

**Project Narrative**  
**670, 648, 686, & 690 Pacific Street and 171 Henry Street**  
**Applications for Special Permit, and Site and Architectural Plans and Requested Uses, and**  
**Coastal Site Plan Review**  
**Revised – January 12, 2022**

**1. Introduction/Background**

Hogg Holdings (“the Applicant”) is the owner and contract purchaser of several contiguous parcels along Pacific Street. The combined parcels are approximately 0.95 acres with frontage on Pacific Street and Henry Street and includes the following properties (collectively “the Site”):

- a) 670 Pacific – former Pacific Street Firehouse
- b) 648 Pacific – Tabernacle of Grace Church
- c) 686 Pacific – existing parking lot
- d) 690 Pacific – former New Hope Church
- e) 171 Henry – existing 2-family structure

The Applicant is proposing a comprehensive redevelopment of the Site that will (a) preserve and repurpose the historic firehouse with a mix of retail, commercial and/or residential uses; (b) preserve and maintain the existing 2-family home at 171 Henry Street; (c) preserve and maintain the existing Tabernacle of Grace church; and (d) create a new multifamily residential building with an activated street-front, covered parking and 61 new apartments.

In order to facilitate the potential redevelopment, the Applicant is proposing Special Permit and Site Plan Applications, including the request to utilize section 7.3.C of the Zoning Regulations relating to the preservation of Historic Structures and the inclusion of properties on the Cultural Resource List. The Applicant also seeks Zoning Board approval to designate the collective parcels as a Zoning Lot.

**2. Surrounding Area**

The surrounding area consists of Master Plan Categories 16 (Transit-Oriented Development district), 9 (Urban Mixed-Use), 6 (Commercial – Neighborhood Business), 5 (Residential – High Density Multifamily) and 4 (Residential – Medium Density Multifamily). The surrounding Zoning designations, including M-G (General Industrial), SRD-N (South End Redevelopment District North), V-C (Village Commercial District), C-B (Community Business District) and R-MF (Multiple Family Residence Design District), follow a similar pattern.

The surrounding South End neighborhood contains a mix of medium-to-high density residential, commercial, religious, and community uses.

**3. Project Area and History**

The site consists of 5 separate parcels, generally within the V-C (Village Commercial) Zoning District. Two of the properties (684 and 690 Pacific Street) will be consolidated as part of the development. A 2-family home at 171 Henry Street will remain within its existing R-MF Zoning

designation but is included in the overall Site and Zoning Lot for the purposes of access and circulation.

The site is conveniently situated along the main north-south artery running through the South End approximately 1,000' from the Stamford Transportation Center (STC) and a well-connected sidewalk network throughout the neighborhood. The Site has a Walk Score of 86 (“very walkable” and a Bike Score of 88 (“very bikeable”) with a wide variety of restaurant, shopping, and convenience services within the neighborhood. Stamford’s 326 Bus Line has a stop along the site frontage with service to Shippan, the South End, the STC, and parts of Downtown Stamford which connect to other inter- and intra-City transit lines.

Pacific Steet has benefitted from the re-occupancy and repurposing of some the former industrial buildings along the block north of Henry Street. However, this block between Henry and Ludlow has seen little positive change over the past few years, with much of the street frontage remaining blighted or dormant swaths of asphalt, and is in need of revitalization.

Portions of the Site were the subject of several recent approvals from both the Planning and Zoning Board, including:

- In June of 2020 the Planning Board approved an application put forth by the Land Use Bureau to amend the Master Plan designations of parts of the South End. This included putting this stretch of Pacific Street into Category 6.
- In August of 2020, the Zoning Board approved a Zone Change to NX-D and a Special Permit for 670 and 686 Pacific Street to facilitate a potential future restaurant/retail use of the firehouse with a large surface parking lot occupying most of the Pacific Street frontage. While the approval served as an improvement by providing the potential to reactivate the firehouse building, a more comprehensive redevelopment is needed to achieve the planning goals set forth by the Master Plan changes.
- Most recently, in June of 2021, the Zoning Board approved a Text Change and Zone Change to rezone the site to the V-C (Village Commercial) district and create an “Arterial” designation for the properties along Pacific Street. The 171 Henry Street property remains in the RMF district.

