



# SPECIAL USE REPORT

▶ **FILE #:** 7-B-26-SU

**AGENDA ITEM #:** 14

**AGENDA DATE:** 7/9/2026

▶ **APPLICANT:** **AMBER PARKER**  
OWNER(S): Amber Parker Ijams Nature Center

TAX ID NUMBER: 124 H D 01901 [View map on KGIS](#)

JURISDICTION: City Council District 1

STREET ADDRESS: 4920 PROSPECT RD

▶ **LOCATION:** **North side of Sevierville Pike, east side of Prospect Rd**

▶ **APPX. SIZE OF TRACT:** **5 acres**

SECTOR PLAN: South City

GROWTH POLICY PLAN: N/A (Within City Limits)

ACCESSIBILITY: Access is via Prospect Road, an unstriped local street with 20-23 ft of pavement width within a right-of-way width that varies from 43-48 ft.

UTILITIES: Water Source: Knoxville Utilities Board

Sewer Source: Knoxville Utilities Board

FIRE DISTRICT: Knoxville Fire Department

WATERSHED: Holston River and French Broad River

▶ **ZONING:** **RN-1 (Single-Family Residential Neighborhood), HP (Hillside Protection Overlay)**

▶ **EXISTING LAND USE:** **Public/Quasi Public Land (church)**

▶ **PROPOSED USE:** **Preschool**

HISTORY OF ZONING: None noted.

SURROUNDING LAND USE AND ZONING:  
North: Agriculture/forestry/vacant land, public/quasi public land (undeveloped) - RN-1 (Single-Family Residential Neighborhood)  
South: Single family residential, agriculture/forestry/vacant land - RN-1 (Single-Family Residential Neighborhood), HP (Hillside Protection Overlay)  
East: Public/quasi public land (undeveloped) - RN-1 (Single-Family Residential Neighborhood)  
West: Public/quasi public land (church) - OS (Open Space), HP (Hillside Protection Overlay)

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT: The subject property is in a single-family neighborhood near the Urban Wilderness that features forested, sloped tracts. There are commercial uses along Chapman Highway 0.6 miles to the south, and Anderson School lies 0.1 miles to the north.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

► **APPROVE the request for a preschool in the RN-1 (Single-Family Residential) district, subject to 3 conditions.**

1. Meeting all applicable requirements of the City of Knoxville Zoning Ordinance, including, but not limited to, Article 11 (Parking) and Article 12 (Landscape).
2. Meeting all applicable requirements of the City of Knoxville Department of Plans Review and Inspections.
3. Meeting all applicable requirements of the City of Knoxville Department of Engineering.

**COMMENTS:**

Pre-School's can be permitted within the RN-1 district via a special use review, subject to the principal use standards outlined in article 9.3.W.

This request is for approval of a preschool in an established structure which was formerly used as a church. The proposal utilizes existing internal parking and drive lanes for pick-up and drop-off locations and intends to adjust the structure only to the extent necessary for adequate use as an educational facility and as required by the fire code and state law.

**STANDARDS FOR EVALUATING A SPECIAL USE (ARTICLE 16.2.F.2)**

**THE USE IS CONSISTENT WITH ADOPTED PLANS AND POLICES, INCLUDING THE GENERAL PLAN AND THE ONE-YEAR PLAN.**

1. The One Year Plan and the South City Sector Plan designate this property with the CI (Civic/Institutional) future land use classification. This classification is intended to provide for areas of education and other public and quasi-public entities and explicitly lists schools as an intended landuse within its designation.
2. The General Plan has several development policies which speak to the benefits of supporting school development and the locating of schools in the communities they'll serve. Specifically, policies 5.12 and 5.13 intend for the improvement of structures to serve as schools and highlight the multi-faceted and constructive nature of schools.

**THE USE IS IN HARMONY WITH THE GENERAL PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THIS ZONING CODE.**

1. The RN-1 district is intended to accommodate traditional low density residential neighborhoods in the city with limited nonresidential uses permitted which are compatible with the character of the district.
2. The proposed pre-school is located on a lot which has long been a nonresidential use providing a community space to the neighborhood. The structure is in the center of the lot with generous setbacks from both the local street and the major collector roadway it fronts on. Forested areas on the lot are intended to be maintained for the proposed use.

**THE USE IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE IT IS PROPOSED, AND WITH THE SIZE AND LOCATION OF BUILDINGS IN THE VICINITY.**

1. The proposed use will be located within an existing structure that has been on the lot since 2007. A church has operated on the subject site since the mid-1950s.
2. The property is in an area predominantly defined by residential uses to the north, east, and west, making it a convenient location for this much needed service.

