



**CITY OF SNELLVILLE
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING COMMISSION**

CASE SUMMARY

March 26, 2019

CASE NUMBER: RZ 19-01 SUP 19-01

REQUEST: Rezoning; Special Use Permit; Request for Variances

LOCATION: 4.44± Acres Near Pate Street and Henry Clower Blvd., Snellville

TAX PARCEL(S): 5026 051, 5026 177 and 5027 107

PRESENT ZONING: CI (Civic Institutional) District

REQUESTED ZONING: TC-R (Towne Center Residential) District

OVERLAY DISTRICT: Corridor Overlay District

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN: Towne Center

DEVELOPMENT/PROJECT: 88-Unit Senior (55+) Apartment Development

PROPERTY OWNER: Snellville United Methodist Church, Inc.
Snellville, Georgia 30078

APPLICANT: Wendover Housing Partners
Altamonte Springs, Florida 32714

CONTACT: Bo Johnston
404-694-8649 bjohnston@wendovergroup.com

RECOMMENDATION: Approval with Conditions



**CITY OF SNELLVILLE
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
PLANNING COMMISSION**

**CASE ANALYSIS
March 26, 2019**

TO: The Planning Commission

MEETING DATE: March 26, 2019

FROM: Jason Thompson, Director
Department of Planning and Development

CASE NUMBER: RZ 19-01 SUP 19-01

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The Department of Planning and Development has received applications from Wendover Housing Partners, represented by Bo Johnston, to request a Rezoning and Special Use Permit for a ±4.44-acre site located at the corner of Henry Clower Boulevard, Pate Street (north) and an entrance drive for Snellville United Methodist internally referred to as Wesley Way.

The applicant proposes to build an 111,412 sq. ft. four (4) story, 88-unit age-restricted (55+) senior apartment development. The applicant is requesting the property be rezoned, as well as a Special Use Permit. The applicant is also requesting variances from the Snellville Zoning Ordinance.

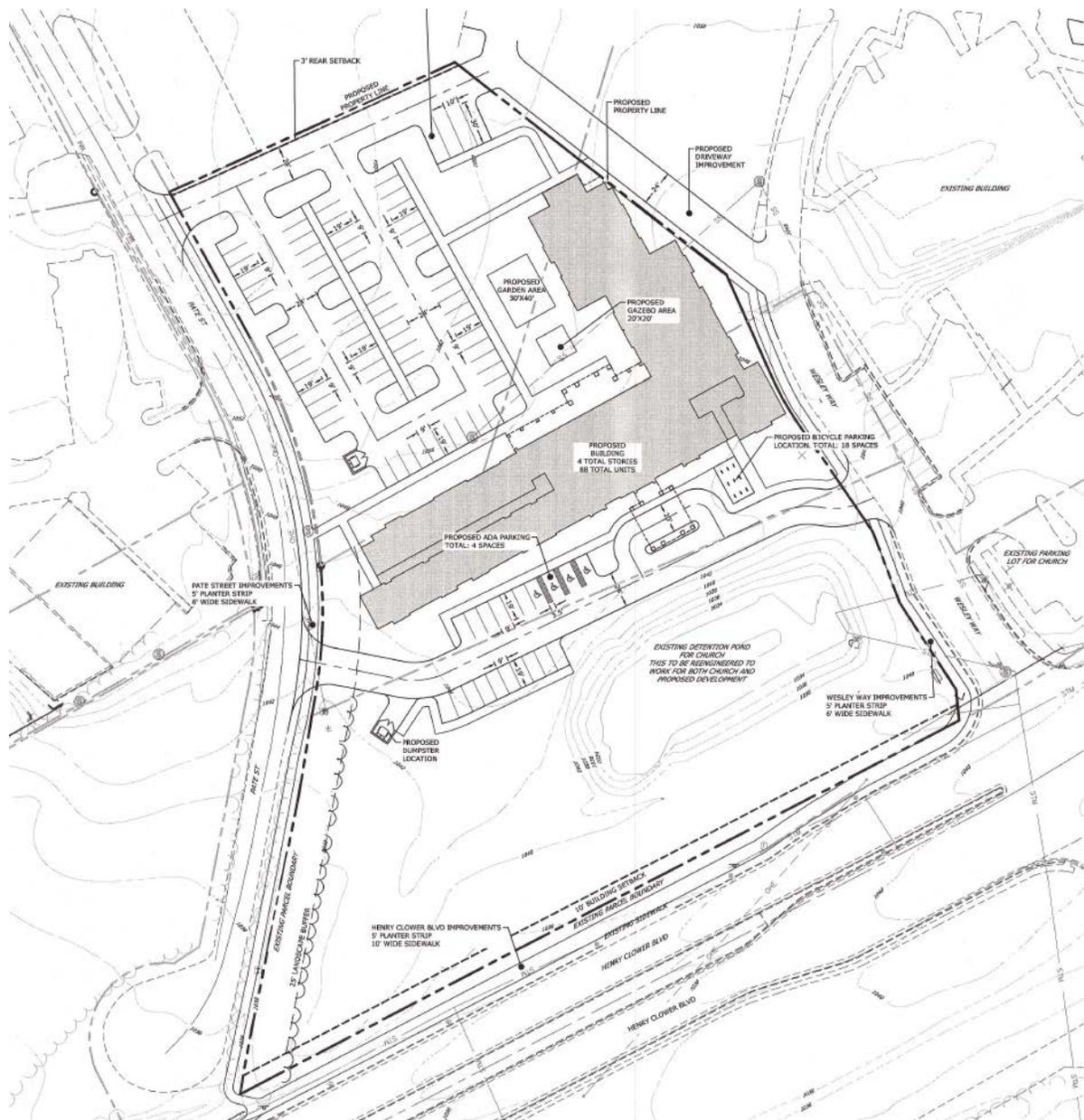
BACKGROUND:

