

Agenda Item: 5
Meeting Date: February 3, 2021
Report Date: January 29, 2021

STAFF REPORT

TO: PLANNING BOARD
FROM: Lisa Bourbonnais, Planning Director
RE: Master Plan Review of “The Post on Main”

Sathuan K. Sa for The Imperial at Greenwich II, LLC for property located at 1016 Main Street; Map 64 A.P. 5 Lot 218 (Zoned MUPD and M/LIO). The Applicant seeks to redevelop the site known as the former American Legion Hall as a 30-unit multi-family residential project to be called The Post on Main and it is designed to be an age-restricted community for persons 55 and over. Applicant has submitted a Comprehensive Permit request since 26% of the units (8 of 30) will be Affordable. The application as submitted specifically seeks Master Plan approval of the project described but will, by necessity, also include improvements to adjacent parcels, namely Assessor’s Map 64, Plat 5, Lots 158 and 219 which were part of the Final Plan approval for The Imperial on Greenwich (38 units accessed via Greenwich Boulevard) for which a favorable decision was recorded on 2/26/20. Staff advised that a major plan revision to the approved “Imperial” project would need to be reviewed concurrently (See Item 4 on the 1/6/21 agenda).

Applicant/Owner: Sathuan K. Sa for The Imperial on Greenwich II, LLC

Requested Action: Master Plan review and approval with required Public Information Meeting, advertised and noticed as required.

Location: 1016 Main Street, site formerly known as the American Legion Hall, Assessors Map 64, Plat 5, Lot 218. For purposes of access, project will also, by necessity, involve Assessors Map 64, Plat 5, Lots 158 and 219, site of the previously approved “Imperial on Greenwich,” a 38-unit multi-family housing development, not yet built.

Parcel Size and Frontage: The subject parcel, Lot 218, is 1.4 acres in size with 70 feet of frontage on Main Street. The additional parcels involved bring the total land area under consideration to 5.5 acres. Lot 158 is 1.6 acres in area with 54 feet of frontage on Main Street and Lot 219 as currently configured is 2.5 acres with 188 feet of frontage on Greenwich Boulevard.

Existing Land Use: From about 1960 until recently, the American Legion Post 15 operated their patriotic and civic club on site but that use has been discontinued. The existing structure is about 6,800 square feet in size but will be razed to make way for proposed new construction.

Surrounding Land Use: The property is part of the Town's Post Road/US Route 1 commercial corridor but a variety of residential uses also exist nearby, including single family homes along Greenwich Boulevard, new condos across Main Street, and a nursing home/assisted living facility to the northwest. To the southwest lies Christ Church. The Maskerchugg River helps form the southern boundary of the subject site and directly to the east is the Amtrak rail line.

Existing Zoning: The subject property is split-zoned with the western portion, including the existing building itself and the roadway frontage along Main Street, being zoned "MUPD," or Mixed Use Planned Development. Such zoning accommodates the higher density residential land use now proposed. The eastern portion including the rear parking lot is zoned M/LIO, which is the Town's light industrial zone. Residential uses are not ordinarily allowed therein.

Surrounding Zoning: The Parcel fronts on Main Street/Post Road which is the Town's primary commercial corridor. Underutilized MLIO-zoned properties are located along the railroad line to the north of the subject site and several residentially zoned lots face Greenwich Boulevard.

Comprehensive Plan Consistency: The Future Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan shows the area for "Transit-Oriented Development" (TOD), designed for mixed and high-density residential use.

The "TOD" designation grew out of a Plan first prepared by the Town in 2004 wherein a Mixed Use Master Plan was created and approved that anticipated future commuter rail availability just north of the subject site. Such project would make related parking facilities, as well as commercial retail and office space along with higher density residential uses desirable.

In the meantime, the State DOT has advised that while the East Greenwich Comprehensive Plan (The 20-Year Vision for the Town) may call for "Transit Oriented Development" at the subject site, the real odds of such development taking place in its truest sense may be slim as future extension of commuter rail or other passenger service here is unlikely. We would note that the TOD designation promotes high density housing but also highlights the proximity of these parcels to the services and amenities of downtown and Main Street given their walkable and

bike-able proximity. In that sense, the project comports with the long-range vision regardless of transit status.

Applicable Regulations: Within the Land Development and Subdivision Review Regulations, the following sections are applicable to major projects: Sections 15 – 17 pertaining to the Master Plan stage of review; and Section 23, Physical Design Requirements, which addresses vehicular circulation, landscaping and vegetative buffer requirements as well as site lighting. Section 24 pertaining to the provision of public improvements also applies.

Within the Zoning Code, Chapter XVII addresses Affordable Housing. Chapter 63 of the Town Code which deals specifically with Comprehensive Permits must also be considered. This chapter provides the standards which must be met for approval or denial of such applications.

Required Relief/Waivers: The Comprehensive Permit process requires the applicants to go through the standard multi-step approval process that any major land development goes through. As part of the Comprehensive Permit, the Planning Board is given the full authority to approve projects acting on behalf of other local boards, commissions, or officials (the Zoning Board or Historic District Commission, for example). In this case, the project proposes a land use not consistent with the current zoning for all the subject parcels. It also requires some dimensional variances or waivers from the Land Development and Subdivision Regulations. The Planning Board is empowered to grant the necessary zoning relief as part of its approval which saves the applicant from having to appear before the ZBR as part of the permitting process. A detailed and specific list of waivers and/or relief will need to be provided at the Preliminary Plan stage of review.

Discussion/Recommendations: Staff is not opposed to advancing the proposed project to the Preliminary stage of review. The Technical Review Committee reviewed the proposal at its November 17, 2020 meeting and noted several positive aspects of the plan. These included the compatibility of the architecture and other site features as relates to the planned “Imperial” project and the vastly improved roadway geometry in terms of how the new “Imperial Way” will align with the existing Greenwich Boulevard. The age-restriction and the fact that all units will be either 1 or 2 bedrooms was also viewed in a positive light in terms of potential fiscal impacts. A couple of concerns around a new sewer lateral and some parking lot drainage were identified but these are expected to be fully addressed as part of the Preliminary Plan review. A draft approval decision will be provided separately for consideration.

