



City of Stamford
Zoning Board

STAFF REPORT

TO: CITY OF STAMFORD ZONING BOARD
FROM: VINEETA MATHUR, PRINCIPAL PLANNER
SUBJECT: **ZB #222-32 100 Clinton Avenue, General Development Plan, Special Permit, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses, Coastal Site Plan Review**
DATE: February 06, 2023

MASTER PLAN: Master Plan Category 5 (High Density Residential), 14 (Open Space – Parks)

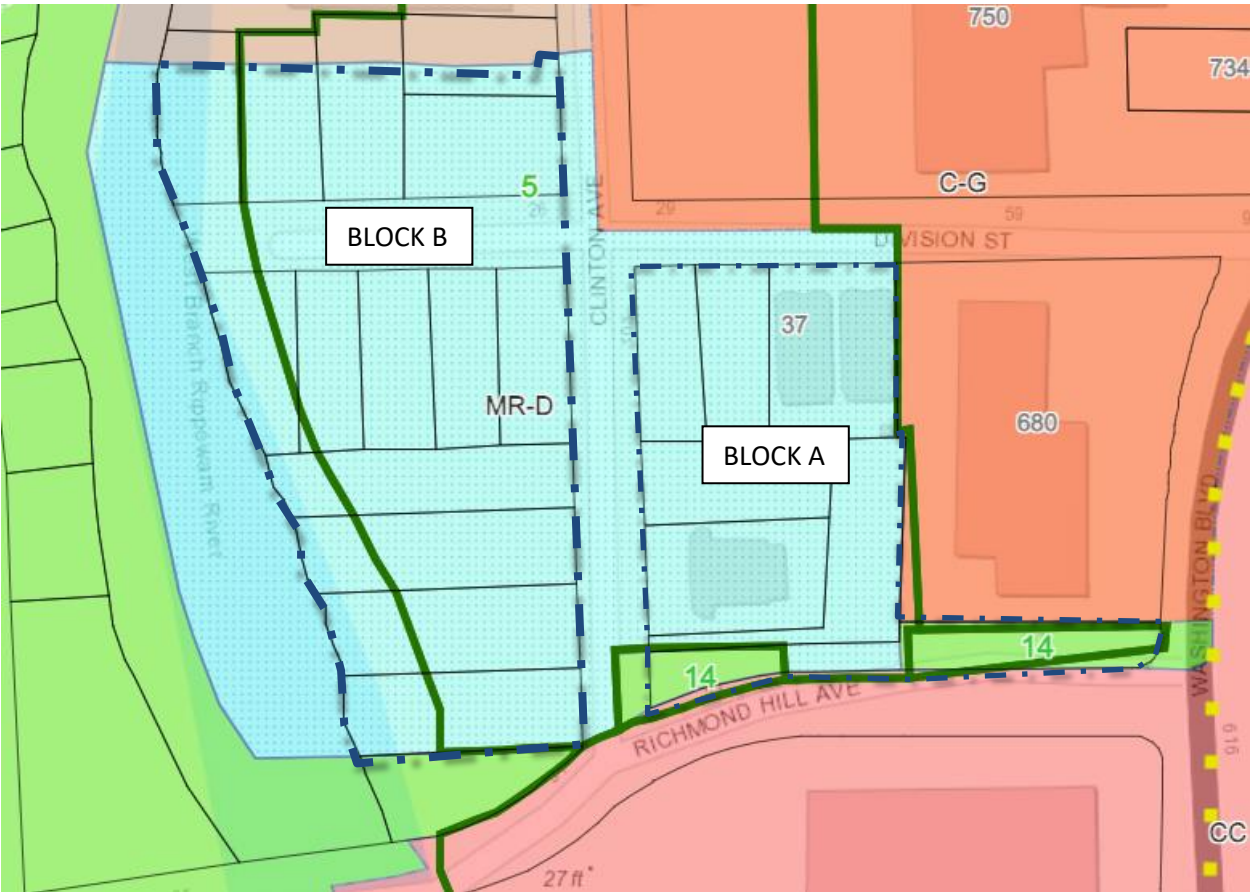
ZONING: MRD-D (Mill River Design District), P (Park)

REQUESTED ACTIONS:

222-32	General Development Plan	Proposed 471-unit residential development on two blocks with associated parking and amenities.
	Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses	
	Coastal Site Plan Review	
	Special Permit	

Introduction

The Applicant CP VIII 100 Clinton, LLC is requesting the approval of related applications including modification of approved General Development Plan, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses, Coastal Site Plan Review and Special Permit Applications to facilitate the redevelopment of properties located at 0, 100, 102 Clinton Avenue and 29, 31, 37, 41 Division Street, Parcel N-1 shown on Map No. 13846 of the Stamford Land Records (Block A); 75, 79, 99, 101, 107, 113 Clinton Avenue and 0, 1, 4, 6, 10, 17, 19, 25 Division Street (Block B) covering a total of 4.37 acres as shown on the map below.