The ±4.44-acre tract is located on the southwest corner of the Snellville United Methodist Church (SUMC) campus. The site is comprised of pieces of other parcels owned by SUMC, which will be cut out and reassembled prior to site development. The site currently contains a 4,900 sq. ft. single-story stone building, with associated parking, which was constructed in 1980 and

currently used as a meeting location for the church and other classroom uses. The site also contains ancillary parking for the main church and a stormwater detention pond that serves the entire church campus.

All adjacent properties are part of the SUMC campus. Across Pate Street to the west are two commercial properties, zoned OP (Office Professional) District and include the Snellville branch of Gwinnett Dermatology. There is a ±1.6 acre undeveloped lot, zoned RS-180 (Single-Family Residential) District owned by Anne Mazzawi.

To the south and east across Henry Clower Boulevard is property owned by Snellville First Baptist Church, all zoned RS-180 and part of the church campus.



The proposed site plan, submitted by the applicant.

REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting that the ±4.44 acre tract be rezoned from their current zoning as follows:

Parcel No.	Area (acres)	Tax ID# (portion of)	Property Owner	Current Zoning	Recommended Zoning
1	1.130	R5026 177	SUMC	CI (Civic-Institutional)	TC-R (Towne Center Residential)
2	0.426	R5026 051	SUMC	CI (Civic-Institutional)	TC-R (Towne Center Residential)
3	0.862	R5027 107	SUMC	CI (Civic-Institutional)	TC-R (Towne Center Residential)
4	2.027	R5026 051	SUMC	CI (Civic-Institutional)	TC-R (Towne Center Residential)

In accordance with Sec. 9.23(W)(1), Uses Allowed by District of Article IX, Schedule of District Regulations of the 2001 Zoning Ordinance, the applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit for the Towne Center Flat residential housing type for the construction and occupancy of a 111,412 sq. ft. 4-story, 88 unit age-restricted (55+) senior apartment development having a gross density of 19.82 units per acre (88 units divided by 4.44 acres). There is no maximum density limit in the TC-R District.

As part of the application submittal, the applicant is requesting four (4) variances from the Zoning Ordinance. The variances are outlined below:

1. Section 11.3: Minimum and maximum off-street parking and loading requirements

Variance to reduce the required parking on the site from 2 spaces per unit to 1 space per unit.

