

Cedar Ridge – Application Report

11/26/2024 – W&A File #24-00284

REQUEST SUMMARY

Applicant:	W&A Engineering, Georgia
Location:	450 & 460 Gaines School Road
Tax Parcels:	233D1 B001 & 233D1 B011
Size:	7.89 Acres
Current Use:	Vacant
Current Zoning:	C-O & RS-15
Proposed Zoning:	C-N & RM-2 (PD)
Current FLU:	Main Street Business & Traditional Neighborhood
Proposed FLU:	Main Street Business

The purpose of this request is to rezone two (2) parcels currently zoned C-O (Commercial Office) and RS-15 (Single-Family Residential) to C-N (Commercial Neighborhood) and RM-2 (PD) (Mixed-Density Residential, Planned Development) for the purpose of constructing 69 single-family attached dwellings, 10 accessory dwelling units (ADU) and one (1) 9,745-square foot commercial building. The request includes an amendment to the Future Land Use designation for the subject properties from *Traditional Neighborhood* and *Main-Street Business* to *Main-Street Business* for the entire site. This request includes seven (7) waivers from code standards and seeks two Special Uses to broaden the limited uses permitted in the two (2) overlay districts that govern this site.

EXISTING SITE

The subject property consists of two (2) undeveloped parcels (Tax Parcels 233D1 B001 and 233D1 B011, 7.07 and 0.89-acres, respectively), located on Gaines School Road in Athens. The site also fronts Sunnyview Road and Springtree Road. The property is surrounded by other commercial and residential uses. The properties directly North-East include an office building zoned C-O and residential housing zoned RS-15. The parcels surrounding the North-West of the site are all neighborhoods zoned RS-15. The parcels along the South-West of the site include Athens Center for Massage Therapy and Merryn Walker: Allstate Insurance, both zoned C-O. The parcels across the street on the South-East side of the property include Athens Medical Services (C-O) and commercial office buildings (C-O). The zoning of 460 Gaines School (the smaller of the two subject properties) is entirely C-O, while 450 Gaines School is split between C-O and RS-15. Both properties are within the Airport and the Gaines School Road Overlay Districts.

The tract contains a scattering of tree canopy, with most trees located at the immediate perimeter of the site. Per the Athens-Clarke County Environmental Areas Map, the property contains no creeks or riparian areas.



Figure 1: 2021 Aerial view of the subject property on Gaines School Road

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Vision

The proposed development is a moderately-dense, walkable, mixed-use residential community, with neighborhood scale commercial uses located along a portion of the Gaines School Road frontage. The intent is to create a close-knit community of single-family attached homes on fee-simple lots and add much-needed residential development to a growing city with a shortage of available and obtainable housing stock. Neighborhood connectivity would be further enhanced by the proposed public extension of Woody Lane, improving the existing street grid for the development and its vicinity. The proposal includes a sizeable park space adjacent to the Woody Lane extension for community enjoyment.

Dwellings

This request includes a total of 79 residential units, which consist of a combination of two different townhome variations (two- and three-story) with a handful of accessory dwelling units (ADU). All townhomes are alley-loaded and face either a public street or the public green. The proposed residential unit breakdown is as follows:

Townhome 'A' (2-Story)	35 Units
Townhome 'B' (3-story)	34 Units
<u>Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)</u>	<u>10 Units</u>
Total:	79 Units

Commercial

The request includes a 9,745-square foot commercial building, with as many as eight (8) separate tenant spaces along Gaines School Road at its intersection with Sunnyview Road. The specific tenants have not yet been established, but in the interest of community cohesiveness, a Special Use request to broaden the possible retail uses (otherwise specifically limited by the Gaines School Road Corridor Overlay), and to permit a potential restaurant/bar (which requires Special Use approval in the Airport Overlay).

Connectivity

The proposed plan includes the extension of Woody Lane, bisecting the site and aligning with the intersection with Ponderosa Drive. The request to permit restaurant and bar uses in the commercial portion ties into the theme of connectivity, where restaurants and bars often serve as important third places, helping to build relationships, promoting conversation, and ultimately creating a sense of community.

Parking

In an effort to reduce the amount of surface parking, all townhome units are self-parked with a garage, accessed from alleys at the rear of each townhome building. These units also provide driveways to the garages that could serve as additional guest parking for the residences. There are 37 parallel spaces depicted along the extension of Woody Lane and another 22 along Sunnyview Road. Three additional surface lots containing a total of 40 parking spaces to serve the ADUs, commercial tenants, and guests of the residents are also shown. The request includes a minor waiver for a reduction in the calculation of parking requirements for restaurants and bars.

