



DiPrete Engineering

September 24, 2024

Jason Parker, AICP, Principal Planner
South Kingstown Planning Department
180 High Street
Wakefield, RI 02879

RE: The Village at South County Commons – Buildings 26 & 28
South Kingstown, Rhode Island
DE Project #: 0267-059-A09 & A10

Dear Mr. Parker:

DiPrete Engineering (DE) has prepared the following Pre-Application narrative to supplement the submission materials and provide additional details for the proposed residential development. South County Commons Buildings 26 & 28 are presented as a Comprehensive Permit application, in accordance with the State of Rhode General Law 45-53-4. As required by the Comprehensive Permit, 25% of the proposed units will be set aside as affordable units. The goal for this site is to create a residential development that not only meets the state law, but also offers new housing options for those who want more affordable and other alternatives. The submitted plans are the same design that you and Jamie reviewed with us on August 27, 2024, with the addition of more detail on the architecture and floor plans.

The design of the proposed residential buildings has been designed with a sensitivity to the adjacent buildings, parking areas, pedestrian paths, and with a similar-scale to the already constructed portions of South County Commons. Special emphasis has been placed on:

- Finishing the streetscape of Village Square Drive
- Completing the pedestrian connections between the hotel and the main street
- Creating compatible architecture between the Hampton Inn (Building 27), the Brown University Dermatology Building (Building 25), and new Buildings 26 and 28
- Creating a focal point at the terminus of Fieldstone Drive
- Creating an outdoor park and recreation area south of the Hampton Inn with additional pedestrian connections

The planning process has involved much thought and preparation to create new buildings that will offer a high-quality residential development as part of the South County Commons mix of uses. It is intended to meet the needs of many current South Kingstown residents with alternatives for pricing and feasible housing options. The concept of additional residential uses in South County Commons has been studied for over a decade and the current plan has been developed over the past several months by a team of experts in the fields of architecture, engineering, surveying, financial viability, construction, and land planning. The additional residential units are intended to add to the vibrancy of the South County Commons retail tenants and provide additional community sustainability to the businesses in the off-season.

This narrative explains the design development and provides extra information that is not shown on the plans. It also emphasizes the features and amenities of the plan that the designers and applicant believe are important and beneficial to the town and future residents. The applicant recognizes that this is the initial stage of the process and that there will be significant additional time and resources needed to advance the design and obtain the required state and local regulatory approvals, and address any possible Planning Board concerns about traffic, drainage, site design, etc.

Comprehensive Permit Process

South County Commons Buildings 26 & 28 are presented as a Comprehensive Permit application in accordance with the State of Rhode Island General Law 45-53-4. This law, effective January 1, 2024, allows an applicant proposing to build low- or moderate-income housing to submit to the local review board a single application for a comprehensive permit to build housing in lieu of separate applications to the applicable local boards. This procedure is only available for proposals in which at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the housing is low- or moderate-income housing.

The law provides for the opportunity for a municipality to require an applicant proposing a project to complete a pre-application conference with the local review board, the technical review committee, or with the administrative officer for the local review board as appropriate.

It's important to note that the Pre-Application Conference associated with a Comprehensive Permit application under RIGL 45-53.4 doesn't follow the traditional Pre-Application Plan submission requirements of a Land Development process and is not subject to the submission requirements as such. In particular, the state law for the Pre-Application Conference within RIGL 45-53-4.(d)(1), states:

Pre-application conference. A municipality may require an applicant proposing a project under this chapter to complete, or the applicant proposing a project under this chapter may request a pre-application conference with the local review board, the technical review committee established pursuant to § 45-23-56, or with the administrative officer for the local review board as appropriate. In advance of a pre-application conference, the applicant shall be required to submit only a short description of the project in writing including the number of units, type of housing, density analysis, preliminary list of adjustments needed, as well as a location map, and conceptual site plan. The purpose of the pre-application conference shall be to review a concept plan of the proposed development and to elicit feedback from the reviewing person or board. Upon receipt of a request by an applicant for a pre-application conference, the municipality shall have thirty (30) days to schedule and hold the pre-application conference, unless a different timeframe is agreed to by the applicant in writing. If thirty (30) days has elapsed from the filing of the pre-application submission and no pre-application conference has taken place, nothing shall be deemed to preclude an applicant from thereafter filing and proceeding with an application for preliminary plan review for a comprehensive permit.

In advance of a pre-application conference, the applicant shall be required to submit only a short description of the project in writing including the number of units, type of housing, density analysis, preliminary list of adjustments needed, as well as a location map, and conceptual site plan.

The purpose of the pre-application conference shall be to review a concept plan of the proposed development and to elicit feedback from the reviewing person or board and there is no formal motion at this stage to be entertained. The applicant believes that this proposed application has exceeded the requirements of the state law, and believes the additional information submitted is necessary for the Planning Staff and Planning Board to provide important feedback prior to detailed engineering and analysis being submitted to the town. We are proceeding with this Pre-Application Conference per the request of the Planning Staff made on August 27, 2024, to the development team.

