



**TOWN OF COVENTRY, RI
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT**

STAFF REPORT

Project Name:	Coventry Centre
Plan Type:	Major Land Development with a potential Zone Change
Plan Review Phase:	Pre-Application
Owners:	Bernard L. LeFoley Living Trust (Lot 23) David & Christine Olton (Lot 24)
Applicant:	Starr Resolute, LLC
Address:	666 Arnold Rd
Plat / Lot / Zone:	AP 7 Lots 23 and 24 Zone I-1 Lot Size 17 acres
Existing Use:	Single-family house
Proposed Use:	Commercial development or Mixed-use development
Description:	The applicant is seeking to construct a development containing either purely commercial uses (potentially including but not limited to restaurants, retail, grocers, gas stations, convenience stores, coffee shops, and/or service stations), a mix of commercial uses with a multifamily residential component.

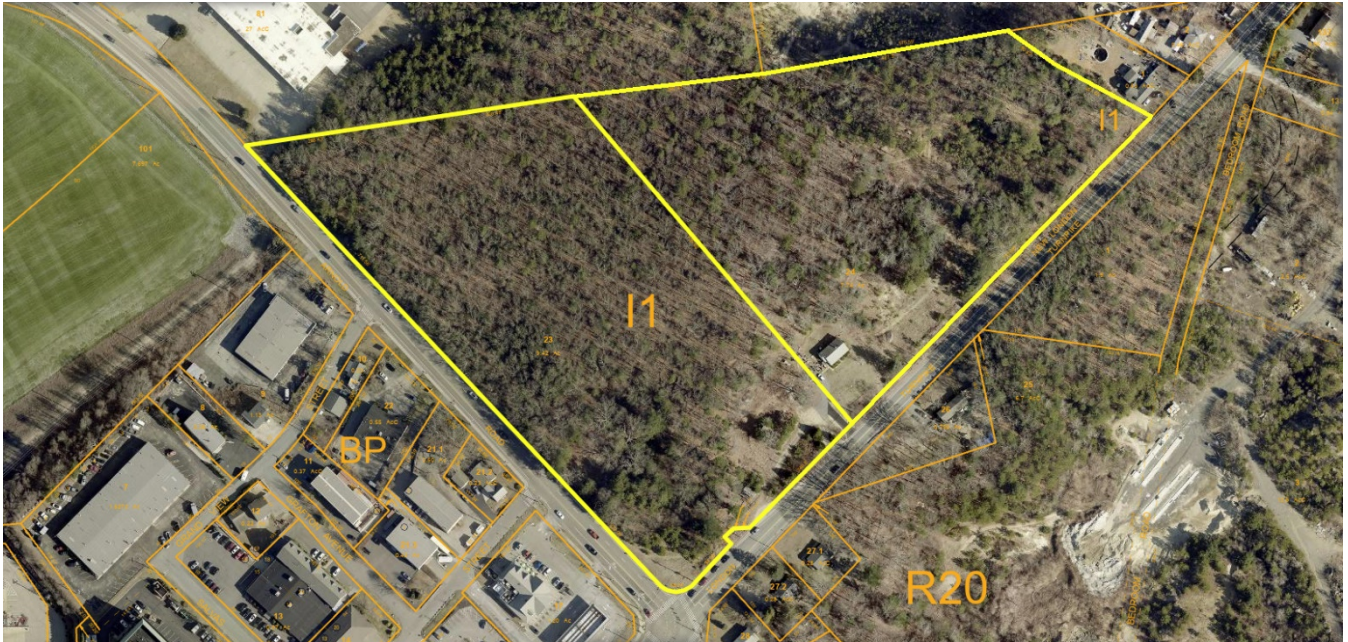
Background

This item will be reviewed as a Pre-Application for a proposed Major Land Development with a Zone Change of a 17-acre subject parcel comprised of two lots: AP 7, Lots 23 (8.6 acres) and 24 (8.4 acres).

