



City of Lowell - Planning Board

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 22, 2026, 6:30 p.m.
City Council Chambers, 2nd Floor, City Hall
City of Lowell, 375 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA
Remote Participation Optional via Zoom

Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For a recording of the meeting, visit www.ltc.org

Members Present

Chairman Linnehan
Vice Chair Frechette
Member Cheng
Member Tenczar
Member Walker
Associate Member Sar

Members Absent

Associate Member Cardoso Silva

Others Present

Peter Cutrumbes, Assistant Planner

A quorum of the Board was present. Chairman Linnehan called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

I. Minutes for Approval

1/5/2026

G. Frechette motioned to approve, C. Cheng seconded. Motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

II. Continued Business

Definitive Subdivision and Special Permit – 165 Nelson Avenue and 33-113 Adie Way, 01852

The Lowell Planning Board will hold a public hearing to hear all interested persons relative to an application by Residents First Development Corporation to amend the Definitive Subdivision and the Special Permit for the Planned Residential Development (PRD) known as “Rivers Edge”. The

amendments pertain to the area of the PRD at 165 Nelson Avenue and 33-113 Adie Way. The applicant seeks approval to create sixteen (16) additional lots within the PRD and increase the approved number of units from 181 to 187. The subject property is located in the Traditional Two-Family (TTF) zoning district. The project requires a revision to the Definitive Subdivision approval from the Planning Board under Lowell's Subdivision of Land Regulations and a Special Permit revision under Section 8.2 for PRDs from the Lowell Planning Board.

On Behalf:

None

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

T. Linnehan noted that the applicant has requested to withdraw without prejudice. The City of Lowell's Law Department has issued a decision that this project needs to be voted on by the City Council under the current zoning.

Motion:

T. Linnehan motioned to allow the applicant to withdraw without prejudice. Seconded by D. Tenczar. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

III. New Business

Site Plan Review - 463 and 281 Moody Street, 01854

The Lowell Planning Board will hold a public hearing to hear all interested persons relative to an application by New North Canal LLC to redevelop two sites located at 463 Moody Street and 281 Moody Street from 116 units of affordable housing into 160 units of new construction affordable housing. The subject properties are located in the Urban Neighborhood Multi-Family (UMF) zoning district. The proposed development at 463 Moody Street will be a four-story building containing 100 senior-restricted affordable units. The proposed development at 281 Moody Street will be a five-story building consisting of 60 units of affordable housing. The proposal requires Site Plan Review approval from the Planning Board for the creation of a residential development with more than 3 residential units.

On Behalf:

Attorney Catherine Flood, the applicant's lawyer. The properties currently consist of 116 units and are being developed into 160. The first phase would create 40 more affordable housing units. It would create additional green space, community programming space, and other amenities. The subject properties are in the UMF zoning district. 463 Moody Street has several buildings with affordable housing. It will be converted to a four-story building of 100-senior restricted affordable units. 281 Moody street currently has 41 affordable units and will be converted to 60 units with parking under the building. The project will assist with meeting state and City housing goals. They received a Variance for parking from the Zoning Board earlier this month. The project will also need to go to the Historic Board.

Maura, a consultant working with CBA on the redevelopment. Many of the residents of the existing units are here tonight in support. In June of 1989, residents, working with CBA, purchased the property to prevent it from being privately developed, a first in the county. Since this time, CBA has worked to maintain North Canal to the best of their abilities. The buildings were constructed in the 1960s and were not constructed with materials meant to stand the test of time. The residents and CBA leadership have worked together on how to solve this issue. The solution was a phased project that produces the units discussed above. This redevelopment directly aligns with state and city goals of providing affordable housing. This is revitalization without displacement.

