



TOWN OF WINCHESTER

OFFICE OF PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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Town Planner

71 Mount Vernon Street
Winchester, MA 01890

September 28, 2021

CBD PETITION-14

10 CONVERSE PLACE

Petitioner seeks a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Special Permit under Section 7.3.12 (and 7.3.14.6) and Site Plan Review under Section 7.3.15 so as to be permitted to construct 60 residential units and 1 commercial unit (2,250 square feet) within a new mixed-use structure that is proposed to be taller in height, have a Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR) higher than permitted as of right and a nonconforming front setback. Outdoor seating for the retail space and a public landscaped area is planned for the south side of the parcel abutting Mill Pond. Demolition of the current structure is planned as part of the project but has not been through a demolition hearing. Previous memos from the Winchester Historical Commission did not show a preference for preserving the current medical office building on site, but it should be noted that a demolition hearing would still need to occur. Parking for the residents will be provided under the building and total 60 spaces (ratio of 1:1 for the units) with an automated parking system. The property is located in the CBD East Core zoning district and contains 25,901 square ft. Below is my initial evaluation and it will be supplemented over the course of the permitting process.

	Requirement	Existing	Proposed
Lot Size	N/A	25,901 SF	unaltered
Front Setback	0'	0' Converse Pl 131.7' Mt. Vernon St	10' Converse Pl 2' Mt. Vernon St
Rear Setback	20'	19.4' Mill Pond south ~80' Mill Pond east	26.1' Mill Pond south 0' Mill Pond east
Open Space	Min 10%		13%
FAR	1.5 by-right 2.5 Special Permit 3.0 PUD Special Permit	15,206 SF/25,901 SF =FAR 0.3	77,443 SF/25,901 SF =FAR 2.99
Height	40' by right 48' by Special Permit No max for PUD Special Permit	60'	60' 8"
Parking	Minimum 0.75/residential unit	0 residential units	60, therefore 1.0/residential unit

Documents Received:

- CBD Special Permit Application Form D
- Existing Conditions Photos
- Beals Plan Set
- Operation and Maintenance Manual
- Traffic Impact Study by Howard Stein Hudson
- Stormwater Management Report
- Hacin Floor Plans and Elevations

Submission Requirements

All submission requirements in Section 7.3.16 are addressed within the application.

Waivers

1. **Front Setback-** I recommend favorable action with regards to this relief based on the added benefit of a woonerf and a comfortable-sized sidewalk, rather than having the building go right up against the street at 0'.
2. **Height-**The proposed height is outside of the traditional Special Permit regulations, however there is no maximum height in this PUD #3. The existing structure is 60' tall and the applicants plans to keep this height as a maximum, but much of the building massing will be around 50', with a penthouse and equipment screens. **More information is necessary with regards to the height of the metal panel equipment screen. It is not listed.**
3. **FAR-**The proposed FAR is at the maximum for the PUD (2.99 out of possible 3.0) The open space required is 20%, while 25% is proposed. The maximum 3.0 FAR may only be achieved if the Planning Board determines that the construction of the development "references and clearly meets the goals and objectives of the CBD by offering more diverse housing opportunities which address the population needs of the Winchester community." Winchester is in desperate need for new construction near transit in the downtown for downsizing seniors, small and younger families. The proposed development offers studios, 1BR, 2BR, 3BR condos and townhouses with 10% of the units being deed restricted affordable to 80%AMI and below. It is not expected that there would be a mix of condo and rental units within the same structure, but the proposed development does offer more diverse housing opportunities which address the population needs of the Winchester community. The zoning does not force petitioners to offer more than the required affordable units, only that there are diverse options within the building, and I feel this is achieved through the current scheme. Unless parking becomes an issue with the underground garage, I am generally in favor of more units that are smaller within the same footprint. This is something that we should discuss as this larger FAR that is being proposed should be maximized for the Town if given.

The applicant and the architect had several pre-application meetings with the Town Planner and the Planning Board throughout 2019 and 2020. The applicant was guided by the board's design consultant at the time, Dennis Carlone. The pre-application meetings with the Planning Board ceased after a general consensus could not be reached on scale. There are now 4 new members of the Planning Board since the time of the original preapplication meetings. Since those meetings, the applicant has met with several

members of the new Board in public session, where the Planning Board instructed the applicant to move forward with a 4 to 5-story structure.

