



CITY OF STAMFORD
LAND USE BUREAU
888 Washington Blvd., P.O. Box 10152
Stamford, CT 06904-2152
Ph.: (203) 977 4711

STAFF REPORT

TO: CITY OF STAMFORD ZONING BOARD

FROM: Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief

SUBJECT: **ZB #223-24 Zoning Text Change, ZB#223-25 Zoning Map Change, ZB# 223-26 Special Permit & Site, GDP Amendment and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses**

DATE: December 9, 2023

MASTER PLAN: Master Plan Category 11 (Downtown)

ZONING: P-D (Planned Development), R-H (Multi Family High Density Design)

A. INTRODCUTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

70 Forest Street LLC (“Applicant”) is requesting the approval of a Zoning Text Change, Zoning Map Change, Special Permits, modification of a General Development Plan and Final Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses applications to facilitate the addition of a two-story garage at 251 Greyrock Place connecting to the existing building located at 70 Forest Street. The new garage would eliminate the current off-site parking shortage at this particular building.

2. Background

The 17-story Highgrove building was constructed in 2011 and contains 93 apartments and 130 parking spaces. The building predominantly contains 2- and 3-bedroom units with an average car ownership of 1.5 vehicle per unit. The parking currently operates as a valet system.

3. Site and Surroundings

The project site is comprised of 70 Forest Street, which is in in the P-D zoning district, and 251 Greyrock Place, which is currently zoned R-H. In total, the project site is approx. 1.15 acres,

3,000sf of which are the 251 Greyrock Place property. The area surrounding the project site is generally multi-family residential with smaller medium density apartment buildings to the east and north and taller higher density apartment buildings to the west and south. The project site is one block from Bedford Street to the west, one of Downtown Stamford's main entertainment areas, and one block from the Towncenter Mall to the south. 70 Forest Street is developed with the Highgrove apartment building. 251 Greyrock Place is currently vacant. Directly west of Highgrove is a high-rise 13 story apartment building. Abutting to the east and north are two three-story condo buildings in an R-MF medium density zoning district. To the south, across Forrest Street in an MX-D zoning district, is Parc Grove, a five-story apartment complex.

The proposed project is in Master Plan Category 11 (Downtown).



4. Proposed Project

Applicant proposes to construct a two-story, 32-parking spaces parking garage on the property located at 251 Greyrock Place. Through the implementation of a valet parking system, 48 vehicles could be parked. The purpose of this project is to ease the capacity restraints at the existing garage.

Applicant states that the currently available on-site parking of 130 spaces is insufficient as actual vehicle ownership is closer to 1.5 vehicles per unit (the building contains 93 units).

The proposed garage would be connected to the existing garage levels and have a landscaped roof terrace accessible to building residents. The garage would be screened from Greyrock Place using evergreen trees. Main access to the proposed garage would be from the existing garage in the Highgrove building via Forest Street, however, applicant proposes a secondary garage entrance at 251 Greyrock Place.

B. REQUESTED ACTIONS

The applicant requests the Zoning Board to consider the following approvals:

Application #	Action requested	Description
223-24	Zoning Text Change	Amend the following Sections of P-D regulations: Section 9.B.4.e. Amend Building Coverage from 55% to 60%. Section 9.B.4.f. Amend provision regarding ZB permissions for reducing side setbacks.
223-25	Zoning Map Change	Change from R-H (Multi Family High Density Design) to P-D (Planned Development) district.
223-26	Special Permit	Modification of circulation aisle to permit a 12’ wide 2-way access under specific conditions, pursuant to Section 12.D.1.g to
	Special Permit	Reduce front setback from 15’ to 5; pursuant to Section 9.B.4.f. Reduce side setbacks to the east of the proposed garage from 8’ to 5’3” and to 0’ on the west side of the building pursuant to Section 9.B.4.f. THIS SPECIAL PERMIT APPROVAL IS CONTINGENT ON THE PROPOSED TEXT CHANGE
	Modify General Development Plan	Amend previously approved GDP (ZB 204-14) to incorporate the proposed garage addition.
	Final Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses	Approval of the proposed garage addition

1. Zoning Text Change (Application #223-24)

The Applicant requests to amend the P-D zoning district regulations (Section 9.B. of the Zoning Regulations) to:

- (1) allow in instances where the Lot coverage of all buildings does not exceed 60% (up from currently 55%) to allow for additional building height for parking structures and exempt structures used for recreation on the roofs of such garages from height limitations; and
- (2) allow the reduction of side setbacks for parking garages not exceeding 20 feet in height by Zoning Board Special Permit approval.

