

Providence City Plan Commission

February 21, 2023



AGENDA ITEM 1 ■ 116 WATERMAN STREET



Building rendering



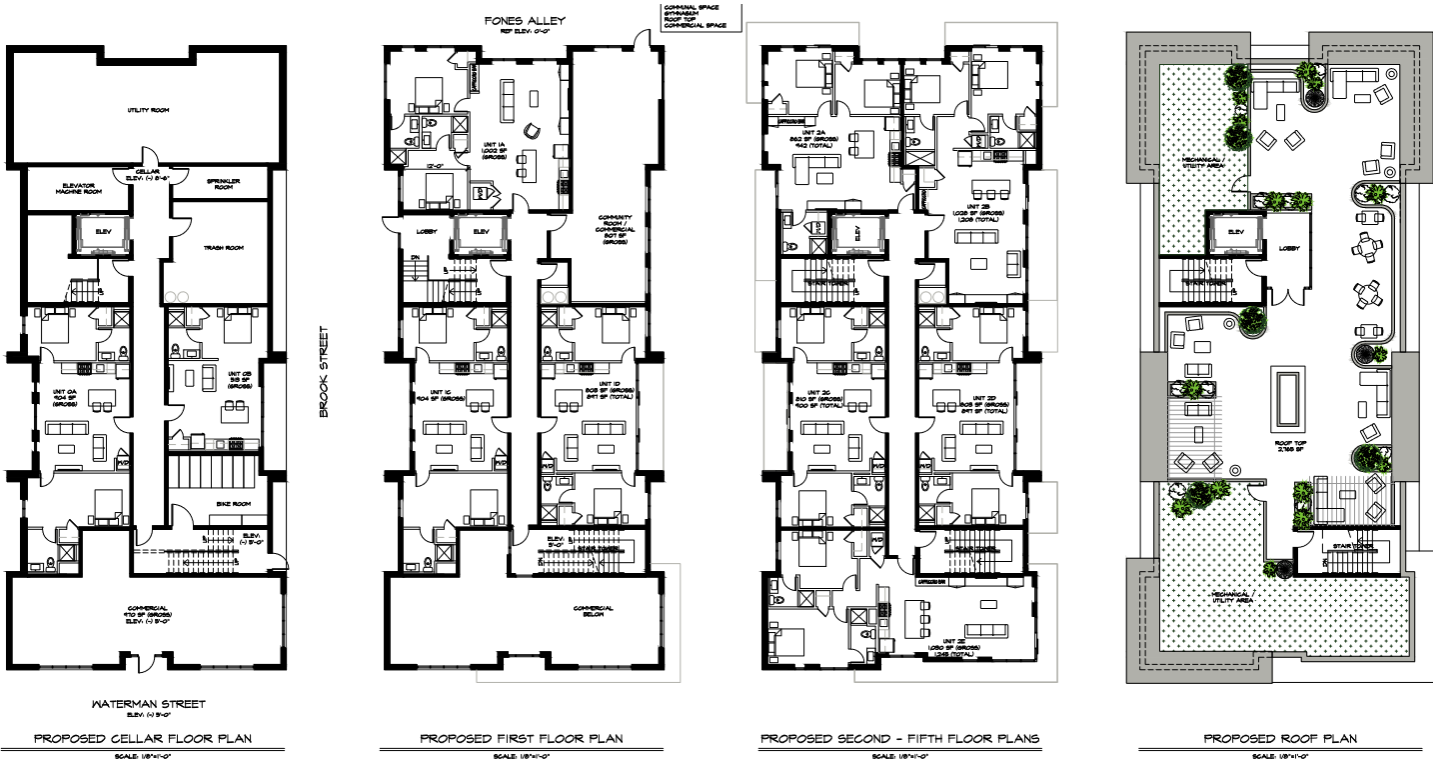
View from Waterman Street



Aerial view of the site

OVERVIEW

OWNER/ APPLICANT:	Walter Bronhard and Brook Holding LLC	PROJECT DESCRIPTION:	The applicant is proposing to demolish the existing buildings to construct a mixed-use five story building with commercial on the ground floor and 25 dwelling units on the four upper stories. The applicant is seeking a dimensional adjustment for height and a design waiver for locating residential development within 20' of a main street, as well as waivers from submission of state approvals and a detailed landscaping plan.
CASE NO./ PROJECT TYPE:	22-033 MA Preliminary Plan		
PROJECT LOCATION:	116 Waterman Street C-2 zoning district, I-3E overlay AP 12 Lots 180 and 260	RECOMMENDATION:	Approval of the Preliminary Plan based on the noted findings
NEIGHBORHOOD:	College Hill	PROJECT PLANNER:	Choyon Manjrekar



