

Athens City Planning Commission

A regular meeting of the Athens City Planning Commission was held in the City Council Chambers, third floor of City Hall, on October 1, 2025, at 12:00 PM

1. Call to Order

Chair John Kotowski called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM and administered the oath to those in the audience intending to speak before the Commission. A quorum was established.

Planning Commission Members

- Chris Knisely-Present
- John Kotowski, Chair-Present
- Steve Patterson, Mayor-Absent
- Andy Stone, Service-Safety Director-Present
- Ally Rapp Lee-Present

Staff Present:

- David Riggs- Code Enforcement Director
 - Lance Allison- Assistant Code Enforcement Director
 - Meghan Jennings-City Planner
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2. Disposition of September 17, 2025, Minutes

Motion: Mr. Stone moved to approve the minutes.

Second: Ms. Rapp Lee seconded.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

3. Cases

Case 25-06: Columbus Road / Lancaster Street / Columbia Avenue Neighborhood Hub Rezoning

Overview

- Ms. Jennings presented the staff report with two maps:
 - July 16, 2025, first revised rezoning map
 - October 1, 2025, most recent revised map (after second neighborhood input)
- Key revisions:

- Fire station retained as B2
- Central hub changed to B1 (instead of B2)
- Dairy Queen property retained as B1
- Columbia Avenue east of Lancaster changed from R3 → R2
- No further rezoning north along Columbus Road

Public Input

- Written correspondence opposed extending B1 and suggested an alternative R1/R2 layout.
- Request made to delay vote for additional neighborhood discussion.
- Request made for consistent zoning of contiguous parcels; preference expressed for R2.
- Other participants supported further discussion regarding B1 vs. R2, while agreeing on most other proposed areas.

Commission Discussion

- Balancing conformity of existing uses with neighborhood concerns
- Risks of leaving properties nonconforming
- Possible compromise by changing B1 areas to R2
- Urgency of advancing case to City Council before membership changes
- Clarification on differences between R1 and R2 (lot size and duplex eligibility)
- Zoning history of former Job & Family Services building (Capstone)
- Nonconforming uses and limits on improvements
- Residential uses permitted in B1 zones

Motion & Vote

- Motion: Ms. Knisely motioned to approve the October 1, 2025, proposal with the following modifications:
 1. Change two parcels west of Columbus Road to R2
 2. Change southeast side of Lancaster Street from B1 → R2, except the existing corner B1 parcel
- Second: Mr. Stone seconded.
- Vote: Motion carried, 3-0 (1 abstention)

Case 25-07: Title 41 Application / Hugh White Honda

Overview

- The property was posted in accordance with code requirements.
- The development group is addressing comments from Fire and Utilities.
- Annexation of a triangular parcel is still pending.

- Approval could be considered contingent on annexation and resolution of staff comments.

Commission Discussion

- Lot combinations and splitting for future development.
- Allowance of multiple primary structures in B3 zoning.
- Clarification on lot lines and zoning boundaries.

Public Input

- Dustin Todd, Archall Architects, spoke on behalf of the applicant.
 - Confirmed plan to consolidate and split parcels into two lots, each with one structure.
 - Reported that soil exploration revealed unstable conditions; soil will be added in fall/winter to allow settlement before spring construction.
 - Noted annexation is scheduled for City Council review beginning Monday.
 - Requested allowance to begin soil placement ahead of annexation; clarified utility connections would not be made prior to annexation.
 - Confirmed tree preservation plan approved through Shade Tree Commission would not be impacted.
 - Confirmed project is aligned with updated flood maps, with improvements to site elevation.
 - Commissioners asked clarifying questions regarding soil work, tree protection, and floodplain issues.

Motion & Vote

- Motion: Mr. Stone motioned to approve the Title 41, contingent upon:
 1. Annexation proceeding in the regular order.
 2. Compliance with all staff comments.
 3. Proceeding with development as a two-lot configuration as presented.
- Second: Ms. Knisely seconded.
- Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

4. Communications

No communications presented.

5. Reports

Meghan Jennings-City Planner

Ms. Jennings reported that she has been working with Council Members Michael McCary and Alan Swank to initiate the advisory commission for the comprehensive plan update. Nominations for the commission will be presented to City Council soon, and the process is now underway.

Lance Allison-Assistant Code Enforcement Director

Nothing to report.

6. Opportunity for Citizens to Speak About Items Not Listed on the Agenda

No additional comments were offered on items not listed on the agenda.

7. Announcements & Other Business

Avenelle Crossing Development

Mr. Allison reported that an initial meeting was held with the Avenelle Crossing Development team, and follow-up questions have been submitted, with responses still pending. The review will determine whether required utility easements classify the project as a major subdivision, which would need board approval. The proposed Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) development is located off U.S. Route 50 and State Route 32 near Hooper Road, with access from Avenelle Drive.

