



City of New Bedford

Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development

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STAFF COMMENTS

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

October 7th, 2015

CASE #22-15

Request to consider a Special Permit for Reduction in Parking located at 157 Ash Street (Map 45, Lot 93) in the Mixed Use Business zoning district. The property is located at the NW corner of Ash/Arnold Streets.

Applicant/Owner: The Resource Inc (TRI) for Community and Economic Development, 200 Palmer Ave, 2nd Floor, Falmouth, MA 02540

Applicant's Agent: Jill O'Neill, The Resource Inc (TRI) for Community and Economic Development

Overview of Request

The petitioner has submitted an application for a SPECIAL PERMIT under Chapter 9 Comprehensive Zoning, Section 5300 relative to property listed above located in a Mixed Use Business zoning district. The applicant is proposing renovation of a mixed-use, multifamily structure comprised of a 740 SF retail store front and three existing single-family occupancy units. Rehab includes interior improvements and exterior improvements feature renovation of the retail store front, new windows, siding and roofing.

Applicant proposes three parking spaces where six spaces are required at this site. This effectively results in a reduction in the number of required parking spaces from two (2) spaces per dwelling unit to one (1) space per dwelling unit. Retail use has not been specified.

Existing Conditions

The subject property is a 4966 SF corner lot located in the MUB zone abutting both Residence A, (allowing Single Family residential dwelling units) and Residence B (allowing Single Family residential dwelling units and Two-Family residential dwelling units.) There is an existing multifamily building on the property with a former retail lower level fronting on Arnold Street. The property is diagonally across the street from the former Fuller Art Supply Company and is located within a dense residential neighborhood that includes a large multifamily apartment building directly across the street, some single family houses adjoining the property and a few small retail uses in the area.

There is an unimproved area with curb cuts off of both Ash and Arnold Streets to the west of the existing structure that appears to have served as an informal parking area in the past. On street parking is permitted in the area.



Proposed Conditions

The applicant is proposes to renovate the existing structure. Residential GFA will remain constant at a total of 2338 SF and will be dimensioned as follows: Retail = 740 SF, 1st floor residential unit of 550 SF, a 2nd floor residential unit at 675 SF and a 3rd floor residential unit of 555 SF. This renovation, according to revised plans submitted dated September 11, 2015, include the construction of a handicap ramp along the west elevation in accordance with building code.

The applicant proposes to formalize the existing unimproved area for parking by using pervious paving. In addition, the applicant proposes to create a landscape buffer along the Ash Street abutting property line.



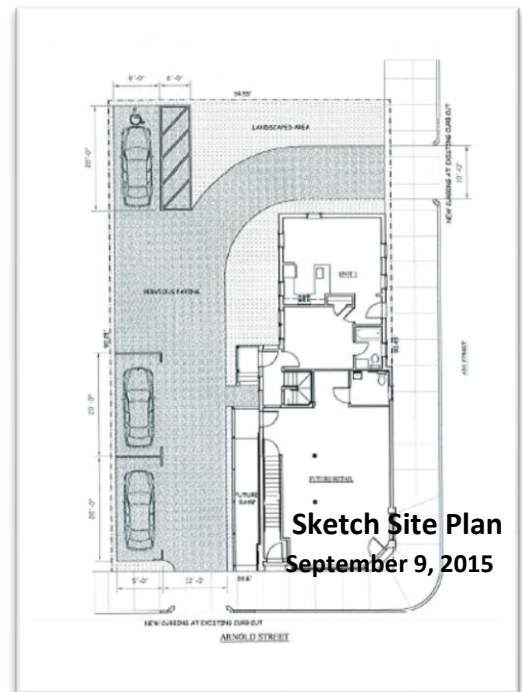
Special Permit for Parking Reduction:

The applicant seeks a reduction in parking from six (6) residential spaces to three (3) spaces, which would include one (1) handicap space. A ramp for wheelchair access is shown on the Sketch Site Plan dated September 9, 2015. Multifamily dwellings consisting of three or more units require two parking spaces per unit. Retail parking space reduction has not been specified by the applicant. The applicant has not stated the retail use; in general, a business may be expected to provide two spaces for each business occupying the premises. Should the applicant later choose to have an active retail space, they would be required to return to the Planning Board to seek any further parking reductions needed.

