



## City of Auburn, Maine

Office of Planning & Permitting

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I

To: Auburn Planning Board  
From: Katherine Cook, Planning Coordinator  
Re: PAL Center Development Review Report  
Date: January 9, 2024

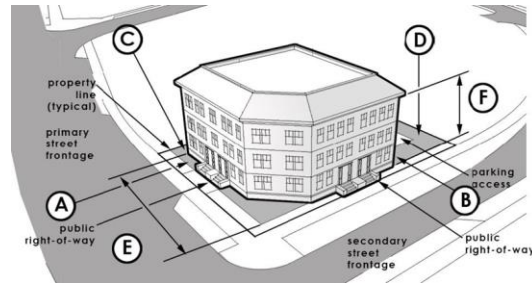
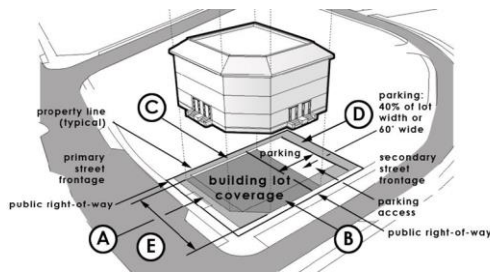
**I. Proposal: Public Hearing/ Site Plan Review:** The City of Auburn is applying to replace the existing Police Activities League (PAL) Center located at 24 Chestnut Street, City Assessor's Parcel I.D. 250-334. The proposal includes the demolition of the existing PAL Center (approximately 4,896 sq. ft.) to replace it with a 14,651 sq. ft. single-story facility with a basketball court, teen room, multipurpose, meeting, and storage rooms, bathrooms and showers, and a commercial kitchen. Site work will also include utility improvements, transportation, and pedestrian improvements along Chestnut St. to Winter St. and Walnut St., a playground, parking lot, and community gardens. This proposal is pursuant to Chapter 60, Article XVI, Division 2 – Site Plan Review and Division 14 – Form-Based Code.



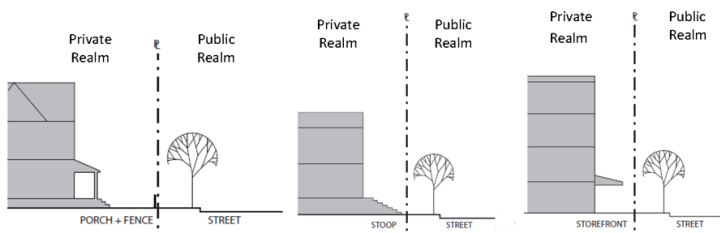
**II. Background:** The parcel falls mostly in the conservation/open space zoning district, and partly in the T-4.2 zoning district, both in the form-based code. There are no listed permitted, permitted with Special Exception, or prohibited uses listed in the C/OS form-based code zoning district. Sec. 60-553 states “the conservation /open space district so reserved for natural resource and compatible open space uses such as agriculture and forestry, low-intensity recreation, facilities that provide water access and similar low impact uses. Uses that involve significant development or impervious surfaces should not be allowed in this district. Uses such as utility lines and roads may be in the district

if there is no practical alternative.” There are multiple ways that the new PAL center can be reviewed and approved. The applicant suggests that the proposal be categorized as “adaptive reuse of structures of community significance” This project can also be reviewed as a “municipal use” which is allowed in all districts. Like the Senior Community Center located at 48 Pettingill Park also located in the C/OS district, the use in Auburn’s the use as a community recreational facility is allowed. The reconstruction of the PAL Center will not change the existing use or conformance. Though not explicitly named in the C/OS district, municipal uses provided for community recreation are allowed in the district though precedent. Finally, because of the lack of dimensional standards in the C/OS district staff suggest that this project be reviewed under the T-4.2 zoning district because part of the project area and all adjacent area is in the T-4.2 Form-Based Code zone. The project characteristics are listed below in comparison to the T-4.2 District Regulations. The applicant requests four waivers detailed below. The position of this structure in the middle of a park between two dead-end streets with access on all sides allows this structure to have more than one possible primary frontage. Both frontage scenarios have been considered in this review.

## Sec. 60-549.1. Building placement and configuration T-4.2.



PRINCIPAL BUILDING PLACEMENT:			
Front Setback, Principal:	5 ft. Min/, 15 ft. Max	(A)	7 feet - Meets requirement in both possible front facades.
(Corner Lot) Front Setback, Secondary:	5 ft. Min., 15 ft. Max.	(B)	6 feet - Meets requirement.
Side Setback:	5 ft. Min.	(C)	Meets requirement
Rear Setback:	10 ft. Min.	(D)	Meets requirement
Building Lot Coverage:	70% Max.		4.9% - Meets requirement
Useable Open Space:	10% Min.		Meets requirement.
Frontage Build-Out:	60% Min (along Front Setback, Primary)		66%, - Meets requirement along parking area.
Lot Width:	24 ft. Min, 120 ft. Max.		N/A - Preexisting lot.
PRINCIPAL BUILDING CONFIGURATION:			
Building Width:	14 ft. Min., 110 ft. Max.	(E)	165 feet- Does not meet requirement if parking is along the frontage. See Waiver Request #1. If former Chestnut Street is considered as the frontage, then the building does meet the requirement.
Building Height Minimum:	1 Story Min.	(F)	1 story, meets requirement
Building Height Maximum:	3 Story Max.	(F) (excluding attic story)	1 story, meets requirement



