

Project Impact Statement and Statement in Support of Fifteen Gardner Worcester, LLC
Application to City of Worcester Planning Board for Definitive Site Plan Review for
Multifamily High Rise Development Project at
15 Gardner Street, Worcester, Massachusetts

I. Background and Project Scope

Fifteen Gardner Worcester, LLC (the “Applicant”), owns a parcel of land known and numbered as 15 Gardner Street, Worcester, MA,¹ which is a parcel of land containing approximately 9,450 square feet occupied only by a rear concrete slab, retaining walls and steps (the “Property”). The Property is located entirely within the Residence, General (“RG-5”) zoning district, and is bounded by Gardner Street, an auto repair shop and residences to the west, one, two and three family and multifamily residential uses to the south, residential properties and commercial establishments to the north along Main Street and residential uses to the east.

The Applicant respectfully requests definitive site plan review approval from the City of Worcester Planning Board (the “Board”) in connection with the construction and development of a new 4-story, multifamily high rise building (the “New Building”) with 8 dwelling units and 9 parking spaces (including 1 van accessible space) (the “Project”). The Project also includes grading of the site and the construction and/or installation of related site improvements at the Property, including, but not limited to, a driveway, walkways, a curb cut, screened trash and recycling facilities, retaining walls, fencing, landscaping, EV ready spaces, exterior bicycle storage area, utilities and other site features.

II. Requirement for Site Plan Review and Additional Approvals

The development of 5 or more dwelling units requires definitive site plan review approval by the Board pursuant to Table 5.1 of Article V of the Zoning Ordinance. The New Building will contain 8 dwelling units and, therefore, the Project requires definitive site plan review.

In addition, the Zoning Board of Appeals (the “ZBA”) granted certain variances to provide relief from the minimum lot area and frontage requirements and a special permit for modification of parking and landscaping dimensional requirements in connection with the Project on October 28, 2024.

III. Compliance with Site Plan Review Approval Criteria

The Project satisfies the site plan review criteria as set forth in Article V, Section 5.B of the Zoning Ordinance for the reasons stated herein:

¹ 15 Gardner Street has a parcel identification of 06-035-00022.

1. Adequacy and arrangement of vehicular traffic access and circulation including intersections, road widths, pavement surfaces, dividers and traffic controls; adequacy and arrangement of pedestrian traffic access and circulation, walkway structures, control of intersections with vehicular traffic and overall pedestrian convenience; location, arrangement, appearance and sufficiency of off-street parking and loading.

The Project will provide a safe, adequate and efficient layout and design for vehicular and pedestrian traffic both within the site and at the access point along Gardner Street. As shown on Sheet 3 of the plan set entitled, “Definitive Site Plan, 15 Gardner Street, Worcester, MA”, prepared by A.S. Engineering dated July 22, 2024, as revised on November 11, 2024 (the “Plan Set”), the Project includes the creation of a new 22 foot wide curb cut on Gardner Street, providing driveway access to the proposed parking area on the Property. The proposed parking spaces and setbacks, drive aisles, curb cuts and building entrances will not cause any nuisance or hazard to vehicles or pedestrians within or off the Property or line of sight hazards along streets.

The sidewalk along Gardner Street will be removed and rebuilt in kind to match existing grades. The sidewalk will also provide access to a new concrete stair with railing leading up to a 4 foot wide walkway along the southeasterly boundary of the Property, allowing pedestrian access to the New Building off Gardner Street.

The proposed parking area will serve the occupants of the New Building, and will provide a safe, adequate and efficient layout and design for vehicular and pedestrian traffic both within the site and at all access points. As noted above, the Project will include 8 dwelling units which would generally require a total of 16 parking spaces under Table 4.4 of the Zoning Ordinance, which specifies minimum parking requirements of 2 spaces per dwelling unit. The Project provides for the construction of 9 spaces (including 1 van accessible space and 2 EV ready spaces). While the Project does not meet the minimum off-street parking requirements and therefore requires a special permit and variance from the minimum parking requirements in the amount of 7 spaces (which was granted by the ZBA), the Project’s proposed 9 spaces will be more than sufficient to accommodate the needs of the residents of the New Building and their guests. The 9 spaces to 8 units result in an off-street parking to dwelling unit ratio of approximately 1.13 to 1, which exceeds most other multifamily developments in the City. In addition, the proposed drive aisles will provide sufficient widths and turning radii necessary to provide for safe and efficient travel for passenger vehicles. Emergency vehicles and large vehicles such as delivery trucks that need access to the New Building can park on Gardner Street.

