MINUTES
BREVARD PLANNING BOARD
FEBRUARY 24TH, 2026
COUNCIL CHAMBERS CITY HALL

The Brevard Planning Board met for a regular meeting Tuesday, February 24th, 2026, at 5:30 PM in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Members' Present: Greg Hunter, Chair
Reid Wood, Vice Chair
Karen Darity
Michael Hinds
Peter Chaveas
Alan Mercaldo
Jerry Yunker

Members' Absent: None

Staff Present: Madalin Baker, Board Clerk
Vith Gass, Board Clerk
Emily Brewer, Senior Planner
Stephanie Hollad, Planner

I. Welcome

At 5:31PM, Greg Hunter, Chair, called the meeting to order.

II. Introduction of Planning Board Members

The Board introduced themselves.

III. Certification of Quorum

G. Hunter confirmed with the Board Clerk that a quorum from the Board was present.

IV. Approval of Agenda

R. Wood made a motion to approve the agenda. P. Chaveas seconded, unanimously carried.

V. Approval of Minutes

P. Chaveas motioned to approve the November minutes. R. Wood seconded, passed unanimously.

VI. Public Comments – None

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VII. Unfinished Business – None

VIII. New Business

a. CZD-26-0001- Azalea Rezoning

E. Brewer presented her staff report, a portion of which follows:

Background: In June 2025, the City of Brevard acquired approximately 3.7 acres on Azalea Avenue and Old Hendersonville Highway to pursue a City-supported affordable housing development (PINs 8596-05-6391-000, and 8696-05-8315-000). The city has entered into an agreement with Fitch Irick Corporation to submit the project for a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit award. To facilitate the development, the City needs to rezone the property prior to the final application deadline in May to show the project is feasible. The project is also the subject of the pending annexation request.

This project comes following a pre-development process with two phases of community engagement. The first phase focused on soliciting community input on the public interests for development of the site. The second phase, following the feasibility study, asked the public to provide feedback on multiple options for development and inform the City's selection of a preferred development program.

Guiding Public Interests: Affordable housing development on the Azalea Avenue site should:

1. optimize the number of new, quality rental units affordable to Brevard's low-to-moderate income households and the local workforce.
2. include access to green space and community amenities for residents.
3. attract as much private investment as possible to maximize the impact of public investment in affordable housing.
4. accommodate the City's sewer infrastructure extension into in the Azalea/Rhododendron neighborhood.

Discussion: The proposed project is an affordable housing development with up to 60 units. The project is comprised of 3 buildings - two larger buildings that are 2 to 3 stories terraced to match the contour of the topography and a smaller 2-story building facing Old Hendersonville Highway. The project will have a community space in a small building, as well as a playground and protected green space on the northern end with an ephemeral stream, as one of the important guiding interests. The project will also have space for a future sewer pump station that is necessary to provide

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wastewater service to the neighborhood which is able to serve an estimated 125 residential parcels.

The proposed base zoning district is Residential Mixed-Use (RMX). Though the property is not adjacent to RMX, the area is identified as Traditional Neighborhood on the Future Land Use Map, RMX is identified as an appropriate zoning district for that character area. A summary of some key requirements in RMX as well as the requested conditions for this project are included in the attachments.

Following the staff report, A. Mercado inquired about the elevation of the subject property, with E. Brewer confirming a steep slope along the rear property line. E. Brewer stated that based on the community input – include integrating the project naturally with the existing terrain and align with the low-scale of the neighborhood, while optimizing unit counts to prevent the bulk and mass from feeling overwhelming. J. Yunker asked if the back building was two stories, but E. Brewer clarified, it is three-story structure. In response to J. Yunker, E. Brewer confirmed the rear structure is three stories, representing the highest point of the project.

E. Brewer noted that, based on architectural review, the applicant is proposing minor adjustments to building dimensions to accommodate internal revisions. Stormwater management requirements will be met. Additionally, the Planning Department recommends revising the buffer requirement to 10-foot semi-opaque screening rather than 20 feet to better align with the zoning district context and required setbacks. This screening will apply to general residential areas, with an exemption for the Broad River Terrace frontage due to steep topography and high compatibility of uses.

E. Brewer stated that the multi-family development maintains consistent density, with required street/parking landscaping planned. Due to site configuration, canopy trees will be spaced 80 feet apart, diverging from the standard 50-foot requirement. Furthermore, it was noted that while the total parking spaces remain unchanged, the layout eliminates loading bay which is not required by the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA). Also, an updated plan features revised dimensions to incorporate curbing around the parking spaces and landscaping islands.

