

STONEFIELD

July 12, 2023

Revised: November 17, 2023

City of Jersey City

Jersey City Planning Board

1 Jackson Square, 2nd Floor

Jersey City, NJ 07305

**RE: Statement of Principal Points
Applicant: 319 4th LLC
321 4th LLC
Block 11101, Lots 10 & 11
319 – 321 4th Street
Jersey City, Hudson County, NJ**

Greetings:

Stonefield Engineering & Design, LLC (“Stonefield”) has prepared this Statement of Principal Points in accordance with Chapter §345-31 of the Jersey City Code of Ordinances to provide details of the proposed use and justification for variance relief pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70(c).

Project Description

The applicant proposes to construct a four-story multi-family residential building on Block 11101, Lots 10 & 11, also known as 319-321 4th Street in Jersey City, New Jersey. The property is located within the Residential Commercial District 3 (RC-3), in the Downtown neighborhood. The site is bounded by 4th Street to the north, a multi-family residential dwelling to the east, an unpaved access road to the south, and a multi-family residential apartment building to the west.

Under the existing conditions, the site is occupied by two (2) multi-family residential dwellings. The site is located along 4th Street, which is lined with multi-family residential rowhomes, typically ranging from 2-4 stories, with the majority being in the 3-4 story range. Also in the immediate vicinity are restaurants, bakeries, and other small businesses. One block to the west, 4th Street is intersected by Newark Avenue, a Neighborhood Commercial District lined with café’s, restaurants, personal service uses, and retail uses.

The project proposes to construct a 4-story multi-family residential building containing eight (8) dwelling units, two (2) parking spaces and a rooftop amenity deck. Floor one is proposed to contain indoor bicycle parking, utility rooms, an elevator, as well as two (2) two-bedroom residential dwelling units. Floors two through three are proposed to contain two (2) two-bedroom dwelling units, and two (2) three-bedroom dwelling units. Floor four contains one (1) two-bedroom unit and one (1) three-bedroom unit. Each dwelling unit is proposed to include a living room, kitchen, bathroom, bedrooms, closet space, and washer and dryer in each unit. Additional improvements to the site include landscaping, lighting, utility connections, sidewalk replacement, and one electric vehicle charging space. Two (2) parking spaces are proposed along the rear of the building accessed via a public access alley.

Residential apartments are a permitted use in the Residential Commercial District 3, therefore no “d(1)” use variances are required for the proposed development. There are three (3) “c” variances associated with the proposed development. The applicant seeks relief for the minimum rear yard setback requirement, minimum landscaping, and the minimum required parking. There is also one existing nonconformity associated with the site regarding the minimum lot depth.

Relief Justification

The board has the power to grant “C” variance relief based on “hardship” criteria pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70c(1) or based on “flexible” criteria pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70c(2). All “C” variance relief associated with this application can be granted under both the “C(1)” “hardship” criteria, as well as the “C(2)” “benefits vs. detriments” criteria. We find that the benefits of the project as a whole substantially outweigh any detriments for the following reasons:

1. The Applicant seeks relief for the minimum required parking spaces. The ordinance requires a minimum of 0.3 spaces per bedroom. The proposed development contains five (5) two-bedrooms units, and three (3) three-bedroom units which equates to 19 bedrooms. Regarding the proposed development, the calculated required parking is 6 spaces. The Applicant proposes 2 parking spaces.

The proposed development has frontage along 4th Street which offers on-street parking. According to Jersey City Open Data found on data.jerseycitynj.gov this area is designated as Parking Zone 17 which offers yearly resident parking permits for \$23.00 through the City of Jersey City Parking Office. Zone 17 has a 2-hour parking restriction for non-permit parking between the hours of 7:00 am and 9:00 pm. No parking is permitted on Tuesdays from 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm for street cleaning. The purchase of a Zone 17 parking permit enables residents the option to park on-street.

The subject property is located approximately 500 FT from Newark Avenue which has several bus stops with the closest being Newark Ave at Brunswick Street. The Newark Ave at Brunswick Street bus stop includes NJ Transit bus lines 80, 82, and 86. NJ Transit Bus line 80 has a direct route to the Journal Square Transportation Center, which provides bus, PATH, and rail services to most major areas of New Jersey as well as access to New York City. Additionally, the site is also located approximately a half-mile (10-minute walk) from the Grove Street PATH Station which offers PATH service to Hoboken, Newark, New York City and other parts of Jersey City. 4th Street and most other streets in the immediate vicinity contain striped bike lanes. Given the availability of multiple forms of transit in the immediate vicinity of the site, it can be assumed that some residents may choose to utilize multi-modal transit over a single-occupancy vehicle in which case a reduced parking standard may be applied.

