

PLANNING COMMISSION



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	June 26, 2024
PROJECT:	Compass Self Storage - Certificate of Appropriateness-Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCO)
PROJECT MANAGER:	Katie Peterson, AICP, Senior Planner

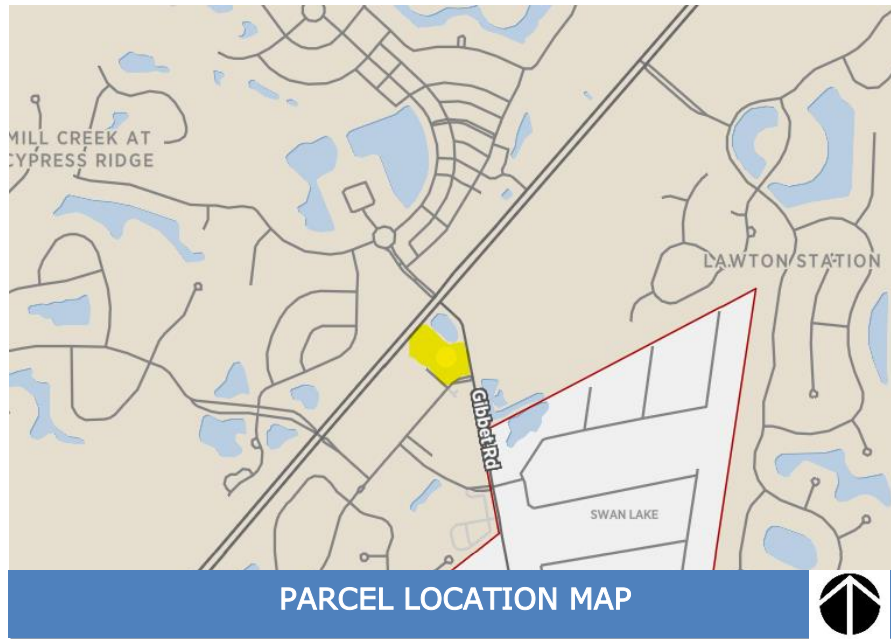
APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Amsdell Construction, on behalf of the Owner, Amsdell Storage Ventures 81, LLC, requests approval from the Planning Commission of the following application:

COFA-03-24-019062. A Certificate of Appropriateness-HCO for the construction of two, two-story buildings totaling approximately 109,398 SF of climate-controlled self-storage space, the associated landscaping, lighting and other infrastructure on the parcels consisting of 3.21 acres identified by tax map numbers R610 036 000 0459 0000 and R610 036 000 0458 0000, zoned Jones Estate PUD, within the Highway Corridor Overlay, located at the northeast corner of the Caine Drive and Estate Drive intersection, west of Gibbet Road, and fronts on SC Hwy 170.

INTRODUCTION: The Conceptual Plan and Development Agreement for the Jones Estate PUD was initially approved by Bluffton Town Council in 2000. As approved, the plan organized the 4,400-acre Jones Estate into planning areas or tracts to provide for the arrangement and regulation of land uses, as well as the allocation of residential densities. The subject parcel is located within the Church Point Planning Tract which was approved by Town Council on the same date, and is within the Palmetto Pointe Commercial Master Plan (MPA-02-13-5332), last revised in 2013.

A Development Plan (DP-09-22-017236) was conditionally approved at the February 22, 2023 Planning Commission meeting. A Final Development Plan was reviewed at the May 15, 2023 Development Review Committee where comments were provide to the Applicant. The Applicant has submitted revised materials May 23, 2024. As several of the comments effect both the Certificate of Appropriateness and the Development Plan, Staff has recommended the Applicant wait until Planning Commission hears this application to resubmit addressing final Development Review Committee conditions.

The Applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness – Highway Corridor Overlay application which is subject to review by the Planning Commission, which has authority over architecture, landscaping and lighting design only.



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 this application:

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

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: Town Staff and the Planning Commission are required to consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.17.3 of the UDO in assessing an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness-HCO. These criteria are provided below followed by a Staff Finding based upon review of the application submittals to date.

1. Section 3.17.3.A. The proposed development must be in conformance with applicable landscaping, lighting, and architectural provisions provided in Article 5, Design Standards.
 - a) *Finding.* The project is located within the Jones Tract PUD, part of the Church Point Planning Area, and Palmetto Point Commercial Master Plan. The PUD established specific design standards via the Beaufort County 1990/3 Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance and the Town of Bluffton Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCO) within the Town of Bluffton Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance (ZDSO), which are attached to the PUD. As a result, the design criteria of Article 5 of the current UDO do not apply to this proposal.

2. Section 3.17.3.B. 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.
 - a) *Finding.* The property is located within the Jones Tract PUD and is identified in the Church Point Planning Tract as a Mixed-Use Community. As a result, the property is subject to the Beaufort County 1990/3 Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance and the Town of Bluffton Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance and Design Guidelines, which contain architectural, landscaping, and lighting design standards for properties located in the Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCOD).

A. JONES ESTATE PUD/PUD CONCEPT PLAN

The Jones Estate PUD refers to the Beaufort County 1990/3 Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance (ZDSO) and The Town of Bluffton Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCOD) for development standards.

