



City of Stamford
Zoning Board

STAFF REPORT

TO: CITY OF STAMFORD ZONING BOARD
FROM: VINEETA MATHUR, PRINCIPAL PLANNER
SUBJECT: **ZB #223-20 Zoning Map Change, ZB#223-21 General Development Plan, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses**
DATE: July 28, 2023
MASTER PLAN: Master Plan Category 11 (Downtown)
ZONING: R-H (Multi Family High Density Design)

REQUESTED ACTIONS:

223-20	Zoning Map Change	Change from R-H (Multi Family High Density Design) to MX-D (Mixed Use Design) district under infill standards pursuant to Section 9.C.5.
223-21	General Development Plan Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses	To permit a 4 story residential building with 21 dwelling units and 19 parking spaces pursuant to Section 9.C.6.

Introduction

Stavros Aivalis (Contract Purchaser) is requesting the approval of a Zoning Map Change, General Development Plan and Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses application to facilitate the redevelopment of an 11,807 sf parcel located at 589 Bedford Street with 21 residential units and 19 parking spaces. The property is owned by Dr. Jeremy Bier.

Background

The proposed project is located in Master Plan Category 11 (Downtown) and the R-H (Multi Family High Density Design) Zoning District.

Site and Surroundings

The subject site is currently vacant. The site was previously occupied by a house used as a medical office which was destroyed by a fire in 2016. The property to the north is occupied by a 2 ½ story building used as a law office. The property to the south is occupied by Bedford Hall (545 Bedford Street) a six-story residential building with 82 residential units. The area to the east is occupied by the Anchor public school and the twin residential buildings located at 100 Prospect Street.

Zoning Map Change

The applicant requests a rezoning from the current R-H (Multi Family High Density Design) to the MX-D (Mixed Use Design) zoning district under the MX-D infill designation criteria.

A parcel or parcels of land, to be eligible for designation as a MX-D Infill Development site is required to satisfy all of the following minimum criteria per Section 9.C.5.a:

(1) At least twenty-five percent (25%) of the area of the site shall have been legally used for commercial purposes or vacant at the time of application for redesignation; Office Buildings previously converted to residential use shall also satisfy this requirement.

*The site is currently vacant. **Complies.***

(2) Site area of at least 20,000 square feet; Site area of at least 10,000 square feet may be allowed in the Downtown when contiguous to existing MX-D zoned land, provided that such sites shall be limited to a Floor Area Ratio of one and one-quarter (1.25) as further described in b-ii below.

*The lot area is 11,807 sf and is contiguous to an MX-D zoned property to the south (545 Bedford Street). The proposed F.A.R. is 1.25. **Complies***

(3) At least fifty (50) linear feet of street frontage;

*The lot frontage is 50ft. **Complies***

(4) At least fifty percent (50%) of the site frontage shall be either vacant or used for parking at the time of the application, provided that the Zoning Board may waive such requirement when the proposed Infill Development requires the preservation and enhancement of existing housing and/or historic Buildings and diminishes the effect of commercial uses on the residential character of the site and surrounding Streets. Office Buildings previously converted to residential use shall also satisfy this requirement.

*The entire frontage of the site is unbuilt, and the site is mostly used for parking. **Complies.***

General Development Plan and Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses

Proposed Development

The proposed development will contain 21 studio units and 19 parking spaces in a 4 story building 40ft in height. The ground floor will have a lobby and access to the parking area in the rear through a driveway. A dog run enclosed by a fence is proposed along the southern boundary of the building. The parking area will be screened by a cement block wall. The second and third floor of the building will have an amenity area with lounge space and a fitness center. The second floor amenity area will open on to an amenity deck which will have a landscaped area along with a terrace with a glass railing and stepped seating. The building also includes office amenity spaces comprising of small rooms on each floor. The development caters to the needs of residents who will benefit from a workspace separate from their residence.