Proposed floor plans

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The development is composed of two lots located between Waterman Street and Fones Alley and also fronting on Brook Street. Each lot is occupied by a building proposed for demolition. The site will measure approximately 6,070 SF upon merging and is zoned C-2 under the I-3E overlay. The applicant is proposing to construct a five story mixed use building with commercial on the ground floor and 25 residential units on the four upper stories. The applicant is requesting a dimensional adjustment for height where a height of 50’ and four stories is permitted by right but a height of 58’ and five stories is requested. A design waiver from the requirement of section 503A.8, that no residential use be located within 20’ of a main street, is also requested. The CPC approved the master plan but deferred consideration of these requests to the preliminary plan stage.

ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL ISSUES

Use

The property is zoned C-2 under the I-3E overlay. Residential and retail mixed use development is permitted by right in the C-2 zone with no restriction on the number of dwelling units per lot.

Dimensions and site design

The buildings occupying the lots are proposed to be demolished, and the lots merged. The building will be set to the front, side and rear lot lines, with Waterman Street providing the main entrance to the commercial space. Access for residents, the elevator and the lobby, will be provided from the interior side yard. Common space and greenery will be provided at the roof level. The transformer will be located on lot 181, to the west of the development, that is also owned by the applicant.

A dimensional adjustment is being requested for a proposed height of approximately 58' and five stories, which is over the 50' four-story height limit of the zone. Over 60% of the front façade will be located at the front lot line, meeting the design requirement of the zone. The building's exterior will employ stone veneer, wood siding and a composite panel system, which are materials that are permitted by right. The east elevation on Brook Street will primarily feature brick on the ground floor, with the upper stories mainly composed of wood siding with balconies. The transparency on the commercial area will exceed 50% and the upper stories will provide over 10% of required transparency.

Landscaping

Approximately 900 SF of canopy coverage is required to meet the landscaping requirement based on the size of the development. The CPC required enhanced landscaping by planting more trees around the site as a condition of master plan approval. The applicant has submitted a revised landscaping plan which would employ seven large trees with two on Waterman Street and five on Brook Street. The height of the large trees can be accommodated as overhead wires crossing Brook Street will be removed. The canopy coverage of approximately 7,000 SF would greatly exceed what is required. The plan has been reviewed and approved by the Forester. A waiver from submission of a detailed landscaping plan was initially requested but will not be required.

Parking

No parking is required as the lot measures less than 10,000 SF. Five bicycle spaces are required to meet the bicycle parking requirement of one space for every five units. The applicant will exceed this requirement by providing 10 bicycle spaces in the basement.

Environmental management

The site is exempt from conforming to the City's stormwater ordinance and the applicant intends to tie into a dedicated storm drain in Brook Street. The applicant has requested a waiver from submission of state approvals at the preliminary plan stage, namely from the sewer connection permit required from the Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC). It is the DPD's opinion that the permit is not a state level permit that requires a waiver since it does not relate to stormwater.

Lighting

No external lighting sources are proposed.

Dimensional Adjustment

The applicant is requesting a dimensional adjustment for a height of 58' and five stories, where the height limit of the C-2 zone is 50' and four stories. Per the applicant, the adjustment is being requested due to the provision of vertical mixed-use development, of which at least 50% is devoted to residential use, which would make them eligible for the adjustment. The DPD recommends approval of this adjustment.

Design Waiver

The applicant is requesting a design waiver from the requirement that no residential use be located within 20' of a main street as Waterman and Brook Streets are considered main streets. Commercial space for the entire Waterman Street frontage will be provided but the waiver will apply to the Brook Street frontage. The applicant has revised the plan to introduce community/commercial space beginning at the intersection of Brook Street and Fones Alley and running along a portion of Brook Street. The space will have direct access from the street. An entrance for residents to access the stair tower will also be located on Brook Street. This would result in approximately 65% of the Brook Street frontage being nonresidential space. Based on plans provided and the site's layout, it would be difficult to situate non-residential use along the entirety of Brook Street. The ground floor residence will be not be directly at street level as Brook Street slopes upward from south to north and a large portion of the Brook Street frontage will be occupied by

the commercial space. The Brook Street façade has varying elements that are in character with the nature of the surroundings. Therefore, the DPD recommends that the CPC grant the requested waiver.

