

Report to Support the  
Special Use Application  
Alpha Xi Delta Sorority

480 S. Milledge Avenue  
Athens, Georgia

Parcel #: 122D2 A002

July 2, 2025

Project # 24015



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# Report to Support the Special Use Application Alpha Xi Delta Sorority

## Introduction:

The Chapter of Alpha Xi Delta Sorority (AXD) has purchased 480 S. Milledge Avenue and proposes to construct a new chapter house and renovate apartments for the members. The site which contains 0.96 acres of land is identified as tax parcel 122D2 A002 in the Athens-Clarke County land records. The project construction plan is to renovate the apartment buildings which contains sixteen 2-bedroom apartments and demolish the front apartment building. The new chapter house will be constructed over the footprint of the apartment building. The current zoning is C-O (Commercial-Office) and the future development map shows the property is *Mixed Density Residential* ; both of which allow for a sorority house. The property is in the Milledge Avenue Corridor Special District Overlay. Information below reflects the intent of the planned expansion and how the requirements for the Special Use Application are satisfied.

## Site Characteristics:

The subject property is comprised of five existing two-story apartment buildings with an asphalt parking lot with 32 spaces. The site includes a one way entrance drive from Milledge Avenue that loops around the parcel and exits on Milledge Avenue. Paved walkways also exist on the property. There is an alley at the rear of the site which exits to Baxter Street. The alley is shared with Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority and Young Life. The remainder of the site that is not covered with impervious surfaces contains lawn and ornamental landscaping along with scattered mature trees along the periphery of the site. Properties surrounding the parcel are a single-family home to the south as well as the Young Life Clubhouse behind the residence. To the north is Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority. Across Milledge Avenue to the east is an apartment complex. Clarke Central High School is to the west and rear of the subject parcel. All adjacent properties are zoned C-O except Clarke Central High School which is zoned G.

The site has a knoll approximately centered on the site with a gentle slope to Milledge Avenue and the alley in the rear of the parcel. The slope has an average fall of 4 percent but the existing driveways at the front slope down approximately 8 or 9 percent. The site has a 2'-8" tall brick retaining wall at the front property line. The wall extends toward the rear of the site approximately 48 feet along the drive entrance and drive exit. Stormwater runoff for the site drains along the slope towards the front or rear of the site. Any storm flow toward the residence to the south is directed to the front or rear of the site due to a curb or retaining wall section along the shared property line. The rear portion of stormwater for this site drains through the alley to Baxter Street. The front portion of this site drains to the gutter line in South Milledge Avenue and then to Baxter Street where the storm inlet is located.

The owner intends to refurbish four of the apartment buildings. The front apartment building will be demolished. All apartments contain two-bedroom units. There are four apartments in

each building. Four buildings will remain, so the number of beds will be 32. The new chapter house will have two bedrooms. One is handicap accessible and the other is for the housemother. A total of 34 beds will be provided.

The new chapter house will be 68 feet wide by 58 feet deep and located in the front of the lot at the minimum front yard setback. The apartment house cannot logically be converted from its current use to function as a chapter house that needs to include enough space for a chapter meeting room, kitchen and dining facilities as well as shared common space. The remainder of the site will remain largely unchanged. A dedicated house mother parking space and two ADA spaces will be constructed. The remaining parking is proposed to stay as it exists today. No changes are proposed to the configuration of the existing parking lot. Parking spaces will be created that meet ACC Ordinance for size of the space but a variance will be required so that the 35 spaces planned for the site can be constructed.

The trees on site will remain to meet the tree conservation requirements for the zone. In addition to conserving most of the existing trees, new street trees are proposed along the site frontage of South Milledge Avenue.

#### **Zoning Request and Future Land Use:**

There is no change to the current zoning or future land use as it exists. The current C-O zoning and the future land use, *Mixed Density Residential* is compatible with a sorority use.

