

PLANNING APPROVAL STAFF REPORT**Date: February 18, 2021****NAME**

Accel Academy at the Festival Centre

LOCATION3725 Airport Blvd
(Southwest corner of Airport Boulevard and Montlimar Drive, extending West to Downtowner Boulevard)**CITY COUNCIL
DISTRICT**

District 5

PRESENT ZONING

B-3, Community Business District

AREA OF PROPERTY

1 Lot / 44.4 ± Acres

CONTEMPLATED USE

Planning Approval to allow a charter secondary school in a B-3, Community Business District.

**TIME SCHEDULE
FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Upon approvals.

**ENGINEERING
COMMENTS**

Engineering has no comments.

No improvements are proposed at this time, thus

**TRAFFIC ENGINEERING
COMMENTS**

The student enrollment exceeds the threshold for number of peak hour trips that would warrant an impact study, however the proposed use is within a developed center that should have available capacity to absorb this traffic. If the site is to develop outside the footprint of the building, Traffic Engineering would require an impact study to accommodate any changes to the site that may have an impact to vehicular and pedestrian impacts.

**URBAN FORESTRY
COMMENTS**

Property to be developed in compliance with state and local laws that pertain to tree preservation and protection on both city and private properties (State Act 2015-116 and City Code Chapters 57 and 64). Private removal of trees in the right-of-way will require approval of the Mobile Tree Commission. Removal of heritage trees from a commercial site will require a tree removal permit.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT
COMMENTS**

All projects within the City Limits of Mobile shall comply with the requirements of the City of Mobile Fire Code Ordinance (2012 International Fire Code). Fire apparatus access is required to be within 150' of all commercial and residential buildings. A

fire hydrant is required to be within 400' of non-sprinkled commercial buildings and 600' of sprinkled commercial buildings.

REMARKS

The applicant is requesting Planning Approval to allow a charter secondary school in a B-3, Community Business District. Planning Approval is required for schools in B-3 districts.

The site has been given a District Center land use designation, per the Future Land Use Plan and Map, adopted on May 18, 2017 by the Planning Commission. The Future Land Use Plan and Map complements and provides additional detail to the Development Framework Maps in the Map for Mobile, adopted by the Planning Commission at its November 5, 2015 meeting.

This designation applies across the city to larger areas of existing mixed-use character or where such character is encouraged. These areas will include moderate to high-density residential (minimum densities of 6 dwelling units per acre) in dynamic, horizontal or vertical mixed use environments, to provide a balance of housing and employment.

District Centers (DC) generally serve several surrounding neighborhoods and may even have a city-wide or region-wide reach. As such, they are often anchored by a major commercial or institutional employer such as a shopping mall or a medical center.

Depending on location and assigned zoning, residential areas in District Centers may incorporate a mix of housing types, ranging from mid-rise multifamily buildings containing apartments and lofts, to townhouses and detached single-family homes. Major civic cultural institutions and public spaces provide regional and neighborhood destinations.

District Centers should be designed to induce pedestrian activity, with high quality streetscapes connecting the different components of a center as well as the center to its surrounding area. DC districts may be served by transit and include development of an intensity and design that supports transit use.

It should be noted that the Future Land Use Plan and Map components of the Map for Mobile Plan are meant to serve as a general guide, not a detailed lot and district plan. In many cases the designation on the new Future Land Use Map may match the existing use of land, but in others the designated land use may differ from what is on the ground today. As such, the Future Land Use Plan and Map allows the Planning Commission and City Council to consider individual cases based on additional information such as the classification request, the surrounding development, the timing of the request, and the appropriateness and compatibility of the proposed use and, where applicable, the zoning classification.

The applicant provided the following information:

Overview

In August 2017, Acceleration (ACCEL) Day and Evening Academy opened at 3100 Cottage Hill Rd Bldg. 3 Mobile, AL 36606. ACCEL is Alabama's first public charter

school. It is currently a 9-12 public high school in its fourth year of operation, serving 330 students. Due to the overwhelming demand for and success of its programs, we requested and were granted a modification to our original charter allowing the school to serve middle school grades. The only obstacle was the limited physical space available at our existing site. In order to grow both the enrollment of the high school grades and add the new middle school grades, we sought a new larger space. We selected the former Virginia College Campus located at 3725 Airport Blvd Space 161 Mobile, AL 36609 in the Festival Center, a site that is less than one mile from the current campus. This new property is zoned a B-3 Community Business. Colleges (such as Virginia College) are allowed, but secondary schools must go before the Planning Commission for approval. Our current location received Planning Commission approval on July 19, 2018.

While the school will serve up to 850 students at its new location, these students will not attend school at the same time. Only a maximum of 800 students will attend day classes during the hours of 7:30am to 3:30pm Monday through Friday. The remaining 50 students will attend class during the evening hours, which are held Monday through Thursday from 4:00pm to 8:30pm. The spacing out of student attendance between day and evening sessions will ensure there is adequate parking on the facility's premises. Please see Tables 1 & 2 for summary counts of staff and students. We ultimately anticipate 850 students and 62 staff members on site at full enrollment.

