

144 Benefit Street

ANALYSIS OF REQUIRED FINDINGS FOR DIMENSIONAL VARIANCE

October 7, 2026

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Project Overview

The applicant requests parking relief to provide 6 parking spaces where 13 would be required for the proposed adaptive reuse and residential redevelopment of the property located at 144 Benefit Street (Assessor's Plat 10, Lot 144). Pursuant to 45-24-37(h), this project qualifies for adaptive reuse as the proposed project provides: More than 50% of the prior commercial use of hotel/bed and breakfast usage will be converted to residential use; there are no known ELURs on the property; this is not being converted from a manufacturing or industrial use nor in a similar zone; The subject parcel is located in an R-3 residential zoning district and the College Hill Historic District, and previously housed the Old Court Inn. The project proposes converting the former hotel/bed and breakfast into a 13-unit efficiency-style residential building, focusing on preservation of the historic character of the building. No exterior work is proposed. The unit layout incorporates and preserves the existing layout.

The proposed layout efficiently distributes 13 units across the existing structure: 2 garden-level units (studio and 1-bedroom), 3 Level 1 units (2 studios and a 1-bedroom), 4 Level 2 units (studios), and 4 Level 3 units (studios). The site includes an existing paved parking lot accommodating 6 compliant parking spaces. Due to the historic building's fixed footprint and the physical boundaries of the parcel, there is no opportunity for expanding the parking lot and adding parking spaces. As the 2nd most walkable city in the country, per USA Today, this is an excellent opportunity to help showcase why, for the future tenants. Within walking distance are downtown, multiple RIPTA lines, the Providence train station, Brow and RISD, and a multitude of shops. The goal with this adaptive reuse project is preservation, and that is achieved through doing no exterior work and through maintenance of interior character and layout.

Summary of Relief and/or Required Approvals

Relief/Necessary Approvals	Specific Dimensions Presently Proposed	Applicable Statue, Regulation, Ordinance
Dimensional Variance - Off-Street Vehicle Parking Relief-Table 14-1	6 parking spaces provided where 13 spaces are required by ordinance ¹	R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-41

¹ Of note, the former use was a hotel, which requires 1 parking space per room. With 10 rooms and 10 required spaces, a grandfathered deficiency exists to the point that only 4 additional parking spaces would need to be provided. However, requesting relief from this would still require a hearing for approval, and so a variance for 7 spaces is requested to be conservative.

Dimensional Variance Standards

Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-41, the applicant must submit evidence meeting the following standards:

Hardship Due to Unique Characteristics	(d)(1) The hardship from which the applicant seeks relief is due to the unique characteristics of the subject land or structure and not to the general characteristics of the surrounding area; and is not due to a physical or economic disability of the applicant
No Prior Action	(d)(2) The hardship is not the result of any prior action of the applicant
Consistency with Neighborhood, Zoning & Comprehensive Plan	(d)(3) The granting of the relief requested will not alter the general character of the surrounding area or impair the intent or purpose of the zoning ordinance or the comprehensive plan upon which the ordinance is based
Relief Minimal to Reasonable Enjoyment	(e)(2) The hardship suffered by the owner of the subject property if the dimensional variance is not granted amounts to more than a mere inconvenience, meaning that relief sought is minimal to a reasonable enjoyment of the permitted use to which the property is proposed to be devoted

Hardship Components - Unique Hardship

R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-41(d)(1) - the applicant must submit evidence of a "hardship relating to the unique characteristics of the land or structure"

Hardship: Adapting a 150+ year-old historic structure on a constrained R-3 lot to modern vehicle parking requirements where the existing building occupies the vast majority of the parcel and its historic layout naturally accommodates a 13-unit efficiency residential configuration at a permitted density.

