



City of Sanibel Planning Commission

Planning Department Staff Report

Planning Commission Meeting: February 24, 2026

Application Number: PL20260007

Applicant: Rachel Bielert (RLBCM, LLC)

Address: 1523 Periwinkle Way

PUBLIC HEARING DESCRIPTION

Consideration of an application filed pursuant to Land Development Code Chapter 82, Article III, Subdivision II. – Variances, Section 82-138. – Application and hearing, to request variances from Section 86-163. – Maximum number of dwelling units, Section 86-164. – Limitations on principal buildings, Section 122-48. – Location and size of required vegetation buffers, Section 122-49. – Types, varieties and numbers of plants required, Section 126-49. – Types, varieties and numbers of plants required, Section 126-494. – Required conditions, Section 126-1029. – Site planning, and Section 126-1404. – Driveways and service aisles; for construction of a 39-unit multi-family development located at 1523 Periwinkle Way – tax parcel (STRAP) no. 30-46-23-T1-00004.0060 and no. 30-46-23-T1-00004.0070. The applications are submitted by Rachel Bielert, RLBCM LLC (the applicant), on behalf of Sanibel 1523 INC and Sanibel 1531 INC (the property owners). **Application No. PL20260007.**

ISSUES

Pursuant to Sanibel Code Section 82-136. – Authorization. and Section 82-137 – Conditions., the subject application has been referred to the Planning Commission to address the following issues:

1. Does the subject application comply with Sanibel Code Section 82-144. – Below market rate housing, which allows the planning commission to grant variances necessary to accommodate below market rate housing developments
2. If the Planning Commission approves the application, what additional conditions should be required?

ATTACHMENTS

A	Application Narrative
B	Survey
C	Site and Construction Plans
D	Floor Plans
E	Building Elevations and Angle-of-Light Exhibit
F	Checklist of Conformance with <u>Sec. 86-43. – Appearance of structures; size and mass of structures.</u>
G	Landscape Buffer Plans

BACKGROUND

The subject parcels are a combined 2.62 acres located at 1523 Periwinkle Way. The portion within four hundred (400) feet of Periwinkle Way, totaling 1.63 acres, is in the GC – General Commercial District. The remaining area of the property to the south is outside the commercial district and is in the D-2 Upland Wetlands ecological zone/residential district. All lands within two hundred (200) feet of the Sanibel River are also located within the Interior Wetlands Conservation District.

Contiguous parcels and their uses include:

- 7 Eleven and Riverview I apartments, a 15-unit Below Market Rate Housing development, to the east;
- Kona Kai Motel, a nonconforming 12-unit resort, to the west;
- A presently vacant commercial building with two units, formerly VCA animal hospital and Schnapper’s Hots, across the Shared Use Path and Periwinkle Way to the north; and
- Sanibel River and Sanibel Island Golf Course to the south.

The property was developed with a commercial building in 1959, pre-city incorporation, and operated as various restaurants over the years, most recently Sanibel Fish House, a 200-seat restaurant. The principal structure was significantly damaged by Hurricane Ian in 2022.

The subject property is allocated up to nine (9) dwelling units based on the development intensity map of the Sanibel Plan or up to 7,138 square feet of commercial floor area. Future mixed-use potential is dependent upon compliance with Sec. 126-1032. – Mixed use development.

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Below, Table 1 provides two Sanibel Plan references that relate to the subject application.

Table 1. Sanibel Plan references
<p>Section 3.6.1. Housing Objective 3 Increase the total number of housing (dwelling) units that are available to persons of very low, low, and moderate income in addition to providing essential services workforce housing based on needs.</p>
<p>Section 3.6.1. Housing Policy 3.7 Ensure that BMRH units continue to be developed and maintained in a manner that is compatible with the character of the community.</p>

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes development of a 39-unit multi-family residential building for below market rate housing. Community Housing & Resources is potentially receiving a grant award of \$9.75m from U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program.

To construct the 39-unit development, as proposed, the applicant requests variances from the following standards:

- Sec. 86-163. – Maximum number of dwelling units, to allow 39 units in one building instead of 12 units in one building.

- Sec. 86-164. – Limitations on principal buildings, to allow a building designed and constructed with three units vertically.
- Sec. 122-48. – Location and size of required vegetation buffers, Sec. 122-49. – Types, varieties and number of plants required, and Sec. 126-494. – Required conditions, to allow development to encroach within the minimum required setback of 15 feet from the east property line adjacent to 1517 Periwinkle Way (Riverview I apartments). The proposed side setback and reduced vegetation buffer is 6.5 feet.
- Sec. 126-1029. – Site planning and Sec. 126-1404. – Driveways and service aisles, to permit more than one ingress-egress driveway for the purpose of emergency vehicle access.

The applicant has filed a concurrent application, PL20260002, to increase density for below market rate housing from up to 9 units (allocated by the Sanibel Plan) to 39 units.

ANALYSIS

Staff reviewed proposed plans against applicable standards of the Land Development Code and the subject variance application relative to Sec. 82-144. – Below market rate housing and applicable provisions of the Sanibel Plan. The tables below include references of notable standards and staff review notes.

Sanibel Code Requirement	Staff Comments
Sec. 86-165. – Limitation on side yard setbacks and height of structures.	Compliant with setbacks and angle-of-light restrictions.
Sec. 86-168. – Architectural harmony.	The proposed structure is architecturally harmonious with the adjacent Riverview I development. See the Checklist of Conformance to <u>Sec. 86-43</u> provided as Attachment F .
Sec. 86-169. – Architectural design standards and examples.	Staff find the building design consistent with Island Contemporary architectural style and otherwise compliant with specific design criteria.
Sec. 126-494. – Required conditions.	The site plan demonstrates compliance with maximum height, as well as maximum developed area and impermeable coverage. All required setbacks are met, except for the east side for which a variance is requested.
Sec. 126-557. – Development standards for wetlands conservation lands.	The proposed development maintains a 200-foot setback from the Sanibel River
Sec. 126-940. – Building access for people with disabilities.	The proposed development is ADA compliant.
Sec. 126-997. – Outdoor lighting generally.	The applicant has submitted a statement as it relates to compliance with dark sky standards of this section.
Sec. 126-1341. – Required parking spaces.	Staff find the application proposes adequate parking in compliance with this standard.
Chapter 126, Article XV, Division 4. – Design Standards.	The site plan complies with all off-street parking design standards, except for multiple points of ingress-egress for which a variance has been requested.

Table 3: Consistency with Sec. 82-144. – Below market rate housing.		
Sanibel Code Requirement	Staff Comments	Requirement met?
Sec. 82-144. – Below market rate housing. The planning commission may grant variances necessary to accommodate below market rate housing developments which are in compliance with all other requirements of this Land Development Code.	Staff generally find each of the requested variances reasonably necessary to accommodate below market rate housing developments, while adequately demonstrating compliance with development standards, such as maximum developed area and maximum impermeable coverage, that help ensure compatibility with surrounding uses.	Yes.
Sec. 86-163. – Maximum number of dwelling units, to allow 39 units in one building instead of 12 units in one building.	While the total number of units proposed (39) significantly exceeds the maximum allowed (12), the development is designed to appear as two buildings joined by elevated breezeways to a shared elevator. The appearance, size and massing of the proposed structure remains consistent with the character of surrounding areas within the GC – General Commercial District; and therefore staff finds the design to be consistent with Section 3.6.1. Housing, Policy 3.7 to, “ensure that BMRH units continue to be developed and maintained in a manner that is compatible with the character of the community.”	Yes.
Sec. 86-164. – Limitations on principal buildings, to allow a building designed and constructed with three units vertically	As the applicant notes, a strict application of this standard will result in 13 fewer Below Market Rate Housing units. Staff supports a variance to facilitate a maximum increase in the total number of BMRH units and notes commercial developments at adjacent parcels in the GC – General Commercial District are entitled to a maximum height of 45 feet NAVD.	Yes.
Sec. 122-48. – Location and size of required vegetation buffers, Sec. 122-49. – Types, varieties and number of plants required, and Sec. 126-494. – Required conditions, to allow development to encroach within the minimum required setback of 15 feet	Staff notes that this variance would not be necessary if the two lots owned by CHR, 1517 Periwinkle Way (Riverview I) and 1523 Periwinkle Way (proposed Riverview II) were combined. However, the applicant provides that a combination of lots is not feasible due to the lending agreement for this development. For these reasons, staff support the requested variance.	Yes.
Sec. 126-1029. – Site planning and Sec. 126-1404. – Driveways and service	Staff notes the Sanibel Plan advocates for, “the improvement of traffic flow by reducing the potential for curb cuts and turning movements on Periwinkle Way.”	Yes.

aisles, to permit more than one ingress-egress driveway	However, staff supports the request for multiple points of ingress-egress for optimal emergency vehicle access in the interest of life-safety for its residents.	
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Future commercial development cannot be reviewed for approval at this time. As proposed, the commercial building appears to comply with standards including maximum floor area ratio (Sec. 126-494), commercial parking setbacks (Sec. 126-958), minimum size for a commercial unit (Sec. 126-1021), maximum size for a commercial building (Sec. 126-1025), site planning (Sec. 126-1029), mixed-use development (Sec. 126-1032), and required parking spaces (Sec. 126-1361).

Unless otherwise revised, the proposed commercial building will require variances, or conditional use permits to address compliance with the following standards:

- Sec. 126-1026. – Maximum size for a retail commercial unit
- Sec. 126-1027. – Maximum street frontage for a commercial unit

PUBLIC COMMENT

Staff have not received any public comment on this item as of February 18, 2026.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

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

- Staff find the proposed variances to accommodate below market rate housing are reasonably necessary and will not have an adverse effect on surrounding uses.
- Conditions are recommended to maintain inter- and intra-connectivity improvements and to preserve and protect land in the Interior Wetlands Conservation District.

Staff, therefore, recommends approval of application PL20260007 subject to the following conditions:

1. The proposed scope of work is contingent upon City Council approval of an application to increase density for below market rate housing (PL20260002).
2. An as-built survey is required to verify conformance with the approved site plan.
3. Pursuant to Section 126-651. – Preservation and enhancement of resources, development shall not take place within the Interior Wetlands Conservation District. The portion of the property within the Interior Wetlands Conservation District shall be preserved by means of a conservation easement or through dedication of such land areas to the city or to a nonprofit conservation entity to manage, or other means, to provide the continued maintenance of conservation lands. Any such easement shall be recorded in the official records of the Lee County Clerk of Courts prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
4. Execute a revised agreement for the use of shared trash and recycling facilities located on the subject property to the property owner of 1521 Periwinkle Way (Southland Corporation) and recorded in the official records of the Lee County Clerk of Courts prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. The City of Sanibel shall be named as a party to this agreement and shall be notified no less than sixty (60) days prior to termination of this agreement.
5. Bike parking facilities for no less than 15 bikes are to be installed and maintained in conformance with all applicable development standards (i.e. setbacks, developed area, coverage).

6. The inter-connectivity path and intra-connectivity driveway are approved pursuant to Section 126-855. – Inter- and Intra-connectivity. These connections shall be maintained as approved unless otherwise approved by Planning Commission by revision.
7. Obtain all necessary building, development, and vegetation permits prior to commencement and within twelve (12) months from the effective date of this resolution.
8. The principal building shall be clearly identified as to building number or street number. Obtain a permit for an accessory ground sign in compliance with Section 106-178. – Unified housing and residential development prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
9. The “future 2,447 square-foot commercial building” shown on the site plan is not authorized for development by this resolution. The applicant shall file all necessary permit applications prior to construction and change of use (mixed-use development).
10. A final landscape plan is required for submittal in compliance with landscape buffer requirements in Division 2. – Commercial and Institutional Uses, except for the reduced buffer area as described by this application, prior to installation of landscaping and issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

Conditions contained herein are in addition to the requirements of the Sanibel Code. The applicant is required to comply with all regulations of the City of Sanibel. Some conditions stated herein reflect the current code requirements applicable at the time of approval of this permit. After the issuance of the completion certificate for this development or upon expiration of the development permit, any subsequent development or change of use for the parcel must comply with the regulations in effect at that time.