Utilities and Public Services

The site is currently served by public water and sewer. An extension of the public sewer main along Springtree Rd. will be required to bring the service to the site. Residential solid waste collection will be provided by a licensed provider. Individual lot owners will be responsible for establishing their own service, with commercial unit service provided by property managers in compliance with the Dumpster Service requirements found in Sec. 5-2-16(a)(1) of the Athens-Clarke County Code of Ordinances.

Public Transportation

Athens Transit Bus Routes 22 and 25 serve the property. A bus stop is located along the Gaines School Road frontage and two additional bus stops are located directly across the street at Ponderosa Drive and at Civitan Club Drive.

Environmental and Stormwater

The Athens-Clarke County Environmental Areas Map does not show any creeks or riparian areas on the site. The property is not located within a Flood Hazard Area, per FEMA maps and contains no wetlands, according to the National Wetlands Inventory.

The proposed planned development will comply with all state and local stormwater regulations. Stormwater Management will be handled primarily if not entirely through underground facilities and shall be designed to protect the watershed from pollution and erosion. The design shall be in accordance with the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual and all ACC regulations. Final details and design of stormwater structures will be completed during the site development/civil design phase of the project. The general locations of facilities depicted on the site plan are accurate as of the date of this submittal but may need to be moved to accommodate the final grading, soil conditions, or other factors that could impact feasibility.

ZONING

Currently, the properties are zoned C-O (Commercial Office) and RS-15 (Single-Family Residential). The current zoning breakdown of the entire tract is approximately 4.9 acres zoned C-O, with the remaining 2.99 acres zoned RS-15. The request is to rezone the properties to RM-2 (Multi-Family Residential) and C-N (Commercial Neighborhood), with 0.94-acres zoned C-N and 6.95-acres of RM-2. While there are no C-N zoned properties immediately adjacent to the site, there are multiple properties with a C-N designation further down Gaines School Road, down Cedar Shoals Drive, and down Lexington Road. The Oaks apartments at Maison Drive, across Gaines School Road, near the subject property are zoned RM-2. The request to rezone to C-N comes from a desire to broaden the available uses, as those permitted by the C-N are more fitting to an integrated

commercial space within a neighborhood, than those allowed by C-O. The request for RM-2 is to permit a moderately dense residential development.

COMPATIBILITY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The current Future Land Use designations for the site are *Main Street Business* and *Traditional Neighborhood*, lining up with the split between the C-O and RS-15 zones. The request is to change the Future Land Use designation for the entire site to *Main Street Business*.

The 2023 Comprehensive Plan defines a Traditional Neighborhood as follows:

"These are medium density neighborhoods with traditional qualities including well-connected street systems, sidewalks, street trees, and a variety of housing types. Homes are often built close to the street with front porches. Garages are set back farther than the homes and porches. Traditional Neighborhood areas support single-family residences, duplexes which resemble large homes, and townhouses. Strict design standards should be implemented to ensure appropriateness of design and to protect neighborhood character. Limited commercial and other non-residential uses designed at a neighborhood scale are encouraged, but only in areas close to principal and minor arterial routes that have good access to transit."

The 2023 Comprehensive Plan defines Main Street Business as follows:

"These are commercial areas where development of a storefront commercial type is encouraged. The uses are generally small-scale, but larger-scale uses can be integrated within a Main Street Business classification if a small-scale storefront is developed along the street facade, with the larger development located behind. Larger-scale uses should only be developed in instances where they are compatible with the adjacent uses. Retail and office uses should dominate the ground floors of the Main Street Business facades, with residential uses encouraged on second and third stories. Auto-oriented uses, such as vehicle repair and maintenance, drive-through restaurants, and vehicle sales, are not included in this designation. Walkability and pedestrian scale are important and the development should be oriented to the street with sidewalks, street trees, and pedestrian access provided."

The proposed lot layout and overall character of the proposed development aligns closely with the described character of the existing and proposed Future Land Use designations. The residential portion of the proposed development aligns with *Traditional Neighborhood* in all ways, but one – zoning compatibility. *Traditional Neighborhood* is not considered to be compatible with RM-2 zoning, which is the key to achieving the residential density necessary for the success of this development.