The Zoning Board also adopted regulations enabling the creation of a “Zoning Lot”. This enables the properties to be combined for Zoning purposes, while allowing the Tabernacle of Grace Church to retain separate ownership of their property and building.

#### **4. Proposed Development**

The proposed building will be situated in the area of an existing parking lot and former New Hope Church building (to be removed). The ground floor will include approximately 2,130 sf of retail space, a residential lobby, storage and mechanical space, and covered parking. The second floor will include residential amenities, an additional 990± sf of retail/commercial space (which may be converted to amenity space depending on market conditions) and parking garage/circulation areas. Floors 3-6 will house the 61 apartments in a mix of Studio, 1BR, and 2BR units, of which approximately 12% will be Below Market Rate (BMR) units. The partial 7<sup>th</sup> floor will have some lofts that walk out onto the 6<sup>th</sup> floor roof level. Most of the 6<sup>th</sup> floor units will have lofted space on a partial 7<sup>th</sup> level that opens out to the roof deck. The roof includes both private and communal open

space for the residents. The rear portion of the building, which is beyond the extent of the V-C Arterial designation, is limited to 5 stories.

#### *A. Historic Preservation*

The Site maintains three historically significant buildings, all of which are listed as “contributing structures” in the South End Historic District National register nomination narrative, entered into the National Register in 1986. All 3 buildings are proposed to be rehabilitated and preserved as part of the redevelopment.

1. 171 Henry Street – 2-Family structure, circa 1885  
The property will be maintained as a 2-family home.
2. 670 Pacific Street – former South End Firehouse (Engine Co. 2), circa 1900  
The building has undergone some cosmetic changes already as part of prior approvals and a purchase and sale agreement from the prior owner (City of Stamford). The Applicant proposes to repurpose the building for multi-tenant commercial use. In addition to any required maintenance relating to the building’s historic and structural integrity, proposed improvements include new pedestrian access and reuse of the former driveway/parking area at the corner of Pacific and Henry Streets as usable open space.
3. 648 Pacific Street – Tabernacle of Grace Church (former Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church), circa 1917

The structure will be maintained for its current use as a religious institution. The Tabernacle of Grace Church will also maintain ownership of the building and property. Development rights are incorporated into the overall project as part of a Zoning Lot Agreement (to be approved by the Zoning Board and recorded on the Land Records prior to the issuance of any Building Permit for the development).

Additional details relating to the history of each property described in a separate report prepared by Lynn Drobbin & Associates (enclosed).

#### *B. Unit Mix*

The proposed unit mix includes 12 Studio, 32 one-bedroom, and 17 two-bedroom apartments. However, exact unit size and mix may change slightly depending on market conditions and other factors which may arise as the plans develop. Upper stories of the Firehouse may be repurposed for residential use. In all scenarios, the proposed mix will comply with applicable parking and affordability requirements.

#### *C. Below Market Rate Housing*

The V-C District includes a BMR unit requirement of 12% - with 6% of the total units affordable at 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI) and 6% affordable at 65% AMI. The Applicant is proposing to satisfy this requirement entirely onsite with 7 BMR units consisting of 2 Studio, 3 one-bedroom, and 2 two-bedroom units. The proposed mix, which includes 5 units at 50% AMI and 2 units at 65%

AMI, differs slightly than the fractional breakdown prescribed by the regulation, but exceeds the minimum requirement on an equivalency basis.

#### *D. Building Composition & Features*

The building is designed with 4+ stories of primarily residential space over 2 levels of parking. The ground floor is activated by the new residential lobby and retail spaces along Pacific Street, which also serve to shield much of the at-grade parking. Similarly on the second floor, the proposed amenity and commercial spaces line most of the primary building frontage with the parking area sitting behind. Depending on the market, the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor commercial space may be used to simply expand the indoor residential amenity area. Additional outdoor amenities are provided by way of both private balconies and terraces – which also provide a visual interest to the building façade – and communal rooftop space above the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. A portion of the rooftop will serve as a child play area – with appropriate surfacing, equipment and fencing.

The massing of the building displays several distinct elements. The first two floors are capped with a cornice/trim line across the entirety of the front (Pacific) and north façade. These levels are comprised of mostly brick with cementitious block columns defining the location of vertical elements that continue above. In between these elements the building differentiates both in depth and material, with the finished wall stepped in and lap siding accented with cable-rail balconies on levels 3-5. The top floors are further differentiated by changing the direction of the siding to a vertical board and batten. Most of the 6<sup>th</sup> floor units have loft space on a partial 7<sup>th</sup> level located centrally within the building footprint with highly desirable living space that walks out onto the 6<sup>th</sup> floor roof terrace.

At the rear (east) of the site, the building steps down to only 5 stories. This limits the perceived height and bulk of the building from the adjacent neighbors and residential neighborhood further east along Henry Street.

The building serves as an attractive package for a multi-family residential apartment that is appropriate in scale and mass to both the street front and the surrounding neighborhood. The design, colors and materials are mindful and compatible with the historic structures in the neighborhood.

#### *E. Access and Parking*

Overall the site will maintain the same number of curb cuts as exist today. Vehicles accessing the Tabernacle of Grace Church will continue to enter from Pacific Street and utilize the 9 onsite angled parking spaces. Instead of having to make an awkward turnaround in the rear of the church site to return to Pacific Street, they will have the ability to continue through the combined site to exit onto Henry Street. The firehouse and 171 Henry Street buildings will continue their use of a shared driveway to access the 4 spaces at the rear of each building (8 total). The new multi-family building will have two-way vehicular access from Pacific Street to the surface parking below and behind the building. A second curb cut will serve the two-way ramp accessing the second level parking garage. The Applicant is proposing to maintain the closure of the former firehouse driveway and parking area at the corner of Pacific and Henry Streets, and reclaim that space as a lawn area.

All required parking is satisfied onsite within the Zoning Lot, with the church maintaining its historic nonconforming parking. Depending on the proposed non-residential tenants and the realized demand of residential users, there may be the ability to share available onsite parking with nonresidential uses. However, no such sharing is required to meet the minimum parking requirements, nor is any specific sharing proposed at this time.

### *F. Landscaping, Open Space, and Streetscapes*

The V-C District has two separate requirements relating to open space. One is a 15% requirement for pervious/planted areas, which is largely met through the use of perimeter planted areas and reclaiming paved spaces on the church and firehouse properties for lawn and landscaping. The second is a Usable Open Space requirement for residents of the multi-family building. With limited at-grade space available given the location and relationship of the historic buildings, this requirement is met on upper floors of the building. Nearly two-thirds of the units will have private balconies/terraces. The roof of the 6<sup>th</sup> floor will have approximately 2,750 sf of communal open space including 1,000± sf dedicated to a child play area. The Site is also located directly next to Yale & Towne Park – a nearly half-acre open lawn area with walkways, benches and landscaping.

None of the open space serving the 2-family home in the RMF district was used in either of the open space calculations.

New contiguous sidewalks will wrap the site frontages and be enlivened by ground floor retail uses both in the new building and the repurposed Firehouse. The front parking area of the Firehouse has been reclaimed as lawn space and improved with ADA accessible pedestrian entrances. The exact use of the lawn space will ultimately be determined by the tenant(s) of the building.

### *G. Construction Timing*

Site work would likely begin in summer of 2022 with an 18± month construction schedule to be completed by winter of 2024.

### *H. Conformity with Stamford Zoning Regulations and Master Plan*

#### Master Plan

Category 6 (Commercial - Neighborhood) of the Master Plan “is intended to provide for and promote pedestrian-scaled “Main Street” environments: (1) encourage a variety of retail, office, other compatible business and residential uses distinct from the most intensive Downtown development...” The proposed design provides an activated street front with ground floor retail and commercial uses in a mixed-use residential development that preserves existing historic buildings and uses. Additional Master Plan goals and initiatives served by the development are noted below.

