

Proposed Zoning Text Amendment - Mansfield Zoning Regulations, Article Ten, Section S

[Zoning Regulations Article Ten, Section S.4.a includes a list of 26 different land uses allowed in the Storrs Center Special Design District. The proposed new text is noted as subsection (xxvii) at the end of this section in double underlining]

**4. Uses Permitted in the Storrs Center Special Design District**

- a. The following land uses are allowed within the Storrs Center Special Design District, whether in separate buildings or in mixed use buildings and whether owned or leased:
  - (i) Single family residences
  - (ii) Two-family residences
  - (iii) Multi-family residences
  - (iv) Age-restricted multi-family residences as defined in Article VII, Section H
  - (v) Live-work units (defined as a mixed use unit that includes a direct internal connection between office or retail space and residential space, whether on the same or different floors).
  - (vi) Use of residence for personal business purposes as defined in Article VII, section D
  - (vii) Retail uses
  - (viii) Restaurants, including sit-down and take-out varieties
  - (ix) Banks and financial institutions
  - (x) Offices, including medical offices and physical therapy clinics
  - (xi) Personal service shops including, but not limited to, beauty salon, barber, and tailoring
  - (xii) Photocopying, facsimile, document processing, courier and similar services
  - (xiii) Repair services or businesses, including the repair of bicycles, electronics, home appliances, office equipment, watches, clocks, clothing, shoes and similar uses, but excluding the repair of internal combustion engines
  - (xiv) Commercial printing or production accessory to an on-site retail business, provided the following conditions are met:
    - (1) the floor area used for such printing or production shall be limited to 3,000 square feet;

- (2) all goods prepared shall be sold to customers on the premises; and
- (3) no floor drains or other direct connections to the exterior of the building shall be permitted
- (xv) Governmental and civic uses, including but not limited to post offices, libraries, University of Connecticut uses, Town of Mansfield uses, parks, squares and greens
- (xvi) Art galleries or studios, museums, music recital halls, cinemas, and theaters of all types
- (xvii) Dance halls and juice bars not serving alcohol
- (xviii) Live music, whether as a principal or accessory use, so long as it is conducted at acceptable noise levels in conformance with all codes and ordinances of the Town.
- (xix) Public and private parking garages
- (xx) Public and private parking lots
- (xxi) Self-service laundromats, and laundry and dry-cleaning drop-off and pick-up, provided no dry cleaning is conducted on the premises
- (xxii) Public or private schools
- (xxiii) State licensed or registered day-care centers
- (xxiv) Recreation facilities, whether public or private and whether indoors or outdoors, such as health clubs, physical fitness centers, gyms, playgrounds, and billiard halls
- (xxv) Private clubs, such as university faculty clubs, university graduate clubs and clubs for civic or religious organizations, with or without residential units, but excluding clubs or housing for student fraternities, sororities and other student groups.
- (xxvi) Sale of alcoholic liquor, subject to the provisions of all town ordinances.
- (xxvii) Hotels.

APPLICATION BY:

STORRS CENTER ALLIANCE LLC

TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE MANSFIELD ZONING REGULATIONS  
(PERTAINING TO THE ADDITION OF A HOTEL USE WITHIN THE SC-SDD)

STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION

Introduction

This is an application to amend the text of the Mansfield Zoning Regulations relative to the Storrs Center Special Design District (SC-SDD). The SC-SDD area consists of several different neighborhoods within approximately 47 acres of land generally located on the east side of Storrs Road (Route 195) between Post Office Road (now named Charles Smith Way)/South Eagleville Road on the south and land along Dog Lane on the north. This application would amend the Zoning Regulations to add “hotels” as an allowed use within the SC-SDD.

Background

Following a competitive selection process in 2003, Storrs Center Alliance LLC (“SCA”) was selected to be the master developer of Storrs Center. The sole member of SCA is LeylandAlliance LLC, a real estate development firm based in Tuxedo Park, New York that specializes in traditional neighborhood development. SCA worked with the Mansfield Downtown Partnership (the “Partnership”) and its consultants to prepare the Storrs Center Municipal Development Plan (“MDP”) in a manner consistent with the requirements of General Statutes Chapter 132. The MDP was approved by the Partnership and the Mansfield Town Council in the fall of 2005. The plan was subsequently approved by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development and the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management in early 2006.

As set forth in the MDP, Storrs Center was envisioned to be a mixed use neighborhood designed to create a vibrant Main Street experience within a shared public realm. Structured and surface parking would be provided in accordance with the plan to support the needs of the various neighborhoods. The developed portion of the new community would occupy about one-third of the overall site. A large part of the project area would be reserved for conservation as part of an effort to establish an environmentally balanced and intelligent approach to the use of the land.

