



DiPrete Engineering

February 7, 2025

James D. Rabbitt, AICP, Planning Director
South Kingstown Planning Department
180 High Street
Wakefield, RI 02879

RE: The Lofts at Fairgrounds
132 Fairgrounds Road
Assessor's Plat 21-3 Lot 9
South Kingstown, Rhode Island
DE Project #: 3373-001

Dear Mr. Rabbitt:

DiPrete Engineering (DE) has prepared the following Pre-Application narrative to supplement the submission materials and provide additional details for the proposed residential development. "The Lofts at Fairgrounds" is presented as a Comprehensive Permit application, in accordance with the State of Rhode General Law 45-53-4. As required by the Comprehensive Permit, 25% of the proposed units will be set aside as low- and moderate-income (LMI) units. The goal for this site is to create a residential development that not only meets the state law, but also offers new housing options for those who want more affordable and other alternatives. The submitted plans are the same design that you and Jay Parker reviewed with us on December 11, 2024, with the addition of more detail on the conceptual architecture and additional parking per your recommendation.

The proposed residential buildings have been designed to create new housing opportunities on the under-utilized, excess parking area of the existing industrial building located on the property. The existing industrial building was previously occupied by American Power Conversion (APC) since the mid 1990's. The APC workforce and associated parking demand created the site layout and asphalt landscape that exists on the property today. APC was purchased by Schneider Electric in 2012, who occupied the building until they subsequently moved in 2020.

After many years on the market, the property was purchased in 2023 by the present owner (132 Fairgrounds LLC). The industrial building is currently occupied by Norpak LLC as a food packaging product manufacturer. The Norpak technological advances and automation of operations have created efficiency improvements that have reduced the workforce demand creating excess parking on the property. The under-utilized parking areas are proposed to re-purposed as residential housing to support the growing demand in the Town.

The planning process has been ongoing for almost a year and has involved much thought and preparation to create new buildings and associated amenities that will offer a high-quality residential development to support the surrounding uses including the University of Rhode Island (URI), the Kingston train station, and South County Hospital. It is intended to meet the needs of many current South Kingstown residents with alternatives for pricing and feasible housing options. The concept of additional residential uses in the West Kingston area near URI has been studied and the current plan has been developed over the past several months by a team of experts in the fields of architecture, engineering, surveying, financial viability, construction, and land planning.

This narrative explains the design development and provides extra information that is not shown on the plans. It also emphasizes the features and amenities of the plan that the designers and applicant believe are important and beneficial to the town and future residents. The applicant recognizes that this is the initial stage of the process and that there will be significant additional time and resources needed to advance the design and obtain the required state and local regulatory approvals, and address any possible Planning Board concerns about traffic, drainage, site design, etc.

Comprehensive Permit Process

The Lofts at Fairgrounds are presented as a Comprehensive Permit application in accordance with the State of Rhode Island General Law 45-53-4. This law, effective January 1, 2024, allows an applicant proposing to build low- or moderate-income housing to submit to the local review board a single application for a comprehensive permit to build housing in lieu of separate applications to the applicable local boards. This procedure is only available for proposals in which at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the housing is low- or moderate-income housing.

The law provides for the opportunity for a municipality to require an applicant proposing a project to complete a pre-application conference with the local review board, the technical review committee, or with the administrative officer for the local review board as appropriate.

It's important to note that the Pre-Application Conference associated with a Comprehensive Permit application under RIGL 45-53.4 doesn't follow the traditional Pre-Application Plan submission requirements of a Land Development process and is not subject to the submission requirements as such. In particular, the state law for the Pre-Application Conference within RIGL 45-53-4.(d)(1), states:

Pre-application conference. A municipality may require an applicant proposing a project under this chapter to complete, or the applicant proposing a project under this chapter may request a pre-application conference with the local review board, the technical review committee established pursuant to § 45-23-56, or with the administrative officer for the local review board as appropriate. In advance of a pre-application conference, the applicant shall be required to submit only a short description of the project in writing including the number of units, type of housing, density analysis, preliminary list of adjustments needed, as well as a location map, and conceptual site plan. The purpose of the pre-application conference shall be to review a concept plan of the proposed development and to elicit feedback from the reviewing person or board. Upon receipt of a request by an applicant for a pre-application conference, the municipality shall have thirty (30) days to schedule and hold the pre-application conference, unless a different timeframe is agreed to by the applicant in writing. If thirty (30) days has elapsed from the filing of the pre-application submission and no pre-application conference has taken place, nothing shall be deemed to preclude an applicant from thereafter filing and proceeding with an application for preliminary plan review for a comprehensive permit.

