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Georgia Square Mall Redevelopment

11/02/2022 – #220246

Master Planned Development Application Report

W&A Engineering, Georgia

I. Request Overview

Applicant:	W&A Engineering, Georgia
Location:	3700, 3706, 3708, 3710 Atlanta Highway
Tax Parcels:	073 016; 073 016F; 073 016J; 073 016K; 073 016S; 073 016T
Size:	74.77 acres
Current Use:	Georgia Square Mall
Current Zoning:	C-G
Proposed Zoning:	C-G (PD)
Current FLU:	Employment and General Business
Proposed FLU:	General Business

The purpose of this request is to rezone six (6) parcels currently zoned C-G (Commercial General) to C-G (PD) (Commercial General, Planned Development) to construct a mixed-use commercial and residential development on a 74.77-acre site. Due to several requested waivers of required standards, a planned development is being requested. An amendment to Future Land Use Map for one existing tax parcel, the property located at the northern boundary (3710 Atlanta Highway), to change the current designation from Employment Center to General Business is also being requested. The remaining five subject parcels are currently designated as General Business

II. Site Description

The subject parcels are the site of the Georgia Square Mall, two associated outparcels along Atlanta Highway, and the former movie theatre to the rear of the mall. The Georgia Square Mall has been in operation since the 1980's for commercial use. The two outparcels along Atlanta Highway (3706 and 3708) were constructed around the same time as the mall, and the existing commercial buildings have been occupied by various tenants for commercial uses. The northernmost parcel at 3710 Atlanta Highway contains a structure, built in 1984, which was used as a multi-screen movie theatre. The subject property fronts Atlanta Highway and Huntington Road and has five access points, including one from Marilyn Farmer Way at the property's northwest corner, as well as a private access road built at the same time as the mall which circles the site.

The Mall building is approximately 500,000 square feet and was developed, as was the model of the era, with four anchor tenants: Macy's, Sears, JC Penny, and Belk. In addition, medium to small commercial retail tenants operated under the same roof. Belk is the only remaining original anchor tenant and will continue operation in its existing footprint as part of the overall redevelopment.

The other three aforementioned anchor tenants have since closed (Macy's in 2017, Sears in 2019, and JC Penny in 2020).

The subject property is located within a designated Tax Allocation District (TAD). The Mall Area TAD advisory committee has been engaged throughout the redevelopment effort. An application for a TAD project will be submitted for consideration to the TAD advisory committee and with their approval will be considered for approval by the Mayor and Commission in February of next year.

The property is surrounded by other commercial and residential uses. To the south, along Atlanta Highway, C-G (Commercial-General), including AutoZone/Pep Boys, Zaxby's, and Burger King. To the west C-G (Commercial-General), with RaceTrac, Akademia Brewing Company, RM-1 Meadowland Apartments zoned RM-1 (Mixed-Density Residential), and C-O w/ Conditions, the Arbor Terrace of Athens assisted living facility. To the north, C-G, including Metro Mortgage of Georgia, Double Tree Place office condominiums. To the east, RS-25 to the east on the opposite side of Huntington Road an existing large residential subdivision.

III. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal is to rezone the site to C-G-PD (Commercial-General, Planned Development) for redevelopment of the Georgia Square Mall site and associated outparcels, including the construction of a commercial and residential mixed-use development.

The proposed development includes a total of 1,188 housing units providing a total of 2,057 bedrooms. 72,140 square feet of new retail/commercial space, with 213,336 square feet of existing commercial and 81,000 square feet of existing office space to remain are also included. An exhibit is attached to clarify the proposed program of uses.

The proposed development will be constructed in multiple phases over the coming years. The phases are generally described here and represented by the attached exhibit.

Phase 1: Approximately 68 % of the site area will be developed in the first phase. Due to the complexities of redeveloping the site while maintaining business at the existing mall, the first phase shall be divided into two sub-phases.

Phase 1A: Includes rehabilitation of the existing mall area adjacent to Belk for use as office space. The construction of 97 fee-simple townhome units, 446 multi-family dwelling units and 52,000 square feet of new commercial/retail space. Improvements to be constructed during Phase 1A will be the center green area and the described amenities, plaza space, sidewalk portions of the multi-use trails, two roundabouts and the stormwater management infrastructure.

