

PLANNING COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management



MEETING DATE:	August 27, 2025
PROJECT:	Seagrass Station C-Store Preliminary Development Plan
APPLICANT:	Girishkumar Patel
PROJECT NUMBER:	DP-06-25-019799
PROJECT MANAGER:	Dan Frazier Planning Manager Department of Growth Management

REQUEST: The Applicant, Girishkumar Patel, is requesting approval of a Preliminary Development Plan application. The project consists of the construction of a 6,000 SF convenience store, fueling station with associated infrastructure (Attachment 1).

INTRODUCTION: The property is zoned Village at Verdier Planned Unit Development (PUD) and consists of approximately 5.46 acres identified by tax map numbers R610 021 000 0652 0000 and R610 021 000 0824 0000 located at the intersection of HWY 170 and Seagrass Station Road within the Village at Verdier Master Plan (Attachment 2).

BACKGROUND: This application is for a Preliminary Development Plan located within the Village at Verdier PUD and as such is subject to the standards set forth in the Village at Verdier PUD Concept Plan, Development Agreement, the Village at Verdier Master Plan, and UDO Sections 5.3 and 5.10 (Attachment 3).

As reflected in the revised site plan, the proposed development includes a 6,000 SF convenience store and fueling station with associated driveways, access, parking, utilities and stormwater infrastructure. The site will be accessed from Okatie Highway (SC 170) and Seagrass Station Road with an internal connection to Amanda Road. (Attachment 4).

The Applicant proposes a connector road between SC 170 and Seagrass Station Road to be free flow, with Amanda Road tying in at 90 degrees as a stop sign controlled intersection. An encroachment permit from the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) for Okatie Highway (SC 170) offsite improvements is required at time of Final Development Plan approval.

In support of the proposed development, 24 onsite parking spaces are required (4 spaces per 1,000 SF per UDO Table 5.11.3.C), and 36 spaces are provided. Where there are more than eight continuous parking spaces, a landscaped island must be installed (UDO Section 5.11.4.6) Staff has concerns regarding the ability of a gasoline and delivery truck to maneuver throughout the site. The Applicant must provide a truck circulation exhibit at time of Final Development Plan submittal.

Section 4.4 Conditional Use Standards includes the standards for Fueling Station/Service Station, including Fuel Pumps/Convenience Stores (UDO Section 4.4.2.B). The parking and/or service areas shall be separated from adjoining residential properties by a planting screen, fence or wall at least six feet in height. This screen is currently not shown on the proposed landscape plan (Attachment 4, Landscape Plan). Additionally, the Applicant proposes ten (10) fueling pumps, however, no more than eight (8) pumps are permitted (UDO Section 4.4.2.B.4.)

The Applicant has provided a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) Technical Memorandum dated January 10, 2022, which includes the proposed land use as defined in the Village at Verdier PUD (Attachment 5). The summary of the TIA states that the Town of Bluffton recently conducted a signal warrant analysis at the intersection of Okatie Highway (SC 170) at Seagrass Station Road, and it was not warranted per a discussion with South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) (Attachment 6). Staff will require an update to the TIA to verify the validity of the submitted findings.

Staff comments on the Preliminary Development Plan were reviewed at the July 23, 2025, Development Review Committee meeting (Attachment 7). Five residents of the Seagrass Station community spoke in opposition to the proposed development. At the time of Final Development Plan submittal, the Applicant shall provide a letter from Seagrass Station Master Property Owner Association (POA) stating that the design meets the covenants and restrictions of this agreement. The Applicant provided a response to comments and revised site plans on July 30, 2025 (Attachment 8 and 3).

The subject parcel is within the Highway Corridor Overlay District and will require a Certificate of Appropriateness – Highway Corridor Overlay District (COFA-HCOD) reviewing landscaping, lighting, and architecture at time of Final Development Plan approval.

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: The Planning Commission shall consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.10.3.A of the Unified Development Ordinance in assessing an application for a Preliminary Development Plan. The applicable criteria are provided below followed by Staff Finding(s) based upon review of the application submittals to date.

1. Section 3.10.3.A.1. Conformance with the applicable provisions provided in Article 5, Design Standards.

Finding. The property lies within the Village at Verdier Planned Unit Development (PUD). In accordance with the First Amendment to the Village at Verdier PUD, the property is subject to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

Finding. The Applicant does not include a planting screen, fence, or wall at least six feet in height along the parking and/or service areas separated from adjoining residential properties (UDO Section 4.4.2.B.2)

Finding. The Applicant proposes ten (10) fueling pumps, however, no more than eight (8) pumps are permitted (UDO Section 4.4.2.B.4.)

2. **Section 3.10.3.A.2.** The proposed development shall be in conformance with any approved Development Agreement, PUD Concept Plan, PUD Master Plan, Subdivision Plan, or any other agreements or plans that are applicable.

Finding: The proposed development is in conformance with the Village at Verdier Development Agreement and the Village at Verdier Master Plan.

3. **Section 3.10.3.A.3.** If the proposed development is associated with a previously approved Master Plan, then the traffic and access plans shall adhere to the previously approved traffic impact analysis or assessment, where applicable. If an application is not associated with a previously approved PUD Master Plan, then a traffic impact analysis shall be required at final development plan submittal.

Finding. The proposed development is in conformance with the Village at Verdier Master Plan improvements as specified in the Transportation Impact Analysis Technical Memorandum provided by the Applicant and dated January 10, 2022. However, an update to the TIA is required to verify the validity of the submitted findings.

Finding. The proposed site plan does not clearly demonstrate adequate truck and emergency vehicle circulation.

4. **Section 3.10.3.A.4.** The proposed development must be able to be served by adequate public services, including, but not limited to, water, sanitary sewer, roads, police, fire, and school services. For developments that have the potential for significant impact on infrastructure and services, the applicant shall be required to provide an analysis and mitigation of the impact on transportation, utilities, and community services.

Finding. The subject parcel is an outparcel within the Village at Verdier Master Plan and utilities have been stubbed to serve this site.

Finding. Letters from the agencies providing public services will be required at time of Final Development Plan submittal per the Applications Manual.

5. **Section 3.10.3.A.5.** The phasing plan, if applicable, is logical and is designed in a manner that allows each phase to fully function independently regarding services, utilities, circulation, facilities, and open space, irrespective of the completion of other proposed phases.

Finding. The project is proposed to be completed in a single phase.

6. **Section 3.10.3.A.6.** The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.

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

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIONS: The Planning Commission has the authority to take the following actions with respect to the application as authorized by Section 2.2.6.C.5 of the UDO:

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

RECOMMENDATION: Should the Planning Commission choose to approve the application with conditions, Town Staff finds that the following conditions should be met prior to final development plan approval to be in conformance with UDO Section 3.10.3.A:

1. Provide an updated Landscape Plan demonstrating the planting screen, fence or wall at least six feet in height along the parking and/or service areas adjacent to residential properties at time of Final Development Plan review.
2. Provide an updated site plan demonstrating eight (8) fuel pumps at time of Final Development Plan review.
3. Provide a truck circulation exhibit at time of Final Development Plan review.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Application
2. Vicinity Map
3. Village at Verdier Master Plan
4. Survey, Narrative, Site Development and Landscape Plan Set 07 30 25
5. Traffic Assessment
6. Letter from Secretary Hall 03 10 23
7. DRC Comments and Original Site Plans 06 11 25
8. Response to DRC Comments 07 31 25