

## NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

**RE:** 29 WOOSTER PLACE. Special Exception to allow 11 parking spaces where 61 spaces are required. Zone: RM-2. (18-86-S) (Owner/Applicant: Saint Michael's Church Corporation)

**REPORT:** 1553-11

**ADVICE:** No Advice (letters addressed to the CPC attached)

### BACKGROUND

The Saint Michaels Church Cooperation currently owns not only the subject property at 29 Wooster Place but also adjacent properties at 234, 240 and 250 Greene Street (all in slightly different ownership than the church). The 26,000 sf lot at 29 Wooster Place contains a 16,500sf church with an attached rectory; the remaining Greene Street parcels contain a former convent and school as well as parking for the church. The church would at some point like to sell the Green Street properties. It is the loss of approximately 15 parking spaces for the church currently located on these properties that necessitates this application.

### JANUARY 8 PUBLIC HEARING

The applicant presented the plan for the lot split and parking arrangement(s) at the January 8, 2019 public hearing of the Board of Zoning Appeals. Testimony was mixed with speakers in favor of the application, including representatives of new off-street parking locations and representatives of the church. Representatives of two neighboring households spoke in opposition in part due to concerns about parking and undetermined future reuse of the vacant school building.

### PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- Special Exception-Parking Nature of the Proposed Site: The 26,000sf lot at 29 Wooster Place contains a 16,500sf church with an attached rectory. There are 9 existing striped parking spaces on 29 Wooster Place. There are 2 handicap spaces located next to the church on the abutting Greene Street parcels; the church will retain the right to use these spaces. In addition, the church has the right to use 4 parking spaces located on the eastern half of the former Chestnut Street on Sundays and other times when the Conte School is not in session pursuant to an agreement with the city of New Haven recorded in volume 2186, page 497 of the New Haven Land Records. Currently the church operates at levels below capacity; it estimates that currently it has 125 people per mass (one mass on Saturday night and one on Sunday). This level of use would, practically speaking, generate a need for 25-30 on-site spaces.
- Resulting Traffic Patterns: The Transportation, Traffic and Parking Department reviewed the application and raised no concerns about the alternative parking arrangements.
- Nature of the Surrounding Area: The property is located in the residential heart of the Wooster Square neighborhood. It is an area of medium density consisting of primarily but by no means exclusively multifamily dwellings on fairly small properties with limited area for on-site parking. Given these characteristics (along with the presence of Wooster Square itself) it is not surprising that availability of on-street parking is an ongoing issue.
- The Comprehensive Plan: The existing use is consistent with the mixed land use pattern of the immediate surrounding area and the overall plans for the area contained in Vision 2025, the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan.

The Commission calls attention to the still-undetermined future reuse of the vacant school building. Although the land split and new parking arrangements for the church functions do not appear to raise significant neighborhood impacts; the ultimate potential benefit rests with a responsible and timely reuse of the school and the Commission encourages the applicant to work with city staff on use, design and parking in order to ensure that any proposal is also consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

**ADVICE**

The Commission has decided to refrain from providing advice regarding the requested Special Exception to allow 11 parking spaces where 61 spaces are required as the nature of the application and the need for the exception are unclear. The Commission suggests that staff forward the three letters expressing opposition to the Special Exception, received prior to the City Plan Commission meeting, to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

**ADOPTED:** January 23, 2019  
Edward Mattison  
Chair

**ATTEST:**   
Michael Piscitelli, AICP  
Acting Economic Development Administrator