



**City of Stamford**  
**Zoning Board**

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**STAFF REPORT**

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**TO:** CITY OF STAMFORD ZONING BOARD  
**FROM:** VINEETA MATHUR, ASSOCIATE PLANNER  
**SUBJECT:** **ZB #222-06 & 222-07, 821 - 833 East Main Street, 15, 27 – 29 Lafayette Street, Zoning Map Change, Special Permit, General Development Plan, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses**  
**DATE:** April 09, 2022  
**MASTER PLAN:** Master Plan Category 9 (Urban Mixed Use)  
**ZONING:** MX-D (Mixed Use), C-I (Commercial- Intermediate)

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**Introduction**

The Applicants 819 East Main Street LLC, 831-833 East Main Street LLC and New Star Lafayette LLC (collectively “the Applicants”) are requesting approval of related applications including Zoning Map Change to MX-D district, General Development Plan, Special Permit and Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses Application to facilitate the redevelopment of properties located at 15, 27 and 29 Lafayette Street, 821, 825-827 and 831 East Main Street to construct a five (5) story building with a total of 130 dwelling units and approximately 3000 sq.ft. of retail space.

**Background**

The current application is the third iteration and expands the development previously approved under application 220-45, 46 and 221-19 which comprised of 85 units, 85 parking spaces and 3000 sq.ft. of retail space. The current application incorporates additional properties on Lafayette Street to complete the development parcel. The site will be collectively 1.15 acre in size.

The original application (218-35 & 36) comprising of a smaller site was reviewed and approved by the Zoning Board in September 2018. The applicant requested a Zoning Map Change, General Development Plan, Special Permit at that time. The originally approved GDP comprised of 63 dwelling units, 79 parking spaces and 2501 sq.ft. of retail space.

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## **Site and Surroundings**

The Site is currently improved with two multi-family buildings (4 units in total), one single family building, a single story retail building containing multiple tenants and a vacant lot (831 East Main Street). The Site is approximately 50,000 sq.ft (1.15 acre) and is located on the southeast corner of Lafayette Street and East Main Street and extends south to North State Street. Most of the site area is currently paved with building and parking. The additions to the development parcel in this iteration comprise of two residential buildings.

The Site is surrounded by a mix of multi-family residential buildings, restaurants, neighborhood scale retail stores, auto service establishments, a bicycle shop, tutoring classes, car and truck rental establishment, and tile shop among several other commercial uses. The surrounding area consists of Master Plan Category 9 (Urban Mixed Use) to the North, East and West, and Categories 11 (Downtown) and 13 (Industrial – General) to the south. Neighboring zoning districts include R-H and C-N to the north, C-I to the east, M-L to the south, and R-MF to the west.

## **Proposed Development**

The Applicant proposes to demolish the existing buildings on the site and construct a new 130 unit apartment building with a total of 156 parking spaces including 2 shared vehicles.

The following approvals are needed to facilitate the change:

### **222-06 - Zoning Map Change**

The Applicant requests a change from the current C-I designation to the MX-D designation for 15 Lafayette Street. This Zoning Map Change will ensure a coherent zoning designation for the entirety of the development site. The following criteria needs to be met for the MX-D designation.

- a. The proposed development is consistent with the Master Plan and the objectives of comprehensive municipal plans for redevelopment, renewal, or neighborhood preservation and rehabilitation.

*The mixed residential and retail medium density development is consistent with the objectives of Master Plan Category #9 in terms of uses and density. The development is consistent with the East Side Corridor neighborhood plan as well as the East Main Street Corridor Neighborhood Plan. **Satisfied.***

- b. The proposed development consists of housing and such other uses as will be supportive of and contribute to the vitality of the Downtown Land Use Category.

*The development consists of 130 units of housing and infills an area surrounded by similar scaled development including Glenview Houses and Eastside Commons. The added residential units as well the proposed retail use will be supportive of the Downtown. **Satisfied.***

- c. The proposed development consists of such proportions as are most appropriate to its functional integration into the neighborhood.

*The proposed development is in scale with the surrounding recent development including the five story Glenview Houses and Eastside Commons. **Satisfied.***

- d. The proposed development site plan is so designed in its space allocation, orientation, materials, landscaping and other features as to produce a stable and desirable character, complimentary to the surrounding neighborhood.

*The proposed sidewalks along south side of East Main Street, north side of North State Street and both sides of Lafayette Street will be a vast improvement over current conditions. The ground floor retail and amenity space and the screened parking garage will further enhance the pedestrian experience. The curb cuts will be significantly reduced and on-street parking will be increased and better organized. **Satisfied.***

- e. The proposed development includes active or passive recreational amenities that will provide a superior living and working environment for the residents and employees therein.

*The proposed GDP includes residential amenity space and retail along East Main Street which will both be beneficial to the residents of the development. **Satisfied.***

### **220-45 General Development Plan**

Staff recommends approval of the General Development Plan which facilitates the redevelopment of the underutilized site. Further discussion of the site plan is in the Final Site Plan/Special Permit Section below.

