



**City of Stamford
Zoning Board**

STAFF REPORT

TO: CITY OF STAMFORD ZONING BOARD
FROM: VINEETA MATHUR, PRINCIPAL PLANNER
SUBJECT: ZB #225-08 General Development Plan, 30 Oak Street
APPLICANT: 30 Oak, LLC & 30 Oak Stamford, LLC
DATE: May 3, 2025

MASTER PLAN: Master Plan Category 4 (Residential – Medium Density Multifamily)
ZONING: MX-D (Mixed Use Development) District

REQUESTED ACTIONS:

225-08	General Development Plan	Conversion of existing office building to up to 60 residential units.
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Introduction

30 Oak Street, LLC (Contract Purchaser) and related entity 30 Oak Stamford, LLC (together “Applicants”) are requesting approval of a General Development Plan to convert the existing 53,388 sf office building at 30 Oak Street Unit B with up to 60 apartments. 30 Oak Street Unit A aka 1200 Bedford Street, a residential condominium with 16 apartments is proposed to remain unchanged.

Background

Conversion of office buildings to residential use has been a successful tool in Stamford to meet several City goals. These goals include increasing housing supply to meet the current high housing need, address high office vacancy and to revitalize existing buildings and streetscapes. This

strategy was identified by the 2015 Master Plan (Strategy 6.C.4), the 2022 Stamford Housing Affordability Plan (Strategy 3) and Mayor’s 2023 Housing Executive Order to increase the supply of market rate and affordable housing. Master Plan strategy 6.C.4 states *“Continue encouraging conversion of vacant office buildings to residential use. Conversion of vacant office space to residential use should be encouraged as a means to address the City’s high office vacancy rate and the demand for higher-density market-rate and affordable housing.”* Furthermore, residential use has a lower traffic and parking impact compared to office use which generates more peak hour traffic and has a higher parking demand. Conversion projects also give the opportunity to bring existing buildings into conformance with new zoning regulations where possible such as open space requirements, bike parking, sidewalks and street trees. The MX-D infill regulations (Section 5.T.5) expressly facilitate housing production in under-utilized areas of the downtown including the residential conversion of existing commercial buildings. Some recent office to residential conversion projects in Stamford include 84 West Park Place (completed) 460 Summer Street (approved), 1 Atlantic Street (completed) 36 Atlantic Street (completed), 1011 High Ridge Road (completed) and 400 Main Street (approved). The Brookings Institute in collaboration with US Housing and Urban Development Department partnered with HR&A advisors, Eckholm Studios and Gensler Architects to conduct a [study](#) of six cities across the country to analyze the potential of conversion of office buildings to residential. The [Stamford study](#) included 30 Oak Street as a good candidate for such a conversion.

Site and Surroundings

The property encompassing Unit A & Unit B is approximately 1.37 acres in size and is located in the MX-D (Mixed Use Development) zoning district and Master Plan Category 4 (Medium Density Multifamily District). The building at 30 Oak Street Unit B was constructed in 1980 and has been used as a general office however it is currently 85% vacant. The properties in the surrounding area are occupied by multifamily residential buildings on all sides including several condominiums. Commercial buildings are location at the corners of Oak Street and Summer and Bedford Streets.



General Development Plan Standards

A General Development Plan has been submitted in advance of a final site plan approval per Section 2.H.2. Per Section 2.H.1 Purpose:

“General Development Plans (GDPs) are required to establish the potential massing and maximum bulk of the anticipated Development, such as maximum Building Height, Density and Coverage. In addition, a GDP approval may cover other aspects of the Development which the applicant wishes to propose.

A detailed description of these bulk parameters have been provided by the applicant in the written narrative and the GDP plan. Minimal change is proposed to the existing building and site. The applicant is seeking the approval of the conversion of the existing office building to residential apartments and thus will have minimal impact on the surrounding area. Sidewalk repairs as requested by TTP staff and addition of open space will further improve the public experience.

The application includes the required materials for a GDP application as follows:

- a. **Written Application** – The applicant has provided a project narrative including the description of the background, existing conditions, proposed changes, conformance with zoning and master plan and list of approvals sought as part of GDP.

List of approvals sought:

1. **Density/FAR** - Applicant requests up to 60 dwelling units and 63,388 square feet (1.93 FAR).

The request is within the permitted density of the MX-D zoning district which allows 2.5 FAR for infill sites (less than 2 acres). The proposed floor area of 63,388 sf allows for up to 10,000 sf increase in floor area for infilling the ground floor where feasible. While the illustrative plans show 54 units, the requested 60 units as part of the GDP approval grants a flexibility of adding units prior to FSP request.