The *Main Street Business* designation, in contrast, is considered to be compatible with both RM-2 and C-N zoning. Extending the *Main Street Business* designation to the entirety of the site will allow the proposed development, which epitomizes *Traditional Neighborhood* development type in all but name.

Relevant Community Goals, Strategies, and Policies

The need for quality, obtainable housing that can be a catalyst to building wealth and lasting value – as well as the need to improve connectivity and sense of community have been identified as needs for Athens-Clarke County since the 2018 Comprehensive Plan. The proposed Planned Development would advance these goals in a meaningful way.

- Goal: Housing options that meet the varied needs of the community, including housing for families and a diverse workforce. The housing stock will provide quality options with a variety of types, prices, and locations.
 - Strategy: Increase the amount of and provide access to affordable housing
 - Strategy: Create quality housing for seniors

- Policy: Create quality housing for seniors, including the possible increased use of accessory dwelling units.
- Goal: Greater prosperity for the entire community – individuals, businesses and local government – through diverse, quality jobs and a ready workforce. This means that entrepreneurship and small businesses flourish in a collaborative environment, that unemployment and underemployment are reduced, and that full-time workers are able to meet daily needs and live in assured self-sufficiency (affording housing, food and life necessities).
 - Strategy: Promote and support the growth of the industries that make Athens unique, including music, art, food, film and other creative endeavors.
- Goal: Our neighborhoods will be vibrant, safe, and stable places where residents interact with each other and have access to a range of diverse housing types, public spaces, and services.
 - Strategy: Apply urban design and aesthetic standards to neighborhoods and other developments as they are developed or redeveloped. These standards can reflect historic character, support walkability and active living, and incorporate open space and ecological landscaping.
 - Policy: Expand sidewalk network in neighborhoods and other infrastructure such as lights, trees, neighborhood businesses, and basic infrastructure for neighborhoods.
- Goal: Residents should feel strong connections to each other and be engaged in the community's overall well-being.
 - Strategy: Encourage activities that strengthen individual neighborhood identity and establish connections between neighborhood groups and the broader community.

REQUESTED WAIVERS FROM ORDINANCE STANDARDS

The Planned Development request seeks waivers from the following code requirements:

1. **8-7-15 (Table 1)** –A waiver from the requirement to maintain a percentage of conserved canopy (25% in RM-2 and 15% in C-N) to 0%. A waiver from the conserved canopy requirement is requested in order to create a moderately dense development without the use of retaining walls, which necessitates grading the entirety of the site and eliminates the opportunity for tree save on a minimally wooded site. The master plan depicts canopy planted on the site in the form of street trees and within greenspaces where possible. The project shall comply with the requirements for total canopy.
2. **9-12-6-E-2** – A waiver from the requirement to provide either a landscape buffer strip or buffer wall between the proposed commercial building and the residential uses on-site. The goal of the development is to foster a sense of community between the residential and commercial uses of the mixed density site. Since the site lies within the Gaines School Road Corridor Overlay, the code requires a commercial buffer from residential uses. A waiver from this requirement is requested because adding a 30-foot buffer (or a 15-foot buffer with a wall) would diminish the connectivity and cohesiveness sought by this request, as well as infringe upon the lawn greenspace as depicted on the plans, intended for the enjoyment of the community.
3. **9-8-3** – A waiver from the requirement for max per lot coverage of 65% in RM-2 to allow for maximum coverage of 66% for the entire project. The maximum individual lot coverage for RM-2 zoned properties is 65%. Due to the moderate density of this development and the use of alleys to create an appealing reloaded scenario the overall lot coverage for the entire development must be increased to a maximum of 66%.

