

**APPROVAL OF A SPECIAL EXCEPTION VARIANCE
FROM THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE OF OCONEE COUNTY, GEORGIA**

TITLE

A Resolution granting approval of a Special Exception Variance based upon the allowances under the Unified Development Code of Oconee County, Georgia, pursuant to Article 13, Section 1303, to grant approval of a Special Exception Variance pursuant to an application requesting approval of a Special Exception Variance on property owned by Drew and Sterling Joiner submitted on August 18, 2025.

ENACTMENT CLAUSE

Pursuant to the authority conferred by the Constitution and Laws of the State of Georgia and after consideration of an application requesting Special Exception Variance approval submitted by Drew and Sterling Joiner on August 18, 2025, regarding a ±0.94-acre tract of land located at 1181 Meriweather Dr, Oconee County, Georgia, (tax parcel no. C-01I-018D), the Board of Commissioners of Oconee County does hereby grant the following:

SECTION 1. A Resolution granting Special Exception Variance approval for the property described above and also described in the attached Exhibit "A" is hereby granted to place an accessory building with a floor area greater than 144 feet in the front yard.

Said Special Exception Variance is subject to the following conditions: as set forth in "Exhibit A" attached hereto.

SECTION 2. Severability. It is intended that the provisions of this Ordinance be severable and should any portion be held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect any other portion of the Ordinance.

SECTION 3. Effective Date. This Resolution shall take effect this date.

Said Special Exception Variance application was submitted to the Oconee County Board of Commissioners and a Public Hearing was duly held by the same at its regular meeting on November 4, 2025.

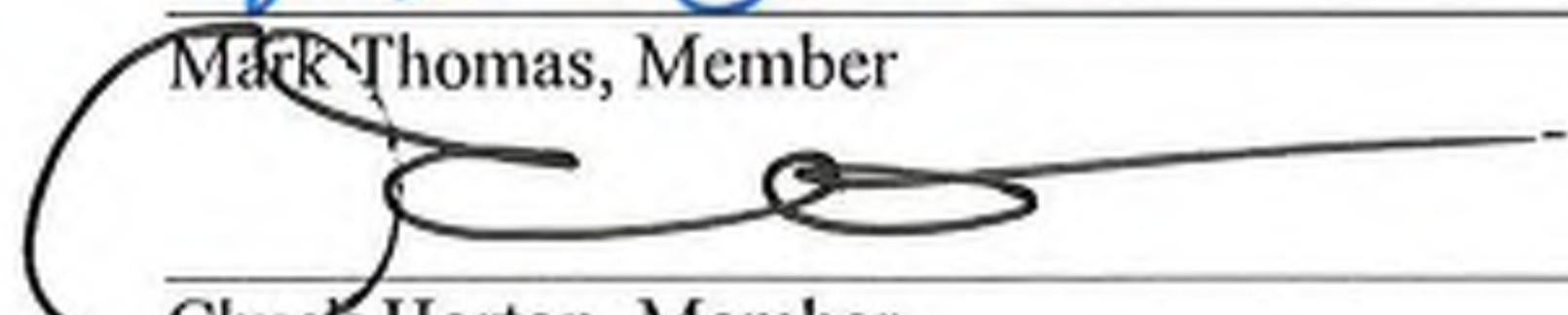
ADOPTED AND APPROVED, this 4th day of November, 2025.

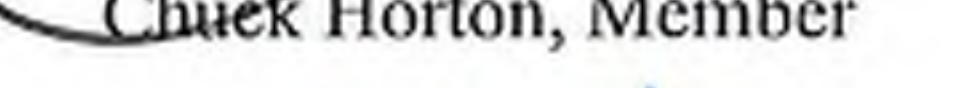
OCONEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BY:

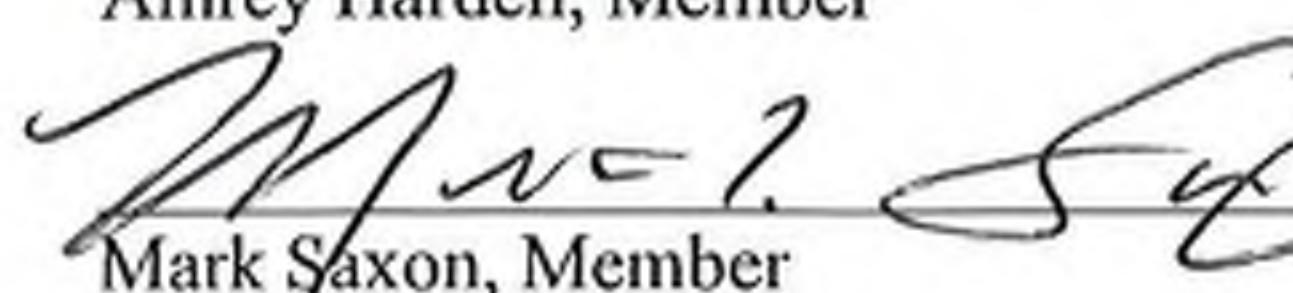

John Daniell, Chairman


Mark Thomas, Member


Chuck Horton, Member


Absent

Amrey Harden, Member


Mark Saxon, Member

ATTEST:

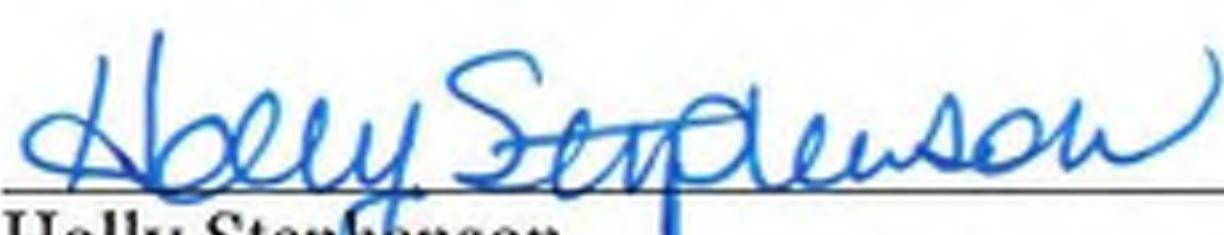

Holly Stephenson
Clerk, Board of Commissioners

EXHIBIT "A" TO SPECIAL EXCEPTION VARIANCE NO. P25-0184

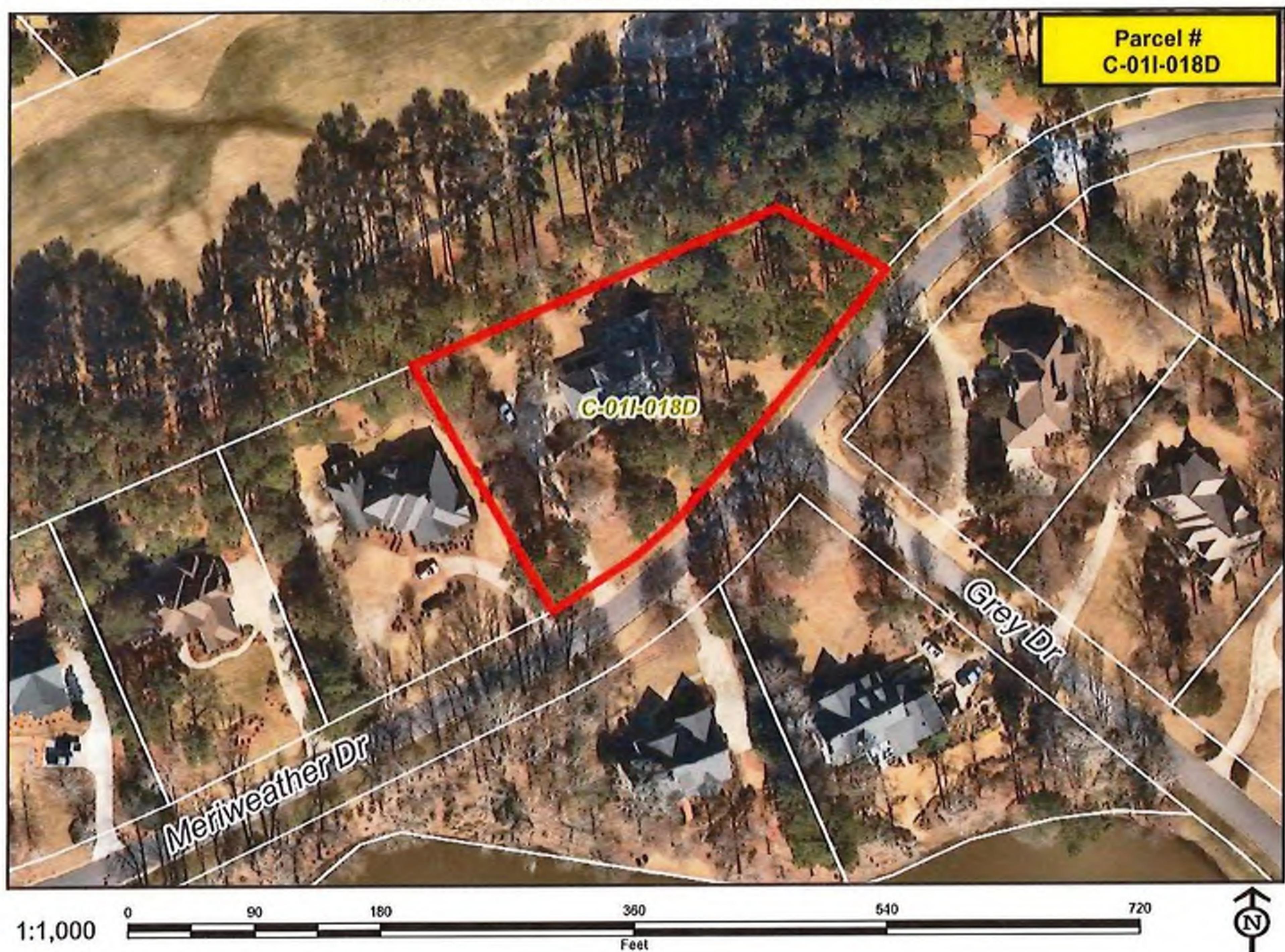
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CONDITIONS

