

HABERSHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUBJECT: Conditional Use Application CU-24-08 – Christian Prayer Retreat Cabins and Parsonages

DATE: October 10, 2024

RECOMMENDATION

POLICY DISCUSSION

BUDGET INFORMATION: N/A

STATUS REPORT

ANNUAL-

OTHER

CAPITAL-

COMMISSION ACTION REQUESTED ON: October 21, 2024

PURPOSE: Make a recommendation to the Board regarding application CU-24-08: Larry Green is seeking a conditional use for a Christian retreat with up to five (5) parsonages and thirty (30) cabins at 5315 Piedmont Mountain Road, map parcel 035 044, in the LI, Low Intensity District.

BACKGROUND / HISTORY:

1. The applicant has purchased approximately 200 acres for use as a Christian retreat with 5 parsonages for the folks running the retreat and approximately 30 cabins available for use by church groups, prayer retreat groups, etc.
 2. The surrounding area is residential, agricultural or undeveloped.
 3. The intention is to cluster the cabins in one area and the parsonages in another to preserve as much open space as possible. The site will have multiple nature trails and quiet areas for prayer. There is an existing chapel built on the west side of Piedmont Mountain Road which did not require a hearing as churches are allowed by right.
 4. The plan is for the cabins to be used/booked by church groups to visit. Three (3) parsonages are expected to be built initially but it could increase to five (5) eventually. These will be used to house the daily staff running the retreat. These will be approximately 1200 square feet. There will be a maximum of thirty (30) cabins built which will be used by groups coming to the retreat. These will be approximately 300 to 400 square feet each. Bookings will not require a fee but donation to the ministry will be accepted.
 5. The property outside of the development will be placed in conservation to ensure it is not developed.
 6. No citizens showed up in opposition to the proposal.
 7. The Planning Commission expressed several concerns about the cabins. Specifically, they expressed concerns about the site transitioning into a full rental campground. Staff informed the PC that we are treating it as a typical cabin rental campground, hence the need for the CU. Concerns were also expressed about weddings and other events. Staff stated weddings were allowed within the existing church, as they are at all, but events held on the property would require approval as an event venue.
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FACTS AND ISSUES: The Planning Commission forwards this application to the Board with a recommendation of Approval with Conditions:

1. There can only be a maximum of thirty (30) cabins with a limit of 500 square feet each.
 2. There can only be a maximum of five (5) parsonages with a limit of 1200 square feet each.
 3. The developed area cannot exceed 15% of the total land mass of the property.
 4. No long term rentals in the cabins as defined by the Habersham County regulations.
 5. All rentals must be handled by and through the organization itself.
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OPTIONS: The Board of Commissioners could act on this application as follows:

1. Approval of the request with conditions as recommended by the Planning Commission;
 2. Denial of the request as submitted; or
 3. Commission defined alternative.
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RECOMMENDED SAMPLE MOTION: I motion to approve CU-24-08 with conditions as recommended by the Planning Commission.

DEPARTMENT:

Prepared by: Mike Beecham

Director _____

ADMINISTRATIVE

COMMENTS: _____

DATE: _____

County Manager



HABERSHAM COUNTY

Planning & Development Department
130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523
706-839-0140 www.habershamga.com

HABERSHAM COUNTY
GEORGIA | Est. 1818

Habersham County Planning Commission Conditional Use Staff Report

APPLICATION NUMBER: CU-24-08

REQUESTED ACTION: Larry Green is seeking a Conditional Use to allow construction of overnight prayer retreat cottages and parsonages. The tract is located at 5315 Piedmont Mountain Rd. and is further identified as Map 035 Parcel 044 consisting of 200.79 acres. *30 cabins
5 parsonages*

Synopsis: Initial inquiry regarding this was addressed when applicant came in to discuss future plans of their operation. Plans are to use this property for a spiritual retreat.

PETITIONER: Larry Green

PROPERTY OWNER: Larry Green

EXISTING USE: Residential

PROPOSED USE: Spiritual/Prayer retreat.

LOCATION: 5315 Piedmont Mountain Rd.

PARCEL SIZE: 200.79 acres

MAP#: 035 PARCEL(S)#: 044

EXISTING & FUTURE LAND USE DISTRICT:

	Current Zoning District	2029 Future Land Use Designation
Parcel	LI	Rural
East	AGRI	Rural
South	LI	Rural

MEETING DATES: Planning Commission: October 1, 2024

Board of Commissioners: October 21, 2024

PLANNING ANALYSIS:

1. The existing land uses and zoning classification of nearby property;

The current zoning classification of this parcel is LI- Low Intensity and the land use of this parcel is Rural. The property to the East is zoned Agriculture.

