



**City of Stamford
Zoning Board**

STAFF REPORT

TO: CITY OF STAMFORD ZONING BOARD
FROM: VINEETA MATHUR, PRINCIPAL PLANNER
SUBJECT: **ZB #224-01 & 224-02 Zoning Text Change, Special Permit and Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses, Addition to Stamford Cultural Resources Inventory**
APPLICANT: 31 Maple Tree, LLC
DATE: November 18, 2024

MASTER PLAN: Master Plan Category 4 (Medium Density Multifamily)
ZONING: R-5 (Multiple Family Medium Density Design)

REQUESTED ACTIONS:

224-01	Text Amendment	Amendments to Section 8.C.3 to reduce/waive standards of Table 12.5 and Table 12.6
224-02	Special Permit	Pursuant to following sections: Section 8.C.4.a.(2).(a) to permit a total of 6 dwelling units in lieu of 4 dwelling units permitted as of right. Section 8.C.3.a to permit 1 parking space per unit. (A ratio of 2 spaces per unit is proposed) Section 8.C.3.c. to permit the location of parking spaces within the parameters established in Table 12.5 & Table 12.6 Section 8.C.4.c.(2) to permit 4 stories instead of 3 stories. Sec. 8.C.4.b.(1) of the Zoning Regulations to permit a

	Side Yard Setback (southerly) of 10.0' in lieu of the 15.0'
	Sec. 8.C.4.e. (formerly Sec. 7.3.C.4.e.) to permit Light and Air along the south side of the Property of no less than 10.0' for the Proposed Addition and 15.5' for the Historic Home.
Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Use	Section 2.D - Site plan approval for the preservation of the existing home and addition of four dwelling units in the rear.
Addition to Stamford Cultural Resources Inventory	Adding the historic building at 31 Maple Tree Avenue to the CRI

INTRODUCTION

The Applicant requests the approval of the related applications for Zoning Text Amendment, Special Permit, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses and addition to the Stamford Cultural Resources Inventory to facilitate the addition of four (4) dwelling units behind an existing historic structure at 31 Maple Tree Avenue.

The Historic Preservation section of the zoning regulations incentivizes the preservation of historic homes in the City by allowing certain reliefs from the zoning standards. Such requests for reliefs requires the historic properties to be added to the Cultural Resources Inventory ensuring that the historic structure and façade is protected creating an asset for the City.

The existing home on the property was constructed sometime between 1921 and 1922 by Mr. Edward Irvine Rudd who was a local engineer, public utilities employee and served as a chair of the Stamford Town Plan Commission for ten years.

SITE & SURROUNDINGS

The subject property is located at 31 Maple Tree Avenue, located on the south side of Maple Tree Avenue between Courtland Avenue and Oakdale Road approximately 1000 ft west of the Town of Darien. The property is approximately 14,125 sf in size. The majority of properties along Maple Tree Avenue are occupied by condominium buildings.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Applicant proposes to renovate the existing historic home, construct a small addition, convert the home into a two family structure and construct four attached townhomes in the rear of the property. Each of the new homes will have a two car garage along with four (4) additional parking spaces for a total of 12 proposed parking spaces.

The historic building is a simple two story structure with its original siding and windows however it is currently in not in a good state of maintenance. The existing house is proposed to be restored and repainted. A later rear addition of a bay window is proposed to be removed (also recommended by HPAC). A two story portion will be added to the back of the historic house along with a small portico. The house will be converted to two dwelling units, each with two bedrooms. The proposed restorations will significantly improve the condition of the house.

Staff recommends that the Applicant provide additional details for the restoration of the front steps leading to the porch of the historic house including materials and colors. Staff recommends materials such as wood/Hardie plank for the stairs and porch.

The applicant is proposing four townhomes each with three bedrooms and two space parking garage on the first level. The second level will include the kitchen and living areas, the third level will include two bedrooms and the fourth level with a sloped roof will have an additional bedroom. The applicant proposes to match the new elevations with the proposed materials and colors of the historic house.