**THE USE WILL NOT SIGNIFICANTLY INJURE THE VALUE OF ADJACENT PROPERTY OR BY NOISE, LIGHTS, FUMES, ODORS, VIBRATION, TRAFFIC, CONGESTION, OR OTHER IMPACTS DETRACT FROM THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT.**

1. The proposed pre-school is considered to be a non-intensive use without anticipated injurious impacts on the surrounding area.

**THE USE IS NOT OF A NATURE OR SO LOCATED AS TO DRAW SUBSTANTIAL ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC THROUGH RESIDENTIAL STREETS.**

1. The proposed use intends to utilize the existing internal parking and circulation system for drop-off and pick-up, as required by the principal use standards. These are located out of public right-of-way and are not anticipated to cause queuing issues.
2. Access to the subject site is provided via Prospect Road, a local street, however, the access point is located only 140 ft from the intersection with Sevierville Pike, a minor collector.

**THE NATURE OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE SURROUNDING AREA IS NOT SUCH AS TO POSE A POTENTIAL HAZARD TO THE PROPOSED USE OR TO CREATE AN UNDESIRABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR**

THE PROPOSED USE.

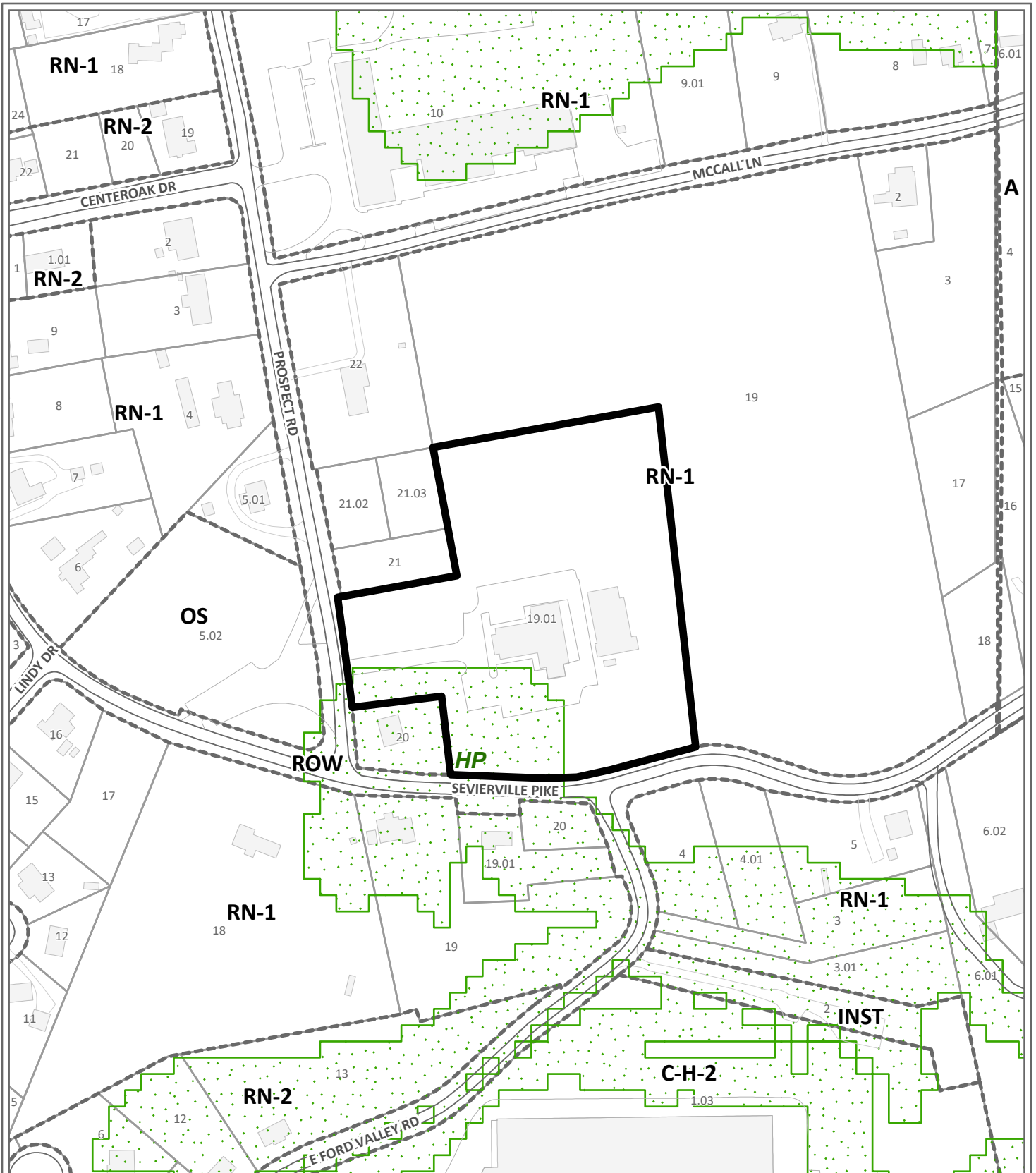
1. The surrounding area is comprised of single-family homes, wooded areas, and the Knoxville Head Start pre-school and program building. These uses are comparable and complimentary to the proposed pre-school use.

ESTIMATED TRAFFIC IMPACT: 270 (average daily vehicle trips)

Average Daily Vehicle Trips are computed using national average trip rates reported in the latest edition of "Trip Generation," published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers. Average Daily Vehicle Trips represent the total number of trips that a particular land use can be expected to generate during a 24-hour day (Monday through Friday), with a "trip" counted each time a vehicle enters or exits a proposed development.

ESTIMATED STUDENT YIELD: Not applicable.

The Planning Commission's approval or denial of this request is final, unless the action is appealed to the Knoxville City Council. The date of the Knoxville City Council hearing will depend on when the appeal application is filed.



**SPECIAL USE**

**7-B-26-SU**

**Petitioner:** Amber Parker



Preschool in RN-1 (Single-Family Residential Neighborhood), HP (Hillside Protection Overlay)

**Map No:** 124

**Jurisdiction:** City

0 225



Feet



**Original Print Date:** 5/29/2026

Knoxville - Knox County Planning Commission \* City / County Building \* Knoxville, TN 37902

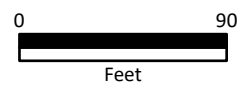
# Exhibit A. Contextual Images



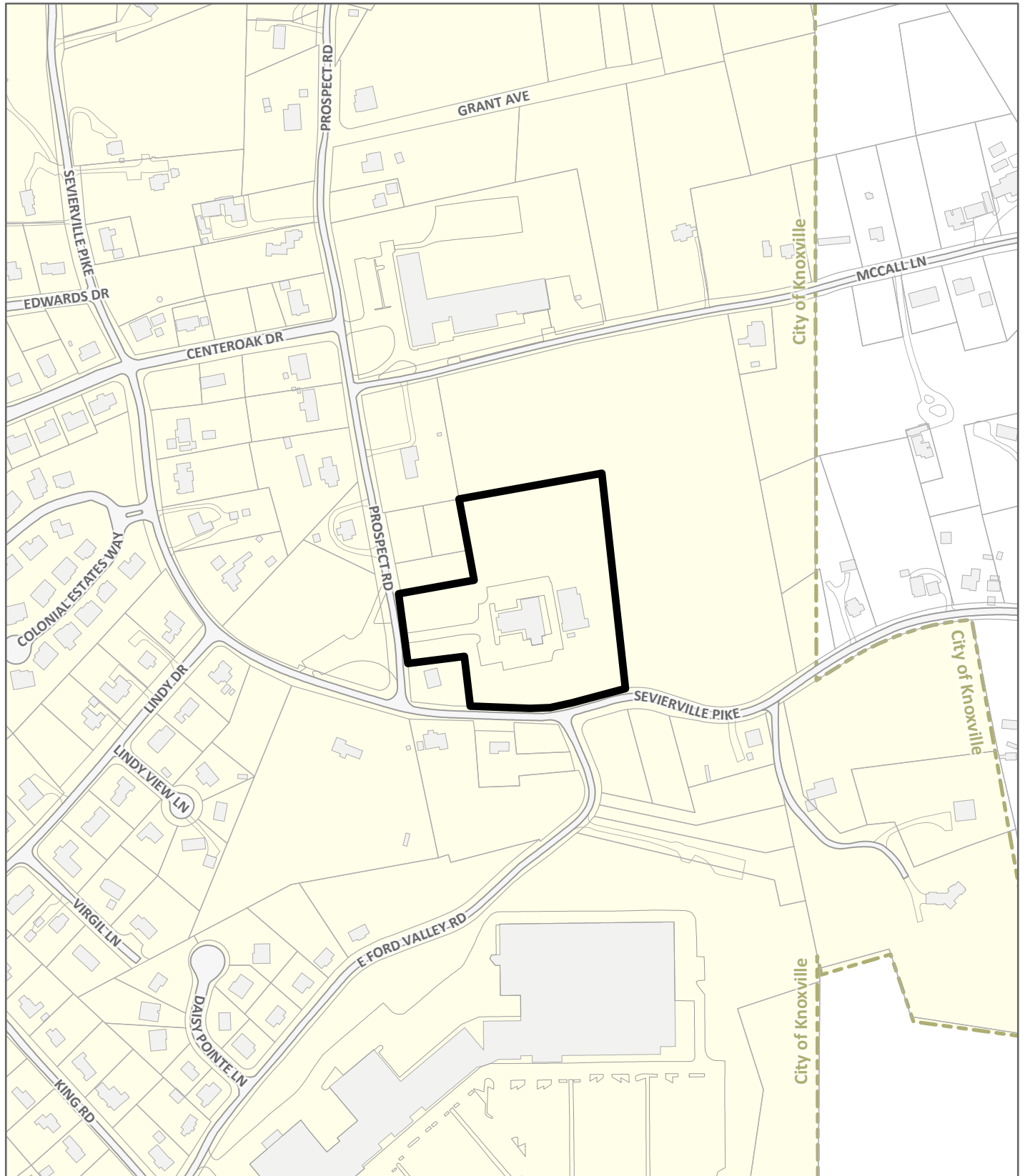
## AERIAL MAP



Case boundary



# Exhibit A. Contextual Images



**LOCATION MAP**

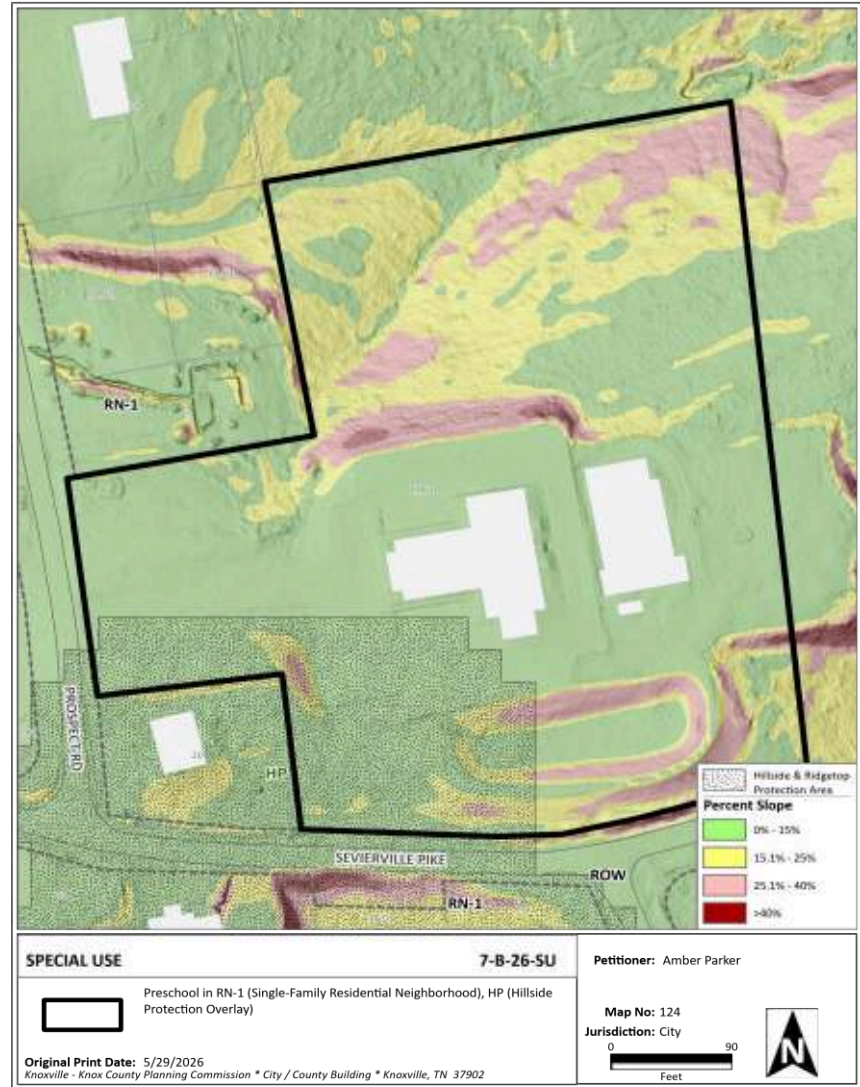
**7-B-26-SU**



Case boundary



CATEGORY	SQFT	ACRES	RECOMMENDED DISTURBANCE BUDGET (Percent)	DISTURBANCE AREA (Sqft)	DISTURBANCE AREA (Acres)
<b>Total Area of Site</b>	<b>217,892.5</b>	<b>5.00</b>			
Non-Hillside	181,795.4	4.17	N/A		
0-15% Slope	29,975.5	0.69	100%	29,975.5	0.69
15-25% Slope	4,910.1	0.11	50%	2,455.0	0.06
25-40% Slope	1,211.5	0.03	20%	242.3	0.01
Greater than 40% Slope	0.0	0.00	10%	0.0	0.00
Ridgetops					
<b>Hillside Protection (HP) Area</b>	36,097.1	0.83	Recommended disturbance budget within HP Area	<b>32,672.8</b>	<b>0.75</b>
			Percent of HP Area	<b>90.5%</b>	





