

# NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

**RE:**           **ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT** to amend the text of Planned Development District #49, the Science Park Planned Development District to permit Primary and Secondary Educational Uses on Parcel B at **300 Mansfield Street** (Applicant, Highville Charter School Inc.; Bernard Pellegrino, Agent)

**REPORT:**    **1498-01**

**ACTION:**     Approval, with conditions

## BACKGROUND

The applicant is a State charter school originally founded in 1999. Highville Charter School was founded as a charter school to represent the interests of the Highwood district of Hamden Connecticut and the Newhallville district in the City of New Haven. The school has been located at its present location on Leeder Hill Drive in Hamden for the last seven years but has now outgrown that space. The school has, for the past two years, been searching for a location to relocate the school in the Newhallville district of the City, as 70% of the school's population live in New Haven. There have been very limited opportunities within the district for properties that meet the school's needs. The school has now entered into an agreement to purchase property located at 300 and 320 Mansfield Street, otherwise known as "One Science Park", from its current owner, the Southern New England Telephone Company.

The subject property is located within the Science Park Planned Development District (PDD#49). In particular the property is designated as Parcel B within PDD #49's multi-parcel district and is shown as 300 Mansfield Street. There are currently 9 separate parcels contained in the PDD#49. Currently there are various uses that are permitted within each of the 9 parcels. Appendix 1 attached hereto is the most current Table of permitted uses within PDD#49 broken down by both use and Parcel location. Educational uses are not currently permitted on Parcel B.

The property is approximately 4 acres in size. It is improved with an existing vacant building of approximately 100,000 square feet with related appurtenances, including over 200 parking spaces. The applicant believes that the site and the building are ideal for relocating the school, including its ongoing process of expansion from grades 1-10 this coming school (calendar year 2014-2015) thru the 12<sup>th</sup> grade by the beginning of the 2016 school calendar year.

## PUBLIC HEARING

City Plan Staff introduced the matter, which is a text amendment to an existing PDD to allow the primary and secondary school use only on the noted parcel B. The applicant's attorney Bernard Pellegrino, Jr. detailed the petition and described the proposed Pre-K – 8 state charter school program. Craig D. Drezek, the Executive Director/ Principal of the School also spoke. Commissioners discussed the changes in uses in Science Park PDD over the last several years. No one spoke in favor or against. The full Hearing was recorded by Post Reporting.

## PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

PDD #49 – commonly known as Science Park – is situated on 45 acres generally bounded by Division Street, Mansfield Street, Munson Street and the Farmington Canal Line in the Newhallville neighborhood. The district comprises most of the former Winchester Repeating Arms Factory and includes numerous multi-story industrial buildings, many of which have been redeveloped or are in process of redevelopment for new multi-tenant mixed use. Since PDD#49 was adopted in 1983 it has been amended on various occasions to change the permitted uses, to increase the number and location of land parcels to be regulated, and to change the zoning specifications pertinent to PDD#49 as a whole. Notably for the purpose of this application was an amendment in 2006 to permit educational uses on Parcel C, directly adjacent to parcel B, for the Amistad Academy. Amistad successfully operated on Parcel C until it relocated to its current location outside of the PDD#49.

The same rationales accepted by the Board to permit educational use on Parcel C apply to the present Petition to permit education uses on Parcel B. The Petitioner is desirous of relocating the School to the City to better serve the majority of its student population. The relocation of this charter school to the City will further the City's mission of raising the academic performance of New Haven's school children. The educational use is consistent with the Science Park goal of research and development while simultaneously providing benefits to the community and its residents. Finally in light of recent amendments to PDD#49 increasing the number of residential units located therein, permitting an educational use within walking distance represents a significant enhancement of the overall quality of life offered to residents of the District. Finally, in all of these respects the school will be beneficial to not only the District and all those who either work, live, or go to school within its boundaries, but also to the residents of the City as a whole.

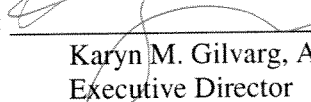
As required by §182 of the City of New Haven Charter, the Commission is of the view that the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment be in accordance with the comprehensive plan of development of the City of New Haven and as such will promote neighborhood and community development, enhance pedestrian access to community schools, and promote a diversity of uses within PDD#49 which are compatible and beneficial neighborhood services for the residents of the District. As also required by §182, this amendment is designed to lessen congestion in the streets, secure safety, promote health and the general welfare, provide adequate light and air, prevent the overcrowding of land, avoid undue concentrations of population, provide adequate provisions for transportation and other public requirements, reflect the character of the applicable zoning districts and their peculiar suitability for the uses to be allowed in the District, conserve the value of existing buildings, and to encourage the most appropriate use of land in the City.

**FINDINGS AND ADVICE:**

Upon consideration of the proposed modification to the use table for Science Park, the Commission believes the applicant's proposal is consistent with the overall intent and purpose of the Science Park PDD in that the application (i) enhances the ability to develop Science Park as an integrated and harmonious unit; (ii) constitutes an opportunity to improve overall quality of life so apparent as to warrant modification of the standards contained elsewhere in this ordinance; and (iii) the proposed amendment to the use table is (1) In accordance with the comprehensive plans of the city, including all plans for redevelopment and renewal; (2) Composed of a use deemed highly most appropriate and necessary for the integrated functioning of the planned development and for the city; (3) So designed in its space allocation, orientation, texture, materials, landscaping and other features as to produce an environment of stable and desirable character, complementing the design and values of the surrounding neighborhood, and showing such unusual merit as to reflect credit upon the developer and upon the city. Therefore, the Commission recommends approval with the following condition:

1. Review of final site plan by City Plan Commission

**ADOPTED:** October 15, 2014  
Edward Mattison  
Chair

**ATTEST:**   
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA  
Executive Director