Existing historic structure



Proposed restoration and addition



Landscaping

The proposed plan includes four shade trees on the property including White Oak, Shingle Oak, Sweetgum and Crabapple. Three Yoshino Cherry trees are proposed as street trees. A series of Arborvitae are proposed along the western edge of the property. A variety of flowering bushes and grasses are proposed throughout the site. Staff recommends that the applicant add additional plantings including native plants along the western boundary. The landscape plan should be updated to accurately show the size of the proposed sidewalk and amenity strip consistent with the civil plans.

224-02 ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT

The applicant requests amendment to Section 8.C.3 to add the following language:

[The Zoning Board may reduce or waive the development standards of Table 12.5 (Minimum Distances of Parking Areas from Lot Lines and Buildings) and Table 12.6 (Location of Parking Areas and Loading Spaces in Yards) in order to facilitate the provision of on-site parking. All parking spaces or areas encroaching within the setbacks specified shall be constructed with pervious pavers. The Zoning Board may modify the dimensions of Parking Spaces exclusively used for residential uses, as defined by Section 12.A of these Regulations where the Transportation, Traffic and Parking Bureau finds that such modification would not reduce circulation or affect maneuverability of parking operations.]

A portion of this text allowing flexibility regarding minimum distance of parking spaces from Lot Lines and Buildings was approved through application 223-39. The remaining portion of the text relating to Table 12.6 which prohibits location of parking areas in certain yards is requested by the applicant to allow the turnaround area (for delivery vehicles/moving vehicles) in the front yard. Staff believes that the proposed text amendment is not critical to the completion of the project and recommends that the Applicant withdraw the application. Allowing a turn-around in front of historic buildings will diminish the aesthetic qualities of the historic home and block its view from the street. Staff recommends that the applicant withdraw this text amendment and revise the site plan to remove the turn around and plant this additional area.

Special Permits requested

The Applicant seeks the following Special Permits Application pursuant to Section 8.C – Development Standards:

***i. Density** - Special Permit Approval pursuant to Sec. 8.C.4.a.(2).(a) of the Zoning Regulations to permit 6 dwelling units in lieu of 4 permitted as of right.*

The property is in the R-5 Zoning district which requires 3000 sf of lot area per family for lots greater than 9000 sf. Given that the subject property is 14,125 sf in size a total of 4 units are permitted. Section 8.C.4.a.2.a. allows a 50% increase in density thus allowing two additional dwelling units for a total of 6 dwelling units. The proposed density is a minor increase and appropriate for the area which primarily contains attached townhomes.

***ii. Number of Parking Spaces** - Special Permit Approval pursuant to Sec. 8.C.3.a. of the Zoning Regulations to permit 1 parking space per proposed dwelling unit.*

The property is in Parking Category 3 which requires 2 spaces per unit along with 1 guest space per four units which would lead to a total requirement of 14 spaces. The applicant has proposed 12 parking spaces. Staff believes that the proposed configuration provides adequate parking while facilitating the preservation of the existing home.

***iii. Parking setbacks** - Special Permit Approval pursuant to Sec. 8.C.3.c to permit the location of onsite parking within the building setbacks established by Table 12.5 (Minimum Distances of Parking Areas from Lot Lines and Buildings) of the Zoning Regulations.*

The applicant requests the parking to be located closer than the 5' minimum distance from buildings. One of the parking spaces will be 1.8' from the new buildings at the closest point and a second parking space will be 3' from the townhomes. Given that the first floor of the building has individual garages, the close location of parking space will not affect any living space therefore staff does not have an issue with the location. The Applicant must ensure that the plantings proposed in the area between the building and these parking spaces can feasibly grow in the space and to change choice of plant if needed.

iv. Location of parking area (turnaround) - Special Permit Approval pursuant to Sec. 8.C.3.c to permit the turnaround space within the setbacks established by Table 12.6 (Location of Parking Areas and Loading Spaces in Yards) of the Zoning Regulations.

