

APPLICATION NARRATIVE - 12 & 18 Taylor Street

Introduction & Background

G&T Taylor Street LLC (the “Applicant”) owns the properties located at 12 and 18 Taylor Street, Stamford in the R-MF Multiple Family Residence District (the “Properties”). The Applicant purchased the Properties in 2021. 18 Taylor Street is improved with a historic three-family house constructed in 1890 in the late-American “Stick Style” that retains many of its original distinctive historical features.¹ Accordingly, 18 Taylor has twice previously been recognized by the Zoning Board as having historical significance worthy of preservation: first in 1991 and again in 2008, when the Zoning Board granted historic preservation Special Exceptions under Section 7.3 of the Zoning Regulations for different projects at the site proposed by two separate prior owners.²

Neither of the two prior projects was ultimately constructed, however, due to the previous owners’ changing plans for the site. Accordingly, 18 Taylor has not yet been the subject of a historic preservation easement, and no redevelopment of the Properties has taken place that includes preservation of 18 Taylor. The current Applicant would now like to finally finish what prior owners admirably started – a redevelopment of the Properties to infill them with much-needed housing (including affordable housing) while improving and beautifying both Properties, historically preserving 18 Taylor, and providing a historic preservation easement to safeguard it in perpetuity. To do so, the Applicant seeks a Special

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¹ Adjoining 12 Taylor Street is improved with a recently-renovated two-family house.

² Enclosed in the current application materials are 1991 and 2008 letters from the well-known historic preservation architect Renee Kahn supporting the applications and setting forth her reasons, as well as a 1991 letter in support from the Stamford Historical Society.

Exception Permit under Section 7.3, inclusion of 18 Taylor on the Cultural Resources Inventory, and CAM approval.

Inclusion on Cultural Resources Inventory

The first step toward seeking a Section 7.3 Special Exception Permit is inclusion of 18 Taylor on the City’s Cultural Resources Inventory (“CRI”) pursuant to Section 7.3.B.2(c). That section provides that a Structure shall be listed on the CRI in accordance with the following requirements, among others: (1) that the application has been reviewed by Land Use Bureau staff based on review criteria for historic or architectural significance established by the Land Use Bureau in consultation with HPAC; and (2) that HPAC has recommended that the structure to be added to the CRI is historically or architecturally significant.

Here, 18 Taylor more than meets the criteria for inclusion in the CRI. The CRI application lists several alternative grounds for inclusion, two of which particularly apply here: (1) 18 Taylor embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; and (2) it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Stamford’s history.

First, as can be seen in the accompanying photos and as set forth in the supporting letter from Qualified Historic Preservation Expert Travis Brock Kennedy, 18 Taylor embodies the distinctive characteristics of the late-American “Stick Style” or Queen Anne style, featuring the massing, proportions, and restrained ornamentation typical of houses from this period. Its features are remarkably well preserved, and include timber clapboard (Fig. 1), two-over-two sash windows and other original windows above the front doors and at basement level (Fig. 1, Fig. 2, and Fig. 3), hand-turned veranda posts (Fig. 4), beadboard (Fig. 5), and other decorative features, such as the hand-made trelliswork under the

building’s porches (Fig. 6). All such materials, features, finishes, construction techniques, and examples of craftsmanship characterize the building as an exemplar of domestic architecture from the “Stick Style”/Queen Anne movement. Listing 18 Taylor on the CRI will facilitate these distinctive historic features being preserved and not lost.

Second, 16-18 Taylor is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Stamford’s history. As Ms. Kahn recognized in connection with the prior applications and Mr. Kennedy re-emphasizes here, the 1890 house at 18 Taylor is a prime example of the type of workforce housing associated with this formative period in Stamford’s history, when immigrant communities swelled the ranks of the city’s industrial workers. As Ms. Kahn puts it, “18 Taylor Street was one of a row of modest but attractive dwelling units built” in the late 19th century “to house the large numbers of immigrant Irish moving into Stamford at that time.” She further notes that “Taylor Street was named for Michael Taylor who originally owned most of the land in the area. A hundred years ago, the street was little more than an unmarked dirt path, but by 1889 almost twenty families, mostly working-class Irish, had homes on the street.... Owning a home on Taylor Street was undoubtedly the first move up the social ladder in America.” Preserving this part of Stamford’s history will allow it to be studied by scholars and appreciated by the public. Listing 18 Taylor on the CRI will enable that preservation.