2. Section 9.23 (X)(13)(e): Commercial space requirement

Variance from the commercial space requirement for sites containing 30 or more Towne Center flat dwelling units must provide a minimum of 5,000 sq. ft. of commercial floor area for each additional 30 Towne Center flats, or fraction thereof, unless a variance is granted in accordance with Subsection (f) below:

(f) Variance requests may only be approved when the applicant demonstrates that all Towne Center flat buildings are located within 1,000 feet of at least 15,000 square feet of existing commercial space. This distance shall be measured by the most direct route of travel on ground and in the following manner:

- i. From the lobby entrance of each proposed building housing a Towne Center flat;

- ii. In a straight line to the nearest public sidewalk, walkway, street, road or highway by the nearest route;
- iii. Along such public sidewalk, walkway, street, road or highway by the nearest route;
- iv. To the main entrance of the existing commercial floor area.

3. Section 9.23(U)(2)(g): Parking Location for Stacked Flat Building Type

Variance from the parking prohibition to allow some parking between the building and Henry Clower Blvd.

4. Section 9.23(U)(2)(g): Street-Facing Façade Length for Stacked Flat Building Type

Variance to exceed the 200-foot maximum building façade length for the Stacked Flat building type by an additional 110 feet, for 310 feet total facing Henry Clower Blvd.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

This will likely be the first entirely new development under both the newly adopted 2040 Comprehensive Plan, as well as the Towne Center zoning districts (TC-R and TC-MU) that were adopted in December 2016. As such, this project will be something of a litmus test for how well the ordinances and requirements set in place are at producing quality developments for downtown Snellville.

In the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the following Policies and Goals directly support the proposed development:

- H-2.1: Promote Snellville as an affordable alternative to intown housing.
- H-2.4: Support the development of housing that is within financial reach of households on fixed incomes.
- H-3.1: Pursue more development opportunities focused on seniors and assisted living.
- H-3.2: Encourage the construction of high-quality townhomes and multi-family units in area where higher density has been targeted.
- QL-1.1: Promote a culture of caring and inclusivity.
- QL-9.1: Promote the development of an urban environment that encourages walking.

One of the main goals of the Towne Center Land Use plan and newly expanded Towne Center Character Area which includes this site, is to ensure that there is “a variety of housing available to meet the needs of multiple generations”. Similarly, the two downtown zoning districts (TC-MU and TC-R) were created in part so that downtown Snellville “should serve people of all ages and allow residents to remain in the community as they age” and “that high-quality and aesthetically compatible housing should be provided to accommodate different needs in the community.”

As the rapid increase of senior-oriented development in Snellville and the Atlanta metro will attest, there is a large and growing need for housing for an aging population other than detached single-family homes on large lots, which is by far the most common development type in Snellville. Not all present and future residents wish to give up that lifestyle, but more and more are expressing a desire to at least have other options, so that they do not have to make the choice between an unsustainable lifestyle or leaving their city.

The hope is that these would produce development that is walkable, human-scaled, and less dependent on automobile as the primary method of transportation.

SITE PLAN ANALYSIS:

The rezoning site plan entitled "Conceptual Site Plan Layout United Methodist Church Wendover Group", sealed and dated 3-7-2019 shows the ±4.44 acre site layout of the 4-story senior apartment building, parking and loading locations, amenity area, dumpster locations, ingress/egress drives, existing stormwater detention pond, and location of Henry Clower Blvd. (a County R/W), Pate Street (a City R/W), and Wesley Way (a SUMC driveway).

The 4-story, 111,412 sq. ft. "L" shaped building is centered midway on the site, with the main entrance on the south elevation of the building facing Henry Clower Blvd. with full-access drives from Pate Street and Wesley Way. The span of the façade of the south elevation is approximately 310 feet in length, requiring variance approval to exceed the 200-foot maximum façade length in the Towne Center zoning districts. The northeastern building wing, measuring approximately 210 feet in total length, abuts the Wesley Way driveway with a 0-5 feet setback from the five (5) foot planter zone and six (6) foot sidewalk.

Primary parking for the senior apartment development is located to the north behind the building and contains four (4) loading spaces, measuring ten (10) feet wide by thirty (30) feet deep and sixty-eight (68) parking spaces, measuring nine (9) feet wide by nineteen (19) feet deep. A secondary parking area is located between the detention pond and front of the main building wing and contains four (4) ADA handicap spaces and sixteen (16) parking spaces, measuring nine (9) feet wide by nineteen (19) feet deep. A bicycle parking pad is located just right of the main entrance designed to accommodate eighteen (18) bicycles. In total, the applicant is providing eighty-eight (88) parking spaces, equivalent to one space per unit.

