

Clarke's showroom gets OK for mixed-use plans

By [Kelly Kultys](#) 2:11 pm EDT, Sunday, March 10, 2019



Photo: Erik Trautmann / Hearst Connecticut Media

Clarke kitchen showroom at 64 South Main Street Friday, March 8, 2019, in Norwalk, Conn. The developer Clarke Capital received approvals to build a new mixed use development with 19,400 square feet of retail

NORWALK — The Clarke Kitchen Appliance Showroom will have some more neighbors after the Zoning Commission approved Clarke Capital's mixed-use plans.

Their plans call for 40 residential units and almost 20,000 square feet of retail/showroom space on the block that runs along Elizabeth Street, from South Main Street to Day Street.

The main building, which will be on South Main Street, from the plan will be a five-story structure, with 29 apartments and the retail space. More than 10,000 square feet of the retail space will be for Clarke's existing showroom that has operated at the site since 2000. [Clarke opened in 1955](#) as an appliance store and has grown into a wholesale distributor with showrooms across the New England area, including in South Norwalk.

“You actually have the primary retail tenant in place before construction and that's driving the construction, the opposite of about every apartment building that you've seen, which I think is a real positive,” Attorney Adam Blank, who was representing the applicant, told the commission on Thursday.

The plans also call for some renovations, demolition and other improvements to take place in the homes along Elizabeth Street. Two properties — 8 and 10 Elizabeth St. — will be completely torn down and rebuilt, Blank said. One of the properties will be a duplex and the other will be a single-family home, he said. The remaining two properties — 12 and 14 Elizabeth St. — will house the remaining units and keep their existing structures, with mostly exterior and facade work taking place at those sites.

“We've essentially maintained what's existing, although we're removing the 8 and 10 Elizabeth (properties) and rebuilding them, they're very much in the scale and character with the historic district,” Colin Grotheer, the architect for the project, said. “We're excited about those buildings as well, maintaining the neighborhood feel on the mid-block.”

Grotheer explained that there was still a couple of questions surrounding exactly what was going to happen to the existing showroom building on the site.

“There's complexities on what you do with the existing structure and how you support that additional building on top of the existing building — or do you take part of that building down, down to street level and rebuild from there?” he said. “We're in the middle of those discussions but essentially that building

footprint is staying and we're just adding this building on top of it.”

The plans also call for improvement to the area's sidewalks, street trees and lighting, which will make it more “pedestrian-friendly,” Grotheer said.

The project will include three workforce housing units — an one-bedroom in the main building, a two-bedroom in the duplex and a three-bedroom unit in 14 Elizabeth St.

“Several of us are quite pleased to see a 3-bedroom affordable unit,” Commissioner Louis Schulman said.

There will be 59 total parking spaces included in the site, with some in front of the main building and others behind the Elizabeth Street properties.

Grotheer said he thought the designs fit in with the surrounding areas and would help continue the Main Street corridor.

“This actually fits in very nicely with the scale of the neighborhood,” he said.

The Zoning Commission affirmative vote was contingent upon approval from the city's Redevelopment Agency, which has not yet authorized the project.

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