



**STAFF REPORT
MASTER PLANNED DEVELOPMENT
2415 JEFFERSON ROAD
PD-2025-05-0895
SEPTEMBER 4th, 2025**

APPLICANT: Ed Lane, SPG Planners + Engineers
OWNER: Homewood Village, LLC.
ZONING REQUEST: From C-G to C-G (PD)
TYPE OF REQUEST: Type II
LOCATION: 2415 Jefferson Road
TAX MAP NUMBERS: 113 053
COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICT: District 5
PROJECT SIZE: 15.95 Acres
PRESENT USE: Commercial
PROPOSED USE: Multi-Family Residential
PUBLIC NOTICE POSTED: August 20th, 2025
STAFF RECOMMENDATION: **DENIAL**
PLANNING COMM. RECOMMENDATION: **PENDING**
MAYOR & COMMISSION AGENDA SETTING: .. September 16th, 2025
MAYOR & COMMISSION VOTING SESSION: October 7th, 2025

I. Summary Recommendation

The applicant is requesting a Planned Development for a portion of 2415 Jefferson Road. The proposal requests to add two apartment structures along with 8 townhomes and partially demolish the commercial buildings at Homewood Village Shopping Center. The site is 15.95-acre tract with 138,000 square feet of existing commercial multi-tenant structure, and a second 5,000 sf of commercial building and associated surface parking. The lot sits below the grade of the adjacent South Homewood Drive and Jefferson Road as well as being bound on the southern side by railroad right-of-way.

The proposal is for two 5-story apartment structures and 8 townhomes to replace 46,000 sf of the commercial buildings in the rear of the parcel and maintain 92,000 sf of the existing commercial. The request is seeking to use the full allowable residential density for the site, but the proposal states that future phases are not binding while offering to do some upgrades in those areas. The applicant references in their application that the Future Land Use Steering Committee has called for this location to be a “Town Center,” but the design focuses on adding the residential component and not creating a neighborhood business district. The applicant shows future phases, but does not commit to them. The Planned Development request could be more successful if aspects of the future design were incorporated at this time or if the proposed portion of the site to be used was either done by-right or only captured that percentage of allowable density and reserved the remainder when the rest of the site could be completed. Also, in terms of layout, the most intensive uses are proposed to be in close proximity to the existing single-family neighborhood (Cottages at Homewood, Moss Side and Homewood Hills subdivisions) instead of a location in the interior of the site or adjacent to the commercial frontage of Jefferson Road.

Adequate infrastructure is a primary concern for this project as certain facilities do not meet current standards, and the site sits in a basin that cannot accept peak flow sewage. Attention should be paid to making this site more manageable for ACCGov utilities and potentially withhold additional density until the system can handle the additional demand. The site is also traversed by a Georgia Power transmission line that is challenging to relocate and restrictive in terms of having development beneath and near it. Further guidance on this is necessary and the applicant should work with ACC Public Utilities to find a solution that does not burden the sanitary sewer system and related infrastructure. In phasing the project, the applicant also shows future structures in places they state are restricted. If those spaces can be used in the future, the applicant should take the necessary steps to have those incorporated into the site design now in an effort to provide for a more community-focused design on the site as a whole.

Revitalizing this aging shopping center and maximizing the use of the surface parking are admirable goals. As noted by the applicant, multiple commercial tenants have ongoing contracts that prevent some changes at this time, particularly with regard to significant portions of the parking lot (although this iteration does show changes to the parking lot which do not align with other statements in the report). This should not prevent the applicant from installing a framework that could be built out in the future that creates a viable business district. The commercial spaces to be removed happen to be of the scale that work better for a smaller commercial center and could also support local businesses. The scale of the proposed buildings in relation to the surrounding neighborhoods is much taller and also of a significantly larger footprint. Staff supports the redevelopment of this property to provide additional housing and valuable business opportunities. However, this proposal places a large-scale and monolithic residential development in very close proximity to existing housing of a much smaller scale and does not provide a network to build upon going forward.

The applicant has requested six waivers that are not supported by Staff, and these waivers are listed in Section F of this report. Staff notes that one waiver needs to be evaluated using Special Use standards and the application should provide information addressing those standards for that waiver. One waiver could be supported if the proposed design more closely approximated current code standards.

The proposal is not using the planned development process to accommodate uses not anticipated by the underlying zoning, or to provide design creativity. The planned development application is primarily asking for relief from code requirements. ACC Public Utilities Department has deemed that the project cannot be supported with the current or proposed infrastructure. **Staff recommends denial** of the proposal.

