



# Town of Barrington

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

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Barrington Planning Board  
FROM: Teresa Crean, AICP – Director of Planning, Building and Resilience  
DATE: March 1, 2023  
SUBJECT: 25 Watson Ave, Memo to Planning Board for discussion at March 7, 2023 meeting

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### **For March 7, 2023 Agenda of the Barrington Planning Board:**

#### **Old Business: Discuss and Act: 25 Watson Ave (Carmelite Monastery)**

*REFERRAL to Planning Board from Town Council Meeting, Monday, February 6, 2023:*

AGENDA ITEM #23: Discuss and Act: [Referral of Planning](#) of 25 Watson Avenue (Carmelite Monastery Property) to Town Administration, Planning Board and Others If So Determined by the Town Council; Authorize Additional Funding for Design.

**This memorandum provides an update on the analysis work completed by the 25 Watson Avenue consultant, 4ward Planning, and suggests next steps to guide the Planning Board's actions at the March and April 2023 Regular Business Meetings, with a proposal to hold one or two dedicated Special Meetings of the Planning Board to encourage public input and engagement in the process.**

**Overview:** A financial feasibility report from the Town's real estate development consultant, 4Ward Planning, determined that development of the seven-acre former Carmelite Monastery site would not be feasible if it included repurposing the existing Monastery building. This report was issued after last year's Financial Town Meeting when voters rejected a motion that would allow the Town the option to remove the existing building in seeking proposals from developers to develop the property.

In late 2022, two land use plan scenarios, Land Use Plan 1 and 2 (see Page 2), were provided to 4Ward Planning with the following Scope of Work (see attached report):

- Identification of Financially Viable Residential Development
- Identification of Development Potential & Financial Feasibility Based on Parceled Sections of the Property, both with and without the existing building.
- Identification of Potential Purchase Value for Developable Land Parcels



**Land Use Plan 1** - Keep the building and develop housing around it, including single-family lots along Watson Avenue and Freemont Road, and some age-restricted senior housing.

- 0.5 acres – land buffer area
- 0.8 acres – six (6) single-family detached housing unit lots fronting Watson Avenue
- 1.0 acres – eight (8) single-family detached housing unit lots fronting Freemont Avenue
- 1.6 acres – twenty-two (22) detached cottage court units partially fronting Freemont Avenue
- 1.4 acres – The existing monastery building left intact but unutilized
- 2.0 acres – preserved public open space with public parking

Figure 1: Land Use Plan 1



Figure illustrates the goals for redevelopment of the 25 Watson Ave. site. The site may be developed as an overall project, or in phases labeled as subareas 1, 2, and 3

**Land Use Plan 2** - Remove the building and parking lot and develop housing in its place.

- 0.5 acres – land buffer area
- 1.4 acres – twelve (12) single-family detached housing unit lots fronting Watson Avenue
- 0.8 acres – six (6) single-family detached housing unit lots fronting Freemont Avenue
- 2.6 acres – thirty-five (35) detached cottage court units partially fronting Freemont Avenue
- 2.0 acres – preserved public open space with public parking

Figure 2: Land Use Plan 2

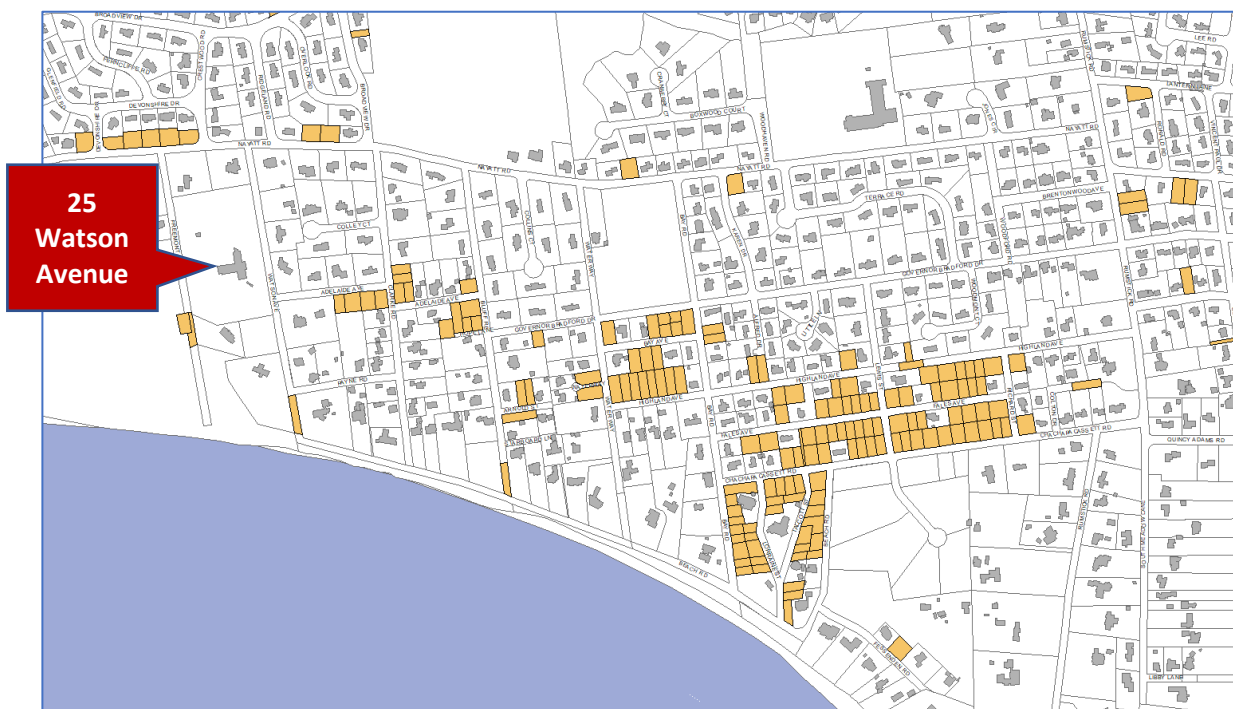


Figure illustrates the goals for redevelopment of the 25 Watson Ave. site, with the monastery building and parking lot removed. No development phasing is permitted under this plan



