



DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES – PLANNING DIVISION
REPORT: Master Plan Amendment for the Village at Park River
for consideration May 25th, 2021

STAFF REPORT

TO: Planning & Zoning Commission
PREPARED BY: Paul Ashworth, Senior Planner
paul.ashworth@hartford.gov

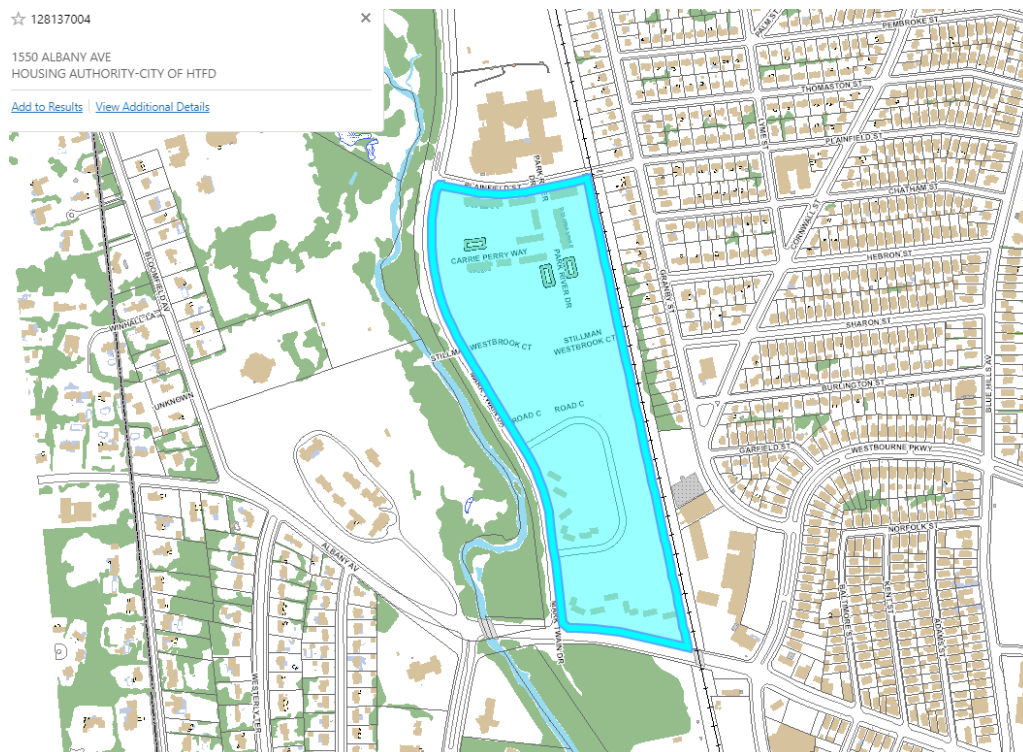
PROJECT: Village at Park River (Westbrook Village)
1550 Albany Ave
PARCEL ID: 128-137-004
P&Z-COMM-2021

ZONE: MX-2, Multi-Use Mix with Campus Overlay

TYPE: Special Permit per Section 1.3.4 for a Master Plan Amendment per Section 5.1.2.A

APPLICANT: Pennrose, LLC c/o Rio Sacchetti

OWNER: Housing Authority of the City of Hartford



Overhead View – Hartford GIS 2021

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Applicant is requesting an amendment to the Westbrook Village Master Plan (the Master Plan) to accommodate several changes proposed by the Applicant.

The original special permit for the Master Plan was granted on October 11, 2016 (P&Z-SPCPR-2016-0007, recorded in Land Records Vol 7493, Pg 32) and included the redevelopment of the entire Westbrook Village housing development consisting of 360 residential units in 81 buildings on approximately 30 acres, into a mixed-income residential community consisting of 360 units in 39 buildings, subject to conditions. Subsequent amendments to the Special Permit Master Plan were approved with conditions by the Commission on July 24, 2018; July 9, 2019; & September 24, 2019 (P&Z-SPCPR-2018-003, Land Records Vol 7493, Pg 30; P&Z-COMM-2019-0017, Vol 7553, PG 106; & P&Z-COMM-2019-0049, Vol 7539, Pg 238, respectively). The most recent approved Master Plan depicted 420 dwelling units within 29 buildings. At its meeting on August 12, 2019, Court of Common Council passed a resolution that the City abandon interest in Ogilby Drive and Dillon Road (see quit Claim Deed recorded in Land Records Volume 7571, Pg 219).