Michelle Apigian, the architect for the project from Icon Architecture. Have been working with the residents for a number of years trying to figure out possible solutions for the project that kept the existing buildings. Due to their conditions and materials, it was determined that new construction was the best route. Site 1 (463 Moody Street) will have 100 units of senior housing and Site 2 (281 Moody Street) will have 60 units of affordable housing. Icon did research on the historical neighborhood of Little Canada in order to better understand the architecture, size, etc. of the buildings before they were razed during urban renewal. They found the canal-facing facades tended to be flat, clean, and simple. The street facing sides tended to have much more texture and dimension. There was generally distinction between the upper part of the building and the ground floor. They have designed the buildings similarly. Noted that the tree canopy along Father Morissette is robust. Maintaining these trees was accounted for in the placement of the buildings. Neighborhood analysis found the proposed building heights were consistent with the neighborhood. Site 1 will have a community building that is adjacent to the residential building. There will also be a larger open space on the southern side. Site 2 has the canal to the east. The L-shaped building opens up to the canal and allows for a courtyard open space. Access is only off of Moody Street. Traffic on Father Morissette needs to keep flowing, and Moody Street provides better access for emergency vehicles. There is a City park immediately adjacent to Site 1.

Brian Gaudreau from Hancock Associates, the Engineer for the project. Site 1 has a slight slope from Moody Street to Father Morissette Boulevard. The buildings have been set to be level with the street. There are not a lot of records for stormwater management. They have a general understanding that it flows out to the Merrimack. They have spoken to LRWWU about tying into the existing sewer system. They plan to create an underground infiltration system for the site and direct it to James Street, which has a separate sewer. Sanitary Sewer will be connected to Father Morissette and Water will go through Moody Street. They have created the horseshoe on the site to make the site easier to access for LFD. They have agreed to multiple traffic improvements in the TIA in the application package. Engineering suggested looking at the proposed curbcuts on Moody Street. They had concerns that they are not wide enough. Spoken with LRWWU and looked at water use history and do not exceed the maximum flow.

Terry Kinsley from Offshoots Productive Landscapes. The landscape architect. They are excited about the green space at Site 1. There is open space in the parking lot surrounded by parking on three sides, with the fourth side being the side walk. Shielding from parking via a mixture of a pollinator garden, trees, and native species. The ground level units will be shielded from cars by plantings. All the walks on site will be accessible. There will be a community garden, outdoor fitness area, and a dog park on the Aiken Street side. Some of the trees on the Father Morissette side are invasive species or are in poor health. The plan is to remove trees that cannot be saved but to also add significant tree canopy with native trees and plantings. They have trees that grow fast that they use closest to the street, and then slower growing trees like oaks further behind.

M. Apigian spoke about Site 2. This will be affordable units for families. There will be parking underneath the building. The site is more restricted than Site 1. The building will open towards Moody Street and will be bordered by the canal. It was important to connect the project to the canal. Cars will access parking via Moody Street. Have worked with LFD to ensure their access. Trash for both sites will be collected within the building.

B. Gaudreau discussed the engineering for Site 2. The design is more compact because the site is smaller. The property slopes roughly from the canal towards the opposite side of the property. The size of the curbcut on Moody Street allows LFD to access the corner of the L more easily. The stormwater approach is essentially the same as Site 1, except the tie in is on Moody Street and not James Street. They are bringing this site completely into compliance.

T. Kinsley discussed the landscaping for Site 2. Wanted to bring a softer feel with the landscaping along the canal. There is a large lawn space large enough to host small sports games. There is a playground adjacent to it. The walking paths will be connected to the canal walkway. All plantings are native. Preserving as many trees as possible. The curbcut has been placed to not disturb plantings.

M. Apigian discussed the elevations and design of the project. Site 1 is all connected, but the texture and colors split it into three segments that mimics the variety of historic facades. The facade on the south is the canal facade. This is much more flat and is similar to the mill nearby. The first floor on this site is articulated with masonry to reflect on Lowell's history with brick structures. There are some areas, like where the laundry rooms are, that will provide a pop of color or indentation to mix-up the facade. M showed mock-ups of the various angles of the building. They are focused on quality buildings for the residents that they have not been able to have. The buildings will be high quality, efficient, and sustainable. It is an all electric building.

C. Flood stated that the applicant put a significant amount of thought into the project before filing. They have worked diligently with the City and their residents.