Background

The current proposal is the result of several preceding actions by the City as well as the property owners to facilitate elevating this vacant site adjacent to the Mill River above the flood plain, allow contextual development in accordance with the Mill River Corridor Plan while ensuring public access and creation of a Riverwalk. The site assemblage required a property swap between the former property owner (RBS Americas) and the City of Stamford. The dead end portion of Division Street west of Clinton Avenue was discontinued by the City and incorporated into the development site. In 2016 applications for a Zoning Map Change to the Mill River Design District, General Development Plan and Coastal Site Plan review were filed jointly by RBS and the City of Stamford. A text amendment was also requested by the property owner to establish special residential development standards. A public access easement along the river was required by the City along with the access to the Riverwalk from Clinton Avenue. The former property owner (RBS) was required to contribute \$1.7 million towards the construction of the Riverwalk. This would supplement the grants that the City received for the creation of the Riverwalk. In 2018 the site received a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) removing the development area from the floodplain after approved regrading. A storm drain pipe was relocated by property owner from the

former Division Street ROW. A public access easement spanning approximately 60 feet from the river was recorded in 2019.

Proposed Development

The Applicant proposes to construct two seven (7) story buildings with a total of 471 residential units and 453 parking spaces on Block A and B of the General Development Plan. Improvements to the Mill River Riverwalk are not included in this application but are anticipated to be filed jointly with the City of Stamford in the near future.

Unit type	Block A	Block B	Total
Studio	33	18	51
1 Bedroom	88	128	216
2 Bedroom	55	148	203
3 Bedroom	0	1	1
Total	176	295	471

The following approvals are needed to facilitate the development:

A. Modification of the previously approved General Development Plan

The development predominantly follows the massing and scale of the previously approved GDP. The main changes pertain to refinement of building form, increase in total number of units by 15, minor changes to setbacks, building coverage and building height. The project no longer utilizes shared parking with neighboring office building as previously proposed. All changes to the GDP are listed in the exhibit titled “*Summary of GDP Amendments: ZB App. No. 216-22 As Compared to ZB App. No. 222-32*”.

Staff believes that the proposed modification are consistent with the Mill River Design District standards.

B. Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses

The project lies within the Mill River Design district and is subject to the Special Standards listed under Section 9.P.7.b. The compliance with applicable standards for both buildings collectively is stated below. A detailed Zoning Chart is included in the application materials.

Section 9.P.7.b. Special Residential Development Standards

(1) **Commercial Floor Area Ratio.** Not applicable

(2) **Floor Area Ratio** – Maximum permitted F.A.R. is 3.0. Proposed F.A.R. is 2.88. **Complies**

(3) **Building Height** – Maximum permitted 125 feet. Proposed height – 81 ft. **Complies**

(4) **Building Coverage** – Maximum permitted 85% when parking is suitably screened. Project proposes 71.3 % coverage. **Complies**

(5) **Parking** – The parking requirement for Parking Category 1 applies to this project. The requirement for studios is 0.75, one-bedroom is 1.00 and 2 bedroom is 1.25. The parking requirement for Below Market Rate studios is 0.50, one-bedroom is 0.75 and 2 bedroom is 1.00.

Based on these parking requirements and deductions for shared vehicles provided, a total of **164 parking spaces** are required on Block A and **289 parking spaces** are required on Block B. The project provides the required number of parking spaces for both buildings for a total of **453 parking spaces**. The project generates a total **37 EV parking space** requirement which is satisfied with 9 spaces in Block A and 28 spaces in Block B. **Complies.**

Detailed parking calculations are provided in the TDM/Parking Management Plan as Figure 2 on page 7 of the document.

