

MAYOR
Caroline Simmons



**CITY OF STAMFORD
ZONING BOARD
LAND USE BUREAU**
888 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD
STAMFORD, CT 06904 -2152

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
Matthew Quiñones

Land Use Bureau Chief
Ralph Blessing

Principal Planner
Vineeta Mathur
(203) 977-4716
vmathur@stamfordct.gov

Associate Planner
Lindsey Cohen
(203) 977-4388
lcohen@stamfordct.gov

RECEIVED

February 21, 2024

Ms. Theresa Dell, Chair, Planning Board
Land Use Bureau, City of Stamford
888 Washington Blvd.
Stamford, CT 06904

FEB 21 2024

PLANNING BOARD

RE: Application 224-08 -Summer Street Equity, LLC, 1600 Summer Street, Stamford, CT -Map Change –Applicant is proposing to rezone 1600 Summer Street from the current RM-F (Multiple Family Residence Design) & C-L (Limited Business) to proposed C-G (General Commercial).

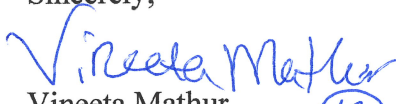

Dear Ms. Dell:

In accordance with Section C6-40-10 of the Charter of the City of Stamford, the above captioned Application for a Map Change is hereby referred to the Planning Board of the City of Stamford for its advisory report.

A public hearing has not yet been scheduled. Referral comments should be filed with the Zoning Board Office by **March 27, 2024**.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (203) 977-4716.

Sincerely,


Vineeta Mathur
Principal Planner 

February 9, 2024

City of Stamford
Zoning Board
c/o Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief
888 Washington Boulevard
Stamford, CT 06901

Re: *1600 Summer Street*
Zone Map Change application

Dear Mr. Blessing and Board Members,

As discussed, on behalf Summer Street Equity, LLC (owners), enclosed please find applications and supportive materials to facilitate a Zone Map Change from RM-F and C-L to C-G. Application details are described further in the attached Project Narrative and reflected in the enclosed materials.

In support of the applications, enclosed please find:

1. A check in the amount of \$8,700 for:
 - Zone Change Fee; \$7,700; and
 - Zoning Board Public Hearing Fee: \$1,000.
2. Zoning Map Change Application form:
2. Qualitative Analysis;
3. Aerial Exhibit;
4. Zone Change Exhibit;
5. Zone Change Description;
6. Preliminary Zoning Comparison;
7. Site Demonstration Exhibit;
8. Property Survey; and
9. Letter of Authorization.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or comments. We look forward to continuing to work with you and the Planning & Zoning Boards.

Sincerely,



Richard W. Redniss, FAICP

Enclosures

February 9, 2024

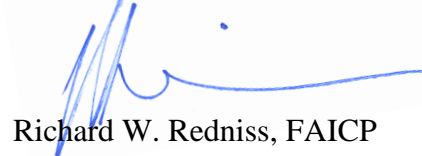
City of Stamford Planning Board
c/o Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief
888 Washington Boulevard
Stamford, CT 06901

Re: 1600 Summer Street
Zone Map Change application

Dear Mr. Blessing,

Please let this letter serve as our formal request for members of the consultant team to speak, should the Planning Board have any questions for the applicant at the forthcoming referral meeting on the proposed Zone Map Change application. Please let us know if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,



Richard W. Redniss, FAICP

Enclosures



APPLICATION FOR CHANGE IN THE ZONING MAP OF STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT

Complete, notarize, and forward **thirteen (13) hard copies and (1) electronic copy in PDF format** to Clerk of the Zoning Board with a **\$1,000.00 Public Hearing Fee** and the required application filing fee (see **Fee Schedule below**), payable to the City of Stamford.

NOTE: Cost of required Public Hearing advertisements are payable by the Applicant and performance of mailing of required property owners is the sole responsibility of the applicant. **LAND RECORDS RECORDING FEE:** \$60.00 for First page - \$5.00 for each additional page)

Fee Schedule

Map Change (Affected Area of 1 Acre or Less)	\$1,060.00
Map Change (Affected Area of greater than 1 Acre)	\$1,060.00 + \$2,000 per acre or portion thereof in excess of 1 acre

APPLICANT NAME (S): Summer Street Equity, LLC

APPLICANT ADDRESS: c/o Redniss & Mead 22 First Street - Stamford, CT 06902

APPLICANT PHONE #: c/o 203-327-0500

IS APPLICANT AN OWNER OF PROPERTY IN THE CITY OF STAMFORD? Yes, 1600 Summer Street

PRESENT ZONING DISTRICT: RM-F & C-L PROPOSED ZONING DISTRICT: C-G

LOCATION OF PROPOSED CHANGE: (Give boundaries of each parcel in proposed change and indicate dimensions from nearest intersecting street. Also include Assessor's Card number and Town Clerk's Block number, and square footage of land. Attach twelve (12) copies of map showing area proposed for change.)

Please see attached Zone Change Description

LIST NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE OWNERS OF ALL LAND INCLUDED WITHIN THE PROPOSED CHANGE:

<u>NAME & ADDRESS</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
SUMMER STREET EQUITY LLC 708 THIRD AVENUE 28TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10017	1600 Summer Street Stamford, CT

ARE THERE DEED RESTRICTIONS THAT CONFLICT WITH THE PROPOSED ZONE DISTRICT FOR THIS PROPERTY?
n/a

IF YES, LIST REFERENCE TO TOWN CLERK BOOK & PAGE #: _____

DOES ANY PORTION OF THE PREMISES AFFECTED BY THIS APPLICATION LIE WITHIN 500 FEET OF THE BORDER LINE WITH GREENWICH, DARIEN OR NEW CANAAN? No (If yes, notification must be sent to Town Clerk of neighboring community by registered mail within 7 days of receipt of application – PA 87-307).



