



Michelle M. Smith – Chief Planner
Worcester Planning & Regulatory Services Division
455 Main Street, 4th Floor
Worcester, Massachusetts 01608

October 3, 2024

RE: Amendment Special Permit – CCOD
Amendment Definitive Site Plan
GoVenture Capital Group, LLC
Franklin Street, Worcester, MA

Dear Ms. Smith,

GoVenture Capital Group, LLC (the Applicant) is submitting an application for an Amendment to a Special Permit and Definitive Site Plan for the construction of a high-rise apartment complex on multiple parcels in the area of Franklin Street, Arctic Street, Plastic Street, and Keese Street in Worcester, Massachusetts. This Project was granted Definitive Site Plan Approval by the Planning Board in April of 2022, and an Amendment to the Definitive Site Plan in June of 2023. This Project was also granted a Special Permit in June 2023.

As part of the current review, the Applicant is requesting an amendment to a Special Permit be granted to allow for a reduction in the minimum parking requirements under Article IX Sec. 7.C.3. The granting of this Special Permit will allow the Project to eliminate the use of parcel 4-15-0002B with the address 26 Arctic Street.

In addition, it is requested that this Definitive Approval be amended to modify the parking layout to reflect the changes requested in the Special Permit. The primary change to the project is the reduction of 59 parking spaces. The overall parking layout and flow of traffic has remained the same.

The Project is comprised of multiple properties along the southerly side of Franklin Street, between Arctic and Plastic Streets, and adjacent to Keese Street in Worcester, Massachusetts. The list of properties included in the Project is provided below.

<u>Map and Parcel</u>	<u>Address</u>
4-15-17+24	274 Franklin Street
4-15-00003	284 Franklin Street
4-15-0003A	290 Franklin Street
4-15-00013	290 Franklin Street
4-15-00014	23 Hygeia Street
4-15-00004	25 Arctic Street
4-15-00023	14 Hygeia Street
4-15-00015	33 Arctic Street
4-15-00016	45 Arctic Street
4-15-00005	38 Arctic Street
4-15-00007	2 Keese Street
4-14-2A+3B	0 Grafton Street

These parcels are located within the Business, General (BG-3.0) District, the Downtown/Blackstone Canal Sign Over Lay District (DSOD), Commercial Corridors Overlay District, Elsewhere (CCOD-E) and the

Manufacturing, General (MG-2.0). The intended use of the property as defined within *Table 4.1-Permitted uses by Zoning Districts-Residential Use*: 11.) Multi-family dwelling, High Rise, is allowed by-right per the Zoning Ordinance in the District that the structure is located within.

It is the intent that these parcels will ultimately be consolidated to create a single lot on which the proposed new building will be constructed.

SITE REVIEW – SPECIAL PERMIT

The Project consists of the construction of a single new high-rise apartment building comprised of three hundred and sixty-four (364) dwelling units, which has not changed from the latest approval.

As part of this Project, a total of 342 surface parking spaces will be provided, including provisions for bicycle parking and EV-capable parking spaces. This is a change of 50 parking spaces from the latest approval of 392 total parking spaces. As noted in the Definitive Site Plan, access to the parking areas will remain via Plastic Street, Arctic Street, and Keese Street extensions.

The general grading design has not changed since the latest approval. A series of new deep-sump hooded catch basins will be installed to capture the runoff, directing the stormwater through water quality devices to provide Total Suspended Solids (TSS) removal. Upon treatment, portions of the stormwater will be directed to the new trunklines within Arctic and Plastic Street. The remaining flows will be directed to one of two underground storage systems located throughout the development. These systems will be comprised of concrete galley chambers set within a bed of crushed stone to provide mitigation of peak rates of runoff and provide additional recharge capacity.

The general stormwater design has also not changed since the latest approval. It is predicated on the fact that there will be a reduction in impervious area on the property. This results in a reduction in peak rates of rates and volume of runoff to the municipal system. As part of this project, discharges from the project are directed to the combined system located within Franklin Street, as well as an existing drain line that runs from the Keese Street property under the Interstate 290 to the Grafton Street system. Reference is made to the Drainage Analysis & Report for a comprehensive review of the proposed stormwater system and its compliance with current Stormwater Management Regulations.

