



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

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**STAFF REPORT**

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**TO:** CITY OF STAMFORD ZONING BOARD  
**FROM:** VINEETA MATHUR, PRINCIPAL PLANNER  
**SUBJECT:** **ZB #222-19 & 222-20, 0 Ursula Place, Text Change, General Development Plan and Special Permit**  
**DATE:** May 23, 2022

**MASTER PLAN:** Master Plan Category 3 (Residential Low Density Multifamily)

**ZONING:** R-5 (Multiple Family Medium Density Design District)

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**REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

222-19	Zoning Text Change to Appendix B, Footnote 6/Section 7-R	Housing Authority of City of Stamford
222-20	General Development Plan Special Permit	Housing Authority of City of Stamford

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**Introduction**

The Applicant Housing Authority of City of Stamford is requesting approval of related applications including Zoning Text Change, General Development Plan and Special Permit to facilitate the redevelopment of Oak Park in the Cove neighborhood of Stamford consisting of 166 apartments on a roughly 14.6 acre parcel. All the units will be income restricted to population at or below 60% of Area Median Income.

## **Background**

The Oak Park development is one of several affordable housing developments managed by Charter Oak Communities and the latest project undergoing comprehensive and phased revitalization. The Oak Park townhouses were constructed between 1947 and 1950. They are comprised of 13 one-bedroom, 135 two-bedroom, 15 three-bedroom and 3 five-bedroom units. All buildings are two stories with most of them including 6 connected units. The 32 Ursula Townhomes which are not planned for redevelopment were constructed in 1980s.

## **Site and Surroundings**

The Oak Park development is located on Ursula Place and Dale Street in the Cove neighborhood of Stamford. The Chelsea Piers recreational facility is located to the east and single family residences are located to the west.

## **Proposed Development**

The Applicant proposes to reconstruct the 166 apartments in the Oak Park development with the objective of addressing structural and building systems issues, increasing off street parking spaces, improving the drainage and flooding issues. The redevelopment will result in an increase by in off-street parking spaces by 40, increase in the size of the units and overall improvement in amenities for the residents. The townhomes will be built in clusters with up to 7 townhomes in each cluster. The 32 Ursula Townhomes will remain as such.

The following approvals are needed to facilitate the development:

## **222-19 - Zoning Text Change**

The Applicant requests a change to Appendix B, Footnote 6 (alternatively Section 7-R). This regulation has special standards for large scale development of properties in the RM-1, R-5 and or RM-F district where local, state or federal housing assistance programs have been utilized. The proposed text amendment makes changes to the following subsections of the Special Permit standards. The subsections that will be remain unchanged are omitted. New language is underlined and highlighted and deleted text is struck through.

1. The minimum land area is three (3) acres and may include land areas of at least one (1) acre in common ownership separated by a right-of-way. Proposed Lots where home ownership is available shall not be less than 2,000 square feet. Residential density shall be governed by the standards of the RM-1, R-5 and/or R-MF Districts, including applicable Below Market Rate and bonus density requirements, provided that bonus density may be increased to 15, 25, and 44 dwelling units per acre in RM-1, R-5 and R-MF zones respectively.

While the Oak Park development is 14.6 acres in total, a portion of the development bound by Ursula Place and Dale Street on the south side of project is less than 3 acres. The collective blocks comprising the project are interconnected by access, amenity and design and merit the collective consideration for the special standards. The ownership by a common entity ensures a coherent development plan for Oak Park or any future development which may use this subsection.

4. Required parking shall be determined based on the number of residential dwelling units at a rate of not less than 1.25 Parking Spaces per unit. The location, setbacks and screening of Parking Spaces shall be subject to Zoning Board approval and may include tandem spaces. Additional parking for non-residential uses shall be determined by the Zoning Board. Driveways may be no less than twenty (20) feet wide; Where existing housing is being replaced and/or redeveloped and 100% of dwelling units are provided as Below Market Rate, parking may be provided at a rate of not less than one (1) space per dwelling unit. Where the Zoning Board makes a finding that parking is being significantly improved over existing conditions and where the applicant owns property on both sides of the street, on-street parking may be permitted to account for up to 20% of the required parking. The requirements of Section 12.L shall not apply, although the inclusion of equipment and/or infrastructure to serve proposed or future electric vehicle charging is encouraged.

