



**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, JAMES LUNNEY, ZONING ENFORCEMENT OFFICER, RALPH BLESSING, LAND USE BUREAU CHIEF  
**SUBJECT:** **ZB #223-12 Special Permit, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses**  
**DATE:** June 26, 2023

**MASTER PLAN:** Master Plan Category 11 (Downtown)

**ZONING:** C-C (Center City)

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**REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

223-12	Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses  Special Permits	To permit a 31-story building with 400 residential units, approx. 5,448 sf of retail and 420 parking spaces.  Pursuant to §7.5 (Review of Large-Scale Development)  Pursuant to §7.4.D.3 (Fee-in-Lieu Payment), Applicant requests approval to satisfy some or all of the BMR requirement (40 units) through a cash contribution to a City of Stamford fund and/or to an organization approved by the Zoning Board that is dedicated to affordable housing initiatives.  Pursuant to Appendix B, Footnote 7, Applicant requests a Building Area up to 100% of the site and minimum front, side and rear yard setbacks of zero.  Pursuant to Appendix B, Footnote 13, Applicant requests to utilize the “Maximum Premium Height” standard.
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## **Introduction**

Landmark Square 1-6, LLC (Property Owner), a related entity of Reckson/SL Green and the Cappelli Organization (collectively the Applicants), is requesting the approval of Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses and Special Permit to redevelop a portion of the Landmark Square property with 400 units of housing, 5,448 sf of retail use and 420 parking spaces.

## **Background**

The proposed project is located in Master Plan Category 11 (Downtown) and the C-C (Center City) Zoning District. The redevelopment site (Building 3) is part of a large Landmark Square commercial complex with a total of five (5) buildings and 646,000 sf of commercial space and 5 acres of land area. This complex is served by a parking garage containing 1,025 parking spaces in a publicly accessible garage. The uses in the parcel include office space, retail stores, restaurants and cafes.

## **Site and Surroundings**

Building 3 fronts on Atlantic Street and Veteran's Park. Building 3 which is proposed to be redeveloped currently contains 134,000 sf of office/commercial space and has a 62% vacancy rate. The site is centrally located in Stamford Downtown surrounded by a wide variety of retail, restaurant and office uses along with some residential buildings. The site is well served by transit with two CT Transit bus stops located in front of the site. The Harbor Point Trolley makes two stops an hour at this location. The site is within ½ mile of the Stamford Transportation Center further making it a walkable location.

## **Proposed Development**

The proposed development will contain 400 units, 5,448 sf of ground floor retail use and 420 parking spaces (411 net spaces accounting for EV). The proposed unit mix is as follows:

### **Unit Mix**

Studio – 20 units

One-bedroom – 180 units

Two-bedroom – 180 units

Three-bedroom – 20 units

The apartments average approximately 930 sf in size.

## **Ground Floor**

The ground floor of the building will have a 3,901 sf two story residential lobby and a two-story retail/restaurant space approx. 5,448 sf. The ground floor will also have the access to the loading area and parking garage from Atlantic Street. A utility room will be located on the north side of

the building to house the transformers. The first-floor level of the garage will be connected to the existing garage within Landmark Square.

### **Access**

The primary vehicular access to the building will be on Atlantic Street with a two-way driveway for a seven-level parking garage (two basement levels and five garage levels above grade). The loading area for the building will also have access off Atlantic Street. This driveway connects to the loading area for the Landmark Square complex.

### **Landscaping and open space**

#### ***Streetscape***

The streetscape along Atlantic Street will be improved by the construction of a new sidewalk along with an amenity strip and street trees. If the Atlantic Street curb remains in its current location, the sidewalk will be widened to the required 15' with a small portion where it will be 12.5' (See Option A on architectural, civil, landscape plans). If the Atlantic Street is redesigned as proposed by TTP, the new curb will allow for a wider sidewalk along the entire frontage along with a traffic calming bump-out adjacent to Veteran's park (See option B). Staff recommends planters be added along the front of the proposed building to enliven the streetscape. The building has 250.8' frontage along Atlantic Street generating a requirement of 10 street trees. Given that the final streetscape design is contingent upon the Atlantic Street redesign, the actual number of trees that can be provided may vary. The final design will also dictate the final street tree fee-in-lieu amount.

#### ***Usable Open Space***

The project provides a total of 36,000 sf of indoor and outdoor amenity space (including 16,250 sf of outdoor usable open space) for the residents exceeding the 30,000 sf of required usable open space. The sixth floor comprises of indoor and outdoor amenities for the residents. Outdoor amenities include a landscaped terrace with grills, seating, sports courts, children's playground and a dog run. The outdoor terrace will have a paved area with a central synthetic turf area with a planted bed on the periphery of the terrace with grass and trees. Several small and large seating areas are proposed along with a meandering path within the planted area. This roof deck will have a glass railing allowing residents to enjoy views of the City as well as allow the roof top greenery to be visible from surrounding buildings.