#### Zoning Regulations

The Village Commercial district is intended to “promote the preservation and development of sustainable, transit-oriented and pedestrian friendly “Main Streets” for neighborhood centers.” The proposed redevelopment is appropriately scaled among the varying development types within the South End neighborhood and meets all the Zoning requirements of the V-C District in conjunction with the permitted special standards for historic structures and sites. Please refer to the Zoning Data Charts for additional zoning information.

## **5. Action Items**

To facilitate the potential redevelopment and implement the many goals of Stamford’s Master Plan, the Applicant has submitted the following applications.

- **Site and Architectural Plans and Requested Uses (Final)** – The Applicant requests approval for the proposed 61-unit residential building, including approval of the proposed location, height, coverage, relationships with buildings and property lines, parking, landscaping, open space, and designation of the combined Site as a single Zoning Lot, subject to a subsequent Zoning Lot Development Agreement. The Applicant also requests the ability to occupy the designated commercial spaces, including the firehouse, with allowable uses of the Village Commercial District as defined in §4.B.7.b of the Regulations.

While the proposed plan meets the minimum parking requirement for the commercial spaces, once specific tenants are identified, the Applicant may request administrative approval of the Zoning Board for shared use of residential parking spaces (pursuant to §12-I) to accommodate additional onsite parking for users of the commercial spaces, if warranted.

The properties at 648 Pacific Street and 171 Henry Street will continue their existing use as a religious institution and 2-family house, respectively. The church will continue the existing use of 9 nonconforming onsite parking spaces.

The Applicant also requests Zoning Board approval of a modified sidewalk requirement, pursuant to §12.K.5, along areas of the historic buildings which do not currently permit the prescribed sidewalk width/design.

- **Coastal Site Plan Review** – While the property is not on the water, it is within the Coastal Area Boundary. With proposed drainage mitigation, no adverse impacts are anticipated. The application will be referred to the Stamford Harbor Management Commission for recommendation.
- **Special Permit pursuant to the following sections of the Zoning Regulations:**
  - §4.B.7.e.6 for new construction within the V-C District;
  - §4.B.7.c.9.e to modify permitted curb cut locations in order to accommodate existing uses on the subject site. This request has been coordinated with both Land Use and TTP staff;
  - §7.Q to permit the child play are to be located on the rooftop;
  - §7.3.C relating to “Special Use Bulk and Density Standards for Historic Structures and Sites” to permit the following Special Standards under §7.3.C.4:
    - Increased Floor Area equal to the area of the Historic Structures within the V-C zoned portion of the site (which are less than 25% of the as-of-right Floor Area);
    - Reduced Rear Yard Setback of 50% (from 20’ to 10’);
    - Increased Building Height from 5 stories to 7 stories (and 55’ to not more than 80’) in the Arterial portion of the site (i.e. within 125’ of the Pacific Street right-of-way) and generally subject to the same limitations as 5<sup>th</sup> stories in the V-C District; and from 4 stories to 5 stories (and 45’ to not more than 60’) in the Non-Arterial portion of the site;



- Reduced Light & Air requirement (from 20' to no less than 10'), where the proposed plan provides 10' onsite and an additional 8' of spacing based on the required setback of the adjacent property.
    - §7.4.C.1.g and 7.4.C.1.k relating to the proposed bedroom and affordability mix of onsite Below Market Rate units, as described in paragraph 4-C above and further detailed in the enclosed Zoning Data Charts.
- **Addition of the 3 historic properties to the Cultural Resource Inventory**

## 6. Conclusions

The proposed development continues the efforts of the Land Use Bureau and Planning and Zoning Boards to facilitate development that will preserve historic buildings, activate a blighted and underutilized block, and provide new and affordable housing opportunities at a neighborhood scale within the South End. The potential redevelopment will advance many goals and objectives of the City of Stamford including the preservation of 3 unique structures over 100 years old.