#### **Buffers:**

No environmentally sensitive features or state water buffers are located on or within 200 feet of the subject property. No landscape buffers are required because the site is adjacent to C-O zoned properties and Clarke Central High School (CCHS) zoned G. A rear alley separates this property from CCHS. The subject property is adjacent to the parking lot of CCHS across the alley. CCHS has a chain link fence on the property line with shrubs and mature trees beyond approximately 10 feet in width. The parcel to the south has its own fence built against the subject property fence; however, an outbuilding on the south parcel sits almost on the property line. There is no screening between the north parcel and this parcel. If the Special Use Application Permit is approved, this parcel and the north parcel will have the same use: sorority house and parking.

#### **Site Access, Traffic, Parking and Pedestrian Safety:**

Access to the site is from an existing one-way driveway in from South Milledge Avenue. At the rear of the site is a private alley that allows ingress/egress for the sorority to the north of this parcel as well as Baxter Street. The entrance is shared with the north parcel. The alley access is used to access parking at the rear of the parcel as well as access to the south parking lot. The alley extends between CCHS and Young Life and exits on Baxter Street. The main exit drive extends along the south side of the property to South Milledge Avenue. The exit is not a shared access. The nearest location where a traffic count survey was conducted is identified as station 059-0109 and is located on S. Milledge Avenue north of the entrance to CCHS. A survey at this station in 2023 identified the Average Daily Vehicular trips to be 14,400 trips. A similarly 1-day

study in 2025 identified the Daily Vehicular Trips as 13,720 trips. Parking lot trees are added between the apartments and the parking.

Since the sorority has approximately 100 members but only 34 full time occupants in the sorority, the average daily traffic to the sorority house will be significantly less than the 1000 vehicle trips which would require a traffic analysis. The majority of people traveling to the site will use the UGA transportation system which provides regular service along the length of South Milledge Avenue, it is anticipated that 60 trips per hour will occur as a maximum.

On-site parking is provided to accommodate 35 vehicles which includes two ADA spaces. One parking stall is reserved for the house mother. Since it is not feasible to provide sufficient parking to meet ACC Code required for boarding houses, fraternities and sororities, a variance from the required number of parking spaces is requested. The required spaces for sororities based upon ACC Ordinance is 75 spaces of resident parking or 154 spaces of assembly parking. Due to the lack of availability of on-site parking, members will access the UGA transportation system to go to class, share rides amongst members as well as walk and ride bikes. Pedestrian access is provided by the existing sidewalk along South Milledge Avenue

#### **Tree Management Plan and Planting:**

The C-O zone requires 25% tree conservation and 50% overall canopy coverage. The property also falls within the Milledge Avenue Overlay Corridor and a tree preservation area encompasses the front yard. There are no trees located in the tree preservation area. Rearward, there are two cedars along the one-way entrance drive as well as five oaks on the north property line. There are three oaks on the property along the south property line. See the tree management plan for total conserved and planted trees. The majority of the trees will be conserved to meet the minimum conservation requirements. Planting of parking lot and street trees will satisfy the 50% canopy coverage requirements.

#### **Public Utilities and Services:**

The site is served by a public water and a public sewer connecting from ACC water and sewer lines in the South Milledge Avenue right-of-way. The current meter is a master water meter located in the Milledge Avenue sidewalk. The sewer connection is not known exactly but the entire complex connects to sewer across Milledge Avenue near the eastern right-of-way line. A new fire line will be constructed and include the fire vault with fire department connections and a new hydrant. Athens-Clarke County has determined that sufficient capacity for the water and sewer demands exists. That report is attached. Solid waste is handled by an existing dumpster located at the rear of the property. No changes to the solid waste service are proposed under the Special Use Application. The dumpster will be screened per Athens-Clarke County standards.

#### **Stormwater Management:**

All improvements on the site were constructed prior to the adoption of the stormwater ordinance. For this reason, there is no on-site stormwater management facility. Since the proposed addition replaces or creates new impervious of 4,328 square feet, no stormwater

management is required because the amount is less than 5,000 square feet replaced or new impervious which is the threshold limit.

### **Lighting:**

Existing site lighting consists of building mounted lights at all doorway entrances. The lights are covered with awnings; therefore, they comply with the ACC Lighting Standards. In addition, three overhead parking lot lights are located along the northern property line on the Kappa Kappa Gamma property. The lights provide lighting to Kappa Kappa Gamma parking lot but some light trespasses to the Alpha Xi Delta property. Because the property to the south is a residence in the C-O zone, the sorority intends to keep this side of the property dimly lit per ACC Standards. A detailed photometric plan submitted during the Plans Review Process will demonstrate site compliance with the Lighting Standards for Athens-Clarke County.