2. The suitability of the subject property for the zoned purposes;

The property is designated as LI – Low Intensity. This district will provide and protect an environment suitable for single-family detached residential uses or individual lots, conventional subdivisions and master planned developments, together with such other accessory uses as may be necessary to and compatible with low density residential surroundings.

3. The extent to which the property values of the subject property are diminished by the particular zoning restrictions;

Property values are not diminished by the current zoning. It is the intent of the Conditional Use process to permit specific uses compatible with a residential area. The process will assist in determining the need for buffers, parking, hours of operation and other concerns that may be presented.

4. The extent to which the diminution of property values of the subject property promote the health, safety, morals or general welfare of the public;

Property values are not diminished by the current zoning.

5. The relative gain to the public, as compared to the hardship imposed upon the individual property owner;

Overnight prayer retreat cottages should not be a hardship to the community if used within certain guidelines.

6. Whether the subject property has a reasonable economic use as currently zoned;

Property does have a reasonable economic use within the LI District.

7. Whether the proposed zoning will be a use that is suitable in view of the use and development of adjacent and nearby property;

The compatibility of the proposed use with adjacent properties is critical. Specific criteria will need to be addressed such as hours of operation, capacity, noise, sanitation, buffers, etc., to promote harmony and balance in an existing rural neighborhood.

8. Whether the proposed zoning will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property;

The existing land use patterns in the area is primarily rural. However, during certain times, an increase in traffic, noise, etc. may be an issue that needs to be addressed.

9. Whether the zoning proposal is in conformity with the policies and intent of the land use plan;

The Comprehensive Plan identifies this area as Rural. The scope of the proposed use will support compatibility and balance if certain criteria is met.

10. Whether the zoning proposal will result in a use which will or could cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, utilities, or schools;

The increase of noise and traffic could possibly be an issue to the neighborhood.

11. Whether there are other existing or changing conditions affecting the use and development of the property which give supporting grounds for either approval or disapproval of the zoning proposal;

The balance of the above mentioned issues at this location are essential to maintaining the integrity of the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed use may need to have restrictions placed upon it to support harmony and balance in this rural neighborhood.



HABERSHAM COUNTY

Planning & Development
130 Jacob's Way Clarkesville, GA 30523
706-839-0140 www.habershamga.com

APPLICATION TYPE: Variance: Conditional Use: Map Amendment:

[Check appropriate application(s)]

PLEASE BE ADVISED THIS FORM IS PUBLIC INFORMATION

Applicant / Primary Contact Larry Green

Address [REDACTED]

Telephone # () [REDACTED] Cell Telephone # [REDACTED]

E-Mail [REDACTED]

Property Owner(s): HIS HOME INC.

Address [REDACTED]

Telephone # () [REDACTED] Cell Telephone # [REDACTED]

E-Mail [REDACTED]

Agent: Gary Young

Address [REDACTED]

Telephone # () 770 Cell Telephone # [REDACTED]

E-Mail [REDACTED]

Location (Street Address) of Property: 5315 Piedmont Mountain Rd.

Acreage of Site: 200 Tax Map & Parcel#: 035044 Existing LUI District: _____

Action Requested: _____

Cite Pertinent Section(s): _____

Existing Use: _____

Proposed Use: Church overnight prayer retreat cottages and parsonage cottages for serving team

APPLICATION PROCESS FEE: \$300.00

RECEIVED
AUG 20 2024
BY: _____



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PROPERTY OWNER'S CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that I am the owner of the property described in the attached legal description, that all information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, and that the applicant and/or agent listed below is authorized to act as the applicant and/or agent in the pursuit of the proposed application of this property.

