

Re: 51 Islington St
Meeting: Zoning Board of Adjustment
Date: November 21, 2023
Pictures at end (pages 3 and 4)

Dear Members of the Zoning Board of Adjustments,

November 17, 2023

A brief history of 51 Islington St. In 1997 the building had 6 commercial units, shown as 9000 sf of retail, 3000 sf of office space and 26 residential units. Minimum parking needed was: Retail = 30 spaces, Office space= 9 spaces and Residential = 39 spaces. A total of 32 spaces were provided. Parking overflowed into the neighborhood.

The proposal for 51 Islington St is missing some important information in determining if the desired Special Exception be granted regarding the use. It is NOT shown how many of the other FIVE businesses in the building used the 3 spaces out front, as part of their parking minimums. Anticipating that the other 5 businesses use the spaces out front only once an hour that would mean there are currently NO spaces available out front, much less if any of the 26 residential units have company. ALL OVERFLOW GOES INTO ISLINGTON CREEK's FREE PARKING as opposed to the paid Foundry Garage.

This proposal does NOT meet the required **minimum off-street parking spaces of 1 per 400 sf.** It is stated there are 898 sf, which is a minimum of three spaces **off-street parking spaces** must be provided. **They are providing none.** The truth is that the parking needed is more likely to be 7 to 10 spaces per hour.

At least one of the businesses in this building has repeatedly shared at other meetings they have 9 employees of which most park in the neighborhood and they use the spaces out front regularly. To my knowledge the on site spaces in the rear are designated to specific units. **Are any of them designated for the commercial units?**

What is being proposed is the three spaces out front would be used exclusively by this business. Some things to consider beside the lack of out front parking would be **the actual number of parking variances provided to the other businesses in this building. Proof that the spaces out front are exclusively for those in the building and enforced as such.** There is a sign that states 2 hour parking not 51 Islington St only. Looking at the history of this building it shows that the Bridge St lot was supposed to be used for the overflow. However, since the city boards have repeatedly allowed no or reduced parking for many of the buildings going in downtown, the Bridge St Lot and Islington Creek are full of cars most days and the Foundry Garage has been repeatedly shown it will be at capacity within the next 3 years based on previous numbers shown regarding the former Neighborhood Parking Program for Islington Creek.

10.232.32 impact on the surrounding area cannot be met. As more and more businesses and residential units are being added and NOT meeting minimum parking requirements along Islington St and downtown, most of that overflow has caused an EXPONENTIAL change in parking in Islington Creek and along Islington St. Any home that has little or no parking is losing value every year. 40 years ago the parking was tight but sharable. Now if a neighborhood resident goes to the dentist when they come back they may walk two to three blocks to find a parking space, sometimes having to circle the neighborhood a few times for a space. Property values have gone up generally in Portsmouth but if anyone can find a house with at least 1 parking space they will take that over one without one, **thereby reducing the value of those homes.** Parking is an issue when deciding where to live. This parking overflow which will be added to by this business makes the Special Exception questionable.

The proposal states: "10.232.24 Traffic Safety and Congestion: My business will not create any traffic safety hazard or substantially increase traffic congestion. **My clients and staff will have ample parking options along Islington Street and the nearby parking garages.** We will encourage appointment-based scheduling to manage the flow of visitors efficiently. There are three street parking spaces in front of the building **that are assigned to the building,** however they are not assigned specifically to Unit 3. 1 clients can use."

