

Project Narrative

A. Site Description

1. **Applicant:** Women's Development Corporation
861A Broad Street
Providence, RI 02907
2. **Owner:** Southeastern Massachusetts Veterans Housing Program, Inc.
(dba Veterans Transition House)
20 Willis Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
3. **Location:**
 - a. 20 Willis Street (Assessor's Map 066 Lot 167)
 - b. 1311 Purchase Street, Parcel 2 (Assessor's Map 066 Lot 33)
 - c. WS Purchase Street between Willis and Campbell
(Assessor's Map 066 Lot 168)
4. **Zoning:** Mixed Use Business
5. **Existing Site Conditions:**

The existing Veteran's Transition House is located at 20 Willis Street between Pleasant and Purchase Streets, Assessor's Map 66, Lot 167. The building has aggregated over time with the original structure having been built at the turn of the 20th century. Significant alterations have been made to the building over time and it has been determined that the property retains none of its historic significance. The site has significant grade change, dropping fifteen feet as it slopes down from Pleasant Street to Purchase Street. The site is 14,462 square feet while the 3.5 story building is 22,222 square feet with 36 residential units and as many as 45 occupants. The building is utilized for transitional veterans housing as well as for dining services, administrative and program offices for VTH and its 21 full-time employees.

6. **Proposed Project Site:**

The proposed project site will be comprised of the parcel currently bearing the address 20 Willis Street (Assessor's Map 66, Lot 167), as well as two adjacent parcels along Purchase Street (Assessor's Map 66, Lots 168 and 33). The existing facility on Lot 167 will be demolished in its entirety and replaced by 20,370 square feet of new construction. Lot 168, in use since 1994 as parking for the 20 Willis Street facility, is owned by Purchase Street Corp, an unaffiliated entity. It is the intention of Purchase Street Corp to convey said lot to VTH upon closing of financing for the project. A formal agreement is currently being finalized. At the NW corner of Purchase and Campbell Streets is an undeveloped lot (Assessor's Map 66, Lot 33) under the ownership of VTH. Both lots 33 and 168 will be developed as parking for the new project. The aggregate project site is 22,307 square feet.

PLANNING
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DEPARTMENT

CASE 31-16 + 32-16

B. Project Description

WILLIS STREET APARTMENTS is being developed as a joint venture between Southeastern Massachusetts Veterans Housing Program, Inc of New Bedford, MA and Women's Development Corporation of Providence, RI.

The proposed project, development name of WILLIS STREET APARTMENTS, will be the product of the demolition of the aging 22,000 square foot facility and the new construction of 20,307 square feet of quality affordable housing and supportive services for veterans and families in its place. Of the 20,370 square feet of new construction, 18,412 is residential with roughly 2,000 dedicated to commercial activity in the form of social services and dining facilities.

WILLIS STREET APARTMENTS will provide thirty permanent veteran-preference housing units divided between two buildings, as well as a 6,300 square feet of parking lot/drive lane resulting in 18 regulation parking spaces and site improvements through outdoor patios and green space.

The larger of the two buildings located at the corner of Willis and Purchase Streets, Building A, is a three-story bar shaped structure housing (23) enhanced SRO units, on-floor laundry and storage, a 1200 square foot social service office suite, onsite property management, community kitchen, a large dining/community room adjacent to an enclosed outdoor patio and a light-filled public lobby. The facility will include a sheltered outdoor waiting area for loading and unloading from passenger transport vans, a 17-spot parking lot and an attractive combination of hardscape and landscape. Due to the change in grade, the building will be 4-stories at Purchase Street and 3-stories on the uphill side to the west.

The smaller of the two, Building B, located uphill of the bar building at the corner of Pleasant Street and Willis Street, will be a 3-story classic New England-style multifamily house comprised of (2) studios, (3) one-bedroom and (2) two-bedroom units. This family housing will have one accessible unit on the ground floor and will provide much needed housing for those veterans in our community that have families. The building will have on-site laundry and access to the parking lot shared with the 23-unit bar building. The building will have one dedicated accessible parking spot. The two buildings sit on the same .33 acre parcel. The aggregate lot size is 22,307 square feet or .51 acres of land. At 20,370 square feet of new construction and a building footprint of 5,800 square feet the lot coverage by building is 26% in the aggregate. Green space is just shy of 16% representing a 3% improvement over the existing. Two large patios, sun screened entries, professional landscaping and rebuilt city sidewalks add finishing touches.

C. Evidence of Adherence to Parking and Loading Requirements

The WILLIS STREET APARTMENTS development project is seeking relief from the New Bedford off-street parking requirement of 36-spaces through the Special Permit process.