E. Brewer communicated that the Planning Department is proposing that the required sidewalk improvements will be located along Old Hendersonville Highway instead of on Azalea Avenue. She explained that Azalea Avenue is not a city-maintained street and falls outside the city limits, requiring sidewalk, there is not feasible under North Carolina law. Furthermore, the area is predominantly single-family residential, and, based on our current ordinance, future development on Azalea is unlikely to trigger the eight or more dwelling units' threshold that mandated sidewalk installations. Therefore, placing a sidewalk on Old Hendersonville Highway is the most appropriate and enforceable location to improve

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pedestrian safety. This proposal is prioritizing the Old Hendersonville Highway frontage to establish a secure, pedestrian-friendly connection to the Broad River Terrace. This layout is designed to support future infrastructure needs and connectivity, pending annexation to these properties into the city limits.

J. Yunker inquired about the municipal boundary, and E. Brewer confirmed the Broad River is within city limits. Addressing a query for P. Chaveas, E Brewer confirmed that the new Old Hendersonville Highway sidewalk is an isolated segment noting its role in long-term incremental development. She further explained that this segment is linking to existing infrastructure on Board River Terrace and that development potential is more realistic for the commercial properties along Old Hendersonville Highway than in the densely packed residential area on Azalea.

G. Hunter inquired regarding the funding status of the sewer project. In response, E. Brewer stated that a funding request has been submitted to the county, with hopes for inclusion on the March meeting agenda. P. Chaveas inquired about the existence of a Plan B, if any. E. Brewer reported that the current project budget includes a $2 million line item for sewer line, which significantly impacts the stack of capital. The project's feasibility and competitiveness would be greatly improved if this cost was removed. This could be achieved if the county funds the sewer extension – either for the entire neighborhood or specifically for this project. E. Brewer also strongly encourages everyone to advocate for this project, which has been the subject of numerous local, state, and federal grant applications. In a follow-up G. Hunter inquired about the inclusion of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LHTC) project. Brewer confirmed, noting that because the city owns the site, they are submitting a prepared application and securing a 99-year ground lease. This long-term lease ensures the project remains affordable housing for decades, providing the city authority over its use after the initial 30-year term expires.

M. Hinds requested for a definition of the capital stack to which E. Brewer clarified that it is primarily structured around Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and uniquely for this year, includes Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding for large projects. She added that they are currently including an additional $3 million in CDBG-DR funds as part of the LIHTC application, which are rare, non-traditional sources of funding for them.

Following up, M. Hinds inquired about the impact on unit pricing. E. Brewer explained that while changes could influence the total unit count and similar factors, the affordability levels remain predetermined by the program requirements. M. Hinds expressed concern that the current sewer proposal relies on a best-case scenario leaving no contingency plan other than an additional 2 million expenditure. E. Brewer stated that the initial $2 million proposal necessitates an immediate request for additional funds. She further explains that in contrast,

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Fitch Irick Corporation favored a lower request amount to increase the project's competitive standing. Consequently, if county funding for the sewer is not secured, the plan is to max out the CDBG-DR request at $3 million and exhaust nearly all allocated low-income housing tax credits.

G. Hunter inquired whether the sewer project is funded by LIHTC or county fund and how it connects to the 125 residential units. He asked if these connections are included in the $2 million budget. E. Brewer confirmed the $2 million is dedicated to this project. She added that the pump house is excluded from the project cost. She also noted that a $5 million , 125-parcel sewer extension project is necessary to address failing septic systems and environmental pollution in a low-income, unincorporated "donut" neighborhood and that after two decades of seeking funding. As part of a broader regional infrastructure initiatives, this project plays a critical role in safeguarding the French Broad River, addressing significant contamination from failing septic systems and sewage leaks, and ensuring public health protections, she added.

M. Hinds raise concerns regarding the proposed development's impact on existing infrastructure, specifically the sewer capacity. He advised that focusing on, and funding, primary utility improvements should take precedence to avoid long-term operational failures. He suggested that proceeding without solving these fundamental issues represents an inefficient use of capital. Brewer defended the current project, emphasizing a three-year selection process with DFI begun in early 2023. She explained that after finding the church-owned property cost-prohibitive, this site was selected as the only viable option that met all criteria (size, location, Low-Income Housing Tax Credit scoring, and no environmental constraints). Furthermore, the ongoing Azalea sewer extension makes this development more compelling. Supporting the project, E. Brewer pointed out that the current sewer extension in the Azalea neighborhood provides the necessary infrastructure for the city-owned property, making the proposed affordable housing development a practical and beneficial move.

Regarding the project's budget, A. Mercaldo questioned what extra costs the city would incur beyond the grant funding. The response indicated that the city's primary commitment is the donation of the land/site control.