Based on the use of the 3 spaces out front there will be no parking available and it is not considered off-street as required by the ordinance. *The client's from this business will likely attempt to park for free and will add to the already increased circling of cars looking for spaces in the Islington Creek Neighborhood. This circling has been brought up repeatedly by residents regarding the concern for children, residents being subjected to excess air pollution and noise. Circling for parking is distracted driving, the driver focuses on parking spaces not other things happening around them.* This business CAN NOT meet the parking minimum! There are no spaces between Maplewood and 51 Islington, 51 has three spaces for 2 hour parking, then 4 spaces for 30 minutes by Robbins Auto Body of which one handicap. Tanner and Parker St have no parking on each street. Pearl St has limited parking. Parking will be an issue for clients as well as employees unless the business is proactive regarding this issue. **Please see the pictures at the end.**

Please do not approve this Special Exception until the off-street parking requirement has been met and resolved. Questions such as how many parking variances, CUP or special exceptions have been given to the existing commercial units in the building for how many spaces. Who uses the 3 spaces? Impact of circling and values of no parking spaces properties. It is NOT the donut hole but the WHOLE donut. Starting below the minimum and then adding more and more reductions to this building has an exponential impact on the neighborhood. It is not just 3 spaces, it's 50 or 60!

Some strict stipulations regarding parking may be able to be assigned and enforced. The first could be the business must provide parking in the Foundry Garage for all employees including the managers/owners or employees must purchase a **parking permit** for the Foundry Garage, city inspection or enforcement department every month for either option. The second could be for the business to contact the 26 residents in the building and find out if they would be willing to provide **shared parking** with the business. The third could be to encourage clients to park in the Bridge St lot if possible or the Foundry Garage since they will provide appointment based scheduling to manage the flow of visitors by providing reductions to those who use them. The fourth could be to **limit the business hours to be closed from 5 to 7 PM weekdays** to allow residents of Islington Creek time to get home from work and park near their homes. This would likely add to increased neighborhood support, who could walk to the business. This could be another neighborhood friendly business as some of the others are, working to keep their customers out of the neighborhood and growing their neighborhood support and business.

Spaces out front-Full as usual! Please see other pictures regarding available parking at the end.



Thank you for considering the impact of all parking relating to all proposals coming before you. NO ONE is keeping track of how many times not meeting the minimums have passed various boards. Please do not approve this until parking has been resolved. Be part of the solution. Please don't add to the problem.

Respectfully,
Elizabeth Bratter
159 McDonough St and 342 Cabot St Property owner

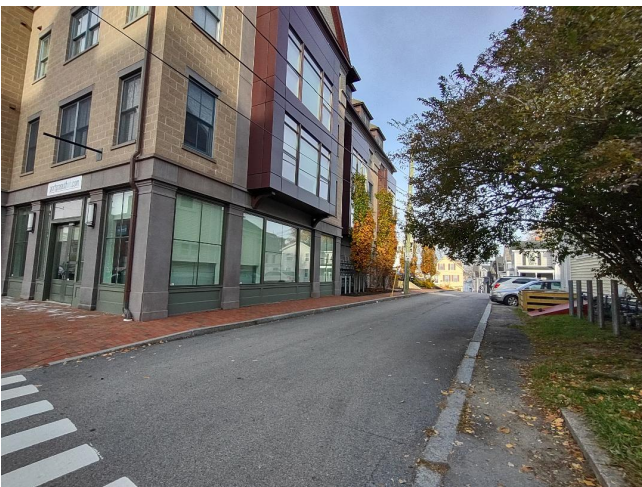
In front of 51 Islington St, **no private parking sign**. Parking minimum cannot be met.



No parking allowed on Parker St, to the left of 51 Islington



No parking allowed on Tanner St to the right of 51 Islington



Parking in front of next business (Robbins Auto Body) is 1 handicap and 3 spaces, all 30 minutes only.



Pearl St, one block down from 51 Islington, has no parking on one side and six spots in front of multi-unit buildings which are almost always full



There is no parking on-site parking available and really no off-site parking as well. Please do not approve this Special Exception until the parking minimum has been met, much less the other realistic spaces needed and impacts on the neighborhood by adding more clients and employees to the neighborhood.