Roadway names were adopted by the Planning & Zoning Commission for some of the new Westbrook Village network (roads previously known as Road A, Road B and Westbrook Ave) on May 12, 2020 (P&Z-COMM-2020-0185).

Construction of the Master Plan was approved for Phase I, II (P&Z-ASPREV-2018-0177), III (P&Z-ADMIN-2019-0456) and IV-A (P&Z-ADMIN-2020-1189). Construction of Phase I and II are complete while phase III is currently under construction. Phase IV-A is a portion of the section of Westbrook Village identified on the Master Plan as Phase IV consisting of five 3.5 story Row Buildings (#19-23), with a total of 60 dwelling units (rental) and 83 parking spaces.

Concurrent with the subject Master Plan Modification, the Applicant has applied for modifications to the previously approved Phase IV-A site plan (P&Z-ADMIN-2021-1936).

KEY APPLICATION TIMELINES

- Application Submission Date: April 23, 2021
- Date Application Accepted as Complete: April 23, 2021
- Application Date of Receipt: May 11, 2021 (sooner of either: date of next regularly scheduled meeting, or 35 days after acceptance of complete application)
- Public Hearing is scheduled to open on Tuesday, May 25, 2021; Open Hearing Deadline: July 15, 2021.
- Close Hearing Deadline (if opens May 25, 2021): (35 days after opening) Tuesday, June 29, 2021
- CT General Statutes Sec.8-7D allow that the applicant may consent to one or more extensions of time, provided the total extension of all time periods shall not be for longer than 65 days*.

LEGAL STANDARD

Standard for Application Type:

The Commission reviews special permits in accordance with Zoning Regulations section 1.3.4. Special permits may be approved, approved with conditions, or denied.

Considerations the Commission may weigh in special permit review include: harmony with the plan of conservation & development; compliance with the purposes of the district; effect on existing development; creation of safety hazards in vehicular and pedestrian circulation; effects on traffic; compatibility with adjacent properties; suitability of arrangement of buildings, open space, and provision of light and air; impact on essential services; impact on stormwater runoff; impact on city services and infrastructure; tree and landscape provision; and pedestrian amenities. The Commission may deviate from the minimum requirements for building siting, height, street facades, accessory structures dimensions, tree installation, landscape installation, buffers, fencing, lighting, parking, signage, and street design by up to 15% upon certain findings.

STANDARD SPECIFIC TO THE USE

Section 5.1.2.A: Special Permit

Special permit for a master plan for the entire campus, showing the location of buildings, landscaping, and other development features, in accordance with special permit application requirements outlined in 1.3.4 Special Permits...

FINDING OF FACTS

The Applicant described the proposed changes to the Master Plan verbally as seen below:

- A. Consolidation of building footprints and relocating curb cuts enabling a higher density around the central green spaces.
- B. Addition of a fenced dog park in a centrally located area near the Community Park.
- C. Consolidating the 3-story buildings in a consistent length and placing with a symmetrical approach on either side of Park River Drive, while maintaining the overall height to align with the design of Phases I through IV.
- D. Updating the name of “Road C” to Annie Walton Way, named after the former long-time resident of Westbrook Village and President of the Westbrook Resident’s Association.
- E. Incorporating a mid-rise apartment building symmetrically placed flanking the proposed mid-rise senior building on the opposite side of Park River Drive, providing an inviting entry gateway from the South entrance to the property as accessed from Mark Twain Drive and seamless transition to commercial and retail uses.
- F. Capturing minor modifications made during the site approval process for Phase 3 and the Community Building, which were designed to accommodate the needs of the residents and shifted to provide a better view into the green.

Other changes include:

Phasing Changes

- Owner occupied row homes on Annie Walton Way moved to Phase VI-A from phase IV-B.
- Phase VI is broken into two subphases, consisting of Phase VI-A, the owner occupied row homes, and Phase VI-B a newly proposed 4-story, 36 dwelling unit (DU) apartment building.
- Senior housing building moved from Phase VI to Phase VII.

Total Units

- Total units increasing from 420 DU to 432 DU.

