



**City of Stamford
Zoning Board**

STAFF REPORT

TO: CITY OF STAMFORD ZONING BOARD
FROM: VINEETA MATHUR, PRINCIPAL PLANNER
SUBJECT: **ZB #224-33 460 Summer Street, Final Site Plan & Architectural Plan and Requested Uses and Special Permit Applications**
APPLICANT: 460 Summer Street, LLC
DATE: October 21, 2024 (Revised)
MASTER PLAN: Master Plan Category 11 (Downtown)
ZONING: C-L (Limited Business), RM-F (Multiple Family Residence Design)

REQUESTED ACTIONS:

224-33	Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses	Final Site Plan Approval (“FSP”) pursuant to §2.D. of the Zoning Regulations to develop the proposed buildings, parking structures, and associated site improvements on the Property.
	Special Permit	Special Permit Approval pursuant to § 10.H of the Zoning Regulations to permit the density of 600 sf per family, minor expansion of floor area and approval of the Usable Open Space.

Introduction

The 460 Summer Street LLC (Owner and Applicant) is requesting approval of the related Special Permit and Final Site Plan Applications to facilitate the conversion of the existing 5 story office building comprising of 28,279 sf of floor to 40 residential units. The site is approximately 0.28 acres in size.

Background

The office building at 460 Summer Street was constructed in 1967. The building has been approximately 95% vacant for the past few years with the final lease expiring in 2025. The building was constructed pursuant to a Special Permit and Variances and is non-conforming to the current zoning with respect to building height, coverage, floor area, side yard setbacks and office parking.

Site and Surroundings

The site is split roughly through the middle between C-L district (Summer Street side) and RM-F district (Franklin Street side). The areas to the south and west of the site are in the C-G zoning district, areas to east are in the C-L district, to the north is the continuation of the RM-F/C-L zoned split properties. The building is well situated with convenient access to retail, services, restaurants, parks and public transportation.

Final Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses

The applicant proposes to utilize the 600 sf conversion factor for the existing floor area. While the tax records show the building as having 28,279 sf of floor area, older floor plans procured by the applicant indicate a total floor area of 28,640 sf. The maximum number of units permitted using either values for total floor area would be 47. The applicant proposes to convert the building into 40 residential units including 32 studio units and 8 one bedroom units.

Building Design

The applicant proposes to retain the existing building exterior and plans to power wash the building. No other changes are proposed. Staff recommends that the applicant repaint/re-clad the metal panels on the façade to soften the look to complement the change to residential use. Staff also recommends painting the concrete walls to improve the appearance of the building.

Landscaping

Staff recommends adding planters along the vertical screens on the Summer Street side. A combination of evergreens, shrubs/annual can be used to enliven this frontage. The planting along the Franklin Street side should also be refreshed. Staff recommends the applicant consider expanding the northern planting bed on the Franklin Street side.

Sidewalk

Given that the sidewalk on both Franklin Street and Summer Street is in good condition, the project is exempt from the sidewalk requirement under Section 12.K.4.(a).5.

Below Market Rate Housing

The Applicant proposes to meet the required 10% BMR requirement on site with 4 BMR units proposed at 50% of Area Median Income.

Parking and Access

The site currently has 29 parking spaces. The applicant proposes to stripe 5 additional spaces for a total of 34 parking spaces.

The parking requirement is as follows:

A total of 4 Class A and 8 Class B spaces are required. Since less than 10 Class A parking spaces are required, they can be provided as Class B parking Space. The applicant has proposed a total of 12 Class B spaces underneath the building. The applicant has noted that they will reconfigure the bike enclosure to separate it from the trash area.

EV charging spaces are required if so determined by the Zoning Board. Staff recommends that the applicant incorporate EV charging spaces prior to Building Permit request.

Land Use Bureau and TTP staff agreed on the waiver of the PMP and TDMP with the condition that the project complete the standard parking occupancy count form for three years after CO.

Special Permit

1. Pursuant to Section 10.H. (Conversion of Commercial Buildings to Residential Buildings in Certain Districts)

Applicant requests approval for the conversion of an existing nonconforming commercial building using the following standards:

- Residential density not to exceed one (1) dwelling unit per 600 square feet of converted gross commercial Floor Area (provided that all required BMR units are provided onsite). *The conversion factor of 600 sf would allow a maximum of 47 units whereas a total of 40 units are proposed. All BMR units are proposed to be provided on-site. The units vary in size from 413 sf to 680 sf in size.*
- Expansion of usable floor area to permit the minor expansion of the ground floor lobby (25± sf) *This minor expansion is necessary to create a lobby area and space for mailboxes.*
- Usable Open Space provided onsite with the amount, location, and design subject to the determination and approval of the Zoning Board.

The applicant proposes to provide 1299 sf of Usable Open Space in the form of a courtyard located on the 2nd floor of the building. All units will have access to the courtyard through doors located on the north and south side. The space will have landscaped screening on the west and east side which have units overlooking the courtyard. Staff believes that the proposed Usable Open Space is sufficient for the building.

Referral Comments

Planning Board

In a letter dated September 26, 2024 the Planning Board voted to recommend approval of the related Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses application as well as the Special Permit application. The Planning Board found the request in general harmony with Master Plan Category 11 and the following policies and strategies:

- Strategy 3A.3: Encourage modernization of office space and allow for adaptive reuse.
- Strategy 3B.3 and 5A.3: Encourage redevelopment of vacant Downtown office space for housing.
- Strategy 3B.2: Encourage the reconfiguration of existing office and retail space to accommodate market trends and potential new users.
- Policy 4D: Promote Transit-Oriented Development.
- Policy 6B: Create new affordable housing.
- Policy 6C: Encourage development of mixed-income housing.
- Strategy 6C.2: Promote development of a variety of housing types.
- Strategy 7G.3: Where feasible, locate and/or design development such that 50 percent of residential units are within a ¼-mile radius of walkable, diverse uses supportive of the compact and complete community.
- Strategy 7J.5: Encourage adaptive reuse of existing structures

Fire Marshal

In an email dated September 27, 2024, Assistant Fire Marshal Chad Armstrong requested information regarding a Life Safety plan. FA Plan, Egress Plan, FD access from Franklin St, Full NPFA 13 sprinkler system, standpipe system. He noted that the bike storage to be a rated space for electric bikes and battery storage and for EV chargers for cars are to be as close to open air as possible due to fire risk. He noted that if the building is to be used for dorms, the codes pertaining to dorms are to be followed for construction.

Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau

Luke Bittenweiser Transportation Planner in a letter dated October 8, 2024 provided comments on the site plan. The applicant submitted a response to the comments in an email dated October

16, 2024 to which the Transportation Bureau concurred in an email from Luke Bittenweiser dated October 17, 2024.

Summary

Staff believes that the proposed project facilitates future vitality of the property and addresses office vacancy. Staff recommends that the applicant refresh the office façade to reflect the residential use and improve the landscaping on each street. This conversion could potentially serve young professionals or students looking for options other than new luxury housing in addition to providing four (4) BMR units. In addition, housing will support the existing businesses on Summer Street and across Downtown.