

Blackwell Property – Annexation & Pre-Zoning

Staff Report: Andy Bauer
Application #: ZA22-000001

Planning Commission Meeting Date: February 22, 2022
Applicant: City of Gulf Shores

Property Location: 18999 Oak Road West

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE

Summary of Request

The City requests to annex and pre-zone 7.3 acres of property to OS-Open Space District. The property is located at 18999 Oak Road West.

The Code of Alabama allows municipalities to pre-zone territory proposed for annexation prior to the effective date of the annexation. This application is processed as a rezoning application with public hearings before both the Planning Commission and City Council.

BACKGROUND

On January 27, 2020 the City Council, by resolution, authorized the Mayor to negotiate, accept and execute a contract purchase agreement for the subject property with the estate of Mildred M. Blackwell.

Existing Conditions & Surrounding Context

The property was recently cleared of all improvements by the City and is now vacant. The surrounding zoning and land uses are as follows:

- North – OS-Open Space District / City of Gulf Shores Sportsplex
- South – R-1-5 Residential High Density Single Family District / Summerwood and McNeil Place single family detached house subdivisions
- East – OS-Open Space District / City of Gulf Shores Sportsplex
- West – R-3 Residential Limited Density Multifamily District / Vacant Wooded Land

Current Zoning

The site is not located in the City Limits of Gulf Shores. The property is an enclave of un-zoned property in Baldwin County that is surrounded by properties that are annexed and zoned by the City of Gulf Shores.

Future Land Use Plan

This area is designated as “Open Space/Parks” on the City’s Future Land Use Plan. The Open Space/Parks category is a broad land use that includes active and passive open spaces, recreational parks and playgrounds, as well as green infrastructure and natural areas.

Details of Request

The City of Gulf Shores seeks to annex and pre-zone 7.3 acres of property to OS-Open Space District. The property is located at 18999 Oak Road West and abuts the northern boundary of the City Sportsplex. If annexed and zoned OS, this property will provide expansion opportunities for the Sportsplex.

ANALYSIS

Existing Conditions

According to the 2020 United States Census, Gulf Shores is the fastest growing city in Alabama. Ten years ago, Gulf Shores boasted a population of 9,741. The 2020 Census now lists that population at 15,014, meaning the city grew by 54 percent over the decade. Population increases, particularly of this magnitude, present a challenge to provide a quantity and diversity of parks and recreation amenities commensurate with the increased size of the community.

The property is located on, and has direct access to Oak Road West, which is classified by the Major Street Plan as a Minor Arterial. A Minor Arterial is a facility that serves moderate inter-city-length trips at a lower level of mobility than principal arterials. The widening of Oak Road West

from 2 lanes to a median divided four-lane roadway is listed as Project #16 by the Major Street Plan. The widening of Oak Road West is a component of the BUILD Grant project, and will be completed by 2026.

Future Land Use Plan

The annexation and pre-zoning of this property to OS-Opens Space complies with the "Open Space/Parks" future land use designation and furthers several goals and policies of the Land Use Plan:

1. A goal of the City and an "Implementation Opportunity" listed in the Land Use Plan is to develop a proactive annexation policy to regularize the city's boundaries in the Oak Road West area. Annexation supports the planned image, health, safety, and welfare of the City, and provides the City control over future development.
2. One of the four major development themes of the Land Use Plan is *Maintain and Enhance Community Character and Livability*. Gulf Shores intends to conserve and enhance its special qualities — natural coastal environment, beachfront and waterways, neighborhoods, small town scale, **parks and recreation areas** —promote sustainable development and foster an equitable and resilient economy.
3. A policy of the Green Infrastructure component of the Land Use Plan is to provide and promote **development of a range of functional open spaces and recreational areas** at neighborhood and community wide levels for active and passive recreation to meet the needs of the city's growing population.
4. The Land Use Plan indicates all neighborhoods should contain a focal point of a type and size appropriate to the needs of residents should be included to add a sense of place to the neighborhood—for example, a **park or usable community facility or open space**.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Adopted by the City Council in 2019, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is the primary guiding document for improving, expanding and managing the City's parks system. The Master Plan is a commitment to a course of action that will lead to the development of a park and recreation system that reflects the vision and core values of the people of Gulf Shores.

Given the City's high growth rate, a *Key Recommendation* of the plan is to acquire parkland to meet needs of future residents. The most strategic location for new parkland according to the plan, is north of the Intracoastal Waterway, an area that is currently underserved with parks.

Proposed Zoning

OS Open Space and Preservation District. This district is established to preserve and maintain lands for outdoor recreation, parks, and related activities, both public and private. This district may also be used to identify Alabama State lands intended to be preserved in their natural state. The Zoning Ordinance includes a Public Parks and Playgrounds use which is allowed by "Right" in the OS zoning district.

RECOMMENDATION

Maintaining and growing parks and recreational facilities are essential investments by the City of Gulf Shores to provide an exceptional quality of life to its residents, businesses and visitors. The property provides an excellent opportunity to expand the City's park lands to meet the needs of a growing population and complies with and furthers the goals of the Land Use Plan and Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Staff recommends the Planning Commission approve the Annexation and Pre-zoning of the subject property to OS-Open Space District.

Blackwell Property – Location Map



**RESOLUTION ZA22-000001
BLACKWELL PROPERTY
ANNEXATION & PRE-ZONING**

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF GULF SHORES, ALABAMA, WHILE IN REGULAR SESSION ON FEBRUARY 22, 2022 as follows:

By a vote of ?-?, the Gulf Shores Planning Commission approves Annexation and Pre-zoning of the subject property to OS-Open Space District.

This Resolution shall become effective upon its adoption.

ADOPTED this 22nd day of February, 2022.

Robert Steiskal, Jr.
Chairman, Planning Commission

Attest:

Mell Davis, Secretary, Planning Commission