Special ~~Exception~~Permit Under Section 7.3

Under Section 7.3 of the Zoning Regulations (Historic Preservation), the Zoning Board “may modify by *Special Permit* use, bulk, height, *Light and Air*, setback, coverage, density and parking standards based on the standards listed in this Section.” The criteria for obtaining a Special ~~Exception~~Permit under Section 7.3 are:

- a. Proposed use and site plan are compatible with and implement the objectives and policies of Stamford's *Master Plan*;
- b. Proposed use and site plan are superior to a plan conforming to the standard dimensional requirements and use standards of the underlying zoning district and will not impair the future development of the surrounding area;
- c. Proposed use and site and architectural plans serve to rehabilitate, restore, *Critically Reconstruct*, or preserve *Historic Structures* or *Sites*, and meet the *HPAC* guidelines for Historic Preservation (once they are recommended by *HPAC* and adopted by the Zoning Board), or the appropriate Standards and Guidelines of the Secretary of the Interior, as amended from time to time and published on the National Park Service website, as applied by *HPAC* and the Zoning Board; and
- d. The loss of said *Historic Structure* or *Historic Site* would be detrimental to the neighborhood character, *Local Historic District* or the cultural and historical heritage and identity of the City of Stamford.

Here, the project more than meets these criteria.

First, under (d), as shown above, the loss of the historic building at 18 Taylor would be detrimental to the neighborhood and to Stamford as a whole, because a prime example of a valuable style of architecture and a piece of Stamford's industrial heritage would be irretrievably lost.

Second, under (c), the proposed use and site and architectural plans serve to rehabilitate, restore, and preserve the historic structure at 18 Taylor. As discussed in Mr. Kennedy's report, 18 Taylor will be preserved and restored in accordance with industry standards for preservation, including the Secretary of the Interior's guidelines. The distinctive Stick Style/Queen-Anne features of the house will be preserved intact, and where repairs are needed due to deterioration, they will be made with materials that, while durable, are historically sensitive and designed to maintain the building's visual aesthetic.

Third, under (b), the proposed use and site plan are superior to a plan conforming to the standard dimensional requirements and use standards of the underlying zoning district. The Applicant seeks to do a modest infill development on a through-lot between Taylor and Mission Streets, in the R-MF district where multifamily housing is currently allowed as of

right and there are abundant multifamily developments nearby. The Applicant would be allowed 16 units on the subject parcel as of right, and only seeks to build an additional 2 units under a Section 7.3 historic density bonus.³ The Applicant currently rents out two of the existing units (at 12 Taylor) under the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program voluntarily, and seeks to create two additional below-market-rate units at 18 Taylor in connection with the Project. The Applicant intends to deed-restrict these two units as affordable for the life of the building, thus preserving valuable workforce housing in perpetuity. Because all this affordable housing is being provided on site, the Project additionally qualifies for a density bonus of at least 2 units by Special Permit under Section 7.4 and 9.N.6(h) of the Zoning Regulations. As explained by Mr. Kennedy, the Applicant has strived to design the proposed infill units in an architectural style that is complementary to the existing historic house. The new units will help to screen the high-rise skyline that currently predominates in the site's viewscape, and thus will help restore more of the residential neighborhood feel to this area.

Due to the characteristics of the properties and the preservation of the lawful nonconforming buildings (including historic 18 Taylor), the Applicant seeks modest relief under Section 7.3 from the underlying zoning district's requirements for:

- Density: 18 units instead of 16 units maximum;
- Building coverage: ~~37% (9,054 sft.)~~ 35.6% (8,714 sft.) instead of 35% (8,567 sft.) maximum;
- Sideyard setbacks: ~~11.185.5 ft. both sides~~ instead of ~~18 ft. 11.18 ft. both sides~~ lawfully nonconforming (18 ft. both sides minimum currently required), only if measured between lawfully nonconforming Building A and Building G; otherwise 10.2 ft.;

³ The Applicant could have sought a density bonus of up to 3 units under Section 7.3. The Applicant also could have sought an even higher density bonus under Sections 9.N.6(h) and 7.4, for providing all required below-market-rate units on site. By limiting the units on site to 18, the Applicant hopes to strike the right balance between appropriate density, space for parking and landscaping, affordable housing, and historic preservation.