The requested addition would allow a parking ratio of 1 to 1 while also allowing on-street parking to supplement off-street parking for up to 20% of the requirement for subsidized housing. This standard allows for the necessary flexibility where given the ownership of land on either side of the street, the on-street parking is used primarily by the residents of the development. The standard will minimize the need for adding impervious surface. Section 12.L pertains to Electric Vehicle Parking. A demand for electric vehicle parking is not expected for income restricted units and the requirement will raise the overall cost of the project.

The Oak Park development has been self-sufficient in parking and the proposed redevelopment will increase the parking by 40 spaces and will have an overall parking ratio of 1.41.

9. Applications for Special Permits shall follow the procedures outlined in Section 9.C.6. The Zoning Board shall authorize in the approval of General Plans the number of years from the date of final plan approval within which all phases of Development shall be completed. General Plans may anticipate the relocation, abandonment or establishment of public and private rights-of-way, and may authorize an expansion or alteration of the original public housing land area, at the discretion of the Zoning Board.

This amendment is a clarification.

10. Subsequent to approval of Final Site Plan, the Zoning Board, where required for reasons shown for financing, operating or conveyance purposes, may allow internal property lines to be established, or existing property lines to remain, that create Lots that individually ~~exceed the~~ may not conform to internal Building or parking setbacks, residential density and or Building Coverage standards, provided that all conditions applicable to all Lots are filed on the Stamford Land Records.

This amendment acknowledges the redevelopment of existing sites where internal lot lines may remain.

### **222-20 General Development Plan & Special Permit**

The townhomes are setback approximately 15' from the streets and are 2 ½ stories tall. The three bedroom units will have approximately 1,300sf and the two bedroom units will be approximately 1,100sf. The development will be completed in three phases comprising of 61, 62 and 43 units each. Given that there is existing vacancy in the development, the residents will be moved internally before the beginning of each phase and will not result in any displacement of residents.

### **Access**

Ursula Place and Dale Street will remain as the main access with curb cuts leading to off-street parking on either side. The total number of curb cuts will remain the same however some of the parking lots will be internally connected thus improving the circulation.

### **Unit Distribution**

The 166 Oak Park apartments comprise of 140 townhomes and 26 apartments in a three story building.

Unit distribution of the townhomes:

Two bedroom units – 110

Three bedroom units – 30

Unit distribution of the apartment building:

One bedroom units – 16

Two bedroom units – 4

Three bedroom units – 6

The final unit distribution and size of units may be refined in the FSP and the Building Permit application process.

### **Parking**

The development will contain 190 off-street parking spaces. In addition to the 90 on-street parking spaces will also serve the townhomes as they do currently. The proposed text amendment establishes a parking requirement of 1 space per unit and will allow 15% of the requirement to be met by on-street parking. The overall parking ratio will be 1.4 per unit.

### **Bike spaces**

Bike spaces are only required for the 26 unit apartment building.

### **Open Space**

The site will have approximately 10 acres of open space. The final design of the open spaces will be part of the final site and architectural plan application.

### **Affordable Housing**

All 166 units will be affordable units restricted to households at or under 60% of AMI. This is a reduction from the current maximum income cap of 80% AMI. Oak Park has received Fee-in-Lieu (FIL) funding totaling \$2.95m which carries an obligation for the redevelopment to include 9 two-bedroom and 10 three-bedroom units at or below 25% AMI. The Housing Authority may seek addition f-i-l funds to support this project.

### **Special Permit**

The application meets the Special Permit requirements of Section 7-R (Special Standards for Subsidized Housing In RM-1, R-5 and R-MF Districts) including the proposed amendments. The applicant also submitted the findings for the Special Permit per Section 19.