<b>BUILDING FRONTAGE TYPES:</b>	Common Yard; Porch Yard, Stoop and Storefront	
<b>BUILDING ENTRIES:</b>	Primary entry door is encouraged along ground story facade facing a primary street.	Meets requirement for two possible front facades.
<b>BUILDING ENVELOPE ARTICULATION:</b>		
Ground Story Building Frontage Facade:	<u>Residential</u> - Windows and doors shall comprise a minimum of 25% and maximum 60% coverage of the total ground story frontage facade. Commercial - Windows and doors shall comprise a minimum of 40% and maximum of 90% coverage of the total ground story frontage facade.	17% front façade if parking area considered frontage, 20% front façade if Chestnut Street sidewalk is considered frontage- does not meet requirement. See Waiver Request #3

Upper Story Building Frontage Facade:	Windows and doors shall comprise a minimum of 20% and maximum 40% coverage of the total upper story building frontage facade.	N/A
Ground Story Finished Floor Elevation:	<u>Residential</u> - The ground story elevation must be a minimum of 2 feet minimum and 6 feet maximum above the front yard elevation (average grade). Commercial - The ground story elevation must be at a minimum of sidewalk grade to maximum of 2 feet.	Meets requirement
Frontage Facade Wall:	Blank lengths of wall exceeding 10 linear feet are prohibited.	Does not meet requirement. See waiver request. See Waiver Request #2

Front Yard Fence:	<u>Residential</u> - A front yard fence a minimum of 2 feet and a maximum of 4 feet in height is encouraged to maintain spatial edge of street. No chain link, vinyl, split rail, or barbed wire is allowed	N/A
Front Yard Fence/Wall Opening:	A vehicle entry way, as part of a front fence/wall, shall be a maximum width of 20 feet; a pedestrian entry way shall be a maximum width of 6 feet.	Meets requirement
Building Projections:	No part of any building, except overhanging eaves, awnings, balconies, bay windows, stoops and other architectural features shall encroach beyond the minimum front setback line.	Meets requirement
Porch & Stoop Encroachments:	Porches & Stoops may encroach upon the minimum front setback line by the following distances: Front Setback, Principal Frontage 5 ft. maximum. Front Setback, Secondary Frontage 5 ft. maximum.	Meets requirement
Garages:	Detached garages shall be located a minimum of 20 feet from any street right-of-way.	N/A
Driveways:	Driveways are encouraged to be on the secondary street frontage. Driveways shall be paved and a minimum of 8 feet wide and a maximum of 20 feet wide.	N/A
Parking:	<u>Residential</u> - Vehicle parking areas shall be located only on driveways or designated parking areas and shall not extend into the street right-of-way or sidewalk. Commercial - Parking shall be located to rear of the property to the greatest extent possible. Parking on a side yard is limited to no more than 60 feet wide or 40% of the lot width. Screening and/or street wall is required for parking areas along a street.	This building has two possible frontages. If parking is considered the side yard, this project meets the requirement.
Accessory Structures:	Accessory structures shall be located a minimum of 20 feet from any street right-of-way and 5 feet from either side or rear property line.	Meets requirement
Landscaping:	Landscaping is encouraged but shall not extend into any street right-of-way or sidewalk. Street trees are encouraged.	Meets requirement
Foundation Planting:	Foundation plantings are encouraged but should be pruned and maintained with enough clearance from the building facade to encourage air circulation.	Meets requirement

**III. Waiver Requests:** Waiver requests were requested by Woodard and Curran in the December 27<sup>th</sup> letter, Pal Center Development Review Waiver Requests submitted by Caitlin Glass, Project manager.

1. The applicant is requesting a waiver from the provision of **Sec. 60-549.1**-Building placement and configuration which states that building width shall be 14 feet minimum to 110 feet maximum. The building width is proposed as 165 feet Site constraints including the existing soccer field, the two parking areas to the north and south of the site, proximity to utilities, and a full-size gym with a court. This building is proposed to be a single story to reduce construction cost. Staff supports this waiver request and notes that if primary frontage is considered to be along the Chestnut Street sidewalk, then the proposal does meet this requirement at approximately 98 feet.
2. The applicant is requesting a waiver from the provision of **Sec. 60-549.1**- Building placement and configuration which states that blank lengths of wall exceeding 10 linear feet are prohibited. The structure, particularly in the gym, is consistent with this type of facility that boasts low window to wall

ratio. This design decision is also more cost-effective and energy-efficient. Staff supports this waiver request.

