

McCordsville

ESTD  1988

INDIANA

Board of Zoning Appeals Staff Report

Meeting Date: September 24, 2025

PETITIONER: Town of McCordsville

PETITION: BZA-25-009

REQUEST: The petitioner's request seeks a Special Exception to allow a parking facility as a primary use (public or private) in the Old Town zoning district, along with Development Standards Variances relating to setbacks, parking, drive aisle widths, buffering, and landscaping.

LOCATION: The property is located at 7595 N Form St, McCordsville, Vernon Township.

ZONING: The property is zoned Old Town, with the following surrounding land uses and zoning:

<u>Zoning</u>	<u>Land Use</u>
North: OT	Church parsonage
South: OT	Single Family Residential
East: OT	Single Family Residential
West: Community Center PUD	Community Center

STAFF REVIEW: Lot 26 of the Nelson Bradley Original Plat is currently vacant and owned by the McCordsville United Methodist Church, Inc. As planning for the Community Center to the west has progressed, an opportunity was identified to provide additional parking to serve both the Community Center and the Church. To accomplish this, the Town and the Church have entered into a shared parking agreement, under which the Town will construct a new parking lot to be jointly utilized by both entities. As part of the site design, a sidewalk connection between the new parking lot and the McCordsville United Methodist Church has been proposed. If constructed, this improvement would enhance pedestrian circulation, improve accessibility between the facilities, and further integrate the lot into the surrounding neighborhood.

This project was reviewed by the Town's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on September 18, 2025. TAC directed refinements to the site design including: tapering of the fence from 6' to 4' at specified locations, installation of fence posts in asphalt along the north property line, ADA-compliant ramps at the alley crossing and the east end of the Third Street sidewalk, confirmation and replacement of the Form/Third St corner streetlight with the Town standard, installation of a parking lot light at the

Third St entrance, and enhanced perimeter landscaping such as shrubs every three feet along the south and west property lines and trees in vaults along the south line. These refinements strengthen the proposal, lessen the requested variances, and will be incorporated into the plans prior to permitting.

The petitioner seeks approval of one (1) Special Exception, and five (5) Development Standards Variances related to setbacks, parking, drive aisle widths, buffering, and landscaping, as detailed below.

Appendix A: Official Schedule of Uses

Parking Facility as a Primary Use (public or private) requires Special Exception approval in Old Town

Land Use Matrix															
Primary Use	Zoning District														
	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	MF 1	MF 2	CN/TC	CO	CR	I1	I2	P	OT	
Store (excluding sexually oriented businesses)															
Nursing Home						S	S			S	P		P		
Park	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		P	S	
Parking Facility as a Primary Use (public or private)					S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	

The Town's Bulk Use Standards Matrix (Appendix B) requires the following lot standards for development in Old Town zoning:

- Minimum Lot Width at Build Line: 65 feet
- Minimum Front Yard Setback – Equal to the average setback distance for existing buildings within 300 feet: 25 feet
- Minimum Side Yard Setback: 10 feet aggregate

§ 154.114(A)(3) – Parking Space Dimensions

The petitioner is requesting a Development Standards Variance from § 154.114(A)(3) of the McCordsville Zoning Ordinance, which requires standard off-street parking spaces to measure a minimum of nine (9) feet in width by eighteen (18) feet in length.

The current site plan reflects stalls that meet the nine (9) foot width requirement, with a typical length of eighteen (18) feet. However, due to site constraints and circulation needs, final engineering may require certain spaces to be shortened. The petitioner therefore requests a variance to allow standard spaces to be not less than nine (9) feet in width by seventeen (17) feet in length, in lieu of the full nine (9) by eighteen (18) feet required. The one-foot reduction in stall length, if utilized, will not negatively impact vehicle maneuverability, circulation, or accessibility within the parking lot.

be reduced to no less than nine (9) by seventeen (17) feet where necessary.

§ 154.114(B)(1) – Off-street parking

The petitioner is requesting a Development Standards Variance from § 154.114(B)(1) of the McCordsville Zoning Ordinance, which prohibits off-street parking from being located within required front, side, and rear yards.

Because the parcel is limited in size and the site will be developed entirely as a surface lot, parking spaces and drive aisles are necessarily located within the required front yard along Form Street, the front yard along Third Street, and the side yards along the north and east property lines.

TAC required accessibility refinements to ensure the design functions safely within these reduced yard setbacks, including ADA-compliant ramps at the alley crossing and at the east end of the Third Street sidewalk. With these improvements in place, parking and circulation within the setback areas will function safely and without injurious impact.

Approval of this variance would allow off-street parking areas (spaces and drive aisles) to be located within all required setbacks of the subject property.

§ 154.114(E)(b) – Drive Aisle Widths

The petitioner is requesting a Development Standards Variance from § 154.114(E)(b) of the McCordsville Zoning Ordinance, which requires interior drive aisles serving two-way traffic to be a minimum of twenty-four (24) feet in width.

The current site plan reflects two-way aisles designed at twenty-four (24) feet in width, consistent with ordinance requirements. However, due to site constraints, final engineering may require certain aisles to be reduced in width. The petitioner therefore requests a variance to allow two-way drive aisles to be not less than twenty-two (22) feet in width, in lieu of the full twenty-four (24) feet required. The two-foot reduction, if applied, would still allow for safe circulation, adequate maneuverability, and emergency access.

Approval of this variance would permit flexibility so that two-way drive aisles may be reduced to no less than twenty-two (22) feet where necessary.

§ 154.120(A)(2) – Buffering and Screening

The petitioner is requesting a Development Standards Variance from § 154.120(A)(2) of the McCordsville Zoning Ordinance, which establishes buffer yard requirements for public/semi-public uses abutting single-family residential uses.

Because the site will be developed entirely as a public parking lot, the standard buffer yard widths cannot be provided along the property boundaries. To address this, the petitioner proposes to install a 6-foot opaque fence along the north and east property lines, which pursuant to § 154.120(A)(3) allows the buffer width and required shrubs to be reduced by half.

TAC directed refinements to the fencing plan, including tapering the fence from six (6) feet to four (4) feet in strategic locations, installing fence posts in asphalt along the north property line, and adding shrubs with mulch along the east fence where feasible. Together with frontage landscaping along Form and Third Streets, these measures provide effective mitigation in lieu of the full buffer yard widths otherwise required.

Applicable Code Section:

- § 154.120(A)(2): Requires a perimeter buffer yard, including minimum widths and plantings.
- § 154.120(A)(3): Permits buffer yard width and shrub counts to be reduced by 50% where an opaque fence or wall (5–7 feet in height, and compatible in composition and color) is provided.

Approval of this variance would allow the public parking lot to be constructed without providing the full buffer yard widths and plantings otherwise mandated by § 154.120(A)(2), even with the reductions permitted under § 154.120(A)(3).

§ 154.119 – Parking Lot Landscaping

The petitioner is requesting a Development Standards Variance from § 154.119 of the McCordsville Zoning Ordinance, which establishes both interior and perimeter landscaping requirements for parking lots with more than ten (10) spaces.

The ordinance requires:

- Interior landscaped islands and/or median strips, equaling a minimum of 5% of the parking lot area;
- One shade tree per 2,400 square feet of paved area;
- One shrub per 500 square feet of paved area;
- A planted screen at least three (3) feet in height along parking lot perimeters visible from public rights-of-way or adjacent property lines, with at least one tree per fifty (50) lineal feet.

Because the subject parcel is small and will be fully occupied by parking and circulation, strict compliance with these standards is not feasible. The submitted plan does not include interior landscaped islands or medians, and certain portions of the perimeter may not accommodate the full screen plantings required by ordinance.

To mitigate these deficiencies, TAC directed enhanced landscaping at strategic locations, including shrubs spaced every three (3) feet along portions of the south and west property lines and shade trees planted in vaults every fifty (50) feet along the south property line. Additional frontage plantings along Form and Third Streets also provide visual relief and soften the edges of the lot.

Approval of this variance would allow the Community Center parking lot to be constructed without meeting the full requirements of § 154.119, including the 5% interior landscaped area, the specified number of interior shade trees and shrubs, end-of-row or median islands, and the continuous three-foot-high perimeter screen with trees every fifty (50) feet.

The concept plan is included as Exhibit A.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff finds that the proposed parking facility will serve an identified community need by providing shared parking for the Town's Community Center and the McCordsville United Methodist Church. While the development cannot fully comply with the setbacks, parking, drive aisle widths, buffering, and interior landscaping requirements of the Old Town zoning district, staff believes the requested variances are appropriate given the parcel's size and configuration, and that the proposed fencing and frontage landscaping will mitigate potential impacts on adjacent residential properties. Accordingly, staff recommends approval of the Special Exception and associated Development Standards Variances, subject to the conditions listed herein.

If the Board is inclined to approve the special exception and variances, the Department recommends the following conditions:

1. The Special Exception shall run with the land.
2. The variances granted under this petition shall apply only to the construction and use of the subject property as a surface parking lot. Any future building or structure proposed on this parcel shall be required to comply with the applicable setback and landscaping standards, or obtain separate variance approval.
3. Parking lot lighting shall be residential in scale, downcast, and shall not produce glare onto adjacent properties.