1. Minimum lot area of 3 acres and may include land areas of at least one (1) acre in common ownership separated by a right-of-way. **COMPLIES.**
2. The developer shall enter into one or more regulatory agreements with the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford (i.e. Charter Oak Communities), pursuant to which approximately one half of the dwelling units will be made available to households which meet federal public housing or state assisted housing income eligibility requirements for the term required by the HOPE VI or similar program. **COMPLIES.**
3. Authorized Special Permit uses shall include all uses permitted by right in the R-5, C-N and R-MF districts and Community Center, Health Club, Sales/Leasing offices, Day Care, Health Clinic, Police substation, School, Dental Clinic and other appropriate accessory recreational and support facilities; **COMPLIES.**
4. Where existing housing is being replaced and/or redeveloped and 100% of dwelling units are provided as Below Market Rate, parking may be provided at a rate of not less than one (1) space per dwelling unit. Where the Zoning Board makes a finding that parking is being significantly improved over existing conditions and where the applicant owns property on both sides of the street, on-street parking may be permitted to account for up to 20% of the required parking. The requirements of Section 12.L shall not apply, although the inclusion of equipment and/or infrastructure to serve proposed or future electric vehicle charging is encouraged. **COMPLIES**
5. Usable Open Space shall be provided on site, provided that the amount, design, location, and dimensions of open space shall be subject to determination by the Zoning Board. **COMPLIES.**
6. Total Building Coverage shall not exceed thirty-five percent (35%) and may exclude the

area of one-Story parking Structures provided that the height of such Structures is not more than five (5') above the grade of the Street from which the Structure is accessed. **COMPLIES**

7. Building Height shall be limited to three (3) Stories and thirty-five (35) feet in the RM-1 district and shall be limited to four (4) Stories and forty-five (45) feet in the R-5 and R-MF districts, provided that the Zoning Board may authorize increased Building Height in the R-MF district not to exceed five (5) Stories and sixty-five (65) feet where sites abut zoning districts that allow five (5) or more Stories in height. Building Height within seventy-five (75) feet of a more restrictive residential district (external to the project area) shall be limited to three (3) Stories and thirty-five feet. Pursuant to Definition 16-a, height may be measured from the established grade of the curb of the primary street frontage. **COMPLIES**

8. All Buildings shall provide a Front Yard setback of not less than ten feet (10') excluding covered porch and steps. **COMPLIES**

Subsections 9 and 10 are related to procedure.

## **Referral Comments**

### **Stamford Planning Board**

The Stamford Planning Board, during its regularly scheduled meeting held on April 26, 2022 recommended approval of the applications for Zoning Text Change, Special Permit and General Development Plan and found the request to be compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with Master Plan Category #3 (Residential Low Density Multifamily).

### **City of Stamford Engineering Bureau**

In a letter dated May 12, 2022, Willetta Capelle, Coordinator of Site Plan Reviews and Inspections at the Engineering Bureau provided a response to 222-19 and 222-20. She noted that if the applications are allowed to proceed, the Engineering Bureau shall review the Final Site Plan submission for compliance with Engineering Bureau policies, including compliance with the Stamford Stormwater Drainage Manual.

### **Fire Marshall**

Fire Marshall Walter Seely in an email dated April 26, 2022 regarding Application 222-19 and 222-20 stated that he did not see any issues with the development. He requested that the Applicant ensure that adequate turning movement is available for fire apparatus at driveways in relation to marking of on street parking spaces in the final plans.

### **Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau**

The Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau memo dated May 20, 2022 stated that the proposed text will bring the development closer into conformance and acknowledges the existing condition with regards to use of the on street parking. The memo requested that the final plans clarify that on street parking along Dale Street will not be included in the parking calculations, the department

is agreeable with maintaining the existing configuration of the sidewalk path and amenity strip and that the plans for sidewalk reconstruction will be finalized in coordination with the applicant in the FSP process. The Applicant shall also coordinate the pavement marking of the on street parking.

### **Summary**

Staff believes that the proposed Text Amendment, General Development Plan and Special Permit allowing the commencement of the phased reconstruction of the Oak Park development will enhance the parking, drainage and site amenities, all while providing greater affordability and resulting in no increase in density. Staff recommends approval of the three related applications which will together improve the quality of life of all the existing residents and enhance the affordable housing stock of Stamford.