SCA and the Partnership, working with a team of professional architects, planners, scientists, engineers and legal counsel, jointly prepared materials to create a special design district for Storrs Center. In June, 2007, the Mansfield Planning & Zoning Commission rezoned 47 acres of land in the center of Storrs to the newly-created Storrs Center Special Design District. The intent of the new zoning designation was to facilitate

the redevelopment of a portion of the downtown Storrs area that was previously developed with a mix of mainly commercial uses.

Following the approval of the new zoning district for Storrs Center, extensive site planning, building design and engineering work continued. Various federal, state and local permits and approvals were obtained. The Town of Mansfield approved zoning permits for the first two phases of construction of Storrs Center near the town square. The first two mixed use buildings are complete, and a third is nearing completion. Zoning permits have also been approved for the parking garage and intermodal center, Village Street and transit pathways, and Post Office Road and the Post Office site. Construction of the parking garage is complete, and roadway improvements to Storrs Road and the Village Street are underway. Twenty-five acres of land were conveyed from the University to the Town of Mansfield for permanent protection as open space.

The Planning & Zoning Commission recently approved an amendment to the SC-SDD zoning map to provide for the construction of a new supermarket in the Market Square area of Storrs Center. This amendment reduced the overall development program in the Market Square area, including a net reduction of over 43,000 square feet of retail/commercial space as compared to the original approval. The application also modified elements of the preliminary master plan, such as parking, landscaping, and drainage improvements, as necessary to enable the development of this supermarket.

#### Summary of Proposed Zoning Text Amendment

The proposed zoning text amendment would add “hotels” to the list of allowed uses within the Storrs Center Special Design District.

The Zoning Regulations already set forth a list of 26 different land uses allowed within Storrs Center. The core development area of Storrs Center, which largely overlies previously or currently developed property along Storrs Road and Dog Lane, was envisioned to include a commercially oriented mixed use zone designed to create a vibrant Main Street experience with a shared public realm. Buildings in the commercial mixed use zone were anticipated to combine retail, office, restaurant and residential uses in a variety of forms. In addition, structured and surface parking was planned to support the needs of the various neighborhoods. Civic uses would also be allowed throughout the project, including public open spaces such as streets, sidewalks, the town square, and small plazas and terraces.

The Storrs Center Special Design District map provides that at the heart of Storrs Center will be a town square. A significant portion of the town square in Storrs Center is now coming to life in ways that are very similar to what was envisioned. The north and east sides of the town square are nearly complete: construction of two mixed use buildings and a parking garage is complete, and a third mixed use building is under construction. Over 290 residential units are occupied or nearing completion in this area, with very high occupancy rates. Restaurants and stores are opening up along Dog Lane and the Village Street near the town square (now named Royce Circle), bringing activity and vitality to

the area. Streetscape improvements to Storrs Road are underway, and installation of landscaping and sidewalks in the town square itself will take place this year.

With the development of the areas fronting the town square on the north and east sides nearly complete, an opportunity has arisen to complete the development of the south side of the town square. Two buildings are planned in the Phase 1C area. The first would be a mixed use building facing the town square, Storrs Road and Royce Circle with retail/restaurant space and a terrace on the ground floor and apartments above. To the south of this building, separated by a driveway with a porte cochere drop-off area, would be a new hotel. The hotel would be located on the south side of Parcel 1C, adjacent to the Storrs Commons center. Hotel parking could be located beneath the hotel, which would be accessed from Royce Circle.

At the time the Storrs Center Special Design District was initially approved in 2007, the real estate market for a hotel in this area was not particularly strong. Although the concept that a hotel might be located within Storrs Center was described in the MDP, the Storrs Center Special Design District was approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission without specific mention of a hotel as an allowed use.

With the Storrs Center vision now coming to life in the form of new residences, restaurants, shops and public spaces, a hotel would be an excellent complement to what is taking shape. A hotel would further the MDP's goal "that the square becomes a primary destination in the region." A new hotel would create a lodging and hospitality option right in the heart of Storrs Center.

In terms of urban form and function, a hotel will fit very well with the buildings and uses in this part of Storrs Center. For example, the parking demands and traffic generation patterns for a hotel are very similar to the residential uses that the hotel would likely replace. No greater impacts from a hotel would be expected beyond what has already been planned for in Storrs Center. None of the other infrastructure components of Storrs Center, such as utilities, drainage, and water and sewer service, would need to be changed in any significant way to accommodate a hotel. It is not expected that the introduction of a hotel use would require any changes to the design guidelines that have been created for Storrs Center. In short, a hotel would fit seamlessly into the fabric of Storrs Center, both as it was originally planned and as it is now taking shape.