### **Special Use Considerations:**

#### **1. Conformance with the Future Development Map**

The site is located in an area designated as *Mixed Density Residential* in the Future Development map of Athens-Clarke County. The *Mixed Density Residential* area anticipates a broad variety of uses, including retail, services, and housing. The C-O zoning is compatible with the future uses and a sorority is allowed through the Type II Zoning Process. The UGA transportation system provides service along Milledge Avenue. Sorority members and guests typically use this as their main means of transportation during the day. Additional auto uses are discouraged as intended in the *Mixed Density Residential* area due to the limited parking. Weekly chapter meetings and special events such as game day do provide a challenge for parking. Sorority members share rides, park at the site, park away from the property and walk to the event or take alternate transportation to the property. The new chapter house does not increase the number of current members of the sorority. The site has been a multi-family residential property since 1968 when the apartment buildings were constructed. The sorority is essentially the same use. The number of residents living on the property as apartments was 40. The number of sorority residents will be 34.

#### **2. Conformance with the Zoning Ordinance and purpose and intent of Comprehensive Plan**

Plans for the new chapter house and the remodeled apartments were designed to comply with all requirements for the zone as much as practical. All area and dimensional requirements for the site comply with the current zoning requirement and a sorority house is allowed within the C-O zone subject to Special Use Approval. The recent survey indicates that the site has impervious coverage above what is allowed for the zone. A variance for increase of impervious coverage will be requested as the new chapter house increases the total impervious coverage of the site. The maximum floor to area ratio (FAR) is 0.5 in the Milledge Overlay District. With the increase in floor area between the existing front apartment building and the new chapter house, a variance will be required as the FAR

increases from 0.47 to 0.65. Three variances are requested so that the site will meet the standards of the zoning ordinance.

As previously indicated in this report a variance will also be required for the number of parking spaces.

Expansion of the sorority house in the current location is in congruence with the intent and guiding principles of comprehensive plan. Utilizing the existing site to the fullest extent allowed by the zone and replacing the existing front apartment with the chapter house minimizes the impacts on the resources of Athens-Clarke County. No other location was appropriate from a search by the National Sorority Office. Alpha Xi Delta purchased this property. The Milledge Avenue Corridor between Broad Street and Five Points is the area for sororities. Other sites on Milledge Avenue were smaller lots than the one purchased. The sorority felt that reuse of the apartments was the best option for use of the site.

### **3. Public Services are sufficient to service the proposed Special Use.**

The existing site is currently served by public water and sewer, electricity, gas and communication lines. The prior multifamily use would indicate that water and sewer service is sufficient for this site. A water and sewer availability analysis was sent to ACC Public Utilities for verification that the needs of the project can be accommodated by existing water and sewer. Vehicular access is from South Milledge Avenue, a state highway with approximately 14,400 Average Daily Trips as identified in a recent traffic survey. Since South Milledge Avenue is a state highway, it was designed to convey a large traffic volume. Use of the buildings as a sorority will not conflict with existing traffic patterns on South Milledge Avenue.

### **4. The proposed Special Use will not adversely affect the balances of Land Use in Athens-Clarke County.**

This Special Use Application allows for a sorority on an existing property. Since the property has been an apartment complex for many years, the sorority use will not result in any change to or affect the balance of land use in Athens-Clarke County since the current site use will not change with the approval of the Special Use. Both uses are residential.

### **5. The Proposed use is in conformance with the zoning district, all comprehensive plan policies and state and federal laws**

The proposed use meets all the requirements of the zoning district with the approval of 9 requested variances. All plans for the new chapter house will be designed in compliance with all applicable local, state and federal laws. Furthermore, development plans are in alignment with the comprehensive plan policies and requirements of Athens-Clarke County.