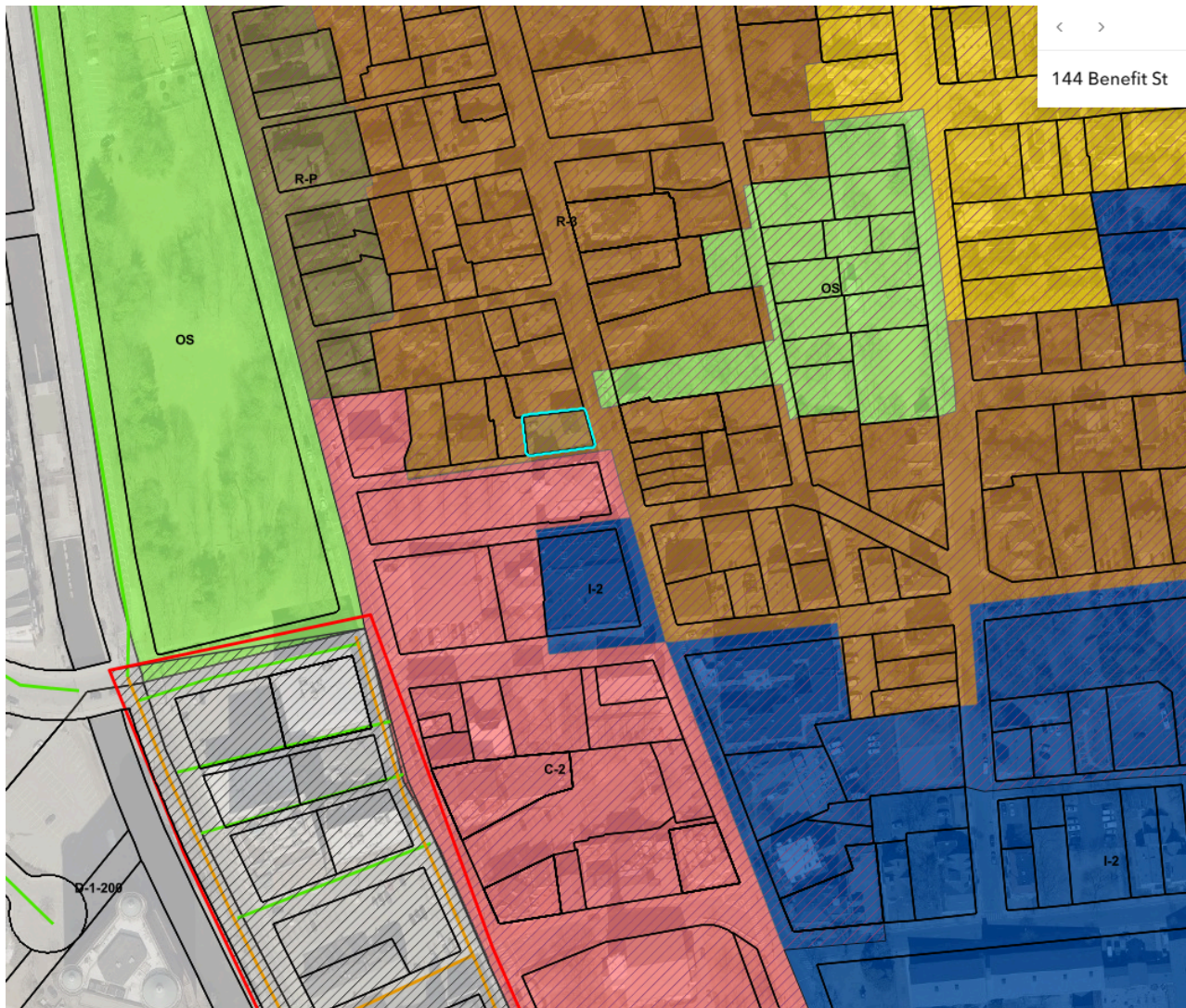
Evidence: Facts & Findings	Municipal Staff Expert Findings
• The subject historic structure was constructed over 150 years ago and occupies the vast majority of the substandard R-3 lot. • The existing paved parking area accommodates 6 spaces. • The existing interior layout of the former inn/bed and breakfast logically distributes into 13 efficiency units with minimal interior structural work, preserving historic character. • The proposed density is within adaptive reuse limits • Forcing compliance with 1:1 parking would require substantially altering the interior, deter historic preservation, and causing the loss of the existing historic architectural charm and character.	"The subject property contains a historic building along Benefit Street and six existing surface parking spaces to the rear of the property."

Hardship Components - Not Related to General Characteristics

R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-41(d)(1) - the hardship is not due to the "general characteristics of the surrounding area"

<u>General Characteristics:</u> Edge of College Hill featuring a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional uses with varying development patterns.	
Evidence: Facts & Findings	Municipal Staff Expert Findings
- Surrounding properties along Benefit Street and nearby corridors consist of mix of development types across many eras with varying abilities to meet parking demand. - The subject site's 6 existing spaces and fixed building footprint are an isolated physical condition, while off-street parking deficiencies are common throughout the surrounding historic neighborhood.	"Per the future land use map of the comprehensive plan, which is not parcel specific, this is an area with adjacent neighborhood commercial and medium density residential uses. These are areas intended for pedestrian and transit oriented uses as well as one to three family dwellings with some higher density uses."

