



# City of Green Cove Springs Special Exception Application

### FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

P Z File # \_\_\_\_\_

Application Fee: \_\_\_\_\_

Filing Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Acceptance Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Review Type: SDRT  P & Z

#### A. PROJECT

- Project Name: Springs Chapel & Academy - Church / Education Off Street Parking
- Address of Subject Property: 1106 N. Orange Avenue
- Parcel ID Number(s) 38-06-26-017553-000-00
- Existing Use of Property: Church and Educational Uses
- Future Land Use Map Designation : Mixed Use FLUM - front / Neighborhood FLUM - back
- Zoning Designation: Gateway Corridor Commercial (GCC) - front / Gateway Corridor Residential (GCR) - back
- Acreage: 2.8 acres

#### B. APPLICANT

- Applicant's Status  Owner (title holder)  Agent
- Name of Applicant(s) or Contact Person(s): James G. Whitehouse, Esq. Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company (if applicable): St. Johns Law Group  
Mailing address: 104 Sea Grove Main Street  
City: St. Augustine State: FL ZIP: 32080  
Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) 904-495-0400 FAX: (\_\_\_\_) 904-495-0506 e-mail: jameswhitehouse@sjlawgroup.com

- If the applicant is agent for the property owner\*:  
Name of Owner (title holder): Pastor Christian Pope  
Company (if applicable): Springs Chapel Corp.  
Mailing address: 1106 N. Orange Avenue  
City: Green Cove Springs State: FL ZIP: 32043  
Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Must provide executed Property Owner Affidavit authorizing the agent to act on behalf of the property owner.

#### C. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Is there any additional contact for sale of, or options to purchase, the subject property?  Yes  No  
If yes, list names of all parties involved: \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, is the contract/option contingent or absolute?  Contingent  Absolute

D. STATEMENT OF SPECIAL EXCEPTION SOUGHT

1. Requested Special Exception:

Special Exception as allowed by the Code and Comprehensive Plan for use of the south portion of the property for Churches with their attendant education and recreational buildings and off-street parking areas, (Buffers to be included as requested by the neighbors on St. Johns, including a compatible, architecturally pleasing fence and landscaping and prohibition from the use of St. Johns for ingress and egress, as requested.)

2. Section of Land Development Regulations under which the Special Exception is sought:

DIVISION 3. - GATEWAY CORRIDOR RESIDENTIAL (GCR) ZONING CATEGORY,

Sec. 117-515(a) - The gateway corridor residential zoning category is intended for all property located in the gateway corridor and designated as RLD (residential low density) on the future land use map. The permitted uses, special exceptions, and density controls are R-1.

DIVISION 2. - RESIDENTIAL LOW DENSITY LAND USE, R-1 ZONING CATEGORY

Sec. 117-62. - Special exceptions: The following are special exceptions in the residential low density land use, R-1 zoning category:

(3) Churches with their attendant education and recreational buildings and off-street parking areas.

3. Reason Special Exception is requested:

The Church, with their attendant education buildings and off-street parking areas, requests, in coordination with the St. Johns neighborhood, to provide a well buffered and landscaped area on the southeastern side of their property, to address the parking and stacking needs of the church and education uses. Part of this area has been used for dirt parking and traffic direction for years, and they wish to provide a better engineered and architecturally and aesthetically pleasing plan to contain this church and attendant educational traffic and parking. The Church and attendant K-12 school onsite, seeks to provide the safest experience for ingress/egress and parking and the least amount of disruption to the state highway and a clear separation from the St. Johns neighborhood areas as requested by the residents. Thus, they seek this special exception as allowed by our comprehensive plan and under our code to allow this Church and attendant education off-street parking area, as depicted, with substantial buffering to be included as requested by the neighbors on St. Johns, continuing their compatible, beautifully designed iron fence the length of the property behind this section while adding additional landscaping and buffering to substantially buffer this excepted attendant parking. Further, as a good neighbor, they will direct all traffic toward Orange Avenue and away from St. Johns Ave. as they ingress/egress the church and school. Finally, this will allow them to contain all their church and attendant school traffic to the property, with no adverse off-site impacts or effect.

4. Statement of Facts for Requested Special Exception (Use additional pages if necessary)

(PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. THESE FACTS WILL BE USED BY THE STAFF TO MAKE A RECOMMENDATION AND THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD IN MAKING THEIR DECISION)

a. Is this exception in compliance with all elements of the Comprehensive Plan?