There is a 10,938 sq. ft. amenity area located behind the apartment building containing a 20'x20' gazebo area and 30'x40' garden area. Sidewalk connectivity exists internally and around the perimeter of the site except at the northern end of the site near the two full-access drives at Pate Street and Wesley Way. As required by the code, a ten (10) foot wide sidewalk and five (5) foot planter zone is required along Henry Clower Blvd. and a six (6) foot wide sidewalks and five (5) foot planter zone along Pate Street and Wesley Way.

The Planter Zone is the zone adjacent to the curb and intended for the planting of street trees and the placement of street furniture including light poles, litter receptacles, utilities, traffic

signs, newspaper vending, bike racks, bus shelters, and similar items in a manner that does not obstruct pedestrian access or motorist visibility, as approved by the City.

Two solid-waste dumpsters and enclosures are located on the site. The first is located approximately seventy-five (75) feet from the front of the southeast corner of the main building and approximately forty-five (45) feet from the Pate Street R/W. A second dumpster is located behind the main building in the parking area, approximately forty (40) feet from the back of the building and thirty (30) feet from the Pate Street R/W.

There is a twenty-five (25) foot landscape buffer shown on the site plan that extends from the southwest corner of the property and extends north along Pate Street approximately three-hundred-forty (340) feet.

There is an existing stormwater detention dry pond located in the southeast corner of the site that currently serves the SUMC campus. It will be reengineered to accommodate both the SUMC campus and senior apartment site.

Although not shown on the conceptual site plan layout, the development shall be required to meet the Landscaping and Screening requirements of Sec. 9.23(T) of the Zoning Ordinance, as well as the Buffer, Landscape and Tree Ordinance of Chapter 19 of the City Code, as applicable.

CONCEPTUAL BUILDING ELEVATIONS:

The applicant provided conceptual building elevations and photos from other projects they have completed that are representative of the product they intend to build in Snellville. No formal determination has been made regarding compliance with the City's building design standards of Sec. 9.23(V), which includes, but is not limited to:

- a) Allowable building and accent materials and colors;
- b) Building façade requirements when facing the street;
- c) Building massing;
- d) Façade design and articulation to convey the impression of separate buildings;
- e) Min. and max. fenestration and blank wall requirements;
- f) Awning/canopy building elements; and
- g) Floor-to-ceiling 9 foot min. height.

TOWNE CENTER FLAT USE STANDARDS:

Where a Towne Center Flat use is allowed, it is subject to the following specific use standards of Sec. 9.23(X)(13):

- a) Towne Center flats must be located in a conforming walk-up flat or stacked flat building type.

- b) Ground floor dwelling units may be accessed from the outside or through a conditioned interior hallways, as permitted by building type.
- c) Dwelling units located above the ground floor must be accessed through a conditioned interior hallway.
- d) Each dwelling unit must be at least 750 square feet in floor area.
- e) Sites containing 30 or more Towne Center flat dwelling units must provide a minimum of 5,000 square feet of commercial floor area for each additional 30 Towne Center flats, or fraction thereof, unless a variance is granted by the Board of Appeals¹ in conformance with “f” below.
- f) Variance requests may only be approved when the applicant demonstrates that all Towne Center flat buildings are located within 1,000 feet of at least 15,000 square feet of existing commercial space. This distance shall be measured by the most direct route of travel on ground and in the following manner:
 - i. From the lobby entrance of each proposed building housing a Towne Center flat;
 - ii. In a straight line to the nearest public sidewalk, walkway, street, road or highway by the nearest route;
 - iii. Along such public sidewalk, walkway, street, road or highway by the nearest route;
 - iv. To the main entrance of the existing commercial floor area.
 - v. When multiple commercial establishments are required to attain 15,000 square feet, this requirement shall apply to all establishments.

VARIANCE ANALYSIS:

- 1. Section 11.3: Minimum and maximum off-street parking and loading requirements. Request to reduce the required parking on the site from 2 spaces per unit to 1 space per unit.