Larry Green

Property Owner/Executor/Officer
(Print)

[Signature]

Property Owner/Executor/Officer
(Signature)

08/19/24
Date of Signature

Gary Young

Authorized Agent
(Print)

[Signature]

Authorized Agent
(Signature)

08/19/24
Date of Signature



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CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION DISCLOSURE FORM

Required For All Applications Regarding the Comprehensive Land Development Resolution

Disclosure of Campaign Contributions:

When any application is made for a Public Hearing with regards to the Comprehensive Land Development Resolution within two (2) years immediately preceding the filing of the applicant's application for public hearing, campaign contributions aggregating \$250.00 or more to a local government official who will consider the application, it shall be the duty of the applicant to file a disclosure report with the governing body of the respective local government showing:

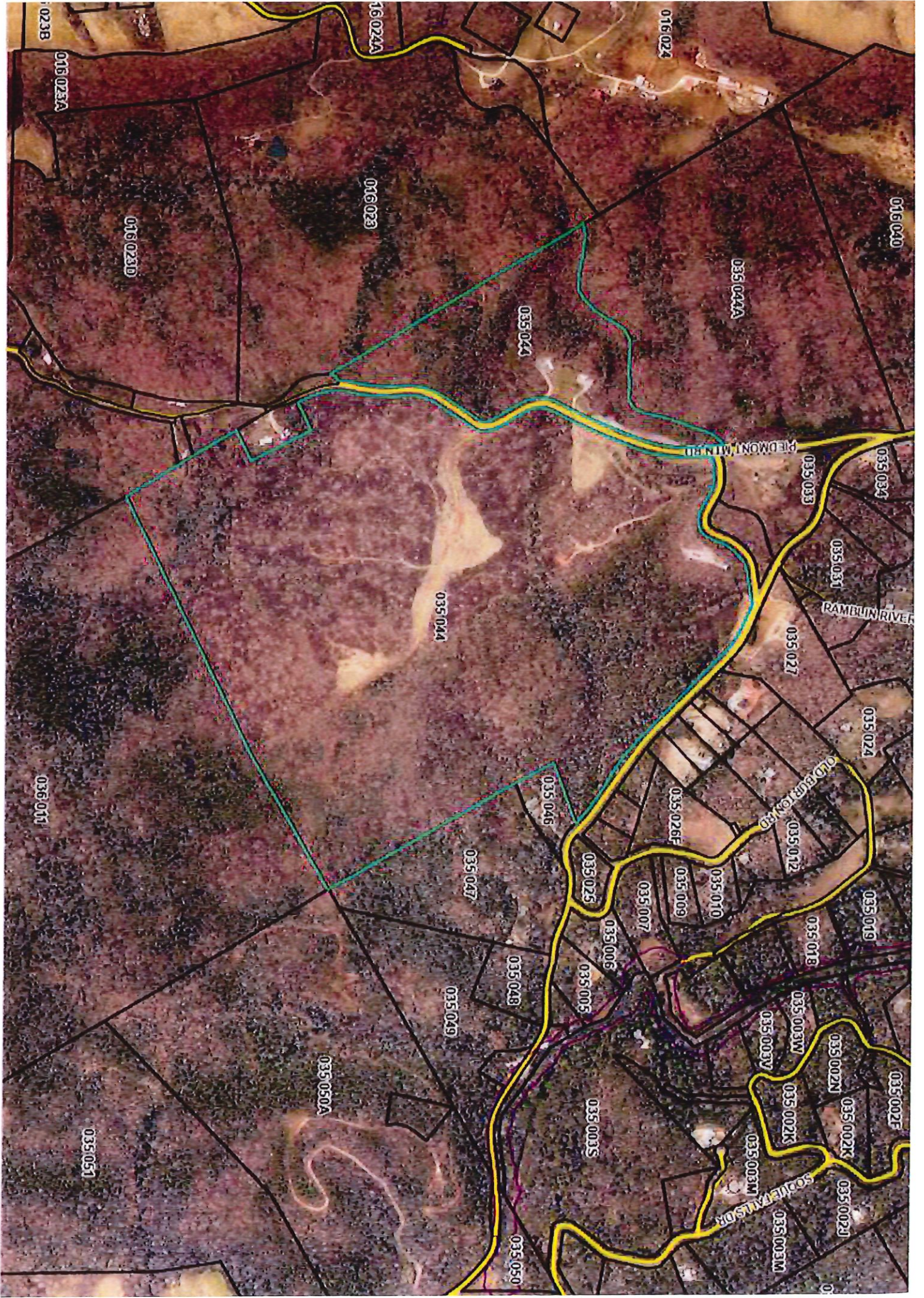
- (1). the name and official position of the local government official to whom the campaign contribution was made; and
- (2). The dollar amount and description of each campaign contribution made by the applicant to the local government official during the two (2) years immediately preceding the filing of the application for public hearing and the date of each contribution; and
- (3). The disclosure shall be marked by the **applicant, property owner, or person representing the property owner** and shall be filed within ten (10) days after the application for Public Hearing is first filed with the Planning Staff. If the disclosure is not provided to the Planning Staff within said 10 days, the application shall be removed from the scheduled agenda.

