



**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES – PLANNING DIVISION**  
**REPORT: 8-24 Review of Municipal Improvements at 279 & 285 Farmington Avenue for consideration January 25, 2022**

**STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Planning & Zoning Commission  
**PREPARED BY:** Evelyne St-Louis, Senior Planner ([evelyne.st-louis@hartford.gov](mailto:evelyne.st-louis@hartford.gov))

**PROJECT:** Purchase and Sale Agreement  
279 & 285 Farmington Avenue  
PARCEL IDs: 179-406-043 and 179-406-044  
COMM-2022-0564

**ZONE:** MX-1, Multi-Use Mix District  
Asylum Hill National Historic District

**TYPE:** Review of Municipal Improvements Per Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-24

**APPLICANT:** Court of Common Council

**OWNER:** City of Hartford

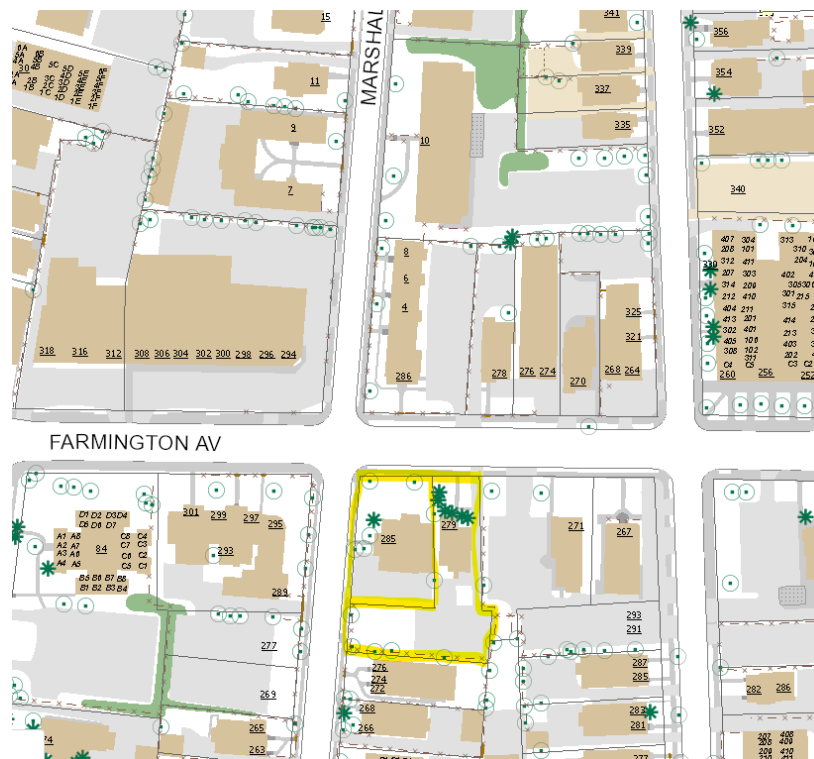


Figure 1. 279 & 285 Farmington Avenue parcels highlighted in yellow (Hartford GIS, 2022)

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The application is an 8-24 Review of Municipal Improvements. The referral notice, dated January 10, 2022, is a communication from Mayor Bronin to the Court of Common Council regarding a proposed resolution that would authorize a Purchase and Sale Agreement for the transfer of two city-owned properties at 279 & 285 Farmington Avenue to Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (NINA) Properties, LLC for the restoration of these historic buildings into single-family owner-occupied homes.

### **KEY APPLICATION TIMELINES**

- Referral Date: Monday January 10, 2022.
- Date Received: Thursday January 13, 2022.
- Scheduled to be heard by the Planning and Zoning Commission: Tuesday, January 25, 2022.
- Council Public Hearing Date: Monday January 17, 2022.
- Council Meeting Date: Monday February 14, 2021.

### **LEGAL STANDARD**

Standard for Application Type:

The Commission advises the city council and city agencies about municipal improvements in accordance with 8-24 of the general statutes and section 1.3.10 of the Zoning Regulations. The Commission must primarily consider whether the municipal improvement will be completed in a manner consistent with the comprehensive plan of development.

### **STANDARD SPECIFIC TO THE USE**

**Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-24;**

**Zoning Regulations Section 1.3.10: Review of Municipal Improvements**

C. Review Criteria:

- (1) In reviewing proposals for municipal improvements, the commission shall focus primarily on whether the municipal improvement will be completed in a manner consistent with the comprehensive plan of development.
- (2) The Commission shall not base its decision solely on financial matters (including but not limited to the cost to the city of the municipal improvement).

### **Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD)**

Relevant goals of the POCD listed by action area.

Grow400: A more prosperous economy

- Incentivize rehabs of historic homes
- Infill, infill, infill: Building on vacant and underutilized lots across the city will raise property values, reduce blight, and create cohesive neighborhoods.