Phase 1B: Includes the site preparation of the transit station and the roadway improvements along the properties western side including the third roundabout. The construction schedule of the transit station will be determined by A-CC.

Phases 2 & 3: Make up the remaining 28 % of the total site area. These phases include the remaining fee-simple townhomes and the remaining 620 multi-family dwelling units. Timeline and configuration of the remaining phase(s) will be driven by market demand. The given outline of these phases is subject to change per market conditions.

IV. Comprehensive Plan Compatibility

A. Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map indicates that most of the subject property, consisting of parcels 073 016, 073 016F, 073 016K, 073 016S, and 073 016T, currently has a General Business designation, which is described as follows:

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 and corridors 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.

V. Zoning

The Master Plan designation being sought includes this binding application report, and binding site plan to provide certainty to the public that what is approved will be what is built. The proposal does not change the base C-G zoning of the subject property and adds residential and commercial developments, which are like uses of the adjoining districts, therefore approval would not create an isolated zoning district.

VI. Community Goals / Needs and Opportunities

The proposal is aligned with the following 2018 Comprehensive Plan policies:

- Housing options that reflect the diversity and meet the needs of the community, including housing for families and a diverse workforce. These are quality options with a variety of types, prices, and locations.

- Given the County's small geographic area, redevelopment should be prioritized over greenfield development.
- Infill housing should be promoted and concentrated in areas near commercial nodes, providing easy access to everyday services.

VII. Requested Waiver of Ordinance Standards

The scale and complexity of the proposal will require some exemptions to the zoning and development standards. The following have been identified and are being requested as described in this binding proposal to provide clarity on areas where the development as proposed, for the reasons described below, require some relief from the standards described for the C-G district by the A-CC code of ordinances.

- Ground floor residential in C-G (9-10-2): Due to the mixture of proposed housing types, ground floor residential uses will not be required to conform to the C-G district standard. The inclusion of fee-simple townhomes and exclusively multi-family buildings as a component of the development will require ground floor residential uses in excess of what the code will allow.
- Tree Canopy* (8-7-15): A waiver to reduce the amount of existing tree canopy maintained is being requested as depicted on the included Tree Management Plan. The current site conditions fall below the C-G district's 10% area minimum for preserved canopy. The redevelopment of the overall site will include reforestation areas as well as significant supplemental plantings across the entire site to increase the total canopy area in order to meet the overall requirement for planting. Additionally, future amendments to the approved Tree Management Plan submitted with this application may be approved by the Planning Director administratively.
- An increase to the maximum allowable length of a building above 300' (9-25-8-F): The remaining portion of the existing mall building (Building 1) fronting the center green will exceed the maximum length by approximately 200'. To create a sense of continuity and symmetry, Building 4 (located on the opposite side of the center green) is proposed to be the same length.
- Elimination of the maximum distance requirement for shared parking facilities (9-30-8-A): Site conditions and overall design resulted in the shared parking areas being located more than the maximum 200' away from all uses they will serve.
- Density of 27.5 bedrooms per acre*: A density bonus under the A-CC inclusionary zoning will be needed to allow for the additional proposed affordable units described in the subsequent section. The requested density bonus of 15% is being sought in exchange for an offer of 10% of the new multi-family dwelling units to households or individuals making 80% of the annual median income (AMI) for the County. This is well in line with the ratios offered under the affordable housing ordinance, which allows a 100% bonus when offering 20% of units at 80% AMI.
- Relief from the RS-5 standards for single-family residential uses in a C-G zone (9-10-2) L(11)): The fee simple townhomes will be constructed to the C-G standard, since they are considered multi-family dwellings by the code's definition.
- A reduction of the required minimum lot width in the C-G district from 50' (9-10-3) to 20': Because each townhome unit will be on an individual lot, the minimum lot width will need to be

reduced to 20' to allow for subdivision according to all other C-G lot standards

8. Removal of the fee-simple townhomes and their lots in the area used to calculate the plaza area requirement (9-25-8-F-2: In an effort to reduce the total amount of impervious surface, the required plaza space is reduced to be equivalent to what would be required for only non-residential uses.

The scale of the development triggered a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) Review by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, the results of which were presented with the original submittal.

