

Providence City Plan Commission

August 15, 2023



AGENDA ITEM 3 ■ 661-665 PLAINFIELD STREET



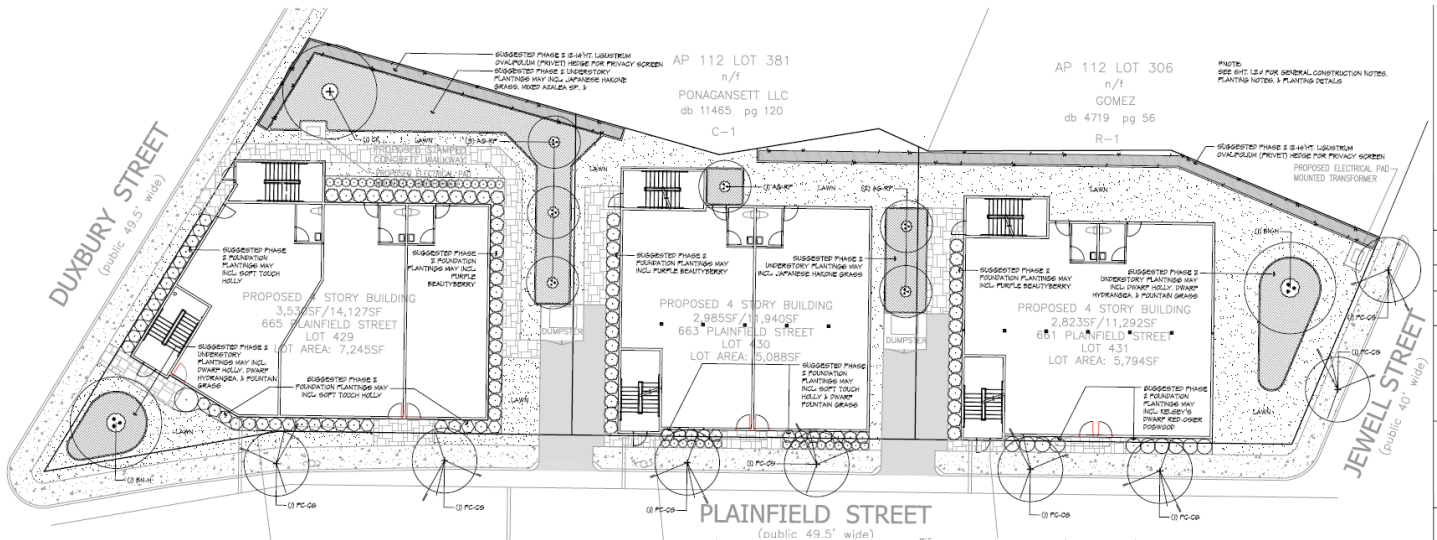
Aerial view of the site and view from Plainfield Street



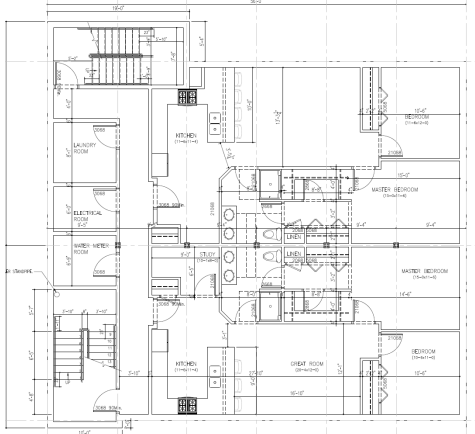
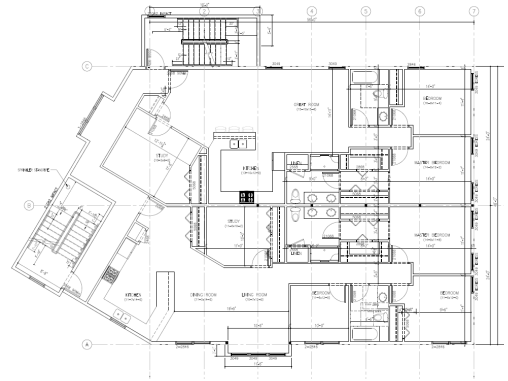
Elevations for 663 and 665 Plainfield Street

