TOWN OF FLETCHER

PRESTON BLAKELY
MAYOR

MARK E. BIBERDORF
TOWN MANAGER

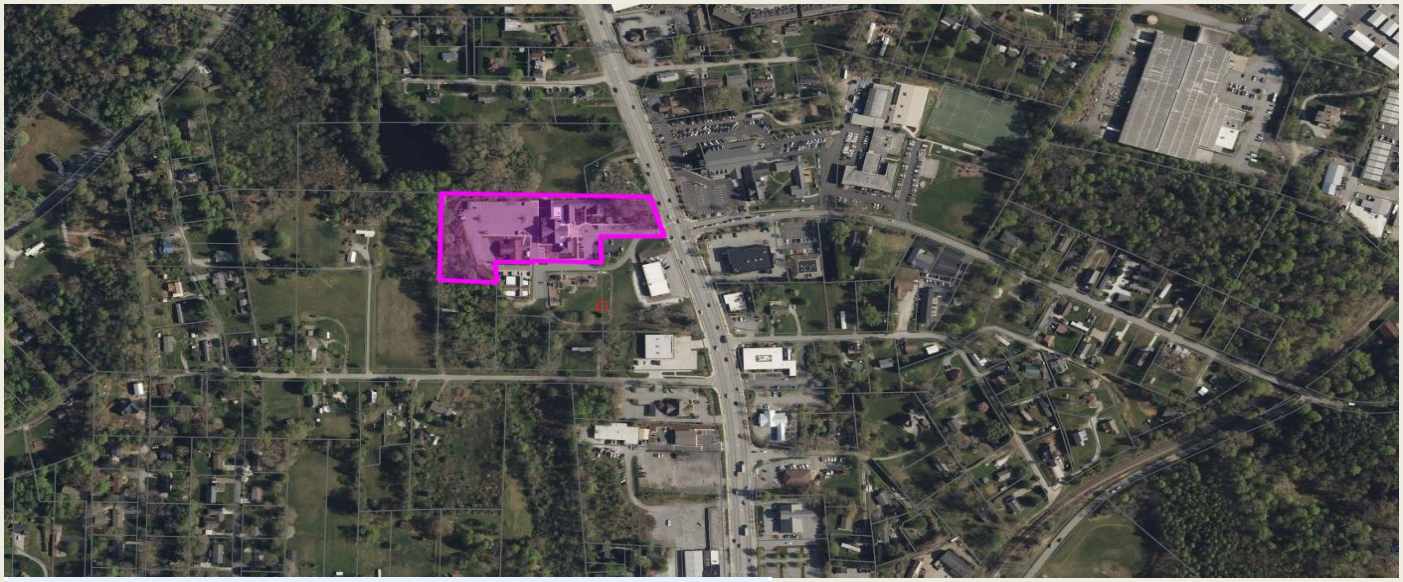
COUNCIL MEMBERS:
TREVOR LANCE
JIM PLAYER
KEITH REED
AMBER MCKINNEY

Special Use Permit
Focus Plus Academy
(26-11-SUP)

Planning Department Staff Report
Tyler Morrow, Planning and Zoning Director

Project Summary 2
Special Use Permit Process: 3
Existing Zoning & Land Use Map and Description 4
Site Images 5
Site Plan/Project Summary: 7
Land Use Plan Consistency: 8
Heart of Fletcher Design Review: 8
Planning Board Recommendation: 9

Project Summary



SITE VICINITY MAP

- **Project Name & Case #:**
  - Focus Plus Academy
  - 26-11-SUP
- **Applicant:**
  - Jill Paterson, Co-Founder and School Director of Focus Plus Academy
- **Property Owner:**
  - Fletcher United Methodist Church, INC.
- **Property Address:**
  - 50 Library Road
- **Project Acreage:**
  - 3.9 Acres
- **Requested Uses:**
  - Schools – Elementary & Secondary

- **Parcel Identification (PIN):**
  - 9653-61-5698
- **Current Parcel Zoning:**
  - C-1, General Commercial District
- **Heart of Fletcher District:**
  - Town Center Business
    - Heart of Fletcher Review by the Planning Board is not required for this project see page 8 for more details.
- **Land Use Plan Designation:**
  - Institutional-Public
- **Project overview**
  - Utilize two existing classrooms within Fletcher First United Methodist Church to operate a small middle/high school with a maximum enrollment of 25 students. The proposal includes no exterior modifications to the building, site layout, parking areas, or surrounding property.