2. **Below Market Rate (BMR) Units** — The Applicant states that pursuant to Section 5.T.5.b.6 of the Zoning Regulations, BMR units shall be provided in accordance with Section 7 of the Zoning Regulations. Pursuant to Tables 7.1 and 7.2 (for Conversion units), seven percent (7%) of the dwelling units must be provided as BMR units affordable at fifty percent (50%) of the Area Median Income OR 7% of the Gross Residential Floor Area is subject to a Fee-in-Lieu payment.

Based on a 7% requirement applied to 60 units the BMR requirement is 4.2 BMR units. The applicant plans to determine the final means of compliant as part of the Final Site & Architectural Plan application. A draft affordability plan using the standard template has been provided designating four units as BMR at 50% AMI within the building. If onsite BMRs are provided, the fractional 0.2 BMR is met through a fee-in-lieu payment. If the entirety of the requirement is decided to be met through fee-in-lieu, the rate of \$125 per square foot will be applied as adjusted by the construction cost index. Both means of compliance will further the City’s Housing Affordability goals.

3. **Height** - No changes or additions to the building height are proposed.

4. Building Coverage – No changes or additions to the building coverage are proposed.

5. Yards Requirements - The applicant proposes to utilize the existing building and, pursuant to Section 5.T.4.h, requests approval of the existing building location as it relates to setbacks, separation of structures, light and air. No changes or reductions to existing building setbacks are proposed.

Section 5.T.4.h. in the MX-D zoning district allows the Zoning Board to establish setbacks on a site-specific basis. Since no changes are proposed to the building, this request simply confirms the appropriateness of the existing setbacks as shown on the GDP drawing.

**30 Oak Street
Zoning Summary (MXD - Infill)**

Standard	Existing		Required/ Allowed	Proposed GDP		Notes
	Unit B	Total Property		Unit B	Total Property	
Min Lot Area	32,775	59,462	20,000	32,775	59,462	Complies. Unit B area includes proportional share of Common Elements.
Max Building Height	60'±	n/a	90'	No Change		Complies.
Max Building Coverage	58%	49%	80%	No Change		Complies. Includes area of structured parking.
Max FAR	1.63 (53,388)	1.25 (74,152)	2.5	1.93 (63,388)	1.41 (84,152)	Complies. Existing floor area per Tax Assessor information. Proposed assumes up to 10,000 sf of additional floor area.
Max Dwelling Units	0	16	n/a	60	76	Complies. Additional 16 existing DU in Unit A building (1200 Bedford St).
Min BMR Requirement	7%	n/a	7%	7%	n/a	Complies. To be provided either on site or through fee-in-lieu payment.
Min Open Space	n/a	n/a	75 sf / DU	75 sf / DU	n/a	Complies. Design and location to be determined as part of Final Site Plan application.
Min Front Setback	Oak St: 20' Bedford St: 14.7'		0-15'	No Change		Complies. Existing conditions.
Min Side Setback	7.5'	6.7'	0-15'	No Change		Complies. Existing conditions.
Min Rear Setback	n/a		0-30'	n/a		Corner lot; no rear yard.

6. Parking — Pursuant to Table 12.7 (Category 2) of the Zoning Regulations, the Applicant requests the following parking ratios:

Unit Type	Rate
Studio	1.0
1BR	1.0
2BR	1.5

Parking

Unit Type	Units	Rate	Required	Provided	Notes
Studio	29	1.00	29	80+	Complies. Does not include additional surface parking spaces or garage spaces of Unit A. Final space count dependent on open space design.
1BR	19	1.00	19		
2BR	12	1.50	18		
TOTAL	60	-	66		

Bicycle Parking	Required	Provided	Notes
Class A	12	12	Complies. Locations TBD as part of Final Site Plan application.
Class B	6	6	
Total	18	18	

EV Spaces	Required	Provided	Notes
	N/A	4	Complies. Not required pursuant to Section 12.L.1

The applicant intends to maintain approximately 80 parking spaces where 66 are required based on the contemplated unit mix.

Given that the parking spaces are in excess of the requirement staff recommends that some of the parking spaces on the ground floor be repurposed for floor area and/or open space. This would also allow the parking to be more effectively screened from the street.

b. Existing Conditions Map. The applicant has submitted a detailed property survey titled ‘Property & Topographical Survey for 30 Oak Street’ prepared by Redniss and Mead dated April 21, 2025.

c. General Site Development Plan. A General Development Plan showing existing conditions and potential areas for floor area infill dated April 21, 2025 prepared by Redniss and Mead has been submitted.

d. General Architectural Plans

The applicant has submitted floor plans showing 54 units in a mix of studio, one and two bedroom along a double loaded corridor.

