



## Zoning Board agrees to convert Plymouth Street building to two-family home



*An application for a use variance from Sustainable Sanctuary Homes, LLC was approved by the Zoning Board to convert the building at 41 Plymouth St., currently a medical office and residence, to a 2-family dwelling in an single family zone. TINA PAPPAS/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

**By TINA PAPPAS**  
*for Montclair Local*

The township Zoning Board of Adjustment approved a use variance Wednesday night to convert a mixed-use residential building and medical office on Plymouth Street into a two-family dwelling.

The application was submitted by Henry Liedtka, owner of Sustainable Sanctuary Homes, who purchased the property, located in the R1 single family zone, in order to renovate it. His attorney, Alan Trembulak, cited points about generating more rateables for the township and improving property values in the application.

According to Trembulak the building, which was built in 1917, contains a large, residential structure presumably originally built as a single family house. However the structure was converted in 1950 to a mixed use with a medical office on the first floor, and residential use on the second floor.

“It continued to be used as such since 1950 and continually since until my client purchased the property a few months ago,” said Trembulak, adding that before the property was acquired it had a medical office on the first floor and two residential apartments on the second floor.

Trembulak further added that the intent for the property was to eliminate the medical use, which is not conforming in the R1 zone.

“It creates parking and traffic and concerns for a residential zone, and converts the building to a two-family dwelling, which we believe is a more appropriate use than this location for a variety of reasons,” Trembulak added. “Part of what we’re doing is pushing to eliminate the second entrance office so that this house as

converted will appear to be a single family residence, although it will be used as a two-family dwelling.”

When asked about the intentions of the two units by the board, Liedtke confirmed that the building would consist of two unit condominiums that would be owned and not rented. Board members made a point that non-conformity would still be a factor for a two-family dwelling that’s located in a single-family R-1 zone. Background information on the property, conducted by Deputy Planning Director Graham Petto, was not found regarding how the property wound up in the single-family zone. However, board members agreed to the two-family use, approving the application 6-0.



*From left, architect Paul Sionas, applicant Henry Liedtka, owner of Sustainable Sanctuary Homes, and attorney Alan Trembulak discuss an application to make a mixed-use building on Plymouth Street into a two-family dwelling. TINA PAPPAS/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

Some minor modifications for the building’s exterior were also detailed by Trembulak, among them being the elimination of a second entrance office so that the building will appear to be a single-family residence, although it will be used as a two-family residence. Paul Sionas, architect for the site, showed an array of blueprints, which depicting the renovation details and emphasized that the house would continue to look as it presently does, with slight aesthetic adjustments to the exterior.

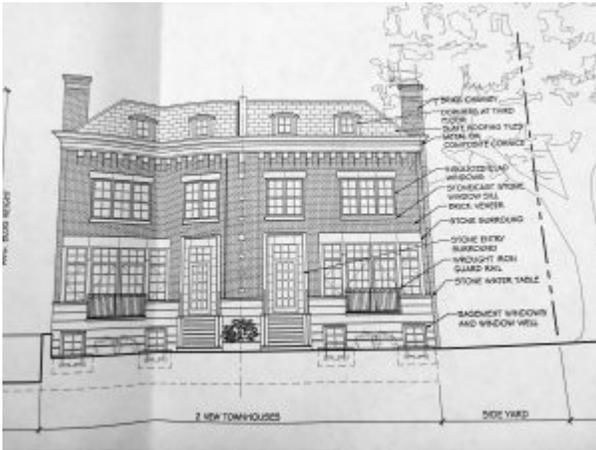
Liedtka told board members that the nature of his business was to renovate homes in order to produce “attractive, comfortable and energy efficient housing in the Montclair market.” He added that his projects have been well received in the past by those who live in the vicinity.

“Last year, we completed a bigger project, which was a three-lot subdivision on Elm Street,” he noted. “Prior to the acquisition and subsequent renovation, it was an unkept property.”

Liedtka also said that the families that bought homes were happy and that Montclair received an additional amount of property tax revenue resulting from that development.

“I would think that if you’re familiar with the South End at all, you could tell that the surrounding area benefited,” he added. “Our firm strives to create a win-win for everybody involved. Most importantly, we engage the neighbors early on many phases of the project. In October of last year, we invited everyone at an open house at 41 Plymouth Street, and we reviewed the plans of those who attended. We received positive feedback proposing this and in other discussions with those neighbors. What I heard from them regarding their main desires is to keep the single family look and feel in the neighborhood.”

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## Plofker seeks to build townhouses by First Congregational



Developer Steven Plofker has filed plans with the Township Zoning Board of Adjustment to build four townhouses on land now owned by First Congregational Church of Montclair. They would face Plymouth Street. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

**By LINDA MOSS**

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Local developer Steve Plofker has another residential project in the works, and is seeking township approval to build four townhouses on part of the property owned by First Congregational Church of Montclair.

Plofker's company, Willow Street Properties LLC, has applied for four variances in order to subdivide part of the church's land, a vacant area that faces Plymouth Street. The parcel is in front of an accessory parking lot for the house of worship, which is at 40 South Fullerton Ave.

The Township Board of Adjustment was scheduled to hear Plofker's application, filed by attorney Alan Trembulak, at its meeting Wednesday night. But the matter was rescheduled for Nov. 8.

The Rev. Ann Ralosky said that the house of worship is selling part of its property in order to help fund its ministry and to pay for work on its building.

"First Congregational Church is a growing and dynamic congregation in Montclair and we take pride in the meaningful roles that our congregation and facilities play in our community," Ralosky said in an email. "We have the responsibility of maintaining a large, aging and complex building and have agreed to sell our back lawn parcel to Willow Street Properties to raise much needed capital to improve our physical plant and support our continued ministry work."

Willow Street Properties declined to comment.

The subdivision that Plofker wants would be 14,460 square feet, and the three-story townhouses were designed by Montclair architect Paul Sionas.

The variances are for construction of the townhouses in an R-1 residential zone; permission to have eight on-site parking spaces instead of the 9.6 required by town ordinance; permission for a rear-yard setback of 20 feet, 4-inches, rather than the 23.54 feet required by the township; and approval to have building coverage of 4,286 square feet rather than the maximum of 3,615 set by the municipality.

The proposed townhouses would have a brick veneer, chimneys and be situated as pairs, with two next to each other.

The project is one of several multifamily developments that Plofker either has under construction, has approval for, or is seeking approval for.

He [recently won the go-ahead](#) from the township to build a mixed-use development with 11 residential units at the former site of the Diva Lounge on Bloomfield Avenue. And he will be looking to construct [seven townhouses on Orange Road](#).