### **221-19 Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses & Special Permit**

The Applicant made revisions to the submitted elevations based on comments from staff, Planning Board and HPAC.

### **Comparison with previously approved plan**

#### **Building Height and massing**

The current proposal has a five story portion along East Main Street and steps down to four story along East Main Street and North State Street. The previously approved building was five story along both East Main and Lafayette Street. The step in the new proposal improves the design of the building. The new design maintains the base, middle and top demarcation of the previous proposal and continues to accentuate the corner of Lafayette and East Main Street.

### **Building Materials**

The building materials are overall upgraded from the previous proposal. The ground floor level material along East Main Street remains Drivit Cementitious Stucco as was proposed in the last iteration. This treatment was most recently used in the base of the building at 57 Stillwater Avenue. The current proposal uses various types of Hardi siding such as Hardi Reveal Panel, Hardiplank Lap siding and Hardi Shiplap along with color variation vs STO Creativ brick used in the last approval. The middle and top cornice use Azek sheet trim in dark grey. The ground level elevation along Lafayette Street screens the parking garage with formed concrete façade and metal screens for climbing vines to punctuate the elevation.

### **Access**

The current proposal has the access driveway off North State Street whereas the previous project had access off Lafayette Street. The change further streamlines the flow of traffic and allows for a consistent street wall along Lafayette Street.

### **Below Market Rate Housing**

The current application is subject to a higher Below Market Rate requirement above the base 10% based on current “Market Rate Affordable Units” on the site. Given that 17 units of existing “Market Rate Affordable Housing” will be removed from the Site to enable its redevelopment, an additional BMR unit, affordable at 65% of Area Median Income, is required for every 2 units removed. This equates to an additional 8.5 BMR units (@65% AMI), or 5.1 BMR units (@50% AMI) based on the equivalencies in Section 7.4. The total BMR obligation for the project is 18 units (@50% AMI). The Applicants intend to satisfy this requirement by providing 5 studio, 8 one-bedroom and 5 two-bedroom units onsite. A special permit request pursuant to Sections 7.4.C.1.g and 7.4.C.1.k is included to facilitate this aspect of the proposal. Staff supports the lower affordability of the BMR units as proposed. Final unit size of BMR units shall be reviewed by staff prior to the finalization of the Affordability Plan to ensure the BMR units are proportional to the market rate units.

### **Parking**

The project includes 148 striped parking spaces including 2 shared vehicle spots which equate to a total of 156 parking spaces. Of the 171 required spaces, the Applicant requests a Special Permit to allow 17 spaces to be provided on an as needed basis through the use of alternative parking strategies such as stackers and shared parking. The current plan is subject to the new requirements of Section 12 (Mobility) including planted medians and buffer planting as well as EV charging and bike parking spaces. The last proposal was not subject to these requirements due to time of filing.

The Applicant has submitted a Parking Management Plan which proposes various measures to increase parking supply if needed including shared parking arrangements with neighboring retail uses may be employed.

### **Landscaping and Open Space**

The planting along the eastern boundary includes 7 Honey Locust trees with a mature height of 45' and yellow fall colors with Green Giant arborvitaes and switchgrass filling the areas between the Honey Locusts. The parking area islands have 6 Ginkgo trees along with a mix of perennial and evergreen shrubs. The street trees proposed along East Main, Lafayette and North State Trees are Redmond Linden, Ginkgo and Honey Locust respectively. The East Main Street front of a building will be lined with a variety of perennials such as Hydrangeas, Juniper and Hameln grass. Planter boxes are also proposed for the Lafayette Street façade. The plant materials for the rooftop planting areas are not specified.

### **Usable Open Space**

The project is required 75 sf of usable open space per unit equivalent to 9,570 sf. The project provides 10,200 sf of usable open space located on the rooftop terrace on two levels (above parking area and roof on top of fourth floor).

### **Unit Distribution**

The current unit mix includes 44 studio, 55 one-bedroom and 31 two-bedroom apartments. The previous approval was an even mix of one and two bedroom units. The proposed unit mix allows more variety in the units.

The two residential buildings on 15 Lafayette Street received a 7.3 Historic Preservation approval in the 90s but have since seen severe deterioration due to flood damage and thus need to be demolished. The façade preservation easement is in the process of being released.

## **Site Plan and Requested Uses approvals**

### **Retail and restaurant uses**

Pursuant to Sections 9.C.3 and 9.C.6.a, in order to maximize flexibility and potential success of the retail space, Applicants request approval for all retail and restaurant type uses allowed in the zone.

*Allowing flexibility in terms of retail and restaurant uses within the scope of those permitted in the MX-D district is essential for ensuring that the space is successfully occupied.*

### **Setbacks**

Pursuant to Section 9.C.4.h, Applicants request approval of the proposed setbacks as depicted on the Zoning Location Survey and site plans.

