

## APPLICATION COVER LETTER

April 24, 2021

Mr. Steven Kleppin, AICP  
Director of Planning  
Planning and Zoning Department  
City of Norwalk  
125 East Avenue  
P.O. Box 5125  
Norwalk, Connecticut 06856-5125

**Re: Proposed Zoning Amendment for Industrial No. 1 Zone and Applications for Site Plan Approval and Coastal Site Plan Review for a Trade/Vocational School (Workforce Training Center) Use at property located at 25 Van Zant Street, East Norwalk in the Industrial No. 1 Zone (the “Site”).**

Dear Mr. Kleppin:

25 Van Zant Street Condominium is the owner of the above referenced Site. On behalf of the owner, we respectfully submit herewith to the City of Norwalk Zoning Commission an Application for a Zoning Regulation Amendment, and Applications for Site Plan and Coastal Site Plan Review approval to allow: a) “Colleges, universities and schools, including business and trade/vocational schools, and studios” as a permitted principal use in the Industrial No. 1 Zone, and b) the establishment of a workforce training center of up to 150,000 square feet in the existing historic industrial building at the Site under the above-referenced “Colleges” etc. use.

The following information is submitted in support of the referenced Applications.

The Site as shown on the current, submitted, survey is 4.782 acres (208,334 square feet) in size. It is improved with a 4 story (front) and 5-story building (rear), constructed in 1923. The gross floor area of the building is 225,450 square feet. Only 217,530 square feet is rentable area. This excludes building hallways. The building height and FAR pre-exist the adoption of zoning regulations by the City, and exceed that presently allowed under the Zoning Regulations for new structures. However, these improvements are considered in conformance with Industrial No. 1 regulations under §118.700.C(4) and (6).

### Site History.

The Site has continuously supported industrial and commercial uses for almost 100 years. The existing building was constructed in 1923 and was used for manufacturing by the Crofut & Knapp Hat Factory. Subsequently it was further used for industrial manufacturing by the Hat Corporation of America. The products that were created at this location were distributed both nationally and internationally.

Over the years, the subject, historic building has been used for a wide variety of industrial and other uses. After the hat manufacturing operation ceased, the building at various times has housed as many as 30 different commercial and industrial businesses within its confines.

Today, the established multiple uses continue to operate within the building with a variety of uses established and operating well. Below is a post card photo of the building from the Van Zant Street side taken in the 1920's. While much improved today, the building is essentially the same size and height as when it was constructed in 1923. Currently many energy saving and aesthetic improvements are being installed in and on the building, with no change in building size.

This photo below was taken at the time the building was first constructed and used by the Crofut & Knapp Hat Factory.



### Proposed Use.

The owner of the Site is requesting the City approve the submitted proposed Regulation Amendment to add “Colleges, universities and schools, including business and trade/vocational schools, and studios” as a permitted principal use in the Industrial No. 1 Zone. This is in keeping with not only the history of the building, but also is consistent with the City’s overarching Master Plan objectives for economic and employment growth and opportunity for the residents and businesses of Norwalk and its status in the region. This proposed additional use which is the subject of the zoning text amendment is that of a trade (vocational) school would allow the owner to establish, subject to Site Plan approval, a **workforce training center** at the Site. This use will not only support the City’s master planning objectives, it will also allow the historic use of the building to continue, and will also fit seamlessly with the other present uses in the building.

In addition, the proposed use at this site is also in close parallel with the Governor’s Workforce Council and the Workforce Strategic Plan of 2020. Many of

the specific areas of need cited in this report would be able to be directly addressed for this area by the implementation of this use at this existing site.

Specific details of the proposed use are included in the Applications submitted herewith. Parking and traffic considerations are addressed in the accompanying current traffic and parking report dated April 12, 2021, prepared by Fuss & O'Neill for the site, its uses and the proposed workforce training center use. This report carefully evaluates existing and projected traffic volumes and specific parking factors of supply and demand for the current and proposed use of the building, and takes into account the Site's close proximity to multi-modal transit opportunities including the East Norwalk Train Station, local bus service, etc.

The fact is that the building is so well located for the intended use for tenants and future trade and vocational students to conveniently use the nearby existing train station and other existing multi-modal transit facilities. Details of these transportation alternatives are found in the submitted traffic and parking report and will also be addressed by our traffic engineer at the Zoning Commission's public hearing.

It is also important to note that close observation of the on-site parking capacity has been monitored frequently by the building owner for the building's existing, mixed uses. The existing parking area has proven more than adequate. The traffic and parking report includes a professional analysis of existing parking supply and demand, and the capacity for the existing on-site parking facilities to accommodate the proposed workforce training center school use.

Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for Article 10. Definitions, and Article 70. Use Regulations Controlling Industrial Zones §118-700. Industrial Zone No. 1. are described in the attached material.

In order for a vocational/trade school use to be established at the Site, the Zoning Regulations must be amended to allow “Colleges, universities and schools, including business and trade/vocational schools, and studios” as a permitted principal use in the Industrial No. 1 Zone, as well as a formal definition of a

“Vocational/Trade (Workforce Training Center) School” use. The proposed amendments are set forth in the attached Regulation Amendment Application.

We look forward to presenting 25 Van Zant’s Applications for a Regulation Amendment, Site Plan and Coastal Site Plan Review at the next available public meeting and public hearing of the Zoning Commission. Should you or your staff have any questions in the interim, please feel free to have them contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

**Hiram W. Peck III**

Hiram Peck, AICP, CFM  
Plan Three LLC