

Southern Mill D900 Condos Planned Development Amendment Narrative

5/30/2025

Applicant:	W&A Engineering, Georgia for Ratman SM LLC
Location:	355 Oneta Street, Suite D900
Tax Parcel:	114B2 D009 (part of 114B019)
Size:	18.174 acres
Current Use:	Vacant /Undeveloped
Current Zoning:	C-N (PD)
Proposed Zoning:	C-N (PD)
Current FLU:	Mixed Density Residential
Proposed FLU:	Mixed Density Residential

Introduction

The purpose of this submittal is to amend the approved Planned Development (PD) which consists of 18.174 acres located at 355 Oneta Street in Athens-Clarke County (ACC) Georgia. The changes being requested are to modify the binding site plan and to increase the cap on office space from 55,000 sf to 85,000 sf.

Development History

The Southern Mill site is a previously abandoned mill site located at 355 Oneta Street. The mill was started at the beginning of the 20th century and was originally known as the Southern Manufacturing Company. Over the years the site has changed names as it transitioned between different sowing companies. Manufacturing on site ended in the late 1990s.

The property consists of four main structures (Buildings A, B, C, and D) and associated parking. Where the structures were once severely dilapidated and on the brink of irreversible deterioration, the Southern Mill site is now a thriving, mixed-use development boasting a boutique hotel, the State's most popular craft brewery, and two of Athens' most renowned and innovative new restaurants, alongside several offices. There have been numerous amendments to the original Planned Development over the years, as the prospects for different economic sectors and local demand changes. These periodic changes have allowed this site to become the successful development that it is today.

Proposed Development

Unit D900, located at the western edge of Building D, is currently vacant. It is the last portion of the site that embodies the property's former status as an industrial ruin. The façade walls remain, open to the sky, without accompanying floors or a roof. Due to the topographical change on the site, the northern façade is the second floor of the building. The lower level of the building is in line with the ground floor of the southern side of Building D – like many of the other units in that portion of the building.

The proposal is to construct four levels of residential condominiums above ground level, resident-only parking. As this is only a portion of a much larger overall structure that contains multiple businesses on the ground floor (as established by the southern façade), the proposed ground floor parking is far below the 50% limitation found in 9-10-2-L(1), therefore no relief is requested or required. The proposed addition, when accounting for the average grade, tops out at 65' at top of parapet wall.

The proposed building addition will contain twelve compact parking spaces located on the ground floor, with 14 dwellings (with a total of 32 bedrooms) located in the four levels above. The proposed addition will have a 7,039 square foot footprint and extend beyond the current extent of the structure to on the northern and southern sides, while contracting to allow for the proposed entry to the twelve-space parking area along the western side. As the current 0.13-acre condominium boundary conforms to the existing structure boundary, the proposed addition will extend beyond and contract from the condo boundary in identical fashion.

Echoing the flexibility of design from the initial Planned Development, through all the amendments to the present, this application also requests that the cap on office space be raised from the current 55,000 sf up to 85,000 sf as a contingency. If the market demand drops from residential in favor of office space, the developer would then be able to shift all or part of the addition to that sector.

This building addition, along with the amenity patio and ground floor parking entrance, will result in an additional 9,411.5 sf of lot coverage, bringing the total coverage from 40.31% to 41.49% – still well below the 75% coverage permitted by the base zoning. Existing parking (especially when combined with the ground floor parking area) is more than sufficient for the residences. If the new addition were to become entirely office space, the ground floor parking would be restricted to the uses and not open to the public and a shared parking agreement would be arranged to account for the additional office demand.

Comprehensive Plan Compatibility

The 2023 Comprehensive Plan recommends the following policies which support the approval of the proposed request.

- Increase the supply and variety of quality housing units, at multiple price points, in multiple locations, to suit the needs of a variety of households.
- 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.
- The preservation and adaptive reuse of existing structures offers benefits both financially and environmentally. Historic structures also contribute to heritage tourism.
- Develop incentives to reuse existing development before new development in greenfields... redevelopment should be prioritized over greenfield development as plenty of opportunity exists to improve blight along corridors and gateways, strip malls, industrial sites, and aging apartments.

Future Land Use Map and Zoning Compatibility

This application does not seek to change the underlying Future Land Use Map designation of Mixed Density Residential.

Current zoning for the property is C-N (PD) (Commercial Neighborhood, Planned Development). This application only seeks to amend the existing PD by modifying the binding site plan and by expanding the allowable office square footage.

Utilities

The development is currently served by Athens–Clarke County public water and sanitary sewer. There is existing capacity for the proposed addition, per a water and sanitary sewer evaluation completed by Athens–Clarke County Public Utilities Department on January 31st of this year.

Stormwater Management

The amended Planned Development will comply with all state and local stormwater regulations.

The 25-foot State Waters Buffer, and the 75-foot ACC Environmental Areas Buffer shall remain undisturbed.

Stormwater Management shall be designed to protect the watershed from pollution and erosion. In addition, the stormwater management for this development shall protect downstream properties from flooding. The stormwater management 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 stormwater facilities depicted on the submitted site plans 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.

Architecture

The proposed addition echoes the historical architecture of the mill, as well as its new additions, with brick exterior and sections of tall, thin windows. Balconies (both wrap-around and inset) and top-floor pergolas add visual interest and activation, while acting as outdoor spaces for social gatherings for the residents.

Requested Waiver of Ordinance Standards

1. Waiver to expand the 55,000 sf cap on Office Space to 85,000 sf.

The C-N zone caps office space at 10,000 sf. A previous PD amendment included a request to increase this limit to 55,000 sf. As stated previously, the intent is to develop this portion of the site as multifamily condominiums. However, should market conditions change, the developer would like to have the option to change some or all the proposed units to office use without returning for another PD amendment.

Previously approved waivers to this PD include:

- Waiver to expand the 10,000 sf cap on hotel space in the C-N zone to 35,000 sf.
- Waiver to allow "Theater" to be added to the list of allowed uses.
- An increase to the cap on Office Space from 10,000 sf to 55,000 sf.
- Elimination of the square footage cap on Bottling Plant uses.
- A waiver from the application of section 9-25-8-F "Standards for large scale developments".
- Waiver to allow "Light Manufacturing" use.
- Waiver to allow "Event Space" use.
- Waiver to allow "Indoor Recreation" use.

STATEMENT OF REQUEST AND LEGAL OBJECTIONS

Ratman SM LLC is the owner of the subject property located at 355 Oneta Street, Suite D900 in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia.

The request is aligned with the general goals, policies and objectives identified in the Comprehensive Plan and is in keeping with the current Future Land Development Map. This request is an amendment to the residential portions of the existing Planned Development and does not represent a significant departure from the intent of the existing plan.

Under these circumstances, a denial of the Request in question would be unlawful, arbitrary, capricious, irrational and a manifest abuse of discretion; all in violation of the Fifth Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, and Article I, Section I, Paragraph I and Article I, Section III, Paragraph I of the Constitution of the State of Georgia.

Denial of the Request would discriminate unfairly between the Appellant and others similarly situated, in violation of the Fifth Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, and Article I, Section I, Paragraph I and Article I, Section III, Paragraph I of the Constitution of the State of Georgia.

Denial of the Request would amount to a taking of property, in violation of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, and Article I, Section I, Paragraph I, and Article I, Section III, Paragraph I of the Constitution of the State of Georgia.

For these reasons, we respectfully request Approval of this request. We also wish to preserve our rights for constitutional challenge if the case of a vote of denial to the request.

This 30th day of May 2025.

Respectfully submitted,



Scott Haines, PLA