

PLANNING COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	May 27, 2026
PROJECT:	Chipotle at May River Crossing Certificate of Appropriateness – Highway Corridor Overlay District
APPLICANT:	Joshua Bookhout, Wilkus Architects
PROJECT NUMBER:	COFA-02-26-020127
PROJECT MANAGER:	Angie Castrillon, Planner Department of Growth Management

REQUEST: The Applicant, Joshua Bookhout of Wilkus Architects, on behalf of property owner PBC Partners LLC, requests approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness-Highway Corridor Overlay District (COFA-HCOD) application. The project consists of the construction of a single-story 2,385 SF restaurant with associated infrastructure (Attachment 1).

INTRODUCTION: The subject property is within the Jones Estate Planned Unit Development (PUD) and consists of approximately 1.51 acres identified by tax map number R610 036 000 3211 0000 located within the May River Crossing Master Plan along SC Highway 170 (Attachment 2).

BACKGROUND: The Preliminary Development Plan (PDP) (DP-08-25-019908) was approved with conditions by the Planning Commission at the November 19, 2025, meeting. This application is for a Certificate of Appropriateness-HCOD located within the Jones Estate PUD and the May River Crossing Master Plan and is subject to the Jones Estate PUD Development Agreement and Concept Plan, the May River Crossing Master Plan, and applicable Unified Development Ordinance Sections 5.3 and 5.10. The Beaufort County Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance 90/3 (ZDSO 90/3), as modified and incorporated into the PUD, establishes the applicable landscaping, lighting, and architectural standards (Attachment 3).

As reflected in the revised submittal, the proposed development includes a single-story 2,385 SF freestanding restaurant with a pull-up window, an outdoor patio and associated landscaping, lighting, parking, and infrastructure. The proposed architecture incorporates a pitched standing-seam metal roof, fiber cementitious horizontal plank lap and board-and-batten siding, a brick base, Bahama shutters, decorative gooseneck lighting, and a prefinished metal canopy. These elements are intended to be compatible with the existing architectural character of the May River Crossing development and reflective of Lowcountry vernacular design (Attachment 4).

The proposed landscaping plan includes foundation plantings, parking lot interior and perimeter landscaping, and street trees consistent with the Jones Estate PUD and HCOD standards (Attachment 5). The lighting plan proposes seven (7) pole-mounted full cut-off LED parking fixtures and wall-mounted full cut-off LED fixtures at exterior building doors. The photometric plan demonstrates illumination levels are within the requirements (Attachment 6).

The Conceptual COFA-HCOD application was reviewed at the April 1, 2026, Development Review Committee (DRC) meeting (Attachment 7). The Applicant provided a response to comments and revised plans on April 28, 2026 (Attachment 8 and 4-6). The Applicant has also provided a letter of approval from the Publix Regional Property Manager that serves as the May River Crossing POA (Attachment 9).

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: The Planning Commission shall consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.17.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) in assessing a Certificate of Appropriateness-Highway Corridor Overlay District (COFA-HCOD) application. The applicable criteria are provided below, followed by Staff Finding(s) based upon review of the application submittals to date.

1. Section 3.17.3.A. The application must be in conformance with the applicable landscaping, lighting, and architectural provisions provided in *Article 5, Design Standards*.

Finding. The property is located within the Jones Estate PUD and the May River Crossing Master Plan, therefore, the design standards of Article 5 of the UDO do not apply, except for applicable provisions of Sections 5.3 and 5.10.

2. Section 3.17.3.B. The application must be in conformance with the approved Development Agreement, Concept Plan, Master Plan, Final Development Plan, Subdivision Plan, and any other agreements or plans applicable.

Finding. The proposed development is subject to the Jones Estate PUD Development Agreement and Concept Plan and the May River Crossing Master Plan. Accordingly, the property is subject to the Beaufort County 1990/3 Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance (ZDSO 90/3) and the Town of Bluffton Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCOD), which governs architectural, landscaping, and lighting design standards. The application has been reviewed for conformance with the applicable design standards, as outlined below.

a. Architecture

Finding – Roof. The revised design incorporates a pitched standing-seam metal roof consistent with Sections 5.15.9.D.3 and 5.15.9.E.2. Staff finds the roof design compliant.

Finding – Façade Articulation. Revised elevations include varied wall planes, Bahama shutters, and accent siding panels consistent with Section 5.15.9.E.3. Staff finds the revised elevations compliant.

Finding – Materials. Proposed materials — fiber cement lap and board-and-batten siding, brick base, and standing-seam metal roof — are consistent with Section 5.15.9.D.1 and compatible with the established May River Crossing character and Lowcountry vernacular design.

Finding – Dumpster Enclosure. An extension of the building façade serves as the dumpster enclosure. Therefore, the design is reflective of and coordinates with the general style of architecture inherent in the primary structure, consistent with Section 5.15.9.F.

b. Landscaping

Finding – Highway Buffers. A minimum 25-foot landscaped buffer along HWY 170 is maintained per Section 5.15.8.B.1.

Finding – Perimeter Buffer. A landscaped buffer of at least ten (10') in width along the side and rear property boundaries, except for areas of vehicular and pedestrian passageways, is maintained per Section 5.15.8.D.1.

Finding – Foundation Buffer. A foundation buffer of at least eight (8') feet wide between any structure and any parking or driveway is required per Section 5.15.8.D.2. Staff has approved a foundation buffer of less than eight (8') feet along the eastern façade due to site constraints.

c. Lighting

Finding – Lamp Type. ZDSO 90/3 Section 5.15.11(E)(2) lists permitted lamp types but does not include LED. The Applicant proposes LED fixtures throughout. The Planning Commission must determine the appropriateness of LED lighting as a substitute for the lamp types listed in Section 5.15.11(E)(2).

Finding – Illumination Levels. Proposed illumination levels do not exceed the 10.0 fc maximum permitted under Section 5.15.11(E)(4)(b). All overhead fixtures are shielded. Staff finds the illumination levels compliant.

3. Section 3.17.3.C. The application must comply with the applicable requirements in the Application Manual.

Finding. The application has been reviewed by Town Staff and has been determined to be complete.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIONS: As granted by the powers and duties set forth in Section 2.2.6.C.6. of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), the Planning Commission has the authority to take the following actions with respect to the application:

1. Approve the application as submitted;
2. Approve the application with conditions; or
3. Deny the application as submitted.

RECOMMENDATION: Town Staff finds that the requirements of Section 3.17.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) are met and recommends that the Planning Commission approve the Certificate of Appropriateness – Highway Corridor Overlay District (COFA-HCOD) application as submitted.

Additionally, Town Staff finds that the Planning Commission should evaluate the following items for consistency with the applicable ZDSO 90/3 standards:

1. Whether the proposed LED lighting fixtures are an appropriate substitute for the lamp types permitted under Section 5.15.11.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Application and Project Narrative
2. Vicinity Map
3. May River Crossing Master Plan
4. Revised Architectural Plans and Material Board 04 28 2026
5. Revised Landscape Plans 04 28 2026
6. Lighting Plans 04 28 2026
7. DRC Staff Comments and Original Plans 02 24 2026
8. Response to Comments 04 28 2026
9. Letter of Approval from May River Crossing POA