Special Use Permit Process:

Upon application, the Town Council, following a recommendation from the Planning Board, may grant special use permits in specific cases. Such permits may be approved subject to appropriate conditions and safeguards, as authorized by this ordinance and identified as special uses within the applicable zoning districts.

All Special Use Permit Applications are Quasi-Judicial Proceedings. A quasi-judicial decision is a formal, court-like process used by local governments to apply specific zoning or development ordinances to individual situations. It requires finding facts, holding evidentiary hearings, and basing decisions on evidence rather than political discretion.

For the Town Council to approve a Special Use Permit, the following findings must be made:

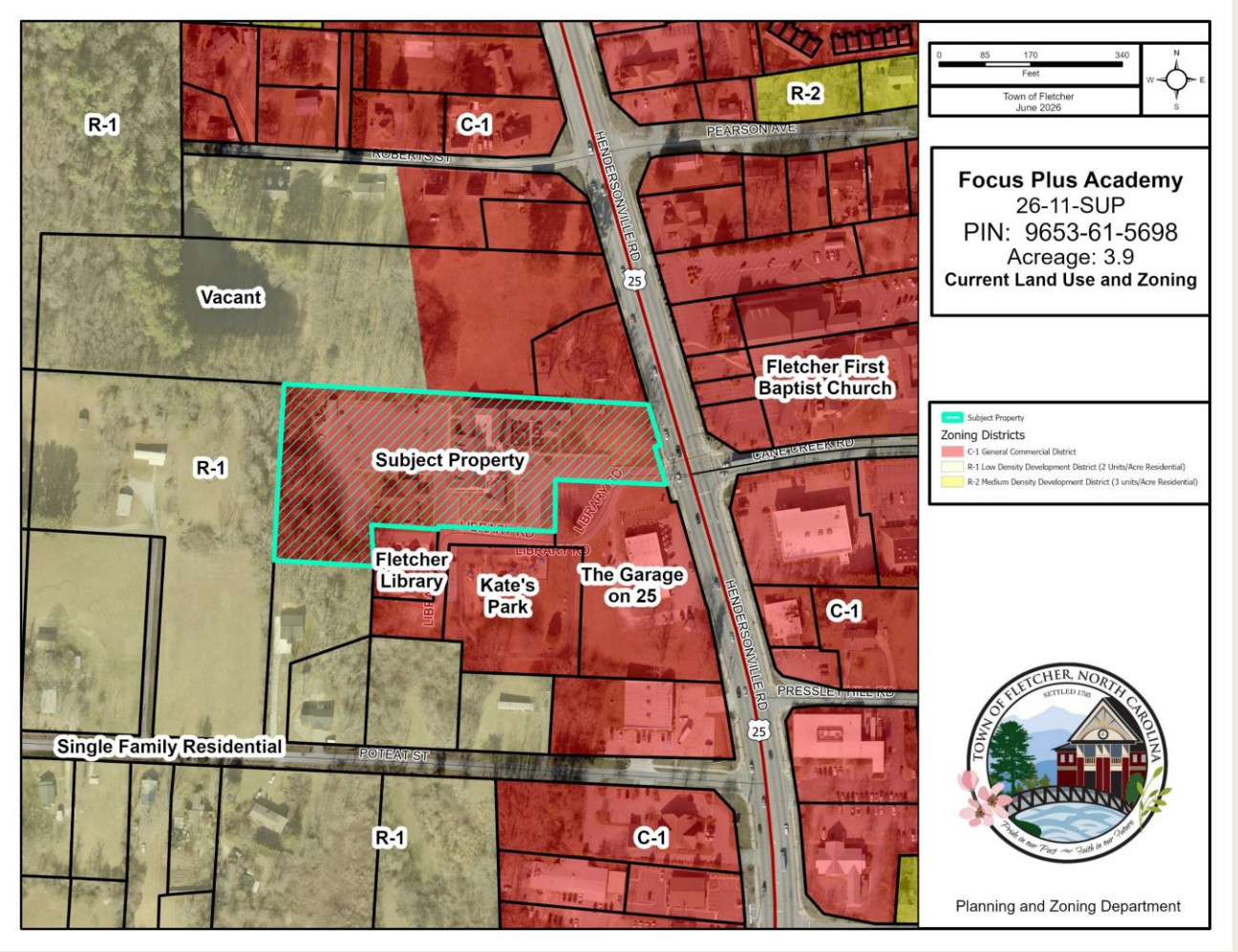
1. A complete application has been submitted in accordance with the requirements of the Town Code.

