

DEVELOPMENT IMPACT STATEMENT SUBMITTAL

819 AQUIDNECK AVENUE

Overview

819 Aquidneck Avenue is zoned Limited Business with an A delineation based on its location in a Traffic sensitive area. John and Pamela Wallace acquired the property in December of 2019. The building was built in 1930 and is listed as a Combo property by the Town of Middletown. The existing house is listed as a three bedroom, seven room dwelling with an attached commercial component including a connector room and garage totaling 1400 square feet. The most recent occupants were the Lord Harvey family and Mr. Harvey's commercial business detailing automobiles. Currently the building is vacant. The Wallace's purchased the building at foreclosure after, it is fair to say that the property fell into a state of disrepair and had drawn the attention of the Middletown Building Department regarding concerns of abatement.

John and Pamela Wallace purchased the property with the intention of utilizing the structure for a single family residence and art and pottery studio to be owned and operated by Mrs. Wallace. Although that can be done as a matter of right through renovation, architects have rendered an opinion that the underlying structure lacks the structural integrity to make renovations a sound business decision. Upon learning that the logical thing to do was to seek a demolition permit and rebuild, the process of legal permitting began.

Under the Middletown Ordinance, if the property were destroyed the Wallace's could rebuild in the footprint within six months. Under Section 802 if the building is voluntarily destroyed by demolition permit the structure must comply with the ordinance. Architect Stephen Sullivan was hired to design a building that would meet the needs of the Wallace's, conform to the ordinance and aesthetically be an asset to the community.

PROPOSED BUILDINGS AND USE

The proposed buildings can be addressed one at a time but are combined to meet the needs of the two proposed occupants. The front building is 40x30 two floor structure or 1200 square feet. The entire first floor will be used for the commercial endeavor of an art studio and creative space for various artistic endeavors including the individual crafting of pottery pieces. Mrs. Wallace has described her facility as a small pottery studio and gallery with a retail component called Las Cosas Bellas. She is aiming to provide an affordable and nurturing environment for all skills and ages with 6-8 pottery wheels and two kilns. She sees 4-6 artists utilizing the studio at any given time but believes as many as ten may be present if a demonstration of technique session is scheduled by appointment. She plans to rent the studio time on a price per attendance basis as well as a membership for those who become part of the community based on their frequent use.

The first floor will have a small retail component of approximately 200 square feet and a bathroom and kitchenette for patrons. The open ceiling floor plan is why the second floor apartment is only 620 square feet.

The rear building is a proposed two stall garage that will be addressed more in depth below.

The mixed use is allowed in the Limited Business Zone by special use permit and the art studio although not specifically listed is allowed by comparison with other permitted uses meeting the needs of local residents and non-obnoxious by nature.

DEVELOPMENT IMPACT FACTORS

(a) Traffic and Parking Conditions on site and within the surrounding area.

The property is located within the Traffic sensitive district of Aquidneck Avenue. Although traffic in any area must always be considered this impact should be viewed based on it's current use as opposed to the proposed use.

As mentioned, the residential component of the project is a small one-bedroom efficiency apartment as opposed to the current three bedroom home existing on the property. The ordinance calls for two spaces per dwelling unit and two are provided. Despite the Ordinance treating a three-bedroom 1700 square foot house the same as a 600 foot efficiency for parking and traffic purposes it is clear that both parking and trip generation from the residential unit for this efficiency will be greatly reduced from a typical family of 4-6 people.

The commercial component of the building can also be classified as a diminimus use for traffic and parking concerns. As stated above it is anticipated that 4-6 people utilize the facility at a time and one employee is present. Traditionally people utilizing art studios to create projects average not less than 2- 4 hour blocks of time to set up their art project, implement their daily task and clean up. Even at capacity without car sharing of any kind 6 trips in three hours or two trips per hour will have no significant impact on Aquidneck Avenue and can be seen as a substantial reduction from what is allowed on site as a matter of right. Historically the car detailing business with pick up and drop offs averaged more than the proposed use. The nature of the art studio is also that by definition, not designed for everyone except the employee to arrive during morning rush hour and leave at night while the roads are closest to capacity. It is the opinion of the Wallace's as well as their consultants that the traffic and parking requirements of this use will be substantially better than not only the historic use of this property but the allowable uses under our Ordinance.

