

The Herald News

Former Fall River Catholic school to be rehabbed into 68 apartments: What to know



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Published 4:04 a.m. ET Dec. 24, 2024 | Updated 4:04 a.m. ET Dec. 24, 2024



FALL RIVER — The [Zoning Board of Appeals](#) on Thursday night unanimously approved the conversion of the historic structure on 37 Park St. — once the former home of [Atlantis Charter School](#) and the [Dominican Academy](#) — into 68 new market-rate apartments.

The \$17 million rehabilitation will makeover the 19th century building, originally used as convent, into 25 studio apartments, 25 one-bedroom apartments, and 18 two-bedroom units with 75 spaces of “plentiful” off-street parking next door to [Saint Anne’s Shrine](#).

Attorney Peter Saulino, who represents 37 Park Street Partners LLC., the [project’s](#) developers, reminded the board of [previous plans to rehab the space into medical and professional offices in August 2022](#). Due to the “failure” of [Steward Health Care](#), he said, “that deal fell apart, and as a result, my client was left with a vacant and dilapidated building.”

The petition before the board sought a variance to convert the pre-existing, non-conforming structure and in turn waive the dimensional requirements of lots 28 and 29. The property falls within the A-2 city district already zoned for apartments. Developers are hoping to shrink the number of parking spaces from 137 to 75.



37 Park St. Fall River *Colin Furze*

“We think it’s a great project for the city,” Saulino said.

Zoning Board Chairman Joseph Pereira inquired about locating nearby property for additional parking, to which Saulino contended that “it’s a tight neighborhood,” but Director of Engineering and Planning Daniel Aguiar warned of “too much parking.”

Who is the new housing geared toward?

The build is hoping to attract young professionals and medical employees of Saint Anne’s Hospital.

“I think it’s a great way to save this building,” Aguiar said, mentioning that keeping tenants is a 24-hour business, which should mitigate traffic congestion by leveling peak hours of busyness to more moderate comings and goings, even if Mass is in session, or in the chance of a funeral.

“We had multiple mill renovation projects where we’ve granted this kind of relief for parking. ... [King Philip Mill](#) just recently opened,” Aguiar said, sharing that each time he asks [mill rehabilitation developers](#) whether they run up against parking or infrastructure challenges, “they say they have ample parking for the types of tenants that they’re bringing into these buildings.”

“I expect it’ll be a similar market for this building,” he added.

What will the project do for the St. Anne's neighborhood?

Ken Fiola, the executive vice president of [Bristol County Economic Development Consultants](#), spoke in favor of the project, commenting that “the building itself needs to be tended to, as it’s falling into continuous disrepair. It’s a beautiful building in need of ... reutilization.”

He mentioned that the residential use of the building will be “a nice complement” to the neighborhood, and the project’s price tag will likely enhance surrounding property values.

Resident James Harrington of 48 Park St. lives across from what used to be the Dominican Academy and shared that he’d “like to see something done with” the roughly 59,000-square foot building that “continues to deteriorate.” He said the historic building should see new life, considering the shortage of housing in the city.

Harrington offered the idea of a raised parking platform to alleviate parking woes. In answer, Aguiar said that developers could increase parking if need be.