

TO: Township of West Orange Planning Board

CC: Genice Gary-Adams, Zoning Official
Jamilet Baquerizo Vite, Planning Board Secretary
Ryan McNeil, Planning Board Engineer

FROM: Malvika Apte, PP, AICP, Planning Board Planner
Langley Oudemans, Associate Planner

RE: **SPRAB Meeting Summary**
PB Application 25-11
525 Northfield Avenue

DATE: March 13, 2026



SPRAB Meeting Summary: PB 25-11

Meeting Date: March 10, 2026, at 8:30AM

The SPRAB Meeting for the proposed project at 525 Northfield Avenue (Planning Board Application # 25-11) was conducted on March 10, 2026. Below is a summary of the items discussed, organized by topic, including concerns presented by the review board and actions which may/may not be taken by the Applicant.

1. Ground Floor Amenity Spaces:

- The plan shows entrances from the street/public-facing side, and questions were raised about whether these spaces were intended to be converted to commercial spaces in the future.
 - Applicant clarified that the amenity spaces are intended for tenant use only.
 - Planner requested that the resubmitted plans should include a design which more clearly designates these as tenant-only spaces.

2. Parking:

- Applicant confirmed that parking spaces will be assigned to the tenants
- Tandem space coordination – concerns raised about coordination of these spaces
 - Applicant notes that to handle the coordination, the tandem spaces will be assigned to the larger (2-3 bedroom) units which will require 2 spaces
- Tandem spaces at the driveway entrance – concerns raised about safety and coordination of vehicles parking in these spaces and switching spots right at the

entrance point of the garage. It was noted that the spaces are in a tight and higher traffic area of the garage.

- Applicant stated they do not anticipate major issues, given that their other buildings in other towns have a similar layout. Additionally, the team indicated that there will be a Rytec garage door that makes sound when opened and will not open if there is movement on the other side. This is to provide an extra layer of safety.
- Additional concerns were raised about cars then having to wait outside of the gate in the sidewalk area if there are cars coordinating in the tandem spots and blocking the driveway gate.
- Applicant indicated that they would find a solution for these spaces and proposed the possibility of moving the tandem spaces to another area of the garage or adding a car lift somewhere in the garage to make up the spaces.
- Commercial parking spaces – questions raised about safety measures being taken to restrict the commercial patrons from having access to the residential areas from the parking garage.
 - Zoning Officer confirmed that the project is not exempt from providing commercial parking spaces.
 - Planner noted the Applicant should keep the parking requirements for different commercial uses in mind.
 - Engineer indicated that clear signage will be needed to direct commercial patrons to their designated parking spaces and that tandem spaces should not be used for the commercial spaces.
 - Applicant indicated that the commercial space has not been dedicated to anything yet (could be a small café or coffee shop.) Perhaps the coordination and safety of the commercial parking spaces might have to be done by a valet or attendant.
 - Question raised regarding requiring commercial parking near the front of the garage and closing the access to rest of the garage to residents only for safety.
 - The point was also made that the Applicant should consider that locating all the commercial spaces by the entrance could cause some congestion in this area and make it difficult for residents to enter the garage.
 - There is currently no gate proposed at the eastern driveway entrance, but Applicant will provide this in a resubmission.

- EV Parking
 - Fire Department was not present, but Zoning Officer noted that there will be a report from the Fire Official.
 - In other proposals, the location of the EV spaces has been a concern. Applicant should consider moving the EV spaces into an area which is easily accessible for firefighters and away from the main areas of the building in case a fire breaks out.
- Visitor Parking
 - Questions were raised about designation of visitor parking spaces.
 - Applicant indicated that designated spots with signs can easily be included for visitor parking areas.

3. Garbage Coordination:

- Applicant noted that the building Super will know the timing of the pick up and will stage garbage inside of the parking garage for quick pick up by the hauler. They confirmed that there will be no staging on Northfield Avenue.
- The garbage truck turning plan provided shows the truck pulling into the area on the opposite side of the garage from the trash room. More information is needed to clarify how and where trash will be staged for pick up.
- Architect confirmed that there will be a trash chute on every floor and it will go to the trash room where it will be compacted. There will also be additional trash storage for the building in case the trash room reaches capacity.
- A statement is needed on the plans which describes the trash removal schedule. The Engineer also made a note that the trash room door should be switched from an external door to an internal door.

4. Retaining wall:

- The retaining wall at the east side driveway has a maximum height of 42". It will begin as curbing that then becomes a wall as it goes further in the property. The wall starts around the first three parking stalls.

5. Floor Plans:

- There are a lot of amenity spaces being proposed. In a revised submission, the Applicant should be prepared to give testimony about what is happening in these

spaces, including if there will be plantings, grills, etc. and what the space is going to be used for.

- Planner raised concerns about the triangular corner apartments next to the amenity spaces not having adequate privacy or access to light, air, or space because of the placement of the windows next to the entrance of the amenity space.
 - Applicant indicated that privacy elements will be provided, such as curtains and planters, but that the price of these units will reflect these circumstances and that not everyone may be impacted by this layout.
- Applicant confirmed that the building storage area is intended for use by the building and not for tenant use.

6. Façade/Exterior Design:

- Units will have HVAC grills on the façade, but they will not be PTAC systems. The current elevations are not accurate, and the Architect indicated that the grills will be the same color as the façade and will not be placed under the windows.
- There will be a fake green wall on the western façade (Vistafolio material.) Applicant will label the material on resubmitted plans.
- Emphasis on providing good materials on the exterior façade was given. Applicant concurred with this intention and their desire to “activate” the area in a positive way with this property.
- Historic Area Considerations
 - It was noted that this site is in close proximity to historic areas of the community.
 - Applicant indicated that they will provide the letter which confirms that the subject property is not within a historic area nor considered a historic landmark.
 - Zoning Board member provided information about the surrounding historic character of the site and noted the high number of units being proposed as a potential negative point. She noted that it was a good design, but it does not speak to the character of the St. Cloud neighborhood as a whole and that considerations should be made regarding that.

7. Stormwater:

- The Applicant’s Engineer confirmed that previously brought up issues will be resolved.

- Applicant's Engineer should provide testimony about the contradicting stormwater requirements and request a waiver since the project is reducing stormwater volumes and impervious coverage compared to the existing conditions.

8. Steep Slopes:

- Major concerns are anticipated from the Board regarding the steep slope disturbance proposed. Applicant was encouraged to prepare robust testimony to support their proposal. The Engineer recommended that the Geotechnical expert who provided the previously submitted report be present at the meeting to provide testimony and answer questions from the Board.
- Applicant noted that many of the trees that are proposed to be removed are not in good shape, and they will get more information on the number of these trees to provide as an exhibit for their testimony.

9. Other points:

- Applicant is requesting a number of variances because of the large size of this proposal (impervious coverage, height, setback etc.)
- It was emphasized that the Board will be reviewing this plan according to the existing zoning and what is currently permitted.
- Applicant's attorney noted that a statement was provided regarding the environmental impact statement.
- Applicant represented that no revised drawings will be provided and would like to move forward to the Board hearing with current site plans that are submitted.

It should be noted that these are notes from the SPRAB meeting that was held virtually and is not a thorough review of the application. Please review the Board Engineer and Board Planner's review for a thorough review of the application. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any planning related questions at mapte@hgapa.com.