Public Outreach

The CPC declined to take action on the dimensional adjustment and design waiver at the master plan stage and required that the applicant conduct public outreach to discuss the changes with the community in conjunction with the councilperson. The subject property is located in Ward 2, which is represented by Councilor Helen Anthony. Ward 1 on the southern portion of Waterman Street and the eastern portion of Brook Street is represented by Councilor John Goncalves. Both councilors were present at the master plan hearing. It is the DPD's understanding that the applicant's attorney reached out to Councilor Goncalves believing the property to be located in his ward. When recently corrected, the attorney reached out to Councilor Anthony and held a community meeting on January 9.

As discussed, the DPD is in favor of granting the requested dimensional adjustment and design waiver. Holding the community meeting fulfilled the CPC's condition of master plan approval. Therefore, the DPD recommends that the CPC take action on the requested adjustment and waivers.

FINDINGS

Section 806 of the Commission's *Development Review Regulations* requires that the City Plan Commission make the following findings as part of their approval of all land development project applications. Based on the analysis contained herein and subject to the conditions contained in this report, staff has prepared the following findings regarding the request for approval of the preliminary plan stage:

1. *Consistency—The proposed development is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and/or has satisfactorily addressed the issues where there may be inconsistencies.*

The subject property is located in an area that the future land use map of Providence Tomorrow: The Comprehensive Plan intends for Neighborhood Commercial/Mixed Use development. The plan describes these areas as ones intended to foster pedestrian oriented needs like retail and housing in buildings oriented toward the street. The development conforms to this land use designation. As the building will be located on a main street in proximity to a commercial corridor, it conforms to objective BE-2 of the plan which encourages new development to complement traditional character. Creation of housing will conform to objective H-2 of the plan which encourages creation of new housing.

2. *Compliance with Zoning Ordinance—The proposed development is in compliance with the standards and provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.*

Use: Residential and retail mixed use development is permitted by right in the C-2 zone.

Dimension: The development will conform to the dimensional and design requirements of the C-2 zone subject to the CPC granting a dimensional adjustment for height and a design waiver for residential development within 20' of a main street.

Parking: No parking is required, but the applicant will meet the bicycle parking requirement.

Landscaping: The plan meets the landscaping requirement and has been approved by the City Forester.

3. *Environmental Impact—There will be no significant environmental impacts from the proposed development as shown on the final plan, with all required conditions for approval.*

No significant negative environmental impacts are expected as the applicant is expected to come into conformance with applicable environmental regulations.

4. *Buildable Lot—The subdivision or development project, as proposed, will not result in the creation of individual lots with such physical constraints to development that building on those lots according to pertinent regulations and building standards would be impracticable.*

The subject lots will be merged. There are no physical constraints that impact development of this property, as the lot will comply with the dimensional requirements of the C-2 zone with no impediments to development.

5. *Street Access—All proposed development projects and all subdivision lots shall have adequate and permanent physical access to a public street. Lot frontage on a public street without physical access shall not be considered compliance with this requirement.*

Adequate pedestrian access will be provided from Brook and Waterman Streets and Fones Alley.

RECOMMENDATION— Waiver of Submission Items

1. As discussed above, no waiver is necessary from the provision of state permits.
2. Also as discussed, a waiver from submission of a detailed landscaping plan is not required as a plan has been submitted.

RECOMMENDATION— Dimensional Adjustment

The CPC should grant the dimensional adjustment for a height of 58' and five stories, finding that the applicant will provide vertical mixed use development.

RECOMMENDATION—Design Waiver

The CPC should grant the design waiver for location of residential use within 20' of a main street finding that the applicant has added more nonresidential space on Brook Street and that it is required based on the development's configuration.

RECOMMENDATION—Preliminary Plan

Based on the foregoing discussion, the DPD recommends that the CPC approve the preliminary plan finding that the plan is in conformance with the zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan subject to the following condition:

Final plan should be delegated to DPD staff.