From: [Robin Husslage](#)
To: [Planning Info](#)
Cc: [Andrew Bagley](#)
Subject: BOA Meeting 11/21/2023 - Ashley Stearns/LLC (Applicant)
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 9:11:49 PM

Related to the request of Ashley Stearns/LLC (applicant) and Joan T. Jones Revocable Trust (Owner)

Dear Portsmouth Board of Adjustment,

I live in the neighborhood where 51 Islington is located and where we have a well-known parking problem due to our proximity to the downtown area of Portsmouth. I am concerned about parking issues which this business may exacerbate.

Ashley Stearns of Blush LLC stated that there is no dedicated parking for her business located at Unit 3, 51 Islington Street. So, I have a few Questions:

1. How many employees does she anticipate will be at her place of business at any given time? And, how many clients does she anticipate will be at her business at any given time – being served in her 3 treatment rooms, those waiting to be served in her 3 treatment rooms, and those shopping for professional skincare, cosmetics and small boutique gift items? My guestimate would be 3 technicians, 1 receptionist, 3 clients in rooms, 3 clients waiting for a room, and 2 shoppers in the boutique -- 10 to 12 people at any given time likely driving 10-12 cars needing a parking spot, from 9am to 7pm.
2. Where will she and her employees be parking...since it is unlikely the 3 parking spots in front of the 51 Islington Street building will be available? I walk down Islington street nearly every day, right past the parking spots for this building, and it is rare to see a single spot open, which is also true for the rest of Islington Street.
3. She referenced nearby parking garages—does this mean she will be purchasing parking passes there for her and her employees to park or will they search our neighborhood, which is closer to her place of business, for all-day free parking? I hope she will take advantage of the Downtown Workforce Parking Program at the Foundry Garage offering \$3/10-hour

parking session per day, rather than taking up parking spots in our residential neighborhood.

4. Where will her clients park? Will they pay to park at the parking garages 4 or more blocks away, or will they instead seek out free parking without time limits on our neighborhood streets?

This is not meant to deter this business from doing business at this location. I am voicing a real concern for the worsening parking issues in our neighborhood due to the current lack of a residential parking program to protect the residents living in a neighborhood negatively impacted by the encroaching growth of downtown Portsmouth into our dense residential neighborhoods containing houses mostly built without off-street parking due to being built 100+ years ago.

Thanks for considering this very real concern.

Respectfully,

Robin Huslage
27 Rock Street

From: [Nicole LaPierre](#)
To: [Planning Info](#)
Subject: 51 Islington proposed business
Date: Saturday, November 18, 2023 8:00:45 AM

Dear Members of the Zoning Board of Adjustments,
I am writing regarding the proposed move of the business Blush, Skin, & Soul Spa. While it sounds like a great business and would be a nice addition to the neighborhood there is the enormous issue of parking. For many years I have advocated for a parking program in the Islington Creek Neighborhood. I believe the pilot we had would have been able to accommodate this business but without it there is absolutely not ample parking to accommodate this business. My neighbor has made the following observations that I wholeheartedly agree with:

1. There is no sign to indicate that the 3 parking spots in front of 51 Islington are for residents of 51 Islington Street only. There is just a sign stating "2 Hour Parking".
2. There is no parking allowed on either side of the street on Parker Street, the street to the immediate left of 51 Islington Street
3. There also doesn't appear to be any parking allowed on either side of Tanner Street which is to the immediate right of 51 Islington Street.
4. There is no parking on Islington allowed from Maplewood up until you reach the 3 spots in front of 51 Islington.
5. Moving down Islington Street after the 3 spots in front of 51 Islington Street, there are just 4 spots in front of Robbins Auto Parts and these spots are designated as 1 spot for Handicap and 3 spots for 30-minute only parking.

What all of this says is that there is really NO parking available immediately surrounding 51 Islington St unless you go into the Islington Creek neighborhood to park on residential streets for free parking.

It is incredibly frustrating that the issue of parking in our wonderful neighborhood goes unaddressed. And sadly, the result is allowing this business to move to 51 Islington will result in unwanted issues.

Best,
Nicole LaPierre
44 Rock Street