Table 1 - Student Enrollment

	2020- 2021	2021- 2022	2023- 2024	2024- 2025	2025- 2026	2026- 2027
Enrollment:						
MS Enrollment	0	200	300	300	300	300
HS Day Enrollment	280	300	415	500	500	500
HS Night Enrollment	50	50	60	50	50	50
HS Total Enrollment	330	350	475	550	550	550
Student Enrollment, Combined Schools	330	550	775	850	850	850

Table 2 - Employee Staffing

Content Teachers	0	9	13	13	13	13
Middle School Staff Total	0	16.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5
Unallocated Staff						
Administrative Staff						
CNP Staff	2	5	5	5	5	5
Janitorial Staff	2	4	4	4	4	4
Director of Admin	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total Admin Staff	5	10	10	10	10	10
Content Teachers, Combined Schools	11	22	30	34	34	34
Total Staff, Combined Schools	26	49	58	62	62	62

More information on ACCEL

Accel Day and Evening Academy aims to re-engage and inspire youth to unlock their academic potential by connecting to students' gifts and passions through personalized learning pathways that build students' social and emotional well-being, academic skills, and professional mindsets, so they are prepared to be lifelong learners ready for college, careers, and civic life. Accel focuses on serving uniquely vulnerable populations - those who are disinterested in the traditional learning environment, those who are disconnected from the learning environment, and those who are over-aged, under-credited, or have already dropped out of school. Accel's model is a competency-based, student-centered, blended- learning model, which leverages wraparound services and case management supports to meet students' needs and help all students persist and achieve their goals of graduating college and career ready. Over the last three years, we have graduated more than 250 Mobile County students with more than 80 percent of them accepted to college. For more information, visit www.accelacademymobile.com.

The review required for Planning Approval examines the applicant's location and site plan with regard to transportation, parking and access, public utilities and facilities, traffic congestion and hazard, and to determine if the proposal is in harmony with the orderly and appropriate development of the district.

It is very important to note that the Planning Approval review is site plan specific; therefore *any* future changes to the site plan or to the scope of operations for the school, as approved, by current or future applicants must be submitted for Planning Approval.

The site is located within the Festival Centre, and specifically is the former tenant space of Virginia College, a commercial business college and technical school. The Festival Centre is a Planned Unit Development, which received its original approval in 1986, with subsequent approvals due to site modifications in 1991, 2010 and 2015. As no physical changes are proposed at this time to the site, a new Planned Unit Development application is not required.

The site plan submitted with the application indicates that an additional area, currently undeveloped, will be utilized at some point for a future gymnasium for the school, which when constructed, may require additional approvals.

The applicant proposes to utilize the existing 61,750 \pm square foot building within the overall 431,000 \pm square shopping center across 57 \pm acres. The overall shopping center has approximately 3,000 parking spaces, exceeding the minimum amount required for all uses combined.

The site is bounded to the North, East and West by commercial uses in B-2, Neighborhood Business and B-3, Community Business districts, and to the South by multi-family uses in a B-1, Buffer Business District.

The shopping center has frontage onto the Airport Boulevard service road, Montlimar Drive and Downtowner Boulevard. Multiple access points are provided to each abutting street.

The proposed use in terms of number of students, teachers, required parking and hours of operation would be consistent with the previous uses as well as the other uses within the overall shopping center. Given the design of the shopping center and the multiple points of access to abutting streets, no impacts are anticipated from the proposed school.