4. **9-12-6** – A waiver from the requirement for max lot coverage per lot of 60% in Gaines School Road Corridor to allow for a maximum coverage of 71% for the entire development. The maximum lot coverage for developments within the Gaines School Road Corridor overlay is 60%. A waiver is requested for this limitation due to site confinements and the desire to create a moderately-dense in-town development.
5. **9-30-2** – A waiver to change the method for calculating parking for Restaurants and Bars from 1 per 100 or 1 per four seats, whichever is less, to 1 per 300 or 1 per four seats, whichever is less. The minimum number of parking spaces required for restaurants, bars, etc. is determined by seating or square footage, whichever results in fewer required spaces. Different restaurant tenants require different numbers of seats, so not knowing a specific restaurant tenant in advance requires the developer to use the square footage figure instead – which almost always ends up requiring more parking spaces than would be required once the tenant and seating is ultimately established. This Planned Development includes a request to change the calculation for establishing minimum parking spaces for restaurants and bars from “one space per four seats or one space per 100 square feet of gross leasable floor area, whichever is less” to “one space per four seats or one space per 300 square feet of gross leasable floor area, whichever is less.”
6. **9-25-8-C-1-b** – A waiver from the requirement that *“All buildings located within 75 feet of a public or private street must include front entry porches oriented towards the street and provide direct access to said street.”* – The site design configuration creates a neighborhood feel with vehicles parked at the rears of buildings, often concealed in private car garages. The road network needed to achieve this desirable parking solution requires parking alleys are connected via side loop streets to the main street frontage (true frontage). The result is that a handful of side elevations become collaterally “fronts” while connecting alleys to main streets. The design team requests to waive the handful of incidents noted to avoid having two front door conditions on a corner of the noted building(s). Further, side elevations are intended to be further adorned with additional landscaping and trees, adding to the overall aesthetic of the development.
7. **9-25-8-C-1-c** – A waiver from this requirement which states *“Buildings which are located within 75 feet of a front yard property line or 20 feet of any yard adjacent to a public or private street shall have at least 25 percent of the wall facing the street in functional window and functional door areas.”* The units noted in the waiver request from **9-25-8.C-1-b** are similarly affected by section **9-25-8-C-1-c** and would typically be considered a side, non-fronting elevations except for the need to loop from parking alleys to main streets. The design team requests a reduction from 25% to a range of 12-17% for the side elevations affected.

REQUESTED SPECIAL USES

The subject property is within both the Airport Overlay and the Gaines School Road Corridor Overlay. The Airport Overlay ordinance prohibits restaurants/bars and single-family attached housing except when approved as a Special Use. While the Gaines School Road Corridor Overlay ordinance restricts the permissible Retail Sales and Services use category to a handful of specific uses. The proposed development contains two Special Use requests, as follows:

1. **9-13-4-C-2** – A special use is requested to allow Single-Family Attached Dwellings and Restaurants/Bars within the Airport Overlay.
2. **9-12-6-C** – Retail Sales and Service uses within the Gaines School Road Corridor Overlay are limited to a short list of specific retail and service activities. A special use is requested to permit additional Retail Sales and Service uses beyond those specifically permitted within the overlay. All other uses in the underlying zone (which, in this case, would be C-N) are permitted. The specific additional Retail Uses requested are:
 - a. Pharmacy
 - b. Clothing and/or shoe sales
 - c. Fitness studio
 - d. Real estate office
 - e. Music instrument sales/lessons

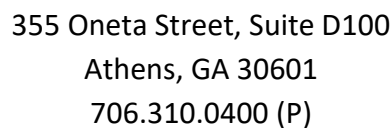
ARCHITECTURE

The proposed architectural elevations and renderings depict a diversity of attractive building styles and types within the development. Of the two-story residences, there are four different building types and two different building types for both the three-story residences and the accessory dwelling units. The elevations depict a mixture of hipped and gabled asphalt roofs, with fiber cement and batten siding, and porches. The commercial renderings depict a single-story structure with multiple offsets for variety and visual interest, large clusters of windows, and a large covered outdoor seating area.

CONCLUSION

A primary concern of modern cities is avoiding sprawl, while providing housing that has been largely underbuilt for the past few decades. This can be accomplished by finding and seizing upon the opportunities for density when it is available. Doubly so, when the opportunity presented is mixed use and a natural fit into its surroundings. The Cedar Ridge development is one such opportunity. A moderately dense, neighborhood-scale development on a prominent and underutilized property on one of the principal corridors of East Athens that will contribute to the work required to close the massive gulf between housing demand and housing availability.

TRAFFIC GENERATION STUDY
MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT
450 GAINES SCHOOL ROAD
ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY, GEORGIA
NOVEMBER 13, 2024



1.1 Trip Generation

To account for traffic generated by the new development at 450 Gaines School Road, the Institute of Transportation Engineers provides a TripGen Web-Based Application in which calculated trips are sorted by development type.

This development will consist of various 2-story and 3-story townhomes with accessory dwelling units and commercial space. Trip generation for the proposed development was calculated based upon the following land uses:

- Land Use 220: Multifamily Housing (Low-Rise)
- Land Use 710: General Office Building

The site is expected to generate a net daily of **636** weekday trips with a 50-50 distribution and a maximum of **52** weekday AM peak hour trips and **59** weekday PM hour trips. The results of this trip generation are shown in **Table 1**. The ITE data plots are attached to this report.