2. The Town Council must determine that the proposed use will not negatively impact the health or safety of nearby residents or employees, will not harm the public welfare, and will not be detrimental to surrounding properties or public improvements. As part of its approval, the Town Council may impose reasonable conditions to ensure the proposed use complies with the intent and requirements of the Code.

3. Prior to issuing the Special Use Permit, the Town Council must adopt written findings confirming that the proposal complies with the specific standards for the requested special use as outlined in Article 3, and that appropriate provisions and arrangements have been made for all applicable requirements.

    1. Satisfactory ingress and egress to property and proposed structures thereon, with particular reference to automotive and pedestrian safety and convenience, traffic flow, and control.
    2. Provision of off-street parking and loading areas where required, with particular attention to the items listed above, and the economic, noise, glare and odor effects of the special use on adjoining properties in the area.
    3. Adequate and proper utilities, with reference to locations, availability, and compatibility.
    4. Buffering, with reference to type, location, and dimensions.
    5. Signs, if any, and proposed exterior lighting, with reference to glare, traffic safety, economic effect, and compatibility and harmonies with properties in the district.
    6. Playgrounds, open spaces, yards, landscaping, access ways, pedestrian ways, with reference to location, size, and suitability.
    7. Buildings and structures, with reference to location, size, and use.
    8. Hours of operation, with particular reference to protecting and maintaining the character of the neighborhood.
    9. A site plan/preliminary plat has been submitted, as required in Article 16.3.

Existing Zoning & Land Use Map and Description



The subject property is zoned C-1, General Commercial District, as are the surrounding properties fronting along the US 25 commercial corridor. The C-1 district was established to accommodate and encourage commercial development along this corridor, and the subject property is consistent with that intent. As development transitions farther away from US 25, the zoning pattern decreases in intensity, transitioning to the R-1 Residential District. The R-1 district consists primarily of single-family residential development, particularly along Poteat Street to the south.

The subject property is also located within an established public and institutional node in Fletcher that includes Fletcher First United Methodist Church, the Fletcher Library, and Kate's and Pete's Park. Together, these community facilities create a civic gathering area that is separated from the more intensive commercial activity along the US 25 corridor.

Because schools are permitted as a Special Use within the C-1 district, the proposed project is required to obtain a Special Use Permit from the Town Council following review by the Planning Board. Since schools are already contemplated within the C-1 district as a Special Use, the proposal does not require a rezoning.

Site Images



This site photograph depicts the existing entrance on the west side of the building that will be utilized by the proposed school.



This photograph depicts the rear parking area that will be utilized by teachers, parents, and visitors associated with the proposed school.



This photograph depicts the existing Kate's and Pete's Park located adjacent to the church property, providing nearby recreational and open space amenities within the surrounding public institutional area.



This photograph depicts the existing signalized intersection that will serve as the primary access point for vehicles entering and exiting the site.