The Applicant does not anticipate that the Project will result in a substantial increase in trip generation levels to and from the Property. Traffic generated, and patterns of access and egress will not cause congestion, hazard or a substantial change to the neighborhood character. The proposed parking area will provide a safe and efficient means of access to and from the New Building, and will be in close proximity of the front entrance of the New Building. There are three main bus lines (Routes 33, 27 and 19) along Main Street with stops in close proximity of the Property. The Project also includes an outdoor covered bike rack area. Given the Property’s close proximity to Main Street, residents will be able to walk to many commercial

establishments including restaurants and retail stores within area. Based on the dwelling unit to parking space ratio, access to alternate means of transportation and the walkability of the neighborhood, the proposed parking will adequately serve the Property and all occupants of the New Building.

2. Location, arrangement, size, design and general site compatibility of buildings, lighting and signs; protection of adjacent or neighboring properties against noise, glare, unsightliness or other objectionable features.

The Project is functionally and aesthetically compatible with the surrounding residential and commercial properties in the neighborhood, which include a mix of one-, two-, and three-family residences, multifamily residences, and commercial uses. The Property is located within a residential zoning district and therefore the multi-family dwelling use will be compatible and in harmony with the neighborhood's character. The Project will not adversely affect or be detrimental to adjoining premises or the neighborhood. The New Building will improve the economic vitality of the neighborhood by developing an underutilized, vacant lot and providing eight (8) new dwelling units of much-needed housing and associated off-street parking.

The kind, size, height and nature of the New Building and the proposed site improvements for the Property are consistent with buildings in other neighborhoods within the City that have been developed for a multifamily use. The New Building will provide architecturally appealing features and massing, including a mansard roof, dormers, balconies, alternating colors and changes in tones and textures of exterior walls that will be visible from Gardner Street. The New Building will comply with yard setbacks, height and floor to area ratio requirements and all other dimensional requirements set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, except for the relief granted by the ZBA related to minimum frontage and lot area requirements.

The Project use will not result in any increase in noise levels that would be noticeable at any abutting properties. The Project will neither create a nuisance, hazard, congestion or concerns pertaining to health, safety or general welfare, and there will not be substantial harm to the neighborhood or derogation from the intent of the Zoning Ordinance.

The proposed outdoor lighting will be adequate for safe and secure access to and from the New Building. The proposed lighting will be arranged and have directional shields so as to minimize light from shining onto abutting properties and streets, and will not have a deleterious effect on neighboring properties. See the Site Lighting Plan on Sheet 7 of the Plan Set.

Trash and recycling receptacles will be enclosed and screened away from public view.

3. Adequacy of stormwater and drainage facilities; adequacy of water supply and sewerage disposal facilities; adequacy of plans and protective measures to ensure minimal risk of contamination to surface or ground water.

New water and sewer connections, electric service facilities and infrastructure will need to be provided for the New Building. The Applicant is conducting ongoing coordination with the City of Worcester Department of Public Works & Parks and the applicable utility companies.

The development does not anticipate any adverse effect on drainage patterns. The best management practices (“BMPs”) for stormwater are incorporated in the design of the Project, and will be adequate to manage stormwater runoff generated in satisfaction of the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, the Worcester Department of Public Works & Parks and Massachusetts Stormwater standards. Said standards include provisions relative to the treatment of stormwater runoff and equivalent peak rate runoff. The BMPs include deep sump hooded catch basins, subsurface detention stormwater system, stone swales with subdrain, grass swale with inlet, and operation and maintenance plan for the operation of the aforementioned BMPs.

Furthermore, the Project will result in the removal of the existing concrete slab in the rear of the Property and the replanting of grass and other landscaping. The Project will employ low-impact development BMPs including grass swale and a stone wale. The Property is outside of the Floodplain and Water Resources Protection Overlay Districts and ecologically sensitive areas, and there are no wetland resource areas on the Property.