Table 1: Trip Generation

Land Use (Intensity)	ITE Code	Daily Traffic (Weekday)			AM Peak (Weekday)			PM Peak (Weekday)		
		Entry	Exit	Total	Entry	Exit	Total	Entry	Exit	Total
Multifamily Housing (Low-Rise) – 79 Units	220	266	266	532	9	28	37	28	17	45
General Office Building – 9,600 SF	710	52	52	104	13	2	15	2	12	14
Total		318	318	636	22	30	52	30	29	59

Land Use: 220

Multifamily Housing (Low-Rise)

Description

Low-rise multifamily housing includes apartments, townhouses, and condominiums located within the same building with at least three other dwelling units and that have two or three floors (levels). Various configurations fit this description, including walkup apartment, mansion apartment, and stacked townhouse.

- A walkup apartment typically is two or three floors in height with dwelling units that are accessed by a single or multiple entrances with stairways and hallways.
- A mansion apartment is a single structure that contains several apartments within what appears to be a single-family dwelling unit.
- A fourplex is a single two-story structure with two matching dwelling units on the ground and second floors. Access to the individual units is typically internal to the structure and provided through a central entry and stairway.
- A stacked townhouse is designed to match the external appearance of a townhouse. But, unlike a townhouse dwelling unit that only shares walls with an adjoining unit, the stacked townhouse units share both floors and walls. Access to the individual units is typically internal to the structure and provided through a central entry and stairway.

Multifamily housing (mid-rise) (Land Use 221), multifamily housing (high-rise) (Land Use 222), affordable housing (Land Use 223), and off-campus student apartment (low-rise) (Land Use 225) are related land uses.

Land Use Subcategory

Data are presented for two subcategories for this land use: (1) not close to rail transit and (2) close to rail transit. A site is considered close to rail transit if the walking distance between the residential site entrance and the closest rail transit station entrance is ½ mile or less.

Additional Data

For the three sites for which both the number of residents and the number of occupied dwelling units were available, there were an average of 2.72 residents per occupied dwelling unit.

For the two sites for which the numbers of both total dwelling units and occupied dwelling units were available, an average of 96.2 percent of the total dwelling units were occupied.

The technical appendices provide supporting information on time-of-day distributions for this land use. The appendices can be accessed through either the ITETripGen web app or the trip

DATA STATISTICS

Land Use:	Multifamily Housing (Low-Rise) - Not Close to Rail Transit (220) Click for Description and Data Plots
Independent Variable:	Dwelling Units
Time Period:	Weekday
Setting/Location:	General Urban/Suburban
Trip Type:	Vehicle
Number of Studies:	22
Avg. Num. of Dwelling Units:	229
Average Rate:	6.74
Range of Rates:	2.46 - 12.50
Standard Deviation:	1.79
Fitted Curve Equation:	$T = 6.41(X) + 75.31$
R²:	0.86
Directional Distribution:	50% entering, 50% exiting
Calculated Trip Ends:	Average Rate: 532 (Total), 266 (Entry), 266 (Exit)
	Fitted Curve: 582 (Total), 291 (Entry), 291 (Exit)

Multifamily Housing (Low-Rise) Not Close to Rail Transit (220)

