

Town of Walden
Walden Planning Commission
Special Called Meeting
June 24, 2025
5:30 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular monthly meeting of the Walden Planning Commission (WPC) was called to order at 5:30 PM by Chairman Tom Bartoo. The sign-in sheet showing interested citizens in attendance is attached as an exhibit (Appendix A) to these minutes.

II. ROLL CALL

Town Administrator Mariah Prescott called the roll, noting the presence of Tom Bartoo, Angela Cassidy, Tim Hilvers, Joe Robbins, Jr., Werner Slabber, Bill Trohanis, Dawson Wheeler. Ashley Gates, Walden's consultant from Southeast Tennessee Development District (SETD) and Town Attorney Sam Elliott were also present.

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

CHAIRMAN TOM BARTOO ASKED TO PUT "NEW BUSINESS" BEFORE "UNFINISHED BUSINESS" ON THE AGENDA FOR THE JUNE 24, 2025 MEETING, AND ALSO REVERSING ITEMS "a" AND "b" UNDER NEW BUSINESS. COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA WITH THE SUGGESTED CHANGES, SECONDED BY CHAIRMAN TOM BARTOO AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

IV. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES – MAY 22, 2025

COMMISSIONER BILL TROHANIS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MAY 22, 2025, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER TIM HILVERS AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

V. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

The Town Administrator Report was given by Mariah Prescott. She noted that the Tree and Landscape Ordinances, recommended by the WPC at the May meeting, will be on the August agenda for the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

There are no communications from Chairman Bartoo or other Commissioners.

VII. HEARING OF PERSONS HAVING BUSINESS WITH THE COMMISSION

There are no communications from persons having business with the WPC.

"New Business" (Agenda Item # IX) is addressed next.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Design Review Standards Draft: Articles 1 – 4

To view the latest draft of the Design Review Standards (DRS), please refer to www.waldentn.gov and view the Walden Planning Commission page. This can be found within the “Government” link on the main page.

There is no action taken on the DRS, as there are still questions regarding the definition of Open Space. A special called WPC meeting is scheduled for August 13, 2025 at 5:30 PM in order to finalize this definition and possibly recommend the completed DRS to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. Chairman Bartoo noted that any questions, edits, or proposed changes from the commissioners should be sent directly to Ashley Gates at SETD.

b. Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to require a Special Permit for Decentralized Wastewater Systems

COMMISSIONER DAWSON WHEELER MOVED TO TABLE THIS AGENDA ITEM UNTIL AUGUST, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

a. (On the original agenda as item “b”) Bird-Safe Glass Presentation

Ms. Jess Brooks is an architectural design manager with Guardian Glass. Ms. Brooks gave a presentation on the benefits of bird-safe glass. She covered how many birds are killed annually in the United States from window strikes, and also how many different types of bird-safe glass are available to protect them. The WPC will consider whether or not to include any requirements for bird-safe windows in new Town Center construction projects.

There was no action taken on this matter.

b. (On the original agenda as item “a”) Request to rezone 2809 Taft Highway from R-1 Residential to TC-MU Town Center Mixed Use

Ms. Ashley Gates summarized the request and the findings / recommendation from SETD, which are attached as an exhibit (Appendix B) to these minutes.

Mr. Justin Cox, property owner, spoke briefly to his rezoning request. He stated that he received through a Facebook survey overwhelming suggestions for a public meeting space and indoor sporting venue at this location.

Ms. Catherine Colby spoke regarding the rezoning, and noted her concern about continuing stormwater runoff from the parking area at this property. She requested that special consideration be given before any approvals of changes to the existing structure or parking lot.

Mr. Melvin Millwood, who lives across from the property on Taft Highway, asked if the rezoning would include his property and if his taxes would increase. Chairman Tom Bartoo clarified that the rezoning only involves the property at 2809 Taft. Town Attorney Sam Elliott stated that the rezoning itself wouldn't require a change in the tax rate, but also noted that tax rates do change for a number of reasons. Mr. Millwood closed by requesting that a fire hydrant be installed near the property in question.

Mr. Barrett Fischer recognized that stormwater is a problem everywhere, but also spoke in favor of the proposed indoor complex.

Having no other speakers from the audience, Chairman Tom Bartoo opened the discussion to the commissioners. There is clarification as to how the proposed zoning changes should move forward. See Appendix B for SETD's recommendation. There is also clarification as to the current zoning of the property, which is R-1. Town Attorney Sam Elliott verified that current zoning standards must be applied to this potential rezoning, but the Design Review Standards are not in effect yet. It is further clarified that, once in effect, the DSR will only apply to new construction. Despite ongoing stormwater concerns, this issue is not addressed in the current zoning standards.

There is a question about whether or not the current owner plans to "flip" (sell) the property if the rezoning is approved, which the owner verifies. Town Attorney Sam Elliott stated that if the rezoning is approved tonight, the next step is for the recommendation to go to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, where it must be approved on two readings. Attorney Elliott and Ashley Gates do not see a reason why TDOT would need to be involved in this rezoning.

COMMISSIONER WERNER SLABBER MOVED TO REZONE 2809 TAFT HIGHWAY FROM R-1 TO TC-MU WITH NO CONDITIONS, SECONDED BY TIM HILVERS. THE MOTION PASSED WITH VOTING AS FOLLOWS:

AYE: Tom Bartoo, Tim Hilvers, Werner Slabber, Bill Trohanis

NAY: Angela Cassidy, Dawson Wheeler

Abstain: Joe Robbins, Jr.

COMMISSIONER BILL TROHANIS MOVED TO RECOMMEND AMENDING THE LAND USE PLAN TO CHANGE THE PLACE TYPE OF 2809 TAFT HIGHWAY FROM "CIVIC / INSTITUTIONAL" TO "TAFT HIGHWAY NON-RESIDENTIAL," SECONDED BY WERNER SLABBER. THE MOTION PASSED WITH VOTING AS FOLLOWS:

AYE: Tom Bartoo, Tim Hilvers, Werner Slabber, Bill Trohanis

NAY: Angela Cassidy, Dawson Wheeler

Abstain: Joe Robbins, Jr.

"Unfinished Business" (Agenda Item #VIII) is addressed next.

a. ADJOURNMENT

COMMISSIONER WERNER SLABBER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER TIM HILVERS.

Chairman Tom Bartoo adjourned the meeting at 7:22 PM.



Respectfully submitted:
Stacy Stewart



Approved:
Mariah Prescott, Town Administrator



Approved:
Tom Bartoo, Chairman

(A)

TOWN OF WALDEN

ATTENDANCE

Sign in
Sheet

Walden Planning Commission 5:30 PM

Meeting Date: 6/24/2025

Name (Please Print)	Signature	Address	E-Mail
Manning Sherry Millwood		2806 Top Hwy	—
Jim Conwell			
KERNER SLABBER			
Justin Cox	JL	7013 Levi Rd	
Bill Trohanis			
Cathon Gels	CG	3103 Fawnway	
Workingers		Castilla Lane	
NATALIE MINOR	Natalie M		
Matthew Creek	MC	197 Woodhill Cir	
Errett Fischer	EF	7277 Grayhawk Tr.	
Grace Mynatt		1458 Palisades Dr	
Lori Hensley	Lori Hensley	N. Chatt.	
Tim Colman	TC	WA WA	



MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Walden Municipal Planning Commission
Cc: Mariah Prescott, Town Administrator
From: Ashley Gates, Senior Planner
Date: June 16, 2025
Subject: Request to rezone 2809 Taft Highway from R-1 Residential to TC-MU Town Center Mixed Use

Summary

Property Address: 2809 Taft Highway
Parcel Number: 089J C 014
Owner: AJ Investment Properties LLC
Applicant: AJ Investment Properties LLC
Current Zoning: R-1 Residential
In Town Center: Yes
Land Use Plan Place Types: Civic / Institutional
Requested Zoning: TC-MU Town Center Mixed Use
Proposed Use: Adaptive reuse of former church for commercial recreation and retail

Staff Recommendation: Approve

Application Requirements

Survey of Existing Conditions

Elevation Contours	Yes
Natural Drainage Areas, streams, wetlands	N/A
Existing Structures	Yes
Existing ROW	Yes
Existing Easements	N/A
Existing Paved Areas or Roads	Yes
Live Specimen Trees 12-inches in diameter at breast height	N/A
Features of the land that may impact development	Yes

Conceptual Site Plan

Note: Applicant is not proposing any alterations to existing building footprint. All alterations proposed are interior to the structure.

Area for rezoning	Yes
Adjacent parcels, if needed	Yes
Location, size, dimensions of existing and proposed buildings	Location shown, need dimensions
Property lines and setback lines	TC-MU setbacks not established
Landscaped buffers	None proposed
Proposed streets, sidewalks and ROWs	N/A
Proposed open space areas	N/A
Proposed public amenities	N/A
Parking area	Yes
Vehicular and pedestrian ingress/egress	Yes
Proposed septic field line area	Using existing septic
Conceptual stormwater area	Using existing stormwater infrastructure

Narrative Statement

Traffic Impact	Addressed
Environmental Impact	Addressed
Economic Viability of Commercial Uses	Addressed

Analysis

Background

The applicant proposes to rezone 1.24 acres to Town Center Residential (TC-MU) in order to convert the existing structure, formerly a church, into a multi-tenant commercial building. The proposed commercial uses included commercial recreation and small-scale retail.

Zoning Ordinance

The existing zoning of R-1 Residential does not permit commercial use, so rezoning would be required to use the property as proposed. The property is fully within the Town Center Boundary, and is eligible to be rezoned to TC-MU.