Staff recommends the following conditions be considered if this proposal is recommended for approval:

- 1) The proposal may only construct the amount of residential density that would be allowed for the portion being redeveloped; this area is 8.8 acres.
- 2) The proposal shall have ground-floor commercial along the frontage of both apartment buildings along the interior drive, shown on plans with parallel parking spaces.
- 3) Project shall construct structured parking prior to completion of the second apartment building.
- 4) The proposed area and location of the conserved canopy area adjacent to the railroad be binding.

Planning Commission Recommendation: Pending

II. Purpose of Applicant Request

A. Proposal

The applicant has requested a Planned Development on a Commercial General (C-G) parcel for the construction of an apartment complex at 2415 Jefferson Road. The request also mentions façade changes to the remaining, existing commercial space. However, the application does not provide information about changes to the architectural treatment for the commercial space, as is required for Planned Development consideration. The two proposed main buildings are placed to the rear of the site, both are five stories in height. The project also now proposes 8 townhome units along Magnolia Blossom Way. The combined residential structures would accommodate 382 bedrooms in 234 apartments (predominantly one- and two-bedroom units). The design also now shows two commercial tenant spaces added on to the end of the structures (2,000 & 4,000 sq. ft. respectively). Multi-family projects are required to provide open space and recreational opportunity. The new design shows a 29,000 sq. ft. area which is mostly an amphitheater oriented toward the existing neighborhood.

The project would also demolish 46,000 sq. ft. of commercial space, leaving 92,000 sq. ft. in the larger format, commercial space (currently home to Dollar General Market, Foothills Charter School, Dial America, etc.). The site is proposed to be accessed from Jefferson Road, South Homewood Drive (two points) and a pedestrian-only path via Magnolia Blossom Way. The request also proposes 652 surface parking spaces, which does not meet the overall requirements for the site and includes areas referred to by the applicant as restricted. Lastly, the proposal has about 30,000 sq. ft. of open plaza space east of the residences and an amphitheater abutting S. Homewood Drive.

B. Existing Conditions

The property is located just outside of Loop 10 on Jefferson Road, adjacent to the neighborhoods of Homewood Hills, The Cottages at Homewood, and Moss Side as well as a church, adjacent office park and across Jefferson Road from the Athens Country Club. The site is bordered by the railroad to the south and has an outparcel at the intersection of Jefferson Road and South Homewood Drive (former Chevron). The total project area is 15.95 acres, but does not include the service station outparcel. Currently there is 138,000 square feet of commercial; large footprint in the front of the site (toward Jefferson Road) which is to remain and neighborhood-scale to the rear which is to be demolished. Main access to the site is via the signalized intersection at Jefferson Road and South Homewood Drive. The area is served by Transit Route 7 (Prince Avenue).

The property is currently zoned C-G, the surrounding properties are mostly residential (RS-8, RS-15, RS-25 and RM-2), the adjacent church is zoned Commercial Office (C-O) and the outparcel is C-G. The existing RM-2 property nearby is across the railroad track and connects to Tallasseee Road, and there is a planned extension of the ACC Greenway Network through these properties, however the connection has not yet been designed and is not shown in this proposal.

The property sits at an elevation that is lower than both South Homewood Drive and Jefferson Road, but has been internally graded and slopes gently southwest toward an aging stormwater facility.

III. Policy Analysis

A. Compatibility with Comprehensive Plan

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

- *Infill and redevelopment should be prioritized over greenfield expansion.*

The 2023 Comprehensive Plan calls for the following policies that are not supported in this project:

- *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.*
- *Improve safety and accessibility for people walking, biking, and busing around Athens.*

Overall, the proposal is partially compatible with the Comprehensive Plan. It does provide infill at an aging shopping center with unused surface parking. However, the housing proposed by this development is consistent with the large-scale apartment complex form that has been developed in Athens-Clarke County over the past 10+ years (some with waning occupancy) but not specifically within the context of the surrounding neighborhoods that exist in this area. As noted in a series of recent studies completed for Athens-Clarke County, the local housing market is deficient in housing forms that accommodate family occupancy and provide viable opportunities for prospective owner-occupants to enter into the residential market. The surrounding neighborhoods are characterized by one and two-story dwellings, and a smoother transition to those existing residences could include structures (or portions of the proposed structures) that are less than 5 stories in height and designed with more modest-scaled footprints. Staff supports the idea of ground floor residential in these nodes and notes that, when designed well, such uses can fit well with neighboring properties. This proposal unfortunately does not provide any design that activates the ground floor along the residential units which is common when allowing these in commercial zones. Using a mix of housing options would also allow this project to set the groundwork for future development and opportunity. Lastly, there have been plans for the Greenway Network Plan expansion to the site, but the proposal does not show future interconnection in this regard.

