

**Special Use Application
Report
110 West Hancock Avenue
Owned by
Athens First United Methodist Church**

Introduction:

Athens First United Methodist Church located at 327 North Lumpkin Street owns the property located at 110 West Hancock Avenue. The tax parcel number for 110 West Hancock Avenue is 171A6 C008A and the property is 0.57 acres in area as identified in the Athens Clarke County tax records. The church purchased the property in 2004 according to the ACC tax records. The purpose of the special use application is to request permission from Athens Clarke County to expand the current parking lot by removing the building on this tax parcel. Removal of the existing structure and keeping the concrete building pad will allow expansion of the existing surface parking lot on the subject property. The current zoning is C-D. (Dougherty Street Downtown Design Area), which allows for a surface parking structure on the property by approval of a Special Use Application. Information below provides information on the parcel, the intent of the surface parking lot expansion and how the requirements for the Special Use Application are satisfied.

Site Characteristics:

The subject property is comprised of an existing two-story building with approximately 23,491 square feet of total floor area. The building fronts West Hancock Avenue and North Lumpkin Street. There are multiple entry doors along these streets. All access to the second floor is from street level exterior doors. A one-way asphalt parking lot containing 40 spaces occupies the western portion of the site. The entrance of the asphalt parking is on West Hancock Avenue and the exit is on West Dougherty Street. There is an existing curb cut adjacent to the northeast corner of the property on West Dougherty Street. This curb cut allows access to six parking spaces against the north end of the structure. The existing site is fully impervious surface except four curbed landscape buffers, two each at the surface parking lot entrance and exit as well as a minor strip of landscape next to the building on the Hancock Avenue side. The site is accessed by concrete sidewalks along North Lumpkin Street, West Hancock Avenue and West Dougherty Street.

Topography slopes down from North Lumpkin Street to North Hull Street. The building floor elevation is at the sidewalk elevation on North Lumpkin Street. The existing parking lot is about 3 feet lower than the floor elevation of the building and has minimal cross slope. Stormwater runoff for the site drains to the gutters on North Lumpkin, West Hancock and West Dougherty. Storm water inlets which receive storm water are on North Hull Street and West Dougherty Street at North Hull Street intersection.

Discussion of the Decision to Remove the Current Building and Need for Parking:

The existing structure on the parcel is comprised of at least two separate structures. The tax assessor record indicates the building was constructed in 1920. The initial building may have been constructed that early. A 1918 Sanborn map shows a rooming house at the very corner of West Hancock and North Lumpkin but it appears much smaller than the current building. The first building is approximately half the length of the Lumpkin Street frontage. An additional structure was constructed on the north end of the first structure at a later date. This has been determined by the change of roof elevation and pitch as well as the different architectural details on the North Lumpkin and West Hancock Street building elevations.

Athens First Methodist Church commissioned a building committee to explore the condition as well as current uses for the building in 2016. The purpose was to explore the conversion of the existing building into something more appropriate for church programming compared to the current use.

A building assessment was conducted by Batson Associates, Inc., Greenville, South Carolina and a final report was issued dated July 5th, 2017. The intent was to assess the current conditions of the building, identify upgrade requirements for efficient operation and determine code compliance of the building for current and future uses. Below are the four main points found and reported in the report “Executive Summary/ Recommendations” section.

- Overall poor condition of the building interior, windows, and doors.
- Aging and poor condition of existing building systems such as mechanical, plumbing, and electrical systems.
- Many building code violations were noted especially in the electrical systems.
- The building assessment forecast anticipated repair and replacement costs over the next 10 years up to \$969,000 to include structure, mechanical and electrical.

The resulting conclusion was that:

- Replacement costs of the various building systems as well as upgrade of various building components (such as doors, windows and exterior walls) will prove to be quite costly. Replacement costs for various individual components have been estimated in other portions of this report. However, in overall terms it is our opinion that future upgrade of building systems and renovation for new interior room layouts will cost in the range of approximately \$110 - \$130/SF. This results in a total upgrade/renovation cost in the range of \$2,640,000 to \$3,120,000. A new building of the same area would cost approximately \$200/SF. This results in a total new building cost of \$4,800,000. In a new construction, the building shape and dimensions could be altered to provide a more “square” building that more suitable for the church’s needs for large classrooms and meeting areas.