## 7. Statement of Findings

I. The above referenced specific Special Permit requests are integral to the development project as a whole. Thus, for purposes of demonstrating compliance with the standards and conditions below, the entire development proposal is considered. The Applicants submit that all applicable criteria contained in Stamford Zoning Regulations Article V, Section 19.C.2 are met for the following specific reasons:

- a. *Special Permits shall be granted by the reviewing board only upon a finding that the proposed use or structure or the proposed extension or alteration of an existing use or structure is in accord with the public convenience and welfare after taking into account, where appropriate:*
  - 1) *the location and nature of the proposed site including its size and configuration, the proposed size, scale and arrangement of structures, drives and parking areas and the proximity of existing dwellings and other structures.*

The proposed development is appropriately located within a mixed residential and commercial neighborhood and the Commercial-Neighborhood Master Plan Category. The proposed building is compatible in scale and style with the surrounding area, particularly historic former Yale & Towne manufacturing building along Henry Street. The proposed setbacks and arrangement of buildings are appropriate for the district and serve to activate pedestrian street frontages while maintaining appropriate sidewalk width. All new parking is appropriately accommodated within 2 levels of parking below and behind the buildings and generally screened from public view.

- 2) *the nature and intensity of the proposed use in relation to its site and the surrounding area. Operations in connection with special permit uses shall not be injurious to the neighborhood, shall be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of these Regulations and shall not be more objectionable to nearby properties by reason of noise, fumes, vibration, artificial lighting or other potential disturbances to the health, safety or peaceful enjoyment of property than the public necessity demands.*

The proposed density, height, and building coverage are all within the allowable standards of the underlying zone and appropriate to the standards relating to the preservation of historic structures and sites. The proposed building complements the historic buildings being preserved and improves the surrounding mixed-use community with new residences and ground floor retail uses. There are no anticipated objectionable impacts or potential disturbances to nearby properties.

- 3) *the resulting traffic patterns, the adequacy of existing streets to accommodate the traffic associated with the proposed use, the adequacy of proposed off-street parking and loading, and the extent to which proposed driveways may cause a safety hazard, or traffic nuisance.*

Traffic can be safely and adequately accommodated on the surrounding streets. The enclosed Traffic Study anticipates that all nearby intersections will continue to operate well within acceptable levels. Parking is safely and adequately provided onsite at a ratio of 1.16 spaces per unit with the potential for shared use of parking for onsite commercial uses.

- 4) *the nature of the surrounding area and the extent to which the proposed use or feature might impair its present and future development.*

The surrounding area includes a variety of residential, commercial, industrial and retail uses. The proposed residential use is compatible with these uses and will serve as a further catalyst for others to invest in their properties. It will also place people on the streets thereby increasing the patronage of nearby retail and service establishments.

- 5) *the Master Plan of the City of Stamford and all statements of the purpose and intent of these regulations.*

Category 6 (Commercial - Neighborhood) of the Master Plan “is intended to provide for and promote pedestrian-scaled “Main Street” environments: (1) encourage a variety of retail, office, other compatible business and residential uses distinct from the most intensive Downtown development...” The proposed design provides an activated street front with ground floor retail and commercial uses in a mixed-use residential development that preserves existing historic buildings and uses. Additional City of Stamford goals and initiatives served by the development are noted below.

From the Master Plan...

- **3C.3:** Maintain the affordable housing stock to ensure that people who work in Stamford can afford to live in Stamford.
- **5E.1:** Promote neighborhood revitalization.
- **6A.1:** Balance new development with preservation of existing residential communities.
- **6B:** Preserve Existing and Create New Affordable Housing
- **6C.2:** Promote development of a variety of housing types.
- **6D:** Preserve Historic Buildings and Districts
- **6D.3:** Provide tax and zoning incentives for historic preservation and adaptive reuse



From the 2018 South End Study...