1. Development design and structures shall meet or exceed the standards indicated on the concept plan, narrative, representative architectural sketches, and other documents submitted with the variance application and attached hereto. This condition shall not construe approval of any standard that is not in conformity with the Unified Development Code.

TAX MAP

Variance # P25-0184 - Drew Joiner



TYPED LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Legal Description for 1181 Meriweather Drive

All that tract or parcel of land situate, lying and being in the 1331th district, G.M., Oconee County, Georgia, being known and designated as Lot 18, Section 2-B of the Jennings Mill Subdivision, and being more particularly shown on a plat thereof entitled "Survey for D. Dean Turpin & Merrell L. Turpin," dated July 19, 1989, by Landmark Engineering Corporation, J.R. Holland, GRLS #1087, recorded in Plat Book, 16, Page 171, in the Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court of Oconee County, Georgia, and being more particularly described as follows, to wit:

Beginning at an iron pin located on the northerly side of the Meriweather Drive right-of-way, said iron pin located 1251.80 feet from the Millstone Run right-of-way and running thence North 32 degrees 47 minutes 17 seconds West 190.57 feet to an iron pin; North 67 degrees 29 minutes 39 seconds East 312.36 feet to an iron pin; thence running South 44 degrees 19 minutes 59 seconds East 59.79 feet to an iron pin; thence running South 43 degrees 06 minutes 15 seconds West 34.70 feet to an iron pin, thence running South 40 degrees 37 minutes 35 seconds West 178.99 feet to an iron pin; running thence South 48 degrees 53 minutes 35 seconds West 115.32. feet to the beginning iron pin.

NARRATIVE

1181 Merriweather Drive

SPECIAL EXCEPTION VARIANCE SUBMITTED 8/15/2025

INTRODUCTION

Variance Requested: A Special Exception Variance from UDC 410.01 – Accessory Structures is requested to allow construction of a small pool cabana in the front yard of the subject property.

Property Address: 1181 Merriweather Drive, Watkinsville, GA 30677

Parcel Info: Parcel C 011 018D / 0.94 acres

Existing / Proposed Zoning: R-1-PUD

Existing / Proposed Use: Residential

VARIANCE REQUEST NARRATIVE

Drew and Sterling Joiner respectfully request a variance for the placement of a pool cabana – to complement a new swimming pool – on our 0.94-acre residential property. As our property is under 3 acres, the proposed front yard location for the cabana requires a special exception variance from UDC Section 410.01(2). We believe this is the most practical and considerate solution for our property and neighbors.

Our existing home is situated towards the rear of the parcel. The area directly behind the house is impractical for a pool and cabana due to an established garden, firepit, and significant retaining walls. Further, placing the pool and cabana behind the driveway would be in close proximity to our neighbor's home and in full view of their back yard, reducing privacy for both parties and potentially being "detrimental to public good" or "injurious to the use and enjoyment" of both properties. Even if we were to force the cabana into this location, it would still require a variance due encroaching upon the 40-foot rear setback.

