



City of Sanibel Planning Commission

Planning Department Staff Report

Planning Commission Meeting: February 24, 2026
Application Number: PL20260005
Applicant: Lisa Giordano, John Wojdak- RESPEC Company LLC.
Address: 2351 Palm Ridge Road (Sanibel Fire Station #171)

PUBLIC HEARING DESCRIPTION

Consideration of an application filed pursuant to Land Development Code Chapter 82, Article IV, Division 2, Subdivision III - Long-form, Section 82-421- Application, Section 82-422, – Scheduling and notice, Section 82-423. – Hearing, and Chapter 86, Article II - Site preparation, Section 86-44. - Public facilities, to authorize deviations from required conditions of the Land Development Code related to floor area ratio in the Town Center Limited Commercial District for an application to redevelop Fire District Station 171 located at 2351 Palm Ridge Road – tax parcel (STRAP) no. 26-46-22-T2-0030B.0020. The application is submitted by Lisa Giordano & John Wojdak, RESPEC Company LLC (the applicant), on behalf of Sanibel Fire and Rescue District (the property owner). **Application No. PL20260005.**

ISSUES

Pursuant to Land Development Code (LDC) Section 82-424. – Action on application and Section 86-44. – Public facilities, the subject application has been referred to the Planning Commission to address the following issues:

1. Is the application complete and is the proposed development, including the requested deviation, consistent with the intent and purpose of the Sanibel Plan?
2. If the Planning Commission approves the application, what additional conditions should be required to ensure consistency with the Sanibel Plan and Land Development Code?

ATTACHMENTS

A	Applicant’s request for the deviation to Floor Area Ratio
B	Survey
C	Architectural Plans
D	Civil Plans
E	Site Lighting Plans
F	Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-05

BACKGROUND

The subject property located at 2351 Palm Ridge Road is an approximately 1.64-acre parcel developed as Sanibel Fire Station 171. The parcel is located at the intersection of Palm Ridge Road and Wooster Lane, with a shared-use path adjacent to the east, commercial uses to the east across Palm Ridge Rd. as well as to the south, and vacant City-owned property to the north and west.

The subject property is located predominantly within the G – Altered Land ecological zone, with smaller portions of the site within the D-2 – Upland Wetlands ecological zone. The property is also located within the Town Center Limited Commercial zoning district. The fire station is a public facility use, which is a permitted use within both ecological zones as well as the TCL commercial district.

The principal building for Fire Station 171 was originally constructed in 1979. In 2004, permits were approved for a replacement fire station and accessory structures through Planning Commission Resolutions No. 04-04 and 04-05. A detached telecommunications device was subsequently approved in 2005 by Planning Commission Resolution No. 05-008.

During further review of the 2004 variance application, staff determined that Land Development Code Section 86-44, entitled “Public Facilities,” authorizes the Planning Commission to grant deviations from applicable conditions, limitations, and restrictions of the Land Development Code for public facilities, provided the approved development is not inconsistent with the intent and purpose of the Sanibel Plan. Accordingly, Resolution No. 04-05 was adopted to correct procedural deficiencies in the originally requested variance and to approve the development under the appropriate provisions of Section 86-44.

Resolution No. 04-05 included the following conditions of approval:

1. Minimum side yard setbacks shall not be less than 15 feet.
2. Maximum permitted coverage shall not exceed 43,700 square feet.
3. Maximum permitted developed area shall not exceed 48,100 square feet.
4. Strict adherence to all other applicable conditions and limitations of the Land Development Code is required.

The development approved at that time included the apparatus bay, simulation training building, emergency helicopter pad pavement, vehicular drives, and six parking spaces. The existing development complies with building height requirements.

A copy of the existing survey is provided as **Attachment B**.

PROPOSAL

Due to building damage sustained during Hurricane Ian, the Sanibel Fire and Rescue District propose to demolish the existing fire station, while retaining the one-story apparatus bay, and to reconstruct the station within a footprint similar to the existing building, with comparable driveway and parking configurations.

Section 82-140 of the Land Development Code establishes the variance process, which is generally applicable to private development and requires a showing of undue hardship based on unique property conditions. In

contrast, Section 86-44, entitled “Public Facilities,” authorizes the Planning Commission to grant deviations from applicable Code requirements for public facilities, provided the development is not inconsistent with the intent and purpose of the Sanibel Plan. Because the fire station is classified as a public facility, the requested relief is processed as a deviation under Section 86-44 rather than as a variance under Section 82-140.

