



June 2, 2025

To: Planning Board

Re: Preliminary Review of 26 Friend Street Application for Site Plan Approval

Members of the Amesbury Planning Board,

The Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) has reviewed the site plans and elevations submitted for the proposed mixed-use project located at 26 Friend Street. The project requires a special permit for the multi-family use and site plan approval. OCED provides the following preliminary comments in full support of the project:

- **Building Design** – The proposed 3-story, mansard style building design is appropriate for this location given the height, scale, massing, and traditionally-styled buildings along Friend Street. In contrast, the existing single-story building is not representative of that character, nor an efficient use of this urban location.
- **Off-Street Parking** – As discussed at the Technical Review Committee (TRC) the proposed three (3) off-street parking spaces along the rear of the building are critical for marketing these units and to support this level of investment. These units are relatively small (approximately 1,000 SF) making one (1) designated off-street parking space sufficient in this location. Thus, we would support the requested waiver to the off-street parking and loading requirements to allow for one (1) off-street parking space per unit.¹
- **Access to Off-Street Parking** – Our office has reviewed the abutting city-owned parcel behind the property and the existing parking and circulation pattern is highly efficient to service the abutting private off-street parking areas that provide parking to twelve (12) abutting privately owned properties. In any event, providing access to the proposed parking for 26 Friend Street, while not currently proposed to be secured by an access easement from the city, would be reasonably available in the foreseeable future.
- **Staging Area for Deliveries** – It would likely be necessary that up to two (2) city-owned parking spaces within the rear parking lot would be needed to support construction of the project. This could be accomplished by a temporary license from the city.

¹ Please note that our office is currently drafting a zoning amendment to the off-street parking requirements that will propose reducing the off-street parking requirements to 1 space per unit within 300 feet of a municipal parking lot. Additionally, we will include a special permit process whereby an applicant could request a special permit from the Planning Board to make a payment-in-lieu to the city for any unmet parking. Such payments would be used to support the city's off-street parking management program in the Downtown.



- **Solid Waste Disposal** - The project provides a designated area along the rear elevation of the building for solid waste storage. The area will avoid the storage of trash totes in the alleyway between the properties.
- **Multi-Family Use** – The addition of three (3), 2-bedroom dwelling units at this location is beneficial to the urban form and mixed-use character of downtown Amesbury. Additionally, it will help activate this section of Friend Street and support economic development within the central business district.
- **Off-Site Park Improvements** – Given the proximity of the building to the abutting city-owned park there is an opportunity to work with the applicant to make improvements to the park that will increase public utilization of the space and beautify this urban pocket park. Additionally, there is an opportunity to consider including a small outdoor dining area in the park design to help activate the park and a license for a ground-floor restaurant could then be considered by the ground-floor tenant in the proposed building.
- **Design Review Committee** - We continue to support the efforts of the Design Review Committee (DRC) to finalize the design details for this building design including but not limited to, lighting, landscaping, signage, and any park improvements on the city-owned parcel.
- **Economic Impact** – This project is likely to require an investment of over \$1.5m which will increase the assessed value by more than four (4) times the current assessed value (increasing the annual taxes from \$5,000/yr. to over \$20,000/ yr.). Moreover, the construction will create temporary employment and the three (3) new dwelling units will support spending in downtown Amesbury.

In summary, once these relatively minor issues are addressed and finalized, OCED continues to enthusiastically support approval of this project. Coupled with the proposed improvements at 45 Main Street, we believe Friend Street will significantly benefit from the proposed use, building design, and the off-site improvements.

Please feel free to contact us directly if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nick Cracknell', is written over a circular blue stamp.

Nicholas Cracknell, Director

Cc: Nipun Jain, Planning Director