## Findings:

1. The analysis determined that both Land Use Plan 1 and Land Use Plan 2 are financially feasible.
2. The number of units assumed for the updated financial analysis, 36 to 53 units, is consistent with the range contemplated during the 25 Watson Avenue Ad Hoc Committee planning process in 2022.
3. Neither Land Use Plan proposes re-use of the Monastery building. The consultant report dated September 6, 2022 concluded that re-use of the existing building for housing is not financially feasible.
4. The “Carrying Costs” to the Town to maintain/upkeep the existing Monastery building is approximately \$310,000 per year (includes debt service, security, heat, water, staff time, and contracted maintenance vendors).
5. Both Land Use Plans 1 and 2 propose dedicating the southern section of the site as public open space in perpetuity.
6. Both Land Use Plans 1 and 2 propose single-family detached lots fronting Watson Avenue and Freemont Street, with land area in the center of the 25 Watson site proposed for an age-restricted cottage/bungalow development.
7. The surrounding neighborhood illustrated below shows over 150 lots in the neighborhood with lot sizes less than 10,000 square feet, similar in scale to the single-family lots proposed in both Land Use Plans 1 and 2 along Watson Avenue and Freemont Street.



This map shows 156 parcels between Freemont, Nayatt, and Rumstick Roads with lot sizes less than 10,000 square feet.

**Goals of the Housing Element in the Town's 2015 Comprehensive Plan (Page 22, online here: <https://www.barrington.ri.gov/205/Planning>)**

1. Goal HN-1: Expand supply of senior housing to meet growing demand of retiring Baby Boomers and the needs of residents with disabilities.

Objective HN-1.1: Completion of at least 50 units within a senior residential community or communities by 2020.

Policy HN-1.1.1: Identify sites that are appropriate for a variety of housing types for seniors.

Policy HN-1.1.2: Reduce barriers to senior housing through amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and related regulations.

Policy HN-1.1.3: Support the development of housing for residents with physical and mental disabilities that encourage independent living, and support alterations to the Town's current housing stock to achieve compliance with the RI Civil Rights of Individuals with Handicaps Act and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990.

2. Goal HN-2: Ensure that future development is compatible with the character of Barrington in general and that of individual neighborhoods.

Objective HN-2.1: Revise Zoning Ordinance and Map by 2017 to establish standards that protect or enhance the character of Barrington's neighborhoods through building and site design.

Policy HN-2.1.1: Pursue Zoning Ordinance amendments and other strategies that encourage compatible scale and building massing.

Policy HN-2.1.2: Encourage scattered-site affordable housing involving new construction and qualification of existing homes as affordable.

Policy HN-2.1.3: Allow well-designed, compatible mixed-use development in commercial areas, while enhancing the pedestrian environment.

3. Goal HN-3: Continue to comply with die State's 10 percent affordable housing goal through provision of well-integrated and compatible affordable housing.

Objective HN-3.1: Qualify as affordable at least three existing housing units on scattered sites per year by 2020.

Policy HN-3.1.1: Provide financial and administrative support required to implement the "capture existing affordable housing" program.

Policy HN-3.1.2: Engage the Housing Board of Trustees in order to use available funds in the most cost-effective, productive manner.



**Charge to the Barrington Planning Board:**

At the March 7, 2023 meeting, the Planning Board is being asked by Town Council to frame a recommendation on amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, working with Town administration. To assist in this process, the Town Council authorized the Town Manager to contract with Union Studio Architecture and Community Design of Providence, which is on a State Master Price Agreement, to develop an updated conceptual site plan with sketches to help illustrate options for planning the site.

The Union Studio concept design and sketches will not be available until mid-March 2023. With this in mind, the Planning Board is encouraged to schedule Special Planning Board meetings in March and April 2023 to invite public input and engagement in forming a recommendation to Town Council. These meetings will inform the Town Council of the Planning Board's recommendations at the May 2023 meeting of the Council, where they will set the agenda and any ballot items to be included on the docket for the May 24, 2023 Financial Town Meeting.

**Possible motions for Planning Board to consider at the March 7, 2023 Regular Business Meeting:**

***MOTION 1:** Advance Land Use Plan(s) \_\_\_ and update/revise the draft Developer Guidance (see attached template for review) that can be adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan and included into the Zoning Ordinance as a new zoning district for the 25 Watson Avenue property.*

***MOTION 2:** Hold at least one, possibly two, Special Planning Board meetings in March and April of 2023 to invite input and engagement from Barrington residents and determine if any actions can be proposed for inclusion on the 2023 Financial Town Meeting (FTM) agenda and ballot.*