B. Compatibility with the Future Land Use Map

The 2023 Future Land Use Map designates the subject parcel as *General Business*, which is described as follows:

General Business

These are commercial areas that serve a variety of needs for the residents of the region. It is intended for small- and large-scale retailing and service uses that are auto-oriented, such as Atlanta Highway, Lexington Road and US 29 North. Pedestrian-oriented design is particularly appropriate when these streets contain neighborhood-shopping areas or are adjacent to multifamily housing or residential neighborhoods. Pedestrian circulation in these centers is a primary concern, therefore, connectivity within and to surrounding areas should be encouraged. Internal pedestrian walkways should be provided from the public right-of-way to the principal customer entrance of all principal buildings on the site. Walkways should connect focal points of pedestrian activity such as, but not limited to, transit stops, street crossings, building, store entry points, and plaza space. Walkways shall feature adjoining landscaped areas that contribute to the establishment or enhancement of community and public spaces. The street level facade of these areas should have a scale and architectural elements that relate to pedestrians. Buildings should be oriented to the street corridors which should be lined with street-trees. Small and medium scale retail stores should frame the streets with large-scale retailers located behind with focus given to pedestrian circulation rather than automobiles. Parking lots should not be located at the street front and shared parking should be encouraged.

The applicant states that this site is being proposed as a “Town Center” node by the Future Land Use Steering Committee and they are seeking to use that framework as justification for the request. Staff does see opportunities for horizontal mixing of uses in nodal areas such as this, however those pieces

should complement one another, whereas this proposal treats the uses separately. Horizontal mixed-use should also allow a business district to step into the surrounding community, but this design puts the largest-scale structures next to the adjacent single- and two-story dwellings.

This proposal could set-up the site to be designed with an interior axial corridor and contextually-appropriate residential and commercial development features. However, the location and massing of the residential structures on the site is out of scale for the adjacent neighborhoods, separating the residential and commercial uses, and appears to give the existing large-scale commercial structures a simple facelift instead of creating a business district. The proposal is also seeking to use the allowed residential density for the entire site in these two structures, without design consideration for over half of the site. While portions of the site are currently lease-restricted, the design could include an interior road network, with some residential development, while leaving opportunity for the future, and plan for the eventual renovation of the remaining commercial areas of the property. This would create a balanced business district for the neighborhood and surrounding area to blend housing and commercial opportunity to the location. The application mostly speaks to existing visibility from Jefferson Road; however, this focus does not consider the full extent of what the Future Land Use Plan suggests. Designing an internal pedestrian and vehicle network that is supportive of a variety of uses would begin rebuilding new utility and value at the site and allow it to grow more organically for the area, without requiring drive-by visibility from the adjacent thoroughfare.

No change to the Future Land Use Map is required since the proposed use is compatible with the current designation. However, the project design is not compatible with the character description, which calls for buildings to be oriented toward the street with good pedestrian connections and easy access to public transit.

C. Compatibility with the Zoning Map

Here is the purpose of instituting a Planned Development:

It is the intent of this district to encourage development of compatible land uses on a scale larger than that of individual small parcels. This district is designed to be an overlay appended to a residential, commercial, or industrial district to provide greater latitude with regard to the internal site planning considerations of a planned development. Individual uses and structures in a planned development need not comply with the specific building location, height, type, building size, lot size, and other space limits of the underlying basic district provided that the spirit and intent of such requirements are complied with in the total development plan approved for such project.

This proposal is not meeting the intent of implementing a Planned Development, and the request is largely seeking relief from ACC code requirements.

The applicant has requested a Planned Development in a C-G zone. The waivers requested are intended to support the proposed design of the site rather than asking for new opportunities or a unique mixing of uses. Additionally, the site and potential business district would benefit from meeting many of the standards that the applicant is looking to waive. Creating human-scale development on a relatively small development site such as this one would fit best with the surrounding uses and allow for new housing and business in an aging commercial center.

The Athens-Clarke County Zoning Ordinance includes a list of defined uses and designates where they can or cannot be established. For this request, the most noticeable difference between the current C-G zoning and the proposed C-G (PD) zoning is to remove multiple design standards that most C-G developments already follow.