- o The lawfully nonconforming 1.4 ft. on the north side and 4.1 ft. on the south side (instead of 8 ft. currently required):⁴
- Parking and electric vehicle parking: ~~21~~22.5 spaces, including 1 EV charger and 1 reserved space, instead of 30.75 spaces minimum, including 3 EV chargers and 3 reserved spaces.⁵

All of these requests for zoning relief are well within the parameters allowed to the Board for historic development bonuses under Section 7.3. In all other respects the proposed project conforms to the R-MF zone requirements for what the Applicant could do as of right.

The proposed project will not in any way impair the future development of the surrounding area. To the contrary, it will improve and beautify the area through new and attractive buildings, preservation of the historic 18 Taylor Street, an enhanced streetscape with new landscaping, a modern drainage system, visual screening of the nearby high-rise commercial buildings from the residential neighborhood, and sustainability features such as bike racks and electric vehicle charging stations.

Fourth, under (a), the project is entirely consistent with the Master Plan, and in fact embodies many of the planning techniques that the Master Plan specifically encourages. The Master Plan clearly supports historic preservation of Stamford’s residential neighborhoods:

- “As redevelopment occurs at an increasingly rapid pace, it is now more important than ever for Stamford to maintain the character of historic districts and structures and ensure that new development is in keeping with the City’s historic character.” (159)
- “Because redevelopment in all areas of Stamford is occurring at an increasingly rapid rate, the protection of the City’s valuable architectural resources is critical.

⁴ The current sideyard setback of 12 Taylor Street is 1.4 feet, which is pre-existing lawfully nonconforming.

⁵ The Applicant respectfully requests that the Zoning Board reduce the required parking to 19 spaces (higher than the one space per unit that may be permitted under a Section 7.3 bonus, which would be 18 spaces). In that case, Section 12.L of the Regulations would only require one EV charger and one EV reserved space, which are provided. A total of ~~21~~22.5 parking spaces are provided on site – 13 garage, ~~89~~ uncovered, and 1 EV charger (which counts as .5 spaces). Notably, under the new version of Section 12.L of the Regulations enacted after this application was filed, an EV reserved space counts as a full parking space rather than a half space.

The City must embark upon a concerted effort to preserve the historic architectural and landscape heritage that remains. This can be achieved by the implementation of policies that preserve the character and viability of historic resources to ensure that new development respects the established traditions of scale, massing, setbacks and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and plazas.” (159-60)

- “Several zoning incentives that promote the historic preservation of properties exist. Section 7.3...for example, provides a development density bonus for projects that will result in the appropriate restoration and preservation of buildings of historic significance in the community.” (163)

Moreover, the Master Plan encourages the preservation of existing housing and the organic addition of new housing within existing neighborhoods, rather than demolition of current housing and replacement by new large-scale development. (*See, e.g.*, 7 (goals include “neighborhood preservation, revitalization, and growth”; “Balance new development with preservation of existing residential communities”; “Preserve existing housing and create affordable housing”; “Preserve historic buildings and districts”). Therefore, the Applicant’s proposed infill development (in a property within Master Plan Category #4, Residential – Medium Density Multifamily) is clearly supported by the Master Plan as well:

- “As Stamford continues to attract new market-rate multifamily housing, it will be important for the City to maintain its existing housing policies and balance new residential development with preservation of existing neighborhoods.” (133)
- Policy Recommendation 6A.1: “Balance new development with preservation of existing residential communities.... As new development occurs, the City should encourage preservation of existing residential streets and the rehabilitation of structures.” (*Id.*)

CAM Approval

Lastly, as the project lies just within the Coastal Area Management (CAM) boundary that extends roughly 1000 feet from the Coastal Jurisdiction Line, the Applicant also seeks CAM site plan approval. As set forth in the accompanying CAM application, the project is

nowhere near the coast, and the only coastal resource nearby is freshwater wetlands⁶; the only coastal policy implicated is “general development.” There will be no adverse effects on coastal resources from this residential project. To the contrary, the accompanying Drainage Report demonstrates that the Applicant will be greatly improving stormwater runoff and drainage from the site, which will benefit coastal resources.

Conclusion

For all of the above reasons, the Applicant respectfully asks that you include the historic three-family house at 18 Taylor Street on the Cultural Resources Inventory, grant the requested Special Permit under Section 7.3 of the Zoning Regulations, and grant CAM site plan approval.

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⁶ No portion of the project is located in inland wetlands or the upland review area.