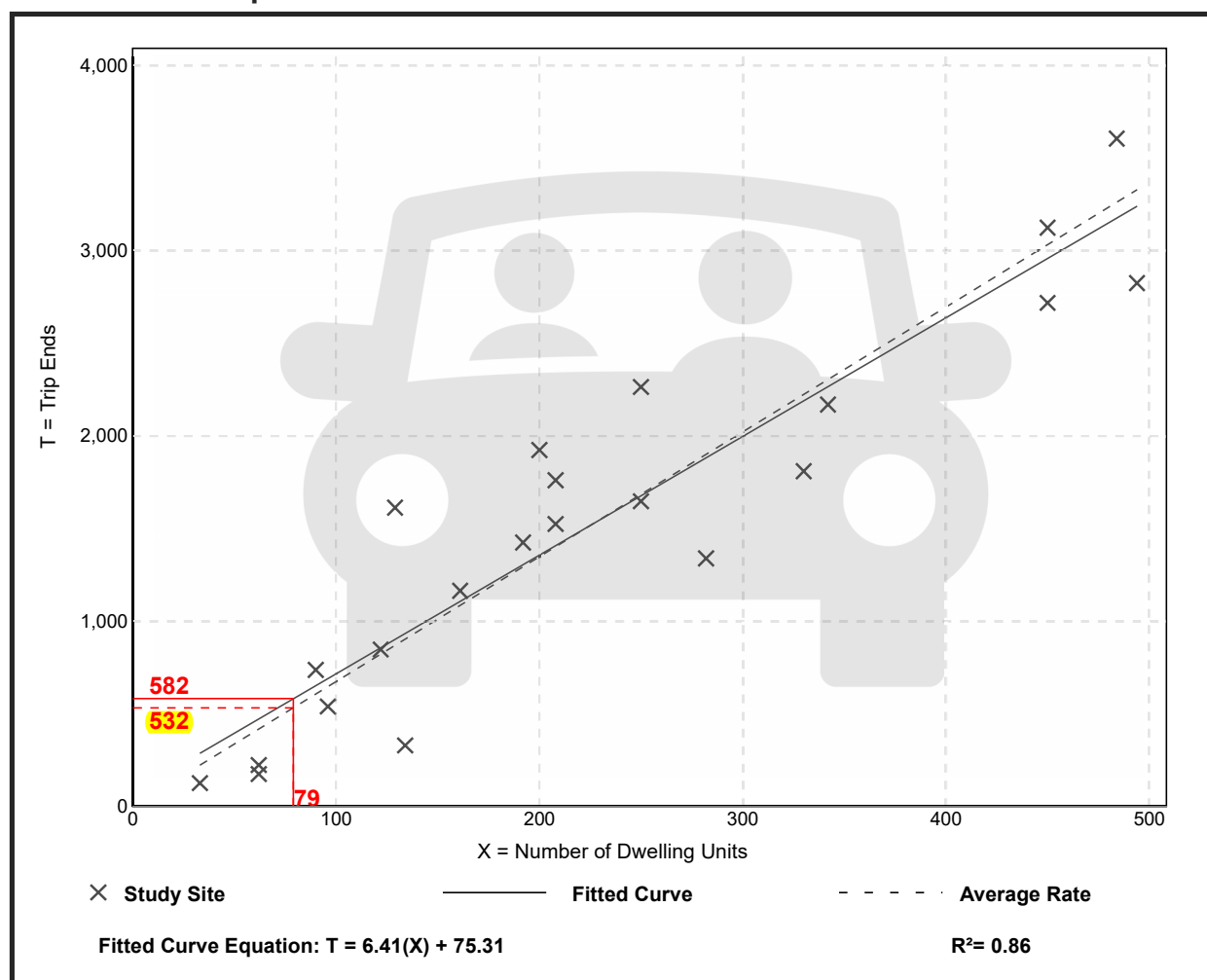
Vehicle Trip Ends vs: Dwelling Units
On a: Weekday

Setting/Location: General Urban/Suburban
Number of Studies: 22
Avg. Num. of Dwelling Units: 229
Directional Distribution: 50% entering, 50% exiting

Vehicle Trip Generation per Dwelling Unit

Average Rate	Range of Rates	Standard Deviation
6.74	2.46 - 12.50	1.79

Data Plot and Equation



Multifamily Housing (Low-Rise) Not Close to Rail Transit (220)

Vehicle Trip Ends vs: Dwelling Units
On a: Weekday,
AM Peak Hour of Generator

Setting/Location: General Urban/Suburban
Number of Studies: 40
Avg. Num. of Dwelling Units: 234
Directional Distribution: 24% entering, 76% exiting

DATA STATISTICS	
Land Use:	Multifamily Housing (Low-Rise) - Not Close to Rail Transit (220) Click for Description and Data Plots
Independent Variable:	Dwelling Units
Time Period:	Weekday AM Peak Hour of Generator
Setting/Location:	General Urban/Suburban
Trip Type:	Vehicle
Number of Studies:	40
Avg. Num. of Dwelling Units:	234
Average Rate:	0.47
Range of Rates:	0.25 - 0.98
Standard Deviation:	0.16
Fitted Curve Equation:	$T = 0.35(X) + 28.13$
R ² :	0.76
Directional Distribution:	24% entering, 76% exiting
Calculated Trip Ends:	Average Rate: 37 (Total), 9 (Entry), 28 (Exit) Fitted Curve: 56 (Total), 13 (Entry), 43 (Exit)

Vehicle Trip Generation per Dwelling Unit

Average Rate	Range of Rates	Standard Deviation
0.47	0.25 - 0.98	0.16

Data Plot and Equation