Yes, this plan is allowable as a special exception for this very use pursuant to our code and is in compliance with our comprehensive plan. This property's land use designation is split, with the entire front half in the Mixed-Use FLU and zoned Gateway Corridor Commercial (GCC), while the back section is in the Neighborhood FLU with Gateway Corridor Residential zoning. Div. 3 – Gateway Corridor Residential, Sec. 117-515, specifically states: The permitted special exceptions for GCR are the same as R-1. Div. 2 – R1, Section 117-62 (R1 Special exceptions) states that the following are special exceptions in the R1 zoning category: "(3) – Churches with their attendant education and recreational buildings and off-street parking areas."



- b. Is the establishment, maintenance or operation of the special exception detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety or general welfare, or contrary to established standards, regulations or ordinances of other governmental agencies?

No, in fact, the plan being designed by this long-standing church and attendant educational uses merely seeks to utilize the vacant part of their land on the southeastern end, which has been used for dirt parking and traffic direction for years, under a better engineered and architecturally and aesthetically pleasing plan to contain its church and attendant educational traffic and parking. Specifically, they will continue their beautifully designed iron fence the length of the property behind this section while adding additional landscaping and buffering to substantially buffer this excepted attendant parking. Further, as a good neighbor, they will direct all traffic toward Orange Avenue and away from St. Johns Ave. as they ingress/egress the church and school. Finally, this will allow them to contain all their church and attendant school traffic to the property, with no adverse off-site impacts or effect to continue to address any issues that have arisen from the long-standing allowed use.

- c. Is the structure or improvement so designed and constructed that it is not unsightly, undesirable or obnoxious in appearance to the extent that it will hinder the orderly and harmonious development of Green Cove Springs and zoning district in which it is proposed?

The church and school have been in place for years and will remain orderly and in compliance with all our codes and regulations. As stated, to reduce/eliminate visibility of the new allowable parking area from St. Johns Avenue, the church will (1) extend its beautifully designed iron fence the length of the property behind this section while adding additional landscaping and buffering fence, (2) ensure a minimum 90% opacity screening in this buffered area, and (3) will also add trees and shrubbery alongside the fence extension (as requested/instructed). These three features will create somewhat of a park like experience/appearance from all roads, especially from St. Johns Avenue. They have specifically worked on this design with their engineers and will implement it to continue their beautifully designed fence the length of the property behind this section while adding landscaping and buffering to substantially buffer this attendant parking. Further, as a good neighbor, they will direct all traffic toward Orange Avenue and away from St. Johns Ave. as they ingress/egress the church and school. Finally, this will allow them to contain all their church and attendant school traffic to the property, with no adverse off-site impacts or effect and to continue to address any issues from the long-standing allowed use.

- d. Will the special exception adversely impact the permitted use in the zoning district or unduly restrict the enjoyment of the other property in the immediate vicinity nor substantially diminish or impair property values within the area?

Not at all, in fact, the plan being designed by this long-standing church and attendant educational uses merely seeks to utilize this open, vacant part of their land on the southeastern end, part of which has been used for dirt parking and traffic direction for years, under a better engineered and architecturally and aesthetically pleasing plan to contain its church and attendant educational traffic and parking. Specifically, they will continue their beautifully designed iron fence the length of the property behind this section while adding additional landscaping and buffering to substantially buffer this excepted attendant parking. Further, as a good neighbor, they will direct all traffic toward Orange Avenue and away from St. Johns Ave. as they ingress/egress the church and school. Finally, this will allow them to contain all their church and attendant school traffic to the property, with no adverse off-site impacts or effect and to continue to address any issues from the long-standing allowed use. This will provide a positive impact on the area and the immediately adjacent properties to this Gateway Commercial Area:

- (1) Neighbors will be extensively buffered from church parking and school pickup/drop-off traffic;
- (2) This buffering will help reduce/eliminate lights and sounds from the growing US17 traffic; and
- (3) It will provide a beautification of the St. Johns Ave. corridor with extensive landscaping, trees and bushes & the full extension of their beautifully designed fence for the full length of the property, clearly delineating the Gateway uses from the residential areas on St. Johns Avenue, a long-established planning technique in transitional areas to protect residents.



- e. Will the establishment of the special exception impede the orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the zoning district?

No, this plan is allowable as a special exception for this very use pursuant to our code. This property's land use designation is split, with the entire front half in the Mixed-Use FLU and zoned Gateway Corridor Commercial (GCC), while the back section is in the Neighborhood FLU with Gateway Corridor Residential zoning. Div. 3 – Gateway Corridor Residential, Sec. 117-515, specifically states: The permitted special exceptions for GCR are the same as R-1. Div. 2 – R1, Section 117-62 (R1 Special exceptions) states that the following are special exceptions in the R1 zoning category: "(3) – Churches with their attendant education and recreational buildings and off-street parking areas."

