

**Project Narrative  
1114 Hope Street  
Special Permit, Site & Architectural Plans and HPAC Review**

**1. Introduction/Background**

1114 Hope Street LLC, an affiliate of Garden Homes Fund (“GHF”), a non-profit private foundation granted 501(c)(3) status in 1981, is the owner of the property at 1114 Hope Street previously owned by The First United Methodist Church. The Applicant is proposing to construct a deeply affordable housing rental project at this location. The 6,200 sq. ft. church building, which has not been in use since 2015, would be preserved by conversion to use as six residential apartment units; the 2,800 sq. ft. house would be demolished; the 6,500 community building would be retained and the existing use of the first floor as a daycare would also be retained; finally, a new residential building containing eleven units would be constructed on the site of the existing parking lot. All seventeen units would be deed restricted and subject to a recorded affordability plan, reserving 100% of the units for occupancy by residents qualifying as extremely low income or very low income, between 30-45% of the Area Median Income. The site is approximately 0.96 acres located on Hope and Mulberry Street within Master Plan Category 3 (Residential – Low Density Multifamily) and the RM-1 (Multiple Family Low Density Design) zone.

The project was reviewed in concept by the Planning Board and Zoning Board as part of ZB approval 219-21 from which Garden Homes Fund was awarded \$1.4MM in Fee-in-Lieu funds to help make the project viable. The proposal was favorably received by the Boards as it served several important needs for the City of Stamford, including (a) affordable housing in Springdale, (b) affordable “family sized” units and (c) preservation of the church structure. The current proposal remains consistent with previously submitted concepts, though there has been an increase of proposed units from 14 to 17.

To facilitate the preservation and affordable housing development, GHF has submitted applications for Special Permit, Site & Architectural Plans and Requested Uses and HPAC.

**2. Surrounding Area**

The surrounding area consists of a mix of Master Plan Categories including 3 (Residential – Low Density Multifamily), 6 (Commercial -Neighborhood Business), 2 (Residential-Low Density Single-Family) and 13 (Industrial-General). The neighboring zoning districts are also a mix including residential (RM-1, R-10 and R-7 1/2), Light Industrial (M-L) and Village Commercial District (V-C).

Properties along this section of Hope Street are used for a variety of purposes including, public library, elementary school, various commercial uses, multifamily housing and other residential uses.

### 3. **Project Area/Development Site**

The site is approximately 42,000SF on Hope Street and Mulberry Street (straddling the bank on the corner of Hope and Mulberry), Block Number 002-6712. It is currently improved with three structures, all of which were associated with the Methodist Church of Springdale.

The principal structure is the 6,200 sq. ft. two-story church building itself, constructed in 1954 and not in use since 2015. To the south of the church building is a 6,500 sq. ft. two-story flat roofed community building which was built in 1970. The first floor has been occupied for 15 years by a private day care facility. The second floor is a vacant auditorium space used by local community and religious groups. To the north of the church building is the original parsonage, a vacant single-family home constructed in 1906, which is currently vacant.

### 4. **Proposed Development**

The Garden Homes Fund is proposing to construct an affordable housing rental project in Springdale at 1114 Hope Street, the site of the former Springdale United Methodist Church, now vacant. The project will be owned by a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Fund, a non-profit 501(c)(3) private foundation.

The project will simultaneously achieve multiple goals. It will provide deeply affordable housing by reserving 100% of units for occupancy by residents qualifying as extremely low or very low income. It will provide deeply affordable housing for families with children, identified as the vast majority of those with housing needs by the wait list data provided by Charter Oak during the fee-in-lieu award process, by providing only 2BR and 3BR units. It will retain the community building enabling the day care facility to continue operations and preserving space for continued use by community and religious groups. Finally, the project is located in an area of Stamford that has a lower percentage of housing for low income persons than the areas of Stamford that contain most of the housing for such persons.

It is estimated that completion of the site purchase, zoning approvals and construction drawings will take until mid-2021, and then another 18 months to bid the project and complete construction.

#### **a. Number and Type of Units, and Number of Units for Low Income Residents**

The Fund intends to construct 17 multifamily units in two buildings: A conversion of the existing church (6 units) and a new residential building in a portion of the existing parking lot (11 units). The community building will remain and the house will be demolished. The church will be preserved by conversion to apartments.

