



City of Stamford
Zoning Board

STAFF REPORT

TO: CITY OF STAMFORD ZONING BOARD
FROM: VINEETA MATHUR, PRINCIPAL PLANNER
SUBJECT: ZB #223-13 & 223- 14 Text Amendment, Special Permit, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses, Administrative Approval
DATE: June 5, 2023

MASTER PLAN: Master Plan Category 7 (Commercial Arterial)

ZONING: C-B (Commercial Business) and RM-1 (Multi Family Low Density)

REQUESTED ACTIONS:

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| 223-13 | Text Amendment | Amend Section 10.K (Expansion of Non-Conforming Buildings in C-B and C-WD Districts) by adding a new subsection permitting hotel additions in the C-B Zone, subject to certain conditions |
| 223-14 | Special Permit | To permit building additions pursuant to the proposed Section 10.K To permit up to 10% of the required parking to be provided on an as-needed basis, pursuant to Section 12.D.1.d. |
| 223-14 | Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses Administrative Review | To permit the proposed building 9,350 sf addition and associated improvements. To permit the existing sidewalk configuration to remain pursuant to Section 12.K.5 |

Introduction

The Applicant Stamford Hospitality LP (Applicants) is requesting approval of related applications including a Text Amendment, Special Permit and Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses Applications to facilitate a one story 9,350 sf prayer room addition to the existing Armon Hotel located at 2701 Summer Street.

Background

The location of the proposed addition is currently used for employee parking and loading and utilized for tents for prayer gatherings several times a year. The Applicant proposes to add a permanent structure in place of the temporary structures to allow better use of the space and add convenience for both the hotel guests and neighbors. The permanent structure will eliminate disturbances in terms of noise from setting up and dismantling of tents. It will also result in a better view for the residents with the proposed green roof. The Applicant engaged with the neighbors and has proposed additional off-site landscape screening on the neighboring property. The property is currently non-conforming to the C-B district standards because it was constructed when the property was in the C-L zone and later rezoned to the C-B zoning district during the comprehensive rezonings of 1980s.

Site and Surroundings

The primary building on the site is shared by Armon Hotel (355 rooms) and Holiday Inn Express (100 rooms). The hotels are supported by a parking garage and surface parking areas with a total of 686 parking spaces. The site is located in Master Plan Category 7 (Commercial, Arterial) and primarily in the C-B (Community Business) district. A sliver of the site (towards Bedford Street) is within the RM-1 (Multi-Family, Low Density) Zoning District. The area to the south of the property is occupied by the Ridgeway Shopping Center and is within the CSC-D (Community Shopping Center Design District). Also located to the south of the property are the “Colonial Garden” condominiums. To the north of the site is an office building located at 2777 Summer Street and “The Village at Stamford” condominiums fronting on Bedford Street. A variety of retail businesses are located along Summer Street to the west of the site. The Chesterfield condominiums are located to the east of the site along Bedford Street.

223-13 - Zoning Text Change

The Applicant proposes the following addition (**in blue**) to Section 10.K which allows the expansion of non-conforming buildings in the C-B and CW-D Zoning Districts. Given that the subject property was rendered non-conforming due to a prior rezoning, it is appropriate to revise

this particular section to allow the continued revitalization and use of non-conforming buildings in the C-B district.

Notwithstanding the above, subject to Special Permit approval by the Zoning Board, a legally nonconforming Hotel in the C-B Zoning District may be expanded provided the following standards are satisfied:

The opportunity for expansion would be limited to hotel buildings in the C-B district and would be further conditioned on the following limitations.

a. Any addition or expansion shall be limited to one (1) Story, thirty (30) feet in height, as measured from the floor elevation of the addition, and 3% of existing Floor Area or 10,000 square feet, whichever is less, and not result in any additional hotel rooms for occupancy.

The above limitation would limit the floor area and height of any expansion and would also limit the use of the space for uses other than hotel rooms thus ensuring an upper limit to expansion of non-conforming buildings.

b. Any additional Building Coverage shall be limited to 6% of existing Building Coverage or 10,000 square feet, whichever is less, and result in no net increase of impervious coverage.

The above regulation would limit the floor area and height of any expansion and would also limit the use of the space for uses other than hotel rooms. The limitation against increase in building coverage will ensure there is no adverse impact to the drainage system and no loss of vegetation.

c. For every square foot of Floor Area added, not less than one (1) square foot of at-grade and/or rooftop landscaping shall be added to the site.

This provision promotes sustainability and will also improve the aesthetics of the roof area.

d. Any Building additions shall be suitably screened from adjacent residential uses.

Screening of the addition will minimize its visual impact for the neighbors.

223-13 Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses & Special Permit

The proposed addition 9,350 sf one story addition will be directly connected to the Armon Hotel allowing for easy access. The addition will be clad by two colors of EIFS material with a metal cap for the roof. A new scored concrete walkway is proposed wrapping around the addition. The addition will have a 7,431 sf green roof with a variety of plant materials.