SPECIAL PERMIT FINDINGS OF FACT

The Special Permit requested is to allow for the reduction of the minimum parking requirements for the proposed development.

Reduction of Minimum Parking Requirements

Per the Zoning Ordinance, the required number of spaces is 401 parking spaces. This is calculated by including 1 space per unit and 1 space per 10 units for guest parking.

We are requesting a reduction of 59 spaces (14.7%) of the minimum parking requirement. As noted in the Definitive Site Plan, there are 342 parking spaces provided.

Per the Requirements of Article II, Section 6(A)(2), The Board must make findings on specific criteria to determine if the effects of the proposed use will impact the City. We offer the following review of these Criteria.

a. Social, Economic or Community Needs that are served by the proposal:

The Project consists of the construction of a single new high-rise apartment building comprised of three hundred and sixty-four (364) dwelling units. The Special Permit is being requested specifically for reductions in the minimum parking requirements within the City of Worcester. The development itself will provide a significant benefit to the Social, Economic and Community needs by providing much needed residential housing in areas of the City that it is most needed. The total number of dwellings has not changed, and the reduction of parking does not negatively impact the social, economic, or community benefit that the project provides.

b. Traffic flow and safety, including access, parking and loading areas:

The reduction in the minimum parking requirements associated with parking within the City of Worcester are not anticipated to adversely affect the traffic flow and safety of the overall development. Sidewalks, site lighting, and pedestrian crosswalks remain along Arctic Street and Plastics Street which provide pedestrian movement within the parking areas. The number of parking spaces is adequate to service the number of units within the development per the Parking Impact Memorandum prepared by Howard Stein Hudson. Please see attached supplemental documents.

c. Adequacy of utilities and other public services:

The reduction in the minimum parking requirements associated with parking within the City of Worcester are not anticipated to adversely affect adequacy of utilities or other public services. The reduction in parking directly correlates to a reduction in impervious areas which reduces the amount surface runoff from the site. This reduction in runoff allows for enhanced natural recharge on the site and lessens the impact on the existing surface runoff infrastructure that ultimately discharges to the Blackstone Wastewater Treatment combined sewer system. Furthermore, there is no impact on the other utilities such as water, electrical, or telecommunication by the reduction of parking.

d. Neighborhood character and social structure:

The reductions in the minimum parking requirements associated with parking within the City of Worcester are not anticipated to adversely affect the neighborhood character and social structure. The reduction allows for improvements to open space and landscape, reduction of impervious areas on the Project.

e. Impacts on the natural environment:

The reductions in the minimum parking requirements associated with parking within the City of Worcester are not anticipated to adversely affect the natural environment. The Project actually provides a significant improvement to the natural environment based on current site conditions.

f. Potential fiscal impact, including city services needed, tax base, and employment:

The reductions in the minimum parking requirements associated with parking within the City of Worcester are not anticipated to have an adverse fiscal impact on City services, tax base, or employment. The Project currently provides significant positive impacts on the area, providing the same number of dwelling units as previously approved. However, the granting of the Special Permit would provide opportunities for future development with the use of 26 Arctic Street. This would have an additional positive fiscal impact, including city services needed, tax base, and employment.

SUPPLEMENTARY SPECIAL PERMIT FINDINGS OF FACT

Per the Requirements of the Ordinance, the Board shall provide special considerations for relief from parking requirements under Article IX Section 7.E. We offer the following supplemental review of these Criteria.

i. Explain whether the resulting development with the modifications proposed is substantially consistent with the purposes and intent of the Commercial Corridors Overlay District.