Compatibility with Surrounding Use

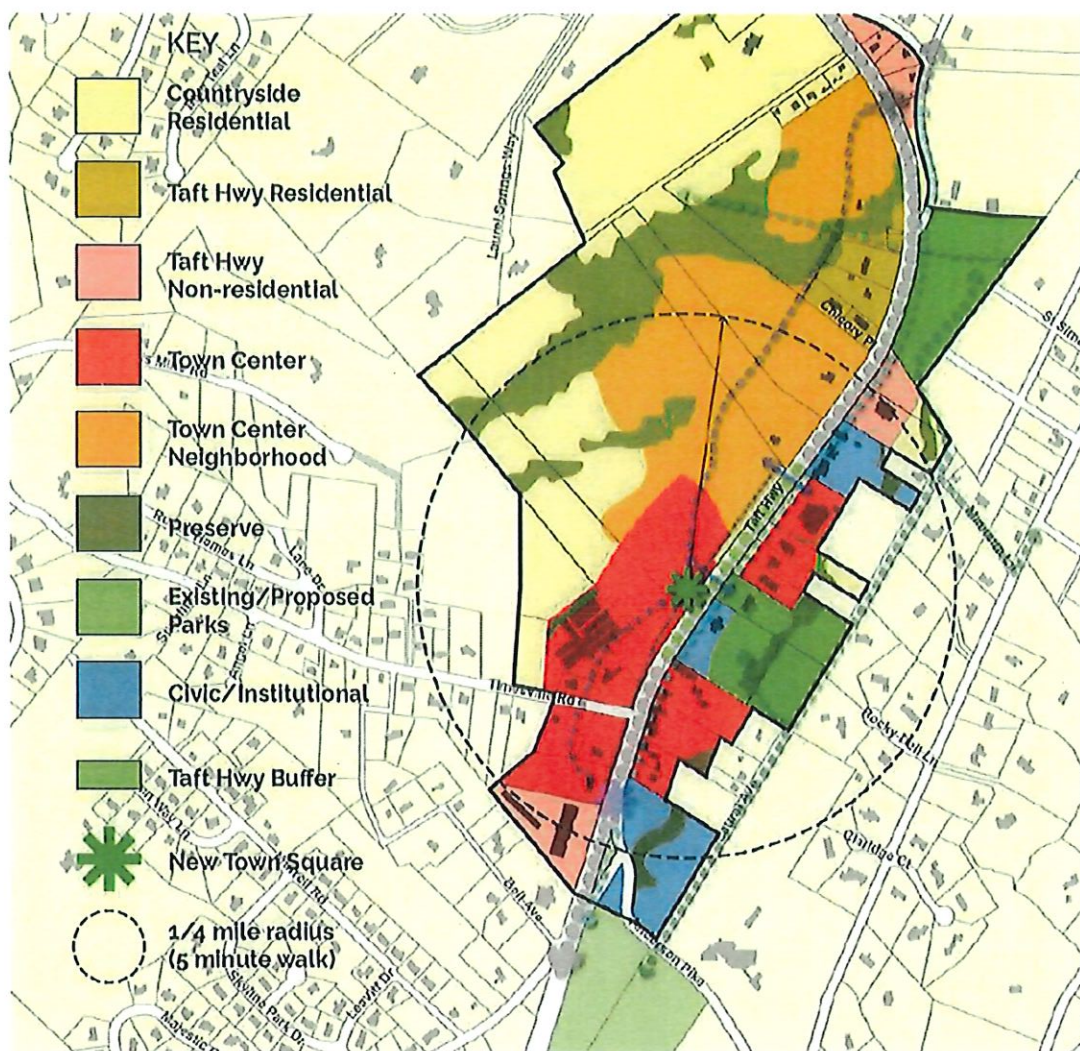
Directly north of this parcel is a I-1 Light Industrial zoned property that has a small warehouse storage facility. All other abutting properties appear to be single family residential. An unoccupied C-1 Commercial property is across Taft Highway within 65 feet of this parcel. The property is accessed via Taft Highway, the main thoroughfare through Walden. Adaptive reuse of the former church could be compatible with the existing mix of industrial, commercial and residential uses in the vicinity.

Land Use Plan

In the adopted land use plan this property is identified as "Civic/Institutional." The plan describes the civic institutional designation as "not a specific Place Type but rather an acknowledgment of these key sites and the intent to preserve and enhance them."

The church has not been in operation in about two years. With the closure of the church operations, the church structure has become functionally obsolete. Without a similar religious or institutional operation taking ownership of this building, the "Civic/Institutional" designation is fairly limiting to future use and could result in a vacant and neglected property within the Town Center.

Commercial properties along Taft Highway have been designated Taft Highway Non-residential. This place type designation would be appropriate for this structure if Walden wishes to see the adaptive reuse of this structure. While "C-1" is listed as the appropriate zone for Taft Highway non-residential, the Zoning Ordinance is written in a manner that precludes any additional C-1 Commercial zoning within the Town Center. The allowable TC-MU zone is written in a manner that could also accommodate the Taft Highway Non-residential place type.



TAFT HIGHWAY FOCUS AREA LAND USE POLICY MAP

Traffic Impacts

No change to the ingress or egress is planned. Small scale commercial recreation and residential is not anticipated to create a significant traffic impact.

Environmental

All alterations are expected to be to the building interior, with no additional impervious surface.

Spot Zoning

If the zoning meets the goal and intent of the adopted land use plan, spot zoning should not be a concern.

Recommendation

Approval upon amendment of the land use plan to designate the parcel as Taft Highway Non-residential.