



City of Stamford
Zoning Board

STAFF REPORT

TO: CITY OF STAMFORD ZONING BOARD
FROM: VINEETA MATHUR, PRINCIPAL PLANNER
SUBJECT: ZB #223-43 Special Permit, 375 Fairfield Avenue
APPLICANT: 375 Fairfield Avenue Associates
DATE: January 8, 2024

MASTER PLAN: Master Plan Category 11 (Industrial - General)

ZONING: M-G (General Industrial)

REQUESTED ACTIONS:

223-46	Special Permit	Section 19.E.3 - Large Scale Development Review
	Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Use	Section 4.B.8.b and 19.D - Site plan approval for the two proposed buildings, parking lots and associated site improvements.
	Authorization	Section 12.K.5 approval of the proposed sidewalk configuration

INTRODUCTION

The Applicant 375 Fairfield Avenue Associates (“Applicant”) is requesting approval of a Special Permit for Large Scale Development and Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Use to allow the construction of two flex industrial/warehouse/commercial buildings (Building A and Building B) with a total industrial of 94,593 sf along with a 1044 sf fast food establishment. The proposed use is permitted as of right in the existing M-G zoning district.

SITE & SURROUNDINGS

The subject property is a total of 9.8 acres. The roughly wedge shaped site is bound by Metro North railroad to the northern side, Fairfield Avenue to the east and other industrial properties to the south. Selleck Street is located just north of the subject site.

The site is currently occupied by six (6) industrial/warehouse/commercial buildings with a variety of tenants including an office furniture outlet, document/printing services, fitness center, packaging store, stone-works, roofing company and floor supplier among others. Many of the businesses are part of the Stamford Waterside Design District which is a private coalition of building design related companies. The center of the site contains a concrete paved area where an industrial building once stood. Since the building became outdated and was demolished, the vacant paved area has been used as a car lot by various Stamford dealerships. The northern triangular portion of the site is used as multiple parking lots.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development will infill the site with two new buildings Building A and Building B and will retain the existing six (6) buildings. Five (5) of the existing curb cuts will be closed which will enhance the pedestrian and traffic circulation along Fairfield Avenue. The new buildings will utilize remaining existing driveway entrances which will be enhanced with new paving, aprons and curbs.

Building A

Building A will be three (3) stories tall with 54,613 sf of warehouse/flex industrial/commercial space. The ground floor will also contain a 1,044 sf of a fast casual café. The building will have 4,338 sf of outdoor rooftop space. The applicant proposes to add 52 parking spaces for Building A. The Building have multiple individual tenants to serve the demand for a variety of design tenants to complement existing design businesses in the area.

The building is designed in traditional industrial style with glass windows, precast concrete panels and metal panel accents. The entrance area is highlighted by a setback and awnings. The large window bays and multiple entrances help break the façade on each side.

Building B

Building B will be one (1) story with a potential mezzanine space and a total of 39,980 sf of floor area to be used as warehouse/flex industrial/commercial use. An additional 46 parking spaces will be added for Building A.

The single story Building B will have a light grey metal panel façade with dark grey panels in the inset areas. A horizontal panel of glass windows is proposed towards the upper side of the façade.



PARKING

The applicant proposes a total of 98 parking spaces which exceeds the total required parking of 68 spaces as shown below:

Building A

Industrial floor area – 54,613 sf

Required industrial parking spaces – 28 spaces (1 per 2000 sf)

Fast Food Restaurant floor area – 1044 sf

Required Restaurant parking – 21 spaces

Building A parking requirement = **49 parking spaces**

Building B

Industrial floor area – 39,980 sf

Building B parking requirement – **20 parking spaces** (1 per 2000 sf)

Total parking requirement for **Buildings A and B = 69 parking spaces.**

Electric Vehicles

The zoning regulations require that 10% of the parking spaces provided be dedicated to EV parking. The proposal includes 10 EV parking spaces including an ADA EV space as required.

BICYCLE PARKING

Building A

Industrial floor area – 54,613 sf

Class A spaces (1 per 10,000 sf)

Required Class A spaces = 6 Class A bike parking spaces

Class B spaces (1 per 5000 sf)

Required Class B spaces = 11 Class B bike parking spaces

Total Bike parking requirement = **17 bike parking spaces.**

Given that less than 9 Class A spaces are required the applicant is permitted to substitute the Class A spaces with Class B spaces. Restaurants under 5000 sf are exempt from bike parking requirement.

Applicant **notes 19 Class B bike parking spaces** for Building A are proposed in the Zoning Data Chart. The bike parking is currently located in the southwest corner of the building but connected

to the main entrance through the concrete path. The civil and architectural plans show the bike parking to be covered. Further specifications of the bike parking and notation of the capacity of the bike spaces on the plans will be required prior to the Building Permit.

