

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: 227 CHURCH STREET, Special Exception to permit zero additional parking spaces where 12 are required for 12 new units in a previously converted building in a BD zone (Owner: Connecticut Properties, LLC. Applicant: Stephen J. Joncus, 10-14-S).
REPORT: 1437-25
ADVICE: Approval with Conditions

BACKGROUND

Stephen Joncus seeks a Special Exception to permit zero additional parking spaces where 12 are required for 12 new units to a previously converted building; Special Exception to permit zero open space where 600 square feet is required in a BD zone.

Previous Zoning History:

02-05-S. Granted. Special Exception to permit zero open space and a waiver of the 300 ft. walking distance requirement.

Conditions:

1. *The courtyard to the south of the building shall be retained.*
2. *A waiver of the walking distance to parking is granted until the Grove Street "Mid-Block" garage is completed.*

At the time this relief was granted plans for a parking garage (the mid-block garage) on Elm Street, not Grove St., between Church St. and Orange St. were unfolding. This anticipated garage was never built. Interim parking was made available at Granite Square parking garage. The New Haven Parking Authority confirmed availability for this parking. This applicant seeks an outright parking reduction for the twelve new units.

This building is listed as item #154 of the New Haven Historic Resources Inventory as an Art Moderne building constructed in 1937.

At the BZA hearing on February 9, 2010, Mr. Joncus described the project as filling in vacant space on the south side of the ground floor. The new apartments were to be efficiencies. No persons spoke in favor or in opposition.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Residential dwellings in the BD zone are calculated using the RH-2 regulations. Using the conversion rule of Section 16(a)(1)f, 170 units are permitted (1 unit per 1,000 s.f. GFA; 170K GFA in bldg.). A new total of 167 are proposed (145 existing plus 12 new).

The submitted plans show twelve apartments on the south side of the building split evenly into partial first and second floors. This area was originally an assembly room and is partially depressed; thus two new floors can be fitted to the space. Each apartment is approximately 15'x32' (480 sq.ft.). All have a window that faces the south side. Access to the first floor apartments is made via a hallway just to the south of the lobby. The second floor apartments are accessed by a stairway in the lobby. Storage space is not indicated on the plan.

As to open space, previous relief was granted to waive 36,250 sq.ft. for the existing 145 units (CPC 1316-13). The rationale for that relief reads as follows:

"The Commission finds the presence of the New Haven Green a block southward provides adequate proximity to open space in this downtown setting, and the use proposed is consistent with the CBD statement of purpose. While the Commission concurs that creation of nearly .83 acre open space is impractical in this instance, it believes the courtyard to the south of the building should be retained as a condition of approval".

If relief of open space for 145 units was rational, then the same argument is rational for an additional twelve.

Special Exception Criteria:

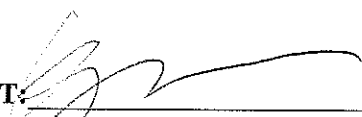
- Nature of the Proposed Site: The building was built in 1937 as an office tower and is listed on the Historic Resources Inventory as item #154. It has since been converted into a 145-unit apartment building. The north side of the ground floor has three apartments and a credit union; the middle portion is the lobby.
- Resulting Traffic Patterns: Density in the building is increasing by 8%. If all new tenants drive they will have to make parking arrangements in one of the existing garages. For those that don't drive the downtown is well served by public transportation. Staff is of the opinion that, if necessary, the downtown garages can accommodate twelve new vehicles for monthly parking.
- Nature of the Surrounding Area: The immediate area has a mix of office, residential, commercial and institutional uses. The proposed use fits the character of the area.
- Proximity to Public Buildings: City Hall, the New Haven Free Library and the New Haven Green area located approximately 700 feet to the south.
- The Comprehensive Plan: The proposal respects the advice of the Comprehensive Plan.

ADVICE

The Commission advises the proposal is reasonable and recommends approval with conditions:

1. Approval is for 12 new efficiency apartments on the south side of the first floor as shown on the submitted site plan.
2. Site plan approval by the City Plan Commission shall be required.

ADOPTED: February 17, 2010
Edward Mattison
Chair

ATTEST: 
Karyn M. Gilvarg AIA
Executive Director