RECOMMENDATION

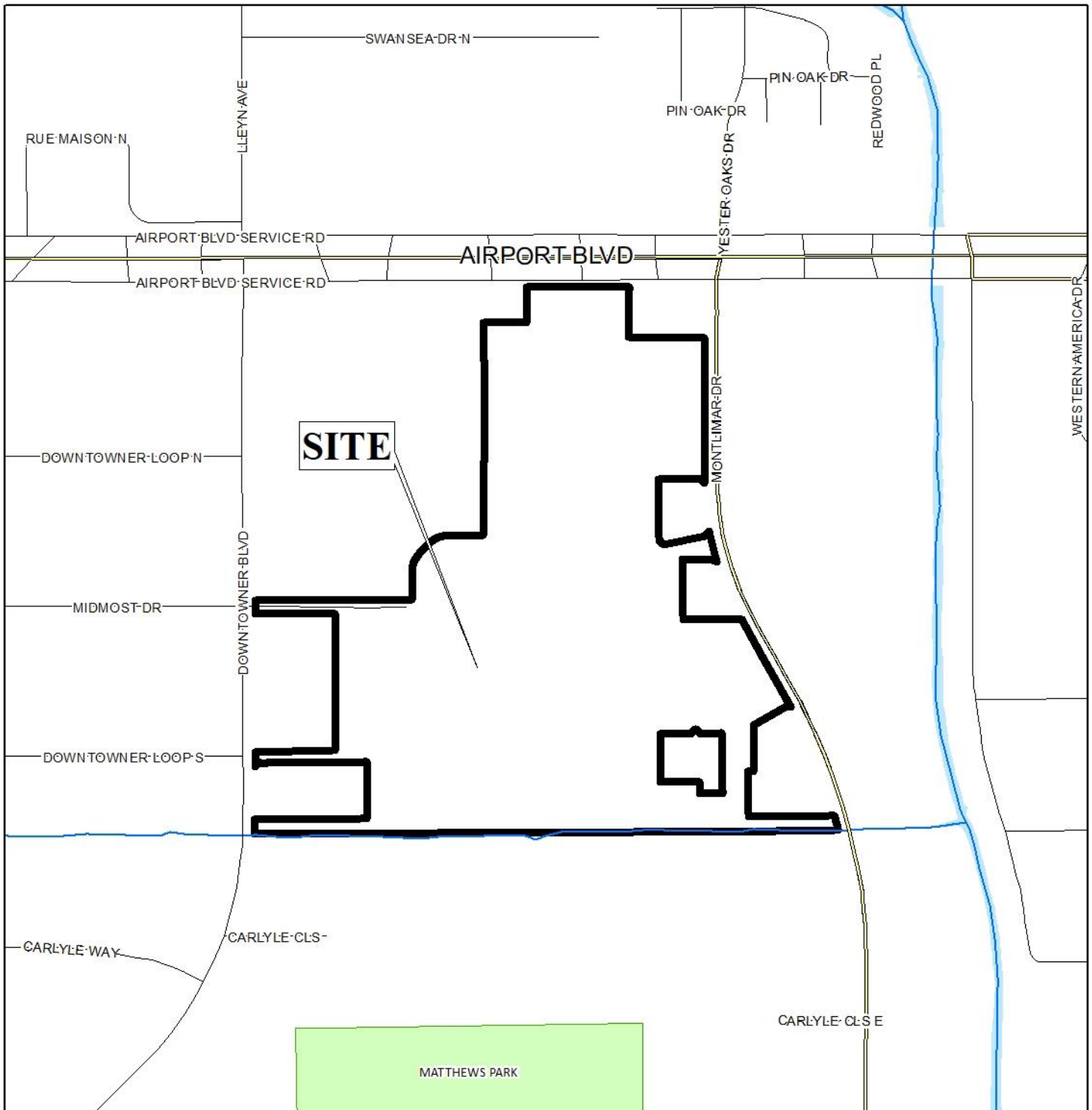
Planning Approval: Staff recommends the following Findings of Fact for Approval:

- a. the proposal will be appropriate with regard to transportation and access, water supply, waste disposal, fire and police protection, and other public facilities, because an existing facility with more than adequate capacity and access will be utilized for the school;
- b. the proposal will not cause undue traffic congestion or create a traffic hazard, because the overall site has multiple points to access to three abutting streets; and
- c. the proposal will be in harmony with the orderly and appropriate development of the district in which the use is located, because the operation of the school in terms of hours, number of people will be similar to existing uses within the shopping center.

The approval should be subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Any future expansion through new building construction is subject to appropriate review for compliance with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance;
- 2) Any proposed change to the scope of operations which would result in an increase in the number of students or a expansion of the hours of operation is subject to appropriate review for compliance with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance,
- 3) Compliance with Traffic Engineering comments (*If the site is to develop outside the footprint of the building, Traffic Engineering would require an impact study to accommodate any changes to the site that may have an impact to vehicular and pedestrian impacts.*);
- 4) Compliance with Urban Forestry comments (*Property to be developed in compliance with state and local laws that pertain to tree preservation and protection on both city and private properties (State Act 2015-116 and City Code Chapters 57 and 64). Private removal of trees in the right-of-way will require approval of the Mobile Tree Commission. Removal of heritage trees from a commercial site will require a tree removal permit.*);
- 5) Compliance with Fire comments (*All projects within the City Limits of Mobile shall comply with the requirements of the City of Mobile Fire Code Ordinance (2012 International Fire Code). Fire apparatus access is required to be within 150' of all commercial and residential buildings. A fire hydrant is required to be within 400' of non-sprinkled commercial buildings and 600' of sprinkled commercial buildings.*); and
- 6) Full compliance with all other municipal codes and ordinances.