I hereby certify that I have ; I have not ; (please one) read the above and that:

Within the two (2) years immediately preceding this date, I have; I have not ; (please one) made any contribution(s) aggregating \$250.00 or more to any local government official involved in the review or consideration of this application.

If you have made such contributions, you must provide the data required below within 10 days of filing this application.

Name of Official(s)	Office	Amount	Date of Contribution
<u>Larry Green</u> Applicant's Name (Please Print)			<u>1/1</u>
<u>[Signature]</u> Signature of Applicant			<u>8/20/24</u> Date of Signature



023B

016 023A

016 024A

016 024

016 040

016 023D

016 023

035 044A

035 044

PELDMONT WIND RD

035 033

035 034

035 031

RAMBLIN RIVER

035 027

035 044

035 024

OLD BURTON RD

036 011

035 046

035 028F

035 012

035 047

035 025

035 010

035 018

035 019

035 009

035 007

035 006

035 005

035 003V

035 002N

035 002F

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035 002K

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035 001S

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035 051

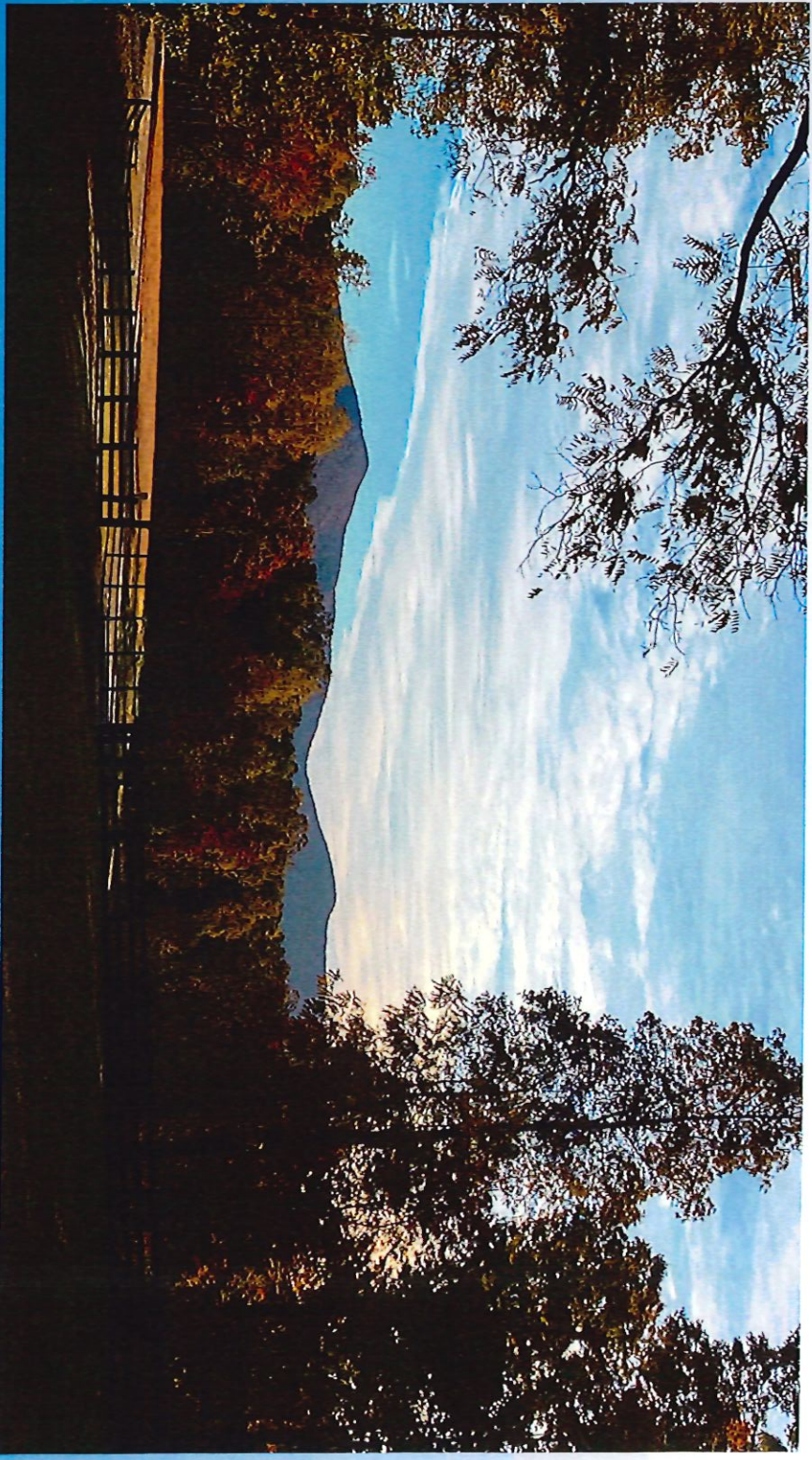
035 050

SOUTH FALLS DR

0



HOME



Conditional Use Meeting

10.01.24

The Vision for the Property

