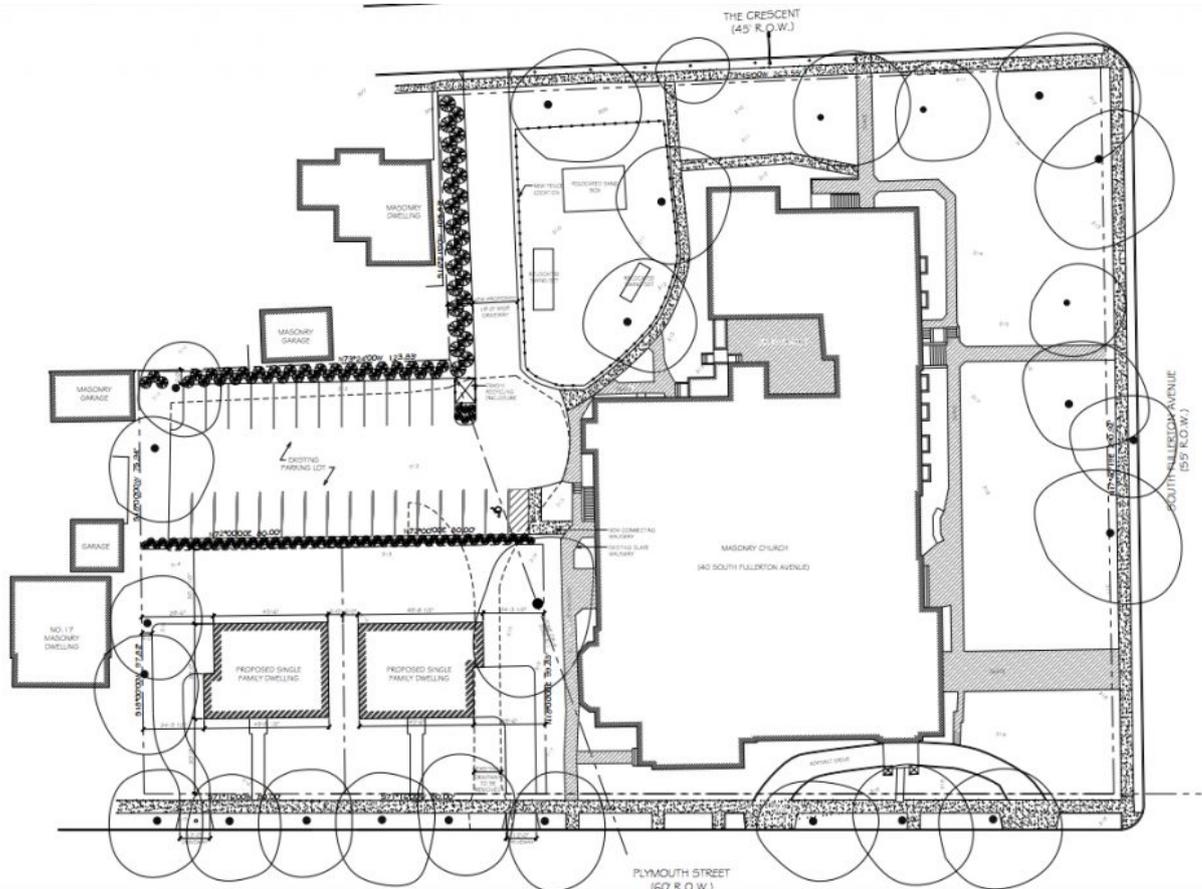


Plofker's revised plans propose single-family homes by First Congregational



One of the revised site plans that developer Steven Plofker has filed for a plot of land he is purchasing from First Congregational Church of Montclair. It depicts the locations of two proposed single-family homes, an alternative to the four townhouses that Plofker originally proposed. COURTESY MONTCLAIR TOWNSHIP

By **LINDA MOSS**

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Montclair developer Steven Plofker has revised his plans for a plot of land he's buying from First Congregational Church, apparently now proposing to build two single-family homes rather than four townhouses on the site.

Plofker and his firm Willow Street Partners LLC submitted amended site plans to the Township Zoning Board of Adjustment Jan. 12, and they offer two different subdivision scenarios for the houses. In a memo dated Jan. 16, Assistant Township Planner Graham Petto offered an updated description of the project.

“The applicant proposes to subdivide two new single-family lots from a portion of the existing church lot,” Petto wrote. “The proposed lots will be located in the R-1 Zone portion of the existing lot.”

With the revised plans, Plofker will need a variance of the permitted use of the zone by the church and a variance in one version of the subdivisions to have a smaller lot size than permitted by the town, according to Petto’s memo.

The zoning board has already held two hearings on Plofker’s original proposal to build four townhouses on part of the First Congregational’s 2.2-acre property, which is on South Fullerton Avenue. The parcel Plofker wants to buy from the house of worship faces Plymouth Street.

On Wednesday night the zoning board postponed the continuance of a Dec. 20 hearing on Plofker’s application until February. The board had been scheduled to continue hearing arguments and testimony on the application that was [filed last fall by Plofker](#).

But Alan Trembulak, Plofker’s attorney, appeared at Wednesday’s meeting briefly to request a postponement until the board’s Feb. 7 meeting. He sought the delay because there were only four board members present who could hear and vote on the application, and it requires a quorum of least five “yes” votes to be approved. There were six board members at Wednesday’s meeting, but Board Chair William Harrison and member Kevin Allen have recused themselves hearing Plofker’s application.

Trembulak didn't mention the revisions in Plofker's plans.

First Congregational officials have said that the church is in a financial pinch and is selling the land to raise money.

In his original application Plofker sought approval for a subdivision for the townhouses, as well as variances to build them in a one-family zone and for intensifying the church's operation as a non-conforming use in the area where it's located.

COMPUTERS AND RETAIL

The zoning board did hear and take action on one other application at its meeting. It granted Catalin Ursu, the owner of Catcom Computers Inc. and its building at 25 Valley Road, variances to permit him to lease part of his space to a retail or personal-service-use tenant. The building, which is across the street from the Township Board of Education headquarters, is in a zone that only permits office use for that space.

Tremulak, who represented Ursu as well as Plofker at the zoning meeting, said that his client the computer-company owner has been trying to lease 900 square feet of the 1,400 square feet on his first floor for two years.



The owner of Catcom Computers and its building at 25 Valley Road won approval from the Township Zoning Board of Adjustment on Wednesday night to have a retail or personal-services tenant on the property's first floor. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

Ursu testified that he has had 40 to 50 inquiries from potential tenants since 2016, but the only people interested want to open retail or service business there, not have offices. The building, which he purchased in 2006, dates back to 1875, according to Ursu. There is an apartment on its second floor.

Previously Catcom Computers was in the building where Let's Yo!, a frozen yogurt shop, is now.

Ursu also testified that there are three parking spaces behind the building, roughly half of the spaces required by town ordinance for retail and service businesses.

Another witness, planner George Williams of Montclair, in his testimony pointed out that Ursu's building is a storefront

with a large window, an exterior compatible with a retail or personal-service business. He added that there is no detriment to the public good if one of those nonconforming uses opened up shop at 25 Valley Road.