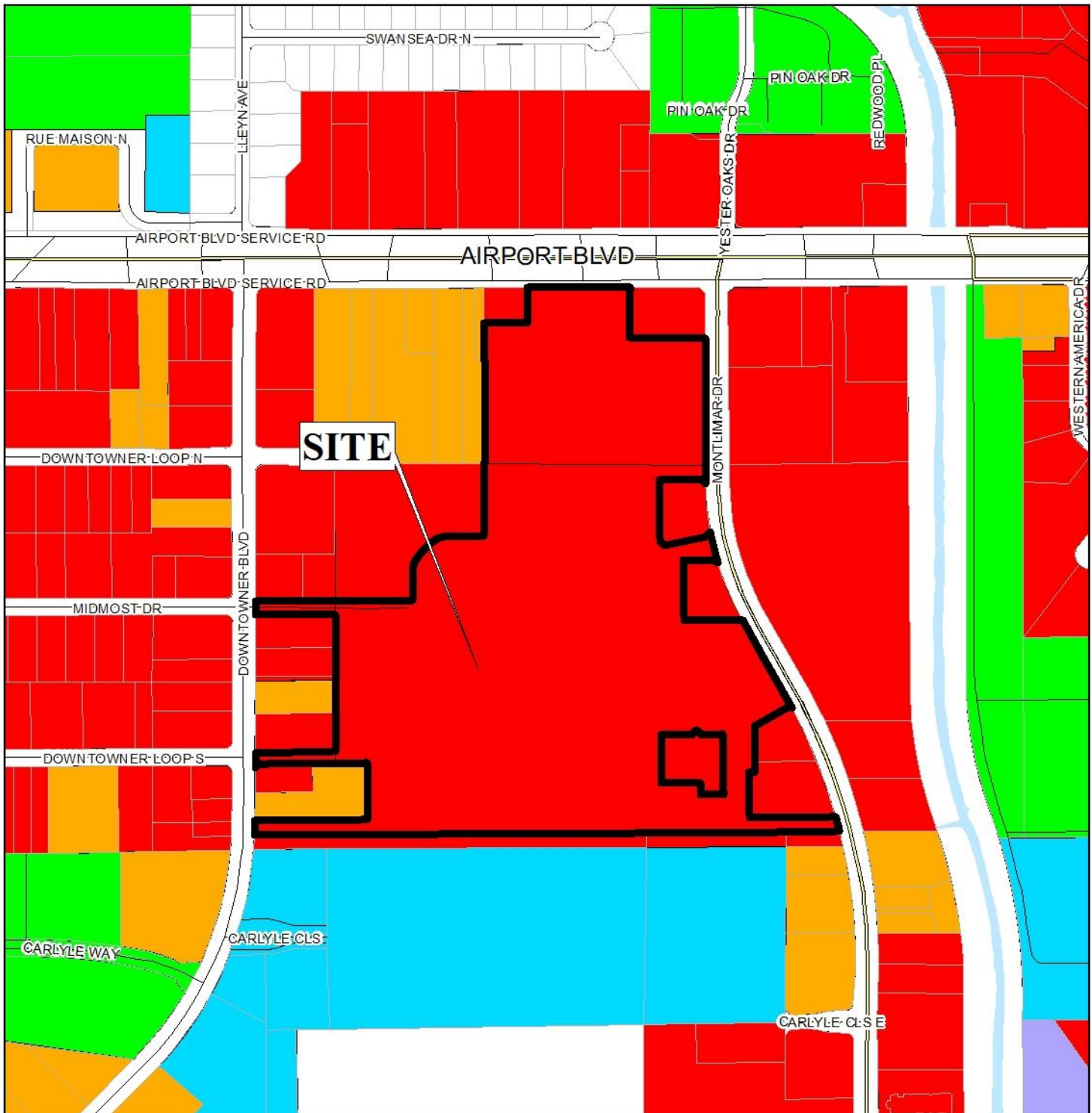
LOCATOR MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER 6 DATE February 18, 2021
APPLICANT Accel Academy at the Festival Centre
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LOCATOR ZONING MAP



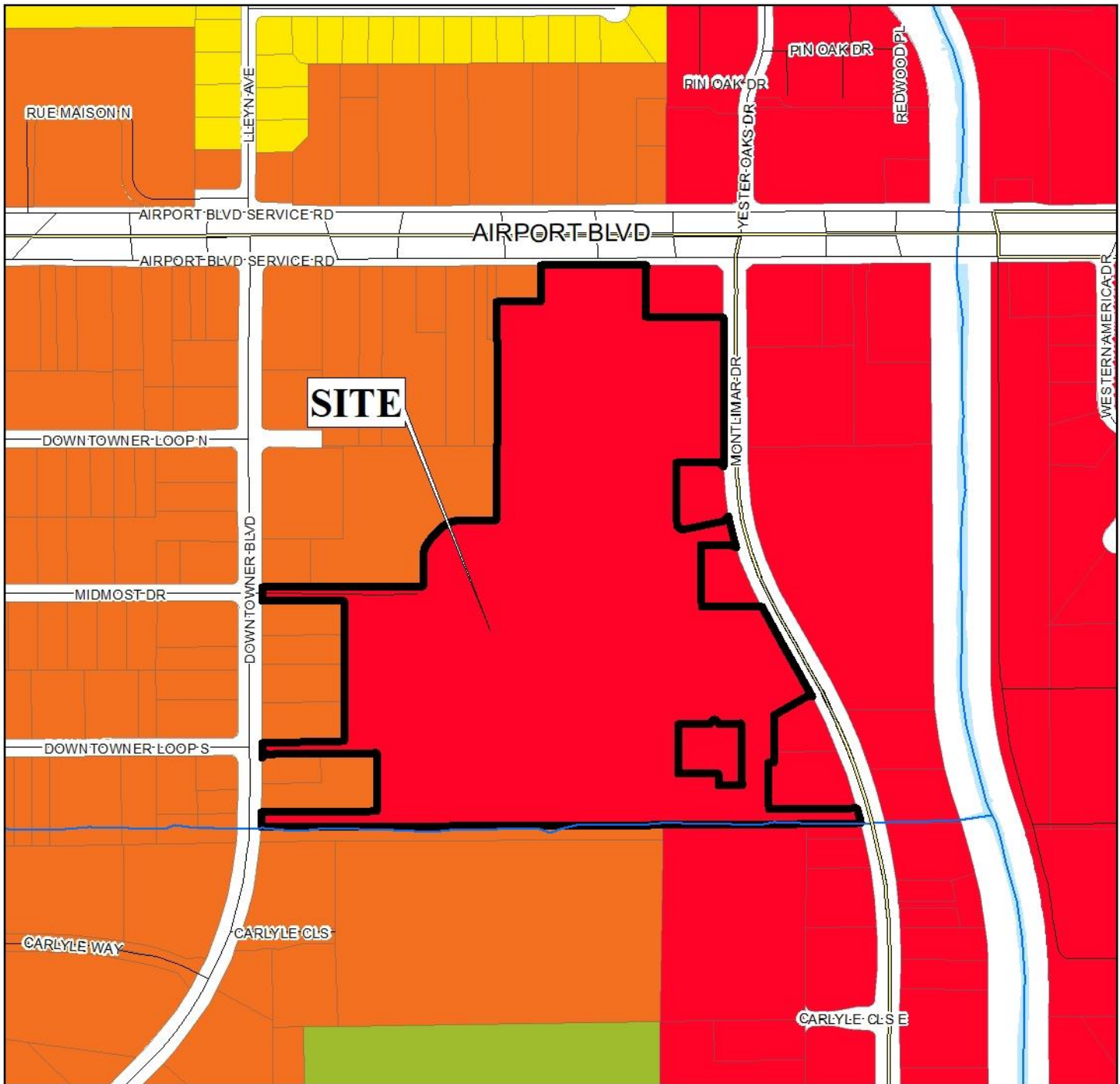
APPLICATION NUMBER 6 DATE February 18, 2021

APPLICANT Accel Academy at the Festival Centre

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FLUM LOCATOR MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER 6 DATE February 18, 2021

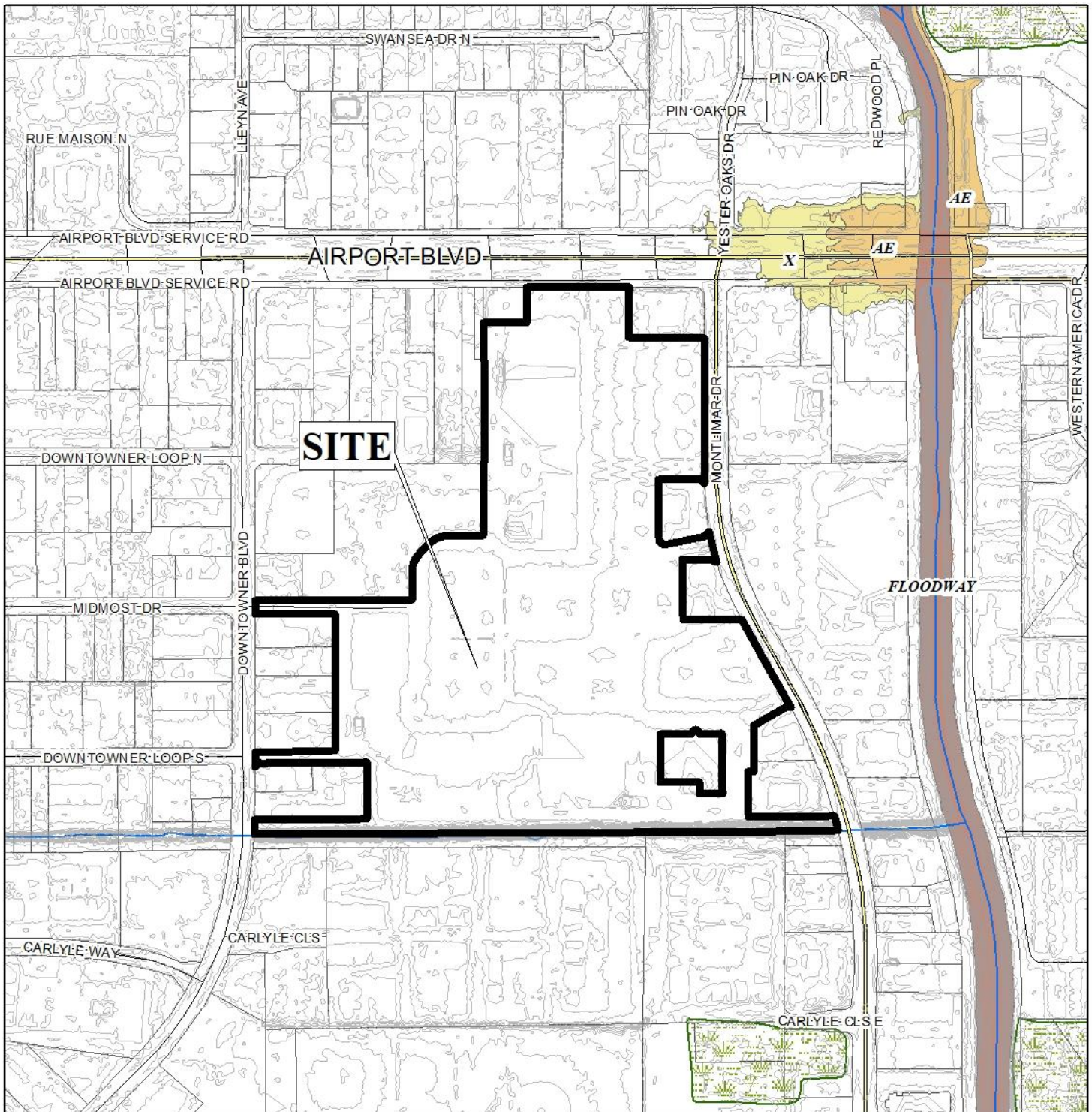
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- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Low Density Residential | Neighborhood Center - Traditional | Downtown Waterfront | Parks & Open Space |
| Mixed Density Residential | Neighborhood Center - Suburban | Light Industry | Water Dependent |
| Downtown | Traditional Corridor | Heavy Industry | |
| District Center | Mixed Commercial Corridor | Institutional | |