The proposed reductions in the minimum parking requirements associated with parking within the City of Worcester result in a development that is substantially consistent with the purposes and intent of the Commercial Corridors Overlay District. Per the Ordinance the primary goal of the Overlay District is to “...to encourage compact, pedestrian friendly development that is physically and functionally integrated through site design, dimensional and parking standards that limit parking...” These reductions would further enhance the provisions for a more compact development by reducing the dwelling unit to parking ratio and providing flexibility for future development initiatives in the area.

ii. Explain the relationship of the modification to other planning considerations for the immediate area and within the Commercial Corridors Overlay District as a whole, including the plans, programs, policies and public investments of the various departments and agencies of the City of Worcester and the State of Massachusetts.

The proposed reductions in the minimum parking requirements associated with parking within the City of Worcester are in line with the Worcester Mobility Action Plan (MAP), which is based on the guiding vision that the City of Worcester's transportation network should support people of all ages and abilities with safe, equitable and sustainable mobility choices. As discussed, and analyzed in the MAP, strategies all aim to improve and advance mobility for Worcester's community through the conversion of roadways to Complete Streets, elimination of traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries, removal of inequitable transportation barriers and collaborative work across City departments.

The Development's proximity to Union Station provides a unique opportunity to contribute towards the four goals of the MAP, those being safety, equity, sustainability and connectivity. It is envisioned that patrons that will one day call the Development their home will be people largely commuting by rail to work and related destinations, reducing the need for automotive transportation. This will have a direct impact on the three remaining goals, where reducing carbon emissions from automotive travel will provide a more sustainable travel solution and also provide higher access to public transportation and the connectivity that naturally comes with it at an affordable price. For instance, the Development includes bicycle storage as we anticipate many of our patrons will use bicycles as a means of travel.

Furthermore, with the City's significant platform, track, and accessibility improvement project at Union Station now becoming operational, MBTA will have the ability to dock two trains at Union Station at the same time; meaning that one train can be loaded with travelers while the other train is coming into Union Station. This also provides the opportunity for the "express" rail to become a viable option for our communities which will further incentive our patrons to travel by train versus automobile. These attributes reduce the need for a higher parking ratio at the Development and better align the Developments design with the City's goals.

iii. Explain whether the pedestrian environment provided on site and its connection to, and interaction with, the public right of way(s) is designed using best practices within the site's context.

The proposed reductions in the minimum parking requirements associated with parking within the City of Worcester do not adversely affect the pedestrian environment onsite and its connection to, and interaction, with the public right of ways. Pedestrian mobility is maintained along the right of ways and parking lot, so the entire site is accessible from Franklin Street to Keese Street.

iv. Explain the impact of the modifications on neighboring properties.

The proposed reductions in the minimum parking requirements associated with parking within the City of Worcester would not alter the positive effect of the proposed development on neighboring properties. With the reduction of parking, it allows a neighboring parcel to be used for future development. Overall the Project is anticipated to be a significant improvement to the area over current conditions.

v. Explain whether the requested modifications are needed to provide adequate parking within the context of the other special permit criteria taking into consideration the combination of on and off-street parking.

Howard Stein Hudson prepared a Parking Impact Memorandum which has been attached to this package. Their observations indicate that 550-600 off-street public parking spaces are available in the near vicinity throughout the day at any time. In addition, observations indicate that 70 additional on-street public parking spaces are available in the near vicinity throughout the day at any time. It is anticipated that the projects parking needs will be very similar to those of other rental units in the area which are showing a parking ratio between 0.92 and 0.98. The projects proposed parking ratio is adequate for the site.

SITE REVIEW - AMENDMENT

Much of the original site design has been maintained. The major change to the site plan is the elimination of the use of parcel 26 Arctic Street and the associated parking. In eliminating 26 Arctic St, there were minor changes to the overall parking layout which were required to balance the site, shifting a parking bay a few feet North on the plans. However, the general parking layout, access points to right of ways, and traffic flow has stayed the same.

As part of the approval process, a review of the various Site Plan Standards is required for review. We offer the following information below:

AMENDMENT REVIEW

To facilitate in the review of the project a list of the modifications performed have been provided below:

- *Building Modification:*
The original design incorporated a single high-rise structure, with a total of 364 units in a ring-shaped building to allow a central courtyard area. The proposed building has maintained its original intent.
- *Building Unit Distribution:*
The original unit distribution has been maintained at forty-four (44) two-bedroom, two-hundred and eleven (211) one-bedroom, and one-hundred and nine (109) studio units will be provided, for a total of 364 units.
- *Parking/Access Modification:*
The original design incorporated the use of #26 Arctic Street for parking. As part of the proposed amendment, the use of #26 Arctic Street has been eliminated.