DATED AT STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT, THIS 5th DAY OF February 2024

SIGNED: [Signature]

NOTE: The application cannot be scheduled for public hearing until 35 days have elapsed from the date of referral to the Stamford Planning Board. If applicant wishes to withdraw the application, this must be done in writing, and be received by the Zoning Board at least three (3) working days prior to public hearing in order to provide sufficient time to publicize the withdrawal. Applications withdrawn less than three (3) days prior to a schedule hearing date will not be rescheduled within 90 days.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
 ss STAMFORD February 5 2024
 COUNTY OF FAIRFIELD

Personally appeared Richard W. Rahiss, signer of the foregoing application, who made oath to the truth of the contents thereof, before me.

DAVID PINTO
 Notary Public, State of Connecticut
 My Commission Expires Mar 31, 2026

[Signature]
 Notary Public - Commissioner of the Superior Court

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

APPL. #: 224-08 Received in the office of the Zoning Board: Date: _____

By: _____

Revised 04/30/20

**Qualitative Analysis
1600 Summer Street
Zone Map Change
February 12, 2024**

1. Summary/Background

Summer Street Equity, LLC (“Owner and Applicant”), a related entity of Benenson Capital Partners, is seeking to rezone its existing nonconforming split-zoned property at 1600 Summer Street (the “Property”) from the R-MF (Multiple Family Residence Design) and C-L (Limited Business) zones to the C-G (General Commercial) zone.

Benenson has owned the property since 1979 when they constructed the multi-tenant office building. Over the decades, the building has been home to several prominent corporations including GE Capital, AON, and Philips. Consistent with trends in the local and regional office market in recent years, the building is experiencing a high vacancy rate with over 70-80% of the building unoccupied on any given day. While most of the building is technically leased, all leases expire in 2025 and all tenants have communicated that they will not be renewing. Moreover, the Owner has actively marketed the building for over a year and has received no inquiries. This situation is not unique to the Property. With an office vacancy of roughly 35% in the central business district, older buildings cannot compete with their higher-end, newer counterparts.

While the Property has been well-maintained and enjoys an attractive site layout and location, it is need of a significant capital infusion and modernization. However, any meaningful change is challenging with its nonconforming status. Specifically, the Property is out of compliance with several areas of the current Zoning Regulations including Building Height, Building Coverage, Floor Area Ratio, Setbacks, and permitted uses (within the R-MF portion of the property).

A zone change to the C-G will cure nearly all the existing nonconformities and provide much needed flexibility for the building’s unknown future. [Note: The remaining floor area nonconformity could also be alleviated in a future plan by landscaping and/or wrapping the garage with active uses.] Such optionality is critical for the ongoing viability of the Property, which may or may not continue as an office use. Placing the Property in the C-G zone has the dual benefit of creating conformity while permitting a versatile and desirable mix of uses including multi-family residential, medical, educational uses (with or without student housing), a variety of retail and other services uses, as well as the permitted height and bulk which may be necessary to achieve such transformations. This type of flexibility is necessary if the Property is going to be successfully repositioned.

2. Surrounding Area

The site lies between two major north/south arteries, Washington Boulevard and Summer Street which connect the Downtown to less intense mixed-use neighborhoods to the north. The Summer Street corridor consists of a mix of both commercial and multi-family residential uses and zoning designations, including R-MF (Multiple Family Residence Design) C-L (Limited Business), MX-D (Mixed Use Development), and C-I (Intermediate Business).

The site lies within the Downtown “neighborhood,” as depicted in Figure 16 of the Master Plan and is mapped as Category 9 (Urban Mixed-Use). Category 9 is meant to “**encourage redevelopment** and to provide an **orderly transition** from the more-intensive Downtown area (Category #11) to adjoining neighborhoods...” Similarly, the C-G zone is generally found proximate to the C-C zone and is considered a less intense, transitional option in and around the Downtown core. Category 9 generally runs along both sides of Summer Street from the Downtown boundary at North Street up to Fourth Street, as well as portions of the East Side, West Side and South End/Harbor Point neighborhoods. Other nearby Master Plan designations include Categories 4 (Residential - Medium Density Multifamily) and 5 (Residential - High Density Multifamily). The property is in walking distance to Ridgeway Shopping Center, Scalzi Park Downtown Stamford and is well served by public transportation and sidewalk networks. The site maintains a Walk Score of 85 “Very Walkable” (per walkscore.com).

3. Subject Property and History

The Benenson Family built, owned, and operated this office building for over 40 years. The overall property is approximately 4.3 acres improved with a 6-story 272,800SF± office building and a 6-story parking garage. The applicant also owns 0.9 acres of open space across Second Street which is not a part of this application. At the time the improvements on the Property were constructed, the C-L zone permitted more intensity of development than it does today. In fact, it was much closer to today’s C-G zone. Additionally, the regulations also allowed a property owner subject to a split-zone to effectively apply the more intense zoning category to the entire property, subject to special exception approval. This tool was utilized for the Property.

The buildings and structures were also approved during a period in which the Zoning Regulations were undergoing major changes, including the introduction of a Floor Area Ratio. Prior to that change, Zoning districts like the C-L simply relied on zoning standards such as coverage, height, and setbacks to determine the appropriate location and massing of buildings. As a result of the permitted and evolving zoning regulations, the development received multiple Special Exception and Variance approvals from the Zoning Board of Appeals. All the foregoing changes contributed to the nonconforming status of the Property today. A zoning comparison analysis is provided herewith.

4. State of the Office Market

While it is common knowledge that our country and our city, in particular, is in the midst of a housing crisis (in that there is not enough housing to meet demand, causing skyrocketing prices), many of us are less familiar with the office crisis. It has been well-documented in Stamford that our suburban office parks are empty and failing. However, our office buildings in and around the Downtown are also floundering, and our situation is not unique. In 2023 U.S. office vacancy surpassed 20% for the first time in decades. In Stamford, the office vacancy has exceeded 30% for years, and these figures only represent spaces that are no longer leased. With many companies still contractually obligated to lease spaces they no longer occupy, the physical vacancy rate is even higher. Many areas are operating at less than 50% of pre-pandemic occupancy. With the rise of video conferencing and increased comfort with remote work options by both workers and employers, those occupancies are not expected to increase anytime soon.