# Ijams Nature Preschool

## Special Use Permit Request



# Ijams Nature Preschool – Special Use Permit Request

Ijams Nature Center has been gifted New Prospect Presbyterian Church for the purpose of operating Ijams Nature Preschool within the existing church building located at 4920 Prospect Road. The preschool will serve children ages 3–5 and is aligned with Ijams’ long-standing mission of environmental education and community engagement.

The existing structure is well-suited for this use, requiring only minor modifications to meet all applicable safety and licensing requirements. The site includes an existing building, parking area, and over 10 acres of natural land that will be preserved to support nature-based outdoor learning.

## 1. Compliance with Federal and State Regulations

Ijams Nature Preschool will comply with all applicable federal and State of Tennessee regulations, including licensing requirements through the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS).

A consultation inspection conducted by the Tennessee State Fire Marshal’s Office identified required modifications to bring the building into full compliance for childcare use.

The primary life-safety requirement is the addition of a fire-rated corridor separation, which will be achieved through the installation of a single fire-rated door and associated assembly within an existing hallway.

All additional noted items (e.g., emergency lighting, GFCI protection, outlet covers, and related safety measures) are straightforward, code-compliant upgrades that will be completed prior to final inspection and licensing.

The building is otherwise in strong condition and requires only modest improvements to meet regulatory standards for preschool use.

## 2. Operator Licensing

Ijams Nature Preschool currently has a DHS license to operate a preschool on its campus and will transfer it over to the new facility. The license will be displayed publicly on-site in accordance with state requirements.

Ijams Nature Center currently operates a successful nature preschool program and has established administrative systems, policies, and experienced staff to ensure full compliance with licensing standards.

## 3. Pickup and Drop-Off Operations and Enrollment

The site is well-equipped to safely accommodate student pickup and drop-off without impacting surrounding streets or internal circulation.

- The property includes an **existing paved parking lot** with **40 parking spaces**, **four of which are designated handicapped spaces**, offering adequate capacity for staff and families.

- A **covered portico at the main entrance** provides a natural and safe location for carline-style drop-off and pickup.
- The internal circulation pattern (see attached map) around the building allows vehicles to queue and exit without blocking drive aisles or interfering with traffic flow.
- All pickup and drop-off activity will occur **entirely on-site**, with no reliance on public right-of-way.
- Ijams Nature Preschool will operate from 8:30 am—5:00 pm Monday through Friday. This will include the regular school year and summer camps.
- Ijams will begin the 2026-2017 school year with **36 students ranging from 3—5 years old**. We anticipate increasing enrollment to 48 in 2027-2028 and then to 72 in 2028-2029.
- Operational procedures will include staggered arrival and dismissal times, staff supervision during transitions, and clear traffic flow management to ensure safety and efficiency.

#### 4. Compatibility with Site and Surrounding Area

The proposed use is compatible with surrounding land uses and neighborhood context. Notably, the property is located adjacent to the Anderson School Head Start facility, demonstrating an established precedent for early childhood education in the immediate area. Ijams will also partner with Anderson School Head Start by training their staff to teach in an outdoor setting and providing access to the trails and outdoor classroom area that Ijams Nature Preschool will use.

The scale of the preschool, use of an existing building, and contained traffic patterns ensure minimal impact on neighboring properties.

#### 5. Public Benefit

The project provides significant community benefit by:

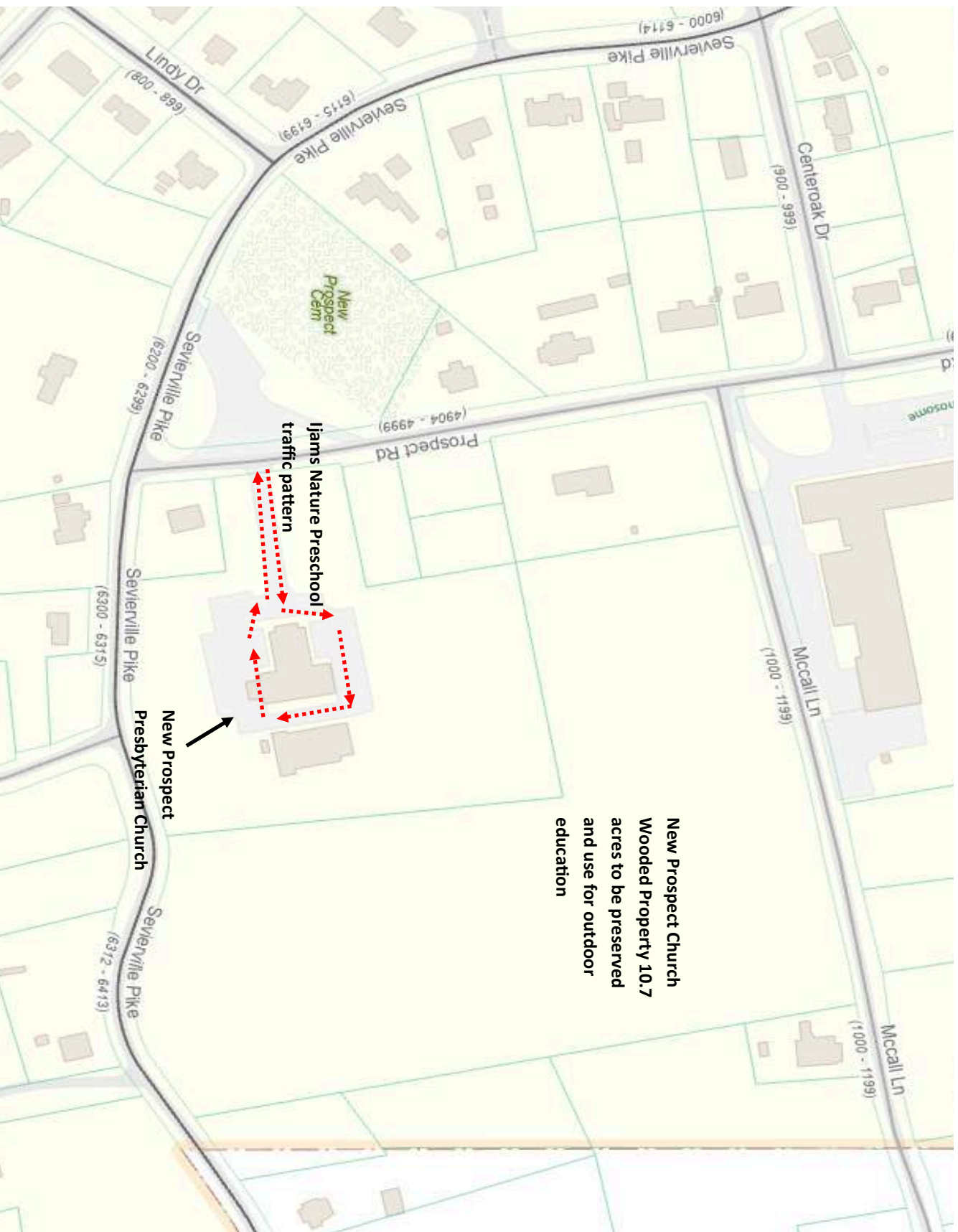
- Expanding access to high-quality early childhood education
- Supporting working families with reliable childcare
- Advancing environmental education and stewardship
- Using an existing building and preserving 10.7 acres of wooded land

The program also strengthens Knoxville's role as a leader in nature-based education and aligns with broader community goals related to education, conservation, and quality of life.

**Ijams Nature Center will hold a community meeting for the New Prospect neighborhood on May 6th to share plans and obtain community input.**

Ijams Nature Preschool represents a low-impact, community-serving use that is fully compatible with the site and surrounding area. With minor building modifications and established operational practices, the project will meet all regulatory requirements while providing meaningful public benefit.

# Ijams Nature Preschool Traffic Pattern





New Prospect Presbyterian Church



Main Entrance (side of building)