Historical:

1. We will receive comments from the Winchester Historical Commission (WHC) leading up to the 10/26 meeting. Anecdotally, in the past, the WHC has shown a willingness to demolish the current structure but has made no formal decision on the scale and massing of a new building.

Floodplain:

1. This application will go under review by the Conservation Commission for a Notice of Intent. It is imperative that both the PB and the Conservation Commission are in contact throughout the permitting phase to ensure that the proposed building is in line with the town and state regulations with respect to wetlands, and the River Protection Act. **We will therefore need to hire a peer review for this work.** A scope will be determined by the Engineer and potentially in conjunction with the Conservation Commission.

Affordable Housing:

1. **How will the parking spot location and fees be determined for the residents of the affordable units?**
2. 60 total units, therefore 6 units at 80%AMI and 3 units at 80%-120% AMI. The applicant has stated they will work with the Housing Partnership Board to determine all DHCD guidelines have been met so that these units will be added to Winchester's Subsidized Housing Inventory.
3. The eventual location of all affordable units should be put on the floor plans.

Traffic/Transit Oriented Development:

1. 60 indoor bicycle spaces
2. Exterior bicycle spaces for the public are supplied
3. Will generate 272 vehicle trips by residents, 160 vehicle trips by consumers, 50 transit trips by residents, 52 transit trips by consumers, and 12 walk/bike trips by residents and 14 walk/bike trips by consumers per weekday. The Project is expected to generate approximately 7 less vehicle trips that under the Existing Conditions during the weekday am peak hour and 4 more vehicle trips during the weekday pm peak hour.
4. 7.3.20.2 requires there to be commercial parking at a ratio of 0.75 spaces per 1,000 square feet of commercial space. At 2,250 SF for the commercial portion, that requires 1.7 parking spaces (therefore 2 spaces) for the commercial aspect. **I recommend the applicant, under Section 7.3.20.4 #3 make a payment in lieu of providing these 2 spaces, or determine some type of shared parking for daytime use of the commercial space.**
6. **I recommend Toole Design to be hired as an outside consultant through 53G to review the Traffic analysis and the circulation within the site.**

Design

1. The architect has been in front of the previous Planning Board on at least 5 occasions. The most recent meeting in 2021, a majority of the Planning Board instructed the applicant to move forward with a 3.0 FAR at 4-5 stories. The scale and massing of the previous structure was more prominent than the current design. The architect uses traditional materials and has several features that add depth and quality to the project including: rounded edges, “Juliet” balconies, townhome patios, a rhythm of window placement, the creation of a street wall with reasonable setbacks, a public open space near the waterfront, a tripartite architectural configuration that consists of a base, middle and expressive top, activated rooftop areas for the residents, awnings on the ground floor, and an aesthetic that is complimentary to the downtown.
2. Refinement of the cornice, the top floor, the garage doors, the metal panel equipment screen, landscaping, the Converse Place/Mt. Vernon street corner, the retail entrance is warranted. **I recommend hiring an outside design consultant to help refine these and other areas, giving particular attention to the tenets of the CBD Rules and Regulations governing design.** I recommend hiring Dennis Carlone, the consultant who was used to develop these regulations to help implement them in this project. Mr. Carlone has been involved with these and other projects in the CBD and feel his expertise, knowledge, and history of the site makes him a strong candidate to move forward.
3. Further design considerations will occur as the project moves through permitting and could possibly be altered by any comments/suggestions from the Design Review Committee, the Historical Commission, or other Boards/Committees.

Operation and Maintenance Manual

Much of the supplied operation and maintenance manual references a different project on Main Street, not Converse Place. This should be resubmitted with correct information. The calcs reference the correct project but much of the prose do not.

Subsequent memos will be produced for each hearing in order to document the progress and determine any issues/concerns that have not been addressed. Overall, the project appears to meet the goals and objectives of the CBD to a high degree. Buildings of this scale and its high level of design are what the zoning contemplated in the first place. This is a larger scale building for Town Center, but there are a number of larger scale historical and more modern buildings in the Town Center that do not have the level of detail, the expansion of the public realm, or the addition of a more comfortable street (woonerf).

Brian Szekely, Town Planner