Parking

The parking requirement for hotels is based on the number of rooms (1.5 parking space required per room). The proposed change does not add any rooms and thus does not trigger a vehicle parking requirement for additional spaces. The existing garage will remain unchanged except for

the introduction of EV charging and reserved spaces and addition of bike parking spaces. The site will have 32 fewer surface parking spaces due to the construction of the new prayer room.

The applicant has provided a parking count spreadsheet for the hotel which demonstrates that the parking garage is vastly underutilized with the peak usage being at 29% during an event. The counts were taken at 11:30pm.

The Applicant has requested a Special Permit pursuant to Section 12.D.1.d to allow the provision of 10% of the spaces on an as needed basis. Given the low utilization of parking spaces this reduction is appropriate. The addition will not create any new parking demand given it will function to better house an existing function of the hotel. The submitted Parking Management plan further states that if the need for additional parking spaces arises it can be met through the implementation of a valet system and/or restriping some spaces to a reduced width of 8.5 ft.

Electric Vehicle spaces

No EV charging or reserved spaces are required given that no additional parking spaces are required. Nonetheless, the Applicant proposes to provide 4 EV charging spaces and has also agreed to provide 4 EV reserved spaces. These will be located on the ground floor of the garage.

Bike spaces

To accommodate the proposed 9,350 sf addition, Section 12.J requires two (2) Class A and five (5) Class B bicycle parking spaces. The applicant is proposing to provide 10 Class A and 12 Class B spaces. Class A spaces, which are anticipated to be used by employees, will be located in the “back of house” area on the main floor. Class B spaces will be located at the front and rear entrances to the hotel.

Landscaping and Open Space

The proposal will result in the increase of pervious area by 2000 sf. Further, the roof of the new structure will be planted with a green roof measuring 7,431 square feet. A total of 13 Green Giant Arborvitae are proposed along the north east side of the property. Low grow Sumac shrubs are proposed along the slope of precast concrete retaining wall facing the neighbor’s property. Additional landscaping on the property of the “Village at Stamford” condominiums is proposed and will be finalized in consultation with the neighbors. Staff recommends that this landscaping should be completed prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

Special Permit

1. To permit building additions pursuant to the proposed Section 10.K

The requested Special Permit is desirable because it reduces impacts of the current operation on the neighboring property, meets the newly created standards and enhances the sustainability of the property.

2. To permit up to 10% of the required parking to be provided on an as-needed basis, pursuant to Section 12.D.1.d.

The submitted parking counts demonstrate that a combination of hotel room vacancy and the low parking demand per room has left the current parking spaces underutilized.

A Statement of Findings has been submitted by the Applicant.

Administrative Approval

To permit the existing sidewalk configuration to remain pursuant to Section 12.K.5

Applicant is seeking administrative approval of the Zoning Board for sidewalks narrower than 6'. While the site maintains a continuous sidewalk along Summer Street generally greater than 10' wide in total, the paved walkway is generally 5' wide throughout, with a grass amenity strip on the outside edge and street trees planted along the inside edge. At the southerly end of the property, in order to transition to the design of the sidewalk south of the site, the sidewalk is only 5' wide with no outer planting strip.

No changes are proposed to the existing sidewalks.

Referral Comments

Stamford Planning Board

The Stamford Planning Board, during its regularly scheduled meeting held on Tuesday March 28, 2023 recommended approval of the application 223-13 & 223-14 for Text Amendment, Special Permit and Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses and found the request to be compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with Master Plan Category #7 (Commercial - Arterial) and the following Master Plan strategy 9.1.A.8: Explore creative zoning incentives to encourage use of green and cool roofs. The Board felt that the design of the addition should conform with the existing building and that the applicant ensure that the landscaped screening on the neighboring property are completed as planned.

City of Stamford Engineering Bureau

In a letter dated April 10, 2023, Willetta Capelle P.E., Coordinator of Site Plan Reviews and Inspections at the Engineering Bureau provided comments on the submitted civil drawings and documents.

Environmental Protection Board

In a letter dated March 2, 2023, Robert Clausi, Executive Director of the Environmental Protection Board provided comments on the application and recommended standard conditions of approval.

Fire Marshall

Fire Marshall Walter Seely in an email dated March 09, 2023 stated that he did not see any issues with the development or the text amendment.

Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau

The Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau submitted comments dated March 30, 2023 and stated that they had no objection to the reduction of on-site parking based on the parking counts and the parking management plan.

Water Pollution Control Authority

Ann Brown, Supervising Engineer in a letter dated March 16, 2023 stated that the department had no objections to application 223-13 or 223-14.

Summary

Staff recommends the approval of the Text Amendment (223-13) as well as the Special Permit, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses application (223-14) to facilitate the prayer room addition. The proposal will minimize the impact of the current events conducted in temporary tents while adding a green roof. The proposed landscape screening on the neighboring property will minimize visual/noise impact between the neighboring residential property and the commercial use of the subject site. The proposed EV charging and reserved spaces along with the addition of bike parking spaces will further enhance the sustainability of the property.