Concurrently, the building committee considered the inability of the existing building to meet the church’s future need for large classrooms and meeting spaces. The existing building is approximately 59 feet x198 feet and creates challenges to accommodate the desired spaces. The

existing building shape is subdivided by load bearing walls that essentially divide the building into three portions. Ideally classrooms and large meeting rooms would be arranged in a building more “square” in shape. This shape would reduce circulation space and improve space adjacencies between the various rooms.

Based on this report and considering all the factors of church program, state of the existing building and the escalating costs to maintain it, costs associated with upgrades to meet the programming needs, or renovation costs to convert the building for the church’s future programming, the Building Committee has recommended to Athens First United Methodist Church to request a special use from Athens Clarke County for surface parking on the location of the existing building.

The proposed increase of the surface parking lot with 14 additional spaces is proposed on the remaining concrete pad after the building removal and adding pervious areas of both ends of the parcel. A more than 10-foot wide landscape buffer and hedge screen is proposed fronting West Dougherty Street, North Lumpkin Street and West Hancock Street for the proposed parking per the Dougherty Street Design Area standard in ACC Code of Ordinances Section 9-10-6 Design Standards for “C-D” Zone. The lower existing parking lot will remain largely unchanged except for proposed landscape islands at each end. The total number of original spaces on the lot is 27 parking spaces and the total remaining plus proposed parking spaces is 41 spaces.

The church acknowledges that there is available parking in the downtown area for use on Sunday. Currently the total spaces available for parking owned by the church is approximately 118 spaces (subject parcel included in the count) as well as including the handicap spaces. Also, the church leases 60 spaces in the adjacent Washington Street deck for employees and other workers. The church intends to continue this lease. However, the church programming is more than just Sunday. The church operates a pre-school program and hosts many weekday non-denominational programs and bible studies. Large assembly functions such as funerals and weddings stretch the capacity of the surrounding available parking during weekdays and Saturdays. As a large downtown church with an outreach mission, the church membership includes families and individuals from the surrounding counties as well as Athens Clarke County. The extent of these activities in combination with the geographically diverse membership is the basis for the need of additional parking.

The proposed expansion of the surface lot does include the construction of the required landscape buffers along the side streets as well as the required evergreen hedges. Street trees, parking lot trees and evergreen shrubs are proposed. Attached is a rendering of the site as it is seen from West Dougherty Street. The renderings show the site as it exists now with the building in view. Another rendering shows the site with the building removed. The view shows the mature trees. The removal of the current building will open up the vista to the Athens Post Office Building which is a better view than the rear of the existing building. The attached plan shows the proposed layout.

Zoning Request and Future Land Use:

There is no change to the current zoning or future land use as it exists. A surface parking lot is allowed under the C-D zone in the Dougherty Street Design Area. A surface parking lot is compatible with the future land use plan in the C-D zone.

Buffers:

No environmentally sensitive features or state water buffers are located on or within 200 feet of the subject property. In the Dougherty Street Design Area of the CD zone, landscape buffers are required for surface parking lots adjacent to streets. The plan includes those buffers greater than the required 10-foot width. The landscape buffer and the required evergreen hedge between the sidewalk and the parking area will soften the visual impact of the proposed expansion of the parking lot.

Site Access, Traffic, Parking and Pedestrian Safety:

Access to the site will be a new entrance on North Lumpkin Street. The proposed landscape buffer on West Dougherty Street and the new drive allows closure of the existing curb cut at West Dougherty. The new entrance on North Lumpkin will allow a safer entrance than that on Dougherty Street. The on-street parking spaces between the new Lumpkin Street entrance and the West Hancock Street intersection remain. Additional right-of-way is being dedicated to Athens-Clarke County. A 20-foot miter at each corner on North Lumpkin Street allow for better visibility for motorists. Also, a 2-foot strip along North Lumpkin Street will be dedicated to Athens-Clarke County. This strip will allow for a compliant 5-foot sidewalk with 4-foot landscape strip along North Lumpkin Street. The existing sidewalk is non-compliant.