4. Adequacy, type and arrangement of trees, shrubs and other landscaping elements in accordance with the Landscaping Design Standards set forth in Article V, Section 5.C.

The proposed landscaping includes a mixture of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs as shown on the Planting Schedule on Sheet 3 of the Plan Set. All the trees will have a minimum caliper of 3.5”. Such planting of new trees and shrubs along the boundaries of the parking areas and the Property will dramatically improve the natural condition of the Property and provide for improved landscape screening. The Applicant will also be installing grass pavers along the northerly side of the Property in between the parking area and the northerly grass area. The Applicant will plant 7 Northern Red Oak trees as follows: 5 along the northwesterly boundary of the Property adjacent to the parking area and 1 on either corner of the southerly side of the Property. Additionally, 1 English Oak tree will be located at the westerly corner of the Property adjacent to the Gardner Street sidewalk. The Applicant will also plant 6 Arrowwood Viburnum shrubs along the southerly side of the Building to allow for an effective buffer between land uses. Finally, the Applicant will plant 19 arborvitae along the northerly and easterly boundaries of the Property and amongst the new grass cover that will surround the New Building on three sides. The landscaped areas will be separated from the parking areas by a six-inch high curb as shown on Sheet 3 of the Plan Set.

5. Adequacy of useable common property or open space.

The Project provides for the construction of a new lawn area adjacent to the Building, as shown on Sheet 3 of the Plan Set. This open space will provide a recreational area for Project residents to congregate and relax. The Applicant will install picnic tables thereon which will contribute to its recreational atmosphere.

6. Adequacy of fire lanes and other emergency zones and the provisions of fire hydrants.

While there are no fire lanes or emergency zones proposed in connection with the Project, fire trucks and emergency vehicles will be able to access the Property from Gardner Street. There are existing fire hydrants on Gardner Street.

7. Special attention to the adequacy of structures, roadways and landscaping in areas with susceptibility to ponding, flooding and/or erosion; adequacy of erosion and sedimentation control measures to be utilized during and after construction.

The Project's site design and proposed drainage reduce any susceptibility of ponding, flooding and erosion. The Property is outside of the Floodplain District and ecologically sensitive areas, and there are no wetland resource areas on the Property. During construction, appropriate measures will be taken to control erosion, sedimentation and pollution. The Property will remain stabilized upon completion of the construction phase.

8. Conformance of site design with the purposes and intent of the Worcester Zoning Ordinance.

The Project complies with the design requirements of Article IV, Section 7.A.3 of the Zoning Ordinance. The proposed curb cut on Gardner Street to accommodate a new 22 foot wide access driveway entrance provides adequate ingress and egress to the parking area on the Property by means of a clearly defined driveway, and such access will be limited to a driveway that provides the most safe, effective and efficient flow to and from the Property. The proposed parking-, walkways- and landscaping-related improvements are arranged for safe and convenient access for motorists and pedestrians. Proposed new lighting will be modern in design, and will not have a deleterious effect on or cause a nuisance to neighboring properties or abutting streets. See Site Lighting Plan on Sheet 7 of the Plan Set. The Project will promote economic vitality within the neighborhood and the City and provide necessary housing stock for Worcester residents.

The Project is in conformance with the purposes and intent of the Zoning Ordinance, as it is a development of a compatible land use that provides greater density in the City. Moreover, the Project will encourage the most appropriate use of the land in a manner that protects natural resources as well as the architectural, scenic and aesthetic qualities of the community and protects against the uses of land which are incompatible with nearby uses, undue intensity of noise and danger and congestion in travel and transportation.

9. Conformance and compatibility of the site plan design with structures listed in the most recent State Register of Historic Places.

The Property is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places or the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) database. The Project will be compatible with historic and non-historic structures in the neighborhood.

10. Adequacy and impact on the regional transportation system.

The Project will not materially impact the regional transportation system as residents of New Building will have sufficient on-site parking, on-site bicycle storage and access to existing bus stops (which include Routes 33, 27 and 19) in close proximity to the Property on Main Street.