



# DiPrete Engineering

August 28, 2025

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

RE: The Lofts at Fairgrounds – Comprehensive Permit (Master Plan)  
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 Master Plan 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 have been slightly modified from the Pre-Application Conference to address some of the comments discussed at the Planning Board meeting.

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 over 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, landscaping, 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.

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.

Recent amendments to the state law related to Low- and Moderate-Income Housing and the Comprehensive Permit process allow an applicant to apply for an optional Master Plan stage:

*Optional Master Plan. An applicant may elect to apply for and be heard on Master Plan review prior to preliminary plan submission. If a Master Plan review is elected by the applicant the following shall apply:*

*Submission requirements. Submission requirements for Master Plan review shall be limited to the following:*

- (A) An application form and fee;*
- (B) A short description of the project in writing including the number of units, type of housing, density analysis, list of adjustments needed, as well as a location map, and preliminary determinations as to site constraints;*
- (C) Conceptual site plans showing infrastructure locations for roadways, preliminary locations and design of conceptual stormwater facilities, location of sewer and water lines and/or wells and on-site wastewater treatment systems, locations of housing units, estimated locations of site constraints and wetlands;*
- (D) A preliminary traffic opinion for projects of over thirty (30) dwelling units;*
- (E) A letter of eligibility issued by the Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation, or in the case of projects primarily funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or other state or federal agencies, an award letter indicating the subsidy, or application in such form as may be prescribed for a municipal government subsidy;*
- (F) If the applicant submits any requests for adjustments at master plan, a public hearing shall be held in the same manner as during preliminary plan review as set forth in this section and the applicant shall be responsible for providing the list of abutters and all advertising costs.*

## 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 311 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.

The design team is excited to present the project to you at an upcoming Planning Board meeting and provide additional details into the project specifics. 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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