The Pre-Application phase of review is for informational purposes only; as such, no formal decisions will be made, nor will any votes be taken, during this phase. At the next phase of review (Master Plan), the applicant will need to submit a formal Master Plan—Major Land Development Application and a corresponding Zone Change Application. These will be decided by the Planning Commission and the Town Council, respectively, through separate Public Hearings. Should the project receive approval on both applications, it would advance to the Preliminary Plan phase of review, in which the Planning Commission will review fully-engineered plans. Preliminary Plan offers the last public meeting for the project; the Final Plan phase of review would be handled administratively.

Staff notes the applicant has submitted a Traffic Memorandum in support of its Pre-Application plan. Staff anticipates the applicant will submit a full Traffic and Parking Study as well as additional detailed plans and studies to provide more information on the proposal discussed in this report through its Master Plan submittal.

Existing Conditions



The subject parcel forms a large wedge on the inside angle formed by the corner of Arnold Road and New London Turnpike. Lot 23 is a corner lot with just over 1,000 feet of frontage along Arnold Rd and an additional 400 feet of frontage on New London Turnpike. Lot 24, for its part, features about 750 feet of frontage on New London Turnpike.

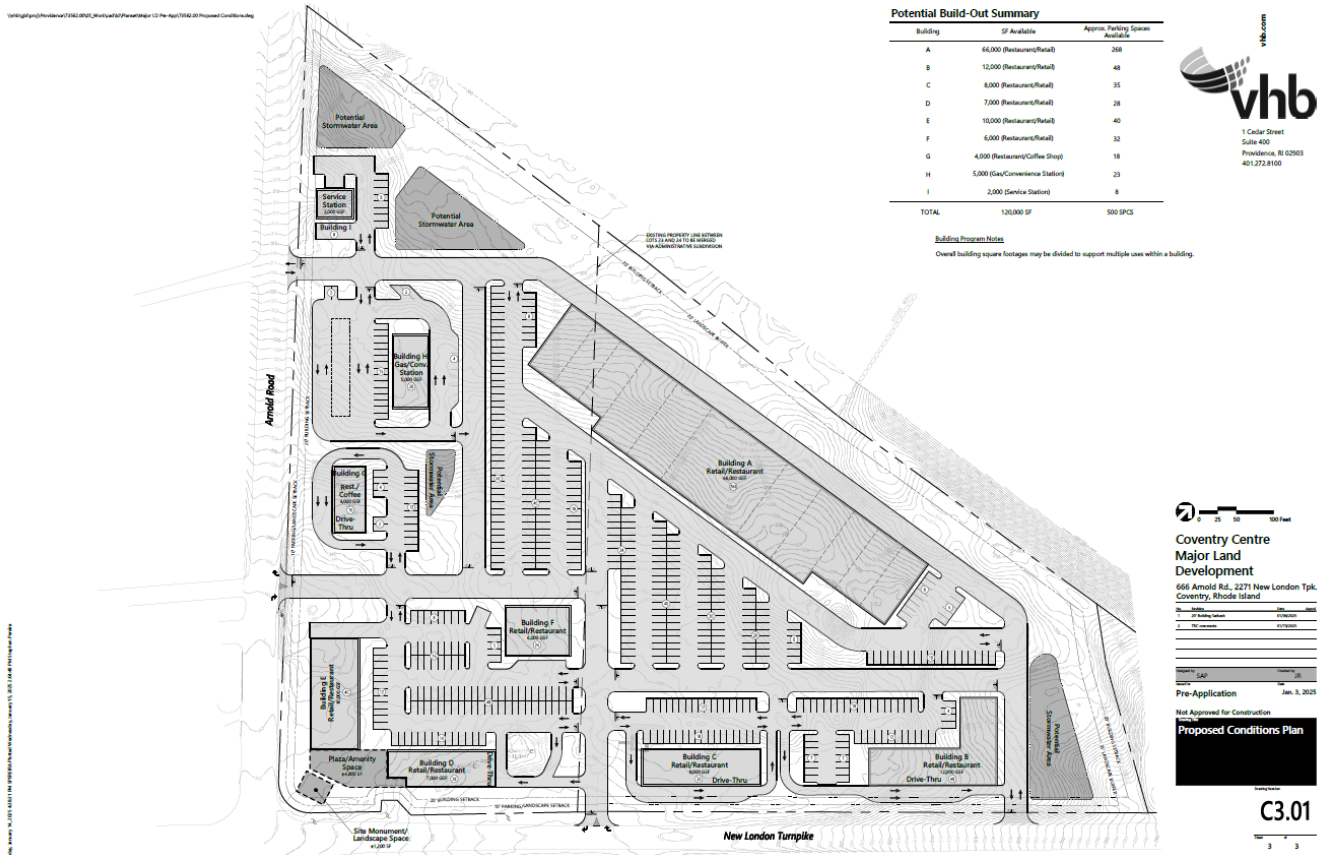
Both lots which comprise the subject parcel are zoned I-1 (Industrial) and largely consist of wooded, undeveloped land. One single-family house can be found near the southernmost corner of Lot 24; two dilapidated outbuildings stand nearby along New London Turnpike on Lot 23.

As noted in the plan set, the subject parcel lies within Flood Zone X. There are no wetlands or watercourses on or within 200 feet of the perimeter of the subject parcel, and the parcel does not lie within a groundwater protection area. However, the parcel does fall within the overlay of a Natural Heritage Area. Additionally, a RIDEM permit will be required because the project will disturb more than one acre of land.

Proposed Conditions

The applicant has submitted two conceptual site plans representing the two alternatives it has brought forward for consideration. The pre-application process will therefore represent an opportunity to vet both alternatives with the Planning Commission. Based on the Commission’s feedback, the applicant will select one alternative to advance to the Master Plan stage of review.

Option A, the 100% commercial development, is depicted below:



Under this concept, the applicant would develop up to 120,000 SF of commercial space on the subject parcel. Multiple pad sites located along the roadways would orbit a much larger, multi-tenant building set back from the roads, a common layout for commercial shopping centers of this scale. A small area at the intersection of New London Turnpike and Arnold Road would be set aside for landscaping or some sort of monument to soften the visual impact of the development.

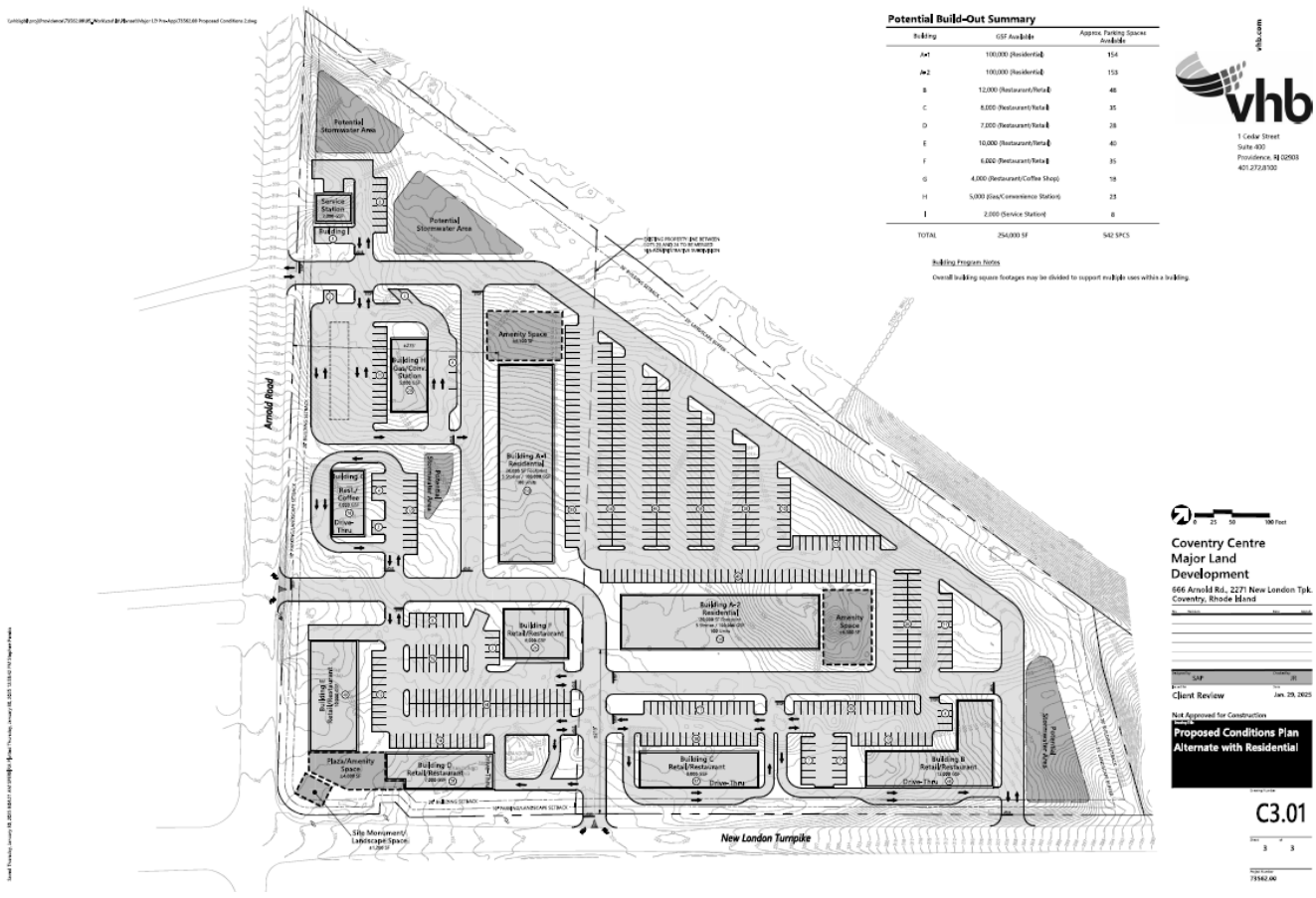
As depicted in this conceptual site plan, the vast majority of the commercial space (109,000 SF) would be dedicated to Restaurant/Retail in Buildings A-F. Building G would offer 4,000 SF for a Restaurant/Coffee Shop; Building H would host a 5,000 SF Gas/Convenience Station, and Building I would

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be a 2,000 SF Service Station. These designations could evolve as the project progresses, and individual buildings could potentially host more than one user.

Site access would be provided by four driveways, two on New London Turnpike and two on Arnold Road. The two which lie closer to the intersection will be designated for right turn only (in and out) to minimize potential impacts on the intersection. The driveways on the Arnold Road side of the parcel would be aligned with Gay Street and Grand View Street. The applicant would provide 500 parking spaces.

Option B, the mixed-use development concept, is pictured in the plan shown below:



Under this concept, the 58,000 SF, all-commercial “Building A” would be replaced with two, 100,000 GSF (5-story building with 20,000 SF footprint) all-residential buildings, identified as Buildings “A-1” and “A-2.” The orientation of the buildings and parking in this portion of the site would be flipped, relative to the Option A layout: the residential buildings would be brought near the center of the site, with parking behind them (on the rear side of the property).

The general configurations and commercial uses envisioned for Buildings B-I are essentially unchanged; under Option B, most of these buildings’ footprints grow very slightly. The proposed driveway locations

are the same in both Options A and B. A greater number of parking spaces (542) overall would be provided under the Option B configuration, with 307 of these attributable to the multifamily residential component. In addition to the same landscaped area near the corner of Arnold Road and New London Turnpike that appeared in the Option A concept, two additional “amenity spaces” are proposed at the outer ends of the residential buildings.

The applicant has provided a Traffic Memorandum for review, with the understanding that a full Traffic and Parking Study will be provided at Master Plan, and that said Study will be peer-reviewed by a traffic expert on behalf of the Town. Given that traffic volume is already an area of focus at this intersection, and that either of the proposed development concepts (but particularly Option A) would add to the existing traffic volumes, Staff encourages the applicant to incorporate elements of non-motorized access into its Master Plan site design. Many of these will take the form of on-site improvements, such as a sidewalk for the length of the frontage on both Arnold Road and New London Turnpike, and additional non-motorized pathways interior to the site. Additionally, Staff anticipate that this proposal will include some targeted off-site improvements – such as the completion of a 300-foot gap in the New London Turnpike sidewalk network immediately adjacent to the subject parcel’s eastern edge, additional off-site sidewalk connections as necessary, and the establishment of crosswalks across Arnold Road and New London Turnpike – as these off-site improvements would have an outsized influence on improving the site’s non-automobile accessibility. In addition to the above, Staff advises that the Master Plan application should evaluate if any lane widening or additional lanes will be needed at the abutting intersection, and if so, provide details on how that will be incorporated into the overall project vision.

