



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

October 22, 2024

RE: Zoning Board of Appeals - Special Permit
GoVenture Capital Group, LLC
Franklin Street, Worcester, MA

Dear Ms. Smith,

GoVenture Capital Group, LLC (the Applicant) is applying for a Special Permit with the City of Worcester Zoning Board of Appeals for the medication of parking/loading requirements. The project consists 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 a Special Permit be granted to allow for a reduction of 10% of the minimum parking requirements and a reduction of the minimum loading space requirements under Article IV Sec. 7. 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.

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 361 surface parking spaces will be provided, including provisions for bicycle parking and EV-capable parking spaces. This is a change of 31 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 and the loading space requirement 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 40 spaces (10%) of the minimum parking requirement. As noted in the Definitive Site Plan, there are 361 parking spaces provided.

Reduction of Loading Space Requirements

Per the Zoning Ordinance, the required number of loading spaces is 4ea. This is calculated based on the gross square footage of the building being between 200,001 and 400,000 square feet.

We are requesting a reduction of 2 out of 4 required loading spaces. As noted in the Definitive Site Plan, there are 2 loading 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 requested specifically for reductions in the minimum parking requirements and loading space 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 and loading space requirements associated with parking within the City of Worcester are not expected 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 and loading 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 and loading space requirements associated with parking within the City of Worcester are not expected 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 and loading space 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 and loading space 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 and loading space requirements associated with parking within the City of Worcester are not expected 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 proposed parking ratio is 0.99 which is adequate for the site.



The applicant provides this information for review related to the requested Special Permit. 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harold Reader III'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Harold Reader
Vice President

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