A Christian Prayer Sanctuary

- Multidenominational / Multigenerational
- The 200-acre sanctuary is open to the public with over 4 miles of prayer trails and places for solitude and fellowship.
- A small chapel for daily use and periodic gatherings (special occasions)
- A maintenance building and 3-5 parsonage cottages to manage the property and ministry work
- A group of cabins to house upward of 30 people
- A gathering structure to serve as a common area for meals and fellowship
- Intent is to place the property into a conservation easement – approximately less than 10% of the 200 acres will be built on, leaving over 90% of the land untouched in perpetuity.



Master Plan

Phase I: Property clean-up and Piedmont Cottage

Phase II: Chapel

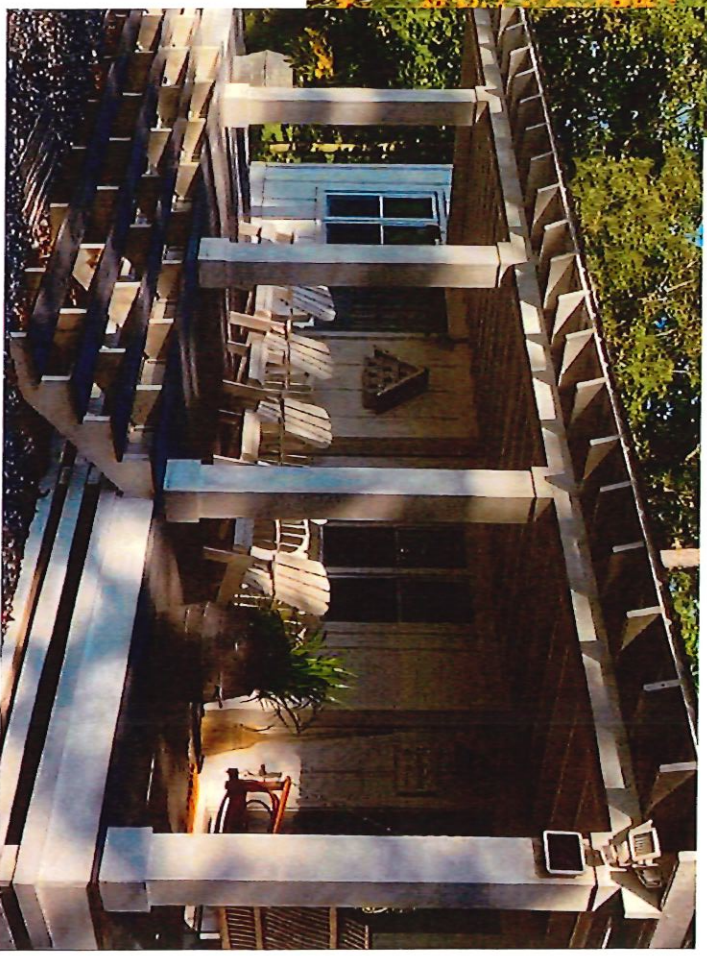
Phase III – Parsonage cottages for serving team

Phase IV – Maintenance building

Phase V – Church overnight prayer retreat cabins



Phase I - A Community Effort



Chapel Project Status

- Dry-in completed
- Mechanical rough-in started in July
- Expected completion by year end



Gathering Expertise and Support

County Support

- Engaged from the beginning (first interaction was 7 years ago). Initial Conforming Use approval letter attached. Currently in the Conditional Use process.

Health Department

- Piedmont Cottage operational, Chapel approved, Parsonage cottages in review now
- Meeting with Marcus Hall in September to get initial nod on Cottage area

NRCS

- We have received 10k+ in grants and are working closely with the NRCS to return the land to its native state – 7 acres of native grasses and wildflowers have been planted

Note: Many of the neighbors have been engaged in the work and support the vision for the property (some families like the Wilbanks (adjoining 200 acres) are in attendance. Also, we have been very intentional about engaging the community by using local subcontractors (partners such as Mark Pourbaix-17 Lumber, Mark Orkins-Framer/Carpenter, Lew Oliver-Architect, Shane Smith-Electrician are also in attendance)

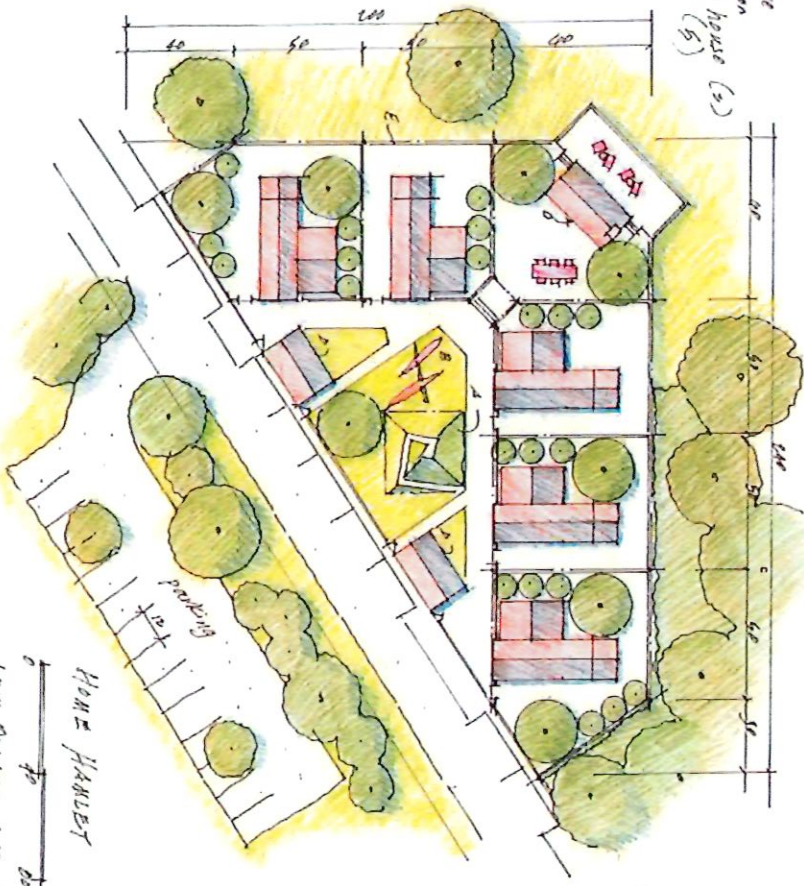
Parsonage Homes

- Hamlet concept to foster community
- Used by those managing the property
- 3 homes with option for 2 additional
- Designed by local Architect, Lew Oliver
- To be built by local builder
- To be started this Fall and completed by Spring 2025



Hamlet Design

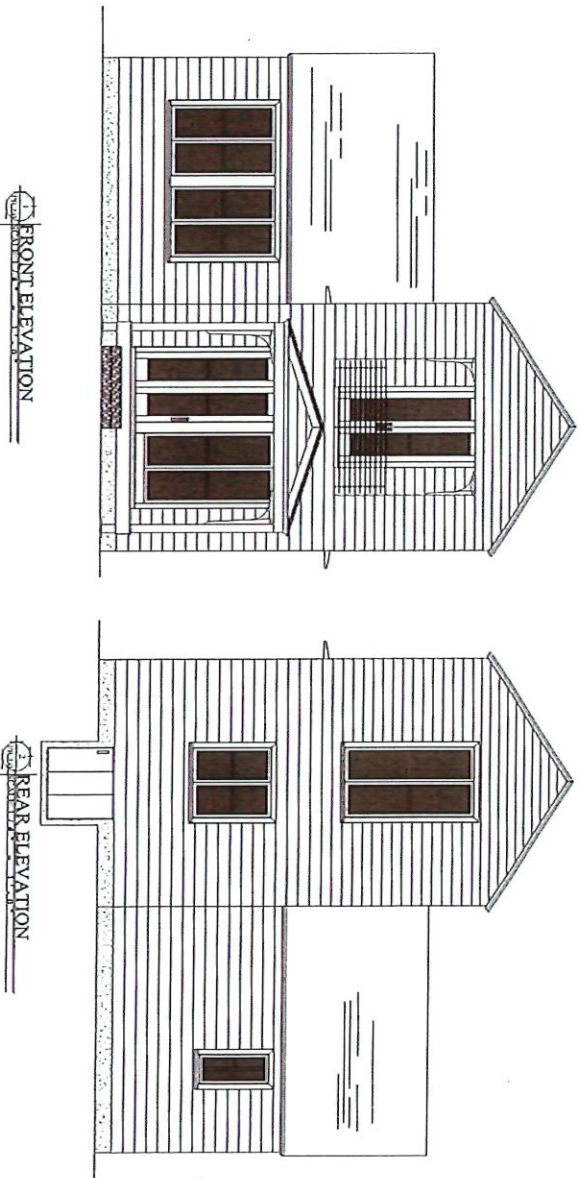
- A. Pilot house
- B. Pilot sculpture
- C. 50' x 10' pavilion
- D. 10' x 20' guest house (5)
- E. 50' x 20' pavilion (5)