Access to the site has not changed. Access will incorporate the approved improvements to Arctic Street along with additional improvements to Plastic Street. The parking area directly behind the building is created with a series of driveway connections between Plastic Street and Arctic Street which provide access to the parking spaces. This creates a loop road configuration around the building which also provides access around the building for emergency vehicles.

- *Utility Infrastructure*
The utility services have not changed, except for any utilities entering #26 Arctic Street. The proposed amendment has eliminated the utilities entering the #26 Arctic Street parcel.

The intent of the drainage infrastructure has remained the same with surface runoff being collected via catchbasins and directed through water quality devices prior to discharge. The Sewage connections to the municipal system are also maintained as originally approved.

- *Tenant Amenities:*
Various tenant amenities provided as previously approved have remained unchanged. These include a ground level courtyard area in the interior of the building with a pavilion, walkways, grilling stations and dog park.

SITE PLAN STANDARDS

a) *Vehicular traffic access and circulation*

Vehicular traffic has remained the same, except for the use of #26 Arctic Street. The proposed amendment does not contemplate any vehicular traffic being used on #26 Arctic Street.

b) *Pedestrian Access and Circulation*

Pedestrians Access and Circulation has remained the same.

c) Off-Street Parking

The total required number of required parking spaces for this building per the Ordinance has been determined to be 401 parking spaces. A total of 342 surface parking spaces has been provided. This is a reduction of 59 parking spaces which we are seeking approval from the Planning Board on a reduction of the minimum parking requirement.

d) Landscape Buffers

Landscaping has remained the same except for any improvements previously proposed on #26 Arctic Street parcel.

e) Building, Lighting and Signs

Lighting and Signage has remained the same except for any improvements previously proposed on #26 Arctic Street parcel.

f) Stormwater and Drainage

The stormwater system and design remain in compliance with current Stormwater Management Regulations.

g) Water Supply and Sewage Disposal

There are no changes to the water and sewer design of the project.

h) Open Space/Common Space

The elimination of #26 Arctic Street parcel from the project provides future development opportunities in the area.

i) Noise and Glare

It is anticipated that the noise and glare from the tenant vehicles should be consistent with other existing surrounding uses. The removal of parking spaces will also decrease the amount of vehicular noise and glare in the surrounding area.

j) Emergency Zones

There have been no changes to emergency zones.

k) Areas subject to flooding and or erosion

The proposed project is not located within an area subject to flooding per the latest FEMA FIRM Map# 25027-C0618E.

l) Erosion and Sediment Control

The approach for Erosion and Sediment Control has not changed.

m) State Register of Historic Places

Per review of the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), there are no historical buildings located within the scope of this project.

n) Regional Transportation System

Based upon the traffic review it is anticipated that a significant portion of the tenants on the property will utilize some form of the regional transportation systems as well private personal transport such as bicycling or walking in addition to private vehicles.

o) Surface and Groundwater Protection

The functionality of the drainage system has not changed. It is anticipated that the Groundwater will adequately be protected as there are no areas proposed for sewage disposal. The drainage system will allow infiltration of stormwater runoff, but this runoff will be pretreated prior to entering the underground storage system.

The applicant is providing this information for review relative to the requested Special Permit and Definitive Site Plan Amendment. We would like to request that this Project be put on the agenda for the next available meeting. Representatives of the Applicant will be available to address any questions or concerns raised at that time. We appreciate the City's assistance in this process as we look forward to working with you to obtain the anticipated approval of this project.

Sincerely,

Goventure Capital Group, LLC



Harold Reader
Vice President

pc: Brendon Gove, Goventure Capital Group, LLC
Chris Anderson, PE, Hannigan Engineering, Inc.