The proposed changes are graphically examined below:



Figure 1. Previously Approved Master Phasing Plan – Freeman Company 2019

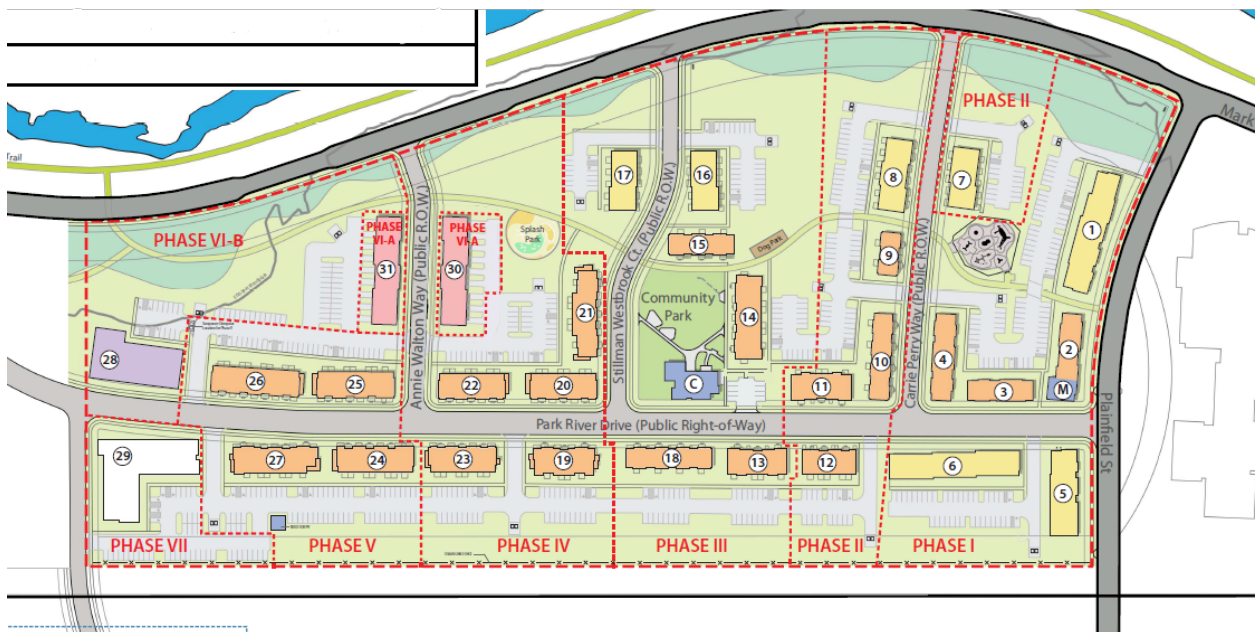


Figure 2. Currently Proposed Master Phasing Plan – Freeman Company 2021



Figure 3. New Apartment Building, Building No. 29 – Freeman Company 2021

COMMENTS RECEIVED (DEPARTMENTS, AGENCIES, NRZs, PUBLIC)

The Blue Hills NRZ was notified of this application via email on May 3, 2021. No comments have been received at the time of this writing.

ANALYSIS

The proposed changes as outlined in the finding of facts appear to meet the requirements of Section 5.1.2.A in that the revised Master Plan depicts the entire campus, showing the location of buildings, landscaping and other development features.

Some of the drawings provided including but not limited to the floor plans and the building elevation drawings were not reviewed for strict adherence to the Zoning Regulations under Section 1.3.4. Such development characteristics will be reviewed administratively prior to construction at time of Site Plan review, as required by Section 5.1.2.B. It should be noted that the elevation drawings provided appear to meet the general spirit of the Zoning Regulations.

The proposed consolidation of curb cuts will reduce the number of conflict points along roadways. The new curb cut location aligns with an existing curb cut across Road-C (or as proposed Annie Walton Way) and is a logical design creating a single interchange as opposed to the previous design that did not align.

The addition of the dog park in Phase IV is a positive addition to the development and provides additional recreation and community building opportunities. The proposed name of Road C as Annie Walton Way also encourages community in that it provides identity and a sense of history to residents. No similar or like sounding road names exist in the city.

The addition of the mid-rise apartment building opposite the senior housing building at the southern entrance to the community will help define the gateway to the development. The similar massing and parallel building faces will mark the entry to the community and further enhance the identity and sense of place to residents and visitors.