**Sides and back of the church**





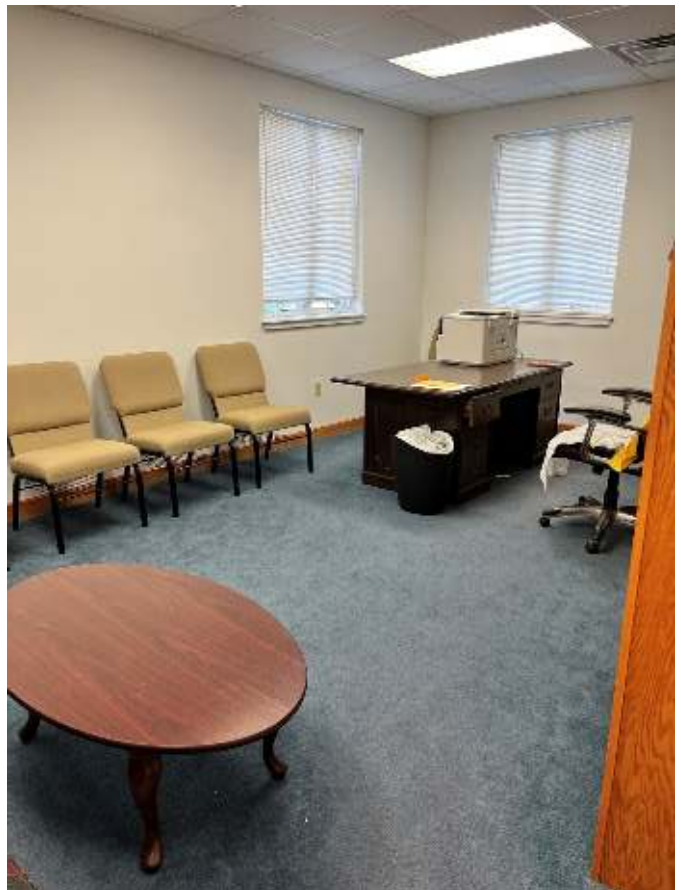
**Main Entrance Hallway**



**Admin Office**



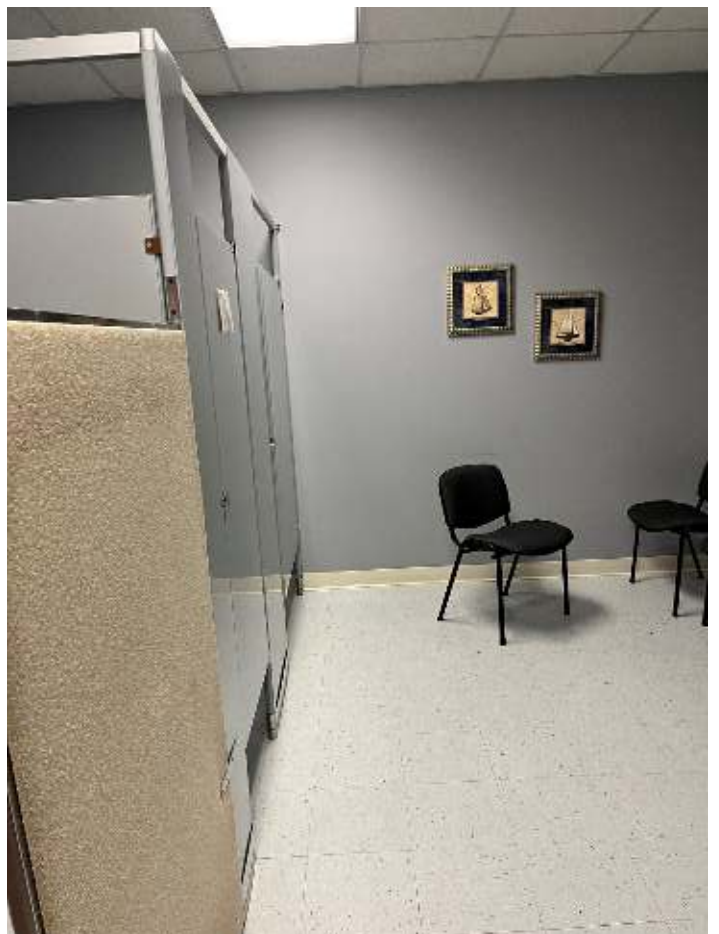
**Library**



**Pastor's Office**



**Women's Bathroom**



**Men's Bathroom**



**Classroom**



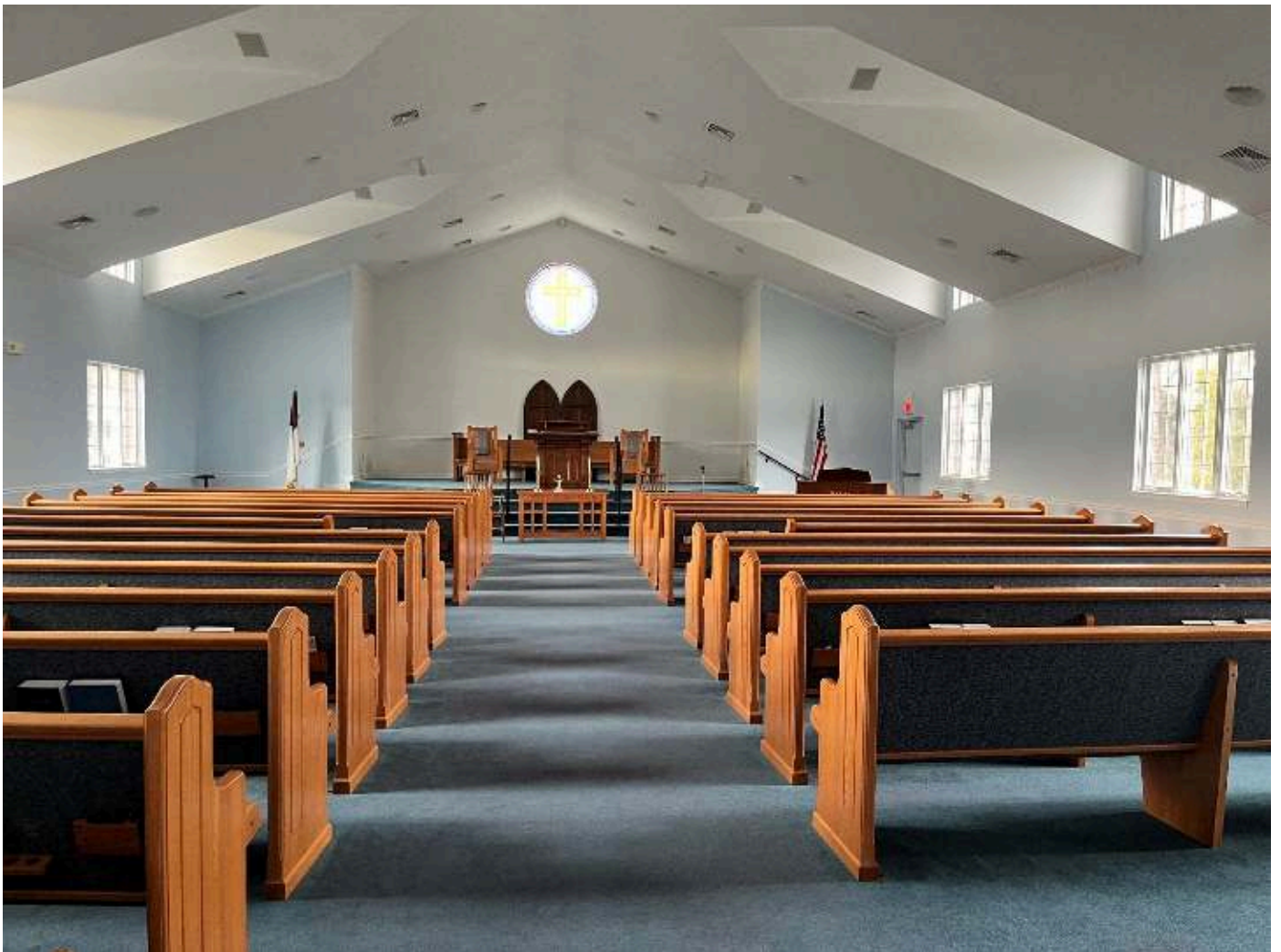
**Hallway**



**Kitchen**



**Backdoor**



**Sanctuary**

# Public Notice and Community Engagement

Planning strives to provide community members with information about upcoming cases in a variety of ways. In addition to posting public notice signs, our agency encourages applicants to provide information and offer opportunities for dialogue related to their upcoming case(s). The contact information you provide in your application may be used for that purpose. We require applicants to acknowledge their role in this process.

## Sign Posting and Removal

The Administrative Rules and Procedures of the Knoxville-Knox County Planning Commission require a sign to be posted on the property for each application subject to consideration by the Planning Commission.

**Planning staff will post the required sign.** If a replacement sign(s) is needed, the applicant is responsible for picking up the new sign(s) from Planning and will be charged \$10 for each replacement.

