

NORWALK ZONING COMMISSION
125 East Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06851

Memorandum

July 15, 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

As you will recall the current submittal consists of a text amendment and a CAM/Site Plan Application to allow trade schools to operate at the subject location.

The applicant was before the Commission at your May 19th meeting. There were several outstanding items that were requested prior to the matter

Proposed Text Amendment

The applicant has indicated they have no concerns with staff's recommendation to add a definition of "trade or vocational school as indicated below.

The applicant's 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]

As agreed to by the applicant, 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.

Assuming the Commission is comfortable with the proposed changes, both amendments be referred to the Planning Commission and CT DEEP.

Site Plan Application

The outstanding issues related to the Site Plan Application are summarized below:

Proposed Use:

The applicant intends to use 150,000 SF of the approximately 256,000 SF building floor area for the vocational school. The applicant has provided undated floor plans indicating the intended spaces for the school use ([25 Van Zant Street | Norwalk, CT - Official Website \(norwalkct.org\)](http://25VanZantStreet.com)). Staff's calculations based on the revised floor plans indicate there is 79,000 SF of other uses beside the school. The applicant should confirm that the residual space is non-rentable space. This item can be rectified prior to the public hearing.

Site Plan Issues:

The applicant has provided an updated landscape plan as well as an updated lighting plan. Both documents have been uploaded to the application page ([25 Van Zant Street | Norwalk, CT - Official Website \(norwalkct.org\)](http://25VanZantStreet.com)). The landscape plan provides the detail that was lacking on the prior submittal.

Staff had questions whether the parking lot lighting was adequate for pedestrian safety. The applicant has provided a lighting plan in response to that question, but there is no summary document providing any context to the plan. The plan shows parking lot light levels on the north, west and east that comply with City standards regarding light levels at the property line, but show high levels on Van Zant Street. There is no indication if those lights are originating at the property or from other sources. Further context should be provided by the applicant when the public hearing occurs.

No comment has been received from DPW regarding drainage.

Staff has questioned the timing of exterior modifications to the buildings and screening of any additional HVAC equipment that will be installed as well as whether any of the user's ventilation will require additional treatment due to the type of work involved. These items can be addressed as future conditions of approval.

Traffic & Parking:

Staff has had preliminary conversations with the Traffic, Mobility and Parking (TMP) Department regarding the application. They had similar questions and concerns that Staff previously raised.

TRAFFIC

The points previously raised by staff that we believe are still outstanding are:

1. Traffic data obtained was collected in 2016. Understanding the pandemic altered traffic patterns and peoples driving habits, is that timeframe appropriate?
2. 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. This will be further evaluated by TMP.

PARKING

The applicant has indicated that the site contains 300 striped spaces, while peak demand, taking into account mass transportation credits is 298 spaces. Staff has provided some of the parking requirements based on the uses as identified by the applicant:

- WFT – 150,000
- Manufacturing – 5,800 (1/300 SF = 20 spaces)
- Warehousing – 18,800 (1/5,000 SF + 1/employee= 7-8 spaces)
- Office – 40,300 (1/370 SF = 108 spaces)
- 1 Story Building?
- School? – 3,800
- Café – 2,600 (1/45 SF of active area. Active area unknown.)
- Church – 1,400 (1 space/5 seats. Number of seats unknown.)
- Unlisted/Vacant – 7,000

The traffic and parking report indicates that a cumulative zoning total would require 379 spaces. Staff conducted additional research regarding parking requirements for vocational schools. Our research of other communities yielded the following:

Example Location	Parking Standard
Gibbs College (Norwalk)	1 space per 4 students, 1.5 spaces per staff; Based on total enrollment and can be revised to reduce # based on # of students & staff at any time
Shelton	1 parking space per 200 sq ft of zoning square footage
Enfield	1 space per student, 1 space per faculty member
Rocky Hill	No parking standard for vocational schools, instead considered “other use”, where commission determines parking standard based on applicant submission
Waterbury	Have a Business & Trade Schools use/parking standard in their zoning – 0.2 spaces per student, faculty, and employees

East Hartford	Their regulations suggest a breakdown by use within the building – 5 spaces per teaching station, 1 space per 250 sq ft of office/business space; However, they do not use the standard anymore and instead commission approves/denies based off applicant proposal
New London	Parking Standard for trade school or university – 1 parking space for every 3 employees, 1 space for every 10 students residing on campus & 1 space for every 5 students not residing on campus; Alternatively, commission can approve the following, if requested: 1 space per faculty + 0.75 spaces per student

Staff had a conversation with the owner of Porter & Chester Institute who operates several facilities in CT and MA. He indicated their parking ratio target is 4 spaces per 1,000 SF but would prefer 6 spaces per 1,000 SF. Apparently their facilities aren't located as close to mass transit as the proposed site is.

END