At the same time, landlords are faced with impending loan maturities, and this owner and this asset are no exception. Reports from reputable financial institutions over the last few months have warned of roughly \$1.5 *trillion* of commercial real estate debt that is coming due before the end of 2025. If property owners are not given the tools they need to reposition or refinance their assets, the result could be catastrophic to the economy. Our Master Plan has long identified the need to “[e]ncourage the reconfiguration of existing office and retail space to accommodate market trends and potential new users.”¹ Thus far, Stamford has been slow to implement the type of changes necessary to effectuate this goal, and the time has come for our community to pivot. The proposed zone change is consistent with the Master Plan, and perhaps more importantly, responsive to the systemic office vacancy issues that plague our city today.

5. Action Items

To bring the Property closer to conformity and provide the Owner with the tools necessary to reposition the asset, the Applicant has filed an application with the Zoning Board for a Zoning Map Change placing the site in the C-G (General Commercial) zone.

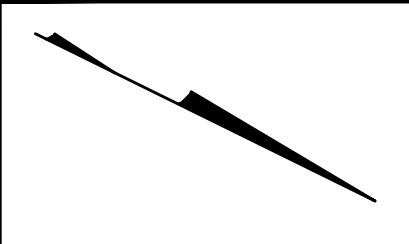
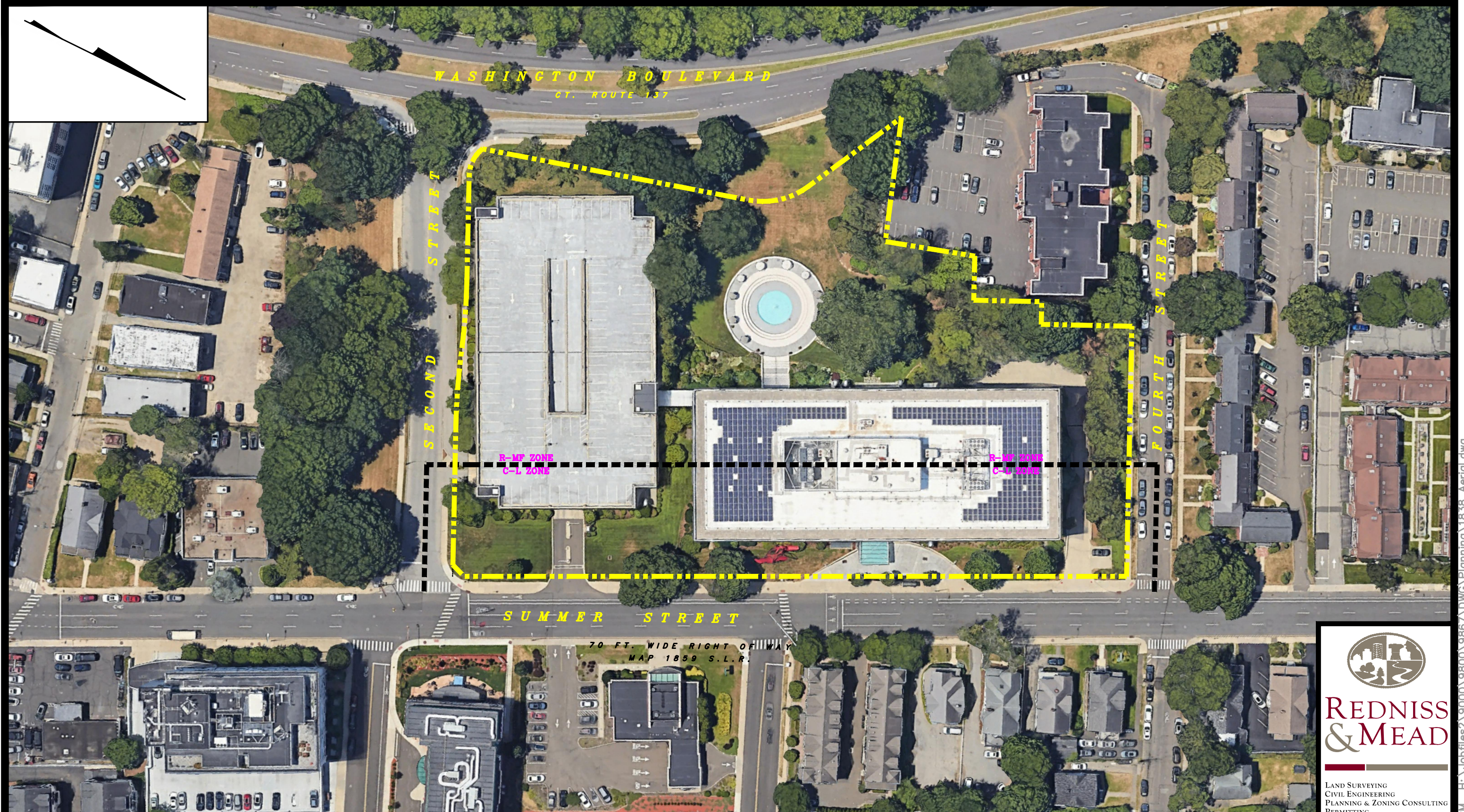
Notably, any meaningful new development on the Property would require a future Large Scale Development Special Permit and Site Plan approval. The enclosed Site Demonstration Exhibits provide several conceptual examples of the types of improvements that could be pursued if the proposed application is approved. These concepts include an adaptive reuse of the existing office building for residential and/or mixed use, the creation of rooftop open space, stepped back upper stories, and wrapping the currently exposed concrete garage structure with active uses. Again, these exhibits are purely conceptual; however, the Applicant believes they illustrate the variety of future uses and improvements that could be pursued under this rezoning if office no longer proves viable.