OVERVIEW

OWNER/ APPLICANT:	Irfaan Saeed	PROJECT DESCRIPTION:	Construction of three mixed use buildings with commercial space on the ground floor and residential units above. Relief from the front yard build-to percentage requirement and from the corner side yard setback requirement is being requested in addition to a waiver from submission of state approvals at the preliminary plan stage. Combination of master and preliminary approval is requested.
CASE NO./ PROJECT TYPE:	23-039MA Master and Preliminary Plan Approval	RECOMMENDATION:	Approval of the Preliminary Plan and dimensional relief subject to the noted findings and conditions
PROJECT LOCATION:	661-665 Plainfield Street AP 112 Lots 429, 430 and 431 C-1 zoning district		
NEIGHBORHOOD:	Hartford	PROJECT PLANNER:	Choyon Manjrekar



Proposed landscaping plan



Second floor plan for 665 Plainfield Street and basement plan for 661 Plainfield Street

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The applicant is proposing to construct three mixed use buildings, one on each of the subject lots, with commercial/retail on the first floor and residential. All lots are zoned C-1. The applicant is seeking dimensional relief pursuant to Unified Development Review (UDR) as described below. The buildings will be developed as follows:

661 Plainfield Street (AP 112 Lot 431, 5,794 SF) — Four stories, ~ 45', eight units, two commercial spaces. Relief from the corner side setback requirement is requested.

663 Plainfield Street (AP 112 Lot 430, 5,088 SF) — Four stories, ~ 45', eight units, two commercial spaces

665 Plainfield Street (AP 112 Lot 429, 7,245 SF) — Four stories, ~ 45', eight units, three commercial spaces. Relief from the front yard build-to percentage

requirement is requested.

The applicant is seeking to combine master and preliminary plan approval and a waiver from submission of state approvals at the preliminary plan stage is also requested.

ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL ISSUES

Use

The subject lots are zoned C-1, where mixed use consisting of commercial use and multifamily development is permitted by right.

Dimensions and site design

The exteriors of all three buildings will employ hardie plank with a glass tower at the western portion of each façade. Portions of the building project from the face, providing dimensional variety that is required from multifamily development. The commercial entries will

provide over 50% of ground floor transparency with windows located over a stone veneer band. Transformers will be located on lots 431 and 429 with dumpsters on lots 430 and 431.

661 Plainfield Street: A building footprint of approximately 2,823 SF is proposed for the 5,794 SF lot. The lot is irregularly shaped, with the rear lot line angled toward the southeast at 54' and then running approximately 50', creating an angled side lot line of 50' on Jewell Street. The building will be set to the front lot line on Plainfield Street and maintain a 10' rear setback from the R-1 zone. Relief has been requested from the corner side setback requirement which requires 40% of the building to be located within 5' of the side lot line but a setback of between 18'-34' is proposed. Two residential units will be located in the basement in addition to utilities. Two commercial units will be located on the first floor with direct entrance provided from Plainfield Street and a residential entrance provided from the rear.

663 Plainfield Street: A building footprint of 2,985 SF is proposed for the 5,088 SF lot with a proposed height of 44'. The building will be set to the front lot line on Plainfield Street and will maintain approximately 10' interior side setbacks. Over 50% transparency will be provided on the ground floor façade with direct entry to the commercial space provided from Plainfield Street and residential access provided from the rear. Two residential units with utilities will be located in the basement with six on the upper stories.

665 Plainfield: A footprint of approximately 3,530 SF is proposed for the 7,245 SF lot, which is shaped as an irregular polygon which forms a triangle at the intersection of Plainfield and Duxbury Streets. The building will be set to the front and side lot lines on Plainfield and Duxbury Streets with a proposed height of 44'. Relief from the front yard setback requirement is requested as the building will not meet the 60% front yard build-to percentage requirement. Three commercial spaces will be provided on the ground floor with two residential units in the basement and six on the three upper stories.