The unit and tenant mix by income are proposed as follows:

Unit Type	Maximum tenant income	No. units	HUD Income category
2BR	30% AMI	2	Extremely low income
	35% AMI	2	Very low income
	40% AMI	2	Very low income
	45% AMI	1	Very low income
3BR	30% AMI	2	Extremely low income
	35% AMI	2	Very low income
	40% AMI	2	Very low income
	45% AMI	1	Very low income

**b. Project Budget and Funding Sources**

The project budget is:

Land	\$1,800,000	
Construction	\$2,200,000	13,000 sq. ft. X \$170 per sq. ft.
Soft costs	\$ 200,000	Design drawings, permit fees, taxes, etc.
Total	\$4,200,000	

The project will be paid for with two sources of funds:

- \$2,800,000 from the Garden Homes Fund
- \$1,400,000 awarded by the City of Stamford in city affordable housing funds

In January 2020, pursuant to a competitive funding process, the project was awarded \$1,400,000 in fee-in-lieu funds by the zoning board. *See* Resolution adopted by the Zoning Board of the City of Stamford on January 7, 2020 for Special Exception Application 219-21. In awarding the funding, the zoning board conditioned it to be used to:

- (a) purchase the former United Methodist Church site located at 1114 Hope Street and construct a minimum of 14 units in multi-family building(s)
- (b) permanently deed restrict 14 units for occupancy by families earning between 30-45% of AMI
- (c) preserve the historic church and community building located on the property in perpetuity.

Further zoning analysis and design work done after the funding award enabled an increase from 14 to 17 units. The additional three units are subject the same income limitations as the other units, as noted above.

## 5. Special Exception for Historic Buildings

GHF has submitted an application for a Special Exception for Historic Buildings under the revised standards for Historic Preservation in Section 7.3 and requires the following special standards:

### **Parking - Section 7.3-C(2)(a)**

The site is proposed to have two uses sharing the common parking lot in the rear: residential dwelling units in two buildings and the Baby Cottage in the third building, a day care use approved by Special Exception in 1998 for a maximum of 40 children. The day care has a maximum of 10 employees and requires 14 spaces under Section 12-D(20). Based on discussions with the operators of the daycare facility, it is understood that the employees typically use 4-5 spaces, as the majority utilize mass transit and/or carpool. Therefore, it is anticipated that the daycare facility will use far fewer spaces than Section 12-D(20) provides. The residential use is proposed for 17 units and, under the proposed Special Exception, will require 0.33 space per five deeply affordably units under Section 12-D(1)d and 1 per other affordable units (six of which are just over the definition of deeply affordable) under Section 7.3-C(2)(a). The site is proposed for 27 spaces.

### **Bonus Development Standards – Section 7.3-C(4)**

The project uses three bonus development standards to the RM-1 zoning in all ways except two, both of which fall within both existing and proposed bonus development standards as follows:

	Proposed	RM-1	Section 7.3
Rear Yard	20.4'	30' min.	15' min.
Height	3 stories 36'	2 ½ stories max. 30' max.	3 ½ stories max. 45' max.
Density	17 units	14 units	25% bonus = 17.5 units

The project is otherwise conforming to the RM-1 area and bulk standards.

## 6. Conclusions

The proposed redevelopment embodies many of the goals of both the RM-1 Zoning District and the underlying Master Plan category and follows through on the Applicant's commitment to provide deeply affordable housing opportunities in Springdale. The development will be an asset to the neighborhood and the overall Stamford community.

## 7. Statement of Findings

I. The above referenced specific Special Permit requests are integral to the development project as a whole. Thus, for purposes of demonstrating compliance with the standards and conditions below, the entire development proposal is considered. The Applicant submits that all applicable criteria contained in Stamford Zoning Regulations are met for the following specific reasons:

- a. *Special Permits shall be granted by the reviewing board only upon a finding that the proposed use or structure or the proposed extension or alteration of an existing use or structure is in accord with the public convenience and welfare after taking into account, where appropriate:*
  - 1) *the location and nature of the proposed site including its size and configuration, the proposed size, scale and arrangement of structures, drives and parking areas and the proximity of existing dwellings and other structures.*

The location, size, configuration of the proposed redevelopment is generally consistent with both the neighborhood and previously existing structures on the site. The proposed building maintains a street front presence in line with the historic building being preserved. Converting the property to residential use and reducing the existing curb cuts will improve the neighborhood.