Live400: A more equitable community

- Build 5,000 new housing units
- Repair and maintain aging housing stock
- Increase homeownership by 50%

### **COMMENTS RECEIVED (DEPARTMENTS, AGENCIES, NRZs, PUBLIC)**

NINA Properties, LLC, presented their proposed project to the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association's (AHNA) Economic Development Committee on November 10, 2021, and to AHNA's General Membership on December 6, 2021, at which time AHNA voted in favor of the proposed project. AHNA also submitted a letter dated December 28, 2021, stating their unanimous support of the project. A letter submitted by Frank H. Hagaman, dated December 10, 2021, also expresses strong support for the disposition of the properties to NINA. These letters are included in the application documents. No other comments have been received as of the the time of writing.

### **ANALYSIS**

For context, the City of Hartford published a Request for Proposals in the winter of 2020 seeking a qualified developer to redevelop 279 & 285 Farmington Ave. Subsequently, the nonprofit organization NINA Properties LCC was selected as the preferred developer for this RFP given the organization's demonstrated experience rehabbing historic properties and developing both for-sale and rental housing in the Asylum Hill neighborhood.

Furthermore, the City's Historic Preservation Commission reviewed and approved the proposed work to be done on the historic structures on Wednesday December 15, 2021, with some minor modifications (COMM-2021-0551 and COMM-2021-0552).

Subsequently, Mayor Bronin submitted a resolution to the Court of Common Council on January 10, 2022 that would authorize the City to enter into and execute a Purchase and Sale Agreement for the transfer of two city-owned properties at 279 & 285 Farmington Ave to NINA Properties, LLC for the restoration of these two historic buildings into single-family homeowner-occupied homes.

In accordance with Section 8-24 of the General Statutes and Section 1.3.10 of the Zoning Regulations, the Planning and Zoning Commission must consider whether the disposition is aligned with the POCD and make recommendation back to Council who will then act on the request. The Clerk's office anticipates that the recommendation made by the Planning and Zoning Commission will be communicated to the Council on Monday February 14, 2022.

The subject properties measure 0.33 acres (279 Farmington) and 0.25 acres (285 Farmington Ave). The lots are occupied by two vacant, deteriorating historic structures (see Figures 2-5). In the past, the structures have been used for mixed business/residential uses. The City of Hartford took ownership of the properties in 2007 (279 Farmington Ave) and 2015 (285 Farmington Ave) and these structures have been listed on the City's surplus inventory for several years. The developer, NINA Properties, has proposed to restore the existing historic buildings back to two single-family, owner-occupied homes.

The Grow400 and Live400 action areas of the POCD include several related and overlapping goals, including rehabbing historic homes throughout the city, repairing and maintaining aging housing stock, building new housing, increasing residential density, and encouraging homeownership citywide. The proposed project at 279 & 285 Farmington Avenue would further these goals by creating new housing units, expanding homeownership opportunities in Asylum Hill, and restoring two historic structures that have long been in poor condition and sitting vacant on a major corridor. While the proposed density could be considered too low for this location, staff finds that the benefits of this proposal outweigh this possible shortcoming, and that overall, the project will

increase neighborhood cohesiveness, help enliven and stabilize the area, and provide homeownership opportunities in a desirable location.



Figure 2. Existing structures at 279 and 285 Farmington Ave (Google Street View, 2020)



Figure 3. 279 Farmington Avenue, as seen from Farmington Avenue (Google Street View, 2020)



Figure 4. 285 Farmington Avenue, as seen from Farmington Ave (Google Street View, 2019)





Figure 5. 285 Farmington Avenue, as seen from S. Marshall Street (Google Street View, 2019)

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of this application.

**A draft resolution follows.**

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

**REVIEWED AND EDITED BY,**

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Aimee Chambers, Director



**CITY OF HARTFORD**  
**PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION RESOLUTION**  
**279 & 285 FARMINGTON AVENUE**  
**8-24 REVIEW OF MUNICIPAL IMPROVEMENTS INVOLVING THE SALE AND**  
**REDEVELOPMENT OF TWO SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES**

- Whereas,** The City of Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission reviewed the referral from the Court of Common Council regarding the purchase and sale of City-owned property at 279 & 285 Farmington Avenue to NINA Properties, LLC, for the rehab and restoration of these two historic structures to two owner-occupied homes; and
- Whereas,** The referral was received from the Court of Common Council on January 10, 2022; and
- Whereas,** The subject property is located in the MX-1, Multi-Use Mix District, and in the Asylum Hill National Historic District; and
- Whereas,** The role of the Planning & Zoning Commission in an 8-24 review is primarily to determine whether the municipal improvement will be completed in a manner consistent with the comprehensive plan of development; and
- Whereas,** The proposed project would help further several goals stated in the Plan of Conservation & Development, namely: incentivize the rehab of historic homes (Grow400), encourage infill development (Grow400), encourage the repair and maintenance of aging housing stock (Live400), build 5,000 new housing units (Live400), and increase homeownership by 50% citywide (Live400).

Now therefore Be It

- Resolved,** The City of Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission hereby **recommends/does not recommend** approval of the transfer of the two city-owned properties at 279 & 285 Farmington Avenue to NINA Properties, LLC, per referral from the Court of Common Council on January 10, 2022.

Be It Further,

- Resolved,** This 25<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2022.