

April 7, 2025

Borough of Sayreville
Sayreville Planning Board
167 Main Street
Sayreville, NJ 08872

**Re: Masjid Sadar - Community Center/House of Worship
Preliminary and Final Site Plan
Block 444.04, Lots 23, 24, 25 and 28
216 Ernston Road, Sayreville, NJ
Planning Review #1**

Dear Board Members:

In accordance with your authorization, our office has reviewed materials for the above-referenced development application including the following:

- Borough of Sayreville Standard Development Application and Preliminary Major Subdivision and Site Plan Checklist;
- Preliminary and Final Site Plan prepared by AWZ Engineering, dated February 4, 2022, last revised April 7, 2025;
- Architectural Plans, prepared by Vision Design and Development, dated January 25, 2023, last revised April 3, 2025;
- A traffic engineering letter prepared by Stimmel engineering, dated April 1, 2025;
- A traffic engineering review letter prepared by Brightview Engineering, dated October 11, 2024.
- Building space and usage reports; and
- Numerous additional documents, including previous iterations of the site plans, architectural plans, reports, review letters and related application materials.

We offer the following comments for the Board's consideration:

1. Project Description

The proposed project site, located at 216 Ernston Road, Sayreville, New Jersey ("Subject Property"), is located within the R-7 Residential Zone. The proposed project includes the demolition of the existing structures and the construction of a three-story 44,391 square-foot house of worship. Additional uses include mens and womens prayer rooms, classrooms, mens and womens exercise areas, a gymnasium, a multi-purpose hall, boys and girls activity halls, cafeteria, kitchen, and a below grade parking area. Additional proposed improvements on-site include landscaping, surface parking, drive aisles, lighting and stormwater management infrastructure.

2. Site Description and Surrounding Uses

The property fronts on Ernston Road to the south and is bounded to the east, north and west by single-family residential uses. Medical office, single-family residential, and the ingress/egress to a cemetery exist across Ernston Road to the south. Roadways bounding the site include Ernston Road, Parkway Place, Louis Street and Center Avenue. Existing improvements on the 2.49-acre tract include existing structure being utilized as the current house of worship (previously utilized as an attorney's office with an accessory dwelling unit), two single-family homes, accessory buildings, parking area, lawn area, vegetation/trees and associated improvements. There is a two-way ingress/egress along Ernston Road, which provides access to the site. In order to avoid a duplication of efforts, please see the Planning Board Engineer's review letter, dated February 21, 2024, for a detailed history of the site.

3. Master Plan

The Borough's 2013 Master Plan identifies the Subject Property as Medium Density Residential. This designation is consistent with the zoning.

4. Zoning Compliance

The proposed project is located within the R-7 Single-Family Residential Zone. Houses of worship are listed conditional uses within this Zone. The Ordinance notes the following regarding the house of worship conditional use:

Houses of worship shall be permitted as a conditional use in all zoning districts in compliance with the following:

- (a) Compliance with Zoning Schedule III at the end of this chapter.
- (b) Screening and landscaping shall be provided where necessary to minimize the development's impact on adjacent properties.

Variances:

A total of five variances are required for this project, as outlined below.

1. As a total of 250 parking spaces are required for the proposed project, and 107 are provided a variance is required.
2. As monument signs must be setback a minimum of half of the front yard setback, which would be a minimum of 25 feet as the setback for signage, and the proposed sign is set back 12.5 feet, a variance is required.
3. As Ordinance Section 26-82.6.3 states that accessory structures in all zone districts shall be at least ten (10) feet from any other structure on the same lot, excluding patios, and the proposed minaret is 7.14 feet from the proposed principal building a variance is required.
4. As Ordinance Section 26-96.1.e. states that all roofs on one (1) and two (2) story principal buildings in residential districts should be pitched and that flat roofs shall not be permitted, and since portions of the proposed building feature a flat roof, a variance is required.
5. As Ordinance Section 26-98.1.b.8. states that no off-street parking or loading area shall be located in a minimum required front yard setback area, and since parking spaces are proposed within the minimum required front yard setback area, a variance is required.

The applicant should be prepared to provide testimony on the following to support variance relief, as applicable:

- a) Positive Criteria
 - i) Purpose of Municipal Land Use Law will be promoted by the proposed deviation; and
 - ii) The benefits of the deviation substantially outweigh the detriments.
- b) Negative Criteria
 - i) The proposed deviation will not result in a substantial detriment to the public welfare; and
 - ii) The proposed deviation will not substantially impair the intent and purpose of the master plan and the zoning ordinance

Waivers:

A listing of required waivers are included in the Board Engineer's review letter for this project. We concur with the Board Engineer in terms of the waivers identified. We reserve the right to provide additional comments if additional variances or waivers are identified.

5. Planning Comments

The applicant has met with the Board's professionals on several occasions and has addressed a number of the Board Engineer's and previous Board Planner's concerns. Based upon Acuity Consulting Services's review, we offer the following comments, which pertain to remaining questions and planning issues to be discussed at the public hearing.

- A. The applicant should provide testimony to describe the mix of uses proposed within the building, including which uses may operate simultaneously and which would not. The hours of operation on-site should also be discussed.
- B. As house of worship, recreational, and assembly uses are proposed on varying schedules within the proposed project, the applicant should provide testimony regarding peak usage hours by day of the week along with a description of how the usage may fluctuate, depending on the time of year.
- C. The applicant should confirm whether any large scale events will take place within the building and, in particular, within the multi-purpose hall.
- D. Parking and Traffic:
 - 1. The applicant should provide testimony regarding the fluctuations in parking demand that correspond to the peak hours of usage as it pertains to the mix of uses described above.
 - 2. With respect to any planned events and/or peak usage time frames, the Applicant should provide testimony regarding the following:
 - a. The anticipated number of attendees for each event,
 - b. The anticipated parking demand on-site and off-site for each event,

- c. Strategies for traffic control at each event,
 - d. Whether the Applicant is amenable to the use of shuttle buses between off-site parking and the Subject Property during events, and
 - e. Any anticipated off-site impacts to area roadways and nearby intersections during each event.
3. The usage of off-site parking areas should be discussed as it pertains to operations, timing, pedestrian movements, any drop-off or pick-up movements/operations, and related considerations.
 4. Testimony should be provided regarding the use of the proposed tandem parking spaces in the underground parking area with respect to whether those spaces will be assigned to staff or others that may be at the building for extended periods of time, operation/use of the tandem spaces in terms of vehicle access and movement, and related aspects.
 5. The Borough's Ordinance requires that non-residential buildings include one (1) off-street loading space for the 1st 25,000 sq. ft. of building area and one (1) additional loading space shall be provided for each additional 15,000 sq. ft. of building area. In addition, each loading space must be 12 feet in width by 50 feet in length. The Applicant is requesting a waiver for this item. While the proposed mix of uses is not anticipated to require substantial loading and unloading activities, the applicant should describe any types of deliveries, loading/unloading, frequency, and associated delivery vehicle size.
 6. The applicant should discuss the location of any proposed EV charging station parking spaces.
 7. A letter from Sridosa Place, dated December 10, 2024 indicates that the owner 3 Johnson Lane, Sayreville, New Jersey, is willing to provide 22 parking spaces off-site during the 12–3 p.m. time period on Fridays to augment the proposed parking located on the Subject Property. The applicant should discuss any subsequent conversations with this property owner and describe how the usage of offsite parking would operate.
 8. The applicant should discuss any correspondence with local fire and emergency services officials and summarize any discussion had to date regarding emergency services vehicle access and maneuvering on-site.
- E. It is our understanding that outdoor lighting will be shut off when the house of worship is not in use (presumably except for any minimum amount of security lighting that may be needed). The Applicant should provide testimony regarding the time frames when the lighting will be shut, the type of lighting fixtures as it pertains to the minimization of light spillage off-site, and related aspects.
- F. The Applicant should confirm whether roof mounted mechanical equipment will be screened from public view.
- G. As the roof access is accessible from a third floor hallway and the Boys Youth Activity Hall is located on the same floor, the Applicant should provide testimony regarding restriction of roof access.
- H. Landscaping
1. Ordinance Section 26-82.10 requires that, where a non-residential use abuts any residential use or residentially-zoned lot, a fifty (50) foot wide landscaped buffer shall be provided between the two uses on the non-residential property, so as to continuously restrict views from the residential property. The applicant should provide testimony regarding whether the proposed landscaping plan provides sufficient screening so as to continuously restrict views from the surrounding residential properties. It is recommended that cross section or perspective views be provided to

demonstrate the efficacy of the proposed screening in order to confirm whether additional screening is needed.

2. Compliance with Ordinance section 26-96.7 should be discussed as it pertains to landscape design requirements.
 3. Compliance with street tree requirements should be discussed.
- I. The applicant should discuss whether any equipment may be used that emits any type of sound outside of the proposed building.
 - J. The applicant should discuss how large vehicles such as fire safety vehicles and solid waste disposal vehicles will traverse the site. We defer to the Sayreville Borough Fire official regarding the review and approval of the fire truck design vehicle and the associated circulation movements.
 - K. It is our understanding that the applicant may be exempt from Affordable Housing Non-Residential Development Fees; however, we recommend that the Applicant file to obtain confirmation of exemption as part of resolution compliance.

We reserve the right to present additional comments, variances, and/or design waivers pending the receipt of revised plans and/or the testimony of the applicant before the Board. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Very truly yours,

Acuity Consulting Services



Peter Van den Kooy, PP, AICP
Planning Board Planner