

# PLANNING COMMISSION

## STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management



<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	February 25, 2026
<b>PROJECT:</b>	Novant Health Bluffton Medical Center Preliminary Development Plan
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	Hilton Head Medical Center, LLC
<b>PROJECT NUMBER:</b>	DP-07-25-019862
<b>PROJECT MANAGER:</b>	Dan Frazier, AICP, Planning Manager Department of Growth Management

**REQUEST:** The Applicant, Hilton Head Medical Center, LLC, requests approval of a Preliminary Development Plan application. The project consists of a three (3) story 164,000 SF hospital with associated infrastructure (Attachment 1).

**INTRODUCTION:** The property is zoned Buckwalter Planned Unit Development (PUD) and consists of approximately 17.8 acres identified by tax map numbers R610 029 000 2487 0000 and R600 029 000 2410 0000 and located within the Parkway Corners Initial Master Plan at the northwest corner of the Buckwalter Parkway and Lake Point Drive south of Bluffton Parkway (Attachment 2).

**BACKGROUND:** This application is for a Preliminary Development Plan located within the Buckwalter PUD and is subject to the standards set forth in the Buckwalter PUD Development Agreement and Concept Plan, the Parkway Corners Initial Master Plan and Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Sections 5.3 and 5.10 (Attachment 3).

On October 22, 2025, the Planning Commission (PC) conditionally approved the original Preliminary Development Plan subject to the following:

1. The Property Owner is responsible for completing all required off-site improvements prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for the Novant Health Bluffton Medical Center with the stipulation that Innovation Drive South, through the Retreat at Grande Oaks neighborhood, cannot serve as the secondary access off-site improvement for the hospital.

These improvements included a) the installation of the required Innovation Drive secondary access road and associated traffic signal upgrades at the intersection of Innovation Drive and Bluffton Parkway, and b) the required traffic signal upgrades at the intersection of Lake Point Drive and Buckwalter Parkway.

On December 19, 2025, Staff received a new Preliminary Development Plan application

that the Applicant felt better addressed operational needs (Attachment 4). The new submittal was reviewed at the January 21, 2026, Development Review Committee meeting (Attachment 5). The Applicant provided a response to comments and revised plans on January 26, 2026 (Attachment 6 and 7).

As reflected in the revised submittal, the proposed development includes a three-story 164,000 SF hospital with associated drives, parking, landscape, and utilities. Access to the site is proposed at two locations along Lake Point Drive and a third access to Bluffton Parkway at the Innovation Drive intersection (Attachment 8).

The revised site plan relocates the building closer to adjacent residences; however, the Applicant will continue to provide an adequate landscape buffer to ensure effective screening between the residences, Lake Point Drive, and Buckwalter Parkway. In addition, required landscape buffers between structures and parking or driving areas, as well as parking lot peninsulas, will be provided in accordance with Beaufort County DSO Section 4.23.2.2.

The Buckwalter PUD requires one parking space for every six patient beds, one for each medical staff member or visiting doctor, and one for every four employees. Based on these requirements, 121 spaces are required, however, the current site plan proposes 319 spaces.

**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 with the Buckwalter PUD and therefore is not subject to the Design Standards set forth in Article 5 of the UDO, except for those found in Section 5.10 which are applicable to all development within the Town of Bluffton. This section is specific to Stormwater regulations and will be reviewed in depth during the Stormwater Permit process.

**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.* Town Staff finds that the Preliminary Development Plan is in conformance with the Buckwalter PUD, Development Agreement and Concept Plan, and Parkway Corners Initial 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 adheres to the traffic impact analysis provided in the approved Parkway Corners Initial Master Plan.

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.* 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 accordance with the requirements of Section 3.10.3.A:

1. The Property Owner is responsible for completing all required off-site improvements prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for the Novant Health Bluffton Medical Center with the stipulation that Innovation Drive South, through the Retreat at Grande Oaks neighborhood, cannot serve as the secondary access off-site improvement for the hospital.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Application and Project Narrative 12 19 2025
2. Vicinity Map
3. Parkway Corners Initial Master Plan 07 31 2025
4. Site Development and Landscape Plans 12 19 2025
5. DRC Staff Comments 01 21 2026
6. Response to Staff Comments 01 26 2026
7. Revised Site Development Plan 01 26 2026
8. Overall Connection Exhibit 01 29 2026