Moreover, the plan as described and depicted will in fact compliment the long-allowed use and add aesthetic and architecturally pleasing additional buffering to assist in the differentiation between the Gateway zoned areas and the residential neighborhood on St. Johns Avenue, particularly with their direction of any traffic away from the public roads up and down St. Johns Avenue.

- f. Are adequate water and sewage disposal facilities provided?

Yes.

- g. Are access roads adequate, on-site parking, on-site loading and loading berths, and drainage have been or will be provided where required?

Yes. Grove St. is a public road that is lightly trafficked with an existing southbound turn lane and the new church/school parking area plan being designed for this long-standing church and attendant educational uses merely seeks to utilize the additional vacant part of their land on the southeastern end, which has been used for dirt parking and traffic direction for years, under a better engineered and architecturally and aesthetically pleasing plan to contain its church and attendant educational traffic and parking lot, including pickup/drop-off lanes onsite and adding approximately 70 parking spaces, which will fulfill our current needs & allow room for additional church and school parking.

- h. Have adequate measures been taken to provide ingress and egress to the property and design in a manner to minimize traffic congestion on local roads?

Yes, hence the plan and the church's large expenditure to contain all their traffic and parking to be good neighbors for this long-allowed use. This use of an access removed from the state highway on Grove St. allows for removal of all congestion from US17. The double pickup/drop-off lane & extended parking area will further eliminate any traffic congestion on Grove St. and all traffic will continue to be directed away from St. Johns Avenue and the residentially zoned areas behind the Gateway. The angled and clearly identified entrance from Grove St. will also help to further eliminate any St. Johns Avenue usage.

- i. Is adequate screening and buffering signs of the special exception provided, if needed??

Yes, as discussed above, an extensive landscaping/screening buffer will be added to the new extended fence alongside St. Johns Avenue. The plan designed by this long-standing church and attendant educational use merely seeks to utilize this open/vacant part of their land on the southeastern end, part of which has been used for dirt parking and traffic direction for years, under a better engineered and architecturally and aesthetically pleasing plan to contain its church and attendant educational traffic and parking. Specifically, they will continue their beautifully designed iron fence the length of the property behind this section while adding additional landscaping and buffering to substantially buffer this attendant parking. Further, as a good neighbor, they will continue to direct all traffic toward Orange Avenue and away from St. Johns Ave. as they ingress/egress the church and school. Finally, this will allow them to contain all their church and attendant school traffic to the property, with no adverse off-site impacts or effect and to continue to address any issues from the long-standing allowed use.

- j. Will the special exception require signs or exterior lighting, which will cause glare, adversely impact area traffic safety or have a negative economic effect on the area? Any signs or exterior lighting required by the special exception shall be compatible with development in the zoning district?

No glare or adverse impact. In fact, all directional signage will be advantageous to direct the traffic away from St. Johns Avenue and the neighborhoods behind this Gateway zoned area and any lighting will be directional to provide safety as required but to eliminate any adverse effect on the area. All will be compatible with the area.

- k. Will the special exception conform to all applicable regulations of the zoning district in which it is proposed?

Yes, we will meet all the applicable regulations and requirements of our code.

**E. ATTACHMENTS (One hard copy or one copy in PDF format)**

1. Copy of Warranty Deed or other proof of ownership

See Attached.

2. Legal description

See Attached.

**F. FEE.**

Home Occupation - \$150  
Residential property - \$250  
Non-residential - \$500

- a. The Cost of postage, signs, advertisements, and outside consultants are in addition to the application fee.
- b. The applicant is responsible to pay the cost of the advertisement and signs.
- c. All applications are subject 10% administrative fee and must pay the cost of any outside consultants' fees.

No application shall be accepted for processing until the required application fee is paid in full by the applicant. Any fees for advertising, signs, necessary technical review or additional reviews of the application by a consultant will be billed to the applicant at the rate of the reviewing entity. The invoice shall be paid in full prior to any action of any kind on the development application.

**Both attachments are required for a complete application. A completeness review of the application will be conducted within five (5) business days of receipt. If the application is determined to be incomplete, the application will be returned to the applicant.**

I/We certify and acknowledge that the information contained herein is true and correct to the best of my/our knowledge:

Signature of Applicant  
James G. Whitehouse, Esq.  
Typed or printed name and title of applicant

Signature of Co-applicant  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Typed or printed name of co-applicant

Date

Date

State of Florida County of St. Johns

The foregoing application is acknowledged before me this 3 day of may, 2024 by James

Whitehouse, who is/are personally known to me, or who has/have produced \_\_\_\_\_  
as identification.

NOTARY SEAL

Sharpe  
Signature of Notary Public, State of \_\_\_\_\_