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

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

IV. Technical Assessment

A. Environment

The Arborist has reviewed the tree management plan and offered the following comments:

- *The arborist recommends that the conserved canopy waiver be worked out during plans review. The administrative waiver of tree conservation is an iterative process requiring dialogue between the ACC Planning Department and applicant to find a solution meeting code.*
- *Project will be required to meet all requirements of the community tree management ordinance at time of plan review.*

B. Grading and Drainage

The Transportation & Public Works Department has reviewed the proposal and offered the following comment:

- *A new stormwater conference should be held to determine how stormwater will be handled. Currently shown facilities seem adequate.*

C. Water and Sewer Availability

The Public Utilities Department has reviewed the proposal and recommend denial with the following comments:

- *ACC water is available*
- *ACC sanitary sewer is available*
- *ACC water capacity is available*
- *ACC dry weather flow sewer capacity is available*
- *ACC wet weather flow sewer capacity is NOT available. A privately-designed, owned, and maintained sanitary sewer storage facility to retain sanitary sewer on site during wet weather conditions is required in order to serve the development with ACC sanitary sewer, or alternative solution as deemed acceptable by PUD Director*
- *A defined proposed solution concept needs to be presented to address wet-weather flow sanitary sewer capacity in order for PUD to support the development. If an onsite sewer storage facility is the proposed solution, this concept should be shown on the binding site plans.*

D. Transportation

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

- *Regarding this project's impact to traffic congestion: this project does not pose a problem. However, at some point in time, continued development along the Jefferson Rd corridor will create an untenable traffic level of service at some intersections throughout the Jefferson Rd corridor.*

E. Fire Protection

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

- *The Fire Marshal's Office has reviewed the proposed development at 2415 Jefferson Road (Homewood Village) and finds that the site provides adequate access for emergency response without negatively impacting response times or routing. However, the increase in bedrooms may contribute to a higher call volume in the area. The site has an adequate firefighting water supply of 1,900 gallons per minute at average flow, and hydrant placement will be coordinated with the developer. Due to the size and use of the proposed structures, fire protection systems will be required, including fire sprinklers, a fire alarm system, and standpipes. A fire department connection (FDC) must also be located in a remote, accessible, and visible location, with riser rooms and FDC placement to be coordinated during further plan review.*

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 can be used to request waivers to the typically required development standards in an effort to provide design flexibility to account for special circumstances unique to the design or the development site, as long as the proposal meets the spirit and intent of the code and Comprehensive Plan. 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 applicable ordinance standards.

Concerns:

- This site and project could set the stage for significant redevelopment in an underutilized space, but the proposal is limited to two large buildings & 8 townhomes surrounded by surface parking near a large commercial structure with existing surface parking.
- Ground floor residential in a commercial zone is a Special Use, not merely a waiver request. The application report should address the special use requirements in Sec. 9-20 as they pertain to this request.
- The phasing of the proposal gives no assurance that anything beyond the residential component and restaurant will be constructed. The applicant is focusing on one portion of the site at this time, and is proposing to use all of the residential yield from the total property acreage in that one area. This develop approach is allowed by-right, and does not need Planned Development approval to accomplish.
- The applicant does not propose to meet design requirements for over half the site, but is using the density for the full acreage.
- The residential portion requires 374 parking spaces + spaces for 6,000 sq. ft. of commercial, but only proposes 284 spaces and has stated that the other adjacent parking is under lease and restricted. The result is a deficiency of at least 90 parking spaces. A reduction in units to accommodate residents is advised, or a commitment to structured parking which would allow the proposed residences to meet functional parking realities.
- Plaza space must meet the plaza standards in sec. 9-25-8 F.
- Breaking up of parking areas and providing pedestrian circulation as required in Sec. 9-25-8.C.

needs attention

- Front entry porch areas are required for residential developments in C zones.
- 8% of the area is required for recreation, please demonstrate compliance
- Parking lot buffering needs to be shown
- Creating a mixed-use business district, especially when requesting waivers or using the planned development process, needs to bring additional community benefit. One opportunity is to design to the urban standards in 9-10-6 or at least consider some of those options to create a neighborhood within an urban environment.

Requested Waivers

1. *Waiver from Section 8-7-15 – A waiver from required minimum 10% conserved tree canopy to be reduced to 4%.*

Applicant’s Purpose: The project site is predominantly asphalt and the existing stormwater facility which includes much of the canopy needs to be rebuilt and modernized.

Staff Analysis: The applicant states that due to existing paved areas of the site and the type and location of the remaining canopy that additional clearing is necessary to modernize the stormwater facility. Staff agrees that the site is limited for viable tree conservation and that the volunteer growth in the existing stormwater area should be addressed. Conserved canopy waivers, when allowed, work with an applicant to go above and beyond planting minimums, use larger sized trees and often trees of better benefit to the community, only one of those is being proposed and in a smaller fashion than typical. Staff does not support this waiver as currently requested.

2. *Waiver from Section 9-10-2. L(1) – A waiver from the requirement that residential units must be on the second floor and above or in the basement.*

Applicant’s Purpose: To separate the residential and existing, remaining commercial.

Staff Analysis: This waiver needs to be presented as a Special Use request and meet Special Use criteria as found in Sec. 9-20-5. Staff sees opportunities for horizontal mixed use or vertical mixed use as existing commercial sites and corridors are redeveloped. However, an integrated program for those uses is needed that provides more consideration to the ground floor of the residential units. There is little differentiation from the first floor residential and remaining stories. In other urban environments in Athens-Clarke County, ground floor residential has been demarcated with additional attention and even provided outdoor space for a tenant and softened the transition to the units. Staff suggests referencing ACC’s downtown design standards in sec. 9-10-6 as they address the defining characteristics that are expected as a community benefit in order to justify a waiver. Staff does not support this waiver in its currently designed form.

3. *Waiver from Section 9-25-8 C. 3. – A waiver from the maximum block size of 3 acres.*

Applicant’s Purpose: Maintain existing retail and work with topography on site.

Staff Analysis: The site constraints are a challenge, but also an opportunity. The proposal places a large footprint for two buildings, limited commercial and 8 townhomes surrounded by surface parking and connects to the existing surface lot. In looking at revitalizing aging commercial areas, Staff encourages a framework for a neighborhood business district with manageable blocks, exterior facing units (when feasible) and transitions into surrounding neighborhoods. This layout places two, five-story structures adjacent to one and two-story residences as well as a lot of parking between the surrounding neighborhood and the commercial space. This proposal has the ability to set the business district up for future infill with a guiding internal street network rather

than treating the uses as completely separate and disconnected. Staff does not support this waiver.

4. *Waiver from Section 9-25-8. F. 1 a & b – Additional Standards for Large Scale Developments* – A waiver from the requirement for buildings to be less than 300' in length and provided curb, sidewalks and street trees.

Applicant's Purpose: Allow existing commercial to remain with minimal updates.

Staff Analysis: The applicant is requesting a waiver from these code sections to be applied to the existing retail spaces that are to remain. Staff supports working with the ownership to maintain some retail on site, but the current proposal does not adequately address the design standards associated with commercial developments of this sort. The applicant is proposing to remove the business district-scaled retail and keep the large-scale tenant spaces. Staff understands that the current lease situation provides some limitations. However, these leasing realities have been agreed upon by the ownership and, if appropriate design considerations cannot be incorporated at this time as a result, then possibly this location is not yet right for redevelopment. The applicant has also stated that the remaining commercial structures will receive façade improvements, and such investment suggests that these structures will not be changed anytime soon. As designed, the residential and commercial uses do not cohesively mix and both are at a scale that does not suggest pedestrian friendliness or attention to the surrounding neighborhoods. Staff does not support this waiver.

5. *Waiver from Section 9-25-8. F. 4 a – Parking Standards between building and street.*

Applicant's Purpose: Due to topography, amount of street frontages and existing parking, it is difficult to meet this standard.

Staff Analysis: Staff wishes to work with the applicant on the existing parking to address topographic challenges, however there are additional design solutions to minimize this request that are not being pursued. One major opportunity is to provide a good transition between the neighborhoods to the west of this proposed development site. This could allow the scale to be more contextually driven and relocate some parking to the site's interior that would allow residential units to face the existing adjacent residential structures. Staff also understands that a major factor on this site is the challenge of relocating the Georgia Power transmission line that runs through the center of the property. This fact appears to show that a swath of the property will never be developed for anything other than roads, parking or possibly open space. If that is not going to be addressed, the applicant should seek to best maximize that space and build around it, rather than address it. Staff does not support this waiver.

6. *Waiver from Section 9-30-2 - Parking Spaces Required.*

Applicant's Purpose: Reduce the required parking amount due to the mix of uses.

Staff Analysis: Parking requirements associated with the proposed development and the demonstrated commercial needs of the site can be evaluated to find opportunities for sharing of spaces and reduction in overall parking provided where appropriate. The applicant could identify possible shared parking opportunities as the current proposal seems to have parking for residents and parking for the commercial without any integration of the two. Staff could support this waiver, but a more integrated design is needed to support sharing of spaces.

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.