ENVIRONMENTAL LOCATOR MAP



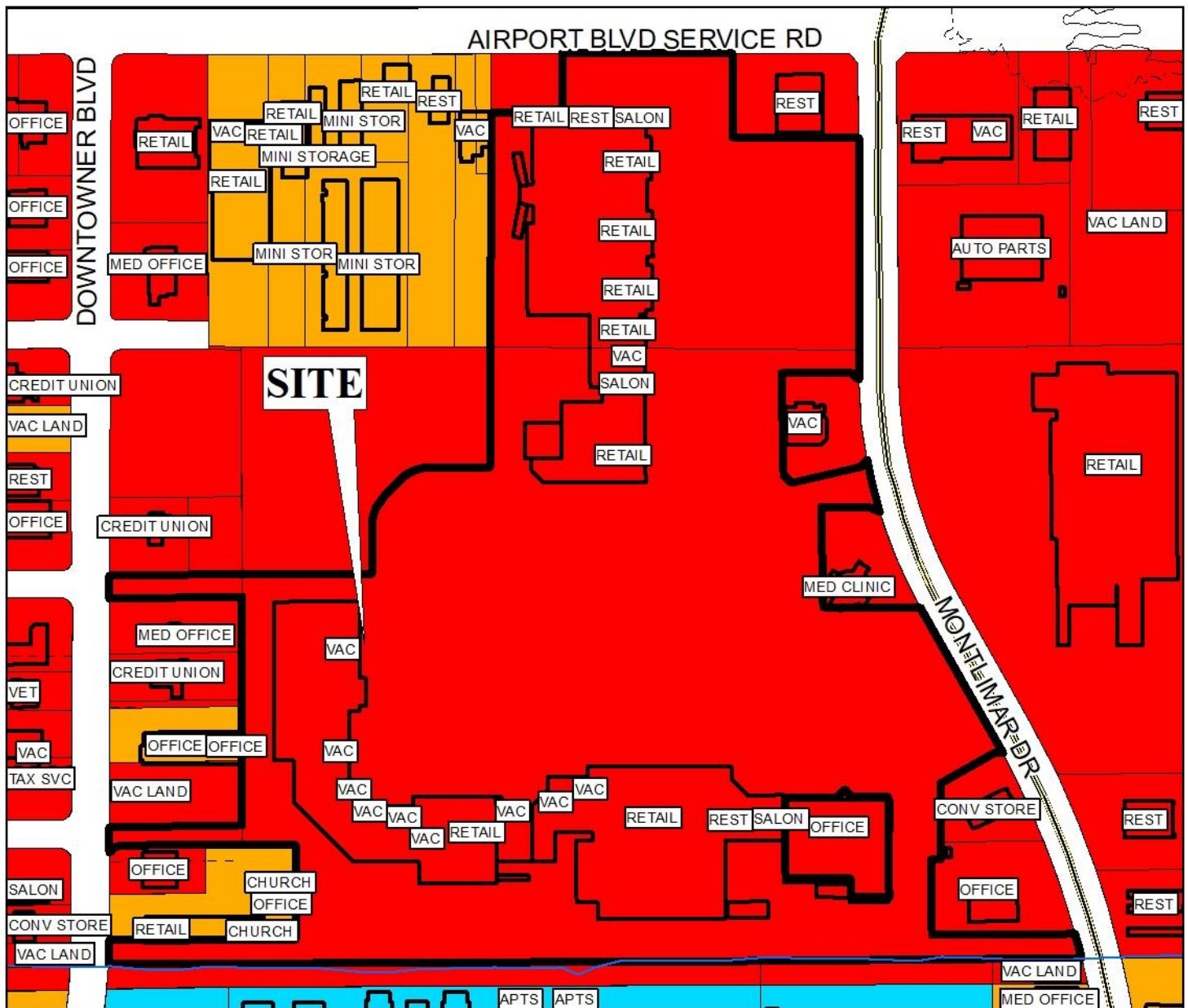
APPLICATION NUMBER 6 DATE February 18, 2021