One of the goals of the Towne Center Future Land Use plan and the TC-R district is to promote “a mix of uses and pedestrian-oriented design” and “reduce the length and number of automobile trips.” It is necessary to encourage development that in turn encourages less dependence on vehicles, and one of the most significant ways to do this is to reduce the abundance of free and freely accessible parking in downtown developments.

The applicant’s desire to reduce the amount of land they waste on surface parking is admirable, and in keeping with the intent of the Towne Center as a place that encourages walking, transit and other alternative modes of transportation.

The location of this development easily meets that criteria; it is located a short distance from the Towne Center core, easily reachable on foot or via bike/scooter. In addition, it is across the street from an existing Park-and-Ride facility, which currently houses a GRTA Xpress bus route but is also slated to include a Gwinnett County Transit (GCT) or MARTA fixed bus route in the

¹ See #ZOA 19-01 – Proposed text amendment to allow the Mayor and Council to also consider this variance.

near future. It is also accessible via the ongoing Microtransit service. The variance is recommended for approval.

2. Section 9.23 (X)(13)(e): Commercial space requirement. Request for variance from the commercial space requirement as the proposed development is in close proximity to area commercial uses.

The intent of this requirement is to avoid situations where a mix of uses is not observed, and as a result the city ends up with multiple blocks of land that are developed into the same type of use or building type. To do this, the applicant must demonstrate that they are within 1000 linear feet from at least 15,000 sq. ft. of commercial space.

Included in the applicant's submittal is a Commercial Land Use Exhibit, where the applicant used the current Zoning Map and placed a 1000 foot radius from the proposed site. The area within the radius shows the various parcels and corresponding zoning district designations which include a variety of religious, office, medical, commercial and retail uses including: SUMC campus, FBCS campus, Krystal restaurant, Renasant Bank, Nabors Used Cars, John Turpen Law Office, Tire Station, Gwinnett Dermatology, Aikens CPA office, Heritage Chiropractic, Eastside Self Storage, Carlin Vision, Carlin Surgery Center, Auto Body Shop, a small 6,500 sq. ft. strip center at the corner of Lenora Church Road and Scenic Hwy., and several office buildings along Lenora Church Road.

The code dictates that the distance is measured by the most direct route of travel on ground and in the following manner:

- i. From the lobby entrance of each proposed building housing a Towne Center flat;
- ii. In a straight line to the nearest public sidewalk, walkway, street, road or highway by the nearest route;
- iii. Along such public sidewalk, walkway, street, road or highway by the nearest route;
- iv. To the main entrance of the existing commercial floor area.
- v. When multiple commercial establishments are required to attain 15,000 square feet, this requirement shall apply to all establishments.

Using the specific measurement criteria in the code, the above list of nearby commercial spaces is reduced to the following two applicable uses: SUMC campus and Gwinnett Dermatology.

However, this variance is appropriate given the fact the proposed development is relatively low impact. It will only yield 88 units, and more than likely there will be fewer than 200 total residents, all seniors. There is little room nearby for another development of this size, given the constraints of the site, and as previously stated the site is still a short walk or trip from the core of downtown.

Additionally, the residential demand required to make 15,000 sq. ft. of commercial space successful would undoubtedly require more than 200 senior residents. This code requirement is more appropriate with traditional multifamily developments within the Towne Center core.

3. Section 9.23(U)(2)(g): Parking Location for Stacked Flat Building Type. Variance from the parking prohibition to allow some parking between the building and Henry Clower Blvd.

One of the best ways to encourage “pedestrian-oriented design” is to not put a lot of parking between pedestrians and the entrances to buildings, which signals that you are supposed to drive to a place rather than walk. While this is good as a general rule, in this particular case there is a need for some parking to be in the front of the development.

The applicant intends to put a short row of parking, primarily handicap and ADA accessible spots, in front near the main entrance to the building. Given that this property is targeted towards seniors, and close proximity to the front entrance is a requirement for ADA approval, this request is appropriate and is recommended for approval.

4. Section 9.23(U)(2)(g): Street-Facing Façade Length for Stacked Flat Building Type. Variance to exceed the 200 foot maximum building façade length for the stacked flat building type by an additional 110 feet (310 feet total) where facing Henry Clower Blvd.