Addressing the scope of the hearing, E. Brewer asserted that although she welcomes conversations regarding affordable housing, the present questions are limited to the rezoning proposal to an RMX conditional district, as previously described.

A. Mercaldo pointed out that while the project might fit long-term land-use goals, the high-density development (125 units) does not match the current character of the surrounding Azalea Avenue neighborhood. He specifically highlighted that the entrance on Azalea makes the development incompatible with that area. Furthermore, Alan argued that the conditional

zoning seems to be used to reduce setbacks and eliminate proper screening, providing only minimal tree cover rather than adequate protection for the existing homes on Azalea Avenue. Emily explained that the conditional zoning district is designed to secure project-specific, tailored requirements. Because multifamily units are not permitted under general residential (GR) zoning, this district allows to slightly increased density while providing a necessary buffer for the proposed 56-unit project. While it aligns with the Future Land Use Map for traditional neighborhood development, this represents a balanced approach to the Comprehensive Plan that weighs site specificities against broader, competing goals like affordable housing. Furthering the earlier point, A. Mercaldo argued that the project is an isolated, high-density development that does not fit the area, calling it a "square pig in around hole" and criticize and questioned the legitimacy of the RMS classification, stating that proceeding without guaranteed sewer infrastructure and is agreeing with M. Hinds previous statement of "putting the cart before the horse".

During E. Brewer's final presentation, she outlined the following key points:

a. **Zoning Consistency:** Brewer highlighted that the project area is identified on the future land use map as "traditional neighborhood" (orange), making Residential Mixed-Use (RMX) and explicitly acceptable and applicable zoning district.
b. **Contextual Alignment:** She argued that the proposed zoning is consistent with the adjacent Broad River Terrace and the surrounding higher-density, mixed-use development.
c. **Sewer Extension Responsibility:** Brewer emphasized that in any rezoning or annexation process, the burden of extending sewer service falls entirely on the property owner/developer, not the city.
d. **Conditional Zoning Weight:** She argued that the availability of sewer should not hold significant weight in deciding on a conditional zoning district. The focus should be on whether the regulations apply to the parcel; if sewer cannot be provided, the project will not proceed

M. Hinds inquired about local neighborhood feedback regarding the project. Emily clarified that the team has conducted extensive community engagement to align with public interests, a point corroborated by A. Chaveas noting that his attendance at a public meeting revealed a lack of opposition; while residents had logistical questions about the project's operation, there were no formal objections.

K. Darity asked about the scope of the proposed pump house for 125 failing septic systems and contingency plans if the project fails, to which E. Brewer replied that while the pump house is essential for total neighborhood coverage, the exact number of serviced parcels is still being finalized, and she remains committed to seeking funding.

G. Hunter moved to approve the Azalea Rezoning Project (Conditional Zoning District) and adopted the Consistency Statement as presented. P. Chaveas seconded. The motion passed 4-2, with A. Mercaldo and M. Hinds opposed.

b. ANN-26-001 – Azalea Annexation

Background & Discussion: In June 2025, the City of Brevard acquired approximately 3.7 acres on Azalea Avenue and Old Hendersonville Highway to pursue a City-supported affordable housing development (PINs 8596-05-5538-000, 8596-05-6391-000, and 8596-05-8315-000). The City has entered into an agreement with Fitch Irick Corporation to submit the project for a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit award. To facilitate the development, the City needs to annex the property prior to the final application deadline in May to show the project can connect to sewer. While not currently available, the City is actively pursuing funding from Transylvania County to extend sewer infrastructure to the Azalea / Rhododendron neighborhood, which would bring the utility line to the project.

The project is immediately adjacent to the corporate limits, and the City Council approved a resolution of intent to annex the municipally owned property. Voluntary, contiguous annexations are governed by North Carolina General Statute §160A-31. The subject property qualifies for annexation under this statute.

E. Brewer was seeking a recommendation from this board to proceed with the final, formal annexation. M. Hinds inquired about the grounds for a negative vote, querying what legal or procedural right the board holds to say "No", to which E. Brewer replied that the potential negative financial impact is a valid reason for denying annexation requests. She stressed once again that she would need a recommendation from the board since this case involved is a legislative matter.

R. Wood made a recommendation for the adoption of the annexation. P. Chaveas seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Green Growth Audit – Full Draft

E. Brewer was excited to present to the Board the final draft of the Building Brevard 2030 Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Background & Discussion: Staff received a grant from the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission's (NCWRC) Partners for Green Growth cost-sharing assistance program. This program provides financial and technical assistance to communities that are pursuing planning initiatives that consider midlife and natural resource conservation in land use and development planning, incentives and ordinances. The City of Brevard has prepared a "Green Growth Audit" of the existing Unified Development Ordinance and an action plan for implementation. The full draft is included as Attachment 1 for the Board's review.