(6) **Setbacks.** No front or side yard setback required except as required by the Zoning Board on a site specific basis. **Complies**

9.P.5. Site Design and Architectural Criteria

a. Mitigation of Environmental Impact. The proposed buildings will be setback from the floodway line and along with filling and construction of retaining walls result in the mitigation of future flood hazard. **Complies.**

b. Public Access to the Waterfront. The site includes a 60ft wide waterfront public access easement. The Riverwalk construction is anticipated as a separate application jointly filed with the City of Stamford. The application includes a landscaped walkway along the northern property line which will allow a connection from Clinton Avenue to the future Riverwalk. **Complies.**

c. Preservation and Enhancement of Visual Resources. The development has been designed to allow access to the Mill River from both the north and south side of Block B. **Complies.**

e. Lighting. Photometric plans provided by the applicant show adequate street lighting and lighting of the publicly accessible areas. **Complies.**

f. Landscaping. The detailed landscape plan and open space plan show a range of public and private open spaces with an emphasis on native planting. The applicant incorporated comments from staff to increase the amount of landscaped area in and around the site and to provide planting details. **Complies.**

Mill River Design Guidelines

The Mill River Corridor design guidelines recommend an architectural style which is distinct, both from the steel and glass office buildings and also the scale and style of suburban wood frame architecture. The guidelines recommend that the character should be that of an urban, downtown residential neighborhood with multiple building entrances, rich texture and proportioned buildings.

The guidelines further recommend buildings with a ‘tripartite composition’ which includes a clearly defined base, mid-section and top. It recommends the use of masonry building materials, punched window openings, details and other relief on façade. For larger buildings, the articulation of the building mass is encouraged to create an impression of an aggregate of smaller forms. The guidelines suggest the height of street-wall to be directly proportional to the size of the roadway and to provide an inviting pedestrian experience through continuity in street wall, use of planters, lighting and trees.

The project architects have engaged with the Land Use Bureau regarding the design of these buildings from the time of project conceptualization with further discussions prior to and post application submission so as to refine the design per staff comments and to meet the Mill River Design Guidelines.



View of Block B along Mill River - The proposed development meets the guidelines by providing a clearly defined base, mid-section and top. The punched windows, balconies and setbacks provide relief to the façade. Change in material and framing around the windows help break the building elevation into small portions. Amenity areas are showcased using large glazed windows. Corners are accented using wraparound windows.



View of Block B along Clinton Avenue - *The proposed buildings have brown brick masonry along the base of the building. This feature distinguishes it from the downtown office buildings which use mainly glass and steel materials. The mid-section of the building uses earth-toned hardi-siding. The top will use gray colored hardie-panels.*



View of Block A along Clinton Avenue - *The proposed building on Block A uses a similar architectural vocabulary as Block B to create a cohesive development.*

Staff recommended the applicant to explore alternative color schemes to introduce variation in color throughout the building. Such an alternative is provide in the plan set submitted on January 30, 2023. Comparing the two color schemes, staff believes that the original color scheme is preferable given the predominance of the earth tone which is distinct from the gray tones in the office and residential buildings in the vicinity.