Building Design

The building has been designed as a modern apartment building with style references from a Queen Anne style house which was one of the prominent house designs north of Downtown. As illustrated on sheet A-504.7.5, the building tries to mimic the scale and proportions of a Queen Anne house. The two distinct vertical elements including the extruding bay windows on the north side and a set-back three level portions capped by a cornice on the south side are inspired by the asymmetrical front and tower portions of a Queen Anne House. The building will use high quality materials including brick along the front of the building and Nichiha cementitious siding in two colors on the north and south sides. The ground floor of the building will have floor to ceiling glass windows and doors along with columns clad in grey PVC panels. The entrance of the building will be accented by a canopy.

Building Height

The maximum permitted Building Height in Master Plan Category 11 is 165 feet. The proposed building will be 40 feet. *Complies*

Floor Area Ratio

The maximum permitted F.A.R. for infill MX-D sites is 1.25. The proposed building has a floor area ratio of 1.25. *Complies*

Building Coverage

A maximum of 80% Building Coverage is permitted. The proposed building coverage is 71.5%.
Complies.

Setbacks

The MX-D district allows for reduction in the setbacks from the minimum requirements. The proposed setbacks are 5' front setback, 0' side setback and 4.4' rear setback.

The proposed setbacks are appropriate given the size of the lot and consistency of the building footprint with similar infill MX-D projects. The building fully meets the Light and Air requirement.

Landscape and Open Space

The project has perimeter landscaping and a landscaped terrace. The applicant is preparing further details of the landscape drawings for the public hearing and is also adding additional ground level planting based on recommendation by staff.

Usable open space is required at the ratio of 75 sf per dwelling unit for a total of 1575 sf. The applicant proposes approx. 2300 sf equal to 110/sf per dwelling.

Residential Parking

The parking requirement for residential units is as follows:

0.75 space per unit for market rate studio = $0.75 \times 16 = 12$ spaces

0.5 space per unit for BMR studio = $0.5 \times 5 = 2.5$ space.

Electric Vehicle spaces

One EV charging space and one EV reserved space is required.

Total parking requirement is 14.5 spaces. The applicant provides 19 striped parking spaces. Given that EV space counts as half, the net spaces provided are 18.5 which exceeds the parking requirement.

Bike spaces

A total of 5 Class A and 5 Class B spaces are required. A total of 18 enclosed Bike parking spaces are proposed.

BMR requirement

The BMR requirement is 10% which equals 2.1 BMR units. The applicant is requesting approval of 5 BMR units at 80% AMI pursuant to Section 7.4.C.1.k instead of 2 units at 50% AMI. The proposal meets the equivalency standards in the regulation.

Referral Comments

Stamford Planning Board

The Stamford Planning Board, during its regularly scheduled meeting held on Tuesday May 9, 2023 recommended approval of the application 223-20 and 223-21 for Zoning Map Change, General Development Plan 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 Strategy 5A.6. The Planning Board noted that the change from vacant to residential is supportive of and would contribute to the vitality of the Downtown,

City of Stamford Engineering Bureau

In a letter dated May 31, 2023, Willetta Capelle, Coordinator of Site Plan Reviews and Inspections at the Engineering Bureau provided comments on the submitted drawings and requested a drainage report. The applicant responded to these comments in a letter dated June 22, 2023 and provided a drainage report.

Environmental Protection Board

Lindsay Tomaszewski, Environmental Analyst in a letter dated April 25, 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 May 19, 2023 requesting details. The applicant submitted responses to these comments in a letter dated June 22, 2023 along with supporting plans.

Water Pollution Control Authority

Ann Brown, Supervising Engineer in a letter dated May 19, 2023 stated that the department had no objections to application 223-20 and 223-21 and made technical comments to be addressed prior to Building Permit.

Summary

The proposed development will infill a vacant Downtown site with much needed market rate and affordable housing and using an attractive design. The proposed building furthers the goals of the Master Plan by revitalizing an unused lot in a walkable neighborhood. Staff recommends approval of this project.