Conversely, the east side of our property offers the ideal location. This side uniquely has no immediate residential neighbors, bordering a golf course to the north and east, and Merriweather Drive to the south. Critically, our residential home would sit between the proposed cabana and our closest neighbor, significantly enhancing privacy for both properties. While technically in the front yard as defined by the UDC, the cabana would be set back nearly 40 feet from the front property line and an evergreen landscape screen will be installed to prevent visibility from Merriweather Drive.

NARRATIVE

Given the existing site constraints and our commitment to neighbor privacy, the proposed front yard location on the east side is the most suitable and least impactful option. We kindly request your favorable consideration of our variance application.

STANDARDS FOR SPECIAL EXCEPTION VARIANCE APPROVAL

Pursuant to Oconee County UDC Section 1303.3 a special exception variance may be granted upon finding that the relief, if granted:

- a. Would not cause substantial detriment to the public good; and

The proposed cabana is nearly 40 feet from the main road and an evergreen screen will be installed to prevent visibility from the road. There are no immediate residential neighbors on this side of the property. Granting a variance will not cause substantial detriment to the public good.

- b. Would not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of the environment or of other property in the immediate vicinity; and

The proposed location of the cabana on the east side of the property minimizes impact on property in the immediate vicinity because there are no residential neighbors on the east side of the property and the residential home will provide a natural buffer between the cabana and the closest neighbor. Additionally, an evergreen landscape buffer will screen the cabana from the street. Granting a variance will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of the environment or of other property in the immediate vicinity.

- c. Would not diminish and impair property values within the surrounding neighborhood; and

Granting a variance for a cabana will not diminish nor impair property values within the surrounding neighborhood. On the contrary, it will enhance property values because it will improve and beautify an undeveloped, wooded area into a neatly landscaped area.

- d. Would not impair the purpose and intent of this Development Code.

Granting a variance for a cabana will not impair the Development Code' purpose and intent to promote the health, safety, morals, aesthetics, convenience, order, prosperity and general welfare of the community. This project will enhance all of those elements.

NARRATIVE

ADJACENT PROPERTIES

North: R-1-PUD

East: R-1-PUD

South: R-1-PUD

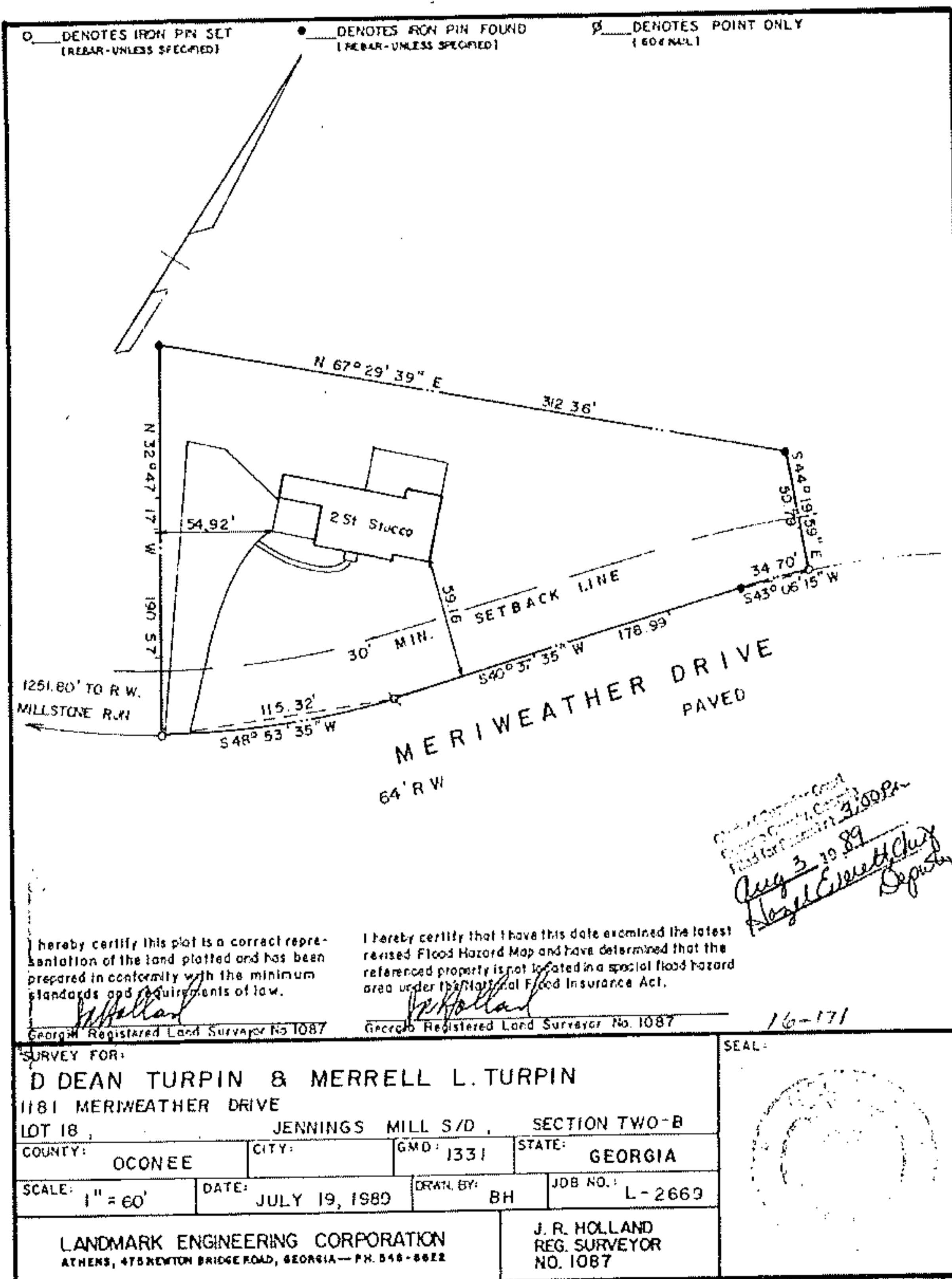
West: R-1-PUD

CONCLUSION

The owners of the subject property would like approval to build a pool cabana within their front yard. This improvement will be screened from the street, adjacent neighbors and located in an area of the lot which minimizes impact on neighboring properties. As all requirements for approval of a variance are met, granting this special exception variance is in accordance with the purpose and intent of the Oconee County UDC.

EXHIBIT "A" TO SPECIAL EXCEPTION VARIANCE NO. P25-0184

PLAT





**Planning Department
Oconee County, Georgia
STAFF REPORT**

VARIANCE CASE #: P25-0184

DATE: October 24, 2025

STAFF REPORT BY: David Webb, AICP, Planning Manager

APPLICANT NAMES: Drew and Sterling Joiner

PROPERTY OWNER(S): Drew and Sterling Joiner

LOCATION: 1181 Meriweather Dr.

Parcel: C-01I-018D

PARCEL SIZE(s): ± 0.94 acres

EXISTING ZONING: R-1 PUD

EXISTING LAND USES: Single Family Residence

TYPE OF VARIANCE REQUESTED: Special Exception Variance

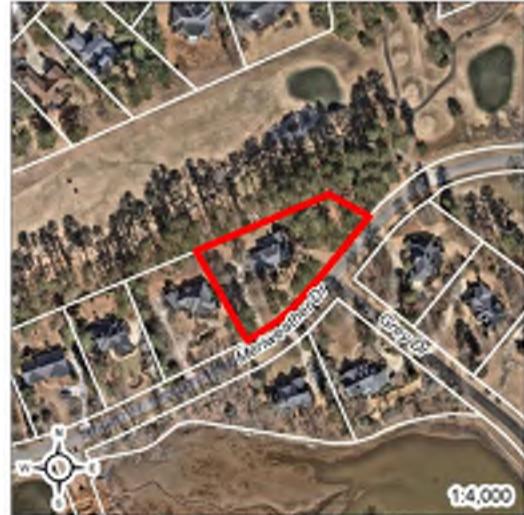
REQUEST SUMMARY: A request for a special exception variance from Oconee County Unified Development Code Article 4 Section 410.01.c.(2) to place an accessory building with a floor area greater than 144 feet in the front yard.