3. The applicant is requesting a waiver from the provision in **Sec. 60-549.1**- Building placement and configuration which states that windows and doors shall comprise a minimum of 40% and a maximum of 90% of ground story façade. The applicant has proposed approximately 17% window coverage of the ground façade along the frontage for the reasons listed in waiver request #2, that the higher wall ratio represents cost savings so windows will be used more sparsely in secondary spaces like storage areas. The design of gymnasiums also typically does not have many windows because of the high cost of keeping the temperature regulated, the glare of the windows for athletes, and the risk of glass shattering due to something hitting the window during a game or practice. The staff supports this waiver request.
4. The applicant requests a waiver from **Sec. 60-607(12)**- Off-street parking and loading which states that all uses containing over five parking spaces shall be surfaced with solid paving material. The applicant is requesting this waiver because the proposed gravel spaces will be a continuation of where the spaces are located currently and are used as secondary spaces seasonally. The primary spaces will be between Chestnut Street and Walnut Street. These spaces are paved, striped, and meet the standards within Sec. 60-607(12).

#### **IV. Department Review:**

- **Police** - no comments
- **Auburn Water and Sewer** – no comments
- **Fire Department**– no comments
- **Engineering** – no comments
- **Planning, Permitting and Code**—All comments have been satisfactorily addressed. Staff had originally commented that if the parking spots are to remain unpaved, the applicant should request a waiver for the parking standard. If they do not request a waiver, they will need to pave the spaces. The applicant responded that the six gravel spaces proposed at the rear of the site are intended to be used as seasonal parking, and as such, is requesting a waiver from the planning board to the requirements of Sec. 60-607 of the Code of ordinances. Staff notes that the waiver is only needed for Sec. 60-607 (12), or requiring that six or more parking spaces be paved. All other off-street parking and loading general provisions and design standards have been met, and Sec. 60-607(12) has also been met for the primary parking area.

#### **V. Planning Board Suggested Action and Findings of Fact:** Staff recommends that the planning board approve construction of the new PAL Center and waive the requirements of Sec. 60-549.1 Building placement and configuration applying to the building width, maximum blank lengths of wall, ground story front façade window to-wall percentage, and Sec. 60-607(12)- Off-street parking and loading requiring that five or more parking spaces must be paved. The motion may be supported with the following findings:

The project has met the requirements of Chapter 60, Article XVI, Division 2, including:

1. Protection of adjacent areas against detrimental or offensive uses on the site by provision of adequate surface water drainage, buffers against artificial and reflected light, sight, sound, dust, and vibration; and preservation of light and air;
2. Convenience and safety of vehicular and pedestrian movement within the site and in relation to adjacent areas;
3. Adequacy of the methods of disposal for wastes; and
4. Protection of environment features on the site and in adjacent areas.

The PAL Center has also met the requirements of Chapter 60, Article XVI Division 3- Special Exception have been met by the applicant, including:

1. That the special exception sought fulfills the specific requirements set forth in the zoning ordinance relative to such exception.
2. That the special exception sought will neither create nor aggravate a traffic hazard, a fire hazard, or any other safety hazard.
3. That the special exception sought will not block or hamper the master development plan pattern of highway circulation or of planned major public or semipublic land acquisition.
4. That the exception sought will not alter the essential characteristics of the neighborhood and will not tend to depreciate the value of property adjoining and neighboring the property under application.
5. That reasonable provisions have been made for adequate land space, lot width, lot area, stormwater management in accordance with section 60-1301(14), green space, driveway layout, road access, off-street parking, landscaping, building separation, sewage disposal, water supply, fire safety, and where applicable, a plan or contract for perpetual maintenance of all the common green space and clustered off-street parking areas to ensure all such areas will be maintained in a satisfactory manner.
6. That the standards imposed are, in all cases, at least as stringent as those elsewhere imposed by the city building code and by the provisions of this chapter.
7. That essential city services which will be required for the project are presently available or can be made available without disrupting the city's master development plan.

**VI. Suggested Motion:** I make a motion to waive the requirements of Sec. 60-549.1 Building placement and configuration relating to the building width, maximum blank lengths of wall, ground story front façade window to-wall percentage, and Sec. 60-607(12)- Off-street parking and loading requiring that five or more parking spaces must be paved and approve the construction of the Police Activities League (PAL) Center located at 24 Chestnut Street, City Assessor's Parcel I.D. 250-334, which includes the demolition of the existing PAL Center (approximately 4,896 sq. ft.) to replace it with a 14,651 sq. ft. single-story facility with a basketball court, teen room, multipurpose, meeting, and storage rooms, bathrooms and showers, and a commercial kitchen, utility improvements, transportation, and pedestrian improvements along Chestnut St. to Winter St. and Walnut St., a playground, parking lot, and community gardens.