Speaking in Favor:

C. Flood provided a list of supporters of the projects.

Jaime Alcantaro spoke in support. He lives at 166 Father Morisette. President of the North Canal Tenant's Council and a board member of CBA. CBA and the property manager, Maloney, have worked with the tenants closely. The residents are happy that Maloney, who manages the North Canal. The buildings are in poor shape, unhealthful, etc. The tenant council has met with CBA and the project team several times. They very much favor the new design. On behalf of the tenants, he supports the project that has been presented tonight.

T. Linnehan noted that 21 people expressed that they were in favor via a show of hands.

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

G. Frechette stated he is impressed by the amount of care put into the project, in particular the interest in the historical design of the previous neighborhood. He also was impressed by the amount of work

they did with the residents. He asked about the construction timeline to limit disruption to the residents. C. Flood said within 5 years. There is a re-location plan for all residents in the application packet. They will move them back in as phases of construction are completed. G. Frechette asked about safety and fencing along the canal. T. Kinsley said there will be fencing along the canal edge. They have not fully designed. G. Frechette said he has the impression that work will be thorough. He has read the traffic report and noted the high quality of work done by Vannasse. Asked if they are incorporating all the elements of the TIA, such as: will there be a transportation coordinator? C. Flood said the ZBA decision conditions the Traffic Engineer's comments. G. Frechette said the ZBA conditions were more related to the off-site issues on the public ROW. He is looking for a transportation management plan. Who is going to be designated to help residents become aware of public transit options, biking, etc? Maura said this can be included in the residents welcome packets. The property manager will also have an office on site. G. Frechette said one of the suggestions was a central mail room. Maura said there is one already designated. G. Frechette asked if there will be provisions for bike racks at either building. M. Apigian said there will be bike racks at the senior site for visitors and at the family building there will be private bike storage. Likely in the garage but not fully fleshed out yet. G. Frechette said he would be looking to condition this. He likes the facade and that it will feel less imposing at street level. He asked about snow storage. T. Kinsley said the edges of the central green will be where snow is stored. The plantings will be hardy enough that they can withstand this. G. Frechette asked if there is curbing around the open space, and asked how this would work with a plow. T. Kinsley said they can plow up and over. Dan Rivera, the director of CBA, noted that the property manager Maloney has been working with them for many years. They are very amenable to conditions regarding this. G. Frechette said part of his concerns are the walkways with snow as well. They need to remain accessible. D. Rivera additionally commented that state law requires them to hire a consultant for resident relocation. The moving services are all free. There are about 95 senior residents across all the properties right now. They have also been invited to a state funding program that would allow them to break ground in 2028.

C. Cheng said he is very impressed with the plan and the community engagement. He fully concurs with G. Frechette. He asked about some of the sustainability features. M. Apigian said the state has stringent requirements for energy efficiency in the building code for new construction. Haven't chosen exact path. May use an enclosure for extra insulation on the building. Will use extra insulation on the roof. Ensuring they can use all electric HVAC and water. They are looking at potentially using geothermal energy and it is looking promising. They will also be solar ready for certain.

L. Walker said most of her questions have been answered. She grew up in the Acre and deeply appreciates the amount of greenspace. She applauded the creation of new units for seniors and families of all sizes. She is in support.

T. Sar favors the projects. He asked how many bedrooms are in the units. D. Rivera said Phase 1, the senior housing is one bedrooms. Phase 2 will be multiple units.

T. Linnehan expressed support for the project. City staff comments have been addressed. Board did its due diligence on parking and is happy the applicant is amenable to the Transportation Engineer's comments. Appreciative of G. Frechette's comments regarding a Transportation Plan. This will be a great improvement to what is there.

Motion:

G. Frechette motioned to approve the Site Plan with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall provide a Transportation Demand Management plan. The elements of said plan will identify a Transportation Coordinator and provide transportation information such as maps and schedules.
2. The plan will be provided to tenants as part of a welcome package
3. The applicant will provide bicycle parking within the site and the building
4. The applicant shall design a buffer zone or walkway between the site and the canals in order to account for public safety
5. The applicant shall ensure snow storage will not impede sight lines for vehicles entering and exiting the site or pedestrian access to walkways
6. The applicant will continue to work with the City Engineer and LRWWU on finalizing the stormwater plan.

The motion was seconded by D. Tenczar. and passed unanimously, (5-0).

Site Plan Review – 104 Mariposa Ave, 01851

The Lowell Planning Board will hold a public hearing to hear all interested persons relative to an application by Soklark Hong to split the existing lot and construct a new single-family home at 104 Mariposa Avenue. The subject property is located in the Suburban Single-Family (SSF) zoning district. The project requires Definitive Subdivision approval from the Planning Board under Lowell's Subdivision of Land Regulations.

On Behalf:

Catherine Flood, the applicant's attorney. The applicant is seeking Definitive Subdivision approval., The property is located in the SSF district. The lot is currently 17,000 square feet and the site of a single-family home. The project received Variance approval to split the lot into roughly 10,000 and 7,000 square foot lots. The newly created lot would be the site of a newly constructed single family home. The plan has been revised after receiving comments from LRWWU and the Engineering Department. Both departments have stated that their issues in the comments are addressed. C. Flood provided signatures from 10 of the direct abutters out of 13.

Matt Hamor, the applicant's engineer. He discussed the proposed site plan that would split the lot in two. The new home would have a driveway and a garage under. There were questions regarding sewer connections, but they have met with the Engineering Department and were approved.

Speaking in Favor:

T. Linnehan read a letter of support for the subdivision into the record.

Speaking in Opposition:

Alisha Payette at 84 Mariposa Ave. Directly next door to the property. Attended the ZBA and spoke opposed. Has two questions. Asked if they really met the Variance requirement of hardship. Acknowledges that the lot size is roughly similar to existing lots, but believes that the current zoning lot sizes were passed for a reason. Additionally, the owner of the property moved their house across the lot to be closer to their house in order to make this new lot is even possible. T. Linnehan explained that this all fell before the ZBA. They can only vote based on the subdivision rules.

Discussion:

G. Frechette said that Variance relief has been granted and that is not what is before them. In regard to subdivision regulations, it appears the comments provided by staff have been addressed. No questions.

C. Cheng asked about the relationship between the applicant and the current owner. C. Flood said the current owner, Jose Negrón, wrote the letter of support. The other lot would be sold to the applicant. The new home is compliant with zoning.

D. Tenczar said he was appreciative of the neighborhood GIS exhibit. He asked about the large tree on the right side of the property. Will it be taken down? M. Hamor said the tree is staying because it is technically in the City ROW. D. Tenczar asked about the tree on the plan. M. Hamor said they are planting it further back in the property or moving their tree. They are amenable to adding more trees.

L. Walker, T. Sar, and T. Linnehan had no questions.

C. Cheng asked if there will be any proposed fencings. M. Hamor said no. Intending to leave rear vegetated.

Motion:

G. Frechette motioned to approve the definitive subdivision with the following conditions.

1. The proposed new tree on the right side of the newly created lot is moved to the opposite of the lot on the plan along Mariposa Ave.
2. An additional tree will be placed on the original lot after the previous driveway is eliminated. The applicant will work with DPD regarding the final species and size.

Seconded by T. Sar. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

I. Other Business

II. Further Comments from Planning Board Members

G. Frechette noted that last night was the board meeting for NMCOG. Part 1 of the At Home in Greater Lowell plan was presented to the board. Plan looks at the 9 NMCOG communities and discusses how the housing shortage can be addressed regionally. Recommends people read the plan. Recognizes towns do not want to change their character, but that there can be a solution that satisfies all parties. Plan also addresses homelessness on a regional level. Encourages everyone to read the plan. D. Tenczar noted that this change in attitudes can take time.

G. Frechette said the Rourke Bridge project has started vegetation and brush removal. Heavy equipment is moving in.

D. Tenczar noted that the CPC is meeting next Thursday and will vote on what projects will fund for the year.

III. Adjournment

D. Tenczar motioned to adjourn. C. Cheng seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:51 PM.