

## NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

**RE:** 208 WOOSTER STREET, Special Exception to permit a Neighborhood Convenience Use (coffee shop) in a RM-2 zone (Owner: ARPI, LLC. Applicant: June Kessler, 10-56-S).

**REPORT:** 1442-17

**ADVICE:** Approval with Conditions

### BACKGROUND

June Kessler seeks a Special Exception to permit a neighborhood convenience use (coffee shop) in a RM-2 zone.

#### Previous History:

79-79-S. Granted. Special Exception for a Laundromat.

04-61-S. Granted. Special Exception for a Laundromat.

#### BZA Hearing:

At the BZA hearing on July 13, 2010 the applicant, June Kessler presented. She said she was anxious to sell her personal brand of coffee in New Haven's Italian neighborhood. No one opposed or endorsed her application.

### PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed space is located in a foyer-like area that protrudes from the building. It is a very small, perhaps no more than 200 square feet.

The unscaled floor plan shows a display window, display counter, two tables, a hutch, stove and some shelving. The focus of the proposed use to operate a "gourmet coffee and foodie bar" offering coffee, smoothies and other types of non-alcoholic drinks, and handmade chocolate and jewelry. The presence of a stove would indicate some sort of food preparation but that information is lacking. The narrative pitches this business as "Offering a "fun quick take-out place to get a healthful meal or energizing drink...".

The application narrative also reads that that days and hours of operation will be 6:00 am to 11:00 pm, seven days per week and that one to two persons would be employed. In addition, a few outdoor tables are desired. Board members may want the applicant to state, in detail, the exact nature of the business including what food, if any, will be prepared on site.

#### Special Exception Criteria as outlined Section 63(d)(3):

- Nature of the Proposed Site: 208 Wooster Street is part of a three-story row house on six narrow lots (21.3' wide) built in 1880. The front portion of the unit was modified in 1916 (BP: 11200) to include a storefront. In the past this storefront has included a tailor and Laundromat. There is a long history of small neighborhood-based businesses here. The current proposal as a place where people can dash in for a quick cup of coffee and small bite to eat of something is in keeping with the historic use of the storefront.
- Resulting Traffic Patterns: Wooster Street is very busy. It is a tourist destination for those seeking world class pizza and other fine Italian fare. Parking comes at a premium for the destination restaurants. However, this business is geared toward capturing pedestrian passersby who may be coming or going from other locations up and down the street. Parking isn't an issue for this business.
- Nature of the Surrounding Area: Wooster Street has a broad mix of residential, restaurant and other office-type businesses. In the immediate area are the Joker's Wild comedy club at 230 Wooster St., the Wooster Square Cooperative Housing development at 158 Wooster St., a mixed use building at 223 Wooster St, and commercial uses at 235 & 237 Wooster St. The proposed pedestrian oriented coffee shop fits the character of the area.
- Proximity to Public Buildings: The Metropolitan Business Academy inter-district magnet school is located about 500-feet to the south and the Polly T. McCabe Center is located about 980-feet to the northeast.
- The Comprehensive Plan: The Comprehensive Plan endorses the continuation of neighborhood convenience uses.

Section 31(d)(4) gives the City Plan Commission authority in determining parking. The size of the space is very small and the business is oriented towards pedestrians. On street parking is available along Wooster Street and Olive Street. Therefore the Commission has determined that dedicated parking is not necessary.

Section 31(d)(1) reads the City Plan Commission must make a finding of the following:

- *Space for such a use is not available in nearby areas which are zoned for business.* The nearest BA zone starts about 500-feet to the east along Wooster Street. There does not appear to be any available space in that zone.
- *Such new use is necessary to serve the immediate neighborhood giving due consideration to:*
  - *The character of the neighborhood.*
  - *The density of development.*
  - *The shopping habits of neighborhood residents.*
  - *The availability of public and private transportation.*

The Commission notes the character of the larger area is predominantly mixed-use and densely settled. The shopping habits of the residents are unknown because a detailed market study was not conducted. However there is a large and well attended farmer's market in DePalma Square on Saturdays. The proposed business could attract many passersby. The area is mostly served by private transportation, although a bus line does run down Chapel Street, one block to the north. The Commission notes there is no other use of this type nearby. For these reasons the Commission finds the use necessary to serve the neighborhood.

#### ADVICE

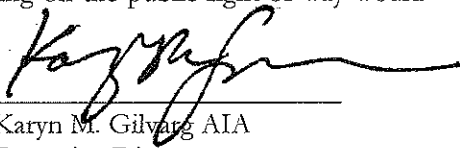
The Commission advises the proposed shop is very small relying upon pedestrian traffic coming and going from the other, larger restaurants and businesses along Wooster Street. The Commission advises the proposal satisfies the Special Exception criteria of Section 63(d)(3) for the following reasons:

1. The proposed site was adapted in 1916 to accommodate commercial uses.
2. Parking is not required because this business is geared toward pedestrians.
3. The nature of the surrounding area is mixed use and the proposed use fits that character.
4. The Comprehensive Plan endorses the continuation of neighborhood convenience uses.

The Commission recommends approval with the following conditions:

1. Approval is for a coffee shop with accessory sales of food and jewelry.
2. Hot food shall not be prepared on site.
3. The days and hours of operation shall not exceed 6:00 am to 11:00 pm, seven days per week.
4. No outside seating is permitted on private property. Any outside seating on the public right-of-way would require a City permit.

ADOPTED: July 21, 2010  
Edward Mattison  
Chair

ATTEST:   
Karyn M. Gilvarg AIA  
Executive Director