### **Parking**

The Applicant proposes 420 striped parking spaces in an enclosed garage, wrapped by non-residential uses on two floors on Atlantic Street and screened by a metal screening system on upper stories. A total of 405 parking spaces are required for the building. After accounting for

EV charging spaces which count as ½ regular space, the net parking provided is 411 parking spaces. A Parking Management Plan and Transportation Demand Management Plan has been provided by the Applicant which enlist the various strategies which will facilitate lower dependency on single occupancy commutes.

### ***Residential Parking***

The parking requirement for residential units is as follows (1 space per unit for studio, 1 and two bedroom unit and 1.25 space per unit for three bedroom units). Therefore the total requirement is 405 spaces.

### ***Non Residential Parking***

No off-street parking is required for retail or restaurant uses within 1000 ft. of a municipal garage.

### ***Electric Vehicle spaces***

A total of 17.2 EV charging spaces are required. The plan provides 18 EV charging spaces. The Applicant shall designate 18 parking spaces as EV Reserved spaces distributed on various floors.

### ***Bike spaces***

The development proposes 48 Class A bike spaces and 50 Class B bike spaces compared to 47 Class A spaces and 50 Class B spaces required.

## **Building Elements**

### ***Building Base Design***

The proposed building has a strong presence on the street with a well-designed storefront. The bulkhead (band at the base) of the ground floor is proposed to use a high quality dark grey porcelain tile. The retail storefront and the lobby area will comprise of a glass storefront framed by articulated metal panels and metal louvers. The portion of the ground floor to be used for utilities and staircase will also use a glass storefront. The ground floor uses are accentuated by having a double story lobby and retail spaces. The garage floors will be screened by a perforated metal panel in two tones of grey color. The lobby and retail use will both feature a metal canopy. The metal canopy for the retail use will wrap around the corner and extend along the façade facing Veteran's park.

### ***Tower Design***

The tower portion of the building starts at the amenity level on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor and extends to the 31<sup>st</sup> floor. Floors 7 through 31 contain residential units. The tower portion of the building uses several methods to articulate the façade. The tower is placed at a diagonal on the base of the building and turns to face the street and the park on both ends. Two different façade treatments are proposed for the northern and southern portion of the tower. The northern portion of the tower will comprise of a glass curtain wall system with light grey metal panels providing vertical frames for the window

bays. In addition, the façade has three extrusions for windows bays accented by light grey metal panels. The southern portion of the tower employs a different façade treatment and uses a dark grey two-story grid using the metal panels to frame the windows. The variation in the horizontal and vertical articulation of the two portions of the tower provides visual interest. Further, the southern portion of the tower steps back after the 26<sup>th</sup> story providing a terrace at the 27<sup>th</sup> floor level and enhancing the building design. The roof line of the tower is accentuated using a band of metal panels. The roof also contains a mechanical penthouse which is setback from the perimeter of the tower and designed to follow the architectural language of the remaining building.

### **Special Permits**

A statement of findings to support the Special Permit have been provided by the applicant.

#### **1. Large-Scale Development pursuant to §7.5**

The size of the development (more than 100 units, more than 100 parking spaces) triggers the need for the Large Scale Development Review. The proposed plan provides the desired mix of uses in a well-designed building in an appropriate location. The proposed plan appropriately connects with the surrounding buildings and uses. Staff supports the requested Special Permit.

#### **2. BMR Fee-in-Lieu Payment Pursuant to §7.4.D.3**

Applicant requests approval to satisfy some or all of the BMR requirement (40 units as further described in the Zoning Data Chart) through a cash contribution to a City of Stamford fund and/or to an organization approved by the Zoning Board that is dedicated to affordable housing initiatives.

The fee-in-lieu is as follows:

464,000 sf (gross residential floor area) x 10% (BMR requirement) x \$200 (per square foot fee per Zoning Regulations) x 1.16 (multiplier based on ENR Construction Cost Index)  
= \$10,765,000

The fee-in-lieu payment is desirable because when utilized by non-profit housing developers, it will result in more units of Below Market Rate housing at lower AMIs and larger size than can be achieved on site. Staff supports the requested Special Permit.

#### **3. Building Area (Coverage) Pursuant to Appendix B, Footnote 7**

Applicant requests a Building Area up to 100% of the site and minimum front, side and rear yard setbacks of zero. The building coverage for the overall 5 acre site is changing modestly from 94%

to 95%. The proposed change supports the pedestrian oriented frontage of the site. Staff supports the requested Special Permit.