Zoning in the Surrounding Area



Land Use in the Surrounding Area



Hardship Components - Not Due to Physical or Economic Disability

R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-41(d)(1) - the hardship is not due to the “physical or economic disability of the applicant...”

Evidence: Facts & Findings	
• The relief requested is based entirely on the physical characteristics of the historic building and lot. • There is no evidence that the hardship is due to any physical or economic disability of the applicant.	

No Prior Action

R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-41(d)(2) - “the hardship is not the result of any prior action of the applicant”

Evidence: Facts & Findings
• The building footprint, interior layout, and 6-space paved parking lot existed prior to the applicant's acquisition of the property. • The building footprint and interior layout predate the Providence Zoning Ordinance • The applicant has taken no action to reduce parking or alter the lot boundaries.

Consistency with Zoning & Comprehensive Plan

R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-41(d)(3) - The granting of the relief requested will not alter the general character of the surrounding area or impair the intent or purpose of the zoning ordinance or the comprehensive plan upon which the ordinance is based

Consistency w/ Neighborhood Character	Will not alter the general character of the surrounding neighborhood
Consistency w/ Intent of Zoning Ordinance	Will not impair the intent or purpose of the zoning ordinance; or
Consistency w/ Comprehensive Plan	Will not impair the intent or purpose of the comprehensive plan

Consistency with Neighborhood Character

R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-41(d)(3) - The granting of the relief requested will not alter the general character of the surrounding area.

Evidence: Facts & Findings	Municipal Staff Expert Findings
• The proposed adaptive reuse requires zero exterior structural modifications, fully preserving the historic aesthetic, scale, and character of Benefit Street and the College Hill Historic District. • Multi-family residential use is permitted within the R-3 zone and aligns seamlessly with many of the surrounding zoning districts (C-2, RP, I-2, OS, Downtown) and existing residential densities. • Given the proximity of jobs, educational institutions, and transit hubs, as well as other amenities and the small size of the units, it is not expected that parking demand will exceed the provided spaces (i.e. this development will not add to on-street parking demand in the vicinity)	• "The proposed multifamily dwelling would be characteristic of this [neighborhood] designation" • "Granting the relief would not alter the general character of the neighborhood as it would preserve the existing historic building through adaptive reuse."

Purpose & Intent of Zoning Ordinance

Pertinent Sections and Provisions of the Zoning Ordinance	<u>Ordinance 101.A</u> : Promoting the public health, safety, and general welfare.
	<u>Ordinance 101.B</u> : Providing for a range of uses and intensities of use appropriate to the character of the city and reflecting current and expected future needs.
	<u>Ordinance 101.C</u> : Providing for orderly growth and development.
	<u>Ordinance 101.E</u> : Providing for the protection of the natural, historic, cultural, and scenic character of the city.
	<u>Ordinance 101.G</u> : Providing for a range of uses and intensities of use appropriate to the character of the city and reflecting current and expected future needs.
	<u>Ordinance 101.H</u> : Promoting a balance of housing choices, for all income levels and groups, to assure the health, safety, and welfare of all citizens and their rights to affordable, accessible, safe, and sanitary housing.
	<u>Ordinance 101.L</u> : Promoting implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Consistency w/ Intent of Zoning Ordinance

R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-41(d)(3) - The granting of the relief requested will not impair the intent or purpose of the zoning ordinance upon which the ordinance is based.

Evidence: Facts & Findings	Municipal Staff Expert Findings
• Parking demand for these small units is not expected to exceed supply of 6 spaces. The variance allows the otherwise compliant development without alteration to the historic subject property, supporting intent and purpose of historic overlay district. • This development satisfies multiple aspects of the Comprehensive Plan.	• Per the future land use map of the comprehensive plan, which is not parcel specific, this is an area with adjacent neighborhood commercial and medium density residential uses... The proposed multifamily dwelling would be characteristic of this designation."