VIII. Community Benefits/ Affordability of Housing

The resident population of the immediate area would increase with this proposal since the request includes the construction of 2,057 bedrooms. The proposal includes a total of 1,188 dwelling units, including 112 one-bedroom studio units, 526 one-bedroom units, 312 two-bedroom units, 157 three-bedroom units and 81 four-bedroom units. Of the proposed multi-family residential, 140 of the new bedrooms (99 units) or 10% will be reserved for tenants whose household income is below 80% of the adjusted median income of property's census block group. These would be identical to the units offered at market rate and will offer new housing at a more affordable price to the community.

Inclusion of these affordable units will increase the total density of the proposed residential units 15% above the allowed density to 27.5 bedrooms per acre. Using the framework established by Athens-Clarke County in their voluntary inclusionary zoning ordinance, which permits a 100% increase in the allowable density in exchange for an offer of 20% of the units at an affordable rate, this request would be to offer 10% of the units as affordable in exchange for a 15% density bonus.

The developer would like to proffer funds of up to \$50,000 to Athens-Clarke County for the construction of sidewalk within the 771 ft section of right of way on the eastern side of Cleveland Rd. from Marilyn Farmer to Kittle Lane. All acquisition of right of way and construction of the sidewalk shall be the responsibility of Athens-Clarke County.

IX. Transportation and Transit

The Traffic Impact Analysis provided with the preliminary plan has been revised and resubmitted with the master application materials for continued Staff review. This section of Atlanta Highway is scheduled for improvements by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

The proposed development includes a 12' wide multi-use path and improved pedestrian network around and through the site. The intent is to provide a high level of internal off-street circulation as well as a destination and connection along the larger County-wide multi-use trail network. The location of the multi-use path is highlighted on an included exhibit.

Athens Transit currently serves the site with two bus routes, Route 20, and Route 21, through the subject property; two ACC Transit bus stops are currently located on the property. The proposal included the addition of a bus stop, bringing the total to three (3) locations in addition to a new transit station on the site.

The proposal takes into consideration the previous review conducted by Athens Transit and has continued a dialogue throughout the process of developing this application. Specifically, the desire A-CC transit expressed previously to make the development transit oriented has been addressed with the inclusion of a new multi-modal facility, a dedicated area to for park and ride users, and roadway improvements. The transit station as proposed will be a public use built and operated by A-CC Transit. Under a future development agreement, the developers will prepare the site for construction during Phase 1. While every effort has been made to accommodate busses throughout the site the developer does request as a condition of approval that the Planning Director be able to grant administrative modifications to the plan as needed for the purpose of facilitating bus movement. Additionally, it is understood that the future development agreement for the transit station will mandate that A-CC shall have three years from the time of the issuance of the Phase One LDP to obtain their own LDP for the transit station and that construction of the station shall commence prior to the expiration of that LDP. If ACC is unable to meet these goals, control of the transit station land shall revert back to the property owners and be regulated by the C-G standards and approved waivers for the balance of the development in order to retain continuity.

In addition to the improvements proposed for the internal street network, two areas along the sites eastern and western boundaries are proposed to be improved to better integrate the site into the urban fabric. Two proposed interconnections are shown along the western edge, which allow for future connection to the existing adjacent developments and street networks. Actual off-site connection to these locations shall be by others. A roundabout to facilitate traffic flow to and from Marylin Farmer Way has also been proposed. The eastern edge of the site would be regraded in order to move the existing ring road and construct residential units along Huntington Rd. This would provide a transition in density for the existing single-family residences on the opposite side of Huntington to the denser residential and commercial development proposed. Also included in the plan is the construction of a roundabout at Huntington Rd and the development's southeastern entrance, which will ease congestion and serve as a node for the project's boundary.

X. Utilities:

Existing underground water and sanitary sewer lines will be relocated where appropriate, and new lines will be installed according to the requirements of the A-CC Utilities and Public Works standards for private streets.

XI. Stormwater

The proposed site layout represents a reduction of 26% of the existing impervious surface area of the Georgia Square Mall property. This reduction in impervious areas will allow the application of special standards for the design of the stormwater facilities as outlined in 5-4-7(c)(2). These special standards will not require channel protection BMPs to be installed. The overall design of the stormwater facilities proposed represent an overall reduction in stormwater runoff and provide additional BMPs to detain the Channel Protection volume in an effort mitigate further degradation of the streambanks located downstream of the site. The proposed detention of the Channel Protection Volume exceeds the requirements of the Unified Governments stormwater regulations.