Specifically, the Applicant proposes to amend Section 9.B.4.e to read as follows:

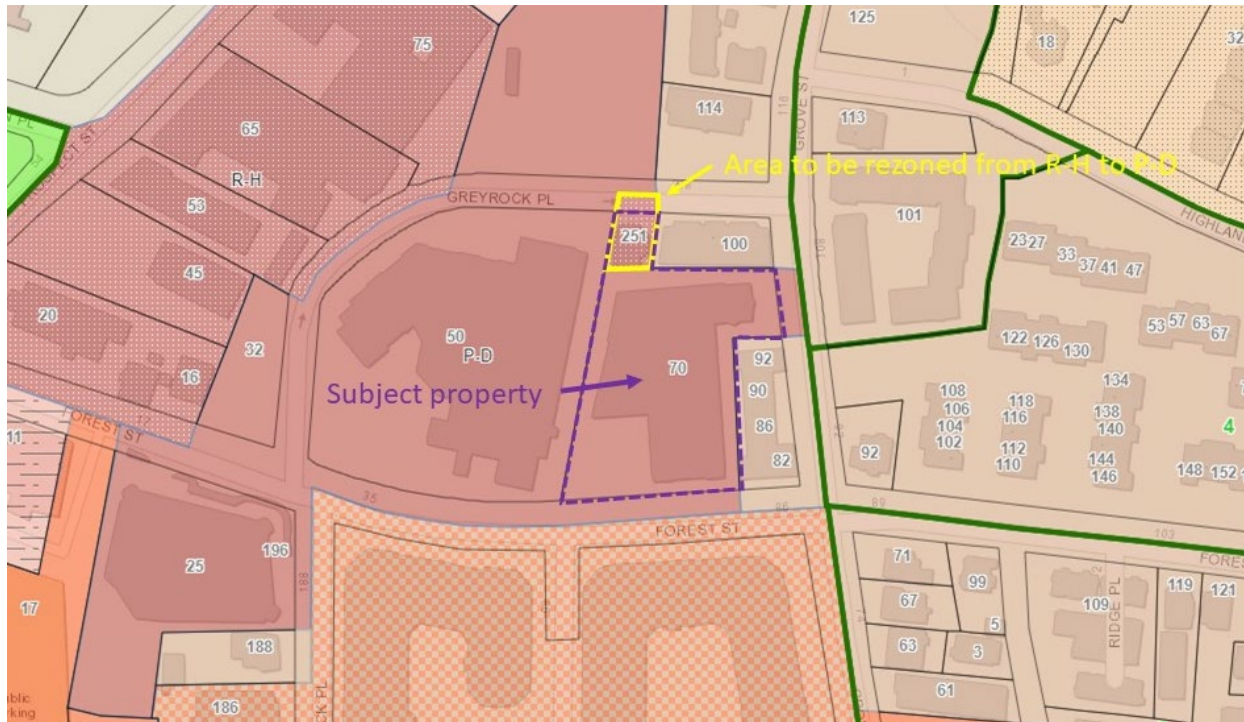
- e. The total area occupied by principal *Structures* in the P-D PLANNED DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT may not exceed forty percent (40%) of the site. *Accessory Structures* may occupy an additional forty percent (40%) of the site, provided that site coverage of all *Structures* shall not exceed seventy percent (70%) and that accessory parking *Structures* do not exceed twenty feet (20') in height above the average grade excluding parapet walls, and include a landscaped roof with direct *Structured* access for the benefit of the residents of the *Development* as *Usable Open Space*. Notwithstanding the above, where the total area occupied by all *Structures* including accessory parking *Structures* does not exceed ~~55~~ 60% and all parking floors are suitably screened from sensitive public views, the Zoning Board may authorize increased height of accessory parking *Structures* not to exceed thirty-five (35) feet, may exempt the coverage of one-*Story* porches, porte cocheres, and balconies not to exceed three percent (3%), and may, on the roof of accessory parking *Structures*, approve the location of one-*Story* active recreation *Structures* which shall be exempt from height limitations.

and to amend Section 9.B.4.f as follows:

- f. The restrictions of the R-MF Multiple Family Residence District, pertaining to Front Yards, Side Yards and Rear Yards, shall apply, provided that the Zoning Board may authorize a reduction in Front Yard and Side Yard setbacks for porches, porte cocheres, landscaped parking structures, balconies and similar architectural features not exceeding a height of twenty feet above finished grade measured at the foundation.

2. Zoning Map Change (Application # 223-25)

The Applicant proposes to change the zoning of the 3,000 sf parcel at 251 Greyrock Place from R-D to P-D.



The proposed map change would change the development rights for the subject parcel at 251 Greyrock Place as follows:

	R-H (existing)	P-D (proposed)
Density	29 DU (>20,000sf) 34 DU/acre (20,000sf-1acre) 60 DU/acre (1+acre)	75 DU/acre (sites less 1 acre) 108 DU/acre (site 1+ acre)
Building Height	4 stories / 40' (less than 1 acre) 125' (1+acre)	110' (sites less than 1 acre) 170' (sites 1+ acre)
Setbacks – Front	15' (less 1 acre) 20' (1+acre)	15'
Side	8' one side 18' both sides (>20,000sf) Up to 15' (20,000sf-1acre) 10' min (1+ acre)	8' one side 18' both sides (sites >20,000sf) 15' each side (sites 20,000+sf)
Rear	30' (less 1acre) 10' min (1+ acre)	30'

The parking requirement remains unchanged as it is dependent on the Parking Category, not the zoning district a parcel is located in.

