

TOWN OF BLUFFTON



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	July 23, 2025
PROJECT:	COFA-05-25-019759 Fifth Third Bank at May River Crossing Certificate of Appropriateness-Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCO)
PROJECT MANAGER:	Charlotte Moore, Principal Planner

APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Angelina Makowski (BDG Architects, LLP), on behalf of owner, Paul Scott (First Chatham), requests approval from the Planning Commission of the following application:

A Certificate of Appropriateness-HCO to construct a new freestanding 2,609 SF bank facility. The property is zoned Jones Estate Planned Unit Development (PUD) and consists of 1.33 acres identified by tax map number R610 036 000 3213 0000 within the May River Crossing Master Plan.

INTRODUCTION: The Applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness – Highway Corridor Overlay application which is subject to review by the Planning Commission for consideration of architecture, landscaping and lighting design per the applicable regulations identified in the next section of this report.

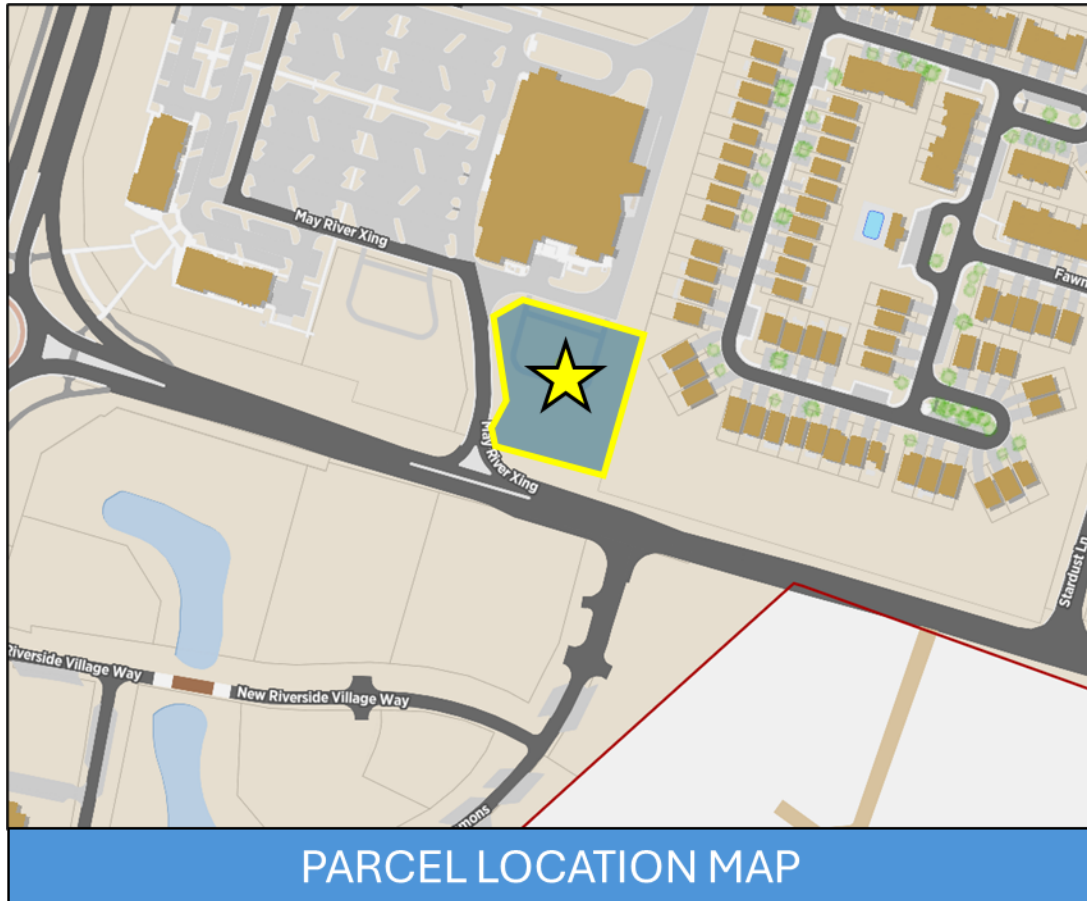
The bank facility will be located on an outparcel of the May River Crossing development. Structures will include a 2,609 SF building, two drive-up automated teller machines (ATM), and a screened trash enclosure. A separate Preliminary Development Plan (DP-03-25-019666) was approved by the Planning Commission on June 25, 2025.

