

6.13 HISTORIC/INSTITUTIONAL ADAPTIVE REUSE

A. Purpose

The purpose of this regulation is to allow for the reuse or redevelopment of municipal, state or institution owned buildings to meet the changing needs of technology, the local economy, and shifting demographics. As technology, demographics and the local economy change public and institutional buildings become functionally obsolete, yet the structure continues to be important to the fabric of a neighborhood. This regulation will allow a significant building to remain by allowing uses that may not be allowed by the existing zoning.

This regulation is intended to:

1. Allow the reuse or redevelopment of buildings owned or most recently owned by the City or Town of Groton, the State of Connecticut or an Institution to a use that may not be allowed by the existing zoning; and
2. Allow flexible and innovative uses in order to promote development and preserve historically significant buildings that may be functionally obsolete; and
3. Ensure that the new use is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

B. Pre-requisite

In order to utilize this provision, the applicant must demonstrate that:

1. The subject building is or has most recently been owned by the City or Town of Groton, the State of Connecticut or an Institution as defined in Section 2.2; and
2. The building proposed for reuse is structurally capable of being redeveloped for the proposed use; and
3. The building proposed for reuse contributes to the fabric of the neighborhood and community.

C. Principal Uses Permitted by Special Permit & Site Plan Approval

Any residential, office, commercial, cultural, educational, community service or combination of such uses which is consistent with the purpose of this regulation and which is not detrimental to the character of the neighborhood in which the use is located as determined by the Planning and Zoning Commission. The burden of proof for determining compatibility of uses in a neighborhood shall be upon the applicant.

In addition to the uses allowed by the subject property's zoning district the following uses are generally considered compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, subject to any conditions the Planning and Zoning Commission may impose:

Residential Zoning Districts

- a. Multiple Family Dwelling provided the open space requirements of Section 6.1.8 a, c, d, f and g are met or an equivalent public open space area is located within 1,000 feet of the property.
- b. Retail Business of less than 8,000 square feet
- c. Restaurant or Eating Facility of less than 6,000 square feet provided outdoor seating is not allowed
- d. Business Services and Professional Offices provided drive through facilities and ATMs are not allowed.
- e. Artist Studios and Galleries
- f. Personal Service Establishments
- g. Specialized Classrooms
- h. Community Residential Counseling Facilities and Rooming or Boarding Houses are not considered compatible with the surrounding neighborhood in residential zoning districts.

Business & Industrial Zoning Districts

- a. Multiple Family Dwelling provided the open space requirements of Section 6.1.8 a, c, d, f and g are met or an equivalent public open space area is located within 1,000 feet of the property.
- b. Specialized Classrooms
 - No minimum lot size is required in order to utilize this historic/adaptive reuse section of the Regulations.

D. Design Standards

1. The Dimensional Standards for the existing zone shall be used for the proposed use. If the dimensional standards are not clear for the existing zone comparable standards for such proposed use may be used. The Commission may increase the residential density up to twenty percent above what is allowed by the existing zoning if it finds that the increased density is compatible with the neighborhood, the building size is appropriate for such density, and that there are adequate public utilities to accommodate the additional density.
2. Nothing in these regulations shall be deemed to prevent additions and new structures on the site as allowed by the Planning and Zoning Commission.
3. Nothing in these regulations shall be deemed to require conformance with yard or height regulations where no enlargement, extension, or alteration of the existing building is planned that increases the degree of non-conformity; however, new building or site construction shall conform to the Dimensional Standards of the existing zone.
4. The existing historic or institutional building(s) must be preserved as part of the reuse. Minor alterations or demolitions may be allowed if the Commission finds that the alteration or demolition does not significantly impact the existing building's contribution to the neighborhood or that the building(s) is structurally unsound. No more than 30 percent of the building(s) can be demolished unless the Commission finds that the building(s) to be demolished does not contribute to the historic context of the remaining building or site.

5. The Commission may allow a more flexible use than allowed by the existing zoning if it determines that the existing character of the building will not be substantially changed, that the building is appropriate for the proposed re-use and that the proposed re-use is similar in intensity to the previous use.
6. All applicable State and/or local licensing and permit requirements/standards shall be met.
7. Off Street parking and/or loading requirements shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of Sections 7.1, as needed. The parking space requirements for a use not specifically listed shall be determined by the Commission based on demand generation for a listed use of similar characteristics.
8. Any increase in density as part of the reuse shall adequately address off-site impacts, possibly through improvements that may be required such as roadway and drainage improvements to the access or frontage roadway.
9. A buffer strip shall be provided within the boundaries of the lot if the proposed use is more intense than those allowed by the existing zone.
 1. The width of the buffer strip shall be at least as follows:
 - Residential Districts: 25 feet
 - Commercial Districts: 15 feet
 - Industrial Districts: 10 feet
 2. The buffer shall shield the neighboring properties from noise, headlight glare, and visual intrusion and shall provide complete visual screening.
 3. The Commission may, by Special Permit, reduce or eliminate the width requirement of the buffer strip where:
 - i. Existing topography, landscaping, and/or other features provide an adequate buffer and screening; or
 - ii. Lot size and shape or existing structures make it infeasible to comply with the minimum widths required above, provided screening (planting, fences, berms, etc.) or other methods are utilized to ensure the buffer area meets the intent of the Regulations; or
 - iii. The architectural features of the site are deemed visually important to the neighborhood and the Commission determines that all or some of the property should be left open to be seen.

E. Decision Considerations

In evaluating the appropriateness of the proposed new use, the Planning and Zoning Commission, shall consider the following:

1. The historic use of the site
2. The preservation of all or a portion of the historic building(s)
3. The structural integrity of the building(s)
4. The character and density of the surrounding area
5. The topography of the site
6. The bulk of the buildings existing on the site and the impact of the proposed alterations on the surrounding neighborhood
7. Noise and lighting impacts of the proposed use on the surrounding properties

8. The impact of traffic from the proposed use on the surrounding neighborhood and the ability of the access roads to adequately handle the proposed traffic from the proposed use
9. The extent of the benefit to the welfare of the community to be derived by preserving the existing aesthetic appearance of the site.
10. The adequacy of the water supply, sewage disposal, stormwater management and other utility systems
11. The surrounding zoning as it relates to the proposed uses(s)
12. The allowed and prohibited uses as recommended by the Plan of Conservation and Development
13. The consideration of the bulk of the building(s) as it relates to the surrounding buildings