



Town of Barrington

PLANNING, BUILDING AND RESILIENCE DEPARTMENT
Barrington Town Hall | 283 County Road | Barrington, RI 02806

25 Watson Avenue Redevelopment Plan Frequently Asked Questions *Updated - May 13, 2024*

1. What is being proposed at 25 Watson Avenue, the site of the former Carmelite Monastery?

Following more than two years of public discussion about the best use of the former Carmelite Monastery at 25 Watson Avenue, the Town Council and the community endorsed the following plan to use the Property for a combination of:

- A two-acre public park ("Park"), and;
- Six (6) market rate single family home sites;
- A "Pocket Neighborhood" of twelve (12) cottage-style single family homes on approximately 1.56 acres (68,000 square feet) of the property:
 - All units will be age restricted to residents 55 or older.
 - Five of these cottages will be affordable to low- and moderate-income residents.

Please see Pages 2 and 3 of this document for illustrations depicting the site plan and development concept.

2. Does the Town still/currently own the site?

Yes. The Town purchased the property in 2021, and borrowed \$3.5 million for the cost of the land and development, and environmental remediation for the existing Monastery building when the building was being considered for reuse. The Town continues to pay on the outstanding balance of the loan, at a cost of approximately \$280,000 per year.

3. How much revenue does the site currently generate for the Town every year?

The Town currently realizes no revenue from the 25 Watson Avenue site.

4. What expenses does the Town incur every year for the site?

The costs to the Town for the 25 Watson site and the monastery are \$313,000 per year. This includes financing for the purchase ("the mortgage"), as well as electricity, heat, water, security, heating and cooling, plumbing, Town staff time, and maintenance of the grounds.



Address: 25 Watson Avenue ("rear" portion – highlighted in red – fronting on Freemont Avenue)



SITE PLAN & DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

PROGRAM

12 Single-Family Cottage Units
30 parking spaces total (2 spaces per unit plus 6 visitor spaces)



UNION STUDIO ARCHITECTURE & COMMUNITY DESIGN | CARMELITE MONASTERY RENDERING
--- FOR CONTEXTUAL PURPOSES ONLY ---



5. What will the revenue from selling the lots and future property taxes be used for?

The sale proceeds will fund demolition costs of the former monastery building, infrastructure improvements for the housing lots, and park improvements on the site, with any excess funds or future revenues applied to other municipal services such as athletic facilities, police, fire, road improvements, and schools.

6. Who will be the developer of the site?

The developer of the 12-unit Pocket Neighborhood will be FJS Associates, Ltd., a Rhode Island company headquartered in Middletown, R.I. The Town will handle sale of the six (6) single-family lots at fair market value, but they will be deed restricted to maintain them as single-family lots in their original configuration.

7. How was the developer selected?

The Town issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) on January 26, 2024 for development of the Pocket Neighborhood lot only. The RFP provided plans for the development of the site based on community input including buildings, infrastructure, landscaping, and overall management. The Town received a response from FJS on February 27 and the Town Council voted to begin negotiating with the company on March 4, 2024.

The FJS team has demonstrated experience creating market rate and affordable housing developments, including both homeownership and rental units throughout southern New England, and particularly in Rhode Island. The entire team is Rhode Island-based and has worked together to create many neighborhoods.

The Town executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FJS on April 1, 2024.

8. What must happen at the financial town meeting (“FTM”) for this proposal to go forward?

For the project to proceed, voters attending the May 22, 2024 FTM must vote to:

- Approve demolition of the former monastery building;
- Sale of the six (6) single-family lots at fair market value with deed restrictions, as illustrated and explicitly conditioned on the site plan layout approved by both the Planning Board on October 3, 2023, and Town Council on January 8, 2024;
- Approve sale of one (1) lot for development of the 12-unit Pocket Neighborhood along Freemont Street; and
- Create a two-acre park along the southern edge of the property.

9. What happens if the FTM does not approve the proposal?

If the plan is not approved by the voters, the Town will be required to continue planning exercises to consider future re-use of the property, including uses of the former monastery building and the property which may be less compatible for the neighborhood. Additionally, the Town will continue to incur costs in excess of \$300,000 annually associated with the site.

10. If the FTM approves this, what happens if the parties can’t reach an agreement by the June 30 deadline outlined in the MOU?

If the Town and developer can’t reach an agreement by the June 30 deadline outlined in the MOU, the Town can re-issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify a different developer for the Pocket Neighborhood only.



