

MAR 15 2024

CITY OF PROVIDENCE
BUILDING BOARD OF REVIEWDate: March 15, 2024

To the Building Board of Review:

Petition for variation or modification of the application of certain provisions of the Rhode Island State Building Code:

Owner: Trinity Academy For The Performing Arts Tel. No. (401) 432-7881Address: 275 Westminster Street, Providence, RI Zip Code 02903Applicant: Signal Works Architecture Tel. No. (401) 400-2724Address: 11 Aleppo Street, Providence, RI Zip Code 02909

Lessee: _____ Tel. No. _____

Address: _____ Zip Code _____

1. Location of subject property: 275 Westminster Street
2. Assessor's Plat(s) 25 Lot(s) 347
3. Dimensions: Lot # 347 frontage 77' depth 105' area 8,085 sq. ft.
Lot # - frontage - depth - area - sq. ft.
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4. Zoning District(s): D-1-120, Overlay District: DD, I-3E
5. Present Use of Premises (each lot): School/Education (floors 1-3), Office/ Business (floors 4-5)

6. Legal Use of Premises as recorded in the Department of Inspection & Standards:
Office, Retail, Chapel

7. Proposed Use of Premises School / Education on all floors
8. Type of Construction existing 3B (200), proposed 3A (211)
9. Are the Premises located within the Historic District: Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, have the plans been approved by the Providence Historic District Commission?

Yes ☐ No ☒

10. Are there outstanding violations concerning the:
- ☐ RI State Building Code
- ☐ Zoning Ordinance
- ☐ Housing Code

11. The undersigned hereby applies for a variation or modification of the application of the requirements of the following Section(s) or Table(s):

Relief is being requested from (T504.4) to allow Educational Occupancy on the 5th Floor of a Type IIIA (211) building.

The rating on the building structure is being upgraded to ensure it meets IIIA throughout the building.

12. State briefly the proposed change of use or alterations and explain the variations or modifications sought. Be specific as to the uses within the building. (Use additional sheets if necessary.)

****Please see the attached memorandum titled "TAPA 5th Floor Relief Memo" dated 03/15/2024.****

Trinity Academy of the Performing Arts is a charter school in Providence giving students in grades 7 through 12 a Performing Arts Based education. In 2019, they converted the historic 275 Westminster Street from Offices (Business Use) to Educational, as they occupied the lower levels of the building. They have acquired approval from RIDE to expand their charter to include 5th & 6th grades, and to do so need to renovate their existing building.

The proposed building will only house the high school students on the newly renovated 5th floor, and lower grades would be within the base floor levels which are allowed by the code by-right. There is a combination theater / cafeteria assembly space on the ground level, and there are also vocational educational classrooms (for theater, music, film and dance) spread throughout the lower and upper levels.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature(s) of Property Owner(s):



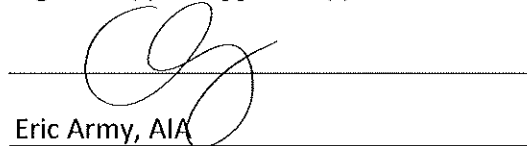
Elizabeth Richards-Hegnauer, Head of School

Address:

275 Westminster Street

Providence, RI 02903

Signature(s) of Applicant(s):



Eric Army, AIA

Address:

11 Aleppo Street

Providence, RI 02909

Please Note: Unless all requirements listed on the instruction sheet are complied with, this application will not be accepted.

TAPA 5th Floor Relief Memo

March 15, 2024

Regarding: 275 Westminster Street, Providence, RI

Overview

Trinity Academy of the Performing Arts is a charter school in Providence giving students in grades 7 through 12 a Performing Arts Based education. In 2019, they converted the historic 275 Westminster Street from Offices (Business Use) to Educational, as they occupied the lower levels of the building. They have acquired approval from RIDE to expand their charter to include 5th & 6th grades, and to do so need to renovate their existing building.

The proposed building will only house the high school students on the newly renovated 5th floor, and lower grades would be within the base floor levels which are allowed by the code by-right. There is a combination theater / cafeteria assembly space on the ground level, and there are also vocational educational classrooms (for theater, music, film and dance) spread throughout the lower and upper levels.

Relief Request

Relief is being requested from (T504.4) to allow Educational Occupancy on the 5th Floor of a Type IIIA (211) building.

-The rating on the building structure is being upgraded to ensure it meets IIIA, but a more intensive rating would require all existing floor framing to be removed, which is not feasible.


-It should be noted that this occupancy *is* allowed by Fire Code, and this proposed condition has been reviewed by the local Fire Marshal with no objection.

The building had previously received relief from this board (Resolution 19-08) as well as the State Fire board (File No 190060) for Guard Rail Height & Handrail Graspability of existing stairs.

Mitigating Factors

As the building is historic, the code gives the Board of Appeals latitude on applying standards, if the building is judged safe by the local code official. (The building is listed as a "contributing structure" in the Downtown Providence Historic District (one of the listed districts in the NPS' National Register of Historic Places).

Most building types would rely on the State Rehab Code (or in other jurisdictions the International Existing Building Code), however the rehab code does not apply to schools, and the IEBC is not currently adopted. These model codes grant by-right relief from this section when a building is not changing to a higher hazard class by-right. However this shows a precedent for this type of request, especially if a reasonable level of safety is demonstrated.



It is feasible to build a code-compliant 4-story school building in such a way that key egress factors such as Total Travel Distance and Common Path of Travel far exceed what this building does. The fact is, the building code is written for big new buildings not small existing ones. Our building, even while occupying the 5th floor, will have shorter egress distances than a code-compliant 4 story school.

The following sections demonstrate areas where we are substantially lower than code requirements:

A 4-story building could be built 40% higher, 90% larger, with travel distance 60% longer, with exits 34% closer together, with 57% longer common path of travel.

Code Section	Required	Proposed	Improvement	
Total Travel Distance	200ft	120ft max	40% less	
Common Path of Travel	100ft	43ft max	57% less	
Dead End Corridor	50ft	29' max	42% less	
Separation of Exits	33% of diagonal	67% of diagonal	34% better	
Floor Height	85ft	49ft 8in	42% better	
Floor Area	70,500sf	7,443sf	90% safer	

Additionally, while safety is paramount in schools, the code shows understanding that the reality of historic buildings may require a “performance” based approach, and grants the Building Board of Review – such as this one – the specific position to review how the code should be applied to these scenarios.

IBC 3409.1 Historic Buildings- Approval

provisions of this code relating to the alteration of buildings shall not be mandatory for existing structures classified by the state or local government as historic buildings, subject to the board of appeals when such buildings are judged by the code official to be safe and in the interest in public health safety & welfare.

Based on the above mitigating factors, we ask that the board grant relief of IBC section T504.4 and allow 5th floor Educational Occupancy for Trinity Academy of Performing Art at 275 Westminster Street.

Respectfully Submitted,

Eric Army, AIA
Signal Works Architecture