Purpose & Intent of Comprehensive Plan

Pertinent Sections and Provisions of the Comprehensive Plan	<u>Objective LU3 (Manage Growth in Residential Areas):</u> Promote a wide range of housing types and encourage infill residential development consistent with existing character. <u>Strategy LU3.E / BE2.G:</u> Encourage adaptive reuse of historic non-residential buildings for housing. <u>Strategy LU2.B:</u> Prioritize the elimination of parking minimums wherever feasible. <u>Objective BE4 / Strategy BE1.F:</u> Preserve historic buildings and districts that contribute positively to Providence's urban fabric. <u>Objective H2 / Strategy H2.A:</u> Support the creation of new ownership and rental housing at all price points. <u>Strategy H5.C / M1.M:</u> Place residential developments at locations near transit corridors. <u>Future Land Use Map.</u>
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Consistency w/ Comprehensive Plan

R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-41(d)(3) - The granting of the relief requested will not impair the intent or purpose of the comprehensive plan upon which the ordinance is based.

Evidence: Facts & Findings	Municipal Staff Expert Findings
• Does not impair intent or purpose of Providence Comprehensive Plan, and in fact helps implement it. • A variance for not needed parking is not inconsistent with the Providence Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map, which identifies the subject property at the intersection of high density residential, medium density residential, institutional, and open space. • Strategy LU3.E / BE2.G: Promotes infill residential development via adaptive reuse of a historic former bed and breakfast, adding 13 efficiency apartments consistent with neighborhood scale. • Strategy LU2.B: Reducing unneeded parking minimums on this constrained historic subject property advances the directive to reduce off-street parking minimums. • Objective BE4 & Strategy BE1.F: Preserves the historic building in the College Hill Historic District without requiring interior gutting or exterior changes. • Objective H2 & Strategy H2.A: Expands housing supply with efficiency units that offer more accessible price points for city residents. • Strategy H5.C & M1.M: Leverages excellent transit access (one block from North Main St R-line, 1/4 mile to Kennedy Plaza, 10-minute walk to train) to reduce vehicle dependence.	• "Per the future land use map of the comprehensive plan, which is not parcel specific, this is an area with adjacent neighborhood commercial and medium density residential uses... The proposed multifamily dwelling would be characteristic of this designation." • "Approval of the relief would conform to objectives BE-4 and H-2 of the Comprehensive Plan which encourage historic preservation, adaptive reuse and creation of new housing opportunities."

Permitted Use

R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-41(e)(2), the property is being devoted to a permitted use.

Evidence: Facts & Findings	Municipal Staff Expert Findings
Adaptive reuse is a permitted use on the subject property.	“Granting the relief would not alter the general character of the neighborhood as it would preserve the existing historic building through adaptive reuse.

Use	R-1A	R-1	R-3	R-4	RP
Day Care - Day Care Center, 9 to 12 people receiving day care	S	S	S	S	S
Day Care - Day Care Center, more than 12 people receiving day care					S
Day Care - Family Day Care Home	P	P	P	P	P
Drive-Through Facility					
Dwelling – Adaptive Reuse	P	P	P	P	P
Dwelling - Multi-Family	S	S	S	P	P

Providence Zoning Ordinance Table 12-1: Use Matrix - Marked Up

Hardship Standard - Mere Inconvenience

R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-24-41(e)(2) - the applicant has submitted evidence of a hardship that amounts to more than a mere inconvenience, *meaning that the relief sought is minimal to a reasonable enjoyment of the permitted use to which the property is proposed to be devoted.*

Evidence: Facts & Findings	Municipal Staff Expert Findings
• The 6 existing parking spaces represent the maximum possible on-site parking capacity due to fixed building and parcel boundaries. • The required 13 parking spaces are not needed for the proposed efficiency units in this location. • Denial of relief would force major interior alterations and exterior changes that would alter the historic character of the subject property. • The proposed adaptive reuse is permitted	• "The subject property is in proximity to commercial areas, college campuses, and bus stops, which reduces the need for parking and a reliance on driving."

Summary

Standard	Expert Findings	Staff Findings
Variance-Hardship	Meets	Meets
Dimensional Variance-Unique Hardship	Meets	Meets
Dimensional Variance-Hardship not due to the actions of Applicant	Meets	Meets
Dimensional Variance-Surrounding area, Zoning intent, Comprehensive Plan consistency	Meets	Meets
Dimensional Variance-Mere Inconvenience	Meets	Meets