#### **4. Maximum Premium Height standard Pursuant to Appendix B, Footnote 13**

The maximum permitted height in the CC district is 290'. The proposed building height is 320' utilizing the premium height standard. Any site seeking premium height needs to meet the following criteria:

##### **Site area of at least 30,000 sf**

The minimum lot area required in the CC district is 4000 sf. Sites greater than 30,000 sf are eligible for the premium height standard. The lot area of the subject site is 227,596 sf which adequately supports the additional height.

##### **Pedestrian Oriented Frontage**

All such buildings are required to provide Pedestrian Oriented Frontage, which is defined as uses of buildings and/or major design features that encourage pedestrian interaction at the street level. These include but are not limited to a) active uses such as retail shops, service businesses; establishments dealing directly with the general public; b) visually interesting features such as public art; display cases; awnings; signage at eye level; c) accessible plazas; or similar landscaped open spaces for public use and congregation. To the maximum extent practicable, all frontages on public and private streets and pedestrian ways shall be supported with contiguous pedestrian-oriented amenities that appropriately fit into the context of the existing streetscape.

The proposal includes a 5,448 sf two story retail space on the ground floor which wraps the southwest corner of the building on to Veteran's park frontage. This will allow visibility into the building as well as potential for outdoor seating on both the Atlantic Street and Veteran's park frontage. The lobby of the building is also two stories with an all glass front. The high quality materials and design elements (porcelain bulkhead, metal panels, glass storefront, large metal canopy, green wall) of the ground floor make this section of Atlantic Street desirable for pedestrians.

The project will result in several major public space improvements. The sidewalk along Atlantic Street will be replaced by a rail trail sidewalk including a brick amenity strip, street trees, streetlights, and pedestrian path.

As noted in the referral comments from TTP, the project will be required to replace the existing HAWK signal with an RRFB and relocation of the crosswalk on Atlantic Street with a raised crosswalk to improve pedestrian access. The project will create public space improvements in

Veteran's Park including replacement of the existing bus shelter with a new bus shelter and addition of covered bike racks.

The Applicant has agreed to make the improvements requested by TTP up to a total of \$500,000. Any amount leftover after the completion of the in-kind work requested in the TTP letter will be contributed towards further public improvements in Veteran's Park.

All of these on and off site improvements will result in a pedestrian oriented environment thus meeting the standard for this Special Permit.

### **Referral Comments**

#### **Stamford Planning Board**

The Stamford Planning Board, during its regularly scheduled meeting held on Tuesday March 7, 2023 recommended approval of the application 223-12 for 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 #11 (Downtown) and the following Master Plan Policies and Implementation Strategies.

- 3B.1: Concentrate regional office, retail and entertainment uses and high-density residential development in the Downtown.
- 3.C.3: Maintain the affordable housing stock to ensure that people who work in Stamford can afford to live in Stamford.
- 5B: Make Downtown a more pedestrian friendly neighborhood.
- 6D.3-c: Maximize the potential of public plazas and open spaces Downtown
- 5E.1: Promote neighborhood revitalization
- 6B: Preserve Existing and create new affordable housing.
- 6C: Encourage Development of Mixed-Income Housing

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

In a letter dated March 22, 2023, Willetta Capelle, Coordinator of Site Plan Reviews and Inspections at the Engineering Bureau provided comments on the submitted drawings and drainage analysis.

#### **Fire Marshall**

Fire Marshall Walter Seely in an email dated February 23, 2023 stated that he did not see any issues with the development.

### **Environmental Protection Board**

Lindsay Tomaszewski, Environmental Analyst in a letter dated March 6, 2023 stated that EPB has no objections to the Zoning Board approving the proposed development and made comments to be addressed prior to the issuance of a Building Permit.

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

The Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau submitted comments dated June 8, 2023, listing several on-site and off-site improvements which will result in improvements to the pedestrian infrastructure. The Applicant was directed to coordinate with the City regarding the details of the curb, sidewalk, crosswalks, RRFB and other pedestrian improvements to ensure compatibility with the proposed design for Atlantic Street. The Applicant has agreed to make cash and in-kind contribution for traffic/pedestrian related improvements for up to a total of \$500,000.

### **Water Pollution Control Authority**

Ann Brown, Supervising Engineer in a letter dated March 7, 2023 stated that the department had no objections to application 223-12 and made technical comments to be addressed prior to Building Permit.

### **Summary**

The proposed development achieves multiple goals of the City's Master Plan as stated above, implements the recommendation of Stamford's Housing Affordability study and will provide the pedestrian infrastructure envisioned by the City for this section of Atlantic Street and Veteran's Park. The proposed mixed use development will enliven this section of downtown which has not seen new residential use in recent years. The proposed housing will not only add to the supply of housing to meet the growing demand, it will support the thriving Downtown businesses. The proposed project uses superior architectural design, thoughtful orientation, and connections to adjacent buildings to add an iconic building to the Stamford skyline. The fee-in-lieu generated from the project will facilitate the creation of affordable housing. Staff recommends approval of the related applications for Special Permit and Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses.