In addition to the Variance to the Buffer Yard, the applicant is requesting a Variance to the minimum Landscape requirements for Parking Lots. The ULDC provides that internal landscaping shall be provided for parking lots with twenty (20) or more spaces. Due to the applicant's choice in the materials used for their proposed parking lot, the applicant is proposing a total Variance in keeping with the property's natural aesthetics and their inability to develop around the flagged delineated wetland areas. ***Therefore, a Variance is being requested in its entirety to the Landscape Requirements for Parking Lots.***

4.07.02 Landscape Requirements for Parking Lots

A. Perimeter landscaping for parking lots
A minimum of 15% of landscaped green space should be in the form of at least a 3ft landscaped buffer from property lines not used for cross-access. The 3ft landscaped buffer may not be used for overhang of parking spaces.

B. Interior landscaping

1. Parking lots with twenty (20) or more parking spaces shall provide interior landscaping.
2. Five (5) percent of the total parking lot area shall consist of internal landscaping.
3. Interior planting areas may be located in tree islands, at the end of parking bays, or between rows of parking spaces. Planting areas may also be located within driveway medians, provided the median is a minimum of ten (10) feet wide.
4. There shall be one (1) tree required for each 500 square feet of internal landscape areas.
5. The design of interior landscaped areas shall comply with the specifications set forth in Section 4.07.04.
6. Vehicle stops or curbing shall be used to ensure that vehicles do not overhang required landscaped areas.

The subject property is located in a Suburban Area (SA) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The Suburban Area Character depiction indicates areas where typical suburban residential subdivision development have occurred OR where pressures for such type of development are greatest due to the availability of public water and/or sewer services.

A buffer yard is required along the subject property's east lot line, in its entirety, and proportionately along the west lot line where it is adjacent to the Lowndes Fire station. The property that is east of the subject property is currently vacant; however, due to the zoning of the property, a buffer yard is required. Additionally, there currently exist an access easement for ingress and egress running along the east side of the subject property. The access easement is primarily used by the two (2) residents located to the south of the subject property. While the majority of the properties in the immediate area are residentially zoned, the need to provide a buffer yard at this time appears that it will be ineffective, given the current use of the existing access easement. Additionally, the flagged wetlands (~3 acres) that currently exist centrally on the subject property may be able to function as a natural buffer given that area's inability to be improved and/or developed. Regarding the internal landscaping for the proposed parking lot, the applicant is proposing to improve their parking lot with an alternative method, the use of gravel in lieu of an impervious surface. The applicant is proposing to maintain the subject property's rural character.

Given the subject property's existing conditions, staff has reviewed both Variance requests and is unanimously recommending the following:

1) the existing vegetation along the exterior of Tax Map 0087 Parcel 220 that abuts the subject property shall remain undisturbed;
2) a buffer yard shall be required along the property line of Tax Map 0087 Parcel 219; and,
3) the required internal landscaping for the proposed parking lot to consist of 1,535 square feet plus 3 trees shall be relocated near the proposed religious facility.

The ULDC provides that variances may be granted upon a finding by the ZBA that one the following conditions have been met:

A. There are extraordinary and exceptional conditions pertaining to the particular piece of property in question because of its size, shape, or topography;
B. Such conditions are peculiar to the particular piece of property involved;
C. The application of this ULDC to this particular piece of property would create an unnecessary hardship;
D. Relief, if granted, will not cause substantial detriment to the public good or impair the purposes and intent of this ULDC;
E. A literal interpretation of the provisions of this ULDC would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties of the zoning district in which the property is located;
F. Granting the variance requested will not confer upon the property of the applicant any special privileges that are denied to other properties of the zoning district in which the applicant's property is located;
G. The requested variance will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of this ULDC and will not be incompatible with the neighborhood or to the general public welfare;