- **Seven Widely Shared Priorities (pg. 4)**
  2. Protection of and reinvestment in the remaining historic district buildings to avoid permanent erasure of character, community culture, and affordable homes and retail spaces.
  6. Upgrades to streetscape and lighting to improve safety, bring people out, connect the different districts of the South End, and create lively commercial areas.
- **Major Recommendations (pg. 5)**
  - Upgrade South End streetscape design and lighting to improve safety, bring people out, connect the different districts of the South End, create lively commercial areas, and increase the percentage of trips people make on foot, on bike and transit. Prioritize streetscape improvements on Pacific Street.
- **Transfer of Development Rights (pg. 21)**
  - The team recommends the use of Transfers of Development Rights (TDRs) to permit the exchange of unused development rights from parcels containing existing affordable housing and retail, and historically or architecturally significant buildings.

*II. Pursuant to Section 19.C.2.a of the Zoning Regulations, the Zoning Board must find that the proposed use or structure or the proposed extension or alteration of an existing use or structure is in accord with the public convenience and welfare.*

The Applicant is proposing to infill an existing parking lot and former church building by constructing a new mixed-use building with associated parking and streetscape improvements in their place. The proposed development will increase the tax base and significantly improve the appearance of an arterial street in the South End, while preserving 3 separate historic structures. The active ground floor frontage, 61 new residential units, both affordable and market rate, will enliven this long-underutilized block and breathe new life into this stretch of Pacific Street. For all of these reasons, the Applicants submit that the proposal, and the associated Special Permit requests which are inextricably intertwined, are in accord with the public convenience and welfare.

*III. Pursuant to Section 7-Q of the Stamford Zoning Regulations, the Zoning Board must find that the design, site or location of the Development render child play areas at grade undesirable or unsafe and the child play areas can be provided at an alternative location within the Development.*

The preservation of Historic buildings and sites severely limits the at-grade areas available for child play areas. Two available areas exist – one at the corner of Pacific and Henry Street directly in front of the historic firehouse, and the other in the front yard of the historic 2-family home at 171 Henry Street. Neither location is particularly safe, directly abutting heavily traveled roadways. Furthermore, the play equipment in the front yard of historic buildings would significantly distract and detract from the historic integrity of the structures being preserved. A sizable play area can be safely and appropriately located on the building rooftop, making it easily accessible to residents. The site is also located directly across from Yale & Towne Park – a nearly half-acre open lawn area with walkways, seating, and landscaping.

*IV. Pursuant to Section 7.3.C.1 of the Stamford Zoning Regulations, the Zoning Board must find that (a) the proposed use and site plan are compatible with the objectives and policies of the Master Plan; (b) the proposed use and site plan are superior to a plan conforming to the standard dimensional requirements and use standards of the underlying zoning district and will not impair the future development of the surrounding area; (c) the proposed use and site and architectural plans serve to rehabilitate, restore, Critically Reconstruct, or preserve Historic Structures or Sites; and (d) the loss of said Historic Structure would be detrimental to the neighborhood character, Local Historic District or the cultural and historical heritage and identity of the City of Stamford.*

The development's compatibility with the neighborhood and Master Plan has been stated above, and the proposed restoration and preservation of the historic structures will meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards. The application will also be referred to Stamford's Historic Preservation Advisory Commission for their review and recommendations. While a plan fully conforming to the underlying zoning requirements could be attempted, it would require the elimination of parking, removal of ground floor retail space, and/or the demolition of or additions to the historic structures – none of which are desirable for the neighborhood or City of Stamford. The demolition of century old buildings to make way for “conforming” redevelopment would be detrimental to the culture and history of the South End. Additions to the historic buildings would disrupt their largely intact historic integrity and setting. The buildings are simply inefficient in their use of space for zoning compliance – as they are only 2 stories tall where 4 or 5 are permitted. Their preservation requires the implementation of permitted development rights on the limited remaining areas of the site, which in turn requires the new building to be taller and more expansive. These concessions are what makes historic preservation feasible.