VALDOSTA-LOWNDES COUNTY ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Staff Report **- MEETING DATE: May 1, 2018**

VAR-2018-09

Indo American Cultural Society of South Georgia
Westside Road, Valdosta, Georgia

This is a request for two (2) Variances to the Lowndes County Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) as it pertains to Buffer Yards and Landscaping for Parking Lots. The subject property consists of 12.5 acres, and is located at 2117 Westside Road, in an R-1 (Low Density Residential) zoning district.

Table 4.07.06(C) contained in the ULDC provides minimum standards for Buffer Yards. In this case, the applicant is proposing to construct a new religious facility. According to the Buffer Yard Standards below (commercial use adjacent to residential zoning), the required minimum buffer yard shall be twenty (20') feet wide and consists of a minimum of 4 shade trees and 25 shrubs every 100 linear feet. The applicant is requesting total relief from the buffer yard standards along the east, south, and portions of the west lot lines. ***Therefore, a Variance is being requested to the minimum Buffer Yard standards in its entirety.***

ULDC Chapter 4.07.06

B. Location, Measurement, and Design of buffers

1. Buffers shall be located on the outer perimeter of a lot or parcel, extending to the lot or parcel boundary line. Buffers shall not occupy any portion of an existing, dedicated, or reserved public or private street, or right-of-way.

2. Buffer width is normally measured from the property line; however, design variations are allowed. Average width shall be measured at the two (2) end points of the buffer and two (2) additional points which are each approximately one-third (1/3) of the total linear distance from the end point.

3. Buffer yards shall be located on private property between the property line and any required fence or wall. They shall consist of a minimum four (4) shade trees and twenty-five (25) shrubs per 100 linear feet. Shrubs shall be at least eighteen (18) inches in height at the time of installation. Buffer yards shall be maintained as green open space, consisting of sod or ground cover, along with required plantings and access drives only.

4. The buffer shall be designed to avoid or minimize plantings within drainage, utility, or other easements.

5. Buffers shall be designed taking into consideration the site's soils conditions, topography, and natural resources. Native vegetation shall be used for landscaping and buffering unless the applicant demonstrates that the use of non-native, drought-resistant plants would best serve the site.

6. Buffers shall be established and maintained by the owner of the proposed development site.

Table 4.07.06(C). Buffer Area Standards.

Proposed Land Use	Adjacent Zoning district	Minimum Buffer Area*
Intensive Service or Industrial	E-A, R-A, CON, R-1, R-21, R-10, MAZ Residential	40 feet*
Multi-family, Commercial or Mixed-**use** areas	E-A, R-A, CON, R-1, R-21, R-10, MAZ Residential	30 feet*
Office or Institutional	E-A, R-A, CON, R-1, R-21, R-10, MAZ Residential	20 feet*
* The installation of a 6' to 8' opaque fence enables the **buffer** area to be decreased by 50% and the **buffer** landscaping requirement to be decreased by 25%. For example, with the installation of an 8' fence a 30' **buffer** area with 4 shade trees and 25 shrubs per 100 linear feet can be reduced to 15 feet with 3 shade trees and 19 shrubs per 100 linear feet.		