Building B

Industrial floor area – 39,980 sf

Class A spaces (1 per 10,000 sf)

Required Class A spaces = 4 Class A bike parking spaces

Class B spaces (1 per 5000 sf)

Required Class B spaces = 8 Class B bike parking spaces

Given that less than 9 Class A spaces are required the applicant is permitted to substitute the Class A spaces with Class B spaces.

The Applicant **proposes 12 bike parking spaces** which are shown along the front of Building A. Proposed bike parking capacity should be shown on the landscape plan along with details of the covering of the bike parking prior to the Building Permit.

Landscaping

The planting plan shows grass and large trees (such as Honey Locust) planted in the parking islands. A mix of shrubs (Hydrangea, Sunburst John's Wort and Mohawk Viburnum) , medium sized trees (American Maple) and groundcover (Gro-Low Sumac) are proposed in the planted areas in front of Building A. Based on previous staff comments, the Applicant will be adding an additional tree and foundation planting along the north wall of the building south of Building B.

The triangular area to the north is planted with 5 Hightower Willow Oaks (deciduous) and a Bracken Beauty Magnolia (flowering evergreen). Applicant is encouraged to add additional shrubs in the triangular area.

Street Trees

The applicant uses the street frontage of Fairfield Avenue along Building A (**430.5'**) for the street tree calculation. One street tree is required per 25ft of frontage. The total street trees per this assumption will be 18 trees.

Staff recommends using the entire frontage of the property along Fairfield Avenue for the street tree calculation which is **742.9'** which will lead to a street tree requirement of **30 trees**. Any trees not planted will be subject to a fee-in-lieu.

12.K.5. Special Permit for modification of the sidewalk requirement

The Applicant proposes a 5' wide pedestrian path with a 4' wide amenity strip. The sidewalk regulations require a 6' wide pedestrian path with a 4' wide amenity strip. The Applicant is in the process of refining the sidewalk/amenity strip plan which will be subject to final review by Transportation Traffic and Parking Bureau and Zoning Board staff. Existing site conditions such as utility poles and overhead wires limit the area available for sidewalk/amenity strip construction.

Referral Comments

Planning Board

During their regularly scheduled meeting held on Tuesday, November 28, 2023, the Planning Board recommended approval of the proposed Special Permit request and found that the request is consistent with Master Plan Category 11 (Industrial - General) with the recommendation to add additional outdoor sitting space and for the rooftop space to be accessible. The Planning Board letter noted that the project is aligned with the following Master Plan strategies and policies:

- Policy 3A: Increase economic resiliency and diversity;
- Policy 7H: Encourage infill development;
- Policy 7V: Energy efficient lighting and reduced ambient light.

Engineering Bureau

The Engineering Bureau by letter dated November 9, 2023 made technical comments on the civil plans and the drainage summary which need to be addressed by the Applicant prior to the issuance of a Building Permit.

Transportation Traffic and Parking Bureau

In a letter dated November 30, 2023, Transportation Traffic and Parking Bureau provided comments on the traffic study, site design and sidewalk modification request. The Applicant updated their site plans and traffic study to incorporate these comments and is in the process of preparing the revised sidewalk plan which they expect to present during the public hearing on Monday January 8, 2024. In an email dated January 5, 2024, Frank Petise, Transportation Traffic and Parking Bureau Chief agreed for the final sidewalk plans to be a condition of approval prior to the Building Permit.

Fire Marshall

Assistant Fire Marshall Chad Armstrong in an email dated January 5, 2024, made several comments related to fire safety including location of fire hydrants, sprinkler systems and water connection. The Applicant responded to these comments on the same date agreeing to the conditions/comments proposed by the Assistant Fire Marshall. In an email dated January 8, 2024, Assistant Fire Marshall Chad Armstrong noted that the responses received were agreeable to the Fire Department.

Environmental Protection Board

In a letter dated November 13, 2023, Jaclyn Chapman, Environmental Analyst stated that EPB has no objections to the proposed activity and provided standard conditions to be satisfied prior to the Building Permit and Certificate of Occupancy.

Stamford Water Pollution Control Authority

In a letter dated December 12, 2023, Ann Brown, P.E., Supervising Engineer, Stamford Water Pollution Control Authority made comments on the application related to sewer connection protocols as well as FOG (fat, oil and grease) abatement related to the food service establishment.

Summary

The proposed flex industrial buildings will add to Stamford's industrial building inventory and enhance the Stamford Waterside Design District. Improvements to the site infrastructure, addition of landscaping, improvements to the sidewalk will further improve the functioning and appearance of this industrial area. Staff recommends approval of the subject application and the requested modification to the sidewalk layout requirement.