

In accordance with Section 5.60.1 of the Enfield Zoning Regulations the Applicant submits this narrative.

Existing Conditions

The property at 1297 Enfield is the site of the Felician Sisters. The campus once housed up to 100 sisters and trainees. Over time that number has dwindled to 24 sisters remaining on the campus, and it is becoming difficult to maintain the vacant and underutilized spaces on the site. Accordingly, the dormitory (Novitiate House/St. Felix Center) has been vacant for over two years, and the existing convent is underutilized, with only 50% of the space being occupied by the Sisters living on campus. As the Felician Sisters honored the Orrin Thompson Mansion by repurposing it, they hope to continue to honor the beauty and integrity of the buildings on the campus with wise decisions that lead to enhancing life to their Enfield community.

The Felician Sisters' vision for the campus, in partnership with The Community Builder's (TCB) as the developer, is to leave a lasting legacy of the Felician Sisters while building a community where families can grow and seniors are able to age with dignity and security.

The Felician Sisters currently sponsor nonprofit organizations on the campus that serve the spiritual and physical needs of the people. Specifically, the two ministries operated by the Felician Sisters on the campus are the Enfield Montessori School, which provides elementary and middle school education, and an over 55, 22-unit senior apartment building. Historical assets on the campus include the Orrin Thompson Mansion and the Historic Parade Grounds. The western boundary of the site is located within the Enfield Historic District.

The uses within five hundred (500) feet are extremely diverse. To the immediate north are single-family, multi-family and religious uses. To the east are Route 91, self-storage facilities, a fire station and a manufacturing facility. To the south is the Little Sisters of the Poor buildings with its Nursing and Assisted Living facility and support structures. To the west are single-family residences, an elementary school and other town facilities.

Proposed Redevelopment

The intended use of the premises is to construct multi-family intergenerational housing. This application is a re-submission of an earlier plan, as the current proposed development has evolved based on the input from stakeholders and the community. This development plan will take place in multiple phases over approximately 10 years. Key priorities and goals for the redevelopment of the site are:

- 1) **To repurpose the underutilized and vacant buildings ensuring the continued ownership and sustainability of the Felician Sisters and their supported ministries.** As the property continues to become further underutilized by the Sisters, the ongoing maintenance and preservation becomes more challenging. The Felician Sisters seek to preserve the existing campus through adaptive reuse of the existing buildings as well as expansion of housing options in order to create a more sustainable future for the preservation of the campus. This will allow the remaining Sisters living in Enfield to continue to live on campus and contribute to the community while building a legacy for the future.
- 2) **Preservation of open space and historical assets.** A primary goal is the redevelopment of existing underutilized and vacant buildings. There are currently approximately 140 dwelling units on the campus, however, only 45 are occupied (between the Convent, St. Francis

Residence, and the Novitiate House). Over 50% of proposed redevelopment would be through the reuse of existing buildings.

Additionally, it is a priority to preserve the existing views from and of the historic district, with no additions or changes to the structures within the historic district boundaries. The campus will also continue the preservation of Orrin Thompson Mansion, Convent, Chapel, Montessori school, St. Felix Center and St. Francis Residence buildings.

- 3) **Build off the success and experience of the Felician Sisters in providing intergenerational programs and housing.** The Felician Sisters have a long history of providing housing and safe communities for those living in poverty, veterans, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations, with housing communities in Pennsylvania, Delaware and Connecticut. The Enfield Campus currently provides intergenerational experiences with the school and senior housing on campus, and this proposed redevelopment would build off this success as seniors living in age-integrated communities have shown to have health and wellbeing benefits.

Further, the town POCD identifies a need for more diverse rental housing options for families. The vision for this property would be to help meet the housing needs of Enfield by creating opportunities for seniors in the community to age in place with improved amenities and resources. This may free up the limited existing stock of single family homes in the community. Non-age restricted housing will be targeted towards individuals and small families who may currently be priced out of the existing housing market, such as teachers that may already be working on the campus or essential workers serving the broader Enfield community.