Staff recommends that the applicant refresh the building facade for the residential use. This can be achieved by replacing/recladding the spandrel panels with an alternative material such as composite panels. Applicant should also consider replacing the windows with operable windows where feasible. The lobby entrance should also be enhanced by cleaning/repainting and signage.

Further the ground floor parking area should be screened by filling in some of the ground floor with lobby/amenity space and adding decorative screening.

The retaining wall around the parking garage should be power washed and refinished as needed. Detailed floor plans and elevations including material sample sheets will be required at the time of FSP application.

f. Utilities Report.

A utilities report detailing stormwater management, sewer, water, gas, electric services and traffic infrastructure indicates that the site is adequately served by these utilities.

g. Schedule of Improvements.

The applicant proposes to complete the conversion in a single phase.

Landscaping

No changes to the existing landscaping has been proposed at this time. FSP application should include a detailed landscape plan showing existing landscaping and proposed open spaces.

Usable Open Space

The project will require 4,500 sf of Usable Open Space per the requirements in Section 3 – Usable Open Space definition. The applicant has stated that the location of the usable open space will be finalized at the time of final site plan approval. Potential areas include portions of the ground floor space currently used for parking.

Street trees

Given site frontage of 224.84 feet along Oak Street, and the requirement of 1 street tree per 25’ a total of nine street trees will be required. Three mature trees with large canopies are currently situated along the sidewalk. The FSP should show whether additional trees can be accommodated or if a fee-in-lieu per Section 12.K.6 is proposed for the remaining 6 trees.

Parking and Access

Access to the parking garage is through a two-way driveway off Oak Street. Final parking plan to be submitted at the time of Final Site Plan approval should indicate the location of bike parking spaces, EV spaces and traffic directions. The project is not subject to the EV charging space requirement per Section 12.L.1 unless determined by the Zoning Board. The applicant has proposed 4 EV charging spaces and listed them under the GDP requests.

The existing parking comprises of one level at the ground floor level and two levels of underground parking with a total of 80 parking spaces. The proposed unit distribution (29 studios, 19 one bedroom units, 12 two bedroom units) results in a parking requirement of 66. The existing parking supply more than meets the requirement.

Referral Comments

Water Pollution Control Agency

Ann Brown, P.E. Supervising Engineer in a letter dated April 3, 2025 requested applicant to provide video taping of sanitary lateral to ensure there is no obstruction, provide an engineered site utility plan depicting the sanitary sewer work, show location of amenity areas which may require grease management. The letter also requested a plan with details to show the treatment

system for wastewater from the garage. Finally, the WPCA also notified the applicant of sewer connection charges.

Environmental Protection Board

Pamela Fausty, Environmental Analyst, provided comments in a memo dated April 16, 2025 and noted that the property is not in the Coastal Management Area or any special flood hazard zone (Zone X, FIRM Panel 09001C0516G, 7/8/2013) and no inland wetlands, watercourses, or conservation easement areas are present. Since the existing ground floor parking will be utilized and the current plans do not propose any modifications to the existing site, no sediment and erosion control or other mitigation plans are needed. The memo states that EPB has no objection to this proposal moving forward through the Zoning Board's review process.

Engineering Bureau

Willetta Capelle in a memo dated April 15, 2025 reviewed the submitted documents and stated that the Engineering Department does not object to this application proceeding with the Zoning approval process. She also stated that although drainage mitigation may not be required, water quality improvements are required for this project since there will be 6 or more parking spaces as part of the development, in accordance with the Drainage Manual requirements. The letter provided additional comments to be addressed at the time of submission of final site plan and building permit.

Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau

Luke Bittenwieser in a memo dated April 7, 2025 noted the reduction in peak hour traffic associated with the change of use. He further stated that the department offers no objection to the GDP while noting that portions of the sidewalk may need to be replaced to bring it into a state of good repair and ADA compliance.

Public Comment

An objection letter by Nora Blythe Delano dated April 14, 2025 was received listing issues with the application. They have been addressed below:

1. Owner's authorization and applicant's legal entity

The application was filed by 30 Oak Street, LLC who is the contract purchaser of the property. The applicant has reinstated 30 Oak Street, LLC and the application form was resubmitted with 30 Oak Street LLC and 30 Oak Stamford as co-applicants. Agent authorization letters are also included as part of the application.