APPLICANT Accel Academy at the Festival Centre

REQUEST Planning Approval



PLANNING COMMISSION VICINITY MAP - EXISTING ZONING



The site is surrounded by commercial units.

APPLICATION NUMBER 6 DATE February 18, 2021

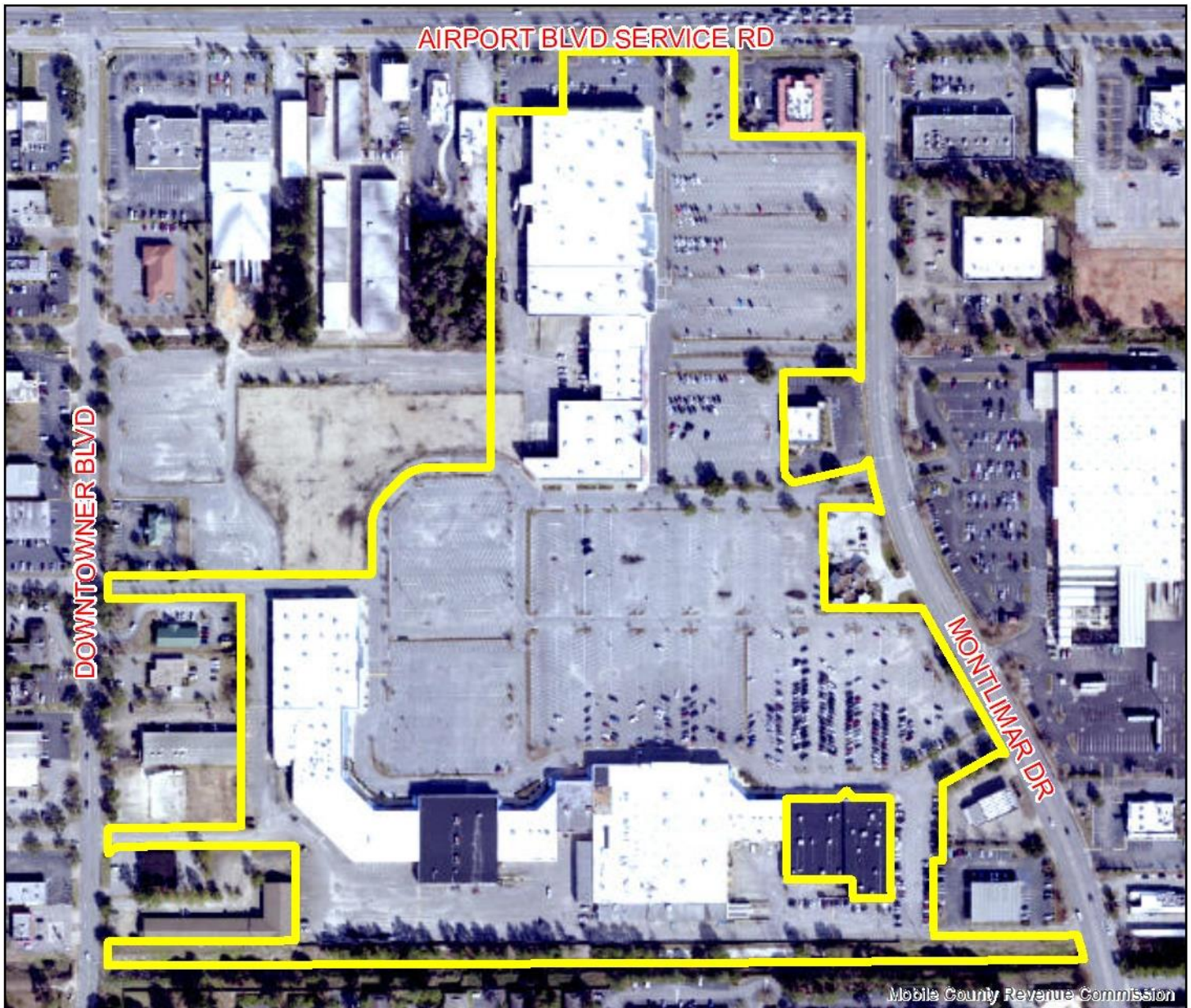
APPLICANT Accel Academy at the Festival Centre

REQUEST Planning Approval

R-A	R-3	T-B	B-2	B-5	MUN	SD-WH	T5.1
R-1	R-B	B-1	B-3	I-1	OPEN	T3	T5.2
R-2	H-B	LB-2	B-4	I-2	SD	T4	T6



PLANNING COMMISSION VICINITY MAP - EXISTING AERIAL



The site is surrounded by commercial units.

