



STAFF REPORT
PLANNED DEVELOPMENT AMENDMENT
355 ONETA STREET (D900)
PD-2025-06-1100
JULY 3rd, 2025

APPLICANT: Scott Haines / W&A Engineering
OWNER: Ratman SM LLC
ZONING REQUEST: Amend C-N (PD)
TYPE OF REQUEST: Type II
LOCATION: 355 Oneta Street, Suite D900
TAX MAP NUMBERS: 114B2 D009, 114B 019
COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT: District 5
PROJECT SIZE: 18.174 acres (subject area: 0.22 acres)
PRESENT USE: Commercial-Industrial Mixed-Use
PROPOSED USE: Residential-Commercial-Industrial Mixed-Use
PUBLIC NOTICE POSTED: June 18th, 2025
STAFF RECOMMENDATION: **APPROVAL**
PLANNING COMM. RECOMMENDATION: **PENDING**
MAYOR & COMMISSION AGENDA SETTING: .. July 15th, 2025
MAYOR & COMMISSION VOTING SESSION: August 5th, 2025

I. Summary Recommendation

The applicant is requesting to amend a previously approved Planned Development (zoned C-N (PD)) at 355 Oneta St, Suite D900 for the purpose of constructing 14 residential condos (with a total of 32 bedrooms) and increasing the allowed maximum amount of office space from 55,000 sf to 85,000 sf. The proposal is to construct four stories of residential condominiums above resident-only parking. The proposed building addition will contain 12 compact parking spaces. The request includes a binding application report, site plan, and architectural elevations.

The project does not require a change to the Future Land Use Map. Overall, the proposal is compatible with the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Map. The proposed addition attempts to align with the historical architecture of the mill as well as its newly renovated additions and aligns with the intent of the original planned development. Staff supports the additional residential density within the project to complement the existing commercial mixed-uses that are on site and to contribute to building a community where people can live, work, and access amenities.

Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the request.

Planning Commission Recommendation: Pending

II. Purpose of Applicant Request

A. Proposal

The proposed amendment of the existing planned development allows for the addition of four levels of residential condominiums above resident-only parking. The addition is located in Unit D900 in the western edge of Building D, which is currently vacant. The proposed addition includes 14 residential condos (with a total of 32 bedrooms) and 12 resident-only compact parking spaces. The proposal includes an additional amenity area and patio.

The proposed building addition will have a 7,039 square foot footprint and extend slightly beyond the current extent of the structure to the northern and southern sides.

The second purpose of the amendment is to increase the cap of office space from 55,000 square feet to 85,000 square feet. The C-N zone limits office space to no more than 10,000 square feet of gross floor area per lot. A previous Planned Development amendment included a request to increase this limit to 55,000 square feet. The current request is to increase that limit to 85,000 square feet. The applicant notes the reasoning for this waiver request is to allow for flexibility of the planned development if the market demand drops from residential in favor of office space.

The request includes a binding site plan and architectural elevations. The proposed addition attempts to align with the historic architecture of the mill as well as its newly renovated additions, with brick exterior and sections of tall, thin windows. Balconies (both wrap-around and inset) and top-floor pergolas are also proposed.

B. Existing Conditions

The subject property consists of an 18.174-acre mixed-use redevelopment, Southern Mill. The property is not located within a local or National Register historic district. The Southern Mill is a previously abandoned mill site and has since been redeveloped as a Planned Development with numerous amendments over the years. An Administrative Action was approved in 2023 for modifications to vehicular and pedestrian circulation for Building C, which consists of a hotel, restaurant, and spa. Recent amendments to the original Planned Development were approved in 2021 and 2018 for modifications to the square footages and types of allowed uses.

The property consists of four main structures (Buildings A, B, C, and D) and associated parking. The Southern Mill mixed-use development currently consists of a boutique hotel, a local craft brewery, two restaurants, and several office spaces.

The proposed addition is in Unit D900 in the western edge of Building D. It is the last portion of the site that represents the property's former use as an industrial mill. Presently, the façade walls remain open to the sky, without flooring or a roof. The rest of Building D currently consists of several renovated spaces occupied by office uses, commercial businesses, and a local restaurant.