Municipal government subsidies, including adjustments and zoning incentives, are to be made available to applications under this law to offset the differential costs of the low- or moderate-income housing units in a development. At a minimum, a municipality shall provide an applicant with more dwelling units than allowed by-right under its zoning ordinance in the form of a density bonus to allow an increase in the allowed dwelling units per acre, as well as other incentives and municipal government subsidies.

Project Overview

The project consists of 2 new multi-family buildings within The Village at South County Commons. Each building provides fifty-two (52) units with a mixture of studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units. Building 26 is located on the vacant, grassed land adjacent to existing Building 25 and was previously approved as an office building with a similar building footprint. Building 28 is a newly proposed building located in the existing overflow parking lot behind the Hampton Inn & Suites.

The design team has looked to provide key amenities to the future residents including an inhouse fitness center work-from-home workspaces, tenant storage space, outdoor passive/active recreation areas, and new pedestrian connections to the existing walking paths. The buildings will be professionally managed with onsite staff to serve the future residents.

Outdoor recreational areas are a key focus for the development and have been incorporated into the design. The applicant recognizes the importance of providing common areas (both indoor and outdoor) for the future residents to use. Potential outdoor recreation areas include:

- New walking path connections to the existing paths to create an integrated pedestrian circulation system
- Covered grill pavilion
- Pickleball court
- Outdoor pet area
- Outdoor seating/meeting area
- Bike racks for use with the adjacent South County bike path
- Activation and integration of an underutilized area originally meant for recreation behind the Hampton Inn. The belief is that with the additional residents the critical mass necessary to have an active outdoor park area will be successful.

The architecture of the buildings at South County Commons has been an important part of its success from the beginning. The intent has always been to use different architects, with different styles to create buildings that are not only compatible but complement the other buildings at South County Commons. In this case, Hans Strauch from Cambridge, MA has created 2 new buildings that the owners of South County Commons believe will be a great addition to the village. The new buildings are at or below the heights of the adjacent buildings, of similar form and materials, but varying in detail, colors, and focal points. The architects will be prepared at the appropriate time to discuss with the board and staff what their design inspirations were, and goals in creating the new buildings.

Regarding the specific state law requirements for the pre-application conference under RIGL 45-53-4, we have provided the following materials:

Comprehensive Permit – Pre-Application Conference Requirements – RIGL 45-53-4.(d)(1)

1. Short Description of the Project
 - Narrative provided above
2. Number of Units
 - Building 26
 - 4 Studio Units (1 Affordable Studio – 25%)
 - 36 x 1-bedroom units (9 Affordable 1-Bedroom – 25%)
 - 12 x 2-bedroom units (3 Affordable 2-Bedroom – 25%)
 - Building 28
 - 28 x 1-bedroom units (7 Affordable 1-Bedroom – 25%)
 - 24 x 2-bedroom units (6 Affordable 2-Bedroom – 25%)

3. Type of Housing

- o Residential multi-family – mixture of studio, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom units with associated active/passive recreational amenities including a fitness center pedestrian walking paths, and outdoor recreation areas

4. Density Analysis

The applicant recognizes that there may be discretion in how the town prefers the density to be calculated. There will be a subdivision plan submitted in the future to modify lot lines to create a standalone lot that these 2 new residential buildings will be located on. It is likely that these will be the only 2 buildings located on the new lot. South County Commons was created with cross easements to permit parking and access throughout the village. No individual lot today stands alone from a parking, open space requirement, density, or zoning compliance. The parking will continue to be shared across lot lines for the new and existing buildings and uses. This area of the South County Commons development has already been modified several times. It was last modified when Building 25 was built. The affiliated owners of The Village at South County Commons own 11 separate parcels totaling 65 acres with 1,027 parking spaces, and no residential units. Three (3) lots that were originally part of South County Commons and not owned by this applicant have residential uses. Proposed Buildings 26 and 28 are affiliated with the owners of the 11 South County Commons mixed use parcels, but not with the 3 residential parcels. We respectfully request guidance from town officials on the different options on how to measure the density. If it is across the mixed use parcels that the applicant controls or affiliated with it would be about 1.6 units per acre (104 units on 65 acres). If the density was to be taken on across the future parcel that the units would be located on, it would be about 9.1 units per acre (104 units over 11.4 acres). The applicant has determined that the density being proposed is the minimal amount of units to be successful and feasible without a significant additional subsidy. The applicant also believes that the size of the future buildings and the use are appropriate and beneficial to The Village at South County Commons.

5. Preliminary List of Adjustments Needed

- o The applicant anticipates adjustments needed for building height, allowable building size (# of units per building), density, and land use (residential)


6. Location Map and Conceptual Plan

- o Site Plans included with the Pre-Application conference request

The applicant has spent considerable time with their design team planning and preparing the Pre-Application Conference materials. We are looking forward to further discussing the vision for the development and hearing feedback from the Planning Staff and Planning Board. If you have any further questions on this matter, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

DiPrete Engineering Associates, Inc.



Eric Prive, PE

Senior Project Manager

eprive@diprete-eng.com