Architecture

Applying Section 5.15.9., (Town of Bluffton Highway Corridor Overlay District, June 20, 2000, Architectural Design), findings include:

- 1) *Finding- Other Requirements.* 5.15.12.(A) states that all duct work, fixed operating machinery and other such utility equipment shall either be screened from view or located so that they are not visible from the highway. Further, 5.15.9.(E)(4) indicates incongruity of architectural details resulting in a clearly disturbing appearance are inappropriate. Staff has concerns that the HVAC units proposed on the roof will exceed the parapet height and be visible. Confirmation that the units will not be visible beyond the parapet and acknowledgement that should they be installed during construction and be visible beyond the parapet height it will result in the failure of HCOD inspections and potentially halt construction until it is corrected.

Landscaping

- 1) Numerous trees are being proposed in the northern bioretention cell (White Oak, Nuttall Oak, Willow Oak) on the landscape plan. As indicated in the Stormwater Review provided at DRC, a list of acceptable bioretention plants can be found in Table 4.7 (perennial & grasses) and Table 4.8 (shrubs & bushes) in Chapter 4.3.5 in the Southern Lowcountry Stormwater Design Manual. Revise Landscape Plan to address Stormwater comments from DRC (Attachment 6).
- 2) Landscape Plan states that the bioretention areas will be "natural ground cover" but does not state species or quantities of plantings. The Civil Drawing detail, provided with the Development Plan, for the bioretention

cells shows a 3" mulch layer in each bioretention cell. Clarify bioretention cell materials and revise all documents to be consistent.

- 3) Trees have been proposed in front of pedestrian doors on both buildings, which results in an obstructed exit in an emergency. Relocate trees as indicated in Fire Department Comments found in the DRC comments.

Lighting

Applying Section 5.15.11., (Highway Corridor Overlay District, Lighting), findings include:

- 7) *Finding – Lighting.* Per Section 5.15.11(E)(2) of the BZDSO, only incandescent, fluorescent, metal halide, mercury vapor or color corrected high-pressure sodium light may be used. The same type must be used for the same or similar type of lighting on any site. The Applicant proposes the use of LED luminaries. As such, the Planning Commission must determine the appropriateness of the use of LED lighting as a substitute for those listed in Section 5.15.11. of the BZDSO.

B. PUD MASTER PLAN

- 1) *Finding – Palmetto Pointe Commercial Master Plan.* The Master Plan states the site planning and development standards are designed in accordance to those in Attachment 1 of the Jones Estate PUD. The site has been designed to be in compliance with the Master Plan as long as the other sections of this report have been addressed.

C. DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 1) *Finding - Development Plan.* This project requires Development Plan Approval from the Town of Bluffton. The Preliminary Development Plan (DP-09-22-017236) was conditionally approved at the February 22, 2023 Planning Commission meeting. A Final Development Plan was reviewed at the May 15, 2023 Development Review Committee where comments were provide to the Applicant. The Applicant has submitted revised materials May 23, 2024. As several of the comments effect both the Certificate of Appropriateness and the Development Plan, Staff has recommended the Applicant wait until Planning Commission hears this application to resubmit addressing final Development Review Committee conditions.

Should the Planning Commission choose to approve this application or approve the application with conditions and the site need to be altered based on the Development Plan, a new Certificate of Appropriateness-HCO may need to be submitted for review as a conditional approval may not be amended until the conditions have been met, and any major changes may not be an amendment to the existing Certificate of Appropriateness-HCO.

D. DECLARATION OF COVENANTS, CONDITIONS, AND RESTRICTIONS

The Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions for the Palmetto Pointe Commercial Master Plan.

- 1) *Finding - Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions for Cypress Ridge.* The applicant must provide a letter from Atlantic States Management, Inc. confirming compliance with the Palmetto Pointe Business Park ARB prior to final approval.
3. Section 3.17.3.C. The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Application Manual.
 - a. *Finding – Applications Manual.* The application has been reviewed by Town Staff and has been determined to be incomplete, as there is not yet an approved Development Plan for the site. Once the Development Plan has been approved, it may be complete.

Please note that per the Town of Bluffton Applications Manual, a separate Sign Permit will be required for all signage that is being proposed in association with this development.

TOWN STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Town Staff finds that with the conditions provided below, the requirements of Section 3.17.3 of the UDO will be met. Should the Planning Commission choose to approve the application Town Staff finds that the following conditions should be met prior to final approval being issued.

Architecture.

1. Confirmation that the units will not be visible beyond the parapet and acknowledgement that should they be installed during construction and be visible beyond the parapet height it will result in the failure of HCOD inspections and potentially halt construction until it is corrected.

Landscape.

2. Revise Landscape Plan to address Stormwater comments from DRC.
3. Clarify bioretention cell materials and revise all documents to be consistent.
4. Relocate trees blocking pedestrian egress as indicated in Fire Department Comments found in the DRC comments.

Lighting.

5. A determine the appropriateness of the use of LED lighting as a substitute for those listed in Section 5.15.11. of the BZDSO must be made.

Additional Requirements.

6. A letter of approval from the Atlantic States Management, Inc. confirming compliance with the Palmetto Pointe Business Park ARB must be provided.
7. All comments provided by the DRC and Planning Commission for the Development Plan must be addressed to be compliant with this COA-HCOD approval and should this plan be changed based on the requirements of the Development Plan Review, a New Certificate of Appropriateness may be required.
8. Per the Applications Manual, a Town of Bluffton Sign Permit must be submitted to for review and approval.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Application and Narrative
2. Proposed Architectural Plans
3. Proposed Landscape Plans
4. Proposed Lighting Plans
5. HVAC Details
6. DRC Comments for COFA
7. Section 5.15. Town of Bluffton Highway Corridor Overlay District as found in the BZDSO