11. Will this proposal require a zoning change?

The Town will not create a new zoning district for the Property. Instead, the Town will apply jointly with the developer to the Barrington Planning Board for a Comprehensive Permit ("Comp Permit Application"). The Comp Permit Application will be submitted for subdivision approval across the entire seven (7) acres, requesting subdivision of the land to create the two-acre public park, the six (6) single-family home sites, and the 12-unit Pocket Neighborhood.

Approval of a Comp Permit application freezes the plan in place with Conditions of Approval that clearly articulate the subdivision density limits and restrictions on future development for the entire parcel/property.

12. How will the costs and responsibilities for the development be shared between the Town and the developer?

The MOU outlining the terms is online here: <https://www.barrington.ri.gov/361/25-Watson-Avenue>

The costs and responsibilities for the development will be shared as follows:

FJS will be responsible for preparing all applications, including hiring and directing all professional support personnel. This includes attorneys, engineers, architects, and landscape architects. Since some of the utility infrastructure will benefit both the Pocket Neighborhood and the six single family homes, and to support the provision of low- and moderate-income housing, the Town will pay for a share of the engineering for some utility infrastructure for the five (5) affordable units, and the impacted single-family lots.

The cost to engineer utility infrastructure will be divided as follows, with the Town reimbursing FJS for its share following the presentation of approved invoices.

- The cost of engineering the sewer service to the Pocket Neighborhood and to two (2) lots fronting Freemont Avenue will be split 50% each to the Town and FJS.
- The cost of engineering potable water service to the Pocket Neighborhood shall be split 50% each to the Town and FJS.
- The Town will provide FJS with all surveys, plans, studies and reports in its possession, and agrees to authorize the professional who produced the material to share the information with the developer. Following execution of the Purchase Agreement, all plans for permitting and construction will become the property of FJS.
- The cost of engineering and permitting stormwater drainage for the entire development plan shall be divided with FJS to pay seven-eighteenths (7/18) of the cost and the Town to pay eleven-eighteenths (11/18) of such cost.
- The cost of engineering and permitting RI CRMC approval, if necessary, shall be divided with the Proposer to pay seven-eighteenths (7/18) of the cost and the Town to pay eleven-eighteenths (11/18) of such cost.
- Also as part of the agreement, the Town agrees to sell the property to FJS for \$1, in consideration of the developer's investment in the project and to eliminate the cost financing and care of the property currently carried by the Town.



13. Why did the MOU indicate a purchase price of \$1.00 for the 12-unit Pocket Neighborhood parcel?

The Pocket Neighborhood includes five (5) deed-restricted affordable units within the twelve-unit development. To ensure the project will work financially, the developer's proposal required that the price of the land be not included. When you pursue quality developments that have an affordable option, the affordability requirement makes the revenues for the developer much lower, but it's expected that the quality of the resulting affordable units will not be any different than the market-rate units in the resulting development.

Additionally, approval of this plan assures there will be public benefits to the Town in the form of affordable housing units and a public park (maintained by the Town) as part of the development, in place of a profit-focused transaction and recouping all costs associated with the purchase and development.

14. Who will be responsible for applying for the necessary permits?

The Town as "owner" and the Proposer as "applicant" will apply jointly for any permits or approvals that are necessary.

15. Which sustainability measures are being integrated into the development plan?

From early in the planning process for redevelopment of 25 Watson Avenue, the Ad-Hoc Committee and other participants agreed that resilience and sustainability measures shall be integrated into all aspects of the development. The RFP articulated the following "Resilient Development and Green Building Design" expectations, which will be integrated into the Comp Permit Application for subdivision/development approval

1. All dwellings shall be all-electric, with no natural gas service or heating oil.
2. Proposals shall integrate strategies to both mitigate the impact of stormwater flooding to the site and reduce the site's contribution to stormwater in the neighborhood. Strategies should focus on pervious site materials, enhanced landscaping and Low Impact Development (LID) measures to capture and infiltrate stormwater.
3. Existing native trees greater than 12" in caliper removed for the proposed development shall be replaced on a minimum of 1:1 basis; proposals that replace trees at a higher ratio will receive a higher score. Replacement trees shall be planted within Lot 6, or in other locations subject to review by the Conservation Commission and final approval by the Planning Board. Native deciduous tree species of at least 2.5" in caliper are required. (Acceptable tree species are listed in the CRMC Coastal Zone Planting Guide.)
4. Energy Efficiency: Proposed designs should minimize all energy uses with a priority on passive building strategies.
 - a. Passive building strategies to include: building orientation and massing; high performance building envelopes that are airtight, well insulated, and include high efficiency windows and doors; and natural ventilation and daylighting.
 - b. Active building strategies to include: Energy Star high efficiency building heating, cooling, and hot water systems sized to meet, but not exceed, occupant needs; and high efficiency LED lighting fixtures and advanced lighting control systems and technologies.
5. To the extent possible, all dwellings within the Pocket Neighborhood should be oriented to maximize solar exposure for rooftop solar installations; the planting plan should place new trees in locations that minimize shadow on the solar-oriented roof slopes.
6. Each structure shall be "solar-ready" for rooftop photovoltaic solar installations, including providing electrical conduit and electrical panel space for a future installation.