Staff believes this request should be withdrawn.

v. Number of stories. Special Permit Approval pursuant to Sec. 8.C.4.c.(2) of the Zoning Regulations to permit total Building Height of 4 stories in lieu of the 3 stories typically permitted;

The proposed building will be within the maximum permitted building height for the district but will comprise of 4 stories instead of 3 permitted. The additional story allows for the parking to be incorporated into covered garages for each of the three bedroom townhomes.

vi. Side Yard setback - Special Permit Approval pursuant to Sec. 8.C.4.b.(1) to permit a Side Yard Setback from the southerly lot line of 10' in lieu of 15' required.

Staff believes that the proposed setback is appropriate in the context of the surrounding properties and the proposed screening fence.

vii. Light and Air - Special Permit Approval pursuant to Sec.8.C.4.e to permit Light And Air along the south side of the Property of no less than 10' for the new addition and 15' for the historic home.

This reduction is critical for the accommodation of the new development within the width of the lot and consistent with the reduction allowed for other historic preservation projects.

Addition to the Cultural Resources Inventory

Addition to the Cultural Resources Inventory is essential to the application for the consideration of the remaining Special Permit requests. The retention of the house will keep the building scale and architecture along the street similar to that which had existing in the area originally.

Referral Comments

Planning Board

During their regularly scheduled meeting held on Tuesday, March 12, 2024, the Planning Board recommended approval of the proposed Zoning Text Change application 224-01 as well as application 224-02, Special Permit, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses and Addition to the Stamford Cultural Resources Inventory application. They found that this request is in general harmony with the Master Plan.

Engineering Bureau

Willetta Capelle, P.E. - Coordinator of Site Plan Reviews and Inspections in a letter dated February 15, 2024 made technical comments on the civil plans and the drainage summary. The Applicant responded to these comments in a correspondence dated February 22, 2024. The Engineering Department provided further comments on the revised plans in a letter dated November 12, 2024

Historic Preservation Advisory Commission

HPAC in a letter dated March 7, 2024 commended the owner for preserving the historic structure and provided comments on the design. These include a recommendation that the new townhomes be designed to match the historic home in terms of siding, windows, columns and roof line. Among other comments, HPAC was not in favor of the turnaround in front of the house. The applicant provided a thorough response to the comments in an email to Land Use staff dated November 11, 2024 and has incorporated the design comments into the drawings. Staff recommends that the Applicant use white color on all elevations as recommended and will provide HPAC with the Building Permit elevation set for their final review.

Transportation Traffic and Parking Bureau

In an email dated November 15, 2024 Luke Bittenweiser, Transportation Planner, Transportation Traffic and Parking Bureau (TTP) noted that TTP had no issues with the site plan but recommended that the text amendment be withdrawn.

Fire Marshall

Assistant Fire Marshall Chad Armstrong in an email dated October 10, 2024 stated that the project does not fall within Fire Marshall's jurisdiction due to its small size. He noted that the modified site plan with the driveway now on the east side of the buildings provides greater width for fire department access.

Environmental Protection Board

In a letter dated August 16, 2024, Pamela Fausty, Environmental Analyst provided comments on the landscape plan among standard comments related to sediment and erosion control. The applicant addressed the landscape comments through the updated Landscape Plan dated November 12, 2024. In a follow up email dated Friday November 15, 2024, Ms. Fausty confirmed that the landscape comments had been addressed.

Summary

The proposed development includes historic preservation along with construction of four new three bedroom townhomes and significantly increased landscaping and reconstruction of the sidewalk with street trees. Construction of three bedroom townhomes is desirable to increase the variety of new housing being produced. Staff recommends approval of Application 224-02 related to Special Permit, Site and Architectural Plan and Requested Uses and Addition to the Stamford Cultural Resources Inventory application but recommends that the Applicant withdraw Application 224-01 Zoning Text Amendment.