In advance of a pre-application conference, the applicant shall be required to submit only a short description of the project in writing including the number of units, type of housing, density analysis, preliminary list of adjustments needed, as well as a location map, and conceptual site plan.

The purpose of the pre-application conference shall be to review a concept plan of the proposed development and to elicit feedback from the reviewing person or board and there is no formal motion at this stage to be entertained. The applicant believes that this proposed application has exceeded the requirements of the state law, and believes the additional information submitted is necessary for the Planning Staff and Planning Board to provide important feedback prior to detailed engineering and analysis being submitted to the town.

Municipal government subsidies, including adjustments and zoning incentives, are to be made available to applications under this law to offset the differential costs of the low- or moderate-income housing units in a development. At a minimum, a municipality shall provide an applicant with more dwelling units than allowed by-right under its zoning ordinance in the form of a density bonus to allow an increase in the allowed dwelling units per acre, as well as other incentives and municipal government subsidies.

Project Overview

The project consists of 6 new multi-family buildings and a retail/amenity building at the entrance. Each building provides a mixture of studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units for a total of 327 units.

The design team has looked to provide key amenities to the future residents including an in-house fitness center, in-ground swimming pool with hot tub, outdoor passive/active recreation areas, new pedestrian walking paths, outdoor firepit/seating areas, detached covered garage spaces, and an outdoor pet area. The buildings will be professionally managed with onsite staff to serve the future residents.

Outdoor recreational areas are a key focus for the development and have been incorporated into the design. The applicant recognizes the importance of providing common areas (both indoor and outdoor) for the future residents to use. Potential outdoor recreation areas include:

- New walking path connections to create an integrated pedestrian circulation system
- Outdoor pet area
- Outdoor firepit with seating/meeting area
- In-ground swimming pool and hot tub
- Bike racks for multi-modal alternatives

The architecture of the buildings at The Lofts at Fairgrounds has been an important aspect of the design from the beginning. It was identified in early stages that integrating a residential community adjacent to the existing industrial building would be important to get right. In this case, Newbury Design Associates have created a site layout and residential community with building facades that the owners believe will be a great addition to the property. The architects will be prepared at the appropriate time to discuss with the board and staff what their design inspirations were, and goals in creating the new buildings.

Regarding the specific state law requirements for the pre-application conference under RIGL 45-53-4, we have provided the following materials:

Comprehensive Permit – Pre-Application Conference Requirements – RIGL 45-53-4.(d)(1)

1. Short Description of the Project
 - Narrative provided above
2. Number of Units
 - Building 1 – 3-Story Building
 - 9 Studio Units
 - 6 x 1-bedroom units
 - 12 x 2-bedroom units
 - Buildings 2-6 (5 Buildings) – 4-Story Buildings – Each Building Provides:
 - 16 Studio Units
 - 28 x 1-bedroom units
 - 16 x 2-bedroom units
 - Totals – 6 Residential Buildings, 327 Total Units, 419 Total Bedrooms

3. Type of Housing
 - o Residential multi-family – mixture of studio, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom units with associated active/passive recreational amenities including an in-ground swimming pool, fitness center, pedestrian walking paths, and outdoor recreation areas. The low- and moderate-income housing units will be equally distributed between each unit type (studio, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom).

4. Density Analysis

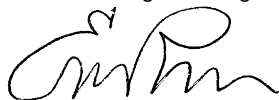
The applicant recognizes that there may be discretion in how the town prefers the density to be calculated. There will be a subdivision plan submitted in the future to create a new interior lot line to create a standalone lot for the residential community to divide from the existing industrial building. We respectfully request guidance from town officials on the different options on how to measure the density. If it is across the full parcel that the applicant controls, it would be about 16.2 units per acre (327 units on 20.22 acres). If the density was to be taken on across the future parcel that the residential community would be located on, it would be about 29.2 units per acre (327 units over 11.2 acres). The applicant has determined that the density being proposed is the minimal amount of units to be successful and feasible without a significant additional subsidy. The applicant also believes that the size of the future buildings and the use are appropriate and beneficial to community.

5. Preliminary List of Adjustments Needed
 - o The applicant anticipates adjustments needed for building height, allowable building size (# of units per building), density, parking, and land use (multi-household in IND-1 zone). A full list of adjustments will be provided at the next stage of permitting (Comprehensive Permit – Preliminary Plan submission).

6. Location Map and Conceptual Plan
 - o Site Plans included with the Pre-Application conference request

The applicant has spent considerable time with their design team planning and preparing the Pre-Application Conference materials. We are looking forward to further discussing the vision for the development and hearing feedback from the Planning Staff and Planning Board. If you have any further questions on this matter, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,
DiPrete Engineering Associates, Inc.



Eric Prive, PE
Senior Project Manager
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