16. How will stormwater be managed on the site during and after construction?

Stormwater shall be managed in accordance with low impact design (LID) standards, consistent with the Rhode Island Stormwater Manual.

As outlined in the Request for Proposal Addendum:

The stormwater management approach should include LID methods and Best Management Practices (BMP's) to provide water quality treatment, groundwater recharge, and stormwater detention. Water quality treatment can be achieved through LID methods such as reduced impervious area through reducing sidewalks widths to 4 feet, the use of alternative hardscape materials for driveways, disconnecting impervious surfaces, and providing qualifying pervious areas (QPA). Other LID techniques that are recommended include preserving natural vegetation to the maximum extent practicable to minimize clearing, designing stormwater BMP's in areas with the greatest infiltration rate, and the use of small-scale BMP's to treat stormwater runoff as close as possible to the source.

Small-scale BMP's that are recommended include bioretention areas, tree box filters, drywells or sand filters. The LID methods referenced above are compatible with these surface stormwater BMP's to design a low impact development. Roof runoff should be infiltrated in drywells located close to the source where feasible. Infiltrating roof runoff can be cost effective, provides groundwater recharge, water quality treatment, and reduces the size of downstream BMP's.

17. Are there grants available to fund improvements at 25 Watson?

The Town Solicitor addressed this inquiry at the December 2023 Town Council meeting, noting that in his experience representing several towns acquiring open space property, it is almost impossible to get money from a state, federal, or private entity for acquiring open space once a Town has purchased the property.

18. At one point there was a proposal to turn the former monastery into housing. What happened to that proposal?

Assessing the potential of turning the former monastery into housing proved to not be viable in the marketplace. Factors contributing to this realization included:

- Converting the existing building to residential apartments was determined to be not viable in the marketplace due to the design and materials used in construction as conversion of these spaces would add significant expenses;
- Interior walls are concrete block, adding significant expense to renovation costs, and;
- Environmental costs are excessive, including removing the materials used in construction of the existing structure.

After a public process lasting more than two (2) years, including extensive input from the community and the October 2023 endorsement of the Barrington Planning Board, the current proposal was determined to be the best, most practical use of the property.

19. Who will be responsible for the demolition of the former monastery?

The Town will be responsible for the demolition of the monastery, subsequent to approval at the May 22, 2024 Financial Town Meeting.



20. What about asbestos? Could there be possible health hazards if the monastery is demolished? How will this be addressed?

There are many examples of safe asbestos abatement in Rhode Island for development projects. Demolition of the monastery will comply fully with state regulations for asbestos control (216-RICR-50-15-1) and Department of Health Asbestos Control Program.

There is recent precedent in Barrington for safe asbestos removal/abatement adjacent to an existing dense residential neighborhood. The former Barrington Middle School was demolished in 2019 and required asbestos abatement during that process. Currently, athletic fields are being used in the same footprint where the former Barrington Middle School stood.

21. Once the project is underway and the Town fulfills its responsibilities, will there be any further financial risk to the Town?

No. The Town will have no responsibility to provide any financial guarantees for the completion, sale of units or operation of the project. FJS will oversee development and construction and assume sole responsibility for all guarantees related to construction, financing, and operations.

22. Has a schedule for development been established if the vote at the FTM is approved?

Next steps are entirely dependent on the outcome of the May 22, 2024 FTM vote to approve the residential lot land sales and demolition of the monastery building.

Upon approval, the conceptual milestone schedule includes:

- By June 30, 2024 – Execution of Agreement
- July 1-Nov 30, 2024 – Permitting & Comp Permit Application
- End of 2024 – Closing with Developer
- 2025 – Q1 – Several SF lots to go up for sale – most likely the lots farthest away from the monastery
- 2025 – Q2 – Demolition of Monastery
- 2025 – Q3 – Remaining lots go for sale
- 2025 – Q2-Q4 – Pocket Neighborhood construction