The orientation of buildings along the eastern side of Park River Drive near the southern entrance (building No. 27 in particular) are proposed to be straightened and placed on a single linear plane

with this revision. This is a change from the slight curvilinear orientation of the previous design. Staff finds that the previous curvilinear design was a positive characteristic that provided an additional identifying marker for residents and visitors. The new design does not provide differentiation and could create a monotonous experience. Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Commission consider requiring that the Master Plan retain the previously approved building orientation. In a related comment, Staff finds that the orientation and placement of the senior housing building (building No. 29) could be rotated or adjusted to enhance the same curvilinear design principle. This would mirror the building placement of the proposed 4-story apartment building (building No. 28) on the western side of the street and enhance the gateway effect created by these two buildings that the Applicant has described as a design goal. This change would also align with the intent of the zoning regulations with regard to building siting.

Staff finds that the proposed changes to the Westbrook Village Master Plan are consistent with the intention of the Zoning Regulations and the Plan of Conservation and Development. With the exception of the orientation of building number 27 and 29 as noted, Staff recommends approval of the application.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of this application.

A draft resolution follows. To address the issues raised in the Analysis, staff proposes the following condition be added to the resolution:

1. The proposed linear building orientation of the buildings identified as Building No. 27 and 29 on the plans shall be adjusted to match the curvilinear nature of the neighboring roadway, and in that respect mirror the relationship to the roadway of the buildings across the street.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Project Narrative
2. Phasing Plan

REVIEWED AND EDITED BY,

Aimee Chambers, Director



**CITY OF HARTFORD
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
1550 ALBANY AVENUE
WESTBROOK VILLAGE (VILLAGE AT PARK RIVER) SPECIAL PERMIT FOR
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT**

- Whereas,** The City of Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission reviewed the application and attached documents regarding the request for a Special Permit for modification of the existing Master Plan for the Westbrook Village Redevelopment; and
- Whereas,** The Westbrook Village Master Plan was first approved via Special Permit by the Planning & Zoning Commission on October 11, 2016 and recorded in the Land Records Vol 7493, Pg 32; and,
- Whereas,** The Westbrook Village Master Plan was most recently revised via Special Permit by the Planning & Zoning Commission on September 24, 2019 and recorded in the Land Records Vol 7539, Pg 238; and,
- Whereas,** The subject property consist of approximately 30 acres located on the north side of Albany Avenue and east of Mark Twain Drive; and,
- Whereas,** The proposed changes to the Master Plan include the addition of a 4-story apartment building, the addition of a fenced dog park, the incorporation of changes made during the site plan review of Phases I through IV, the renaming of Road C to “Annie Walton Way”, the minor redesign of parking, curb cuts and building footprints, and the increase of the overall development program from 420 dwelling units to 433 dwelling units; and
- Whereas,** The proposed changes are consistent with the Zoning Regulations Section 1.3.4 regarding Special Permits via Section 5.1.2.A regarding Master Plans in the Campus Overlay; and
- Whereas,** The provided elevation drawings and floor plans are considered “concept plans” and will be reviewed for strict adherence to the Zoning Regulations prior to construction at time of site plan review consistent with Section 5.1.2.B; and
- Whereas,** The Westbrook Village Master Plan for redevelopment of the subject property continues to be in the public interest and not injurious to the surrounding community; and

Now therefore Be It

Resolved, The City of Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission hereby approves the request for Special Permit for modifications of the existing Master Plan for the Westbrook Village Redevelopment as shown on the 26-page plan, revised April 23, 2021, titled *Westbrook Village* with the following condition:

1. The proposed linear building orientation of the buildings identified as Building No. 27 and No. 29 on the plans shall be adjusted to match the curvilinear nature of the neighboring roadway, and in that respect mirror the relationship to the roadway of the buildings across the street;

Be It Further,

Resolved, This 25th day of May, 2021.