**6. Adequate Capacity of water, sewer, paved access, electricity, storm drainage and storm drainage.**

As previously indicated in this report, the existing site is adequately served by public facilities. Furthermore, ACC Public Utilities will verify that water and sewer services are adequate for the new building. Stormwater flows from the site even after the increase in impervious coverage will not result in excessive stormwater run-off. All stormwater for this parcel and surrounding parcels flow to gutters in Milledge Avenue and Baxter Street.

**7. The Special Use will not have an adverse impact on the surrounding area**

**a. Similarity in scale, bulk and coverage:**

The existing apartment buildings are located within the Milledge Avenue Historic district which stretches along South Milledge Avenue from South Lumpkin Street to Broad Street. This historic district is comprised of residential homes, fraternity and sorority houses as well as commercial offices many in existing houses. The proposed Alpha Xi Delta house is similar in scale of the adjacent sorority house as well as other sorority houses nearby. While the chapter house will increase the size from the current apartment footprint by approximately 2,000 square feet, the building shape is not out of scale. The scale of the chapter house is similar to the existing apartment building when viewed from South Milledge Avenue. The chapter house does result in a decrease in pervious areas so that impervious coverage will be more than the allowable limits. Since the current topography is above South Milledge Avenue elevations and a brick retaining wall is located at the right-of-way, the site coverage increase will not create a visual impact on the surrounding areas.

**b. Character of volume of traffic and vehicular parking generated by proposed use and effects on surrounding streets:**

As previously indicated, the majority of members traveling to Alpha Xi Delta utilize public transportation by riding UGA transportation. Ride sharing is common as well as alternatives such as biking. On-site parking is limited to 35 spaces which will provide all of the parking for the residents. Additional parking of 119 spaces will be obtained through offsite parking agreement for Chapter night. The traffic associated with the proposed conditions is not out of scale with the other fraternity and sorority houses along South Milledge Avenue and is an insignificant part of current daily travel on South Milledge Avenue. The addition will not cause any adverse impacts to the traffic on South Milledge Avenue.

**c. Architectural compatibility with surrounding area:**

The current apartment buildings were constructed in 1968 and is not a contributing property to the Milledge Avenue District. The house is designated in the Milledge Avenue

Historic District Design guidelines as a “Non-Contributing In-Character Property”. This means that while the site does not add to the historic value of the district, the house has significant aesthetic qualities reflective of the district’s character. The proposed chapter house will be designed following the guidelines for the Milledge Avenue Historic District. A COA concept review of the new chapter house was completed by the Historic Preservation Commission. The building and elevation plans did not receive any negative comments at the preliminary review hearing. No one objected to demolishing the existing front apartment.

**d. Possible environmental impacts including but not limited to, drainage, soil erosion and sedimentation, flooding, air and water quality**

The proposed building was designed and will be constructed in accordance with all local, state and federal environmental laws and regulations to ensure that there are no environmental impacts from the replacement of the front apartment with the new chapter house.

**e. Generation of noise, light and glare:**

The proposed building will not result in additional generation of noise by the sorority or additional light and glare impacts on adjacent properties. The residential property to the south is screened from the sorority with landscaping and privacy fence.

Generation of noise from the sorority is not expected to be objectionable. The main noise from outside activities occurs during rush. As typical with most sororities. Alpha Xi Delta also hosts parents day events in the spring. All chapter meetings will be held in the chapter house. That meeting room will be located in the basement of the chapter house. Sororities do not host house parties.

**f. Impacts on development of adjacent properties compatible with the future development maps:**

All properties immediately surrounding the site are zoned and developed for commercial and multifamily residential uses. The proposed chapter house which is located entirely on the subject property will not infringe on any future development rights for the adjacent properties.

**g. Impacts on future transportation corridors:**

Approval of the Special Use for the chapter house will result in a minimal traffic increase for South Milledge Avenue because alternate transportation is typically used by members of the sorority. There will not be any impact on future transportation corridors throughout the county.

### Conclusion:

The proposed use of the property for Alpha Xi Delta Sorority was designed and will be constructed to minimize the potential impacts to the surrounding properties and adjacent uses. With the approval of the 10 requested variances, this project meets all the requirements of the ACC Code of Ordinances. Approval of the Special Use Application will allow Alpha Xi Delta to satisfy their requirements for fraternal living while protecting the rights and interests of the adjacent property owners and the local community.