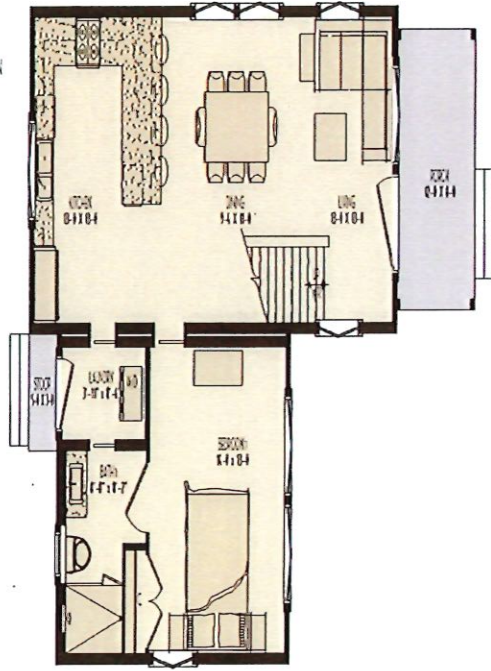
0 40 80
 Hamlet Design
 LAW OFFICE INC. JULY 2004
 55 A + parking

Sustainable & Attainable Homes

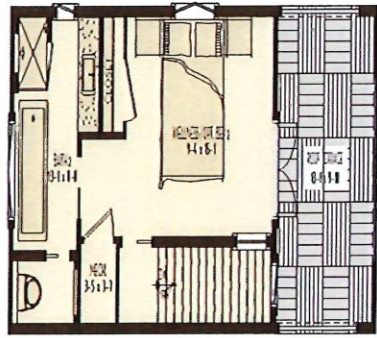
elements
mod
BY LEVI OLIVER
NOT RELEASED FOR CONSTRUCTION



elements
mod
BY L24 01/17
NOT RELEASED FOR CONSTRUCTION



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
12'0" x 12'0"



SECOND FLOOR PLAN
12'0" x 12'0"

YOUR
LOGO
HERE

PLAN
NAME

1258 SQ.FT.

Foot Print 10'11" x 9'0"

Street Address

City, ST 00000

FLOOR AREA CALCULATIONS

First Floor 874 sf

Second Floor 384 sf

Total Sq.Ft. 1258 sf

Plan Note:
The Designer shall provide floor
plans, including but not limited to
sections, and shall be responsible for
the accuracy of the information
provided. The architect shall be
responsible for the accuracy of the
information provided to the Designer
during a site visit.

DATE: 01/17/17
01/17/17
01/17/17

PR.1.0

PLAN MOD LOG

12/15/17
12/15/17
12/15/17

Efficient Floorplans

Future Plans - Cabins

1. In line with the vision of the prayer sanctuary we plan to have lodging for up to 30 people
2. Our intent is to work with all local authorities to determine the best way to accomplish this
3. 30 Prayer Cabins – single rooms (300 sq ft range) is the initial thinking
4. To be tucked into the woods along the edge of the 77-acre trac



How People are experiencing the Home Prayer Sanctuary

"Thank You God for taking me
on the trails and streams.
Thank You for healing
my heart."

"No words can truly
express but thank
you for creating this
space."

"This is just what my
soul was needing!"

"Walking the property and praying
for God's blessing was a powerful
experience."

"I'm leaving a different
person. Thank you God!"