Following is a summary of how the proposed zoning text amendment relates to specific zoning-related issues:

*Traffic* – a hotel use will not have a materially different effect on traffic operations in the area as compared to a comparable number of residential units. SCA, through its consultant BL Companies, analyzed the amount of vehicular traffic that would be anticipated from a hotel as compared to residential uses. The analysis concluded that a 100 room hotel would have no perceptible impact on traffic operations as compared to 100 residential units (see attached report entitled "Storrs Center, Trip Generation

Comparison, Hotel versus Residential Use, Storrs Center Special Design District” prepared by BL Companies dated May 14, 2013).

*Parking and Circulation* – a hotel use will not have a materially different effect on parking and circulation as compared to the previously approved residential uses. SCA, through its consultant Desman Associates, analyzed the parking demand from a hotel as compared to residential uses in Storrs Center. The hotel parking demand is similar to, or less than, the parking demand anticipated from residential uses. In addition, the hotel could provide parking on site below the hotel, which would add to the parking supply in Storrs Center and therefore be an enhancement to parking and circulation (see attached letter report entitled “Storrs Center, Proposed Inclusion of Hotel, Analysis of Potential Impacts to Master Parking Study” prepared by Desman Associates dated January 29, 2013).

*Utilities* – a hotel use will not have a materially different effect on utilities as compared to residential uses. A full utilities plan was approved as part of the original SC-SDD zoning map amendment approved by the Commission. The hotel use does not introduce utility impacts different from the approved zoning map amendment.

*Stormwater* – a hotel use will not have a materially different effect on the stormwater management system as compared to residential uses. A comprehensive stormwater drainage system was approved as part of the zoning map amendment approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission. The hotel use does not introduce any different stormwater drainage impacts as compared to the impacts studied in the already approved zoning map amendment.

#### Information Requirements and Approval Considerations in Article XIII, Sections B, D

Zoning Regulations Article XIII, Section B sets forth certain requirements for information to be submitted in conjunction with any petition to amend the Zoning Regulations.

1. Compatibility of the proposal with respect to the Mansfield Plan of Conservation and Development: For all of the reasons set forth in this application, the applicant believes that the proposed zoning text amendment is consistent with the 2006 Mansfield Plan of Conservation and Development. In addition, the amendment is consistent with the MDP. The Partnership recently approved a minor modification of the MDP to clarify that a hotel is an allowed use in Storrs Center.
2. Reasons for the particular changes: The principal reason for the proposed zoning regulation amendment is to amend the text of Article Ten, Section S.4.a of the Regulations to add “hotels” as an allowed land use within the Storrs Center Special Design District.
3. Effects on the health, safety, welfare and property values of Mansfield residents: The proposed zoning text amendment will not significantly change

the essential character of Storrs Center, either as it was originally intended or as it is emerging during construction. The project will still include a wide mix of land uses, including residential, retail, restaurant and commercial uses. This complementary range of land uses will provide needed housing, shopping, services, and entertainment opportunities for all Mansfield residents. The project will continue to be pedestrian-friendly and encourage pedestrian movement both within and near the project. The addition of a hotel to the list of allowed land uses within Storrs Center will enable an appropriately designed hotel to be developed and bring with it new services and conveniences for residents and visitors to Storrs Center. Hotel guests would also be supportive of the restaurants and other retail businesses in and around Storrs Center.

Zoning Regulations Article XIII, Section D sets forth the following approval considerations for the Planning and Zoning Commission:

1. The proposal is complete and contains all required application information. The applicant believes that the application is complete and contains all of the information required by the Zoning Regulations relative to a zoning text amendment, including a signed application form, application fee, statement of use, and the specific text of the proposed amendment.
2. The proposal is consistent with the goals, policies and recommendations contained within the Mansfield Plan of Conservation and Development. For all of the reasons stated above, the applicant believes that the proposal is consistent with the Mansfield Plan of Conservation and Development. In particular, the proposed amendment is consistent with the following provision:

To strengthen and encourage an orderly and energy-efficient pattern of development with sustainable balance of housing, business, industry, agriculture, government and open space and a supportive infrastructure of utilities, roadways, walkways, and bikeways, and public transportation services.

  - Objective c: To encourage mixed use developments, such as the Storrs Center “Downtown” project, in areas with existing or potential sewer and public water.
3. The proposal is consistent with the expression of regulatory intent and purpose contained in Article I of these regulations and Section 8-2 of the Connecticut General Statutes. This zoning text amendment is consistent with the purpose contained in Article I of the Zoning Regulations, in that the proposal will enable a hotel to be developed within Storrs Center. The text amendment protects the health, safety, convenience and welfare of the residents of Mansfield, as described above.

4. Any proposal to amend the Zoning Regulations is: appropriately-worded and legally sound and comprehensive and consistent with respect to other regulatory provisions. This one word zoning text amendment is appropriately worded and legally sound. The existing SC-SDD zoning, in addition to all of the planning work that has been done by the Town, the Partnership, the University, and Storrs Center Alliance, indicate that this proposal will have a positive impact on the existing land uses in the surrounding area.