

MAY 6, 2025

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Erik Hinkley
ZEO
Town of Newington Planning
Newington, CT 06111

Dear Mr. Hinkley,

BSC Group (BSC), on behalf of Staypoint Properties and Doro Restaurant Group, is pleased to submit the following request for pre-application review to the Planning and Zoning Commission of the Town of Newington for an enlargement to the CasaDoro Restaurant parking lot.

Proposal Background:

CasaDoro is a family style Italian restaurant operated by the Doro Restaurant Group based in West Hartford Connecticut. Since their opening in December 2024, the restaurant has proven to be extremely popular with both Newington residents and with the surrounding community, with weekend reservations selling out sometimes two weeks in advance.

Unfortunately, although the parking design and Commission approved Site Plan for the restaurant meets the requirements of Table Section 6.1.1.C. for Restaurants: "20 Spaces for each 1,000 S.F. of floor area open to the Public" in the Newington Zoning Regulations, the restaurant is proving to be grossly under parked due to its popularity. As a result, Visitors are choosing to illegally park in and along the fire access aisles, creating significant hazards for both patrons and emergency vehicles, particularly in the event of a fire emergency requiring access by the Towns largest fire apparatus.

To alleviate this safety hazard, the developer opened a temporary parking area on the historical "Pad Site" portion of the property located immediately southwest of the existing parking lot. This temporary lot is the focus of this pre-application: To determine if a permanent parking lot over the pad site portion would be considered a viable application in front of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Additionally, to further alleviate the parking situation, the Owner of record entered into an agreement with the owner of the Price Chopper plaza to lease 50 parking spaces for the restaurant's employees to park in, reserving the entire parking lot adjacent to the restaurant for patron parking.

The project team is aware that, with the lot being within the Upland Review Area of a small channel to the south and west of the property, the proposal will also require submission to the Conservation Commission for approval.

Parking Lot Proposal Design Specifics:

(Please refer to the Attached sheet C-1.0 - Additional Parking Lot Concept)

The extension to the parking lot will begin just south of the current right-in/right-out entrance/exit to the site off Berlin Tpke. The primary parking approved in the previous site plan application for the restaurant to the north of the

entrance, surrounding the Restaurant proper, is not part of this proposal except that 2 additional handicapped spaces shall be striped at the front of the property to satisfy CT Building Code.

The southernmost portion of the existing parking lot will be redeveloped and extended further south approximately 180 feet. To achieve this, a retaining wall with guardrail shall be installed along the south and west sides of the parking lot, increasing the total usable area of the site. The proposed lot will remove 39 existing parking spaces, but will add a total of 163 spaces, for a net addition of 124 parking spaces. Including the north portion of the lot around the building, the total parking for the site shall be increased from the 2023 restaurant Site Plan approved 109 spaces to 231 spaces.

To maximize the total parking count effectively, the design team utilized the provision identified in Section 6.1.1.C "Figure 2" Option 2 of the Zoning Regulations, allowing for a 16-foot parking stall with a 3-foot vegetated shelf overhang. Using this optional layout, the design team was able to satisfy the requirement of Section 6.1.3.C.A requiring not less than 10% of the interior of the lot to be landscaped. With the proposed layout and with internal islands seven feet in width, the proposed interior landscaping calculates out to 10.37% (see C-1.0 for pavement and landscaping areas).

Design team interpretation of Zoning Regulation section 6.10.4 - "Berlin Turnpike":

Section 6.10.4 of the Newington Zoning Regulations states the following:

On the Berlin Turnpike, the front yard green space and landscape area is most important to the public interest for the preservation and enhancement of property values, and the control of traffic function and reduction of hazards.

- A. *Alteration and additions affecting 25 percent of the gross floor area or more for business and industrial uses shall make substantial effort to add green space and landscaping, particularly in the front yard.*
- B. *No accessory structures, above-ground utilities, or pavement shall be placed in the 35' minimum front yard.*

This excerpt relates to the parking (pavement) located within the 35 foot front yard. Although the design team recognizes the intent behind this regulation, we are requesting relief from this requirement based on the following grounds:

1. Parking in the front yard setback was approved by the Planning and Zoning commission when the former Bertucci's restaurant was proposed in 1992, even though this regulation was in existence at that time.
 - a. Upon review of the minutes of the meetings for that original site plan, this zoning regulation was not mentioned.
 - b. There was a statement made by the ZEO at that time that the site plan satisfied all requirements.
2. The approved site plan shows a future pad site that, although not constructed, intended to expand the parking in line with the parking proposed for Bertuccis.
3. Connecticut General Statute Section 8-2. "Regulations." states:

8-2.(d) Zoning regulations adopted pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall not: 8-2.(d)(4)(C) provide for the termination of any nonconforming use solely as a result of nonuse for a specified period of time without regard to the intent of the property owner to maintain that use.

In other words, just because the pad site and associated parking was not installed, there is no indication that the property owner did not plan to install the non-conforming site at some point in the future. So now, with the current owner requesting the installation of the parking in line with the originally approved parking, we believe we show sufficient evidence to request relief from this requirement.

Conclusion

Therefore, providing the above information, Staypoint Properties and Doro Restaurant Group respectfully requests a favorable assessment of the proposed parking lot concept and requests any questions or concerns be submitted to the design team at fvacca@bscgroup.com. If considered favorable, The design team is planning to move forward with a formal Site Plan Submission to both the Conservation Commission and to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Respectfully submitted,
BSC Group, Inc.



Francis J. Vacca, P.E.
Senior Project Manager – Senior Associate