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E. Brewer reiterated that this document serves as a guide for staff to refine the ordinances, ensuring they align with the environmental objectives outlined in the comprehensive land use plan. She added that this will also serve as an addendum to be referenced in future policy analysis as it allows future text amendments to be formally anchored to specific elements within the comprehensive land use plan and green growth audit to ensure alignment. She highlighted that this document had undergone review by NC Wildlife Resource Commission, member of the Brevard Sustainability Council and the Planning Board itself. She reported that the planning department is soliciting input from city-appointed officials, community representatives, and subject matter experts. She also noted that the NC Wildlife Resources Commission was instrumental in moving this project forward, providing essential funding, technical support, and detailed guidance. Finally, she expressed sincere anticipation for a fruitful partnership.

E. Brewer looked at the Board for questions. G. Hunter clarified that page 30 requires all landscape plans to be sealed or signed, to which E. Brewer acknowledged the requirement is a sealed (stamped) plan. A. Mercaldo asked for confirmation if the amendments to the previous minutes have been added. E. Brewer confirmed the incorporation of all recommendations, with one exception: rather than creating a specific implementation section on property owner impacts, staff focused on the document's role as a guiding document—not a code—which is to be finalized by City Council. She noted a section clarifying that the City Council will thoroughly vet each recommended action—including reviewing community, environmental, and property impacts—prior to adoption. She further explained that the purpose statement was adjusted to emphasize that these are guide recommendations, not final approvals. While this incorporates the Board's feedback on the process, it is framed differently than suggested. Additionally, the landslide susceptibility information has been included, which was a great addition.

J. Yunker pointed out the implementation matrix covers timelines and resources well. However, he found that the "impact" ratings (low, moderate, high) lack standard definition, making them highly subjective. He suggested that since the ideas themselves are diverse, we need to clarify if "impact" refers to pervasiveness (number for parcels affected) or magnitude (intensity of the effect on fewer pieces). In addition, A. Mercaldo requested a more detailed description of "impact' in the document to add a brief clarification noting that "impact" encompasses both the pervasiveness of the action and the resulting benefits to green growth initiatives.

J. Yunker inquired if we can add new column to our tracker to build a "historical impact" trend line that calculates the percentage of projects affected by specific requirements over the past 3-5 years. He said that it is important to quantify the frequency of these issues – like the 'large-scale construction' assessment requirement – to show their impact in the comprehensive land use plan, because once it's in writing, it becomes the standard. E. Brewer agreed that while this allows us to track progress efficiently, measuring historical impact of these items poses significant challenges noting that accessing that level of detail can be difficult. She indicated that she could provide representative examples for each category. Additionally, she assured the Board that once adopted, however, the Planning team tracks

the implementation of the comprehensive plan action (LUH, PNRC, ATCH 12) – to monitor progress moving forward.

Alan inquired about retrofitting actual map pictures in the addendums, to which E. Brewer confirmed she can incorporate maps into any documents. She noted that while the physical document is not updated every time, the online map viewer – specifically the ViewPro account – is updated with every rezoning , making it 100% accurate regarding character areas. She explained that the public portal also includes flood hazard data, along with our steep slope calculator, which identifies parcels subject to the steep slope ordinance.

E. Brewer paused to check for any questions from the Board. A. Mercaldo shared his disappointment regarding the cancellation of the field trip for identifying rare and endangered fish, noting it was anticipated as a group building exercise session.

P. Chaveas move to recommend adoption of the amendments to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan as presented with reference to the attached consistency statement which include the detailed description of the "impact" ratings (low, moderate, high) as outlined in the staff report. R. Wood seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Board members thanked E. Brewer for her hard work and thorough research.

IX. Remarks

E. Brewer announced that a School of Government Planning and Zoning course is currently running in Asheville, with an online option also available. She noted that this training is being offered to all staff and City Council members. The in-person session is on April 28th, from 1:30PM to 4:30PM. She asked to let Vith know if anyone is interested, and a follow-up email with full details will be sent to them.

G. Hunter expressed appreciation to E. Brewer for facilitating the ground lease on Azalea Avenue, noting enthusiasm for the future of the project. E. Brewer responded, noting that the agreement has not yet been executed, yet. It is contingent upon them securing project funding, meaning the City is not tied to this agreement if funding does not materialize this round. As such, the City will retain its ownership.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business, A. Mercaldo made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by R. Wood, the motion carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 6:53 PM.

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Greg Hunter, Chair

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Edievith Gass, Board Clerk

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