

April 7, 2020

Messrs. Joe Vaccaro and Jon Vaccaro
Darien Place, LLC
48 Rings End Road
Darien, CT 06820

**RE: Peer Review Response
Parking Assessment
Darien Playhouse Change of Land Use
Darien, Connecticut
MMI #7107-01-02**

Dear Messrs. Vaccaro:

We are pleased to provide you with this response to the peer review of our February 17, 2020, Parking Assessment. The firm of CDM Smith produced their peer review on March 23, 2020. Our responses below are in bold text and keyed to each peer review comment. To start, we acknowledge the peer review's statement that our study was "prepared in general accordance with accepted industry standards and procedures."

- C1. Address existing parking supply in the Playhouse lot
- R1. Upon re-review of the parking lot, we maintain that there are approximately 183 parking spaces that currently exist in the Playhouse Lot when omitting the three spaces behind the Sports Shop and the seven non-shared parking spaces at Kennedy Barber Shop. (Note that we had excluded the three spaces behind the Sports Shop but included the seven barber shop spaces for the total of 190 spaces in our original study.) In the future with the proposed development, there is to be a net increase of four spaces to the Playhouse Parking Lot. This will bring the parking supply total in the shared-parking Playhouse Lot up to 187 parking spaces.**
- C2. Consideration of seasonal adjustment factors
- R2. The monthly adjustment factors cited in the peer review that are based on national data published in the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) 2005 2nd Edition of their *Shared Parking* publication does not perfectly apply to Darien, Connecticut. A better source for adjustments is the local comparison of parking within the Grove Street Lot between January 2020 (Milone & MacBroom, Inc. [MMI] count) and the springtime in 2015 (per the Nelson Nygaard *Downtown Parking Study*) that were consistent with one another. Industry resources generally indicate that local data should be consulted along with national data whenever possible. It is also noted that the Playhouse Lot's midday peak period is influenced by lunchtime activity in the downtown that may not vary throughout the year the same as general shopping center retail. For example, when looking at seasonal**

variations for restaurants in the same manner that the peer review reported on for retail, we show a factor ranging from 5% to 10% (depending on the type of restaurant) compared to the 13% calculated strictly for retail.

That said, we have nevertheless increased our January 2020 peak parking counts by the 13% as requested in the peer review in order to reflect an ‘industry average’ month. As a conservative measure, note that we did not remove from our counts the handful of parked cars that were parked in the seven Kennedy Barber Shop spaces that have now been omitted from our space count. Anecdotally, these spaces tend to be around half full during the middle of the day. Based on this, the peak utilization of the Playhouse Lot between noon to 2:00 p.m. on an ‘industry average’ Thursday would be 170 parked vehicles in 183 spaces, during the same time period on an ‘industry average’ Friday would be 183 parked vehicles, and between 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on an ‘industry average’ Saturday would be 166 parked vehicles. Taking this exercise a step further, we then added the estimated parking demands from our study to the Industry Average (13% increase) demands. Table 1 summarizes all of these revised parking demand estimates along with the parking lot capacity associated with each scenario.

TABLE 1
Peak Parking Analysis
Darien Playhouse Parking Lot and Vicinity Public Parking

Time Period	Parking Demand		
	Playhouse Parking Lot Occupancy January 2020	Playhouse Parking Lot Occupancy 13% Increase	Future Parking Demand
Thursday; Noon - 2:00 p.m. Peak	150	170	181
Friday; Noon - 2:00 p.m. Peak	162	183	197 *
Saturday; 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. Peak	147	166	183
<i>Number of spaces in Lot</i>	183		187

* Some motorists would utilize nearby public parking during this time period.

C3. Address short fall in shared parking supply based on peak capacity per ITE

R3. This analysis is unique to downtown Darien. We understand that at certain times throughout the year, there will not be enough parking in the shared Playhouse Parking Lot for the parking demand for all businesses that have the right to use the lot. So, an evaluation of this parking facility being 80% to 90% utilized per Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) “methodologies and guidelines”, as mentioned in the peer review, is somewhat irrelevant, except to determine how often is 80% of the lot adequate vs. 100% of the lot. After all, motorists would not skip over 25 or so empty spaces (15% of the lot) to instead find alternative public parking. The vast majority, if not all, of the Playhouse Parking Lot would fill up first *and then* subsequent motorists would seek to utilize nearby public parking options such as the Grove Street Lot.

That being said, there will be times that the capacity of the lot will be exceeded. Based on the 13% analysis, this may happen routinely on a Friday at lunchtime. It is our opinion that this will not be a detriment to downtown for the following reasons:

- **The Grove Street Public Lot during the Friday midday peak, after seasonal adjustments (13%), has dozens of empty spaces. Even if some Playhouse Lot parkers were to park in the Grove Street Lot under this analysis, there would still be around 15 to 20 remaining empty spaces left over.**
- **Use of all of downtown Darien’s public parking, off-street public parking lots, and on-street parking, besides Grove Street, is available and should be seen as a good thing for downtown. Patrons, for example, using public parking and walking a short distance to/from the Playhouse building will create more foot traffic in the downtown that could also benefit other commercial establishments in the area. Moreover, it is likely that patrons visiting multiple downtown business will leave their cars in the Playhouse Lot even while visiting businesses in other buildings.**
- **Use of public parking assets during peak times could be lessened through arrangement for employees to park elsewhere, for example, employees of the Playhouse building using the Board of Education parking lot, thus freeing up spaces for patrons to use in the Playhouse Lot. The Darien Sport Shop currently has such an arrangement and a similar arrangement is being made by the Playhouse ownership.**

It is also important to understand the big-picture impact of this change in use. A 330-seat theater has been decommissioned. While not generating parkers in recent months like it once did, it clearly generated significantly more evening and afternoon matinee parking in the past than the proposed four one-bedroom apartments and two or three boutique-type retailers will. There are around 650 short-term public parking spaces in downtown Darien (not to mention hundreds of additional long-term public spaces) according to the aforementioned 2015 *Downtown Parking Study*, of which there are typically over 150 spaces vacant during the midday peak on a weekday. These 150 spaces will need to accommodate only around a dozen parkers from the Playhouse Lot during lunchtime on some Fridays of the year.

- C4. Address parking arrangement with the Board of Education
- R4. The applicant is prepared to enter into an agreement with the Board of Education for use of their parking lot for the parking of employees.**
- C5. Dedicated reserved parking for residents in the new apartments
- R5. The applicant may reserve four parking spaces in the Playhouse Lot, one for each proposed one-bedroom apartment. Note that this would not change our analysis findings explained above, as our analysis conservatively includes around four parked vehicles in the omitted barber shop spaces that should be removed from the totals. Accounting for both, the removal of four parked vehicles from the seven omitted barber shop spaces from our numbers and the inclusion of four reserved residential spaces, essentially offsets each other in the total Future Parking Demand above.**

We trust that this response letter is useful to you and the Town of Darien. Please contact either of the undersigned if you have any questions.

Very truly yours,

MILONE & MACBROOM, INC.



David G. Sullivan, PE, Associate
Manager of Traffic & Transportation Planning



Neil C. Olinski, MS, PTP
Lead Transportation Planner

Enclosures

7107-01-02-a720-ltr