### Location and Visibility

The sign must be posted on the nearest adjacent/frontage street and in a location clearly visible to vehicles traveling in either direction. If the property has more than one street frontage, the sign should be placed along the street that carries more traffic. Planning staff may recommend a preferred location for the sign to be posted at the time of application.

### Timing

The sign(s) must be posted not less than 12 days prior to the scheduled Planning Commission public hearing and must remain in place until the day after the meeting. In the case of a postponement, the sign can either remain in place or be removed and reposted not less than 12 days prior to the next Planning Commission meeting. The applicant is responsible for removing the sign after the application has been acted upon by the Planning Commission.

### Acknowledgement

*By signing below, you acknowledge that public notice signs must be posted and visible on the property consistent with the guidelines above and between the dates listed below.*

06/27/2026

~~4/30/26~~

Date to be Posted

07/10/2026

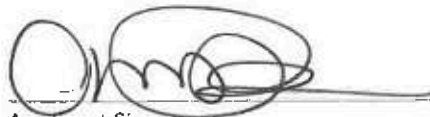
~~5/15/26~~

Date to be Removed

**Have you engaged the surrounding property owners to discuss your request?**

Yes  No

No, but I plan to prior to the Planning Commission meeting



Applicant Signature

Amber Parker

Applicant Name

4/03/26

Date