

## Memorandum

**May 14, 2021**

**To: Zoning Commission:**

**From: Steve Kleppin, Planning & Zoning Director**

**Re: #2021-18 R/SPR/CAM – 25 Van Zant Street Condominium - 25 Van Zant Street**

You may recall a very similar application was submitted to the Commission for consideration but was ultimately withdrawn by the applicant. The current submittal consists of a text amendment and a CAM/Site Plan Application.

### Proposed Text Amendment

The proposed text amendments is as follows:

*Colleges, universities and schools, including business and trade/vocational schools, and studios” as a permitted principal use in the Industrial No. 1 Zone.*

The existing regulations defining *colleges* and *universities*, as well as *schools*.

*COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY: A public or private institution of higher education offering a two-year or four-year degree program of study which is accredited by the State of Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education, as per the Connecticut General Statutes.[Added effective 12-27- 2002]*

*SCHOOL: A public or private elementary or secondary school meeting all requirements of the compulsory education laws of the State of Connecticut. [Added effective 7-15-1976]*

Staff would recommend that a definition of trade/vocational school be added. The following is a draft for your consideration:

**TRADE OR VOCATIONAL SCHOOL: A post-secondary, public or private institution, designed to give students the technical skills to prepare them for a specific occupation. Examples of the program offerings include but are not limited to: medical programs like nursing, dental hygiene or medical assisting, automotive technician services, welding, plumbing, electrical, HVAC.**

The proposed amendment(s) must be referred to the Planning Commission and CT DEEP.

## Site Plan Application

Several questions and comments arose after an initial look at the Site Plan application materials:

### *Proposed Use:*

The applicant intends to use 150,000 SF of the approximately 256,000 SF building floor area for the vocational school. While it is understandable that the individual spaces that the various trades will occupy will be fit-out subsequent to a potential Commission approval, the overall school area should be delineated on the floor plans.

The traffic and parking references existing tenant spaces consisting of a 20,000 square foot office space, a 26,700 square foot mini-warehouse, and 8,000 square foot day care. None of these spaces are delineated on the floor plans. This leaves approximately 51,000 SF of area not accounted for. Clarification is required for impacts on parking and traffic.

As you are well aware we are in the midst of a study of the city's industrial zones. While I believe this use is appropriate for the zone, I will discuss the matter with the city's consultant, Utile, for their opinion.

### *Site Plan Issues:*

The landscape plan simply states "planting" with no indication of the species or size of the plant proposed. The applicant should provide this for review and comment. No landscaping or reduction in impervious surface is proposed for the parking lot area. In addition, clarification of the sidewalk and streetscape improvements proposed should also be provided.

Is the parking lot lighting adequate for pedestrian safety to the parking spaces, should classes end at night?

The drainage letters submitted will be referred to DPW for comment and whether additional measures are required.

Will any of the proposed uses requiring additional ventilation or HVAC equipment. In addition to them being screened, environmental safeguards should also be provided consistent with any applicable CT DEEP requirements.

The exterior façade has been undergoing renovations for some time, what is the expected completion date?

### *Traffic & Parking:*

The traffic and parking study will be referred to the Traffic, Mobility and Parking (TMP) Department for review and comment, but staff raises the following preliminary questions and concerns.

The data obtained was collected in 2016. Understanding the pandemic altered traffic patterns and peoples driving habits, is that timeframe appropriate?

The traffic report appears to indicate that the Level of Service (LoS) at several intersections at peak periods may decline as a result of this project. The report indicates the analysis was very conservative in nature and that existing uses were not factored into the analysis, which could help their numerical analysis. I would recommend the applicant reevaluate this and revise the projections accordingly.

Staff remains concerned that the applicant is still proposing to maintain seven curb-cuts, specifically on Osborne Street. I understand removing curb-cuts could impacts on-site parking, but this warrants further consideration.

The application does not make any representation on potential hours the school may be operating. This information was requested numerous times during the previous submittal. Will a majority of the classes be in the evening, what is the overlap, will they conflict with commuting peaks? A simple query of their potential tenants, or what is occurring at similar institutions will provide much needed insight into how this facility may operate. This may in fact make their case regarding traffic and parking.

The parking analysis as outlined indicates that in comparison to industry standards that the 300 on-site spaces are adequate for the proposed use after mass transit credits are applied. The traffic report indicates that a cumulative zoning total would require 379 spaces. This section and analysis is confusing. And as stated previously, has the remaining 51,000 SF of floor area been factored into the parking and traffic analysis?

I would recommend the applicant do further research on similar facilities in the area and see how they were regulated. It may make sense to develop a parking standard for a vocational school and then consider any mixed-use overlap credits to establish the actual parking load.

Some examples of similar facilities are:

Lincoln Tech (3 CT locations): [Lincoln Tech | Trade School Program Information \(lincolntech-usa.com\)](http://lincolntech-usa.com)

Porter & Chester Institute (6 CT locations): [Trade School in Stratford, CT | Career Training Programs \(porterchester.edu\)](http://porterchester.edu)

Stone Academy (3 CT locations): [LPN Program and CNA Classes in CT | Stone Academy](http://stoneacademy.com)

However, it will be difficult to make any specific recommendations without further detail on the potential hours of operation of the individual trade school tenants and the other tenant spaces within the building.

Lastly, verification that adequate and safe loading areas for all site uses has been provided.

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**END**