

728 Cobb Street

Project Narrative and Written Report for Special Use Permit Application

January 3, 2025

Plan Overview

Plan Name: 728 Cobb Street

Property Address: 728 Cobb Street, Athens, Ga 30606

Tax Parcel No.: 122B1 A026

Current Zoning: RS-8 (single family residential)

Special Use Request: Operation of residence for professional services and offices

Property Introduction and Site Description

728 Cobb Street is a Victorian-style home constructed in approximately 1906. Although originally built as a private residence, this property has a long and storied history of being used for various businesses in the past, including a granite monument and memorial company as well as a mobile home court. (Figure 1) Due to its proximity to the hospital, 728 Cobb Street has also housed multiple doctor's offices throughout the years. For approximately the last 30 years, this property was used as by Dr. David Lockman for his dermatology practice.

728 Cobb Street is located on the edge of the Cobbham neighborhood. This property is bordered on the northwest and southeast by two other residences zoned RS-8, which are tax parcels 122B1 A025 and 122B1 A027. This property also abuts three other properties to the north and northeast (tax parcels 122B1 A008, 122B1 A007, 122B1 A006) that are zone C-3 and C-0.

Non-Conforming Use Status

728 Cobb Street is zoned for single family residential use. However, based upon the property's use as a business prior to the enactment of current zoning ordinances, this non-conforming use of the property has been "grandfathered in" and allowed to continue under Section 9-15-8(B) of the Code of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia (hereinafter, the "Code"). The former Planning Director for Athens-Clarke County, Brad Griffin, issued a written opinion (a copy of which is attached to this application) that 728 Cobb Street maintained its non-conforming-use status to operate as a business as of April 16, 2024. The applicant and current owner of 728 Cobb Street has not abandoned or relinquished this non-conforming-use status since purchasing the property on May 3, 2024.

Scope of Special Use Permit

This application requests a special use permit to utilize 728 Cobb Street for “professional services and offices,” which Section 9-2-1 of the Code defines as “offices used for the conduct of business-related activities, excluding the sale of merchandise or storing of merchandise on the premises.” Using a residence for these commercial purposes would ordinarily be prohibited in an RS-8 zoned district under Section Sec. 9-7-2 of the Code. Specifically, applicant requests a special use permit to operate 728 Cobb Street as a multi-tenant, professional office space with up to six separate office suites. The applicant intends to operate his law firm out of at least one of these office suites and rent the remaining suites to other businesses providing similar, professional services.

Even though the use of 728 Cobb Street for business purposes is already recognized and allowed due to its non-conforming-use status, Section 9-15-8(D) of the Code encourages that this non-conforming use should be “rendered conforming through the issuance of special use permits.” Moreover, the special use permit can include conditions on the business use of the property that will “ameliorate the impact of such use on adjacent or nearby properties.” This application seeks to formalize the use of the 728 Cobb Street *only* for professional services and offices (as opposed to any other potential commercial uses that would be prohibited by the Code) as well as highlight those features that will minimize the impact of this use on the surrounding neighborhood.

Repairs and Modifications to Property

728 Cobb Street requires significant structural repairs. As part of this project, the entire home will be lifted in order to replace the original masonry foundation and install additional footers to support a commercial level of occupancy. The new foundation for the property will be built approximately eight inches higher once completed because much of the current wooden framing for the building sits at or near grade level. This change in elevation will also require the replacement of all stairways leading into the building.

Although 728 Cobb Street currently has a ramp leading into the building, it is far too steep for ADA guidelines. The applicant will install a new, ADA-compliant ramp that will run in a switchback pattern from the parking lot into the main entrance. Applicant will also update the handrails on all stairways leading into the building to comply with ADA guidelines.

Coordination with Historic Preservation Commission

Because 728 Cobb Street lies within the historic Cobbham neighborhood, the Historic Preservation Commission of Athens-Clarke County (HPC) must approve all significant changes to the exterior of this property. The applicant has previously presented the proposed exterior changes to HPC in a conceptual design review conference, which were

favorably received, and has submitted a request to HPC for a formal Certificate of Appropriateness to approve the changes.

Tree Management Plan

The proposed modifications to the property will not affect any canopy trees on the site; therefore, no tree management plan is necessary.

Traffic Impact Analysis

The proposed use of the property will not generate 100 vehicle trips within a single hour or 1000 vehicle trips per day; therefore, no traffic impact analysis is necessary.

Water and Sewer Capacity Evaluation and Stormwater Management

Applicant has submitted requests to the Public Utilities and Public Works departments for a capacity evaluation as well as a stormwater design meeting. Although these requests are currently pending, applicant expects that a formal capacity evaluation will be unnecessary given that the estimated water and sewer demands of his intended use for the property would be less than if it were used as a primary residence. The proposed improvements to the property will only add approximately 100 square feet of additional impervious surface, which would make any changes to the existing stormwater management system for the site unnecessary.

Limitations and Restrictions

Section 9-20-6 of the Code lays out several conditions that can be imposed upon the issuance of a special use permit to limit the impact on surrounding properties. Applicant submits that the following conditions should be included in the approval of this special use permit:

No On-Street Parking

728 Cobb Street has a paved parking lot covering approximately 7,000 square feet, which provides parking for at least 20 vehicles. (Figure 4) There is also over 10,000 square feet of additional, unfinished space on the lot for overflow parking. This ample space for parking will eliminate the need for any on-street parking along the frontage of Cobb Street.

Exterior Lighting

Any exterior lighting for the property must be fully shielded and shall adhere to all standards and specifications set forth in Section 9-19-4 and Section 9-25-8(E)(5) of the Code.

Building Materials and Architectural Features

HPC must review and approve all building materials and architectural features on the exterior of this property to ensure their cohesion with the surrounding, historic neighborhood.

Special Considerations for Mayor and Commission

Section 9-20-5 of the Code sets forth several special considerations for the Mayor and Commission when reviewing and approving this special use permit, and the applicant addresses those most relevant considerations as follows:

Q: Is the proposed use in conformance with all standards within the zoning district in which the use is proposed to be located, and in conformance with relevant comprehensive plan policies implemented by Athens-Clarke County and with all state or federal laws?

A: The Athens-Clarke County Comprehensive Plan Update for 2023 designates the future land use (FLU) for this property as “traditional neighborhood.” (Figure 5) However, 728 Cobb Street lies on the periphery of this neighborhood designation and mainly abuts other properties designated as “main street business” for mixed residential and commercial activity. Applicant submits that the proposed operation of 728 Cobb Street as a professional office space will still be consistent with its traditional neighborhood designation.

Q: Is there adequate capacity of Athens-Clarke County facilities for water, sewer, paved access to and through the development, electricity, urban storm drainage, and adequate transportation that can and will be provided to and through the subject property?

A: 728 Cobb Street already receives services through Athens-Clarke County for water, sewer, and stormwater drainage. The property also has adequate electrical service through Georgia Power. The proposed use will not expand the need for any of these utility services or require any additional paved access to the property. The proposed improvements to the property will not add any significant area of impervious surfaces that will affect stormwater drainage or impact adjoining properties.

Q: Will the zoning proposal have an adverse impact on the surrounding area? When evaluating the effect of the proposed use on the surrounding area, the following factors shall be considered:

1. Similarity in scale, bulk, and coverage.

A: 728 Cobb Street will maintain its current scale, bulk, and coverage as a traditional, Victorian home. The only significant modification to the exterior of the

building will be an ADA-compliant ramp situated at the rear of the property that is not viewable from the street.

2. Character and volume of traffic and vehicular parking generated by the proposed use and the effects on surrounding streets. Increases in pedestrian, bicycle, and mass transit use are considered beneficial regardless of capacity of facilities.

A: The proposed special use of the property will not expand or create any additional traffic than was already present on the subject property. In fact, applicant's proposed use of the property for professional office space will likely involve less traffic than its prior use as an outpatient medical clinic.

3. Architectural compatibility with the surrounding area.

A: 728 Cobb Street will maintain its historic character as a Victorian home and remain completely compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

4. The possible impact on the environment, including, but not limited to, drainage, soil erosion and sedimentation, flooding, air quality and water quality, including the generation of smoke, dust, odors, or environmental pollutants.

A: There are no foreseeable environmental impacts from the proposed use of the property for professional office spaces.

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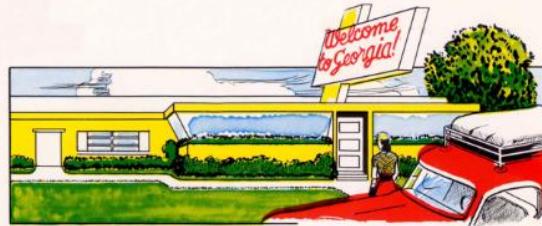
MONUMENT
COMPANY

J. A. WEBB, Owner

•
GRANITE DEALER
Monuments
Grave Markers
•

Dial LI 6-7185

728 Cobb



GEORGIA'S

MOTELS
MOTOR COURTS
TRAILER PARKS

AS APPROVED BY
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
LIST COMPILED MARCH, 1954