The BZA may include additional conditions of approval, and if so, these conditions should be incorporated into the record. They may be amended, added to, or removed by the BZA. The petitioner also has the right to request them to be amended, added to, or removed until the time the BZA has made a motion on the conditions.

RECOMMENDED FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL:

If the Board is inclined to approve the special exception use from development standards, then staff recommend the following findings:

Special Exception:

1. The special exception shall be permitted by this chapter:
***Finding:** A parking facility as a primary use is listed in Appendix A: Official Schedule of Uses as requiring Special Exception approval in the Old Town (OT) zoning district. Therefore, the request is permitted for consideration by this chapter.*
2. The special exception can be served with adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, and other necessary facilities:
***Finding:** The site is located on an existing platted lot within the Old Town district and has direct access to Form Street and Third Street. Utilities and drainage infrastructure are available in the*

vicinity and can be extended to the site as needed. The proposed parking lot has been reviewed for compliance with applicable Town standards through the Technical Advisory Committee and will be further reviewed through the building permit process.

3. The special exception shall not involve any element or cause any condition that may be dangerous, injurious, or noxious to any other property or persons, and shall comply with the development standards of this chapter:

Finding: *The proposed use is a surface parking lot to serve the Town's Community Center and the McCordsville United Methodist Church. Parking facilities are a customary and compatible use within the Old Town district. With the conditions of approval recommended by staff (including residential-scale, downcast lighting and screening of site fixtures), the project will not create dangerous or injurious conditions.*

4. The special exception shall be sorted, oriented, and landscaped to produce a harmonious relationship of buildings and grounds to adjacent buildings and properties:

Finding: *The lot will be developed with a surface parking facility, without principal structures. Landscaping is proposed along Form Street and Third Street, and a 6-foot opaque fence will be installed along the north and east property lines adjoining residential uses. These improvements are intended to mitigate impacts and provide a compatible transition to adjacent properties.*

5. The special exception shall produce a total visual impression and environment which is consistent with the environment of the neighborhood:

Finding: *The site is surrounded by institutional and residential uses, including the Community Center to the west and single-family dwellings to the north, south, and east. The shared parking arrangement reflects the established pattern of public/semi-public uses in Old Town, and the combination of fencing and frontage landscaping will maintain a visual impression consistent with the neighborhood.*

6. The special exception shall organize vehicular access and parking to minimize traffic congestion in the neighborhood:

Finding: *Vehicular access to the parking lot will be provided from both Form Street and Third Street. These two access points will distribute traffic flow and reduce reliance on a single entry, thereby minimizing congestion on adjacent streets. The internal circulation design provides orderly movement within the lot, and staff has recommended installation of lighting at the Third Street entrance to promote safe access. A sidewalk connection to the McCordsville United Methodist Church has been proposed, which, if implemented, would improve pedestrian circulation and provide safe access between the shared facilities.*

7. The special exception shall preserve the purpose of this subchapter:

Finding: *The purpose of the Special Exception subchapter is to allow uses that may be appropriate within a zoning district when certain standards are met, ensuring compatibility with the surrounding area. The proposed parking facility provides a community benefit by supporting the Community Center and the Church while incorporating conditions to mitigate impacts.*

The BZA has four (4) options in considering this request; the Board may approve, approve with conditions, deny, or continue the petition.

Denial: If the Board is inclined to deny the requested special exception, then staff recommends denying, and then tabling the adoption of findings until the Board's next meeting with direction to staff to prepare the findings pursuant to the public hearing evidence and Board discussion.

Variance #1: § 154.114(A)(3) – Parking Space Dimensions

1. The approval will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community:

Finding: *The requested variance would permit standard parking stalls to be reduced in length from eighteen (18) feet to not less than seventeen (17) feet. The reduction is modest and consistent with accepted standards in many nearby communities. The Technical Advisory Committee reviewed the design and determined that maneuverability, circulation, ADA accessibility, and emergency access will not be compromised. Therefore, the variance will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, or general welfare.*

2. The use and value of the area adjacent to the Property included in the variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner:

Finding: *The subject property is surrounded by institutional and residential uses, including the Community Center and McCordsville United Methodist Church. The reduction in stall length will not be visually apparent to adjacent properties, nor will it reduce the utility of the lot. The enhanced perimeter plantings and fencing required through TAC review will mitigate any potential impacts, ensuring that the use and value of adjacent properties will not be adversely affected.*