The master plan concept has identified three key corridors for redevelopment:

- **Open Space Corridors** – These areas occur on the eastern and western borders of the campus, comprised of approximately 65-70% of the site. The open space zone to the West encompasses the historic parade grounds, where no building development or structures will be added or changed. The open space zone to the eastern boundary of the site, along Interstate 91 incorporates the designated wetland area, and the creation of new open space along South Road. This area will be enhanced through walking trails, landscaping to assist with sound barriers from the highway, and recreational outdoor space including a labyrinth for peaceful meditation.
- **Preservation Corridor** – This area is located in the center corridor of the campus where the majority of existing buildings and infrastructure is currently located (there are some auxiliary garages and a small house along the edges of the property, however the primary and historic structures are located within this corridor). In the preservation zone is the Convent and Chapel (built cr. 1948), the Montessori School which formerly served as the Felician archives (built cr. 1958), the historically designated Orrin Thompson Mansion (cr. 1880), St. Francis Residence (part of Orrin Thompson Mansion), and the Novitiate House/St. Felix Center (built cr. 1937). These properties would all be preserved and maintained. The Convent and St. Felix House would be repurposed into approximately 120 units of housing for seniors (currently they consist of ~122 dwelling units between them). There would be no changes to the Orrin Thompson House, St. Francis Residence, or the Montessori School.
- **Development Corridor** – This area, comprising approximately 25% of the site, is located to the southeast portion of the campus. The current concept proposes the construction of two new

buildings that would provide rental, non-age restricted 1- and 2-bedroom apartments. Additional amenities would be added for any new housing, which may include a playground, sufficient parking, fitness center, storage, and on-site property management and maintenance services. Any new construction would be limited to a height of the existing buildings in the preservation zone, to ensure no change to the existing views from Enfield St.

The proposed plan would take place in a series of phases, over approximately a 10-year period of development. The result of the development would be the following:

- A housing community with a mix of senior (age 62 and up) and non-age restricted housing that is comparable to other Enfield multifamily zoning. Approximately 50-55% of housing will be reserved for seniors, and 40-45% non-age restricted housing with a maximum density of 9.3 units per acre (250 units total). The target unit mix for the campus would be 197 one-bedrooms, and 54 two-bedroom units. Units would be targeted as affordable to seniors earning approximately \$40,000 or less a year, and working families earning between \$45,000-\$80,000 a year (Enfield's median income is \$76,423). Rents for seniors would not exceed 30% of their income; rents for non-seniors would range from \$1,000-\$1,400 per month depending on bedroom size.
- Provide 1.4 parking spaces per unit (358 spaces total). Parking estimates utilize Enfield elderly housing zoning guidelines of .75 spaces per elderly unit, and the maximum spaces allowed under state zoning laws of 1 space per bedroom for non-age restricted units, while still leaving additional spaces for visitors, Montessori School, and overflow parking beyond minimum requirements.
- Consolidation of uses on site, with separate entrances for school traffic, senior housing traffic, and new construction traffic flows. The plan proposes establishing and maintaining 3 curb cuts along South Road would minimize traffic impact and improve overall vehicular flow. Designed with no throughways within the campus, this would improve existing traffic and reduce current speeding conditions. Emergency only exits would be provided for emergency services use.
- Reuse of the Convent and St. Felix Center for the purposes of housing, with approximately 50% of all housing use being within the reuse of existing buildings. No changes proposed to the Orrin Thompson Mansion.
- Maximum height of existing buildings (3-4 stories depending on grade) and setbacks of any new construction behind the existing preserved buildings, to ensure preservation of the views from Enfield Street. Setback from Enfield Street set at approximately ~750 feet.
- Preservation of open space on the eastern and western portion of the sites, with the addition of walking trails and recreational spaces.
- Currently planned Amenities for residents, include a wellness center for existing and future seniors on the campus, a community kitchen, a community center, new playground, and additional storage spaces.
- Improvements to the Enfield Montessori School, including new accessible entry way, expansion of play areas, and improved parking and traffic flow. Improvements to St. Francis Residence with the addition of new senior amenities.
- Ensures that the Sisters that live on campus and call Enfield home can continue to age in place and contribute to the ministries and broader community.

The description of the plan provides the parameters for the future design of the site, which will be dependent on the approvals of a zone change. The applicants will provide a draft concept plan for feedback from the commission and the community that captures these priorities at the time of the public hearing.

Addressing Community Concerns and Feedback

The applicant has engaged and integrated feedback from ministry stakeholders (Sisters living on the campus, the Enfield Montessori School parents, and seniors living at St. Francis), as well as feedback from neighbors, town officials, and local organizations specializing in housing and senior care. Final concepts for the site and design plans will be shaped by Zoning as well as feedback from the community to ensure the property meets the needs of residents, neighbors, and the Town of Enfield. Below are the priorities from stakeholder meetings and information sessions with abutters that have been addressed in the priorities for the site.