Based on the scale of development shown on both conceptual site plans, it is understood that the applicant will be pursuing public sewer and water connections.

Zoning

The subject parcel is currently zoned I-1 (Industrial), and several of the proposed uses are not allowed in that zone. The applicant has submitted a letter outlining a proposed approach to defining new dimensional and use standards that could be incorporated into a future zone change application to re-designate the parcel as PD (Planned Development District). This regulatory tool would be conducive to both the mixed-use and pure-commercial development concepts which the applicant is exploring for this site. The letter, as well as the information it contains (summarized below), is conceptual at this time; the applicant would need to submit a formal zone change application to the Town Council at a later date.

As currently envisioned, the proposed dimensional standards include:

- Maximum Impervious Area/Lot Coverage 65% percent

- Up to half of the remaining (minimum 35%) pervious area may be dedicated to stormwater facilities
- Maximum Gross Floor Area 120,000 square feet of non-residential GFA
 - To facilitate a mixed-use alternative to a 100% commercial development, this standard includes the caveat that, for every dwelling unit, maximum non-residential GFA shall be reduced by 300 SF
- Minimum Parking Lot/Driveway Setbacks 10 feet
 - Perimeter landscape buffers are proposed at 10 feet along Arnold Road and New London Turnpike; 20 feet along the rear yard; and 35 feet along the shared property line with AP 7, Lot 1
- Maximum Height 35 feet
 - 60 feet for buildings that maintain a minimum 200-foot setback from New London Turnpike
- Minimum Building Setbacks 20 feet

Parking requirements are proposed as a minimum of 3 spaces per 1,000 SF of gross floor area for non-residential uses and 1.5 spaces per dwelling unit. Parking areas would contain a minimum of 5% of interior landscaping.

The applicant has also included a provision that 18% of any residential units must be designated as deed-restricted low- and moderate-income housing units.

Interdepartmental Review and Comments

Please see the attached report from the Technical Review Committee (dated January 13, 2025) for interdepartmental comments on this application.

Pre-Application Recommendations

Staff recommend that the applicant proceeds to the Master Plan stage of application and review with consideration of the comments from the Technical Review Committee, comments from the public, and any direction provided by the Town Council and Planning Commission at the February 26th meeting. Additionally, the applicant shall provide the following pieces of information with its next submission along with the standard Master Plan checklist requirements:

1. The applicant shall provide the following items with its Master Plan application to provide further detail on key aspects of this proposal and the associated Zoning Ordinance:
 - a. Full Traffic and Parking Study (with anticipated Town peer review)

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- b. Conceptual Landscape Plan
- c. Conceptual Architectural Renderings
- d. Lighting Plan
- e. Planning/Comprehensive Plan report (to discuss the proposed zone change's consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and overall Town goals in this area)



TOWN OF COVENTRY
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TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: January 13, 2025
PROJECT NAME: "Coventry Centre"
PROPERTIES: AP 7, Lots 23 & 24
ADDRESS: 666 Arnold Road
ZONE: I-1 (Industrial)
OWNER: Bernard L. LeFoley (Lot 23); David T. & Christine Olton (Lot 24)
APPLICANT: Starr Resolute

This matter came before the Coventry Technical Review Committee at its January 13, 2025 meeting as a Pre-Application for a Major Land Development project in accordance with Article V, § D.4. of the Coventry Subdivision & Land Development Regulations.

An application and plan were initially submitted for review on January 3 and revised materials were submitted on January 6. The applicant is seeking to construct a commercial development with a mix of uses potentially including but not limited to restaurants, retail, grocers, gas stations, convenience stores, coffee shops, and/or service stations.

