

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: 165 FRANKLIN STREET, Authorization for the City to enter into a **COOPERATION AGREEMENT** with the New Haven Housing Authority, Glendower Farnham Courts I, LLC, and Trinity Farnham Four Partnership with respect to the redevelopment of Farnham Court, including tax abatement pursuant to Section 28-4 of the New Haven Code of Ordinances (Executive Director of LCD).

REPORT: 1485-06

ADVICE: Approval

BACKGROUND

The Livable City Initiative has submitted an Order authorizing the City to enter into a Cooperation Agreement with the Housing Authority of New Haven and the Glendower Farnham Courts I, LLC and Trinity Farnham Four Limited Partnership, with respect to the Farnham Courts site located 165 Franklin Street, north of Grand Avenue. The Cooperation Agreement sets out the developer's obligations, the Housing Authority's and the City's. (The Commission notes that Farnam Court is spelled without an h.)

Tax Abatement

The Cooperation Agreement includes a Tax Abatement agreement for the property as it will be leased to the developer for the construction and operation of assisted housing. The abatement would eliminate the taxes during the construction period and then set them at \$350 per unit for 15 years, with a renewal for another 15 years possible. A tax abatement is typical for PHA owned housing, or housing on PHA owned land, as the construction and ongoing maintenance costs exceed the allowable affordable rental income. This matter has been referred to the BOA committee on Tax Abatement.

Development

The site is currently occupied by a multi-building Housing Authority of New Haven owned and managed assisted housing development on a 10.829 acre site (165 Franklin Street, MBP 200-0582-00100). Trinity (the re-developer of both the Quinnipiac Terrace housing and Rowe Housing at 171-173 Ward Street) and Glendower will demolish the original buildings, relocating tenants to other existing and proposed HANH properties, or using portable housing vouchers elsewhere. They will then construct 210 new units in multiple structures, over several phases on a 9.376 acre site. Two of the structures will be multi-story mixed use buildings which will front on Grand Ave. in the area that is now DeLauro Park (657 Grand Avenue MBP 200-0582-00200), which will become part of the development area, via a swap of other HANH land elsewhere in the City, for the Park area. (Zone change proposed Park to RH-2, see CPC- 1483-04.) Twenty percent of the units will be market rate, the balance, 80% - will be will be assisted, but by different programs and for different income levels. Trinity/Glendower will own and manage the finished development while the housing authority will retain ownership of the land. Other than the tax abatement there is City assistance in infrastructure improvements both on site and off site; all other assistance is from the Housing Authority, US-HUD or the State of Connecticut.

The Cooperation Agreement sets out the City's financial assistance obligations at a total of \$8 million, allocated on a three year schedule, \$1,839,706 in FY 2014, \$4,160,294 in FY 2015, \$2,000,000 in FY 2016. Of the \$8 million total, \$ 6.5 million will be spent on-site and the remaining \$1.5 million will be spent on off-site improvements such as pedestrian cross walks,

sidewalks along Grand Ave and lighting and aesthetic improvements to the underpass of I 91. The developer will contribute \$30,000 to the City to fund a Resident Engineer to observe the infrastructure construction.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS


The site lies along Grand Avenue and is bordered by Franklin Street to the west and Hamilton Street to the east, and the main NE Corridor RR tracks & I91 to the north. It is currently split zoned; with the parcels fronting on Grand Ave. zoned Park and the balance of the site zoned RH-2. The City Plan Department has proposed some text amendments to RH-2 zone at the BOA (CPC 1483-05), and LCI has proposed a Map Amendment changing the Park zone to RH-2 so the entire site would be RH-2. Housing is permitted by right and certain non-residential uses are permitted in the RH-2 zone. The proposed development site comprises 9.376 acres, leaving the northern 2.49 acres undeveloped at this time; future disposition is covered in the Agreement. This northern portion of the site is the least desirable for housing development given its proximity the RR tracks and the highway. Future development could include light and clean manufacturing or office space as envisioned in the Mill River District Plan.

The plan for the new units envisions 2 multi-story buildings along Grand Ave with retail or active or transparent uses along most of that frontage, compatible with the retail uses across Grand Ave. The residences will be largely above the street level with a southern exposure. The balance of the units will be to the north, arranged around a common open space in the form a square. If the RH-2 text amendments are enacted the parking requirement will be reduced to 1 off-street space per two units. The site is on a major transit route, and is one half mile from downtown New Haven and a similar distance from much of the Mill River District. This puts the residents within a 10 minute walk of a variety of employment centers. Improvements to the appearance and state of good repair of the sidewalks and streetscape in the area are sorely needed; as is the lighting and improvement in the appearance and safety of the I091 underpass which separates this area from the Wooster Square area.

While New Haven has a large number of assisted housing units, demand for these units is still strong; and transit service and other service support for low income residents is accessible nearby. The Housing Authority has been comprehensively renewing their aging housing stock. Given the extra-ordinary site preparation costs and the long term provision of assisted housing the tax abatement seems warranted. The efforts to give the complex a more urban presence along Grand Ave. with mid-rise mixed use buildings, while screening the interior units, makes sense here along this busy arterial. Reservation of a portion of the site that is difficult for housing use for future development is compatible with the recent Mill River District Plan.

ADVICE: The Commissions recommends approval of the Cooperation Agreement for the redevelopment of Farnam Court.

ADOPTED: November 20, 2013
Edward Mattison
Chair

ATTEST: 
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA
Executive Director