6. Conclusions

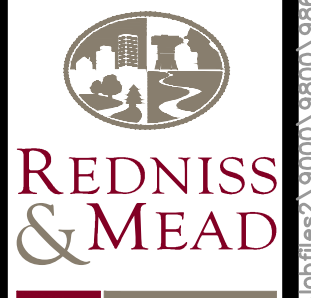
The proposed Zone Map Change will advance many goals and objectives of the Master Plan, by providing a full array of uses including:

- a) **1.3B1** Amend zoning to allow for redevelopment of office parks outside Downtown for mixed-use
- b) **3A.3** Encourage modernization of office space and allow for adaptive reuse...Capital improvements to enhance technological capability should be pursued and zoning should be amended, as appropriate, to allow for reuse. See Policy 3B.5.
- c) **3B.4** Encourage the reconfiguration of existing office and retail space to accommodate market trends and potential new users.
- d) **3E** Continue to pursue uses that promote vibrancy and economic vitality.
- e) **5E.1**: Promote neighborhood revitalization.
- f) **6C.2**: Promote development of a variety of housing types.
- g) **6C.4**: Continue encouraging conversion of vacant office buildings to residential use.

¹ See Master Plan page 70 (goal 3B.4)



**AERIAL EXHIBIT
1600 SUMMER STREET
STAMFORD, CT**



LAND SURVEYING
CIVIL ENGINEERING
PLANNING & ZONING CONSULTING
PERMITTING

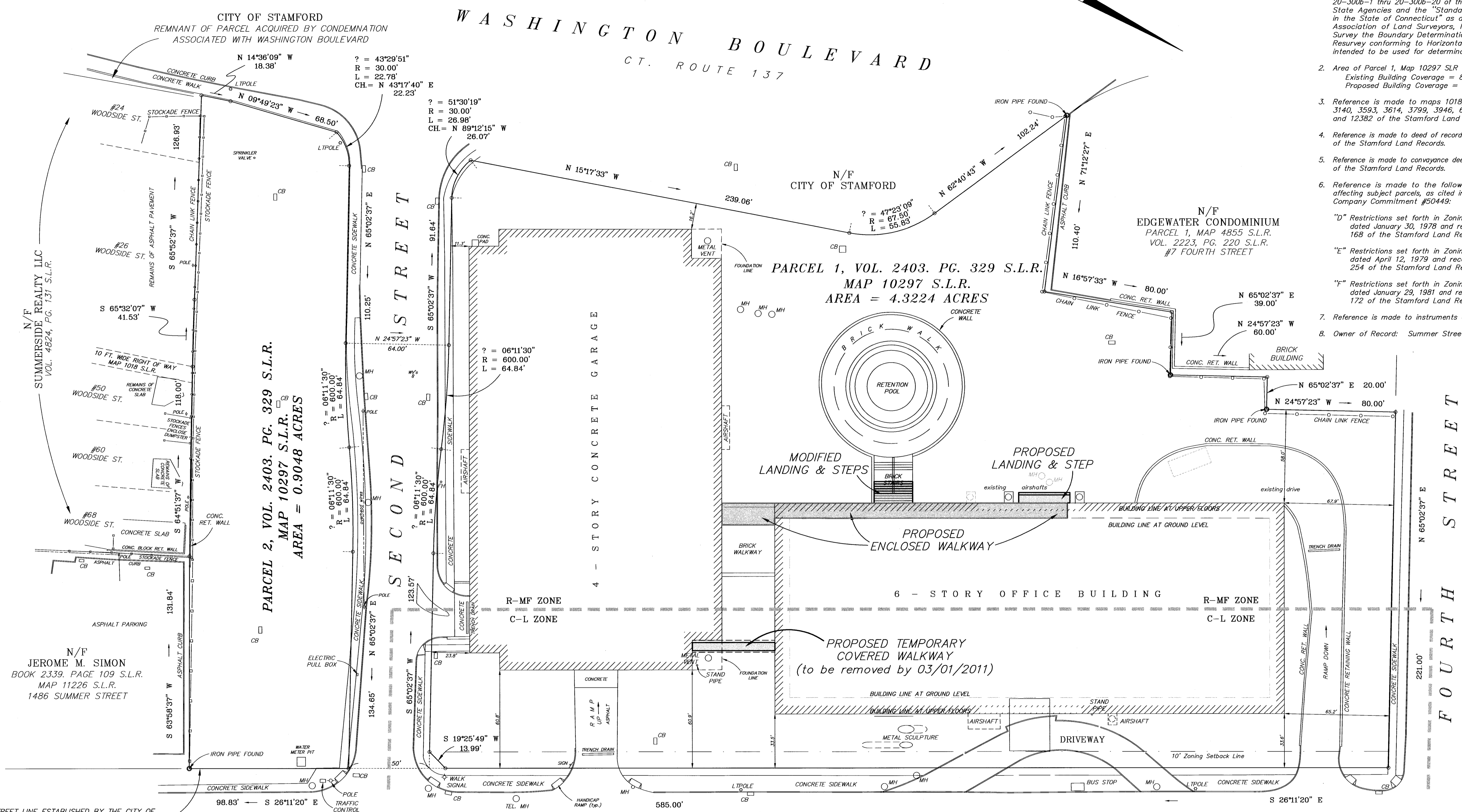
22 First Street | Stamford, CT 06905
Tel: 203.327.0500 | Fax: 203.357.1118
www.rednissmead.com

COMM. NO.:	DATE:
9867	2/2/2024
	SCALE:
	1"=80'

2/2/2024 3:15 PM H:\Jobfiles\2\9000\9867\DWG\Planning\1838 Aerial.dwg

NOTES:

- This survey has been prepared in accordance with Sections 20-300b-1 thru 20-300b-20 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies and the "Standards for Surveys and Maps in the State of Connecticut" as adopted by the Connecticut Association of Land Surveyors, Inc. as a Zoning Location Survey the Boundary Determination Category of which is a Resurvey conforming to Horizontal Accuracy Class A-2 and intended to be used for determination of zoning compliance.
- Area of Parcel 1, Map 10297 SLR = 4.3224 Ac./188,283 SF
Existing Building Coverage = 84,077 SF (44.6%)
Proposed Building Coverage = 84,077 SF (44.6%)
- Reference is made to maps 1018, 1352, 1859, 2419, 3083, 3140, 3593, 3614, 3799, 3946, 6362, 7959, 10297, 11226, and 12382 of the Stamford Land Records.
- Reference is made to deed of record found in Vol. 2403, Pg. 329 of the Stamford Land Records.
- Reference is made to conveyance deed found in Vol. 2189, Pg. 35 of the Stamford Land Records.
- Reference is made to the following instruments of record affecting subject parcels, as cited in the Chicago Title Insurance Company Commitment #50449:
"D" Restrictions set forth in Zoning Appeals Board Certificate dated January 30, 1978 and recorded in Vol. 1711 at Page 168 of the Stamford Land Records.
"E" Restrictions set forth in Zoning Appeals Board Certificate dated April 12, 1979 and recorded in Vol. 1832 at Page 254 of the Stamford Land Records.
"F" Restrictions set forth in Zoning Appeals Board Certificate dated January 29, 1981 and recorded in Vol. 2007 at Page 172 of the Stamford Land Records.
- Reference is made to instruments of record as labeled hereon.
- Owner of Record: Summer Street Equity LLC



STREET LINE ESTABLISHED BY THE CITY OF STAMFORD, VOL. 382, PG. PAGE 118 S.L.R., MAP 1859 S.L.R., FORMERLY BEING THE BUILDING LINE VOL. 322, PG. 148 S.L.R.

SUMMER STREET
70 FT. WIDE RIGHT OF WAY
MAP 1859 S.L.R.

ZONING LOCATION SURVEY
DEPICTING PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS AT
1600 SUMMER STREET
STAMFORD, CT
PREPARED FOR
SUMMER STREET EQUITY LLC

To my knowledge and belief this map is substantially correct as noted hereon

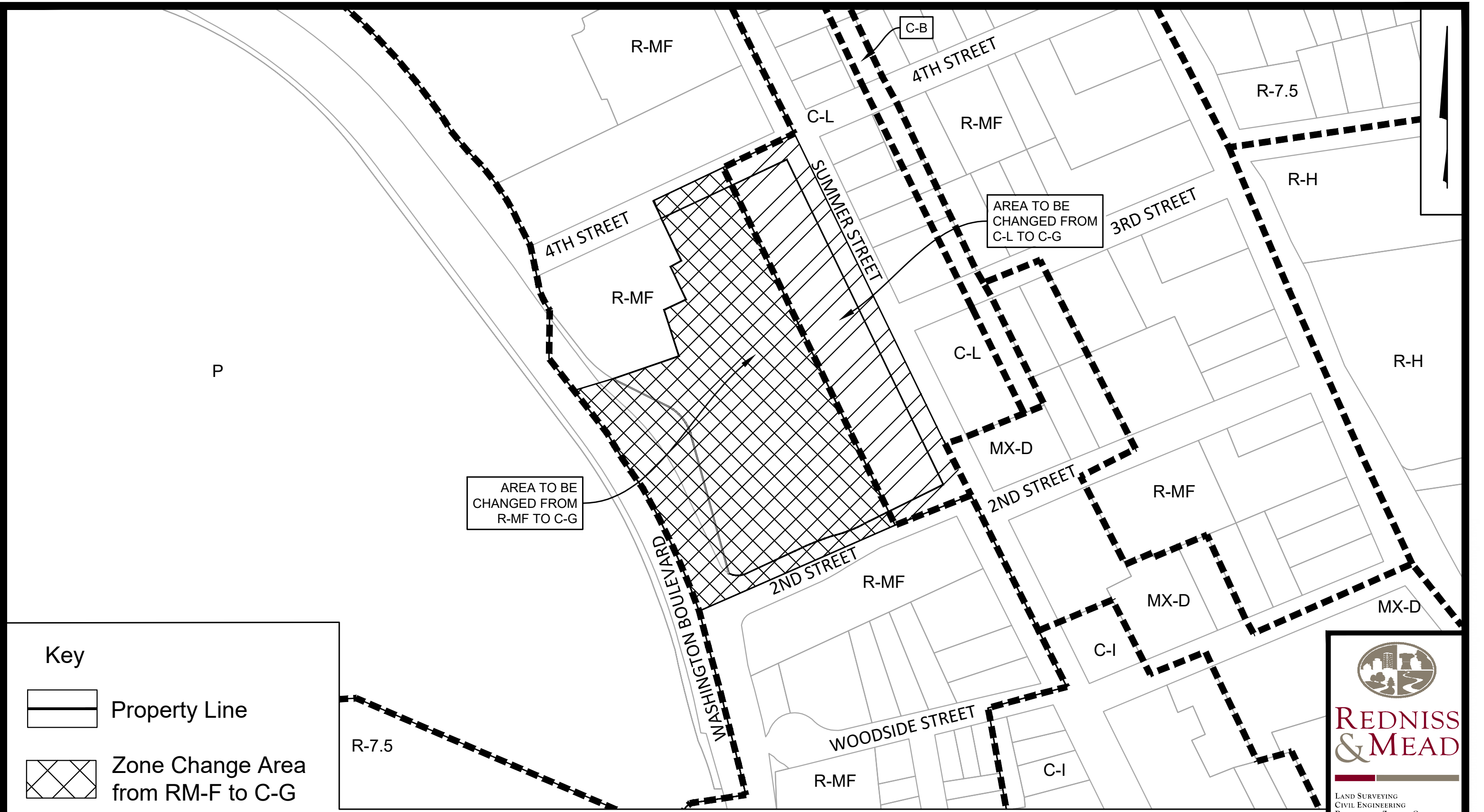
Raymond L. Redniss
RAYMOND L. REDNISS CT.LIC. NO. 10046
DATE: 12 November 2010

JOB NO.: 1838F-5 DATE: 10/19/2010
DRAWN BY: RLR CHECKED BY:
SCALE: 0 30 60
1" = 30'

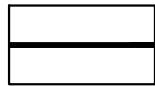
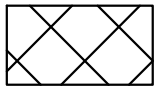

1838F-ZLS3.DWG

Redniss & Mead
INCORPORATED
ENGINEERS - PLANNERS - SURVEYORS - ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS
22 FIRST STREET - STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT 06905 - TEL: 327-6500 FAX: 327-1118


REVISED: 11/12/2011 - added Temporary Walkway



Key

-  Property Line
-  Zone Change Area from RM-F to C-G
-  Zone Change Area from C-L to C-G

ZONE CHANGE EXHIBIT
1600 SUMMER STREET
STAMFORD, CT



REDNISS & MEAD

LAND SURVEYING
 CIVIL ENGINEERING
 PLANNING & ZONING CONSULTING
 PERMITTING

22 First Street | Stamford, CT 06905
 Tel: 203.327.0500 | Fax: 203.357.1118
 www.rednissmead.com

COMM. NO.:	DATE:
9867	2/1/2024
SCALE:	1"=150'

**Zone Change Description
1600 Summer Street
Zone Map Change Application
February 5, 2024**

Block #: 242

Area: 4.32 Acres \pm (excludes portions of Summer Street, Second Street, and Fourth Street rights-of-way along site frontage)

DESCRIPTION OF AREA OF ZONE CHANGE FROM RM-F (MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENCE DESIGN) AND C-L (LIMITED BUSINESS) TO C-G (GENERAL COMMERCIAL):

Including portions of properties commonly known as 1600 Summer Street (Assessor #000-1395); located in the City of Stamford, and generally described as follows:

Beginning at the intersection of the westerly side of Summer Street and the northerly side of Second Street, said the boundary of the subject land travels as follows:

Northerly: 585' \pm along the westerly side of Summer Street;

Westerly: 221' \pm along the southerly side of Fourth Street;

Southerly: 787' \pm along land n/f of various owners of Edgewater Condominium and land n/f of the City of Stamford each in part;

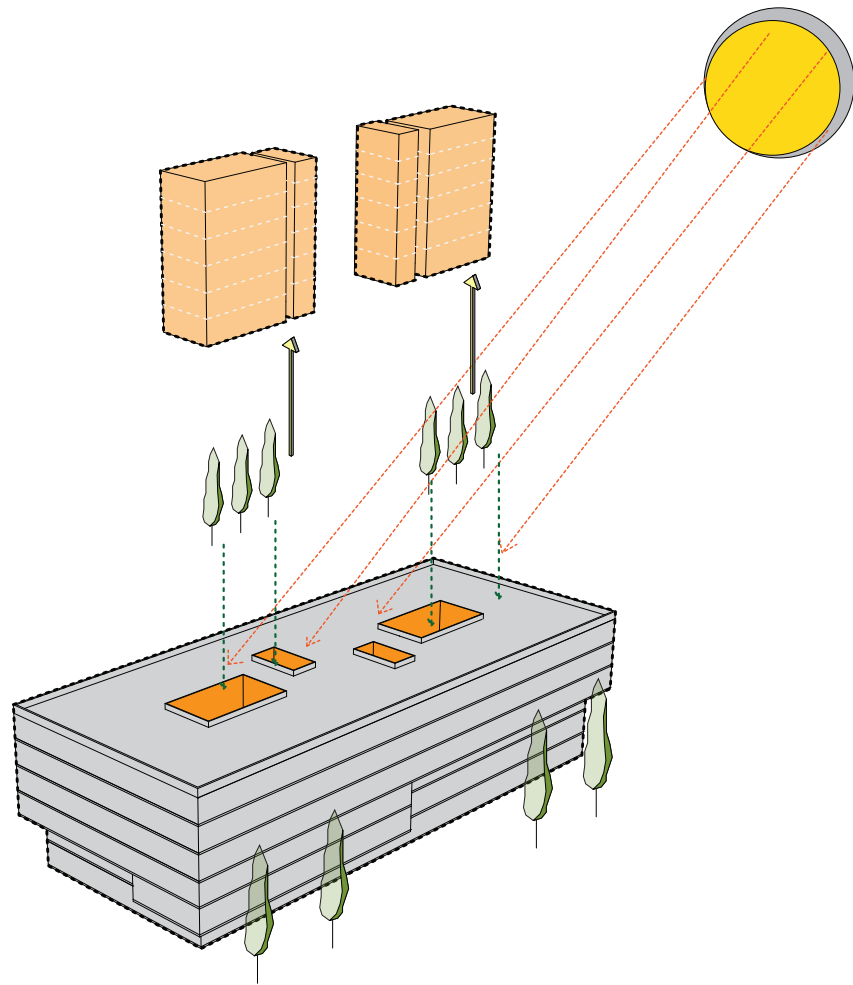
Easterly: 255' \pm along the northerly side of Second Street to the point of beginning.