The proposed fire station will comply with conditions of previously approved deviations related to side setbacks, maximum impervious surface coverage, and maximum developed area. However, an additional deviation from Section 126-534(a) for maximum floor area ratio (FAR) is necessary to approve the proposed plans.

The maximum FAR permitted within the Town Center Limited Commercial zoning district is 12 percent. The existing development has an FAR of 24.6 percent, and the proposed project will increase the FAR to approximately 29 percent. Although FAR was not specifically addressed in the 2004 approval, the proposed increase in total floor area necessitates a deviation from the current FAR standard.

FAR is calculated by dividing the total gross floor area of all buildings on a site by the total lot area. Gross floor area includes the cumulative area of all enclosed stories, measured from the exterior walls. FAR regulates development intensity by controlling total building mass relative to the size of the property.

FAR is not synonymous with impervious coverage or developed area. Impervious coverage and developed area refer to the portion of the site covered by surfaces such as buildings, driveways, parking areas and other developed improvements. While a building footprint contributes to impervious coverage, FAR measures total enclosed floor area, including upper stories, rather than ground-level surface coverage.

The proposed fire station will include ground-level parking and storage; the first elevated floor will consist of bunk rooms, offices, a kitchen, and other necessary emergency service facilities; and the second elevated floor will include emergency operations space, offices, and other required amenities.

The applicant proposes a total of 57.9% impervious coverage (41,382 sf) and 65.2% developed area (46,609 sf), which are both less than the amounts previously approved pursuant to Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-05. The existing parking area will remain unchanged; however, elevation of the building allows for utilization of parking beneath the proposed structure.

The proposed development complies with all other applicable conditions and limitations of the LDC, including building height.

A copy of the civil plan is provided as **Attachment D**, and the architectural drawings are included as **Attachment C**.

ANALYSIS

Sanibel Plan/Land Development Code	Staff Finding
<p>Sanibel Plan, Section 3.3.9, <i>Other Human Support Systems</i></p> <p>Objective 1: <i>“Ensure continued maintenance of an adequate level of service for these other human support systems.”</i></p> <p>Policy 1.2: <i>“Expand and add facilities as needed to provide adequate service.”</i></p>	<p>Supports the applicant’s request to deviate from compliance with FAR in order to expand the second-level area of the fire station to accommodate additional space required for emergency services.</p>
<p>Sanibel Plan, Section 3.6.2, <i>Other Human Support Systems</i></p> <p>Objective B4: <i>“Ensure the availability of suitable land for public facilities (human support systems) necessary to support development consistent with the Future Land Use Map, which is consistent with the densities and permitted uses regulated by the Development Intensity Map, Ecological Zones Map, Commercial District Map, Wetlands Conservation Lands Map and Resort Housing District Map.”</i></p>	<p>Finds the reconstruction of the fire station ensures the continued availability of suitable land for an essential public facility (human support system) and complies with the other regulations permitted in the TCL Commercial district, Altered Land Zone and Upland Wetland Zone.</p>
<p>Sanibel Land Development Code Sec. 86-44, <i>Public Facilities</i></p> <p><i>“Planning commission may allow deviations from the required conditions, limitations and restrictions of this Land Development Code which would otherwise be applicable, as long as the development approved is not inconsistent with the intent and purpose of the Sanibel Plan.”</i></p>	<p>Finds the proposed public facility and associated improvements are not inconsistent with the intent and purpose of the Sanibel Plan.</p>

PUBLIC COMMENT

As of February 18, 2026, there have been zero (0) written public comment provided to staff following the legal advertisement of this public hearing application.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

Staff has made the following findings in support of its recommendations:

- The proposed public facility and associated improvements are not inconsistent with the intent and purpose of the Sanibel Plan.

Staff, therefore, recommends approval of application **PL20260005** subject to the following conditions:

1. The conditions set forth in Planning Commission Resolutions 04-04 and 04-05.
2. A maximum FAR of 29%.
3. Development generally consistent with the building and site layout indicated in the architectural plans and civil plans (Attachments C & D).
4. An as-built survey is required to verify compliance prior to issuance of a completion certificate.