The members of the Technical Review Committee reviewed the following documents related to this application when preparing the comments below:

Coventry Centre - Concept Plan Set.pdf
Coventry Centre - Proposed Zoning Amendment.pdf
Coventry Centre - Traffic Assessment Memo.pdf

TOWN ENGINEER

Proposed Conditions Plan

- 1) A Town of Coventry Commercial Sewer Connection Application will be required for the proposed sewer connection. A capacity analysis of the existing sewer infrastructure in New London Turnpike is currently on-going and its conclusions will need to be known before a will-serve letter is issued.
- 2) Submission of a Town of Coventry Soil Erosion and Sediment Control (SESC) Application will be required for the project.
- 3) Stormwater management shall be provided for the site and meet state and town requirements.

- 4) Engineering recommends that a peer review be conducted for stormwater management at the Preliminary Design Phase.
- 5) Upon project completion, a Certificate of Conformance (COC) from the Engineer of Record (EOR) shall be required. The COC shall certify that the constructed project meets all required standards, regulations and specifications in the permitting and construction documents.
- 6) Sidewalk interconnectivity at and adjacent to the project site shall require review at the next stage of plan development.

Traffic Assessment

- 1) Engineering concurs that optimization of the traffic signal timing and improvements to lane configurations/signage should be studied to improve traffic operations. Engineering also recommends that any future traffic studies include the necessity/feasibility of adding a turning lane(s) at or in the vicinity of the New London Turnpike/Arnold Road intersection.
- 2) Engineering recommends that a traffic engineering peer review be conducted at the next design phase.

PRINCIPAL PLANNER DESIGNEE

- Planning Staff request the applicant provide an amended or alternative site plan to address the discrepancy between the gross square footage shown on the site plan (106,000 SF) and allowed through the proposed zone change (135,000 SF). Please expand upon the note included in the site plan on this topic with a demonstration of likely or foreseeable site plan alternatives at a conceptual level – for example, would the additional square footage take the form of additional buildings on the site, additional floors on top of building footprints already shown on the plan, etc.
- Planning Staff encourage the applicant to explore opportunities to enhance and provision for pedestrian infrastructure that can support non-automobile access, both internal to the subject parcel and with respect to the parcel's relation to the surrounding roadway network, when preparing its Master Plan submission.
 - Staff would further note that certain off-site sidewalk connections and provisions for potential lane widening (if borne out by a peer-reviewed traffic study) should be explored as the site design evolves.
- Given the subject parcel's high-visibility location as one enters the community from the highway, building design and "place-making" elements should be considered and incorporated into the site plan and ordinance moving forward.
- Planning Staff would like a better understanding of the applicant's envisioned landscaped/natural buffer treatments, particularly in the areas of the property near abutting residential uses, including the yet-to-be built assisted living project to the north.
- The following items are anticipated at Master Plan to provide further detail on key aspects of this proposal and Zoning Ordinance:
 - Full Traffic and Parking Study, with anticipated Town peer review.
 - Conceptual Landscape Plan
 - Conceptual Architectural Renderings
 - Lighting Plan
 - Planning/Comprehensive Plan report to indicate how the proposed zone change is consistent with the Plan and overall Town goals in this area.
- Planning staff have several detailed comments on the proposed Zoning Ordinance that are lengthy in nature and will be shared with the applicant under a separate document.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

The Public Works Director stated that he has concerns regarding the traffic congestion in such close proximity to this major intersection. There also needs to be sidewalks installed along the entire property line on Arnold Road and New London Turnpike, along with adequate crosswalks on Arnold Road side. In the parking layout, there does not seem to be ample snow storage areas proposed. A better explanation as to the types of companies that are contemplated.

FIRE REPRESENTATIVE

- No comment at this time.

POLICE CHIEF

The Police Department is awaiting a traffic study and peer review prior to making any comments. The Police Chief indicated that the nearby roadway might need modification due to increased traffic flow.

PLANNING COMMISSION CHAIR

The Planning Commission Chair recused as this item will be heard before the Planning Commission.