Preliminary Zoning Comparison¹ 1600 Summer Street

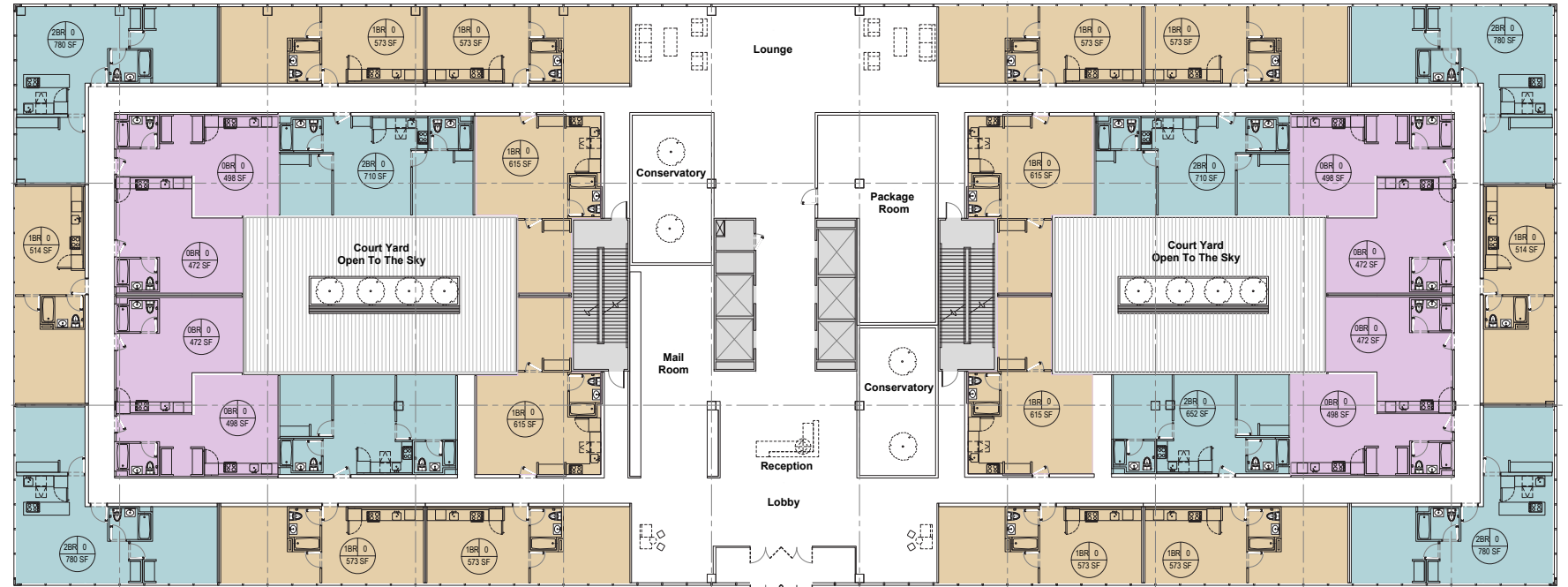
Standard	1970s C-L Permitted	Existing Site ²	C-G Permitted
Site Area	188,283		
Building Height	75'	75'	100'
Building Coverage	90% 169,455	45% 84,000±	90% 169,455
Floor Area Ratio	6.3 (permitted bulk) ⁴	2.33 440,000± ³	1.8 338,909
Dwelling Units	376 ⁵	0 (172 permitted) ⁶	188-414 ⁷

Footnotes

1. For simplicity, permitted figures assume entire site is single zone and base standards only
2. Actual site area: 58,610sf CL + 129,673sf R-MF = 188,283sf.
3. Includes approximately 273,000sf office and 167,000sf garage Floor Area which could be exempt in the C-G if properly screened and/or landscaped.
4. 90% Coverage x 7 Stories = 6.3 or 1.2 million sf of bulk (garage + usable floor area)
5. 188,283 ÷ 500 sf per family = 376 DU + commercial uses within permitted bulk
6. C-L (86 units) & R-MF (86 units) permitted
7. Max density is dependent on the amount of commercial rights available for trade-in




SECTION
AMENITIES



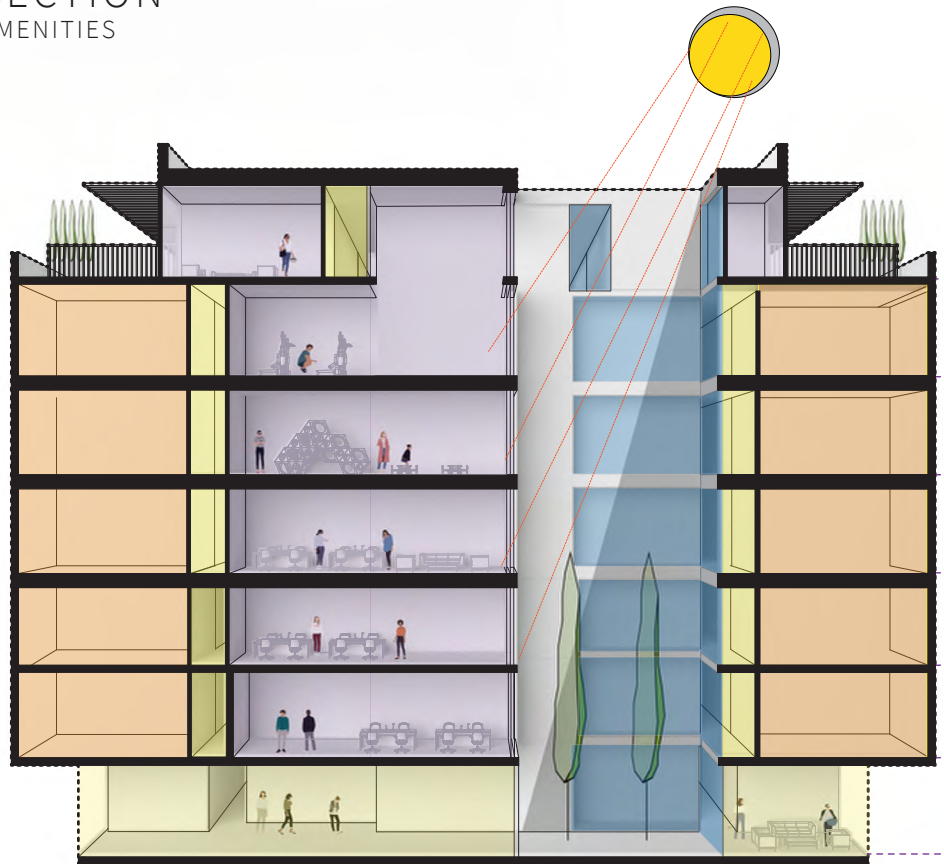
1 1st Floor
1/16" = 1'-0"

0 5 10 20 30



LEGEND

- Studio Apt.
- 1 Bedroom Apt.
- 2 Bedroom Apt.