The existing facility contains 36-units of housing with an occupancy of up to 45 individuals and is operated by 21 FTE of staff on a given day. The facility offers a modest parking lot with 13 spaces; many of them are located on adjacent land under different ownership. Typically the parking lot is 50-75% full during normal business hours, due primarily to the quantity of employees onsite during those times. Due to the income mix of the tenants, only a fraction of

the residents have vehicles and thus do not contribute substantially to the parking load which is primarily staff driven. VTH maintains 4 passenger vans which are parked at the property.

The proposed development, WILLIS STREET APARTMENTS, represents a reduction in population from the existing 36-unit facility with a proposed unit count of 30. Unlike the existing facility which often places 3 or more individuals in a room, the proposed studios and SROs are to house no more than one occupant. With an overall 6-unit reduction and an even greater reduction in occupants, it is expected that the parking load for WILLIS STREET APARTMENTS will be noticeably from the existing. Additionally, due to changes in programming the on-site staff for the new facility will be reduced from (21) to only (7) FTE on a given day. Likewise the operating hours will be set at 8am-6pm, with only residential functions occurring after hours.

VTH will continue to operate their van service, encouraging tenants and clients to utilize the service in lieu of owning or driving a vehicle. This van fleet has been a cornerstone of the VTH program for years as a response to the fact that clients of the organization typically do not have personal vehicles. The site is located at the corner of Purchase and Willis and is the site of a SRTA bust stop for routes 2 and 4 and providing a public transportation connection to the greater SRTA network. Additionally (9) bicycle parking spaces will located near the main entry.

Due to site grading and dimensional constraints, it is not possible to locate more parking on the site. We ask for relief from the 36-space off-site parking requirement with the confidence that the 18 parking spaces that we are providing, including (1) ADA van accessible space and (1) ADA regular handicapped space, are sufficient to serve the facility. (Refer to "Appendix C. Special Permit Application" for additional discussion and exhibits)

D. Forms of ownership

The development project, WILLIS STREET APARTMENTS, is a joint venture between Southeastern Massachusetts Veterans Housing Program, Inc (dba VTH) and Women's Development Corporation and will be financed as a low income tax credit project using a tax credit investor.

The WILLIS STREET APARTMENTS will be located on three adjacent parcels of land in New Bedford, MA (Assessor's Map 66, Lots 33, 167, 168). Two of the three parcels (map 066, lots 33 & 167) are currently owned by Southeastern Veterans Housing Program, Inc. (dba VTH). The third parcel (map 066, lot 168) is owned by Purchase Street Corp, but has been used as parking by VTH since 1994. At the time of the closing of financing, all three lots will be conveyed to the WILLIS STREET APARTMENTS development entity. (Refer to "6. Proof of Ownership" for documentation of the current ownership of the three properties)

E. Compliance with the zoning ordinance

The existing facility is non-conforming by dimension, as is the parcel it occupies. Where possible we have improved on the existing condition so that the proposed facility either meets a given dimensional requirement or represents an improvement over the existing.

Due to significant site constraints including the size, shape and grade of the lot, and the demands of our supportive housing program, we are unable to comply with some of the dimensional requirements. The long and narrow shape of the parcel, coupled with the square footage and

adjacencies of program our spaces means that we are unable to get a large enough structure on the site to accommodate our program while meeting all of the dimensional requirements. Although this only occurs in a couple of places, it would be a significant hardship the project to be required to meet the requirements, as it would force us to reduce our program and square footage of affordable housing.

It is our understanding that as a mixed use facility that provides significant educational programming, we are exempt from some of the dimensional requirements. For this reason and because altering the proposed project to meet all of the dimensional requirements would substantially diminish our ability to provide service, we have requested to be released from several of the dimensional requirements that we are unable to meet. (See site plans and zoning table for specific requirements and site conditions)

F. Estimated time required to complete the proposed project

Estimated completion of construction of the project is August 2018. The detailed development schedule is as follows:

Milestone	Date Completed
Responded to RFP	April 2016
Designated as Co-Developer	May 2016
Application for FHLBB AHP Funding	September 2016
Planning Board Meeting	November 2016
Traffic Commission Meeting	November 2016
DHDC Pre-Application	December 2016
Application to Mass Development (4% Tax Credit TE Bond)	December 2016
Design Development / Construction Docs	January 2017
Mass Development Funding Decision	January/February 2017
Application to DHCD - LIHTC	February/March 2017
DHCD Funding Decision –LIHTC	May/June 2017
Construction Bidding	May 2017
Financial Closing	July 2017
Construction Start	August 2017
Construction Completion	August 2018
Qualified Occupancy Complete and Income Verified	October 2018

G. Projected costs of all site improvements (see attached cost estimate)

H. Drainage Calculations (See “9. Stormwater Management Report” for full description)

The post project stormwater runoff from the site will have peak runoff rates less than pre-project conditions since the project incorporates a subsurface infiltration system which will detail and infiltrate stormwater. The runoff from the site will also receive water quality treatment via the infiltration system to the maximum extent possible. Additional details regarding the stormwater system can be found the Stormwater Management Calculations Report which is attached to the application.