



**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 #222-21, 0 Ursula Place, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses  
**DATE:** July 8, 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:**

222-21	Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses Pursuant to Section 19 and Section	Housing Authority of City of Stamford
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**Introduction**

The Applicant Housing Authority of City of Stamford is requesting approval of Site and Architectural Plans and Requested Uses 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 and managed by the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford.

**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.

The Applicant received approval for the General Development Plan on June 6, 2022.

### **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. The site is in Master Plan category 3 and is surrounded by Master Plan Category 3 to the west and south, Master Plan Category 2 to the north, Master Plan Category 8 to the east. The site is in the R-5 zoning district which extends to the west, the zoning district to the north is R-7 ½ (single family), M-D (designed manufacturing) to east.

### **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 35, 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.

### **Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses**

The development comprises of 140 townhomes and a 26 unit apartment building with a mix of one, two and three bedroom units. It 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.

### **Townhomes**

The townhomes are artfully designed with each unit distinguished by a porch, decorative window sills and lintels, dormers and varying roof heights. The units are clustered in varying combination of two and three bedroom units providing a variety in building types. The mix of pitched and flat roof along with use of varying colors of hardie siding further provide visual variety. The townhomes are setback at least 14' 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.

### **Apartment Building**

The three story apartment building is similarly attractive with varying roofline, façade articulation, large porch and variation in window clustering between vertical bands. The building has an attractive frontage on both Ursula Place and Cove Road.

### **Vehicular Access**

The final site plan maintains the approved circulation and access per the General Development Plan. 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. The Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau recommended a traffic calming island at the triangular intersection where Ursula Place bifurcates in the west and south directions.

### **Pedestrian Access**

Based on agreement with Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau the Applicant will replace the sidewalk along all the frontages of Ursula Place and Dale Street. The design and size of the concrete walking path and the grass amenity strip will be determined based on field conditions in order to save as many of the existing trees as possible. Staff recommends adding walking paths from parking areas to the street sidewalks.

### **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 unit mix did not change from that proposed at the time of General Development Plan approval.

### **Parking**

The development will contain 144 off-street parking spaces which is 35 more than the existing number of off street spaces or a 32% increase. This satisfies the recently approved parking requirement under Section 7.R. which requires at least a 25% increase over the current conditions before redevelopment. On street parking on Ursula Place (87 spaces) are almost exclusively used by the Oak Park residents because of their distance from the surrounding neighborhood. Lastly Dale Street has 49 on street parking spaces.

The parking areas include landscape islands breaking up the stretches of the lots. The 21 space parking area on the west side of Ursula Place needs minor modification to meet the landscaping requirement (an island every 10 spaces).

### **Bike spaces**

Bike spaces are only required for the 26 unit apartment building. Six (6) Class A spaces (for residents) are required based on 1 space per 5 units and three (3) Class B (for visitors) based on 1 space per 10 units. The site plan shows 5 Class A spaces (bike lockers) in front of the apartment building. Staff recommends that the Building Permit plans demonstrate compliance with the full requirement.

### **Landscaping Open Space**

The site will have approximately 10 acres of open space covering almost 2/3 of the site. The site currently has a total of 189 trees. The redevelopment will result in the addition of 126 trees and a loss of 72 trees therefore will result in a net addition of 54 trees. Each townhouse building as well as the apartment building includes foundation plantings. Staff recommends screening of the transformers with planting if feasible.

### **Playground**

The plan includes a large playground measuring 60' x 50' covering 3000 sf located on the east side of Ursula Place in the center of the neighborhood. The landscape plan provides details of proposed play equipment including swings and a jungle gym.

### **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.

## **Compliance with Section 7-R**

The application meets the requirements of Section 7-R (Special Standards for Subsidized Housing in RM-1, R-5 and R-MF Districts)

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. [Site covers 14.6 acres.](#)
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. The development is proposed by the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford and entirely targeted to families earning 60% AMI or less supported by State funding.](#)
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. In addition to the residential units, the development includes residential amenities.](#)
4. Where existing housing is being replaced and/or redeveloped and 100% of dwelling units are provided as Below Market Rate, nonconforming parking shall be increased by at least 25% of the existing ratio or a ratio of 1.0 space per unit, whichever is less. 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. The proposal increases the parking by 132%.](#)
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. The development contains approximately 10 acres of open space including large usable lawn areas and a 3000 sf playground. The size of the open space is much larger as compared to typical ratios for multifamily development.](#)
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. Building coverage is 17%, No parking structures are proposed.](#)
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. The maximum building height is 41’.**

8. All Buildings shall provide a Front Yard setback of not less than ten feet (10') excluding covered porch and steps. **COMPLIES. The front setback is at least 14’ across the development.**

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. **COMPLIES. A GDP and Special Permit was approved by the Zoning Board on June 6 2022.**

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 that create Lots that individually exceed the residential density and Building Coverage provided that all conditions applicable to all Lots are filed on the Stamford Land Records. **NOT APPLICABLE.**

## **Referral Comments**

### **Fire Marshall**

Fire Marshall Walter Seely in an email dated June 09, 2022 stated that separation of the driveway entrances from the on street parking has been addressed.

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

In a letter dated July 8, 2022 Frank Petise and Luke Bittenweiser of the Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau listed the comments and agreements regarding pedestrian amenities and vehicular circulation including reconstruction of all sidewalks, replacement of curbing as necessary, construction of a traffic calming island on Ursula Place and various notes on signage and pavement markings.

### **Summary**

Staff believes that the Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses application allowing the phased reconstruction of the Oak Park development will enhance the parking, sidewalks, traffic circulation, drainage and site amenities, all while providing greater affordability and resulting in no increase in density. Staff recommends approval of the application which will improve the quality of life of all the existing residents and enhance the affordable housing stock of Stamford. The architectural design and material selection of the townhouses and the apartment building is of high quality and will vastly improve the streetscape of Ursula Place and Dale Street.