



**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES – PLANNING DIVISION**

*REPORT:* Utility Plant at Trinity College  
for consideration July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Planning & Zoning Commission  
**PREPARED BY:** Paul Ashworth, Senior Planner  
[paul.ashworth@hartford.gov](mailto:paul.ashworth@hartford.gov)

**PROJECT:** Trinity College Utility Plant  
300 Summit Street (238 New Britain Ave)  
PARCEL ID: 206-533-005; 207-533-001; 207-533-002  
P&Z-COMM-2022-0649

**ZONE:** MX-2 with Campus Overlay

**TYPE:** Special Permit and Site Plan for an addition to a Civic Building not previously shown on a master plan per Sec.5.1.2.C to house a new utility plant and thermal distribution system serving the Trinity College campus

**APPLICANT:** The Trustees of Trinity College c/o Mike Gibbons

**OWNER:** The Trustees of Trinity College



**Overhead View – Hartford GIS 2022**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The applicant is proposing to construct a 2,520-sf building addition to an existing building in the MX-2 district with the Campus Overlay. The building addition will house the Trinity South Campus Utility Plant and Thermal Distribution Center which will supply heat and chilled water to several of the campus buildings on the southern portion of the campus. The Zoning Regulations Section 5.1.2 requires that buildings constructed within the Campus Overlay either be shown on a master plan or, if not shown on a previously approved master plan, receive a special permit for the individual building.

Trinity College has not proposed a comprehensive master plan for the entire campus. Therefore, a special permit is required for all proposed development. Staff have previously recommended that Trinity College create a master plan for the entire campus. As of this writing no master plan has been proposed.

The subject property is listed on the State Register of Historic Places. The State Historic Registration specifically names the Long Walk, or the two buildings known as Seabury Hall and Jarvis Hall (completed in 1878) separated by Northam Towers (1883), as historic. The proposed construction will alter the existing grounds and maintenance building (constructed circa 1967) which is not designated historic and is not in the immediate vicinity of The Long Walk. Therefore, staff have determined that the proposed changes would have no impact on the historically registered buildings.

### **KEY APPLICATION TIMELINES**

- Application Submission Date: June 14, 2022
- Date Application Accepted as Complete: June 14, 2022
- Application Date of Receipt: June 28, 2022 (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, July 26, 2022; Open Hearing Deadline: September 1, 2022.
- Close Hearing Deadline (if opens July 26, 2022): (35 days after opening) Tuesday, August 30, 2022
- 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 3.3.2 Principal Use Definitions & Use Specific Conditions – Civic & Institutional Uses**

- B.(2) **Higher Education Facility.** A non-profit institution for post-secondary education, public or private, for higher education that grants associate or bachelor degrees and may also have research facilities and/or professional schools that grant master and doctoral degrees. Does not include facilities located in a higher education housing overlay zone. Does include vocational and trade schools which are not high schools.

**Section 4.10.2 – Civic Building Type Regulations**

**Section 5.1.3 Campus Overlay – Regulations**

- C. **Buildings.** Buildings within the campus shall utilize the building types permitted by the underlying zoning district. Additional Building Types may be considered through special permit review per either 5.1.2.A or 5.1.2 C. Building Type regulations apply to all buildings with the following exceptions:
  - (2) The blank wall limitations shall be applied to all sides of any detached building, except that the commission may allow a blank wall when the wall is not visible from the public right of way or a private street, and is part of an accessory structure not regularly used by members of the public, such as a maintenance building, where the existence of the blank wall does not present security concerns or where such concerns are mitigated by measures such as a surveillance system. In addition, the commission may eliminate the blank wall limitation for Civic Building Type buildings as part of its special permit review.

**Chapter 6.0 Sitework & Landscape**

**FINDING OF FACTS**

Lot size – The campus is ~78 acres per the City Assessor’s Office

Total impervious surface area within area of disturbance will increase from 1.25 acres to 1.37 acres.

Existing Building

- Classified as a nonconforming civic building.

New Building

- Connected to and abutting the existing building; therefore considered an addition to the existing building for the purposes of this review.

Underground Utilities

- Proposing new hot and chilled water, plumbing and utility lines.
- Limited adjustments to the on-site stormwater system.

Site Modifications

- Area to the south of the proposed building
  - o Existing use of area is parking and storage for on-site maintenance crews.
  - o Existing use verified via aerial photography since at least 2006.

- Some limited stormwater improvements also proposed to accommodate a .12 acre increase in impervious surface area.
- Existing use may continue.
- Southern Campus Hardscape
  - Existing hardscape, pathing and some amenities to be removed for installation of new underground utility and mechanical lines.
  - To be replaced in kind.
- Lighting
  - New lighting plan will replace many fixtures in kind.
  - Proposed lighting includes pole-mounted, bollard, building mounted and accent/safety lighting.
  - Not enough information provided regarding proposed lighting fixture design to confirm compliance.
- Courtyard – Wheaton, Smith, Funston, and Jackson Halls
  - Courtyard is proposed to be demolished and replaced with a new design.
  - Demolition is partly to facilitate installation of new underground utility lines.
  - New design will include lighting, stormwater drains and new pathing and amenities.
- Modifications to existing buildings are either underground to facilitate new utility lines or internal to the structures.
- Tree Plan
  - Proposing to remove 12 trees.
  - 96” of cumulative diameter tree replacement is required per plan.
  - Not enough information provided in the planting plan to confirm required cumulative tree replacement diameter is met (Sec.6.6).



Figure 1. Courtyard - Wheaton, Smith, Funston, and Jackson Halls – Eagleview 2022



Figure 2. Existing Building and Parking & Storage Area – Eagleview 2022

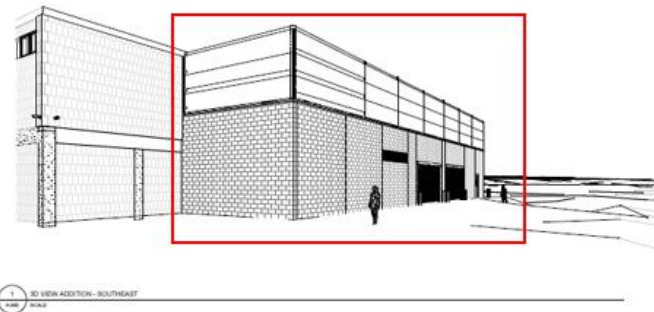
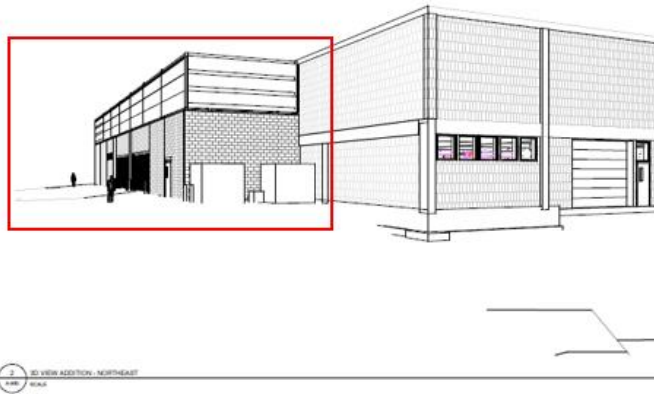


Figure 3. Proposed Building Addition – BVH 2022

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

The Frog Hollow NRZ was notified of the subject request via email on July 8, 2022. Staff confirmed that representatives for Trinity College attended the July 19, 2022 Frog Hollow NRZ meeting and that at the meeting the NRZ board voted to recommend approval of the subject development request. No formal letter or meeting minutes showing this decision has been received by staff.

### **ANALYSIS**

The proposed 2,520 square foot addition represents an ~16% increase in floor area of the existing ~16,000 square foot nonconforming civic building. An addition of this size requires site plan review per Section 1.3.3. Because the property is in a Campus Overlay and the building was not previously shown on a master plan per Sec.5.1.3, a special permit per Sec.1.3.4 is also required. The installation of proposed underground mechanical and utility lines involve the removal and replacement of many site amenities and features, and the proposed renovations to the courtyard between Wheaton, Smith, Funston, and Jackson Halls require review.

The proposed building addition will cross existing property lines. Staff find this condition to be acceptable because all affected parcels are held in common ownership and are part of the same Campus. While not a required condition, Staff recommend that the applicant combine the parcels and apply for a master plan per Sec.5.1 of the Regulations to allow a comprehensive, holistic planning process addressing the entire campus.

Staff have determined that the proposed site plan and building addition meet the requirements of the Zoning Regulations with the following exceptions. The applicant has confirmed that these items will be addressed ahead of the July 26, 2022 hearing, however as of this writing the items remain outstanding.

1. The applicant has proposed to remove a cumulative total of 96” of significant tree diameter (trees with diameter greater than 13”). Per Sec.6.6 this requires tree replacement of equal cumulative diameter or payment into the City’s Tree Account. Tree replacement is not currently shown on the plan. The plan should be revised to confirm tree replacement meets Sec.6.6. Replacement trees should be placed to create shade over pavement as much as possible.
2. The plan shows the addition of a dry well in the newly paved parking area. It appears this may be sufficient to hold the stormwater created by the .12 acre increase in impervious area, however no stormwater calculation was provided. A stormwater narrative must be provided confirming the projects conformance with Section 6.14 of the Regulations.
3. The wooden fencing along New Britain Avenue currently extends into the public ROW and creating a blind corner for vehicles leaving the Trinity campus via this exit (see Fig 4 and 5 below). This is a hazard to pedestrians and vehicles on New Britain Avenue. Staff recommend moving the fence back to the 15’ building line.
4. Lighting fixture details were not provided. All lighting fixtures must be completely shielded and downward facing per Sec.6.15 and Sec.7.3.1.J.

It is worth noting that the proposed building elevations are acceptable because of Sec.5.1.3.C(2) which empowers the Commission to permit blank walls when “...the wall is not visible from the public right of way or a private street, and is part of an accessory structure not regularly used by members of the public, such as a maintenance building...” The proposed building is located such

that it is only visible from inside the campus or within the existing parking and storage area and will be used only by maintenance staff.

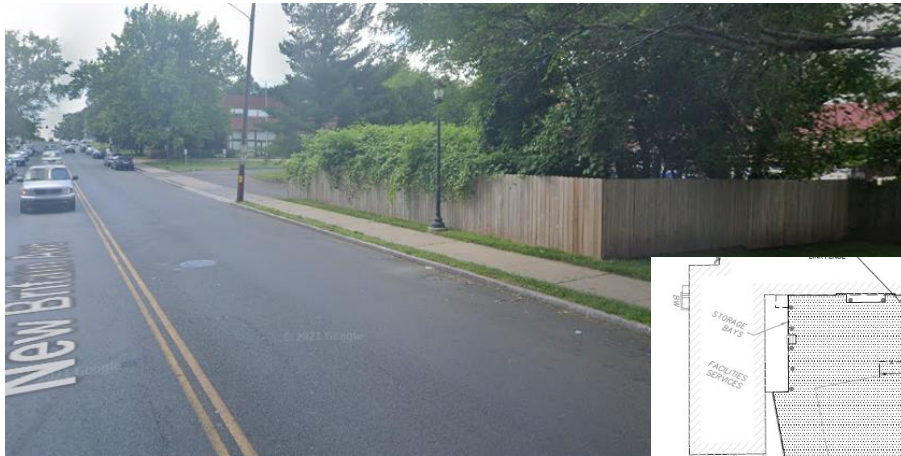


Figure 4 - Photo of the noncompliant fencing on New Britain Avenue

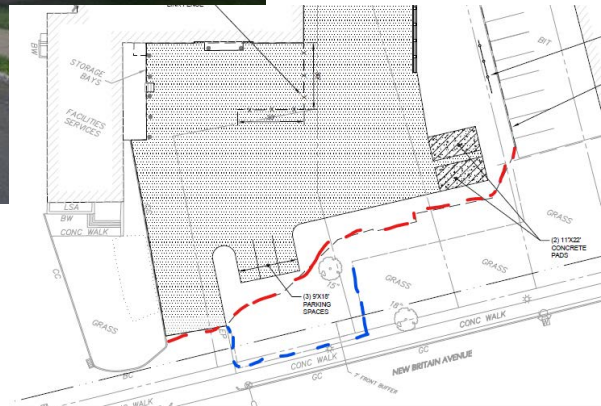


Figure 5. Fence location (blue) in relation to the proposed limit of disturbance

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

If the applicant sufficiently addresses the above items prior to or during the public hearing on July 26, 2022 staff recommend approval of the application. Should the applicant fail to address these items, staff recommend continuing the hearing to allow the Applicant time to respond to the request.

**A draft resolution follows.**

**REVIEWED AND EDITED BY,**

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Aimee Chambers, Director



**CITY OF HARTFORD  
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION RESOLUTION  
300 SUMMIT STREET  
SPECIAL PERMIT AND SITE PLAN FOR A BUILDING NOT PREVIOUSLY SHOWN ON A  
MASTER PLAN**

- Whereas,** The City of Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission reviewed the application and attached documents regarding the request for a Special Permit and Site Plan for an addition to a Civic Building not previously shown on a master plan per Sec.5.1.2.C to house a new utility plant and thermal distribution system serving the Trinity College campus; and
- Whereas,** The subject property is located in the MX-2, Multi-Use Mix district with the Campus Overlay; and
- Whereas,** The subject property is part of the Trinity College Campus; and
- Whereas,** Section 5.1.2 requires that applicants file for special permit review for Civic Building Type buildings not shown on a previously approved master plan when located in the Campus Overlay; and
- Whereas,** The proposed building is connected to and abutting a nonconforming Civic Building and could be considered an addition to the existing building; and
- Whereas,** The proposed building will only be accessed by maintenance staff and is not visible from a public or private ROW; and
- Whereas,** The proposed scope of work also includes the installation of new underground hot and chilled water, stormwater and utility lines connecting the new utility plant to several buildings on the southern portion of the Trinity College Campus; and
- Whereas,** The proposed scope also includes the renovation of an existing courtyard between the Wheaton, Smith, Funston, and Jackson Halls; and
- Whereas,** The proposed stormwater improvements are sufficient to accommodate any new



stormwater created by the proposed .12 acre increase in impervious surface area; and

**Whereas,** All proposed improvements are consistent with the Zoning Regulations; and

**Whereas,** The proposed building addition and site modifications are consistent with the Plan of Conservation & Development; and

Now therefore Be It

**Resolved,** The City of Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission hereby **denies/approves** the request for a Special Permit and Site Plan for an addition to a Civic Building not previously shown on a master plan per Sec.5.1.2.C to house a new utility plant and thermal distribution system serving the Trinity College campus:

Be It Further,

**Resolved,** This 26<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2022.