A full comparison of the existing conditions to the proposed conditions are detailed on the Master Plan. The central green area also contributes to the overall management of stormwater on site, the amenity

area is intended to treat water quality through runoff reduction by making use of the sites natural topography to serve a dual purpose, first as an amenity space and second as a functioning piece of infrastructure to infiltrate and convey storm water.

XII. Lighting

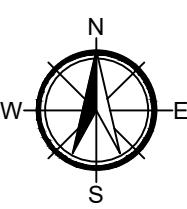
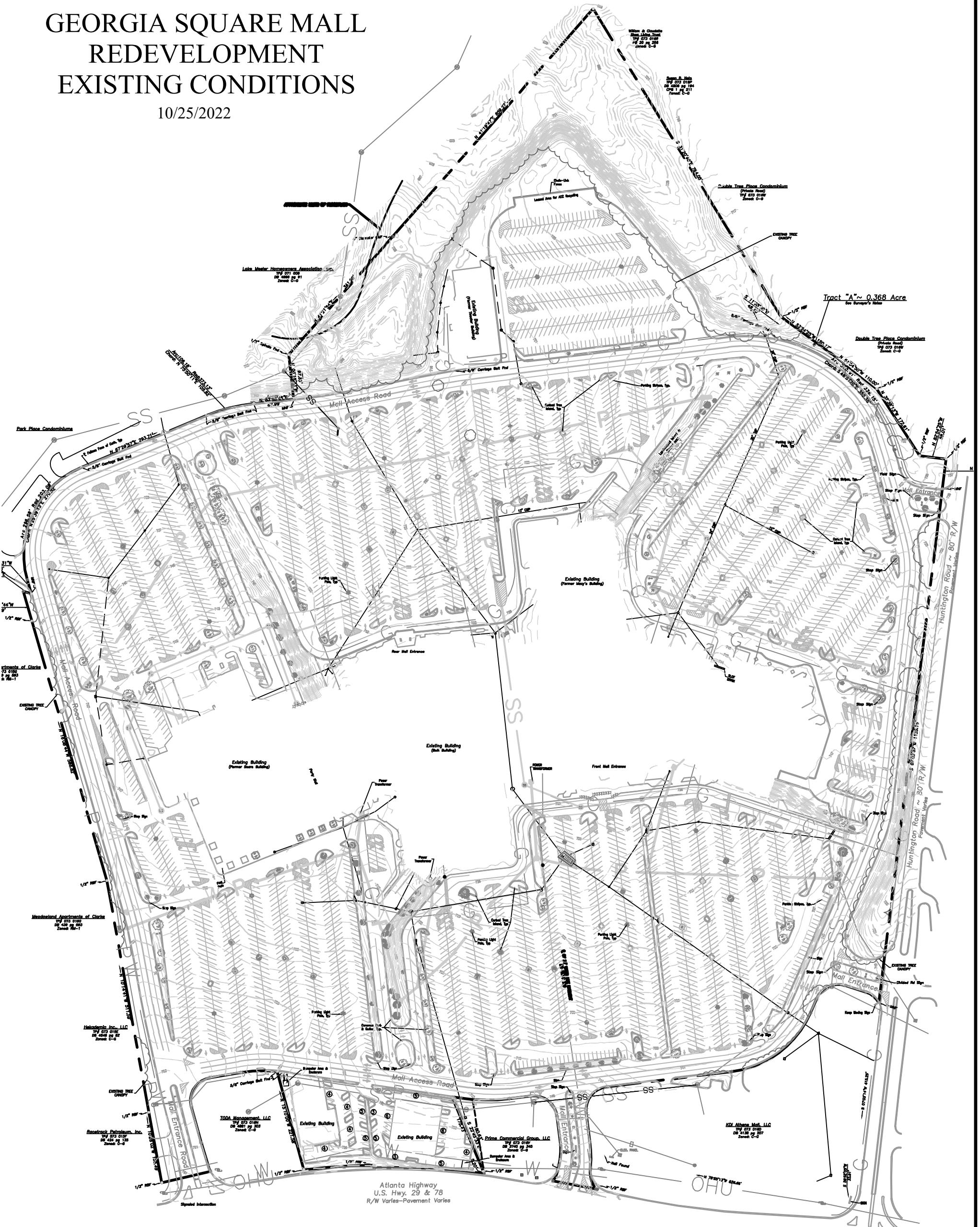
Proposed lighting for the commercial areas will meet the no-spill standards outlined in A-CC code at the time of approval.