To the north of the subject property is Loop 10, along with a large tract of undeveloped land zoned RM-2. East of the proposed redevelopment site is a manufacturing facility zoned I, Oneta Street and Bryan Street, and an office with E-I (Employment-Industrial) zoning. An undeveloped CSX-owned parcel zoned RM-2 is located to the east.

III. Policy Analysis

A. Compatibility with Comprehensive Plan

The 2023 Comprehensive Plan calls for the following policies that **are** supported in this project:

- *Encourage the preservation and adaptive reuse of existing structures, especially those with historic value.*
- *Infill and redevelopment should be prioritized over greenfield expansion.*

The Southern Mill redevelopment addresses many goals of the 2023 Comprehensive Plan throughout its programming and design. The design reflects the historic character and the newest proposal would incorporate residential space within the development, which would expand the variety of uses within the project. Therefore, the proposed development embodies the intent of these elements within the Comprehensive Plan.

Overall, the proposal is compatible with the Comprehensive Plan.

B. Compatibility with the Future Land Use Map

The 2023 Future Land Use Map designates the subject parcel as *Mixed Density Residential*, which is described as follows:

Mixed Density Residential:

These are residential areas where higher density residential development is allowed and intended. Limited nonresidential uses designed at a neighborhood scale may be incorporated into these areas (e.g. churches, schools, daycare facilities, small businesses and offices). Buildings should be oriented towards the street and include streetscape enhancements. Their design should include connections between uses, good pedestrian connections, and compatibility with public transit. Auto-oriented uses, such as vehicle repair and maintenance, drive-through restaurants, and vehicle sales, are not included in this designation.

No change to the Future Land Use Map is required since the proposed zoning action is already compatible with the Map. The proposal is compatible with the Future Land Use description for this area.

C. Compatibility with the Zoning Map

The planned development is currently zoned C-N (PD) (Commercial-Neighborhood, Planned Development) with a small portion of I (Industrial) zoning. The amendment request does not include a change in zoning. The area immediately around the subject parcels is comprised of a mix of zoning categories, including RM-2 (Mixed Density Residential), I (Industrial), and E-I (Employment-Industrial), as well as RS-8 (Single-Family Residential), C-N (Commercial-Neighborhood), and G (Government) across the railroad right-of-way.

Staff supports the introduction of residential use on the site at the proposed density to complement the existing commercial mixed-uses that are within the project as well as the mix of uses among the surrounding parcels. The additional residential density contributes to building a community where people can live, work, and access amenities.

D. Consistency with Other Adopted ACCGov Plans, Studies, or Programs

The Greenway Network Plan has a proposed future connection through or adjacent to this site. The proposal does not include a design for such an interconnection.

IV. Technical Assessment

A. Environment

The Athens-Clarke County Environmental Areas Map indicates environmentally sensitive areas within the boundaries of the proposed planned development. A creek as well as a 15-foot state waters buffer and a 75-foot riparian buffer are located along the western portion of the property and are shown on the site plan. However, the proposed development does not appear to encroach into either the floodplain or buffers identified on the Environmental Areas Map.

The Arborist has reviewed the tree management plan and offered the following comment(s):

- *ACC Arborist recommends approval. Project will be expected to meet all requirements of the community tree management ordinance at time of development during plan review.*

B. Grading and Drainage

The Transportation & Public Works Department has reviewed the proposal and offered the following grading and drainage-related comment:

- *TPW Land development supports approval of this application.*

C. Water and Sewer Availability

The Public Utilities Department has reviewed the proposal and offered the following comments:

- *ACC water is available.*
- *ACC sanitary sewer is available.*
- *Capacity is available.*
- *PUD recommends approval.*

D. Transportation

The Transportation & Public Works Department has reviewed the proposal and offered no comments.

E. Fire Protection

The Fire Marshal has reviewed the proposal and offered the following comments:

- *The proposed development at 355 Oneta Street has been reviewed for fire department access, water supply, fire protection systems, and potential operational impacts. The fire department can provide unobstructed access to the site and all associated structures. Fire apparatus access roads meet local and adopted codes in terms of width, turning radius, and grade. The current road layout includes sufficient through-access, looping around the building, and does not present any concerns related to emergency response time or routing. While the development will not hinder emergency response, the addition of bedrooms may contribute to an increase in call volume for the area.*
- *The site provides a sufficient and reliable water supply for firefighting purposes, with coverage rated at 2000 AFF. Hydrants appear to be accessible and free of obstructions; spacing compliance with local code will be confirmed.*
- *In terms of fire protection systems, this project will require the installation of a fire sprinkler system, a fire alarm system, and standpipes based on the building's size, occupancy, and use. The fire department connection (FDC) will need to be placed in a visible and accessible location,*

which will be reviewed further during the plan review process. Riser room and FDC locations must also be clearly labeled and accessible from exterior entry points.

- *Due to the building's height and layout, ladder access will be required. The nearest ladder company, Ladder One, is located at 700 College Avenue. No unusual fire hazards or high-risk operations are anticipated with this development.*

F. Compliance with the Zoning Ordinance and Development Standards

A Planned Development designation is intended to encourage development of compatible land uses on a scale larger than that of individual small parcels. This designation is used to request waivers to the required development standards in an effort to provide design flexibility to account for special circumstances unique to the design or lot, as long as the proposal meets the spirit and intent of the code. Planned Development requests include a binding application report, site plan, and architectural elevations in an effort to guarantee to the community that what is proposed will be constructed if approved. All exemptions to the zoning and development standards must be identified in the application prior to approval of a binding proposal since the development will otherwise be expected to adhere to the ordinance standards.

Requested Waivers

1. *Waiver from Section 9-10-2(L3), to expand the 55,000 square feet cap on office space in a C-N zone to 85,000 square feet.*

Applicant's Purpose: Should market conditions change, the developer would like to have the option to change some or all the proposed condo units to office use without returning for another PD amendment.

Staff Opinion: Staff supports buildings that can adapt to multiple uses because this extends their useful lifespan. The existing mix of uses on site presents an opportunity to build a dynamic development with employment opportunities. Therefore, **Staff supports this waiver.**

End of Staff Report.

Reviewed

Zoning Criteria Considered by Staff

The following factors have been considered as set forth in *Guhl v. Holcomb Bridge Road Corp.*, 238 Ga. 322, 232 S.E.2d 830 (1977).

- The proposed zoning action conforms to the Future Land Use map, the general plans for the physical development of Athens-Clarke County, and any master plan or portion thereof adopted by the Mayor and Commission.
- The proposed use meets all objective criteria set forth for that use provided in the zoning ordinance and conforms to the purpose and intent of the Comprehensive Plan and all its elements.
- The proposal will not adversely affect the balance of land uses in Athens-Clarke County.
- The cost of the Unified Government and other governmental entities in providing, improving, increasing or maintaining public utilities, schools, streets and other public safety measures.
- The existing land use pattern surrounding the property in issue.
- The possible creation of an isolated district unrelated to adjacent and nearby districts.
- The aesthetic effect of existing and future use of the property as it relates to the surrounding area.
- Whether the proposed zoning action will be a deterrent to the value or improvement of development of adjacent property in accordance with existing regulations.
- Whether there are substantial reasons why the property cannot be used in accordance with existing zoning; provided, however, evidence that the economic value of the property, as currently zoned, is less than its economic value if zoned as requested will not alone constitute a significant detriment.
- Whether there are other existing or changing conditions affecting the use and development of the property that give supporting grounds for either approval or disapproval of the zoning proposal.
- Public services, which include physical facilities and staff capacity, exist sufficient to service the proposal.
- The population density pattern and possible increase or over-taxing of the load on public facilities including, but not limited to, schools, utilities, and streets.
- The possible impact on the environment, including but not limited to, drainage, soil erosion and sedimentation, flooding, air quality and water quantity.