The intent behind placing a maximum on the street-facing façade length of a building is to dissuade the creation of “super blocks” that make it so that a pedestrian has to walk an inordinate distance to go around or past a single building. Too long of a façade and a building can become a psychological (and sometimes literal) wall to someone on foot.

In the applicant’s case, the peculiarities of the site mean that it is unlikely they will have another building of similar length anywhere nearby. They are hemmed in by the church on one side, Pate and Henry Clower on the others, with any new development only possible on the northern property line. There is also a detention pond on the site, which may or may not have to be expanded to accommodate this development, and creates an obstacle for building placement. This request is recommended for approval.

SUMMARY AND STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This is the first TC-R rezoning and Special Use Permit request for a residential building and that is *not* within the core of the Towne Center. However, the recent expansion of the Towne Center land use boundary on the Snellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map and Future Development Map now includes this property, and thus makes it appropriate to consider such a request. The proposed development is supported by six policies and goals of the Snellville 2040 Comprehensive Plan, both in letter and intent.

In conclusion, the Department of Planning and Development recommends **approval** of the rezoning (RZ 19-01) from CI (Civic Institutional) District to TC-R (Town Center Residential) District as follows:

Parcel No.	Area (acres)	Tax ID# (portion of)	Property Owner	Current Zoning	Recommended Zoning
1	1.130	R5026 177	SUMC	CI (Civic-Institutional)	TC-R (Towne Center Residential)
2	0.426	R5026 051	SUMC	CI (Civic-Institutional)	TC-R (Towne Center Residential)
3	0.862	R5027 107	SUMC	CI (Civic-Institutional)	TC-R (Towne Center Residential)
4	2.027	R5026 051	SUMC	CI (Civic-Institutional)	TC-R (Towne Center Residential)

The Department also recommends **approval** for a Special Use Permit (SUP 19-01) for the construction and occupancy of a Towne Center Flat residential housing type, and more specifically a 111,412 sq. ft. 4-story, 88-unit age-restricted (55+) senior apartment development having a gross density of 19.82 units per acre.

In conjunction with Rezoning and Special Use Permit approval, the Department of Planning and Development recommends **approval** of the following variances:

1. Variance from Section 11.3: Minimum and maximum off-street parking and loading requirements to reduce the required parking on the site from 2 spaces per unit to 1 space per unit.
2. Variance from Section 9.23 (X)(13)(e): Commercial space requirement to grant an exemption from providing a minimum of 15,000 sq. ft. of commercial space on the site.
3. Variance from Section 9.23(U)(2)(g): Parking Location for Stacked Flat Building Type to allow some parking between the building and Henry Clower Blvd.
4. Variance from Section 9.23(U)(2)(g): Street-Facing Façade Length for Stacked Flat Building Type to exceed the 200 foot maximum building façade length for the stacked flat building type to 310 feet where facing Henry Clower Blvd. and 210 feet where facing Wesley Way.

These actions are subject to the attachment of the following recommended **conditions**:

1. The property shall be developed according to the proposed site plan entitled “Conceptual Site Plan Layout United Methodist Church Wendover Group”, sealed and dated 3-7-2019 with modifications permitted due to engineering restraints, ingress and egress, and/or to meet conditions of zoning or State, County, and City regulations;
2. New signs higher than 15 feet or larger than 225 square feet are prohibited;

3. Dumpsters to be serviced/emptied no earlier than 9:00 a.m. or later than 6:00 p.m. (M-F only);
4. Continuation of a six (6) foot wide sidewalk shall be required along the property line to the north, between the Pate Street and Wesley Way ingress/egress drives;
5. Applicant shall provide and install a covered transit shelter with bench at a location approved by Director of Planning and Development and in coordination with Gwinnett County Transit, MARTA, or other regional transit authority;
6. The Corridor Overlay District standards and requirements of Sec. 9.15 of the Zoning Ordinance are not applicable to this project; and
7. Non-substantial variances per Section 9.23(F) of the Zoning Ordinance, as determined by the Director of Planning and Development and/or City Manager for the design requirements, zoning requirements, development regulations, and construction requirements must be submitted in writing for administrative approval with the Director of Planning and Development and/or City Manager. Substantial variances, as determined by the Planning and Development and/or City Manager, will require Mayor and Council approval.