The proposed architecture, including materials and color palette, are consistent with the May River Crossing development.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS: The Conceptual Plan and Development Agreement for the Jones Estate PUD was initially approved by Bluffton Town Council on April 14, 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. The parcel is also within the May River Crossing Master Plan, which was approved by Town Council on September 20, 2018. The May River

Crossing Master Plan replaced Towne Centre at New Riverside Master Plan, which had been approved on September 18, 2007. This parcel is in the May River Crossing development and is located at the corner of May River Crossing and SC Highway 46 (May River Road).



REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: Town Staff and 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 architectural, landscaping and lighting 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 May River Crossing 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.

The property is located within the Jones Tract PUD and is identified in the Church Point Planning Tract as “Mixed Use Community.” Therefore, 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 references 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. Compliance has been demonstrated except for the following findings:

1. Architecture *(See Attachment 5 for Elevations and Attachment 6 for Finishes)*

Applying Section 5.15.9. (Town of Bluffton Highway Corridor Overlay District, June 20, 2000, Architectural Design), architectural styles should be reflective of, or at least compatible with, architectural styles which exemplify the unique character of the Lowcountry region and conform to the general standards of architectural quality. Sub-section 5.15.9.(D) provides that materials and elements not specifically listed may be considered by the Planning Commission provided consistency with general principles for Lowcountry architecture is demonstrated.

Findings include:

- a. **Finding – Roof.** The roof massing is a combination of hip roof and flat roof with a parapet wall to screen rooftop equipment. While pitched roofs (4:12 pitch or greater) are more compatible and appropriate for the Lowcountry aesthetic, as provided in Section 5.15.9(D)(2), other buildings within May River Crossing were constructed with the same configuration.

2. Landscaping *(See Attachment 7 for Landscaping Plan)*

A 60-foot wide “highway” vegetative buffer is shown adjacent to S.C. Hwy 46 on the Landscape Plan and will not be disturbed. The proposed landscaping complies with the requirements of Beaufort County ZDSO Sec. 5.15.8.

3. **Lighting** (See Attachment 7 for Lighting Plan)

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

- a. **Finding – Light Source (Lamp).** Per Section 5.15.11(E)(2), 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 one site. The Applicant proposes the use of LED lamps in the parking area and for the building wall lighting on the building. 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.
- b. **Finding – Illumination Levels.** The photometric plan shows compliance with ZDSO Sec. 5.15.11(E)(4)(b) except for the footcandles exceeding 10.0 at the ATM machines (a range of 11.5 to 17.0. are shown). The ZDSO does not allow a footcandle greater than 10.0. This number may change as a note on the photometric plan states: “A minimum of ten (10) foot candle power at the face of the ATM extending outward five (5) feet in all unobstructed directions to be provided by the owner’s premanufactured ATM canopy.” The information has not yet been provided to Town Staff.

B. **PUD MASTER PLAN**

1. **Finding – May River Crossing Master Plan.** The Master Plan states that “[a]rchitectural guidelines are currently governed by the Declaration of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions for Town Centre at New Riverside as found in Book 3706, Pages 3276-3290, in the Register of Deeds for Beaufort County. The property also falls within the Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCOD) and shall comply with these standards. The applicant intends to exercise the design functions entrusted to the applicant as the private developer under the Concept Plan and Development Agreement.”

C. **DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Preliminary Development Plan has been reviewed, and Town Staff is awaiting the submission of a Final Development Plan.

1. **Finding –** As the work proposed in the scope of this project does not modify the landscaping, the UDO Administrator has determined the work is in compliance with the approved Preliminary Development Plan Amendment (DP-03-25-019666).

D. **APPLICATIONS MANUAL**

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

1. ***Finding – Applications Manual.*** The application has been reviewed by Town Staff and has been determined to be complete and that it meets all requirements of the Applications Manual. 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.

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.

TOWN STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The requirements of Section 3.17.3 of the UDO will be met if the Planning Commission approves the application with the following conditions:

1. Provide an updated photometric plan that includes accurate footcandles after the ATM canopy details have been obtained from the canopy manufacturer.
2. Provide a letter of approval from the Master Plan Declarant responsible for the covenants and restrictions for the community.
3. Per the Applications Manual, a Town of Bluffton Sign Permit must be submitted for review and approval of any future signage.

Additionally, Town Staff finds that the Planning Commission must determine if certain lighting elements satisfy the requirements of the ZDSO, including the following:

1. Determine if the use of LED lighting is an appropriate substitute for those lighting types permitted by ZDSO Sec. 5.15.11.
2. Determine if footcandles more than 10.0 are appropriate at the automated teller machines and, if deemed appropriate, a maximum footcandle.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Application
2. Plat
3. Survey & Site Photos
4. Site Plan
5. Elevations
6. Exterior Finish Schedule
7. Lighting and Landscape Plans