Tree Management Plan and Planting:

The C-D zone requires no tree conservation and no overall canopy coverage. Surface parking lots do require trees following ACC Code section 8.7.15(j). The required number of trees is one per seven parking spaces. The plan incorporates a number of trees and different species to achieve this requirement. Street trees are also proposed.

Public Utilities and Services:

There are no public utilities on the site but there are current public utility service connections on the site: electric; gas; water and sewer. No utilities are required for the proposed surface lot expansion. The existing utility services on the site will be abandoned in place or removed as deemed appropriate by capping or truncating at the property line or the utility service take-off location.

Stormwater Management:

No storm water management is proposed as part of this Special Use Application. The total impervious area is being decreased by the construction of landscape buffers and tree islands. The CD zone allows 100 percent impervious area so the creation of this surface parking lot is decreasing the impervious area of the parcel.

Lighting:

The existing surface parking lot is lighted by three existing shared light poles on the west property line. The proposed lot will not add parking lot lights. An existing light pole in the public right-of-way mid-block will be relocated approximately 10-feet north and the pole will now be two feet from the road rather than just off the curb of North Lumpkin Street.

Special Use Considerations:

1. Conformance with the Future Development Map

The site is located in an area designated as *Downtown* in the Future Development map of Athens-Clarke County. An expansion of a surface parking lot is proposed for current use by removing an existing building. As the church continues to grow, the property may be a site for a future auxiliary building. At that time, an integrated parking structure adjacent to or under the building would probably be constructed to replace the existing surface parking. The C-D zoning is compatible with the future uses and the Special Use for Athens First United Methodist Church (AFUMC) is allowed by the Type II Zoning Process.

2. Conformance with the Zoning Ordinance and purpose and intent of Comprehensive Plan (but with less impervious area)

The expansion of the surface parking lot is allowed in the Downtown zone in the Dougherty Street Design Area. The site is auxiliary to the main structure of Athens First United Methodist Church. It is adjacent and serves the church on that basis. The expansion does include a reduction in impervious area due to the construction of the grassed area as well as the landscape buffers and tree islands. The plan therefore conforms to the zoning ordinance and the comprehensive plan.

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. All other utilities will be disconnected. Vehicular access to the parking is from North Lumpkin Street. The addition of 14 net new parking spaces is not deemed large enough to impact the traffic on the adjoining streets.

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

The increase in 14 parking spaces will not increase the balance of Land Use in Athens-Clarke County because the parking area will be on the existing building slab. New landscaped space is proposed. Overall, the improvement will not result in any change to or affect the balance of land use in Athens-Clarke County.

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. All plans for the expansion of the surface parking lot will be designed to be in compliance with applicable local, state and federal laws. Furthermore, development plans will be submitted to Athens-Clarke County for review and approval for conformance 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 reducing the demand on public facilities.

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

a. Similarity in scale, bulk and coverage:

The expansion of the parking lot is a reduction in the vertical scale by removal of the building. The elevation changes along Dougherty Street diminish the visual impact of the proposed surface parking. The change of view from the rear of a non-descript office building to the finer architecture of the U.S. Postal building should enhance the Dougherty Street corridor.

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

As previously indicated, the parking lot expansion is not a significant increase in the total number of parking spaces owned by Athens First United Methodist Church. There will be no observable effect in the character of volume of the traffic and parking generated by the new total of 14 more parking spaces as proposed in this expansion. Therefore, the addition will not cause any adverse impacts to the traffic on adjacent streets. The exit on North Lumpkin Street is new but does not reduce the number of existing on-street spaces. This new exit however is a safer option than attempting to keep the current curb cut on Dougherty Street.

c. Architectural compatibility with surrounding area:

The removal of the building is not incompatible with the architecture of the area. Surface lots exist adjacent to this proposed expansion. The addition of trees and greenspace enhances the adjacent architecture.

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

The proposed addition 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. The reuse of the existing slab on grade of the building for the parking surface is a positive point. No changes in site drainage are proposed. Since the landscape buffer and tree island proposed decrease the existing impervious surface, there is a slight decrease in storm water runoff from the site as a result of this expansion of the surface parking lot.

e. Generation of noise, light and glare:

The proposed addition will not result in additional generation of noise or additional light and glare impacts on adjacent properties. The existing Athens-Clarke County light pole will be relocated slightly north from its current location.