3. Special Permits, GDP and Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses (Application #223-26)

a. Special Permit

Applicant requests a Special Permit pursuant to Section 12.D.1.g to request modification of circulation aisle to permit a 12' wide 2-way access under specific conditions. The standard width for a driveway for parking facilities with up to 49 parking spaces is 20'.

In addition, applicant is seeking to reduce the front setback from 15' to 5; pursuant to Section 9.B.4.f., and to reduce side setbacks to the east of the proposed garage from 8' to 5'3" and to 0' on the west side of the building pursuant to Section 9.B.4.f. The side yard width reduction is contingent on the approval of the requested Zoning text change described above.

b. Modification of General Development Plan (GDP)

Applicant requests amendment of a previously approved GDP (ZB 204-14) to incorporate the proposed garage addition.

c. Final Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses

Applicant requests approval of Final Site and Architectural Plan and Requested for the proposed garage addition.

C. REFERRAL COMMENTS

1. Stamford Planning Board

The Stamford Planning Board, during its regularly scheduled meeting held on Tuesday June 13, 2023, recommended approval of the applications 223-24, 223-25 and 223-26 for Zoning Text Change, Zoning Map Change, Special Permit, 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).

2. City of Stamford Engineering Bureau

In a letter dated July 7, 2023, Willetta Capelle, Coordinator of Site Plan Reviews and Inspections at the Engineering Bureau, stated that the Engineering Bureau has no objections to the proposed projects but established several conditions to be met prior to issuance of a building Permit.

3. Environmental Protection Board

Jaclyn Chapman, Environmental Analyst in a letter dated June 5, 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.

4. Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau (TTP)

In a letter dated July 3, 2023, Frank Petise, Bureau Chief TTP, stated that TTP has no objections with the project but requested application to provide a stop bar at the proposed garage exit at Greyrock Place, install a no-left-turn sign, the driveway to be installed flush with the sidewalk and an access easement for the portions of the proposed sidewalk on private property.

5. WestCOG

In an email dated June 1, 2023, Kristin, Floberg, Planner for the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) found the proposal to be of local interest with no intermunicipal impact and had no further comments.

6. Fire Marshall

In an email dated June 8, 2023, Walter Seely, Fire Marshall, stated that he has no objections to the project.

No further departmental comments were received.

D. DISCUSSION

1. Zoning Text Change (Application #223-24)

While staff believes that the project has a minimal impact on adjacent uses and mitigates the location-specific shortage of available off-street parking staff questions if the proposed text change is the appropriate way to address the very site-specific issues related to the site, namely the small narrow site known as 251 Greyrock Place. The site's size and layout does not allow for the rational development of a functioning parking garage meeting requirements for parking space and drive isles dimensions. However, it seems inappropriate to remedy this issue through a text change that would also be applicable to all other sites zoned P-D. This issue is mitigated by the fact that there are only two P-D districts in the City of Stamford and that both of them are fully developed so that wide-spread application of this proposed text change is unlikely.

2. Zoning Map Change (Application # 223-25)

Staff believes the requested Zoning Map change to be appropriate. The R-H zoning on the 251 Greyrock Place parcel is a remnant of previous rezoning actions that leaves that small parcel orphaned in relation to the neighboring zoning designations (P-D and R-MF).

Rezoning from R-H to P-D would increase the development potential of the site but because of its small size and proposed use as a parking garage would create a negligible development impact.

3. Special Permits, GDP and Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses (Application #223-26)

Staff believes that the Special Permit pursuant to Section 12.D.1.g reduce the width of the circulation aisle to 12' is appropriate as the proposed parking is valet operated.

Staff believes that the reduction of the front setback from 15' to 5', pursuant to Section 9.B.4.f., is appropriate.

Staff has concerns about the reduction of side setbacks to the east of the proposed garage from 8' to 5'3" and to 0' on the west side of the building pursuant to Section 9.B.4.f. This concern is not based on the actual proposed project but on the fact that this special permit approval is contingent upon the above discussed text change that has potential impacts on not only this but all other sites in the P-D district.

Staff believes that the modification of the General Development Plan is appropriate as it would basically be a clean-up action to account for the very modest garage expansion. The same holds true for the proposed requested Final Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses.

E. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the proposed Zoning Map change (223-25) for the reasons stated above.

Staff recommends applicant to explore other avenues for relief (such as a variance application to the ZBA) to cure the site-specific constraints that led to the proposal of the text change. Staff recommends pausing discussion of the proposed text change (223-24) until these avenues have been exhausted. Should the ZBA find that the site-specific constraints do not warrant a variance, the Zoning Board could then reconsider the text changes to provide relief for the insufficient parking at the Highgrove building as the anticipated general impact of the proposed changes seems fairly limited.

As the Special Permit, Site Plan and General Development Plan application (223-26) are contingent on the text change, these would have to be put on hold as well.