Vehicle Access

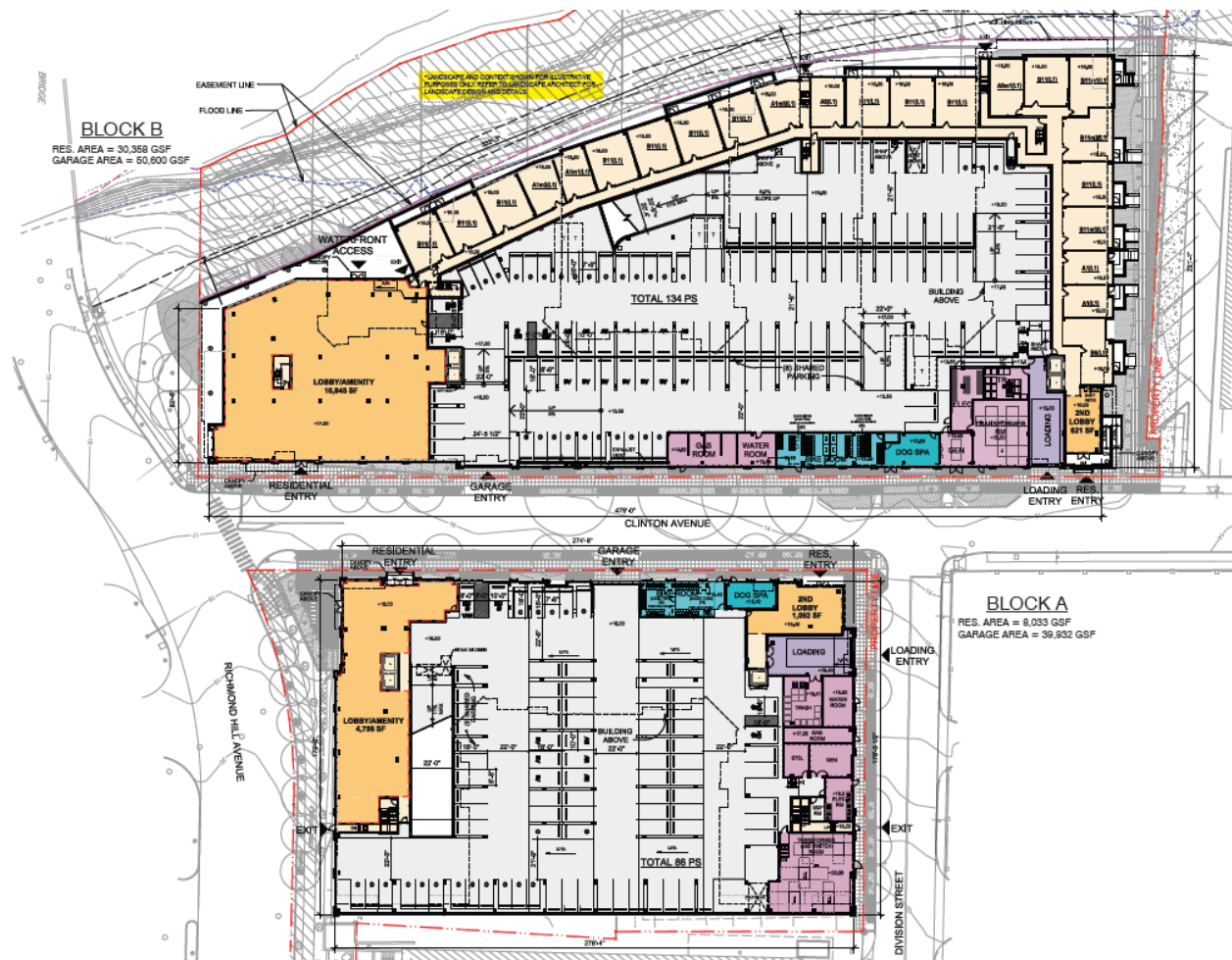
The vehicular access to both buildings (Block A and Block B) is off curb cuts on Clinton Avenue with overhead garage doors. The loading entrance of Block B is located along Clinton Avenue and that of Block A is located along Division Street with dock doors.

Pedestrian Access

Each building will have two residential lobbies. Both buildings have their main lobby located at the corner of Richmond Hill Avenue and Clinton Avenue orienting the entrance towards the train station.

The second lobby for Building A is located at the corner of Division Street and Clinton Avenue and that of Block B is located at the northeast corner along Clinton Avenue. Block A will also have an additional path connecting to Richmond Hill Avenue sidewalk from the south east side of the building and an additional exit door along Division Street.

The residential units located along the north side of Block B have direct outdoor access through doors leading to individual at-grade patios.



Below Market Rate units

The 456 units approved under the original General Development Plan (approved in 2016) are subject to the Below Market Rate requirement at the time of the 2016 approval which required 10% of the units as BMR at 50% Area Median Income resulting in 45.6 BMR units. The additional fifteen (15) units which are part of the current approval are subject to the current Below Market Rate requirement of 12%. Which would require 1.8 additional units at AMIs distributed between 25%, 50% and 65% AMI. The applicant has proposed a total of 49 Below Market Rate units with 30 proposed in Block B and 19 proposed in Block A. Of these, 47 BMR units will be at 50% AMI, 1 unit will be at 25% AMI and 1 unit will be at 65% AMI.

Landscaping and Open Space

The development includes at grade open space as well as terraces and balconies contributing towards the open space on the site.



Waterfront Public Access

The plan includes an approximately 60 ft. wide public access easement along the Mill River. The previous property owner contributed \$1.7 million towards the construction of the Riverwalk with the City being the responsible party for the construction of the Riverwalk. The current property owner (Applicant) is in the process of finalizing an agreement with the City under which the applicant will construct the Riverwalk. The design of the Riverwalk will entail coordination with the Mill River Park Collaborative and various City departments. The Riverwalk easement area encompasses 35,688sf.

An additional 12,520sf of open is provided on Block B in the form of the walkway along the north side of the property leading to the Riverwalk and landscaped area in front of the building.

Usable Open Space (For use by residents only)

For developments adjacent to the Mill River, no 'Usable Open Space' is required per Section 9.P.7(5) however the project includes internal shared and private open spaces for the use of the residents as follows:

Block A – Amenity Deck (14,800 sf) and Private Balconies & terraces (2,263 sf)

Block B - Amenity Deck (21,300 sf) and Private Balconies & terraces (5,547 sf)

Staff believes that the proposed site plan meets the Mill River Design District requirement and the Mill River Design Guidelines.