Attachment 1 – Project Narrative

4. PROJECT NARRATIVE:

Pennrose LLC (the "Applicant") is seeking a new Special Permit approval for updates to the currently approved Master Plan, pursuant to Section 5.1.2.A of the City of Hartford's Zoning Regulations, for the redevelopment of the former Westbrook Village located at 1550 Albany Avenue (the "Property") into the new Village at Park River development. The Property is an approximately 30-acre site owned by the Housing Authority of the City of Hartford ("HACH") located in a Multi-Use Mix District (MX-2) with a Campus Overlay. The Applicant has already demolished the old Westbrook Village public housing buildings, roads and utilities and has begun construction of a new residential mixed-income residential community called Village at Park River. The Applicant, The Cloud Company, and HACH have constructed new Phases 1 and 2 totaling 135 units under the previously approved Master Plan and Phase 3 totaling 65 units is currently under construction. The Applicant is planning to submit Site Plan application to the Hartford Planning and Zoning Commission for Phase V of the project following approval of the updated Master Plan.

The updated Master Plan is anticipated to be constructed in seven phases and will include a mix of building types across the Property, with a total of 31 buildings containing 432 units and a Community Building, as more specifically set forth in detailed plans included with the application. The buildings are anticipated to include rental apartment buildings, owner occupied residential homes, and community/management facilities.

The City of Hartford is home to over 125,000 residents, world class dining, international cultural attractions, award winning entertainment venues and some of the largest corporations in the nation. Correspondingly, Hartford, as a culturally rich and diverse city, has sustained a year-over-year high demand for safe, high-quality affordable housing to fuel its cultural and economic growth. Vital to achieving its housing goals is the revitalization of Hartford's existing aging affordable housing stock from 100% affordable and often insulated enclaves, into diverse, thriving and economically stabilized neighborhoods capable of contributing to the city tax base. The transformative Master Plan responds to this demand through the provision of a truly mixed-income opportunity in this market by replacing blighted and largely vacant structures with newly constructed, high-quality residential rental and homeownership buildings, new multi-modal streetscapes, and an extensive network of stormwater management and recreational infrastructure.

The development team has worked closely with the City throughout the evolution of the Master Plan and its past updates to conceive and evolve a design that at its core is built to respond in detail to the City's progressive zoning and planning code, while remaining flexible to exterior planning forces that will inform the designs of future phases, such as development financing and community participation. Major elements from the master plan were derived directly from the former Westbrook Village residents' and community stakeholders' feedback:

- Tree lined neighborhood streets featuring homes with front porches to provide abundant defensible spaces and eyes on the street.
- Multi-purposed open space amenities including community gardens, picnic areas and playgrounds.

- A centralized community building that is well-programmed for a multi-generational community.

Additionally, the proposed Master Plan employs the positive elements of new urbanism to provide a comprehensive approach to neighborhood planning that, in addition to the creation of new residences, will help to ease the financial burdens on low and moderate-income families by addressing the following issues.

- Development of mixed income housing on a site within walking distance to community assets, job centers, public facilities, recreational amenities, and future adjacent commercial development that will have a profound positive impact on the greater neighborhood by reintegrating this development with the surrounding neighborhood fabric. This infrastructure is needed for Hartford to grow in such a way that is both economically and environmentally friendly.
- Providing for a mixture of building typologies, calibrated to respond to the diverse demographic needs of the existing population, which ranges from young families to seniors.
- The creation of a new and easily navigable roadway network to foster increased foot traffic and will promote pedestrian presence to create a safer neighborhood environment.
- Incorporation of green site and building standards in forms of green infrastructure, green building technologies and a general east-west orientation of neighborhood blocks for positive solar orientation.
- Devoting space to the development of well integrated, affordable homeownership opportunities – a typology which has hitherto been present in this community.
- Satisfies goals of City of Hartford 5-year consolidated housing plan.

The current Master Plan design updates accommodate the following:

- Overall, consolidating building footprints and relocating curb cuts enabling a higher density around the central green spaces.
- The addition of a fenced in dog park in a centrally located area near the Community Park.
- Consolidating the 3-Story buildings in a consistent length and placing with a symmetrical approach on either side of Park River Drive, while maintaining the overall height to align with the design of Phases I through IV.
- Updating the name of “Road C” to Annie Walton Way, named after the former long-time resident of Westbrook Village and president of the Westbrook Resident’s Association.
- Incorporating a mid-rise apartment building symmetrically placed flanking the proposed mid-rise senior building on the opposite side of Park River Drive, providing an inviting entry gateway from the South entrance to the property as accessed from Mark Twain Drive and seamless transition to commercial and retail uses.
- Captures modifications made during the site approval process for Phase and the Community Building which were designed to accommodate the needs of the residents and shifted to provide a better view into the green.

Attachment 2 – Phasing Plan