DATE OF SCHEDULED HEARINGS

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS: November 4, 2025

ATTACHMENTS:

- Application
- Warranty Deed
- Plat of Survey
- Concept Plan
- Narrative
- Legal Description
- Architectural Elevations



BACKGROUND INFORMATION & FINDINGS OF FACT

HISTORY

- The lot was created as part of the Jennings Mill PUD by the plat recorded in Plat Book 13, Page 125 on July 1, 1987.
- Property Assessment records indicate a 3,566 SF residence was constructed in 1996.
- This lot was created prior to the adoption of the UDC.

VARIANCE DESCRIPTION

- A request for a special exception variance from Oconee County Unified Development Code Article 4 Section 410.01.c.(2) to place an accessory building with a floor area greater than 144 feet in the front yard.
- Section 410.01.c.(2) states: *Accessory buildings having a floor area greater than 144 square feet must comply with the same setbacks as required for principal buildings in each zoning district; provided that no such accessory building may be located in the front yard of a lot unless the lot itself is 3 acres or more in size. In no case shall the building be within the minimum principal building front setback).*

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Water:

- The existing house uses Oconee County water.

Sewer:

- The existing house uses Oconee County sewer.

Roads:

- The property has legal access to Meriweather Dr.

Environmental

- The site plan indicates there are no known state waters, wetlands or floodplain areas on the property.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICATION IS MADE BASED UPON THE “STANDARDS FOR SPECIAL EXCEPTION VARIANCE APPROVAL” AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 1303.03 OF THE OCONEE COUNTY UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE.

Special exception variances may be granted upon findings that, if granted, the relief will not cause an occurrence of any of the following:

a. Cause a substantial detriment to the public good:

The requested variance would allow the placement of a pool cabana within the front yard. This lot is not deep and due to the placement of the home at the rear of the lot, there is an increased front yard area. Staff analysis indicates this would not cause a substantial detriment to the public good as this proposed placement would meet required setbacks.

b. Be injurious to the use and enjoyment of the environment or of other property in the immediate vicinity:

The surrounding properties are residential uses and a golf course. Staff finds that approval of the request to allow the placement of a garage would not be injurious to the environment or the use and enjoyment of other properties in the immediate vicinity.

c. Diminish and impair property values within the surrounding neighborhood:

Based on the configuration of the applicant's property and surrounding properties, staff finds that approval of the requested accessory structure variance should not diminish or impair the property values within the surrounding neighborhood.

d. Impair the purpose and intent of this Development Code:

The request to allow the placement of an accessory structure within the front yard will not impair the purpose of this code as the proposed placement would meet required setbacks. This is a legal lot that was approved prior to the adoption of the Unified Development Code.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION & CONDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the standards and limitations for special exception variance approval, this request **does meet all necessary conditions** to grant a special exception variance to the garage setback standards. Should the present request be approved, staff recommends the following condition to be fulfilled at the owner/developer's expense.

1. Development design and structures shall meet or exceed the standards indicated on the concept plan, narrative, representative architectural sketches, and other documents submitted with the variance application and attached hereto. This condition shall not construe approval of any standard that is not in conformity with the Unified Development Code.