# APARTMENT		Units	%
56	Studio	56	22%
92	1BR	92	36%
78	2BR	78	31%
27	3BR	27	11%
	Total	253	100%

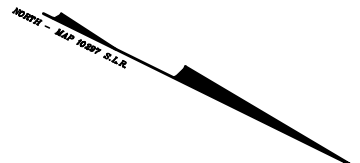
Floor	Units			
	Studio	1BR	2BR	3BR
1st Floor	8	14	8	0
2nd Floor	9	10	18	2
3rd Floor	9	17	12	3
4th Floor	10	17	12	4
5th Floor	10	17	12	4
6th Floor	10	17	12	4
+ 7th Floor	0	0	4	10

1600 SUMMER



1600 SUMMER

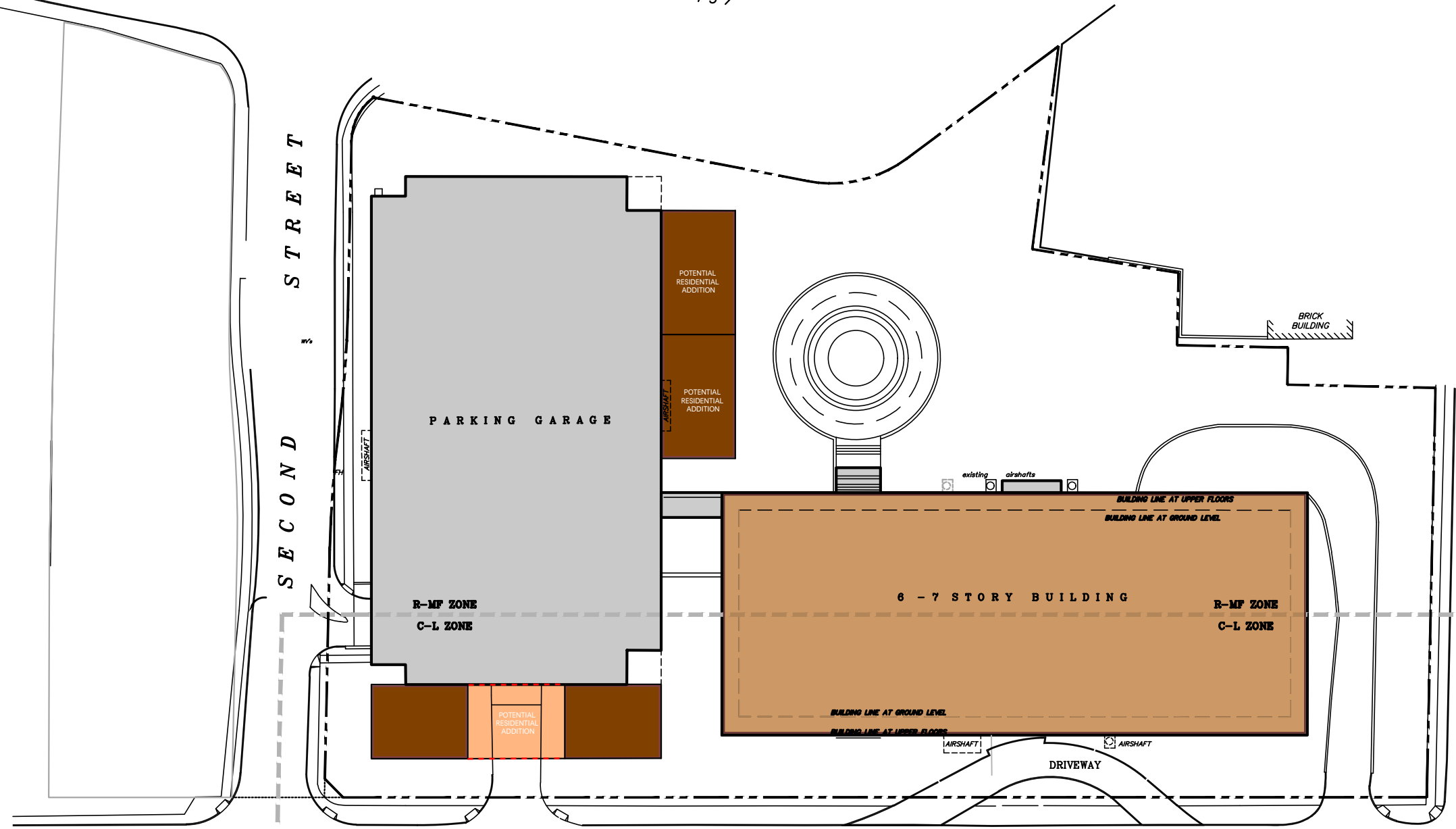




WASHINGTON BOULEVARD
CT. ROUTE 137

SECOND STREET

FOURTH STREET



SUMMER STREET

SITE DEMONSTRATION EXHIBIT
1600 SUMMER STREET
STAMFORD, CT



REDNISS & MEAD

LAND SURVEYING
CIVIL ENGINEERING
PLANNING & ZONING CONSULTING
PERMITTING

22 First Street | Stamford, CT 06905
Tel: 203.327.0500 | Fax: 203.357.1118
www.rednissmead.com

COMM. NO.:	DATE:
9867	2/6/2023
	SCALE:
	1"=70'

**SUMMER STREET EQUITY, LLC
c/o BENENSON CAPITAL PARTNERS, LLC
708 THIRD AVENUE, 28TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017**

February 2, 2024

City of Stamford Planning & Zoning Boards
c/o Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief
888 Washington Boulevard
Stamford, CT 06901

Re: 1600 Summer Street - Stamford, CT

Dear Mr. Blessing:

This letter serves to authorize Redniss & Mead, Inc. (with offices at 22 First Street in Stamford, CT) and Carmody Torrance Sandak & Hennessey, LLP (with offices at 1055 Washington Blvd in Stamford, CT) to act as our agent in connection with the preparing, filing, and processing of applications required for Planning and Zoning approvals relating to the above referenced property.

Thank you for your acknowledgement of said authority.

Sincerely,
Summer Street Equity, LLC



Gary F. Sedoruk
Benenson Capital Partners, LLC
As agent for owner

cc: Richard W. Redniss
William J. Hennessey Jr.
Rachel Loeb