*The proposed building is located on a corner and occupies an entire block front. The proposed setbacks allow for sufficient sidewalk and amenity area on all three streets and therefore staff recommends approval of this request.*

### **Location and design of Usable Open Space**

Pursuant to Section 9.C.5.b.3, Applicant requests approval of the proposed location and design of required Usable Open Space.

*The project exceeds the Usable Open Space requirement in terms of area and provides two adequately sized and located terraces. Final design of the second level space is not designed and shall be reviewed by staff prior to a Building Permit. The fourth level open space is well designed with landscaping, furniture and a playground for children.*

### **Parking**

Pursuant to Section 12.D.1.d and 19.F, Applicant requests that seventeen (17) spaces, constituting less than 10% of the parking requirement, be provided on an as needed basis.

*The total parking requirement is 171 of which 10% may be provided on an as needed basis as per Section 12.D.1.d per Special Permit. Staff recommends approval of the request to allow 17 spaces to be provided as needed given that the Parking Management Plan adequately addresses parking demand, multimodal transport and potential strategies for including the supply including stackers and shared parking with nearby commercial lots. The Applicant will be monitoring the parking usage during lease up to further understand demand.*

### **Special Permit**

#### **i. Below Market Rate units (Section 7.4.C.1.k)**

Pursuant to Section 7.4.C.1.k, Applicants request Special Permit approval to provide 18 BMR units at 50% of AMI.

*Staff recommends approval of the proposal.*

#### **ii. Child Play Area**

Section 7.Q, Applicant requests the child play area to be located on the rooftop.

*Staff recommends approval of the proposal given that the playground is adequately sized and designed.*

#### **iii. Parking Ratio**

Pursuant to Section 12.D.1.c, Applicants request Special Permit approval to provide parking at a ratio of 1.0 spaces per unit and potentially share parking with future retail uses, subject to future administrative approval by the Zoning Board.

*The current proposal has a higher parking ratio than previous proposals and meets the Standards of Section 12. Staff recommends approval of this request.*

**iv. Location of parking close to residential building.**

Pursuant to Section 12-B-1, Applicants request Special Permit approval to permit parking within 5’ of the proposed residential building.

*As required under previous Section 12, this condition is acceptable as long as the residential units are greater than 5 feet above grade of the parking spaces which is satisfied under the current proposal.*

**Referral Comments**

**Stamford Planning Board**

The Stamford Planning Board, during its regularly scheduled meeting held on March 8, 2022 recommended approval of the applications for Zoning Map Change, Special Permit and General Development Plan and found the request to be compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with Master Plan Category #9 (Urban Mixed Use).

**City of Stamford Engineering Bureau**

In a letter dated March 25, 2022, Willetta Capelle, Coordinator of Site Plan Reviews and Inspections at the Engineering Bureau in response to 222-06 stated that the proposed Zoning Map Change has no impact on the authority of the department. With reference to Application 222-07, General Development Plan, Special Permit and Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses the Applicant shall be required to meet the requirements of the Stamford Drainage Manual and provided technical comments on the civil plans. The Applicant provided responses to these comments in a letter dated April 1, 2022 supported by revised drawings.

**Fire Marshall**

Fire Marshall Walter Seely in an email dated February 17, 2022 regarding Application 222-06 & 07 stated that he did not see any issues with the development.

**Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau**

The Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau provided comments to the applicant in a memo dated March 23, 2022 addressing the proposed density at the location and stated that additional traffic study is not required. The letter stated that the Applicant has incorporated comments provided during previous plan reviews in the current plan set. Given the increase in the proposed number of units from 85 to 130, the department requested additional mitigation measures including curb to curb restoration of Lafayette Street and North Street in the area of utility work and a total of \$70,000 for upgrade of the traffic signal at East Main and Lafayette intersection.

### **Historic Preservation Advisory Commission**

In a letter dated March 1, 2022 David W. Woods stated that the regularly scheduled meeting of HPAC on March 1, 2022 the Commission made a determination to support the project as presented with notes and comments including no objection to the demolition of the two historic buildings damaged by flood, comments on the façade of the new development and recommendation to add plantings along Lafayette Street.

### **Water Pollution Control Authority**

Ann Brown in an email dated March 28, 2022 stated that the department had no objections to application 222-06 and made technical comments on 222-07 to be addressed prior to Building Permit.

### **Building Department**

Bharat Gami, in a memo dated March 17, 2022 made comments related to compliance with the Building Code.

### **Summary**

Staff believes that the revised proposal will enhance the housing quality in the neighborhood. The addition of the parcels on Lafayette/North State Street will replace housing which has faced significant flooding issues in the past years. The current proposal not only adds additional housing but also incorporates many refinements over the last proposal including better open space layout, improved elevations, additional BMR units and wider unit distribution.