2. Legal and regulatory framework.

The application is being reviewed according to the standards of General Development Plan per Section 2.H of the Zoning Regulations and was duly referred to City departments including Engineering Bureau, Environmental Protection Board, Transportation Traffic and Parking Bureau, Fire Marshal, Zoning Enforcement Officer and Water Pollution Control Agency.

Review of this GDP by the departments and agencies listed in the objection letter (including Tree Warden, Health Department, DEEP, Dept. of Justice etc.) is not required by the Zoning Regulation.

A traffic study is not required for GDP approvals however the applicant did provide an analysis prepared by Kimley Horn which shows a net reduction in projected vehicle trips between previous office use and proposed multifamily residential use. The report indicates a reduction in daily trips by 496 and peak hour trips by 78 and 83 in the AM peak and PM peak hours respectively. The report also indicated a reduction in parking demand by 25 spaces for a conversion from office to residential.

3. Environmental Violations.

The proposed development represents a [sustainable approach](#) to addressing the housing needs of the City. Utilization of an existing building instead of wholesale redevelopment represents optimal use of building material and existing infrastructure. A conversion also minimizes construction related impacts on the street and surrounding areas. No removal of trees/shurbs is proposed as part of the GDP proposal. Future Final Site Plan will include a landscape plan which may enhance the property with additional planting.

Per State of [CT website](#) “A CEPA assessment is required for each state agency action or sequence of actions undertaken by a state department, institution or agency that could have a major impact on the state's environmental, social, and/or economic resources.” Given that this is a private application, CEPA assessment is not required.

4. Air Quality, Hazardous Materials, and Public Health Risk

A Zoning Board approval of this change of use is a pre-requisite of a Zoning Permit per Section 2.G.1.b. The Zoning Permit is an integral part of Building Permit review which also includes review by various departments for compliance with Building, Health and Fire Code along with review by Traffic Transportation and Parking Bureau, Engineering, EPB and WPCA for each of their regulations.

Rather than continuing to operate with high vacancy, the conversion will facilitate repairs to the building and upgrades to meet the residential codes.

5. Traffic Burden, Parking Deficiencies, and Pedestrian Risk

While a traffic study is not required for a GDP, a traffic analysis provided by the applicant confirms the understanding that conversion from office to residential will reduce the load on both traffic and parking. Detailed site plans addressing pedestrian and vehicular safety will be required at the time of FSP and Building Permit.

6. Distorted BMR Metrics and DOJ Investigation into Rent Inflation,

6A. BMR Unit Designation, Bracket Compliance, and Zoning Discrepancies &

6B. Misstated AMI Levels and Improper Bracket Allocation in Violation of § 7.4

The BMR proposal is compliant with the zoning regulations (Section 7) and the submitted draft Affordability Plan reflects the standard Affordability Plan. The purpose of the draft Affordability Plan is to indicate the number of units dedicated, the AMI levels proposed while providing references to applicable regulations. The AMI number itself is not subject to the discretion of the applicant but are derived from annual HUD publication. An exact schedule of designated units is not listed until the unit layouts are finalized during construction. These affordability plans are finalized with unit designations and floor plans and recorded prior to a Certificate of Occupancy. The standard requirement for the MX-D district is for units to be 50% AMI. Other AMI levels are provided as alternatives which are available subject to an equivalency formula favoring lower AMI units. The actual rent is not included in the Affordability Plans since it varies by unit type and the HUD AMI. The sample table in the plan provides the method for calculating the rent based on these variables. Zoning Board approvals precede actual occupancy by several years. Inclusion of actual rents in the draft Affordability Plan for a GDP/FSP is impractical.

6C. Pattern of Non-Enforcement by the City of Stamford: Complicity in BMR Bracket Evasion

The description of the BMR program in this claim is inaccurate.

The current Zoning Regulations explicitly sets the baseline AMI level for rental BMR units (Table 7.1) as 50% AMI. Proposals meeting this requirement are simply complying with the regulations and do not reflect any deficiency. BMR units at lower or higher AMIs are subject to equivalencies stated in Section 7.C.3.i. and are included in the regulations to provided flexibility in the program where the applicant may choose to deploy them.

7. Lack of Contract and Legal Standing of Applicant

This item was addressed earlier in claim #1.

Summary

Staff believes that the proposed project will be a benefit to the neighborhood and the City by reusing an existing building for a use that is sorely needed. It will increase the supply of housing in an area well served by public infrastructure, retail and service amenities and parks. It will also support affordable housing by providing on site BMR or fee-in-lieu of the requirement. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the General Development Plan application.