3. The strict application of the terms of the zoning ordinance will result in practical difficulties in the use of the subject Property:

Finding: *The parcel is limited in size and must balance parking, circulation, ADA accessibility, and landscaping within a constrained area. Requiring all stalls to be a full eighteen (18) feet in length would reduce the efficiency of the parking layout and limit the number of spaces available to support the Community Center and Church. Allowing stalls to be no less than seventeen (17) feet in length provides needed flexibility while still maintaining a functional and safe design.*

Variance #2: § 154.114(B)(1) – Off-street parking

1. The approval will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community:

Finding: *Allowing parking areas and drive aisles within the required front and side yards will not create conditions injurious to the public. The lot will be constructed to Town engineering standards, including pavement design, drainage, and lighting. With conditions requiring residential-scale, downcast lighting and screening of site fixtures, the variance will not negatively affect public health, safety, or welfare. With TAC-directed pedestrian accessibility improvements, the variance will not create conditions injurious to the public.*

2. The use and value of the area adjacent to the Property included in the variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner:

Finding: *The property is surrounded by the Community Center to the west and residential uses to the north, south, and east. The inclusion of a 6-foot opaque fence along the north and east property*

lines, together with landscaping along Form and Third Streets, will buffer the lot from adjacent residential properties. These measures will mitigate potential visual and functional impacts, and no substantial adverse effect on adjacent use or value is anticipated.

3. The strict application of the terms of the zoning ordinance will result in practical difficulties in the use of the subject Property:

Finding: *The parcel is a small, platted lot within Old Town with limited width and depth. Given its size and configuration, it is not feasible to provide parking spaces and circulation while maintaining the required setbacks. Strict application of the ordinance would effectively preclude development of the lot for its intended shared parking use, creating a practical difficulty.*

Variance #3: § 154.114(E)(b) – Drive Aisle Widths

1. The approval will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community:

Finding: *The requested variance would permit two-way drive aisles to be reduced from the required twenty-four (24) feet to not less than twenty-two (22) feet. The two-foot reduction is modest and does not prevent vehicles from maneuvering safely within the lot. TAC review confirmed that ADA accessibility, fire protection access, and general traffic circulation will continue to function safely. Therefore, the variance will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, or general welfare.*

2. The use and value of the area adjacent to the Property included in the variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner:

Finding: *The site is surrounded by a mix of public/semi-public and residential uses. The width of internal drive aisles is not visible from surrounding properties and will not alter the character of the neighborhood. Because emergency access and circulation remain adequate, there will be no adverse effect on the use and value of adjacent properties.*

3. The strict application of the terms of the zoning ordinance will result in practical difficulties in the use of the subject Property:

Finding: *The parcel is constrained in size and shape, and must accommodate parking, circulation, landscaping, and ADA accessibility within its limited area. Requiring full twenty-four (24) foot aisles throughout the site would reduce the number of spaces that can be provided and limit the functionality of the parking lot. Allowing aisles of not less than twenty-two (22) feet provides flexibility to balance circulation and stall count while still maintaining a safe and functional design.*

Variance #4: § 154.120(A)(2) – Buffering and Screening

1. The approval will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community:

Finding: *The variance will not create injurious conditions. A 6-foot opaque fence will be installed along the north and east property lines to provide separation from adjacent residential uses. This fence, in combination with frontage landscaping along Form and Third Streets, will buffer the lot and protect the general welfare of the neighborhood.*

2. The use and value of the area adjacent to the Property included in the variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner:

Finding: *Although the full buffer yard widths and plantings cannot be provided, the proposed fence*

*and frontage landscaping will mitigate impacts on nearby residential properties. The screening will reduce noise, light, and visual impacts typically associated with parking facilities. A sidewalk connection to the McCordsville United Methodist Church has been **proposed**, which, if implemented, would enhance pedestrian access and reinforce the shared, community-serving nature of the lot. With the inclusion of TAC-directed fencing refinements and supplemental plantings, impacts to adjacent properties will be effectively mitigated.*

3. The strict application of the terms of the zoning ordinance will result in practical difficulties in the use of the subject Property:

Finding: *The lot's limited size and the need to accommodate sufficient parking spaces and circulation prevent the installation of the required buffer yard widths and plantings. Strict application of the buffering standard would preclude effective development of the site for its intended shared parking function, creating a practical difficulty.*