- 2) *the nature and intensity of the proposed use in relation to its site and the surrounding area. Operations in connection with special permit uses shall not be injurious to the neighborhood, shall be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of these Regulations and shall not be more objectionable to nearby properties by reason of noise, fumes, vibration, artificial lighting or other potential disturbances to the health, safety or peaceful enjoyment of property than the public necessity demands.*

Converting the property to residential use will improve conditions in and around the neighborhood and serves the stated goals and intended purpose of the applicable Regulations, including historic preservation. There are no anticipated objectionable impacts or potential disturbances to nearby properties. The site is already zoned for residential use and maintains the historic presence of the church and large front setback along Hope Street.

- 3) *the resulting traffic patterns, the adequacy of existing streets to accommodate the traffic associated with the proposed use, the adequacy of proposed off-street parking and loading, and the extent to which proposed driveways may cause a safety hazard, or traffic nuisance.*

Traffic can be safely and adequately accommodated on the surrounding streets, and the residential use will not adversely impact any peak traffic demand. The proposal uses the same two curb cuts in use for many years – a principal one on Mulberry Street and a secondary one on Hope Street.

- 4) *the nature of the surrounding area and the extent to which the proposed use or feature might impair its present and future development.*

The surrounding area will benefit from the preservation of the historic structure as well as the affordable family rental opportunities, which are scarce in Springdale.

- 5) *the Master Plan of the City of Stamford and all statements of the purpose and intent of these regulations.*

The site lies within Master Plan Category 3 (Residential – Low Density Multifamily) and meets the goals of the category, as previously stated herein. The plan also furthers many other policy goals of both the City in general and the Springdale neighborhood specifically. Some of those policy goals include:

- **3C.3:** Maintain the affordable housing stock to ensure that people who work in Stamford can afford to live in Stamford.
- **5E.1:** Promote neighborhood revitalization.
- **6A:** Maintain residential neighborhood character.
- **6A.1:** Balance new development with preservation of existing residential communities.
- **6B:** Preserve existing and create new affordable housing.
- **6B.3:** Encourage rehabilitation and sound management of small multifamily buildings.
- **6B5:** Enhance inclusionary zoning incentives.
- **6C.2:** Promote development of a variety of housing types.
- **6D:** Preserve Historic Buildings and Districts
- **6D.3:** Provide tax and zoning incentives for historic preservation and adaptive reuse

II. *Pursuant to Section 19.3.2 of the Zoning Regulations, the Zoning Board must find that the proposed use or structure or the proposed extension or alteration of an existing use or structure is in accord with the public convenience and welfare.*

The applicant is responding to the need for deeply affordable housing for families, building it in a residentially-zoned location, adjacent to other residential uses, and at a density consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. Therefore, the proposed project and the associated Special Permit requests, which are inextricably intertwined, are in accord with the public convenience and welfare.

### *Section 7.3 Special Permit for Historic Buildings*

*1. No Special Permit shall be granted nor site plan approved pursuant to this Section until the Zoning Board has made a special finding that:*

- a. *Said use and site plan is compatible with and implements the objectives and policies of Stamford's Master Plan;*

The site lies within Master Plan Category 3 (Residential – Low Density Multifamily) and meets the goals of the category, as previously stated herein. The plan also furthers many other policy goals of both the City in general and the Springdale neighborhood specifically.

- b. That said uses and site plan are preferred to a plan conforming to the standard dimensional requirements and use standards of the underlying zone and will not impair the future development of the surrounding area;*

The surrounding area will benefit from the preservation of the historic structure as well as the affordable family rental opportunities, which are scarce in the neighborhood, City and surrounding towns. There are no impairments to future development as a result of the proposal.

- c. That the proposed use(s) and site plan for development serve to preserve significant historic Structure(s) and that the loss of said Structure(s) would be detrimental to the neighborhood or district.*

The surrounding area will benefit from the preservation of the historic structure as well as the affordable family rental opportunities, which are scarce in the neighborhood, City and surrounding towns.