Additionally, the subject property is conveniently located within a quarter-mile radius (approximately a 5-minute walking distance) to several restaurants, personal service businesses, parks, medical offices, the Jersey City Free Public Library, and grocery stores. It is good planning practice to locate multi-family developments proximate to these other types of uses to encourage walkability, pedestrianism and downtown vibrancy. It is expected that residents will be less reliant on single-occupancy vehicles for everyday tasks due to the walkable nature of the neighborhood. It should also be noted that most of the adjacent properties to the subject property provide only 1 space per townhome development and in many circumstances provide no spaces.

2. Minimum Rear Yard Setback – The Applicant seeks relief for the minimum rear yard setback where 28.5 FT is required, whereas 20.1 FT is proposed. The rear yard setback is calculated as 30% of the lot depth. The Applicant proposes a rear yard setback of 20.1 FT, or approximately 21.2% of the existing lot depth. The existing nonconformity associated with the minimum required lot depth minimizes the amount of improvable area on the site which is partially the reason why the structure encroaches into the rear yard setback. The applicant has balanced the need to provide a rear yard with also providing appropriately sized units to make the lot usable for generously-sized two- and three-bedroom residential dwelling units. The hardship associated with the deficient lot depth contributes to the lack being able to provide a fully conforming rear yard. Although the proposed development does not comply with the rear setback requirements, the proposed building is compliant with all other setback, coverage, and height regulations and is not situated in a manner that will have substantial impact on surrounding properties air, light, and open space.
3. Minimum Landscaping – The Applicant seeks relief for the minimum required landscaping on the site. A minimum of 950 SF is required, whereas 712.5 SF is proposed. As mentioned in the previous section, the applicant has had the challenge of balancing the need provide parking areas, landscaping, as well as adequately sized units. The hardship associated with the deficient lot depth contributes to the lack being able to provide a fully compliant landscaped area. The proposed landscaping is a major improvement over the existing condition as the existing overgrown vegetation will be removed and replaced. The site will contain two street trees, and nine shrubs along the buildings frontage. The rear will contain two flowering trees and small lawn areas adjacent to the parking spaces therefore meeting the intent of the ordinance.

4. Minimum Lot Depth – There is one existing nonconformity associated with the site. The minimum required lot depth for the RC-3 district is 100 FT. The lot depth exists currently at 95 FT. As previously mentioned, the site abuts a 10 FT wide access alley located to the rear of the property. Because the lot is a through lot (fronting on both 4th Street to the north, and the access alley to the south) it is impracticable to bring the site into compliance with regards to lot depth with a right-of-way dedication of some sort. Furthermore, this is an existing condition affecting all other through lots fronting on 4th Street on this block. The proposal does not represent a lot size or shape that is out of character with the surrounding properties in the neighborhood.

The variances can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good, and will not substantially impair the intent and purposes of the zone plan and zoning ordinance. The project carries out the vision of the Jersey City Master Plan Land Use Element, which is to enhance residential neighborhoods, ensure the City's housing supply is balanced, and make the City more walkable and less reliant on the automobile. The project proposes a mix of unit types, all of which are ADA-compliant, and the site is located proximate to essential businesses and multi-modal transportation which promotes the vibrancy of the downtown. The project also carries out the purpose of the RC-3 District, which is to protect the historically low-rise nature of the neighborhood from inappropriate infill. The proposed development is substantially consistent with the intent of these goals by providing a four-story multi-family residential building in the Downtown Neighborhood. The project is a positive addition to the neighborhood because it adds high-quality housing units to the City's ageing housing stock.

Conclusion

Based on a review of the subject property, surrounding area, and applicable zoning requirements, it is concluded that the application's benefits substantially outweigh the detriments, and that the application can be approved without substantial detriment to public good or substantially impairing the intent and purposes of the zone plan and zoning ordinance. It can also be concluded that the relief sought for the rear yard setback and landscaping requirement directly relates to the deficient lot depth which is a hardship associated with the property. It is the opinion of our office that the statutory criteria has been met for the relief required as presented by the planning proofs and the justifications presented in this report.

Regards,



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