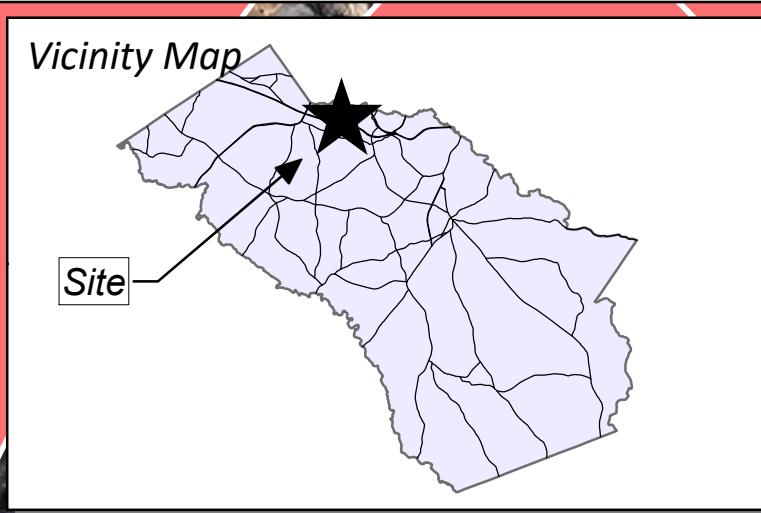
Variance # P25-0184 - Drew Joiner

Parcel #
C-01I-018D

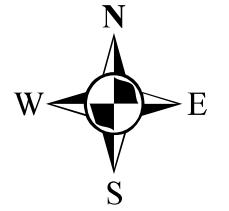


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Feet





Oconee County Planning Department



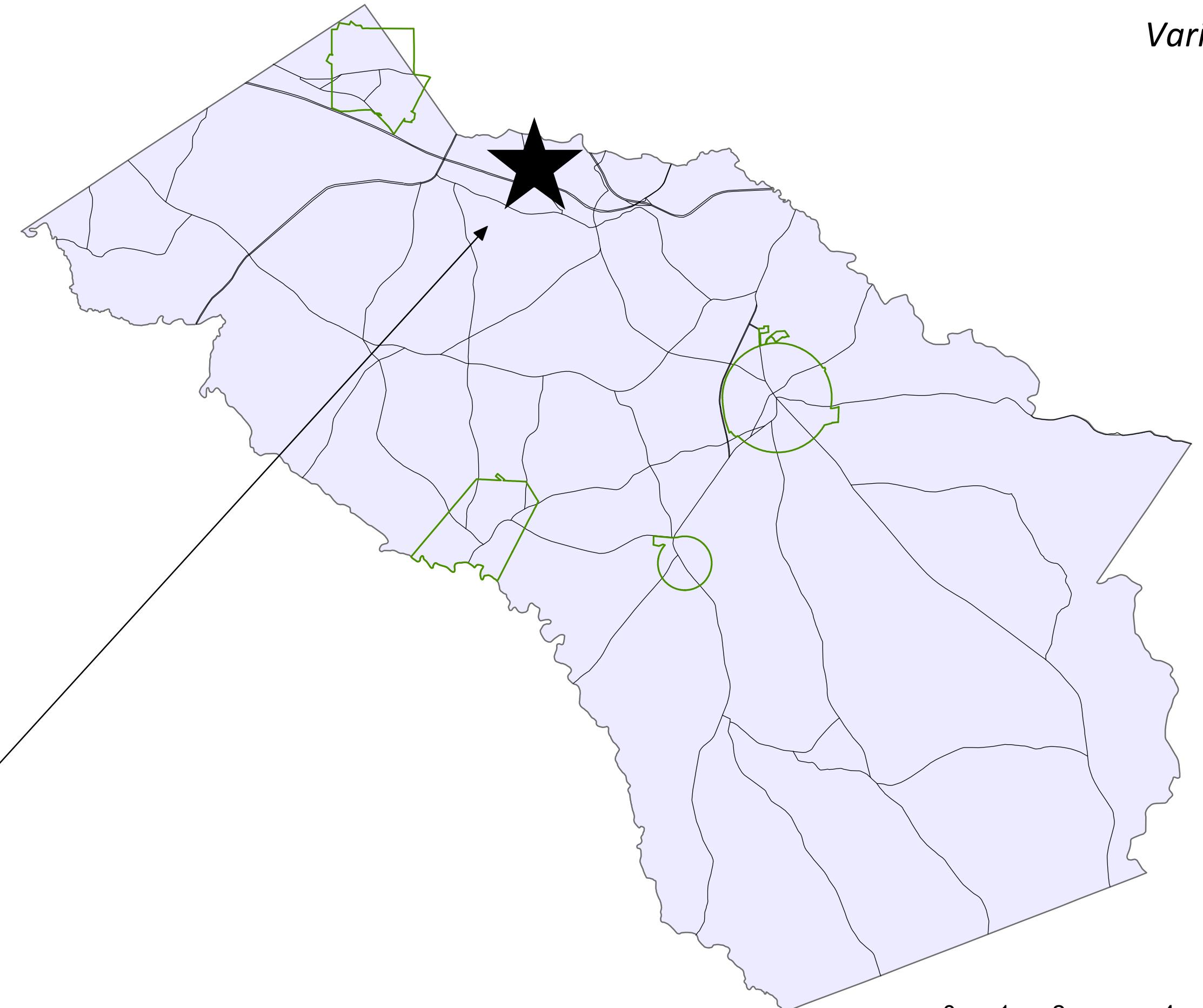
This map is a representation of the future development map
and should be used for planning purposes only

0 40 80 160 240 320 Feet

Parks/ Recreation/Conservation

*Regional
Center*

Location Map
Variance # P25-0184
Drew Joiner



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