



# Town of Hamden

## Planning and Zoning Department

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### Memorandum

**To:** Hamden Planning and Zoning Commission

**From:** Erik C. Johnson, Acting Director Planning and Economic Development

**Re:** Updated Staff Report - Applicant Cornell Hill Health Center  
Site Plan 22-1517 for 2369 Dixwell Avenue and  
Site Plan 22-1516 for 2389 Dixwell Avenue.

**Date:** May 9, 2022

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### Overview:

The Applicant Cornell Hill Health Center has submitted to applications for consideration by the Commission, both applications are in support of the Applicant's intent purchase and open a medical office facility at 2369 Dixwell Avenue, Hamden CT. Upon consultation with the Hamden Plan Staff, it was determined that most appropriate approach to Commission was to submit two complementary applications for its consideration.

Application #1: 2369 Dixwell Avenue is for site plan approval for a change in use from a retail establishment (Goodwill) to a Medical Office use that will be occupied by Cornell Hill Health Center.

Application #2: 2389 Dixwell Avenue is for a modification of approved site plan, allow for the creation of new parking spaces in the north eastern corner of the property in area that not previously designated for parking per the Site Plan Approval (11-1471). The new spaces will be the exclusive use of 2369 Dixwell Avenue, and all access points will be from 2369 Dixwell Avenue.

### Commission Comments:

During the April 19, 2022, Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, Commission member expressed concerns about the Applicant's proposed circulation plan specifically, changing the

entrance point in the building. This change is a significant departure from how the site currently operates, and there were concerns that this change could create safety issues for individuals / patients existing the site under the new circulation plan that conflict with the customers from Town Fair Tire who shares this driveway access.

Commissioners had two other concerns, with the proposed site plan.

1. The application is proposing an outdoor “break area” that boarder the exit drive way. The request was to have additional security measures, bollards or screening put in place to better protect that space.
2. There were also questions if the number of parking spaces that are being proposed is sufficient to address both staff and client needs at the facility.

### Applicant Response t

Based comments and concerns that were raised by Commission members, the Applicant’s Civil Engineer, Langan, reviewed the circulation plan that was proposed and responded to staff with the following comments.

### Advantages of New Proposed Circulation Plan:

- The proposed circulation limits exit movements to one location, simplifying the interactions with drivers on Dixwell
- The proposed configuration is safer. The proposed change will result in a continuous flow, meaning all right turns and no traffic crossings on our site, which is much easier/safer for the driver
- The circulation will lead to less traffic crossings overall when considering the town fair tire, making flow through the site less congested
- Drivers entering through the North one way will have an opportunity to survey the entire parking lot prior to needing to park, making the decision easier and movements more predictable
- As a driver you would have to go out of your way to go the wrong way when exiting the site. Drivers tend to take the path of least resistance so they will be much less likely to travel east all the way to the back of the site and wrap all the way around. The logical path is to exit to the south.

### Cons of the current existing circulation pattern:

- The exit only on the North side of the site still poses a risk of drivers entering through the exit. This may even be a more likely scenario based on my last point above as drivers in the proposed condition would need to go out of their way to exit through our proposed entrance.
- Increased traffic crossings between our site and the town fair tire.

The applicant has also agreed to add additional signage to the property. Langan is proposing that an Entrance Sing in the front yard towards the north side of the building, as well as Do Not Enter and/or One Way Signage at the exit and within the parking area. Additionally, in the case of a

patient accidentally entering the Town Fair Tire entrance, the Applicant will add a signage in the parking lot address this potential issues.

Department Reviews: (Updated)

Based on concerns raised by the Commission, concerning the applicant's entrance and exist proposal, the Town Engineered re-reviewed the design proposed. He has no opposition to the entrance and exit design that is proposed by the applicant.

Planning Department Comments: (Updated)

The primary application involves a typical conversion from a retail center to a medical office use. There is nothing in the Town's requirements that would prohibit such a conversion the plans meet the requirements established in Section 640 of the Town's Regulations.

However, under Town's Zoning requirements, the primary applicant, Cornell Hill Health Center must provide a minimum of 24 spaces for its medical office use at 2369 Dixwell. The current parking lot configuration does not support the minimum parking requirements established. Accordingly, Cornell Hill Health Center has negotiated a long term parking agreement with the owners of 2389 Dixwell Avenue, who will in turn provide six (6) parking spaces to 2369 Dixwell Avenue in order for the property to comply with the parking requirements.

The six (6) parking spaces and related improvements required to create these spaces are not currently part of the approved site plan for 2389 Dixwell Avenue. The proposed parking area is part of the former trail line and there was not improvements parking or otherwise provided for in the previously approved site plan. While staff has determined that there no barriers to the proposed use, it felt that is would be most appropriate if the Commission voted to amend the approved site plan for 2389 to reflect that the use of the land as parking, and also to ensure that this use would not impact the number or approved spaces for the site primary use. The property is currently vacant, it last approved use was the Alphabet Academy.

*Updated Staff Comments (5.9.22)*

As proposed the Applicant's parking plan complies with the Town's parking requirements under the zoning regulations. The Applicant acknowledges the concerns that were raised by Commission members about parking and will work to secure additional space for employees if need arises, however, the proposed plan does comply with the Town's zoning regulations. Additionally the site has operated as a popular retail destination for a several years with less than the parking that is currently being proposed.

The Applicant has agrees with Commission members that the design for the "outdoor break area" can and should be improved. Such improvements will be condition of approval.

### Recommendation (Updated)

The applications are submitted meet the Site Plan Objectives as stated in Section 720.5 and should not have an adverse impact on the health, safety and welfare of the public. Staff therefore recommend approval of Site Plan 22-1517 for 2369 Dixwell Avenue and Site Plan 22-1516 for 2389 Dixwell Avenue.

Subject to the following conditions:

1. Applicant will provide Planning Staff with detailed signage plan for the Entrance and Exist Point on the property.
2. Applicant will provide Planning Staff with an updated site plan that reflects the Design /Safety Improvements to the “Outdoor Break Area” that is proposed. Improvements shall include bollards and additional screening.
3. Prior to the Issuance of a Zoning Permit, the applicant must:
  - A. Provide a performance bond in an amount approved by the Town Planner and Town Engineer.
4. Prior to the start of construction:
  - A. The owner must provide the GNHWPCA with a complete set of design plans for review and approval and obtain a sewer connection permit prior to starting any work.
  - B. The applicant should notify the RWA at least three days in advance.
  - C. Erosion controls (silt fence, anti-tracking pads, hay bales, etc.) should be installed.
5. During construction:
  - A. Any catch basins in paved areas should be protected through a combination of filter fabric, concrete blocks and gravel or the use of silt sack inserts.
  - B. Any hazardous materials should be recycled or properly disposed of by a licensed waste hauler.
  - C. Erosion controls should be inspected regularly and immediately after rainfall, and maintained and modified as necessary to ensure optimum performance. Erosion controls should be installed around the base of all stockpiles of excavated materials and the pile should be temporarily seeded or covered if it will remain at the site for longer than one month.
  - D. All oil, paint, and other hazardous materials should be stored in a secondary container and placed in a locked indoor area with an impervious floor during no-work hours.
  - E. All work must comply with GNHWPCA standards and specifications.
6. All work on the site must be completed within five years.