Shade Tree Code Changes Update

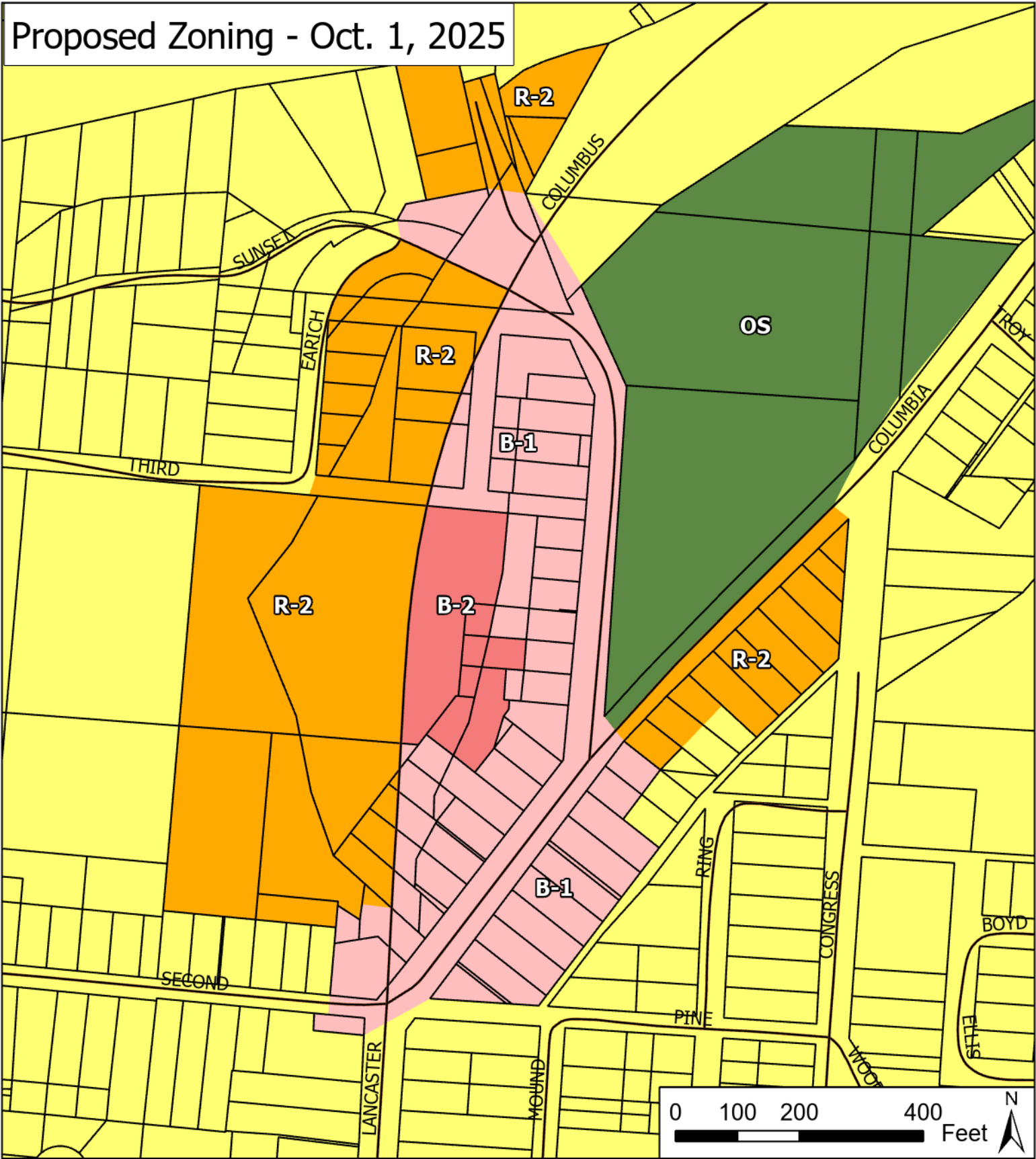
A previously tabled motion regarding updates to the Shade Tree Commission code is being addressed through ongoing meetings. The Code Office and Safety Service Director recommended transferring the commission's regulatory authority to the Planning Commission, with the Shade Tree Commission serving in an advisory role.

The goal is to streamline processes while maintaining urban forester input. The proposed amendments, affecting Titles 9, 21, 33, 37, and 41 of the city code, are expected to go before City Council in October.

8. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 12:56PM

Proposed Zoning - Oct. 1, 2025



Proposed Zone Changes

Proposed zone change for properties along N. Lancaster Street, Second Street, Columbia Avenue, and Columbus Road.

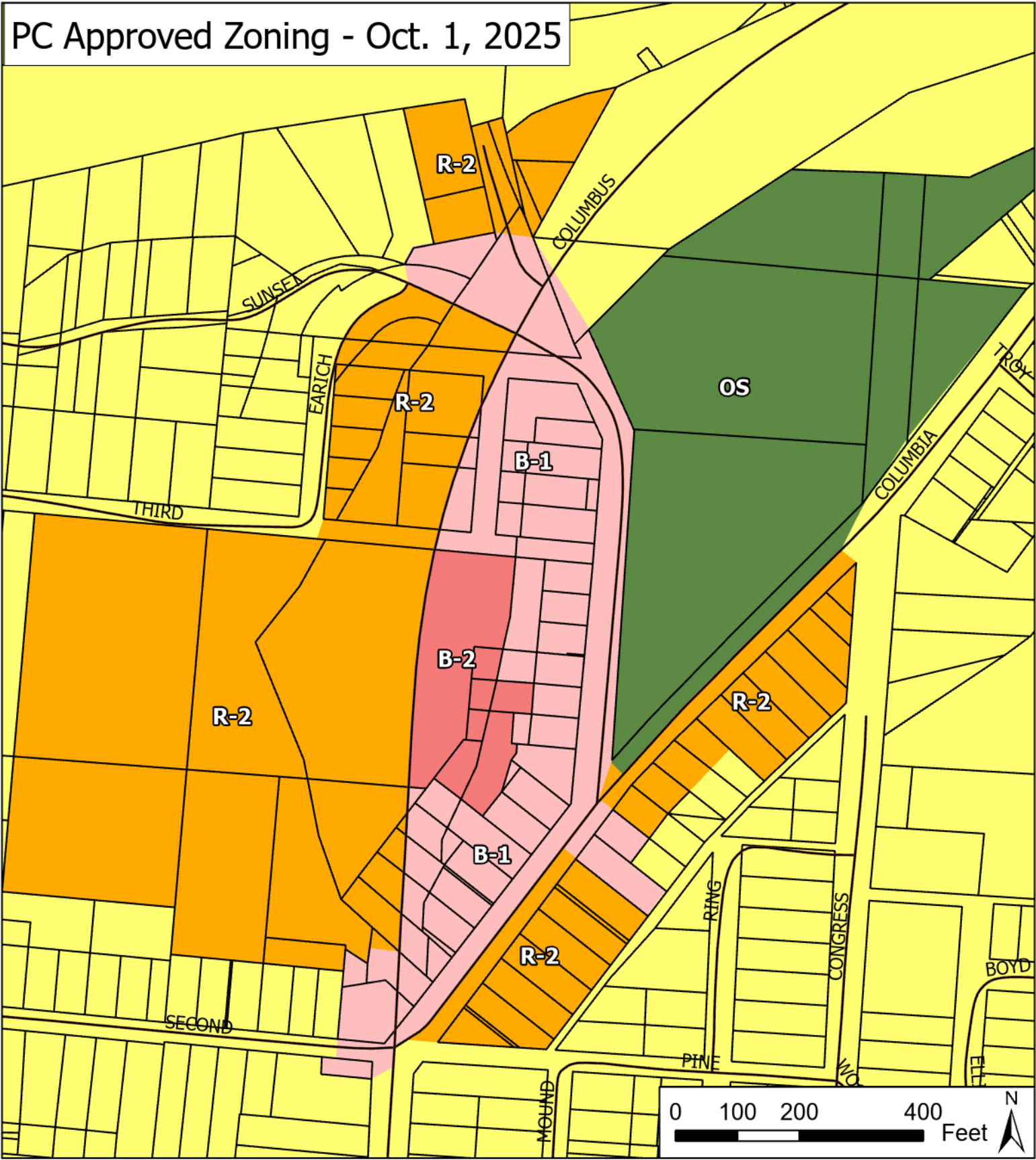
Map created by Athens City Planner. Data recent as of 9/29/2025.

Legend

- Road
- Parcel

Zoning

- | | |
|------|-----|
| B-1 | M |
| B-2 | OS |
| B-2D | R-1 |
| B-3 | R-2 |
| EI | R-3 |



Proposed Zone Changes

Proposed zone change for properties along N. Lancaster Street, Second Street, Columbia Avenue, and Columbus Road.

Map created by Athens City Planner. Data recent as of 10/1/2025.

Legend

- Road
- Parcel

Zoning

- | | |
|------|-----|
| B-1 | M |
| B-2 | OS |
| B-2D | R-1 |
| B-3 | R-2 |
| EI | R-3 |