

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ACTION

RE: **ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT, SCIENCE PARK PLANNED DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT #49**, Amend Planned Development District to permit School Use in Building 5 aka 5 Science Park (Petitioner: Tyler Cooper & Alcorn, LLP for Science Park Development Corporation).

REPORT: 1391-36

ACTION: Approval, with conditions

BACKGROUND

The applicant Science Park Development Corporation (SPDC) is seeking an amendment to PDD #49 to allow secondary school use at Parcel C of Science Park. The applicant proposes this change to the PDD use table to enable Amistad Academy to develop a charter high school within Building #5. Building #5 is a multi-tenant rehabilitated industrial building in the northeast section of Science Park. Amistad's proposal is to lease 13,100 s.f. within the 103,000 s.f. building to expand its program to the 9-12 grade levels. This matter has been referred not only to the City Plan Commission but also to the Department of Public Works and the Department of Traffic and Parking.

PUBLIC HEARING

Charles Andres, Esq. presented this item on behalf of the applicant. Attorney Andres stated this is a proposal to allow secondary school use only in Parcel C for the purposes of a proposed expansion of Amistad Academy's new high school grades to this location. Commissioner Miller inquired about the balance of uses at Science Park. Also, the proposed lease of 13,000 s.f. seems small for secondary school use when compared to city school construction. Attorney Andres stated that the building and related Building #4 are large enough to accommodate Amistad and many other uses. The lease is for three years. Amistad Executive Director Dacia Toll stated that charter schools typically have smaller budgets so they are efficient with the space. Plus, the partnership with Yale allows Amistad to use the university's gymnasium and other larger spaces. Commissioner Huge asked if there are any site plans or needs related to buses, etc. Attorney Andres stated that a site plan review application will be filed as well. A copy of the proposed ordinance amendment was entered for the record.

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, some of which have been redeveloped for new multi-tenant mixed use. The applicant SPDC was formed as a non-profit organization to steward the redevelopment of the district. SPDC has a number of responsibilities as it owns most of the land; operates several buildings and oversees a master developer, Lyme Properties for on-going redevelopment planning for other vacant buildings. A map of Science Park is attached. By parcel, Parcel K is the LCI Ashmun / Canal residential project. Parcel J includes Building #25, which recently was renovated and opened by Lyme Properties. Parcel G includes one of the larger vacant buildings and a surface parking lot. Parcel D is the recently-closed USRAC facility. Parcel C includes the subject Building #5. Parcel B also is improved with renovated commercial / industrial space.

Amistad Academy is 270-student, nationally-recognized charter school located on James Street. The existing facility is located in a confined area and on-site expansion would be difficult. Instead, the school has been looking at various properties in New Haven and now has expressed interest in Science Park. The 13,100 s.f. space in Building #5 currently is vacant and, if approved, would be the new home for approximately 50 9th grade students in the coming 2006-07 school year. Amistad intends to phase-in one grade in each of the next four years, reaching a maximum enrollment of 224 in the 2012-2013 school year. No details are provided about the school's space needs beyond the first year, nor are any traffic studies or site plans provided for Commission review.

Section 64. states the "City Plan Commission and its staff shall carry on a continuous review of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the zoning ordinance, and recommend such changes as they see fit." As this amendment pertains to a planned development, the Commission also considers the objectives and standards for planned developments. Of note, the Commission views the proposed Amistad Academy expansion in light of the overall master planning for Science Park. SPDC was founded in 1981 with a primary objective to "attract to Science Park firms involved in research and development, high technology and light manufacturing which will provide employment opportunities to

residents of the Dixwell and Newhallville neighborhoods as well as revitalization of those neighborhoods and which will provide economic benefits to the city as a whole.”

Although the redevelopment is proceeding at a slower-than-anticipated pace, Science Park generally remains true to its initial goals. The park is being developed in an integrated fashion; the tenants – including Vion Pharmaceuticals, Eastman Kodak, Genaissance, Higher One and others contribute to the city’s economic base; and the Elm Haven, Division Street and related developments are positive indicators of neighborhood revitalization.

Other Considerations-

1. SPDC is encouraged to demonstrate how this use will contribute to the overall goals of Science Park.
2. Please demonstrate the compatibility of the use with other uses in the building (use, layout, site plan, etc).
3. Is the proposed use compatible with any environmental land use restrictions?
4. What is the long-term build-out for Amistad’s phase-in of grades 10-12?

The Commission’s first preference would be the redevelopment of vacant space (eg. Parcel G) for a new secondary school or other non-profit use. Given Amistad’s timeline for opening the new program, a full remediation and renovation of Parcel G obviously would not be possible. However, the Commission encourages the alders and SPDC aggressively pursue high technology tenants and preserve a healthy balance between basic economic uses and non-profit community-based uses.

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) shows the redevelopment of a large tract of land as an integrated and harmonious unit; (ii) the overall design is so outstanding 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 such uses, and in such proportions, as are 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 conditions:

1. City Plan Commission detailed plan review for tenant fit-out, parking, etc. is required.
2. Provide letter from Health Department Director and Building Official approving the tenant fit-out and interior space plan.
3. Maximum allowable secondary school space shall be 25,000 s.f. within Building #5. Elementary and middle school grades not allowed under this approval.

***Note:** Zone change order provided at CPC public hearing and attached to the report.*

ADOPTED: June 21, 2006
Patricia A. King
Chair

ATTEST: _____
Michael Piscitelli, AICP
Asst. Director, Comprehensive Planning



Building #5

