



**NORWALK ZONING COMMISSION**  
125 East Avenue  
Norwalk, Connecticut

**SUPPLEMENTAL STAFF MEMORANDUM**

**November 3, 2020**

**TO:** Zoning Commission, Louis Schulman, Chair

**FROM:** Steve Kleppin, AICP, Planning & Zoning Director

**RE:** #5-20SPR – Wall St Recap Associates – 61 Wall St./17 Isaacs St. (Wall St. Place)

This application involves two (2) properties, 61 Wall Street property (FKA POKO) which is partially developed and intended to be completed as part of this project. The second parcel is the former Garden Cinemas site. As you may recall, when the 61 Wall Street Parcel was approved, it was supposed to have an underground, automated parking system. That system is no longer under consideration and the intention is to have that filled and provide surface parking beneath the existing building. The 17 Isaac Street property will contain an additional fifty (50) units of housing as well as accommodate the required parking, per zoning, for both sites, on that parcel.

61 Wall St.

When this area was rezoned in 2019, the existing structure at 61 Wall Street became nonconforming to height and number of stories. However, the CBD regulations which were approved by this Commission in June of 2019, contain a clause that grandfather's projects built under a Redevelopment Plan (POKO building) or Design District Development Park (Waypointe). The POKO project has a long public history and most recently, had public discussions with Common Council about moving the project forward. One of the concerns raised during the public discourse was regarding the design of the building. While the applicant has consulted with local architects and the historic preservation community, the proposal is still subject to design review, which is being conducted by DeCarlo and Doll.

At the prior meeting on this application there was a discussion regarding the building height and number of stories. When the zoning regulations were amended for this area the as-of-right height and number of stories were reduced for Wall Street. In addition, the former design development park regulations that led to the Waypointe projects were removed. Both of these changes led to nonconformities for some of the bulk and height standards in the 61 Wall Street structure and several structures within Waypointe. With the understanding that these nonconformities would occur, and with the community desire that 61 Wall Street would be constructed as approved, the Commission added a clause, which states:



*Developments and entitlements, previously approved as part of a Design District Development Park or as a Commission approved project in an approved Redevelopment Plan, which were granted: 1) bonus amenities; 2) a reduction in the total number of parking spaces required, beyond any reductions otherwise permitted in the regulations, 3) contain spaces that do not conform to the minimal dimensional standards for parking stalls, and/or 4) exceed the Schedule Limiting Height and Bulk of Buildings, but were compliant with the Zoning Regulations at the time of approval, are hereby declared to be in compliance with the current Zoning Regulations. Modification to an existing development or entitlement, as outlined above, is permitted, provided the standard being modified complies with the current Zoning Regulation. Said modification shall not require full compliance with current Zoning Regulation standards other than the standard being modified and shall not trigger comprehensive review of the underlying development or entitlement.*

This clause is directly applicable to the unfinished portion of 61 Wall Street. The first word “developments”, implies this project is eligible for that protective clause, as it was always expected that this project would be completed, similar to what was previously approved. This grandfathering clause is not applicable to other projects that were never more than concepts or discussion items. 61 Wall Street, as well as the Waypointe projects, are actual projects that were either approved and/or under construction at the enactment of these regulations.

The applicant has not demonstrated how they comply with the 10% requirement for Public Realm space. This should be indicated on the floor plans as well as the zoning date table.

#### 17 Isaacs St.

The structure proposed for 17 Isaacs Street is intended to provide fifty (50) additional units as well as the majority of the zoning-required parking spaces for both developments. This structure is also subject to outside architectural peer review. Within the CBD Zone, there are several lot standards in Section 118-504.C that must be satisfied, in addition to the bulk and height requirements.

#### *Parking:*

- a. There will need to be a covenant on the land records tying the parking between the 2 parcels together.
- b. The schematic for the parking garage does not show columns. The applicant should clarify whether the column sizes and locations will result in a reduction of the required parking. This should be clarified now so there is no request for modifications after the fact.

Design Review:

The City has engaged DeCarlo & Doll to undertake the architectural peer review on both buildings. DeCarlo & Doll has exchanged ideas and had conversations with the applicant's design team. P&Z and Redevelopment staff have also had ongoing conversations with Mr. Grzywacz. Mr. Grzywacz will be providing bullet points of outstanding issues and recommended changes to the design to improve the project. There are many items that we feel are simple cosmetic fixes that can greatly improve the existing aesthetic. In addition, it should be clarified that while the applicant did receive input from both Tod Bryant and Bruce Benfield, I did speak with both of them and while they both indicated that the design was an improvement, neither would endorse the design beyond that. In addition, while the Planning Commission indicated that the proposed amendment is consistent with the Citywide Plan, they expressed strong concerns about the building design, requesting that the Wall Street façade contain some of the elements of the neighboring buildings, such as fenestration, arched windows and increased openness of the ground floor facades. Another concern raised was the lack of ground floor commercial space along Isaacs Street for 61 Wall Street building. The applicant is proposing display boxes for art or pictures. Bob Grzywacz has recommended that this area be used as commercial space and not the display boxes. This would increase the street activation on Isaacs Street. The total additional commercial area proposed is slightly over 10,000 square feet.

**END**

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