Development Impact Analysis:

Traffic Impact

The Sketch Site Plan depicted here (and included in the application materials) illustrates a driveway style of parking and circulation with two ingress/egress sites to facilitate circulation on and off the site utilizing the existing curb cuts at both Ash/Arnold Streets. Width of circulation pathway is between nine (9) and twelve (12) feet. City of New Bedford code of ordinances allows a driveway form of parking space for three (3) or fewer vehicles; the improved surface may be extended to one foot of the side line (Section 3143). The parking spaces meet city regulation requirements for a rectangular shape of at least nine (9) feet by twenty (20) feet. Handicap parking with access aisle as proposed also meets the minimum standards set by 521 CMR whereby the parking space must be eight (8) feet in width and support a five (5) foot wide access aisle. No information regarding snow removal has been indicated within the application.



Impact on Neighborhood Character

This is an existing structure whose density would remain unchanged from the original use. Character of this renovation project is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood of residential multifamily and single family dwellings and small retail uses established to serve the area. It is not expected to adversely affect existing traffic, infrastructure or safety service in the area.

Review Comments

Plans were distributed to City Clerk, City Solicitor, Health Department, Inspectional Services, Engineering, Public Infrastructure, Conservation Commission, Fire Department and School Department offices. The Conservation Commission noted that no local or State protected wetlands in or within 100' of the subject proposal, therefore no permit required from the Conservation Commission. Outside of this, no further comments from city offices were received in this matter.

It should be noted there are two Sketch Site Plans with Drawing Number L-01 presented in the case submittal packet. The presence of the ADA ramp should be clarified by the applicant and Sketch Site Plan submitted with revision date noted.

For Board Member Consideration:

When considering an application for Special Permit, the Board takes into account the characteristics of the site and of the proposal in relation to that site, in addition to any specific factors that may be set forth under Section 5300 of the zoning ordinance. As to those thresholds, the staff offers the following considerations:

- Social, economic, or community needs which are served by the proposal.
The vision of the City includes the creation of dynamic neighborhoods. This proposal allows the restoration of an existing property, provides for off-street parking to serve each apartment and removes a blighted structure from the neighborhood through improvement.
- Traffic flow and safety, including parking and loading.
Although the parking to be provided on site is not consistent with existing zoning standards, many of the properties in this dense neighborhood either have inadequate parking or not off-street parking, themselves, yet there are always spaces on the street that appear to be available. In this instance, the applicant actually proposes to *improve* the parking offered on-site by formalizing spaces, creating an articulated circulation pattern and providing an ADA space where none presently exists.
- Adequacy of utilities and other public services.
Whereas the applicant is renovating an existing structure within an area with complete utility and public services, there is no issue with this adequacy.
- Neighborhood character and social structures.
Housing is the most prevalent land use in New Bedford, and its cost and availability are critical components that define much of the city's character. Within this neighborhood, housing is quite dense and a recent windshield survey indicated there were not too many vacant apartments or houses for sale thus suggesting that the renovation of existing aging housing stock is appropriate in this area. Additionally, this proposal—given that the three proposed apartments are all under 700 SF-- satisfies a growing demographic seeking smaller apartments.
- Impacts on the natural environment
The applicant is renovating an existing structure and will be improving the land area surrounding the building with parking and circulation access. The proposed parking/circulation area would be permeable so as to create less impervious surface. In so doing, the applicant proposes to create a vegetated buffer to mitigate the parking/circulation from the abutter to the north along Ash Street.
- Potential fiscal impact, including impact on City services, tax base, and employment

Having this vacant property renovated and the site improved will provide a positive fiscal impact on the city and the broader neighborhood by improving property values. Outside of water/sewer/trash services, no additional city services are necessitated by this application.

▪ **Master Plan Goal**

This proposal is consistent with the master plan's goal (of establishing a sound foundation for future growth that builds upon its coastal location, preserves its historic legacy, and expands cultural and workforce opportunities) as it restores blighted property, improves the neighborhood, utilizes existing housing and provides new residential opportunities.

Staff Recommendation

Having reviewed this request, the existing character of surrounding properties and the thresholds required for approval of a special permit, staff recommends approval of this Special Permit to include the following conditions:

- Proper and timely snow removal so as to ensure residents are able to safely access the three off-street parking spaces and circulation onto and off of the site shall be provided each winter.
- Parking circulation shall be in one direction moving from Arnold to Ash, painted and signed according to city standards.
- A healthy vegetated buffer shall be created and properly maintained to ensure screening along the northern property line.
- The location of the ADA ramp should be clarified by the applicant and Sketch Site Plan submitted with revision date noted.

NOTE: The only caveat in all of this would be around the petitioner's plans for a handicap ramp which the building code requires. If the application is *not* planning on constructing this ramp this changes the application and would require Zoning Enforcement Officer/Building Commissioner review.

Attachments:

1. Plan Set
2. Special Permit Application
3. Quitclaim Deed – Bristol County (S.D) Registry of Deeds Book 11411, Page 67
4. Photos