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

100 STATE CAPITOL, ATLANTA, GA.

CLARK GAINES, Secretary

CITY	TOURIST COURT	U.S. HWY.	ST. HWY.	LOCATION AND MAILING ADDRESS	MANAGER
AMERICUS	Canfey's Camellia Court	19	3	Americus	R. L. Canfey
	Americus Motel	27, 19 & 280		Meadow Brook Drive	L. D. Stapleton
	King Motor Court	19	3	Americus	Mr. M. T. King
	Highland Court	19	3	5 Mi. S. of Americus	S. P. Smith
	City Trailer Park	19	3	Americus	Mrs. W. A. Whittimore
	Peacock's Trailer Park	19	3	RFD #2, Americus	Mrs. C. J. Peacock
ASHBURN	Byrd's Camp	41		S. of Ashburn	P. J. Byrd
ATHENS	Armour's Motor Court	29	8	4 Mi. N. of Athens	J. L. Reynolds
	Canary Court	29	8	4 Mi. N. of Athens	A. L. Elkins
	Durden's Trailer Park	29		459½ E. Clayton St.	P. H. Durden
	Human's Trailer Court	29	8	RFD 1, Athens	Clyde Human
	King Cotton Motor Court	78 & 129		½ Mi. W. of Athens	J. H. Hubert
	R. C. Arnold Trailer Court	129	15	N.W. of Athens	R. C. Arnold
	Bray's Trailer Courts	72 & 29	8	Athens	I. M. Bray
	Langford's Trailer Court			749 Prince Ave.	A. M. Langford
	Webb's Tourist Court			728 Cobb St.	Mrs. J. A. Webb
	Old Colony Motor Court	129		½ Mi. S. of Athens	Natalie S. Harper
	Athens Motel	129		½ Mi. N. of Athens	H. H. Lewis
ATLANTA	Old South Motel	19 & 41		331 Cleveland Ave., S.W., Atlanta	R. E. McKenney J. W. Fitts
	Colonial Motor Lodge	41		2720 Stewart Ave., S.W., Atlanta	H. C. Carby
	Browns Trailer Park	41		1145 W. Marietta Atlanta	Frank H. Brown

Figure 1: Historic Business Uses of 728 Cobb Street



Figure 2: Photo of Veranda



Figure 3: Photo of Main Entrance from Parking Lot



Figure 4: Photo of Parking Lot

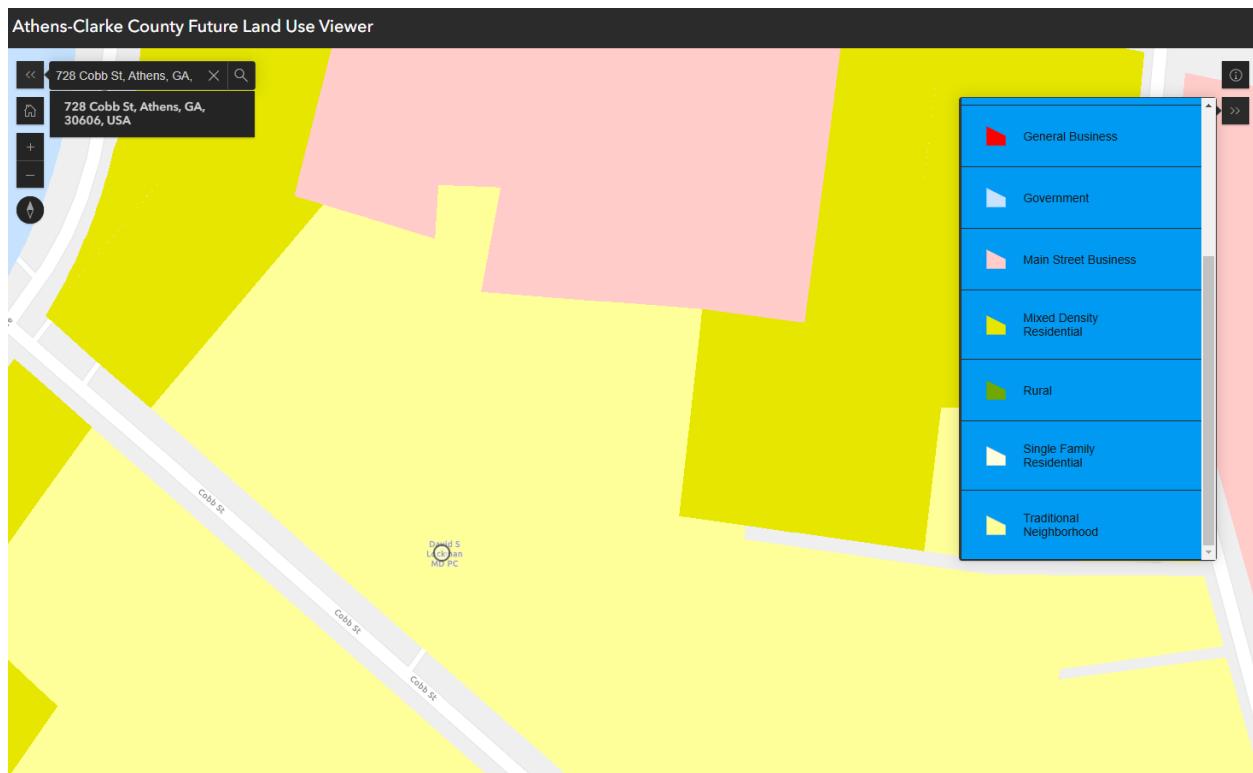


Figure 5: ACC Future Land Use Viewer