Preservation of a landmark, historic property within the community

Community members expressed strong support for the sisters and an understanding of the need for change in order to continue their legacy. However, the community also recognizes the Felician Campus as a sacred place that represents stability and history within the community. This project puts forward the minimum amount of development, through density and developable area, required to realize the Sisters' vision while ensuring their continued ownership and sustainable use of the property for generations to come. This project will allow the Sisters to continue their stewardship and oversight of the property in perpetuity, as they will continue to own the land. The structure of this project allows them the stability to do so while furthering their ministry work.

Through the preservation of open space, adapting existing buildings for reuse, making no change to the existing ministries and chapel, and maintaining key views of the Enfield Historic District, the campus will maintain its historic look and feel and continue to contribute to the character of the neighborhood.

Minimize density and impact of development on services in Enfield

Through the adaptive reuse of existing buildings, and minimizing of new construction, the redevelopment will maximize the reuse of existing infrastructure and reduce the extents of new construction. Limiting the density to 9.3 units/acre (Enfield's multifamily zoning allows for 10 units/acre, and elderly housing zoning allow for 15 units/acre) will provide the necessary stability to maintain the historical and open space assets of the campus, while reducing the number of new buildings needed to achieve this density.

Impact to the services of Enfield, including emergency services, infrastructure improvements, and the public school system, are reduced through the reuse of existing properties and the targeted unit mix serving seniors and small families through one- and two-bedroom apartments. Further, due to the financing structure of this project, the properties will contribute to the Enfield Grand List and to town real estate taxes. The property is not currently subject to real estate taxes as a religious facility, and the proposed zone change will generate annual revenue to the town greater than what the current zoning would allow for.

Lastly, significant consideration has been given to traffic and parking needs for the campus in an effort to minimize any impact to the surrounding community, as well as to address the existing traffic and parking issues on the campus. By designating three curb cuts along South Road and eliminating cut-through traffic, the project will reduce any impact to the intersection along Enfield Street and South Road and improve the current flows of pick up and drop off traffic at Enfield Montessori school.

Maintain high quality maintenance and management of the property

Given the importance of this campus to the Sisters, the existing residents and Montessori parents, and the broader Enfield community, special attention must be taken to the ongoing maintenance and management of the property. The first Felician Sisters arrived in Enfield 90 years ago and have made improvements to the campus and managed its historical and open resources well. This project ensures the continued oversight and ownership by the Felician organization into the foreseeable future.

The property will continue to be managed and maintained at the highest quality. The redevelopment will allow for on-site property management staff, maintenance staff, and resident services staff that will oversee the day-to-day operations and upkeep of the buildings and the grounds. Property management will be provided by The Community Builders, a nonprofit developer and management company whose mission is build and sustain strong communities where all people can thrive. The organization has over 50 years of experience and is an accredited management agent. On-site community managers are experienced and well-trained in all aspects of day-to-day property management, providing daily supervision and support where it is most needed – at the site level. Due to funding sources used, TCBs properties are inspected regularly and are required to meet high standards of quality and maintenance ranging from the grounds to inside resident's units. TCB's strong partnerships with regulators, funders, and partners speak to their continued accomplishments in this area.

Related to the management of the site, is the importance of creating a safe and secure community for the seniors and families living on the campus and the surrounding neighborhood. Applicants for TCB housing are required to undergo screening for eligibility and suitability, including background checks. Annual inspections and recertifications ensure continued compliance with TCB and regulatory standards and constant monitoring of unit and property conditions.

Zone Change Justification

The list of properties attached hereto demonstrates that adjacent properties are zoned HR-33, I-1 and R-33 given the location of proposed development along Route 91, this proposal will exhibit compatibility with adjacent zoning districts. While the density of the site will increase, the property's location near existing abutting industrial, institutional, multi-family and religious uses will be compatible with the density of current land uses. Single-family uses along South Road and Enfield Street will not be impacted visually and as such the overall look of the area will not change. The proposed zone change conforms to the comprehensive plan of the Town. Also, the approval of the proposed zone change is consistent with the town's Plan of Conservation and Development. Conformance with the Comprehensive plan and consistency with the POCD will be demonstrated by the Applicant at the time of the public hearing.