

NARRATIVE

20 HIGHLAND AVENUE

BLOCK 118, LOTS 15, 16, 17, 18.05, 40.02 AND 44

20 Highland Avenue presently contains a three-story office building which was constructed in the late 1960s. The office building consists of 11,518sf of office space. There is an existing parking lot on the west side of the building and to the rear of the building (Tract I), along with a separate, gravel parking lot located on Inn Place (Tract II) that is owned by the owner of the subject property. The parking areas are not currently stripped, however there are approximately 30 parking spaces between the three parking areas. The existing landscaping is minimal, mainly consisting of low-lying plants/shrubberies along the west side of the building and a few low-lying plants/shrubberies with a few small trees along the façade of the building.

The applicant's proposal is to renovate the existing building and construct a 8,249sf addition, with 1,790sf being added to the first floor; 1,832sf being added to the second floor; and 4,627sf being added to the third floor. The renovation will create 516sf of office space and the remainder of the building will be developed into 23 apartment units (1 three-bedroom COAH unit on the basement level; 2 two-bedroom COAH units on the first floor; and 20 one-bedroom market units). There are 37 proposed parking spaces (35 spaces + 2 green-banked spaces), a 161sf bicycle room and a 764sf amenity room. The amenity room will contain a gym/workout area. The days/hours for the office use are Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm, with one employee. Proposed landscaping and lighting details are outlined on the site plan. The additional façade will match the existing façade. No additional signage is proposed.

As a result of maintaining the existing building, there will need to be a number of "C" variances which should be granted under a "C"1" analysis. The "D" use variance is required because there will be residential use on the first floor and the rear parking area is in a residential zone. The purpose of the MLUL, Metuchen Master Plan and surrounding neighborhood justify such variances because it is similar to the development on Hillside Avenue on an adjacent street and a buffer of residential apartments is being created to shield the adjacent single-family neighborhood from the commercial intrusion from nearby Main Street.

There are two existing easements on the property. One is for the retaining wall on the adjacent Lot 40.01, recorded on June 15, 1951 in Deed Book 1565, Page 238 (see attached). The other is for the right-of-way over Lots 17 and 18.05, providing access to the subject property from Inn Place, recorded on May 11, 1978 in Deed Book 3029, Page 837 (see attached). There are no other easements proposed with this application.