

Memorandum

**To:** City of Worcester

**From:** Jena Klimaszewski of XYZ Firm

**Date:** October 21, 2024

**Subject:** Proposal for a Mixed-Use Development on Park Ave

## **Executive Summary**

This memo proposes a mixed-use development on a 48,787-square-foot lot on Park Avenue. The building will be 75,200 square feet. The development will include four stories, with the first floor being reserved for a grocery store and a small bistro-style eatery. The other three floors will be affordable one, two, and three-bedroom affordable housing units, totaling forty-two apartments. There will be one parking spot per resident, with spaces for bikes as well. This prioritizes sustainability, as well as green space. There should be no challenges to creating this development based on the zoning code.

## **Site Selection**

The site proposed for this project is at 344 Park Ave. This property is a vacant field that has been owned by Impala Meadows since 2005. The current owners have done nothing with the property, despite it being in the center of a commercial area. We plan to buy it and create a community hub for living, eating, and spending time outside. It is a 48,787 square foot lot in a commercial strip, but there are a lot of residential areas nearby.



## **Zoning Analysis**

This building will be around 44 feet in height, spanning across 4 floors. Height, as defined in the Worcester zoning code, can be defined as the vertical distance from grade level that is measured from the center of the front of the building to a horizontal line that is extended from the highest point of the building. The maximum height for buildings in this zone is 150 feet. We are keeping this development to only four stories because the surrounding area is low-rise, and we do not want to change the character of the neighborhood.

The area the property is in is zoned for general business uses, as well as 4-1 FAR resident uses. It is also in a CCOD (Commercial Corridors Overlay District). Although the B4 zone has a FAR of 1 for residential uses, the zoning code states that a mixed-use building in a CCOD does not have a maximum FAR requirement as long as it has a non-residential use on the first floor with an active façade. The first floor of this space will have a small bistro-style restaurant as well as a small grocery store. There will be large windows as well as thoughtful landscaping to create a welcoming atmosphere.

The building will have a footprint of 18,800 square feet. The total gross floor area of the building will be 75,200 square feet, for a FAR of 1.5. While the building could be smaller, we wanted to account for parking and a green space. In the table below, there is a breakdown of how space will be used inside the building. The table accounts for 20% of the residential floor space being used for hallways and common areas.

Floor	Total Floor Area (sq. ft.)	Unit Area (sq. ft.)	Number of Units	Average Unit Size (sq. ft.)
Commercial Floor	18,800	18,800	N/A	N/A
Residential Floors (x3)	18,800	15,040	14	1,074

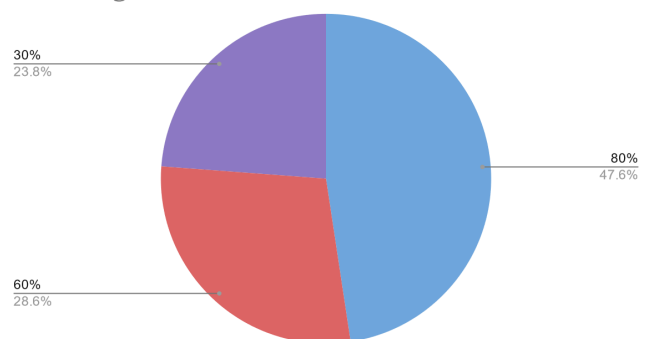
The land is in an opportunity zone, which aligns well with the goals of this project. This project is well suited to the area because the ground floor will create jobs while the upper floors will all be affordable housing. The inclusion of both a grocery store and eatery on the ground floor will make procuring food for residents easier, increasing food security as well. Although there is a Big Y nearby, we aim to find a more affordable store to fill the space. The green space surrounding the building will also have safe, well-lit sidewalks to connect Park Ave to Beaver Brook Park.

For parking, we would like to allot one parking space per unit. Since this land is in CCOD-Elsewhere, this fits into the requirements, as they require one parking space per one, two, or three bedroom unit. There is also a requirement of one guest parking spot per ten units, so we will add four spaces for a total of forty-six parking spaces. If each spot takes around 162 square feet of space, the parking lot will be approximately 7,500 square feet. We will adhere to rules about landscaped parking buffers and create a minimum three-foot wide buffer for parking areas. We will also include tree planting areas to improve the visual and environmental quality of the parking areas.

We would like to utilize some of the tax incentives for building in an opportunity zone. We would like to invest some of the capital gains from other investments into a Opportunity Fund, so we can defer taxes on those gains. We would eventually like this to result in benefitting from the step-up basis and permanent exclusion. This will allow us to keep these units completely affordable, rather than making some of the units at-market rate.

This build will consist entirely of affordable units. Twenty of the units will be at 80% of the AMI, twelve units will be at 60% of

Percentage of Units at Each AMI



the AMI, and ten units will be at 30% of the AMI. There are no issues in the zoning code with this, as they require at minimum 10-15% of units in new developments to be affordable.

As part of our sustainability efforts, we hope to make the building LEED-certified. We plan to utilize sustainable materials and energy-efficient systems. We will also provide bicycle parking for visitors and residents, as well as a community garden with boxes for compost. We recognize that the area is marked as being home to Environmental Justice Populations, who are often unaware or unable to participate in environmental decision-making despite being the most affected. That is why making this development sustainable is of the utmost importance to us.

### **Conclusion**

This development will create housing stock to meet the growing need for affordable housing in Worcester. It will also make accessing a grocery store easier for residents and others in the community. The ground-floor will serve as a community hub, and the green spaces surrounding the building will create an easier way to walk to Beaver Brook Park. Overall, the project is allowed within the zoning and will be beneficial to the residents of Worcester.