

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION PLANNED DEVELOPMENT ACTION

RE: ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT, PLANNED DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT # 90, 150 WHALLEY AVENUE, Petition to Amend PDD #90 to Modify Approved Parking Ratio and Parking Space Size (Petitioner: Economic Development Administrator; Property Owner: Coral New Haven Associates II, LLC; Tenant: Stop and Shop, Inc.).
REPORT: 1469-10
ACTION: Approval with Conditions

PROJECT

ADDRESS: 150 Whalley Avenue
SITE: 6.7 Acres
ZONE: PDD #90
USE: 78,805 Square Feet Supermarket and Retail, 357 Parking Spaces.
DEVELOPER: Coral New Haven Associates, L.L.C.
SITE ENGINEERS: Langan Engineering & Environmental Services, New Haven, CT.
CITY LEAD: Economic Development **CONTACT:** Kelly Murphy **PHONE:** 946-2366

SUBMISSION

Cover Letter, Proposal Summary, Proposed Aldermanic Order, Parking Utilization Study, Site Plan depicting alterations to existing parking at 150 Whalley Avenue as well as proposed development at 485 Orchard Street and 561 Elm Street

BACKGROUND

Previous relevant Actions of the Commission: Application & General Plans (CPC 1212-01, 10/02/96), PDD amendments (CPC 1234-02, 09/17/97; CPC 1271-01, 06/16/99; CPC 1417-01, 06/18/08, CPC 1427-05, 4/22/09, CPC 1450A, 3/6/11), Detailed Plan Review for Hollywood Video (CPC 1243-11, 03/04/98).

PROJECT SUMMARY

Coral New Haven Associates seeks to modify an existing Planned Development District (PDD) designation reducing both the size and number of parking spaces to permit revisions to existing parking locations in order to accommodate a proposal proposed Gasoline Station at 485 Orchard and 561 Elm Streets.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

This proposed amendment to existing PDD #90 involves a relatively minor revision to the existing parking lot at 150 Whalley Avenue. The existing 357 parking spaces on the site serve the 78,793 sf of retail space (Stop and Shop, Auto Zone and other personal service/retail uses) also located on the property. The proposal seeks to accommodate a future gas station associated with Stop and Shop located on property southwest of 150 Whalley Avenue at 485 Orchard and 561 Elm Streets. This accommodation consists of vehicular access from the gas station onto the shopping center parking lot. The provision of this access will result in the elimination of existing required parking and necessitates parking space size reductions at 150 Whalley Avenue.

The submitted parking utilization study from Langan Engineering provides very clear and persuasive conceptual justification for the proposed revisions to the number of required spaces. Actual peak hour weekday and weekend site parking surveys indicate parking utilization of less than 50%. The study also mentions industry data that show shopping center parking utilization rates that would be satisfied by a ratio of fewer than three spaces per 1000 sf of use. This study also points out that much of this data relates to suburban and exurban shopping centers with little access to public transportation and even less to a pedestrian clientele.

Industry standards (although not in the Langan report) are also cited in respect to parking space size. The Commission accepts that the proposed 9x18 space size is, as stated in the applicants' summary, "consistent with industry standards and match the required space size in many Connecticut towns and in Stop and Shop's prototypical standards".

As proposed it does not appear as though the proposed site revisions will have any appreciable impact upon existing utilities, site drainage, loading or traffic circulation.

PDD CONSIDERATIONS

Deviations from Existing PDD Requirements

As noted in the applicants' submission the current standard for parking on this property is 4.5 spaces per thousand square feet of gross floor area of the shopping center, or 357 spaces. They are requesting a ratio of 3.75 spaces per thousand square feet of use for an on-site total of 296 spaces. They are also asking to reduce the required length of parking spaces from 19.5 feet long to 18 feet long, with a width of 9 feet.

COMPLIANCE WITH PDD OBJECTIVES IN § 65(a) OF THE ZONING ORDINANCE

Section 65(a) of the Ordinance sets forth the objectives to be considered by the Board of Aldermen in reviewing an application for or amendments to a PDD. The objectives set forth in Section 65(a) that are applicable to the University's proposal are as follows:

The PDD must be

1. *"In accordance with the comprehensive plans of the City, including all plans for redevelopment and renewal";*
2. *"Composed of such uses, and in such proportions as are most appropriate and necessary for the integrated functioning of the planned development and for the City"; and*
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..."*

The proposed amendment to parking standards is in accordance with all three of the above objectives. It can clearly contribute to the continued viability of the lower Whalley Avenue commercial area and to the quality of life in the adjacent neighborhoods. It can also just as clearly facilitate the physical integration of two important neighborhood commercial uses in a manner that arguably enhances (in terms of traffic and parking) the operational qualities of both existing uses at 150 Whalley Avenue and the adjacent Orchard Street properties. Also, submitted parking survey data and cited industry standards upon which the applicant bases the standards of this current proposal demonstrate an efficient use of property that recommends itself to not only this property but possibly to all other similar development in the City. Based on these considerations it is evident that the proposed amendment to parking standards can "further the objectives of Section 65 and will 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".

Public Hearing summary: At the September 18, 2012 public hearing, Deputy Director Thomas Talbot noted the PDD Amendment had originated with the plan for a proposed gas station on the adjacent parcel at 485 Orchard Street and 561 Elm Street, because parking spaces were removed from the Stop and Shop parcel to provide access to the station. The Langan Parking Utilization Study showed a vacancy rate of more than 50% of the lot even at peak hours, and national supermarket standards were considerably lower than the requested 3.75 spaces per thousand square feet of gross floor area, a reduction from 4.5. The same was true for the reduction in length of parking spaces where the New Haven 20 foot standard was excessive.

Jenny Foo, Yale Law School student, whose client was the Greater Dwight Development Corporation, summarized the Amendment, noting the parking lot was underutilized, it would allow flexibility in siting landscaping and amenities around the proposed gas station and would provide access from the supermarket lot. Linda Townsend Maier, Executive Director, GDDC, listed the accomplishments of GDDC, a community organization focused on the well being, economic development and social success of the Dwight neighborhood. Affiliates Coral New Haven II Associates and Dwight Golden LLC would own the adjacent parcel intended as a gas station and then lease it to Stop and Shop.

John Plante, Langan Engineering, noted the parking spaces would not be restriped immediately, and that some of the spaces were already sized at 9x18. Some would be eliminated however, hence the parking ratio reduction request. The shopping center was fully leased out now and the lot was half full. He presented the General Plan

for PDD #90 which also included the improvements around the Elm Orchard corner site and the 14 parking space reduction.

Sheila Masterson, Executive Director, Whalley Avenue Special Services District, submitted a letter of support for the Zoning Amendment. She said the improvements would complete the development of the shopping center lot. The Taylor garage site had been derelict for many years. Market research showed there was a shortage of fueling stations in New Haven and therefore a need.

Kate Walton, 8 University Place, a 33-year homeowner who worked in community relations in behalf of the store at 150 Whalley, was in full support of the project.

Anika Lemar, attorney from Wiggin and Dana, representing Stop and Shop, clarified there would be an administrative review of the minor changes in the parking lot once the Zoning Amendment.

A letter of support from Alderman Frank Douglass, 2nd Ward, was read into the record.

COMMISSION FINDINGS

It is the judgment of the Commission that based on submitted materials and determinations contained in this report that the Application meets the objectives of Section 65(e) (4)E of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of New Haven as follows:


1. The proposed PDD parking standard amendment may be utilized in accordance with the comprehensive plans of the City in that it reinforces the commercial viability of lower Whalley Avenue and contributes to the quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods.
2. The submitted information demonstrates that the proposed amended standards are not only well within the range of accepted and recommended professional standards but also that they are essential in attaining the level of physical integration between the existing shopping center and future gas station required in any PDD.
3. The amended parking standards (parking ratio of 3.75 spaces per 1000 SF and parking space size of 9 feet by 18 feet) are appropriate and demonstrably preferable to existing PDD #90 requirements as originally approved.

Based on these findings the Commission therefore recommends that the PDD Amendment be approved with the following conditions:

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

- 1) This report and the Application and text shall be recorded on the Land Records of the City of New Haven within 60 days of publication of Board of Aldermen approval for the PDD Amendments to be considered in effect. A certified copy of the recording on the Land Records shall be furnished to the Commission prior to Detailed Plan submission.
- 2) The Commission shall be given prior notice of any change in development principals, and any change in the approved submitting professional design team shall be for cause and require prior Commission approval.
- 3) All necessary on or off site utility improvements are required to be completed at developer cost from its funds or by City Agreement, and to the satisfaction of the City Engineer.

ADOPTED: September 18, 2012
Edward Mattison
Chairman

ATTEST: 
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA
Executive Director