



*The Lowcountry's Hometown*

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## STAFF REPORT

**TO:** Board of Zoning Appeals

**FROM:** Justin Westbrook, Community Development Director

**SUBJECT:** Special Exception (SE-24-04) – Friar Tuck’s Signage

**DATE:** December 3, 2024

**Background:** The applicant, Karyn Grooms, has applied for a **Special Exception** (SE-24-04) for a “freestanding sign” within the Corner Renaissance Overlay District (CR), owned by Robert Strickland (TMS # 142-08-01-031). The applicant has erected a “freestanding sign” without a required Sign Permit. Furthermore, within the CR district, a “freestanding sign” requires a Special Exception, as prescribed in the Zoning Ordinance (Section 6-15).

**Existing Zoning:** The subject parcel is currently in the **C-2 – General Commercial** zoning district. Per the Town’s Zoning Ordinance, the Office & Institutional zoning district is intended to:

*“...accommodate a variety of general commercial and nonresidential uses characterized primarily by retail, office, and service establishments and oriented primarily to major traffic arteries or extensive areas of predominately commercial usage and characteristics. Certain related structures and uses are permitted outright or are permissible as special exceptions subject to the restrictions and requirements intended to best fulfill the intent of this ordinance.”*

Adjacent Zoning		Adjacent Land Use
North	TD	VACANT
South	R-2	Single-family Detached Dwelling
East	C-2	Gas Station (Parker’s)
West	C-2	Vehicle Sales (Main Street Automotive, LLC)

**Existing Site Conditions:** The subject parcel comprises approximately 0.28 acres, which are currently occupied by what appears to be a former single-family detached dwelling which is currently used by Friar Tuck’s retail use. The parcel is currently accessible by E. Main Street, with approximately 39-feet of frontage. The parcels to the east and west are largely commercial, with across E. Main Street and to the North is a parcel within the Transitional District with a former office building that appears vacant. The parcel directly to the South appears to be residential single-family detached dwelling.

**Proposed Request:** The applicant has requested a **Special Exception** be issued for the property for a “freestanding sign”. The applicant has provided a picture of the installed sign, as well as the dimensions of the sign.

All other additional elements as required by the Zoning Ordinance must be met by the business owner.

**Environmental:** Per the National Wetlands Inventory, the parcels do not appear to be subject to any wetlands.

**Procedural Issues:** As part of any Special Exception, the Board of Zoning Appeals shall hold a Public Hearing and may impose additional terms and conditions. Prior to granting the Special Exception, the Board of Zoning Appeals must determine the following standards were clearly demonstrated.

1. The proposed use is consistent with the purpose and intent of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan as well as the character and intent of the underlying zoning district;
2. The proposed use is compatible with existing uses in the vicinity and will not adversely affect the general welfare or character of the immediate community;
3. Adequate provision is made for such items as setbacks, buffering (including fences and/or landscaping) to protect adjacent properties from the possible adverse influence of the proposed use, such as noise, vibration, dust, glare, odor, traffic congestion, and similar factors;
4. Where applicable, the proposed use will be developed in a way that will preserve and incorporate and important natural features;
5. The proposed use shall not destroy, create a loss, or cause damage to natural, scenic, or historic features of significant importance;
6. Vehicular traffic and pedestrian movement on adjacent roads shall not be hindered or endangered;
7. The proposed use complies with all applicable regulations and development standards of the Town.

**Consistency with Plans:** As part of the new 2024 Comprehensive Plan, the Future Land Use Map identifies the subject parcel as “Neighborhood Mixed Use”. This is described as,

*“Intended to provide small-scale neighborhood level services to the adjacent neighborhoods. Commercial-residential mixed uses are encouraged. Typically located along heavily traveled roadways, may act as a transition between higher intensity commercial corridors and residential neighborhoods. This area should have a strong focus around form-based zoning and high-quality design elements.”*

The parcel is also within the “Mixed Use Overlay”, which is described as,

*“A 250 ft mixed-use buffer (500 ft in total width) along select roadways is intended to allow for a mixture of higher density residential and low intensity service-based commercial land uses. This overlay provides flexibility for the Town to expand economic opportunities beyond the traditional downtown or strip mall type commercial corridors.”*

The current zoning designation does not appear to be in line with the designated future land use.

**Staff Analysis:** The applicant has already erected the sign, in violation of the Town Code of Ordinances and the Town's Zoning Ordinance. Staff has issued a Notice of Violation and has an ongoing lack of communication between the business proprietor and the Town.

1. The proposed use is consistent with the purpose and intent of the Town's Comprehensive Plan as well as the character and intent of the underlying zoning district;  
*Staff feels the proposed sign **is compatible** with the purpose and intent of the Town's 2024 Comprehensive Plan, as well as the character and intent of the underlying zoning district and overlay district. The sign is on a parcel that appears to be a former residence, which see significant setbacks from the roadway to the detriment of the business and not faced by traditional downtown buildings. The underlying General Commercial (C-2) zoning district does allow freestanding signage to be alarmingly tall in the overlay district, as well as large, which may detract from the character and intent of the underlying zoning district.*
2. The proposed use is compatible with existing uses in the vicinity and will not adversely affect the general welfare or character of the immediate community;  
*Staff feels that the proposed sign **may be compatible** with the existing uses in the vicinity, such as the Parker's and Main Street Automotive.*
3. Adequate provision is made for such items as setbacks, buffering (including fences and/or landscaping) to protect adjacent properties from the possible adverse influence of the proposed use, such as noise, vibration, dust, glare, odor, traffic congestion, and similar factors;  
*Staff has not had an opportunity to review all documents provided by the applicant, but feel the sign as it has been installed **has adequate provisions** for setbacks and buffering.*
4. Where applicable, the proposed use will be developed in a way that will preserve and incorporate and important natural features;  
*Staff believes that the submitted Sign Plan will **generally preserve and incorporate important natural features**. It appears thought has been paid to preserving existing trees.*
5. The proposed use shall not destroy, create a loss, or cause damage to natural, scenic, or historic features of significant importance;  
*Staff believes that allowing a freestanding sign detracts from the historic features of significant importance, namely the streetscape of Downtown. While the sign has been installed, freestanding signs have the process to seek a Special Exception for a reason, and past decisions and neighboring uses and their signage should not be considered when the Board decides the merit of this request.*
6. Vehicular traffic and pedestrian movement on adjacent roads shall not be hindered or endangered.  
*Staff believes, the erected and proposed sign, will **not hinder** vehicular traffic or pedestrian movement on adjacent roads.*
7. The proposed use complies with all applicable regulations and development standards of the Town.  
*During a preliminary review of the provided Sign Plan, it appears all applicable regulations and sign standards **have been complied with**. During the official review and approval, Staff will ensure **the proposed sign complies** with all applicable regulations and development standards.*

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends the Board of Zoning Appeal consider the impacts of the proposal to grant a Special Exception for the illegally installed sign on adjacent commercial parcels and the overall streetscape of our Downtown within the Corner Renaissance Overlay District.

*Attachments:                SIGNED - Application (Kayrn Grooms, Business Owner)(20241024)*  
*Sign Plan (20241125)*