The proposal calls for 7 parking spots including a handicap accessible spot in the front of the building. The ordinance as mentioned would call for two residential spots and 5 commercial spots based on the formula of 4 per 1000 square feet of commercial area. There are 5 spots in front of the studio and an additional 4 paved spots in front of the garage doors. There is a 14x 25 area in front of the garage for a loading zone although large commercial deliveries are neither necessary nor anticipated. These parking requirements are exclusive of the garage spaces themselves which are intended to be utilized for the apartment as well as for the storage and curing process of the studio.

- (b) Municipal utilities and services, including water supply, sewage disposal, storm drains, police and fire protection, emergency services, schools and other Town services.

The site is currently serviced by public water, sewer, and electricity. The owner will be adding natural gas available on Aquidneck avenue and will use the same for heat, cooking in the apartment and to run the kilns. The location of the services existing and proposed are shown on the utilities plan. A letter from the Water department has been requested but it is not anticipated that there will be an issue and it will be provided at the hearing. The water usage for a three bedroom home clearly exceed the water usage for a small efficiency. The water usage for an art studio other than the bathroom is virtually non existent but the pottery wheels do require water to mix the clay. Research by the consultants including pulling water usage from similar art studios show the consumption is less then the residential use. Water usage in the commercial facility is also not the same as water in the sewerage system as the water is absorbed in the clay and then evaporated in the drying process.

There are no abrasive or toxic chemicals used in the clay process. The use of paints and glazes on individual pieces is safe when done in accordance with manufacturer's specifications and storage of any materials such as glazes, paints or acetone would be done in conformance with Rhode Island law in acceptable lockers to the Middletown Zoning Official.

Aquidneck Avenue and the site are readily accessible to the Middletown Fire and Police Department and the use proposes no health or safety risks that would concern either. The small kilns and gas fittings will be installed by licensed personal and inspected by the mechanical inspector posing no more risk than a gas oven.

It is the opinion of the consultants including the architect, lawyer, engineer and real estate expert that the schools and Town services will be less effected by a one bedroom efficiency than a three bedroom home and that an art studio poses little or no risk on a disproportional use of police or fire services than any of the uses allowable by right on the premises.

- (c) The physical and ecological characteristics of the site and surrounding land including wetlands flood plain, vegetation, wildlife habitat and other environmental concerns.

The owner and his consultants believe this development will have no detrimental impact in these areas. The lot is 26,942 square feet and the proposal is basically to replace a structure and garage with a more aesthetically pleasing and structurally sound structure and garage. The buildings have been slightly shifted from the original location by squaring them to the lot in order to propose a building requiring no dimensional relief. The proposed buildings meet all front, rear and side yard restrictions as well as height restrictions and lot coverage requirements. The existing concrete driveway is being preserved and only enlarged in front of the garage to meet ordinance requirements for loading and parking and to make it possible to turn around so patrons may enter and exit the property safely. This area of Aquidneck is completely developed with existing commercial uses on the North and South as well as across Aquidneck Avenue. The East of the property abuts residential property and despite a 30 foot rear yard setback requirement the owner is proposing to keep the building in the foot print of the existing

structures and patio. The property is tiered, and two tiers exist to the East of the property with beautiful mature trees and stonewalls and all are being maintained. There is in excess of 120 feet to the rear property residential line. There are no wetlands on the property or abutting it and no ecological systems exist which will be disturbed in any way. There is no proposed grading of the lot as again the grading and tiering of the lot already exists, and the owner is restricting all development to the area already utilized.

- (d) The character of the community, including scenic, historic and archeological conditions; scale, placement, lighting parking and use of open space.

The character of Aquidneck Avenue is commercial. The pre-existing home built in 1930 is the building that stands most out of place on Aquidneck Avenue with other homes built before Aquidneck took on it's role as a primary artery as a commercial area. Although old it has no historic significance. There are no archeological conditions on the site although site amenities such as the tiering, beautiful walls, mature trees and walkways are being maintained to preserve the scenic integrity of the parcel. The scale and placement of the building are virtually identical to the predecessor and placement and scale are such that no regulatory variances are needed. Lighting has been re designed to meet the ordinance and parking is well off the road and located in front of the building and garage well away from the residential east boundary and on the South where the landscaping of the subject parcel and the mature grove of pine trees of the neighbors combine to make it virtually invisible. Although there is no true open space on the lot the top two tiers of the property which are clearly the nicest outside areas are being preserved in their entirety.

Overall it is the opinion of the applicant and their consultants that the redevelopment of this parcel will have no negative impact on the neighborhood or Town and is consistent with the Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan.