

# T H E C O R B I N D I S T R I C T

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ARB Presentation

3.6.18



B E I N F I E L D A R C H I T E C T U R E

# INTRODUCTION



The organic growth of downtown Darien has been constrained by two major transportation projects. In the 1800's, the railway bisected the town, severing the connective fabric of the village, and in the 1950's, the construction of Interstate 95 became another barrier to the development of the downtown. These interventions limited downtown Darien's potential to develop a vital downtown shopping district. Recently implemented treescape improvements to the Boston Post Road have successfully enhanced the downtown, but the traffic associated with Route 1 remains an obstacle to the creation of a vital, pedestrian-oriented downtown district. Infill projects on Grove Street and Day Street have successfully added to the downtown district, with a positive mix of uses, and pedestrian-oriented scale.



For the past 50 years, Main Streets in America have been eroded by the forces of suburban sprawl. The wholesome virtues, and the sense of community that for centuries was nurtured by the social interactions and culture of small towns has become endangered in this country. The Baywater project represents an important opportunity to reverse that trend in Darien, and enable future residents of Darien to benefit by having a downtown that embodies the traditional charms of a New England downtown.

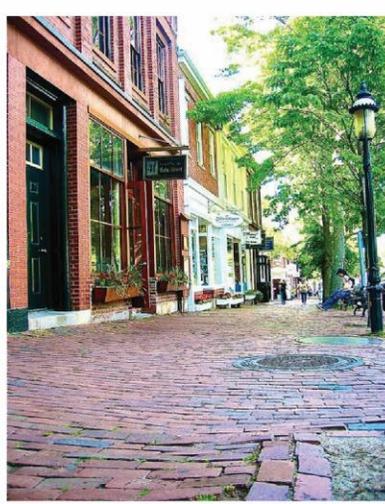


The re-development of the Corbin Block represents an important opportunity to reinforce Darien's downtown as the vibrant, pedestrian-oriented center of town. Street level retail and restaurant uses will add critical mass to the shopping district. Residents will live in a truly walkable community in which they can commute by train to New York City, go to the grocery store, clothes shopping or out to dinner and the movies, without needing their cars.

The architectural concept is to endow this place with the spirit of an early coastal New England town.



One of the most enduring charms of New England is its collection of small coastal towns that were constructed hundreds of years ago and continue to resonate as they reflect thought patterns and sensibilities that have become largely forgotten. places like Stonington, Mystic, Essex, New Bedford, Nantucket, Newburyport, Chatham, Salem, Marblehead, Portsmouth, and Edgartown, are living museums in which you can feel the rich early history of colonial America, and in which the spirit of small town America still resides.



As architects practicing in New England, we have been influenced by place, culture, and history. Our contextual sensibilities are informed by the timeless and essential meanings found in the stark, simple, patterned forms of early New England architecture. It is an architecture of distilled images, which attempts to bridge between the distant past and the present, exploring varying degrees of abstraction along the way. A career of architectural explorations revolving around the intersection of past and the future, and a passionate pursuit of finding meaning is being fully exercised in our attempt to breathe life into this place.

# SITE PLAN



## Main Street & Town Green:

The project includes two classic elements of traditional New England towns. A town green and a Main Street. The planning takes cues from great old European villages with the creation of a variety of public spaces that ask to be discovered and explored.

Corbin Drive is ideally suited to take on the role of “Main Street.” Its location at the center of the shopping district, and perpendicular orientation to the Boston Post Road, along with its scale and relatively low traffic count, give it the proper ingredients. The current Center Street Municipal Parking Lot, along with expanded on-street parking, and over 700 spaces to be provided below grade and on the Corbin block will provide the required parking resource to support the proposed program. Both sides of Corbin Drive, and the South side of the Boston Post Road are to be lined with two- and three-story buildings with shops and restaurants on the first floor, and residences above, creating an active streetscape.

## PUBLIC SPACES



On the Corbin block a variety of outdoor public spaces are to be created to provide a new heart for the downtown district. The primary space is the Town Green that is over three times the size of Grove Street Plaza. It is part of a series of courtyards that total more than 7 times the area of Grove Street Plaza, by comparison. For special events, like concerts by The Rolling Stones, the functional area of the Town Green can be more than doubled in area by closing off an interior drive to vehicles. These outdoor courtyards were inspired by the types of outdoor spaces found in medieval European cities, that encourage walkability, by asking to be explored. Restaurant uses in this plan are clustered around the central green to bring active uses to the center of the district. On grade parking is provided as a buffer along the Interstate, and along the internal streets that are created. 300 additional spaces are provided in a parking structure that is totally hidden from view by retail and residential uses that wrap around it. An office building is positioned to acoustically buffer the outdoor spaces from the noise of I-95. That building has an Uber drop-off area associated with its main entrance, which will also serve shoppers and diners as ridesharing usage increases.

# CORBIN DRIVE



**EAST SIDE**



**WEST SIDE**

## Simple New England Charm:

The architectural vocabulary is derived from the simple charm and character of New England towns. The building form does not read as one large structure, but as an assemblage of buildings that were constructed incrementally over time. The design offers both diversity and continuity of architectural form, with the buildings as a backdrop for a vital pedestrian streetscape. The pattern of windows in the building facades has been studied and composed with scale proportion balance and rhythm in mind. The windows are typically taller than they are wide, as was typical in buildings built prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The goal is to have both harmony and diversity.

# POST ROAD ELEVATION



The buildings and the placemaking strategies are designed to fit into the existing fabric of the downtown. The bank building next to 1020 Boston Post Road is designed as a companion to that structure, that shares a similar style to complete the block facing the Post Road, east of Corbin Drive. A brick mill building type has been introduced to house the retail anchor closest to exit 11. Townhomes line the southern most section of Corbin Drive to transition from the retail core to the surrounding community.

## VILLAGE GREEN



There a hierarchy of different building typologies that respond to the traditional building types in downtown districts. Most of the buildings are simple background structures that contribute by fitting in, with more prominent foreground buildings placed as architectural focal points, where dictated by axial relationships.

AERIAL

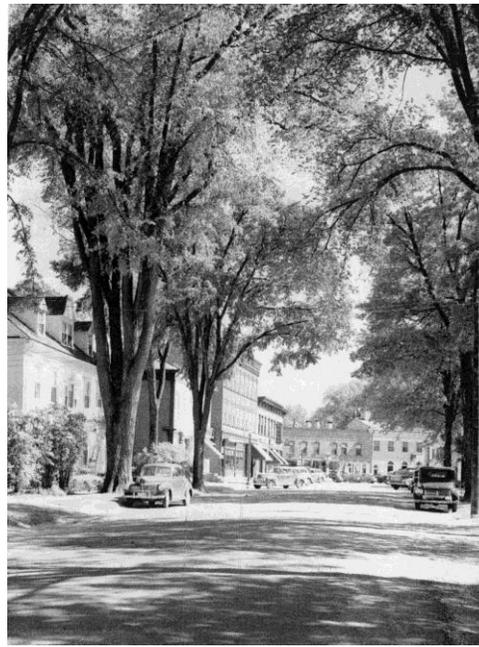


# CHARACTER STUDIES



## REFERENCES

We have studied and drawn on the architectural heritage of these special places, with the hope of endowing this district in Darien with a spirit that speaks of coastal New England. To that end an important resource has been the work of Samuel Chamberlain who celebrated these special places in a wonderful collection of photographic essays back in the 1940s before the landscape of New England was transformed by the forces of suburban sprawl that followed.

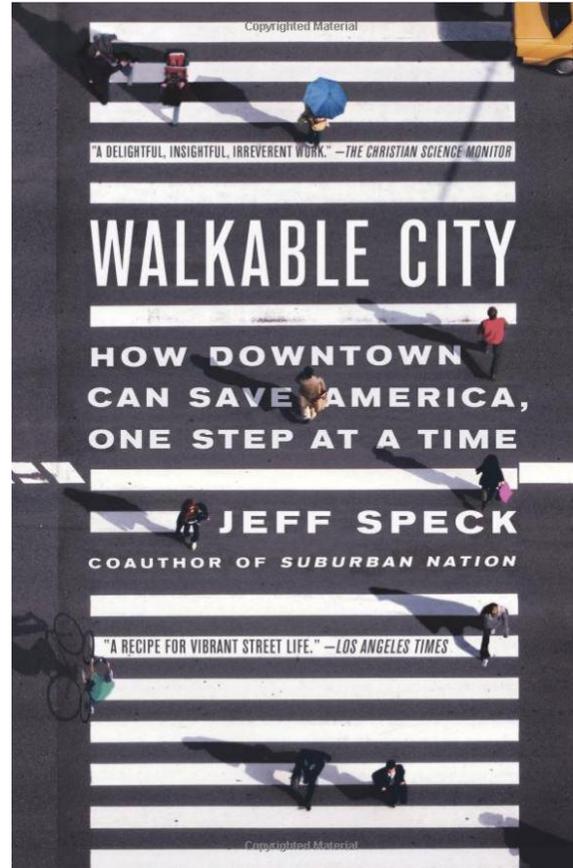


“The colonists brought a sound tradition of building with them from the old country. The dwellings they erected were simple enough, but in their very simplicity they possessed a beauty that time has enhanced rather than marred, and this because their builders had respect for the essentials, the fundamentals, of architecture: honest materials, indigenous to the land; a sense of proportion; good design; and a practical regard for function and environment. The sum of these is style.”

Samuel Chamberlain 1942

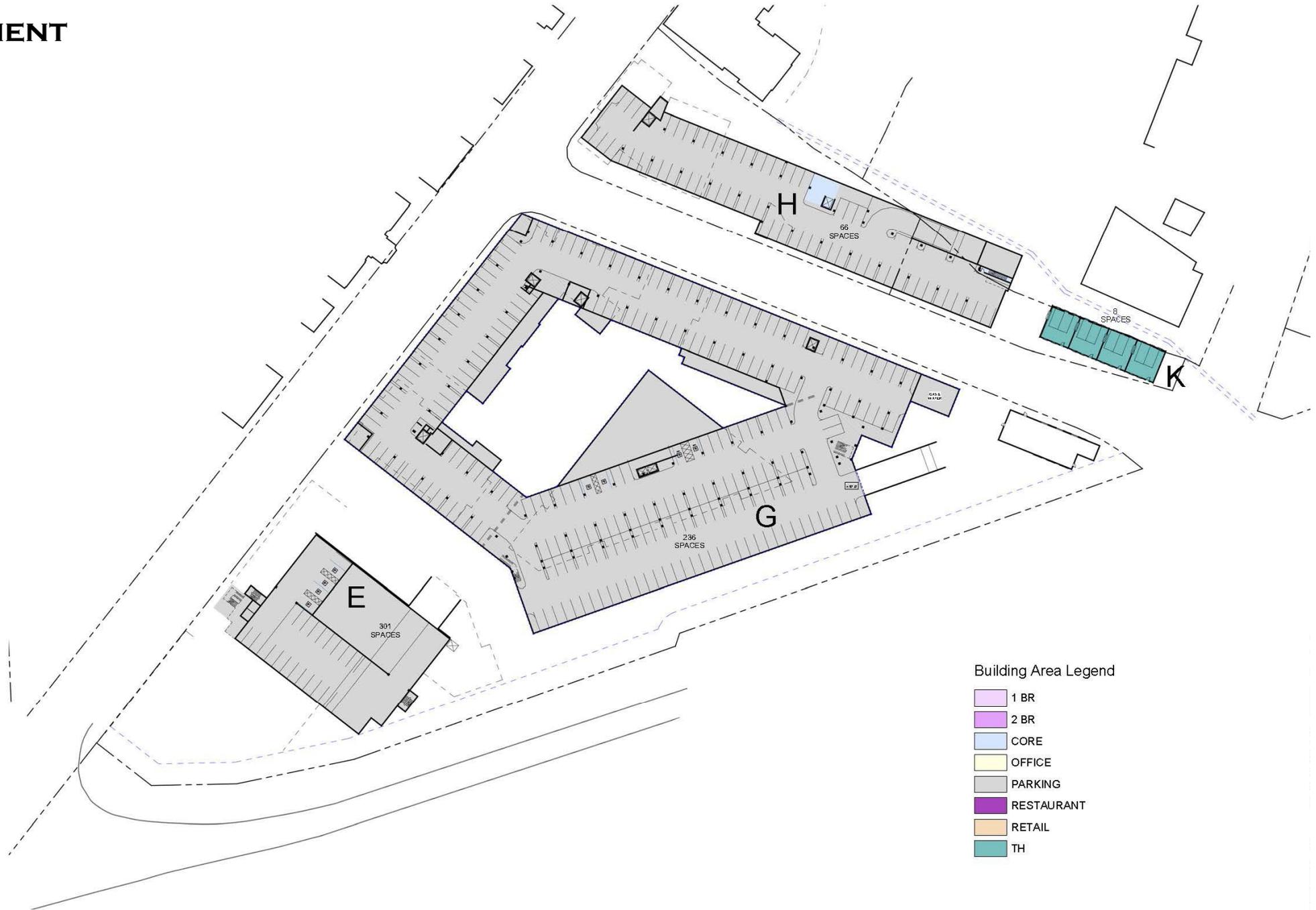
## REFERENCES

“The essence and charm of Nantucket are embodied in its well preserved architecture representing many past generations, in the underlying harmony and subtle diversity of the buildings.”



Another valuable resource has been a well-researched set of guidelines that the Nantucket Historic Commission produced, aimed at preserving the distinctive character of that island. The architectural vocabulary, and architectural design principles of scale, proportion, balance, rhythm, and order articulated in that volume have informed our design process. The fact that Nantucket is a favorite summer destination for the residents of lower Fairfield County, reinforced this design approach. An additional important resource is a book written by our friend and associate Jeff Speck, “Walkable City, how downtown can save America one step at a time.” In that book Jeff has shared a lifetime of observation guidance on the recipe for bringing life to a downtown district.

# BASEMENT LEVEL



Building Area Legend

- 1 BR
- 2 BR
- CORE
- OFFICE
- PARKING
- RESTAURANT
- RETAIL
- TH

# STREET LEVEL PLAN



## Building Area Legend

- 1 BR
- 2 BR
- CORE
- OFFICE
- PARKING
- RESTAURANT
- RETAIL
- TH

# LEVEL 2 PLAN



## Building Area Legend

- 1 BR
- 2 BR
- CORE
- OFFICE
- PARKING
- RESTAURANT
- RETAIL
- TH

# LEVEL 3 PLAN



Building Area Legend

- 1 BR
- 2 BR
- CORE
- OFFICE
- PARKING
- RESTAURANT
- RETAIL
- TH

# LEVEL 4 PLAN



Building Area Legend

- 1 BR
- 2 BR
- CORE
- OFFICE
- PARKING
- RESTAURANT
- RETAIL
- TH

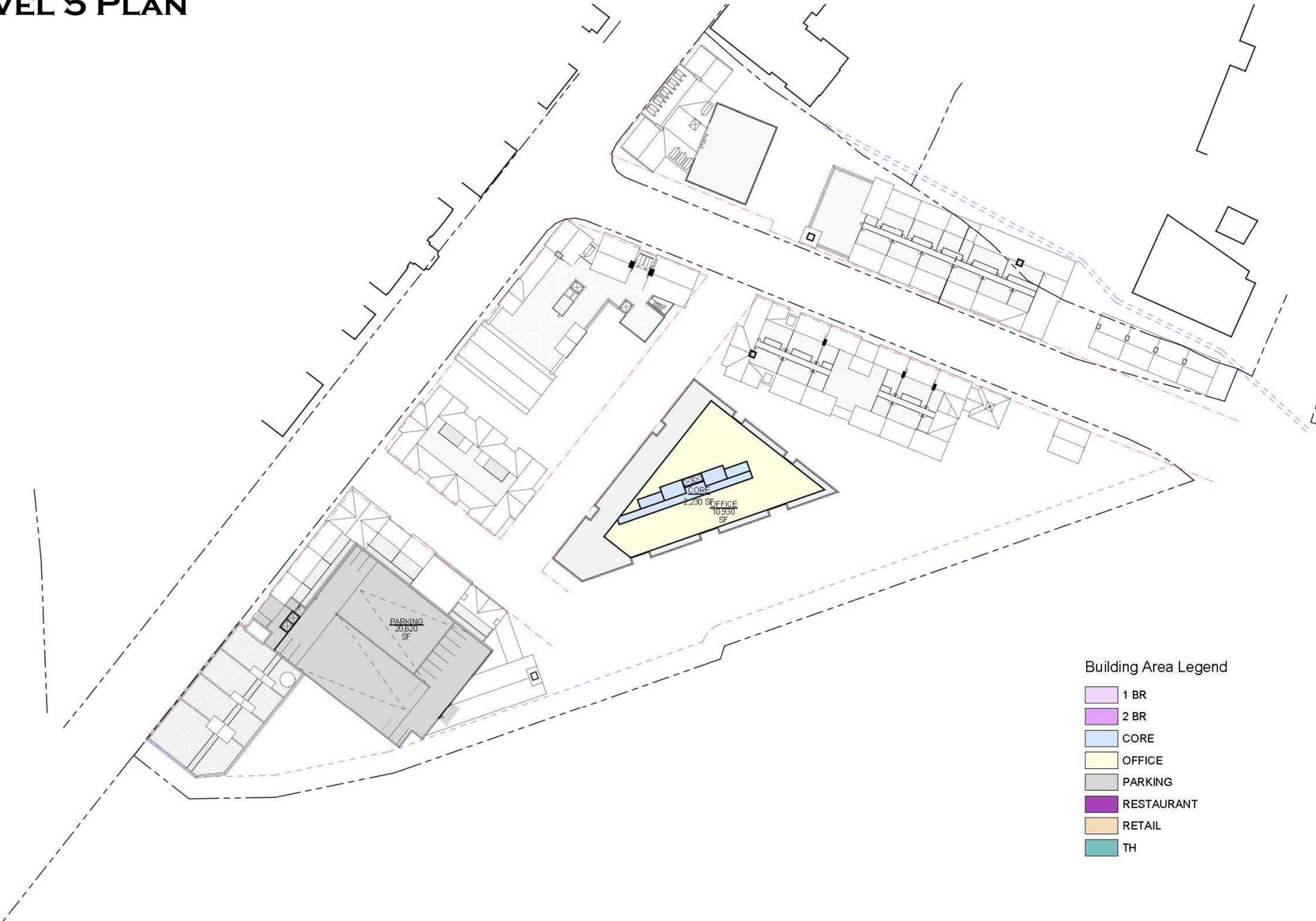
PARKING  
20,620 SF

OFFICE  
2,730 SF

CORE  
2,240 SF

OFFICE  
18,680 SF

# LEVEL 5 PLAN



Building Area Legend

- 1 BR
- 2 BR
- CORE
- OFFICE
- PARKING
- RESTAURANT
- RETAIL
- TH

**LEVEL 6 PLAN**