Variance #5: § 154.119 – Parking Lot Landscaping

1. The approval will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community:

Finding: *The ordinance requires parking lots with more than ten (10) spaces to provide interior landscaped islands equaling at least 5% of the paved area, shade trees and shrubs based on lot size, and a continuous perimeter planting screen. Due to the small size of the parcel, strict compliance with these standards is not feasible. Instead, TAC required enhanced perimeter plantings along key edges, including shrubs every three (3) feet and shade trees planted in vaults along the south property line. These improvements will soften the lot's visual impact and provide adequate buffering, ensuring the project will not be injurious to the community's health, safety, or general welfare.*

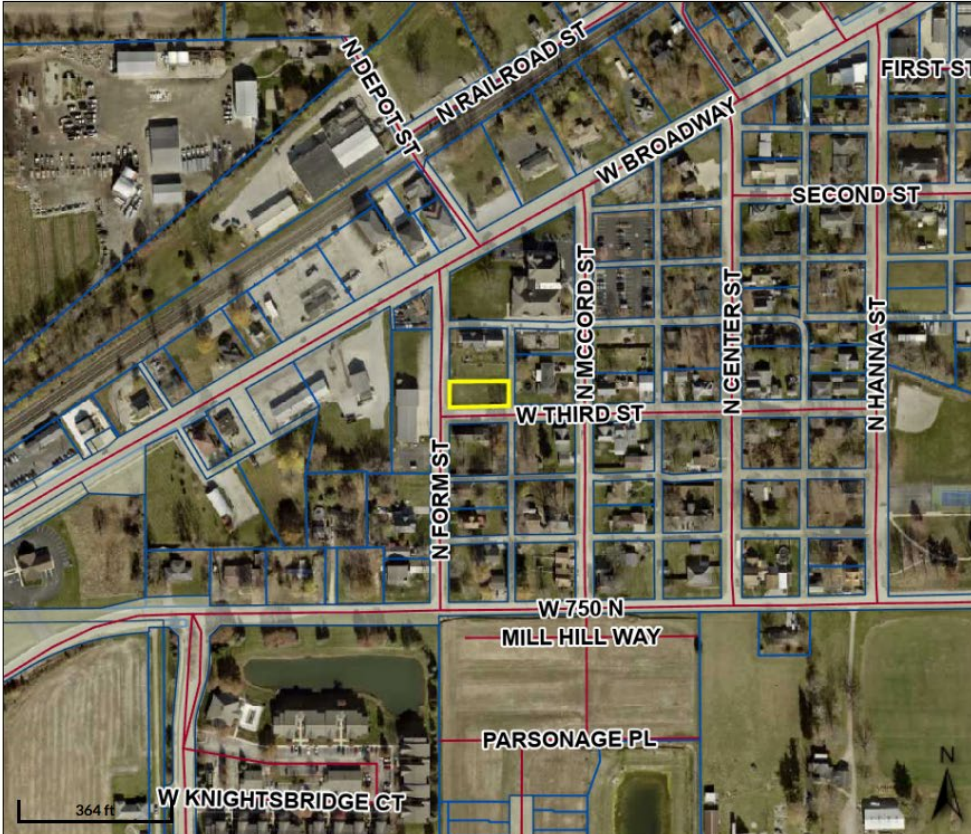
2. The use and value of the area adjacent to the Property included in the variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner:

Finding: *Adjacent properties include the Community Center, the McCordsville United Methodist Church, and single-family dwellings. While the full interior and perimeter landscaping standards cannot be met, the combination of fencing, frontage landscaping, and enhanced perimeter plantings required by TAC will provide effective mitigation. These measures will ensure that the use and value of surrounding properties are not substantially adversely affected.*

3. The strict application of the terms of the zoning ordinance will result in practical difficulties in the use of the subject Property:

Finding: *The parcel is small and irregularly shaped, and is proposed to be developed entirely as a surface parking lot to serve community-oriented uses. Requiring full compliance with both interior and perimeter landscaping standards would significantly reduce the number of available spaces, undermining the purpose of the facility. The variance allows flexibility to provide landscaping in strategic locations, balancing the ordinance's intent with the practical limitations of the site.*

Neighborhood Aerial



Overview



Legend

- Corporate Limits
- Roads
 - I
 - S
 - U
 - <all other values>
- Rights of Way
- Parcels

Parcel ID	30-01-26-103-023.000-018	Alternate ID	30-01-26-103-023.000-018	Owner Address	McCordsville United Methodist Church Inc PO Box 188 McCordsville, IN 46055
Sec/Twp/Rng	n/a	Class	685 - Exempt, Religious		
Property Address	7595 Form St McCordsville	Organization	Organization		
District	MCCORDSVILLE TOWN	Acreage	n/a		
Brief Tax Description	BRADLEY L26				
	(Note: Not to be used on legal documents)				

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Exhibit A