B. Coastal Site Plan Review

A majority of Block B was removed from the flood hazard area through regrading in 2018. A portion of the site encompassing the easement area remains in a flood hazard area. The Coastal Site Plan application was reviewed by EPB as noted in a letter from Robert Clausi dated December 21, 2022 provided comments on the landscaping and engineering plans and stated that he has no objections with the application moving forward.

Special Permit

The following Special Permits are requested to facilitate the project. The Applicant has provided a Statement of Findings to support the requests.

A. Driveway width modification pursuant to Section 12.A.3

Applicant requests modification of the dimensional requirements of the multi-level garage ramp from 28' to 22' in width on Block B and a two-way ramp width of 20.4' in Block A

without 2' center dividers or 1' curbs on either side. The request has been reviewed by TTP who found it acceptable.

Referral Comments

Stamford Planning Board

The Stamford Planning Board, during its regularly scheduled meeting held on January 24, 2023 recommended approval of the applications for Special Permit, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses, modification of the previously approved General Development Plan, Coastal Site Plan Review and found the request to be compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with Master Plan Category #5 (Residential High Density Multifamily) and Category 14 (Open Space-Public Parks) and the following Master Plan policies.

- *5D.3 Continue to pursue the Mill River Plan and promote a continuous greenway from Scalzi Park to Kosciuszko Park.*
- *6B Preserve Existing and Create New Affordable Housing*
- *7A Expand and Link the City's Open Spaces*
- *7F Maximize Public Access to the Waterfront*
- *7G Create Compact and Complete Communities*
- *7H Encourage Infill Development*

Fire Marshall

Fire Marshall Walter Seely, in an email dated October 13, 2022 regarding Application 222-32 stated that he did not see any issues with the project.

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

In a letter dated November 2, 2022 expressed concerns about the proximity of the proposed building to the floodway line and also noted that future Riverwalk application shall require further review due to its relationship with the floodway. The applicant responded to the comments and provided clarification that the development is situated at least 43.7' away from the floodway line and 61' from the mean high water line. Further the applicant provided clarification that the Riverwalk construction is not part of the current application.

Stamford Harbor Management Commission

In a letter dated November 21, 2022, Dr. Damian Ortelli, Chairman of Stamford's Harbor Management Commission provided comments on the application and found the project consistent with the Harbor Management Plan.

Engineering Bureau

In a letter dated November 16, 2022, Willetta Cappelle, Coordinator of Site Plan Reviews and Inspection provided technical comments on the application to be addressed by the applicant prior to issuance of a Building Permit.

Urban Redevelopment Commission

At its regularly scheduled meeting held on January 12, 2023 the Urban Redevelopment Commission endorsed the application for approval citing the increase in housing close to STC, creation of attractive streetscapes and enhancement of open spaces.

WPCA

In a letter dated December 1, 2022, Ann Brown provided a detailed list of comments to be addressed by the applicant prior to Building Permit.

Environmental Protection Board

In a letter dated December 21, 2022, Robert Clausi, Executive Director, Environmental Protection Board stated no objection with the applications moving forward. In a supplemental email dated January 19, 2023 he confirmed that the project will be consistent with the Flood Prone Area Regulations (15B) of the City of Stamford as per the submitted plans.

Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau

The Applicant has coordinated with the Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau on site plan related comments as well as pedestrian and traffic improvements needed in the vicinity of the site. In a letter dated November 22, 2022, TTP provided comments on the site plan as well as recommendations for traffic and pedestrian improvements. In supplemental comments provided in a memo dated January 20, 2023, Frank Petise noted that the department had no objections to the proposed reduction of the ramp widths and geometry.

Summary

The proposed project will result in the implementation of a key portion of the Mill River Corridor Plan by revitalizing a vacant site and creating public access to the waterfront. The development is located in close proximity to the Stamford Transportation Center and will be a valuable addition to the Downtown Stamford neighborhood. The creative design of the buildings and creation of new public and private open spaces will invigorate this section of Mil River. Improvements to

streetscape along Clinton Avenue and pedestrian improvements at adjoining intersections will vastly improve the pedestrian experience of the area. Creation of 49 Below Market Rate units will further support affordable housing in the City.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the related General Development Plan, Coastal Site Plan Review, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses and Special Permit applications (222-32). The development meets and exceeds the design standards of the MRD-D zoning district and is consistent with the policies in the City's Master Plan.