Site Plan/Project Summary:

The proposed project involves the creation of Focus Plus Academy within existing classroom space at Fletcher First United Methodist Church. No exterior modifications to the building are proposed. The school will occupy two existing classrooms totaling approximately 700 square feet. In addition to the classroom space, the church chapel may be used periodically for non-instructional activities. Existing restroom facilities will serve the school, and no modifications to those facilities are proposed. The church's existing kitchen may be used occasionally for staff; however, no commercial food preparation or food service activities are proposed as part of the project.

The proposal does not include the construction of any new buildings, additions, impervious surfaces, or site infrastructure. No grading, land disturbance, or other site alterations are proposed. As a result, the project does not trigger stormwater review requirements.

Access to the site will continue to utilize the existing driveway from Library Road and the signalized intersection at Hendersonville Road. Student drop off and pick up activities will occur through a separate entrance and circulation loop from the church's existing preschool operations. The applicant has indicated that school schedules will be staggered to avoid overlap with preschool drop off and pick up times, minimizing traffic conflicts and congestion on site.

The site plan currently shows 15 parking spaces to be utilized by the school, which exceeds the minimum requirement (2 spaces). The Town's parking regulations allow for shared parking arrangements under certain circumstances. Specifically, up to 50 percent of the parking spaces required for one use may be credited toward the parking requirement of a second use located on the same property. Shared parking is permitted when the peak parking demand for each use occurs at different times, such as a church whose highest parking demand occurs during evenings or weekends and a school whose peak demand occurs during weekday hours. In this case, the proposed school operates primarily during weekday business hours, while the church's primary parking demand occurs during evenings and weekends. As a result, the proposed arrangement satisfies the intent of the shared parking provisions by minimizing overlapping parking demand and allowing the existing parking supply (approximately 144 spaces) to efficiently serve both uses.

A Traffic Impact Analysis is not required for the project. The proposed use is expected to generate approximately 60 daily vehicle trips, which is below the North Carolina Department of Transportation threshold for a Traffic Impact Analysis.

The proposed school will utilize the site's existing water, sewer, and electrical utilities, all of which are adequate to serve the use. The proposed occupancy area has been inspected and approved for Group E occupancy requirements, satisfying applicable fire, life safety, and health standards. Existing waste collection services are also sufficient to accommodate the proposed use.

No changes are proposed to existing landscaping, exterior lighting, or site signage. The school will operate Monday through Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 3:45 p.m., with an early release time of 1:45 p.m. on Fridays. No evening or weekend activities are proposed as part of this application.

Land Use Plan Consistency:

The proposed development is consistent with the Land Use Plan's 1st goal of "Providing the citizens of Fletcher with a quality environment for living, leisure activities and work"

The proposed development would provide additional education opportunities to the residents and children of the Town of Fletcher to better serve their local needs.

Heart of Fletcher Design Review:

The subject property is designated as Town Center Business. However, review under the Heart of Fletcher Overlay District is not required for this project. The proposed use consists solely of the occupancy of existing classroom space within an existing building and does not involve any new construction, building additions, site modifications, or exterior improvements.

Additionally, the project does not constitute a reconstruction or renovation of an existing structure equal to or greater than seventy five percent (75%) of the structure's tax value. According to Henderson County tax records, the existing structure has an assessed value of approximately $1,866,900. As no substantial building improvements are proposed, the project does not meet the threshold that would trigger Heart of Fletcher design review requirements.

Planning Board Recommendation:

The Planning Board voted 8-0 to recommend approval of the Special Use Permit.

Motion by the Planning Board:

I move the Planning Board recommend Town Council approve the Special Use Permit associated with this petition, finding that the proposed development is consistent with Article 15.10 and that all nine (9) required criteria for the issuance of a Special Use Permit have been met. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the approved site plan.

Vote

Motion: Robyn Mondin

Second: Leslie Cuevas

For: Robyn Mondin, Mike Franklin, Doug Ferguson, Julia Fogel, Bryan Gilbert, Lee Bowser, Jacob Compher, Leslie Cuevas

Against: None