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 downtown uses. The proposed expansion of the surface lot is located entirely on the subject property and 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 expansion of the surface parking lot will result in a minimal traffic increase for adjacent streets. There will be no impact on the future transportation corridors adjacent to this site.

Conclusion:

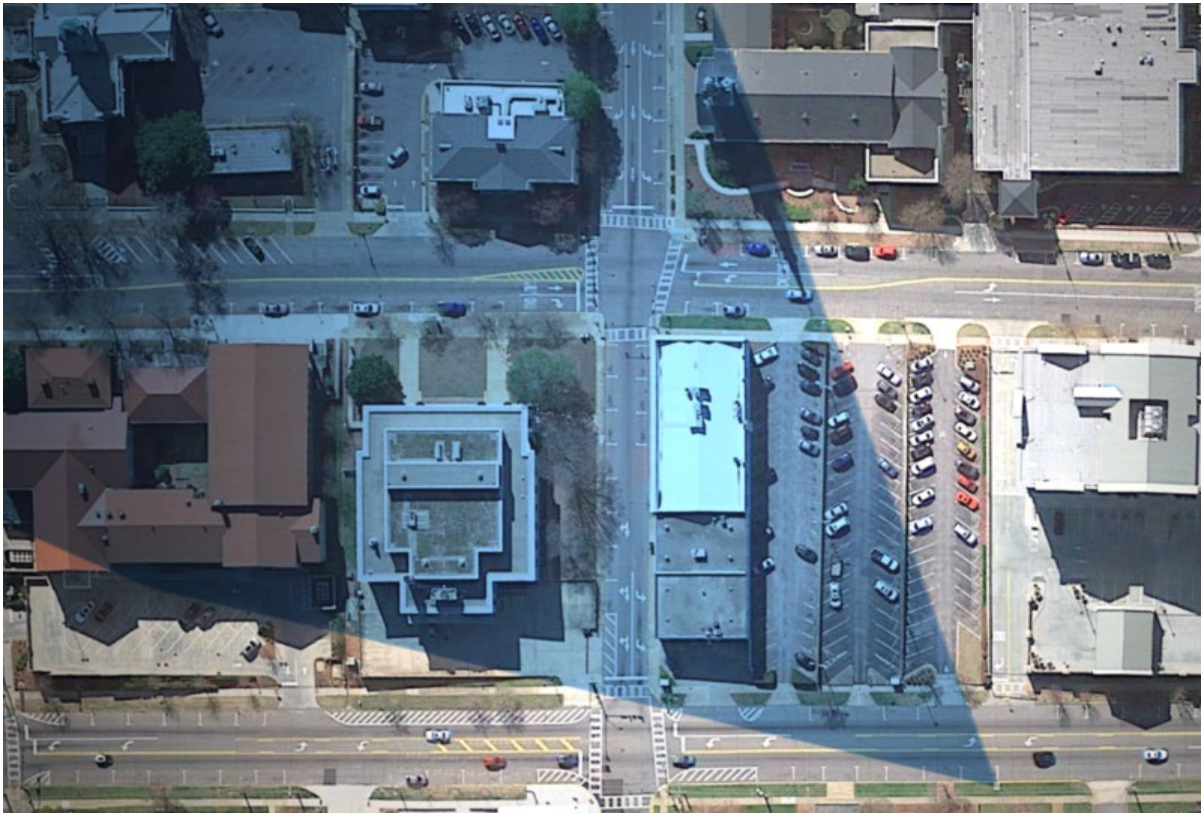
The proposed expansion of the existing surface parking by removal of the building on the subject property was designed and will be constructed to minimize the potential impacts to the surrounding properties and adjacent uses. The project meets the requirements of the ACC Code of Ordinances. Approval of the Special Use Application for the expansion of the surface parking lot will allow Athens First United Methodist Church to continue their programming and help provide adequate parking for its members while protecting the rights and interests of the adjacent property owners and the local community.



EXISTING 3-D VIEW WITH BUILDING



VIEW WITH PROPOSED EXPANSION OF PARKING



VIEW PORT FOR THE 3-D VIEWS

BLUE AREA IS SEEN IN 3-D