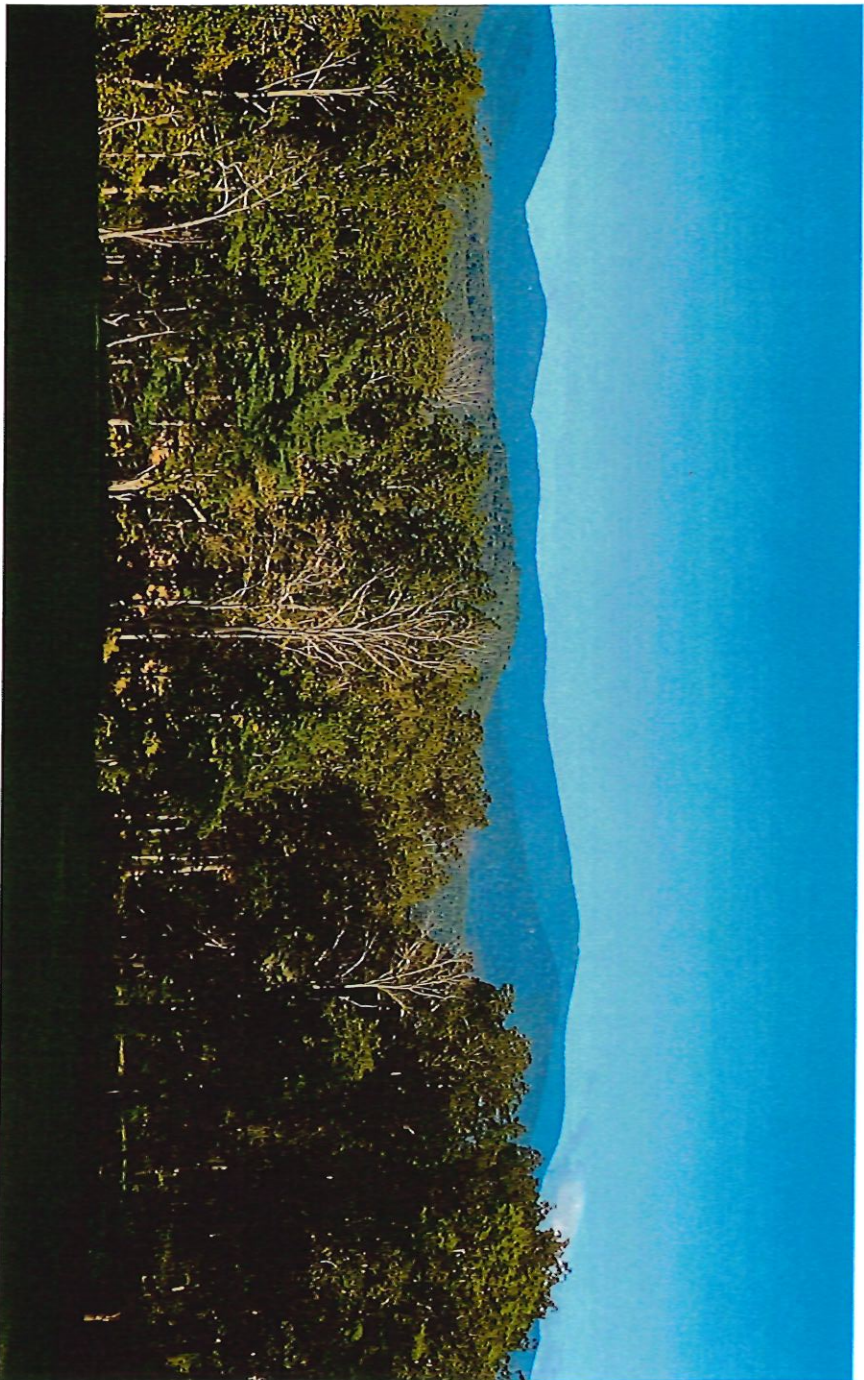
"I am so grateful for
this wide-open space
that God has created
for His people."

"I am so happy I came! And I
will continue to come here. This
place has been such a blessing."

Preserving the Beauty of the Land



Creating Something Special`



Troy Dills

From: Hall, Marcus <marcus.hall@dph.ga.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 3:07 PM
To: Mike Beecham; Troy Dills
Cc: Gary Young
Subject: His Home Expansion Project

[CAUTION: This message originated from outside of the Habersham County email system. -- Please exercise caution before clicking links, opening attachments, replying, or providing information to the sender.]

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Good afternoon,

I wanted provide you both with a recap of the ongoing aforementioned project. The plans are currently under review with our office and the project remains in good standing. Please contact me directly with questions or concerns.

Kind Regards,

Marcus Hall, REHS
Habersham County Health Department
Environmental Health Division
130 Jacob's Way STE 102
Clarksville GA, 30523

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
[Get Outlook for Android](#)