



DiPrete Engineering

December 20, 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:

The two proposed residential buildings in The Village at South County Commons that are the essence of this application have been considered by the applicant for over a decade, and under active discussion with town officials since 2022. Until recently, the owners of South County Commons questioned the viability of this use and resisted proposing anything that would undermine the success of South County Commons. The thought process that brought about this change and the accompanying application are:

- South County Commons was originally envisioned by the town in the 1990's to be the Gateway to the Town – a mixed-use industrial zone, with low impact housing, and as a tax generator for the town. This vision predated the applicant acquiring the land and building the development. The originally envisioned tenant demand is changing and evolving at an increasing rate and presents challenges for the future that were not obvious in the 1990's.
- The South County Commons inclusive properties today are the largest taxpayers to the town and have been credited with helping the town secure a favorable bond rating. Even though after 2 decades, not all the buildings have been constructed.
- The development has been written about in books, received awards, visited by other New England towns, studied in university planning classes, and highly praised over the past decade. The developer takes a lot of pride in the property and wants the high quality to continue into the future even as the office and retail environments change. Representatives from the town over the past decade have told the developer that they also take pride in South County Commons, appreciate the benefits it has brought to the town, and want to be supportive of the property and businesses.
- South County Commons was planned over 25 years ago and since then many of the uses that created the critical mass of people needed for a mixed-use development to be successful have faded. For example, the theatre originally had 1,256 seats and is now 475 seats; the buildings envisioned to be retail are today mostly service and restaurants; office tenants are in decline nationally and South Kingstown is not immune to this.
- Housing, especially multi-family, is in increasing demand in Rhode Island and South Kingstown. These two buildings would bring over 100 people to live at South County Commons and benefit the businesses there. They would provide a housing product that does not exist in South Kingstown today with new buildings, all floors accessible by elevators, professionally managed with in-house amenities, walking distance to restaurants, a movie theatre, and services, and with 26 new units of Low or Moderate Income units to the town's housing stock.

For these reasons and others that we will present to the town during the public hearing process, the applicant believes that this is the right use for this area of The Commons. The buildings are at the right scale and density and appropriately designed to be viable, good neighbors, and fulfill a need in the community. The owner of Soth County Commons believes that the benefits that will result from these two residential buildings will be good for South County Commons and the Town of South Kingstown.

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Prive', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eric Prive, PE
Senior Project Manager
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