XIII. Sustainable Design

New construction will be built to the most recent standards, which have incorporated the advancements in green building technology that have become mainstream improving the overall sustainability and lessening the development's total impact. In addition, conduit will be installed during construction to facilitate the potential installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations for the retail and multifamily areas of the development. Chases will also be included in large residential and mixed-use buildings during construction to accommodate the potential installation of rooftop solar in the future if needed.

GEORGIA SQUARE MALL REDEVELOPMENT EXISTING CONDITIONS

10/25/2022



SCALE 1" = 200' 0 100 200 400

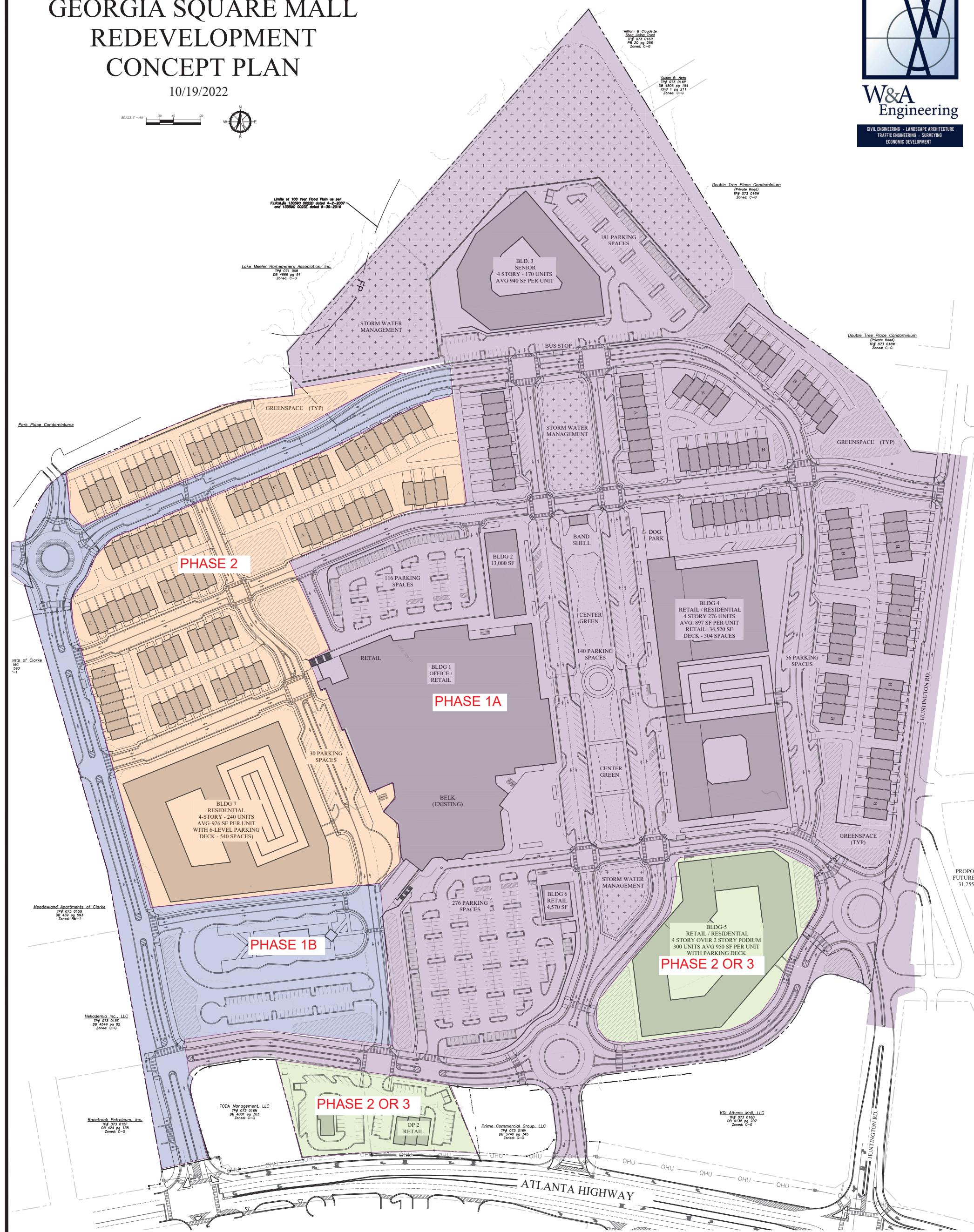
GEORGIA SQUARE MALL REDEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN

10/19/2022



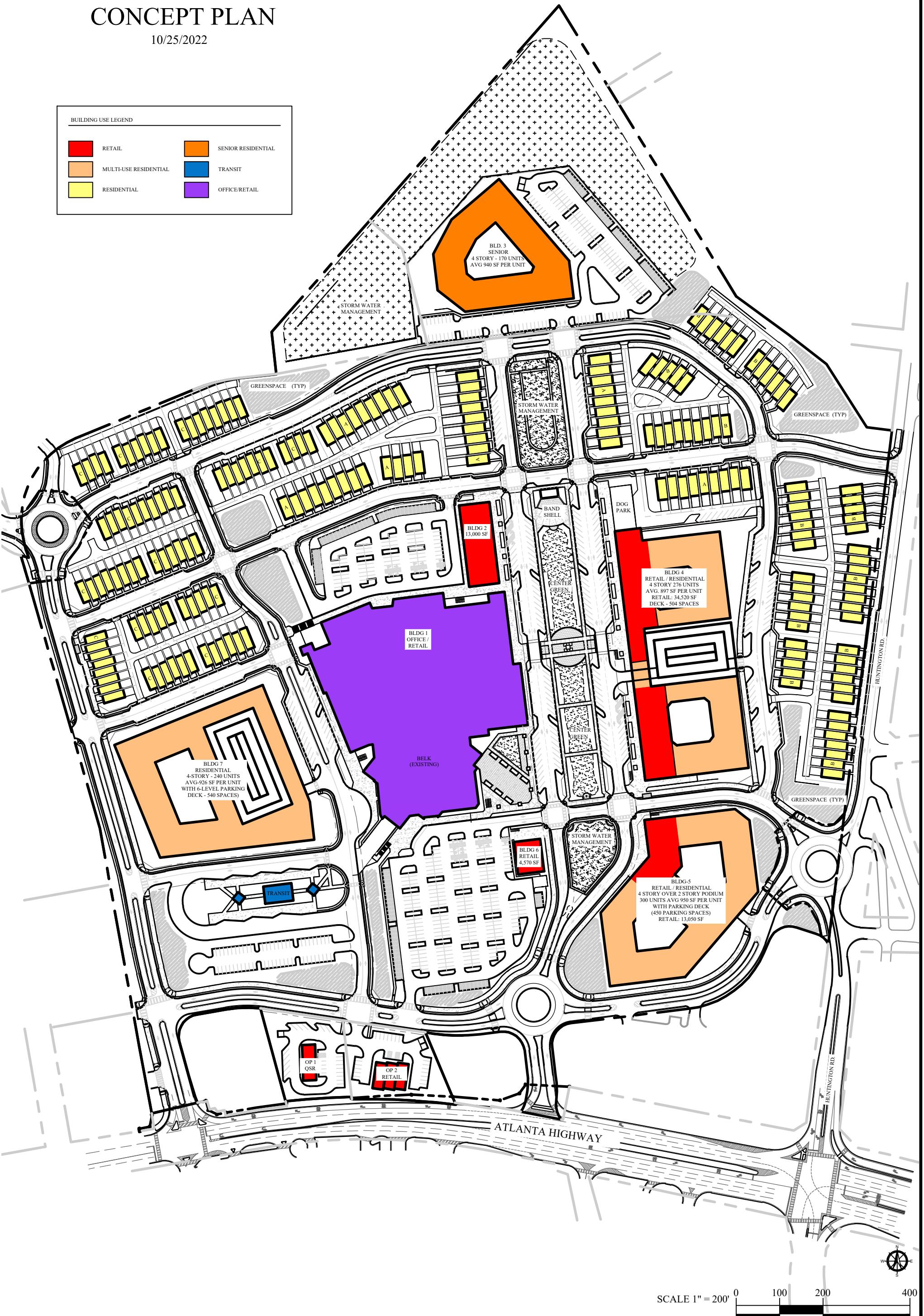
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GEORGIA SQUARE MALL REDEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN

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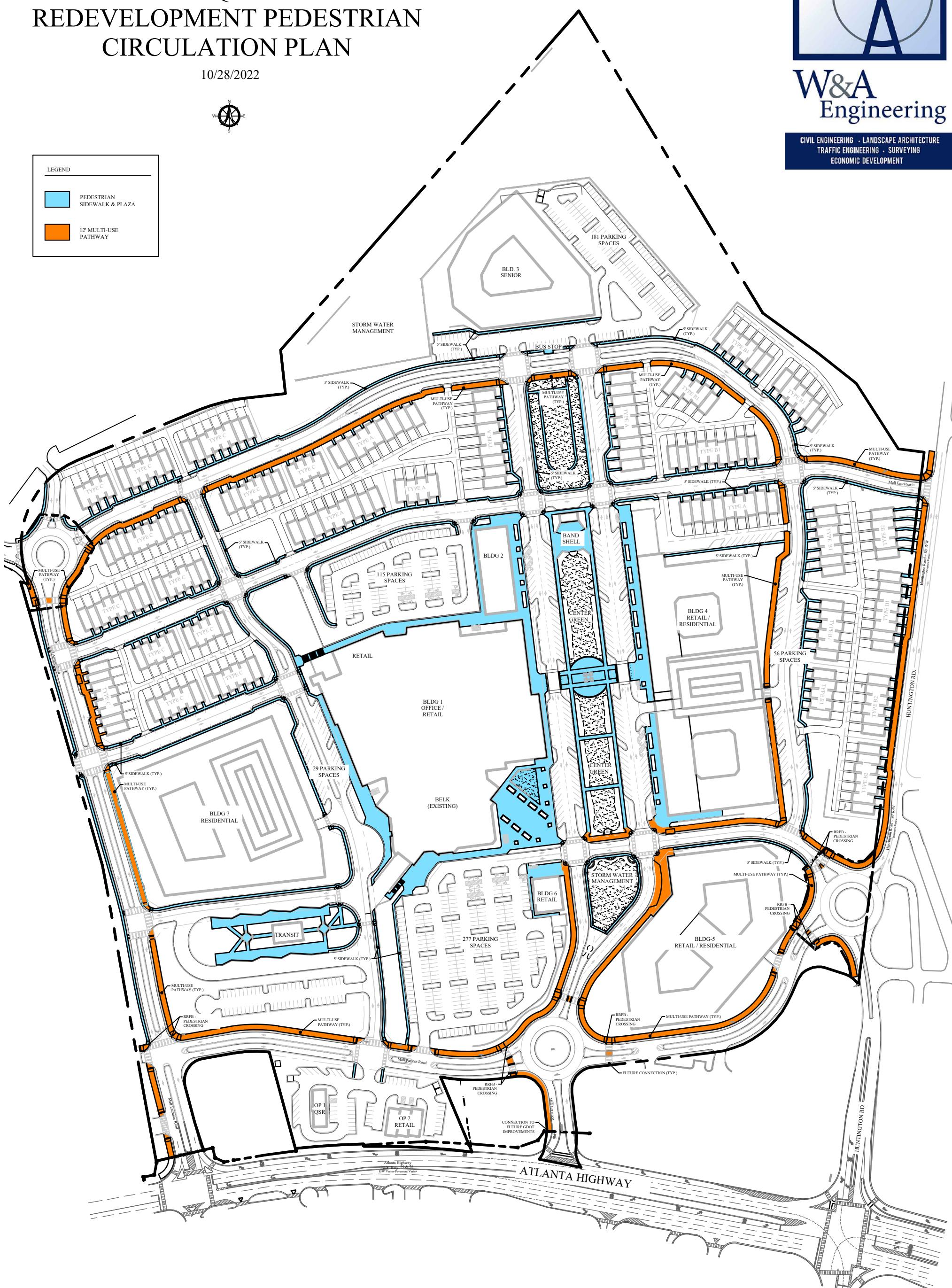
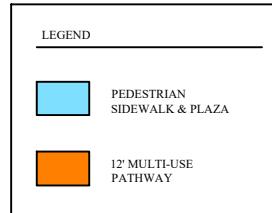
GEORGIA SQUARE MALL REDEVELOPMENT PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION PLAN

10/28/2022



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SCALE 1" = 60'
30 60 120