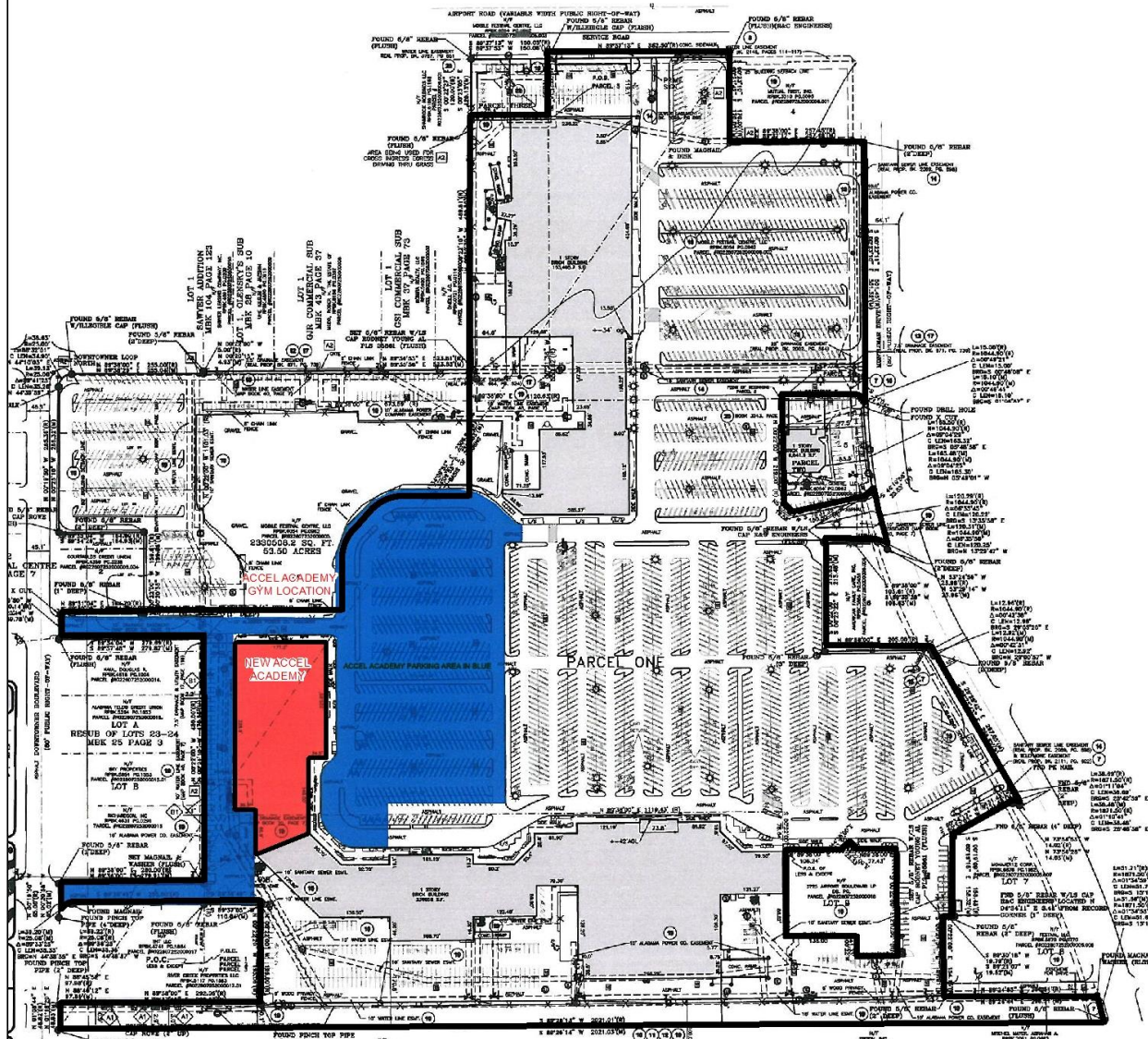
APPLICATION NUMBER 6 DATE February 18, 2021

APPLICANT Accel Academy at the Festival Centre

REQUEST Planning Approval



SITE PLAN



The site plan illustrates the proposed new Accel Academy location, and parking for the academy.

APPLICATION NUMBER 6 DATE February 18, 2021

APPLICANT Accel Academy at the Festival Centre

REQUEST Planning Approval



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