Parking

No vehicle parking is required as each lot measures less than 10,000 SF in the C-1 zone. A total of six bicycle spaces are required to meet the requirement of one bicycle space per five units. The applicant shall include bicycle parking location on the final plan.

Landscaping

Lots in the C-1 zone require 15% of canopy coverage. The applicant is proposing to meet that requirement with a combination of street trees and plantings on the individual lots. The landscaping plan proposes a mix of small, medium and large trees planted around the site with pervious grassed areas and walkways between buildings. Planting rows of shrubs are proposed along buildings. The applicant will meet the canopy coverage requirement and the plan shall be subject to the City Forester's review.

Lighting

No external lighting is proposed.

Drainage

The development does not trigger conformance with the City's stormwater ordinance. However, the applicant will install bioswales and pervious surface on the site to reduce runoff.

Erosion Control

The erosion control plan will employ straw bales as a sediment barrier to prevent flows off the site during construction.

Public Outreach

The applicant has indicated that they will contact the councilperson prior to the hearing.

Waiver from submission of state approvals

The applicant has requested a waiver from submission of state approvals at the preliminary plan stage, particularly from the Narragansett Bay Commission. It is the DPD's opinion that the CPC should grant the waiver, finding that it would be in the interest of good planning practice as the time taken to act by state bodies can vary, and that it would allow the applicant to proceed with the planning process. The waiver should be granted subject to the condition that the approvals be submitted with the final plan submission and that the applicant return to the CPC should the approvals result in a change to the submitted plan.

Discussion—Dimensional Variance

Pursuant to UDR, the applicant is seeking dimensional relief from the provisions of Table 5-1 of the ordinance. The applicant is seeking a variance from the side yard setback requirement on 661 Plainfield Street (AP 112 Lot 431) and the front yard setback requirement on 665 Plainfield Street (AP 112 Lot 429).

Findings—Dimensional Variance

Section 1902 of the zoning ordinance requires that the CPC find evidence of the following standards in order to grant a variance:

1. *That 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, excepting those physical disabilities addressed in Rhode Island General Laws §45-24-30 (16).*

The relief requested is not influenced by the character of the surrounding area but by the unique character of the subject lots. Development in the C-1 zone is required to be set within 0'-5' of the front and side build-to zone. It appears that both subject lots will be unable to meet these requirements due to the unique character of the respective lots, as they are irregularly shaped. Lot 431 abuts a residential zone to the rear, from which the building is required to maintain a 10' setback. It would be difficult to meet this requirement and set the building to the build-to zone of the angled side lot line. Similarly, the building on lot 429 will be unable to meet the front setback requirement due to the characteristics of the lot. The applicant will meet the corner side setback requirement, but will be unable to meet the front yard requirement due to the angled lot lines on Plainfield and Duxbury Street which extend the length of the front lot line.

2. *That the hardship is not the result of any prior action of the applicant and does not result primarily from the desire of the applicant to realize greater financial gain.*

Based on plans provided, it appears that the hardship encountered by the applicant stems from the configuration of the lots and not a prior action of the applicant. The request for relief does not appear to be related to a desire for financial gain .

3. *That the granting of the requested variance will not alter the general character of the surrounding area or impair the intent or purpose of this Ordinance or the Comprehensive Plan.*

The C-1 zone is intended to accommodate mixed-use development like the subject development. The granting of the variance is not expected to negatively affect neighborhood character as it would allow for development intended for this area. The setbacks maintained by the structures will not have a negative effect on neighboring structures or the intent of the plan. Landscaping with the introduction of grass and pervious surface is proposed for the setback areas, which could have a positive effect on the surroundings.

4. *That the relief to be granted is the least relief necessary.*

Based on submitted plans, the relief requested is the least necessary to develop the subject lots with the constraints provided by their configuration.

5. *In addition, the City Plan Commission, as part of unified development review, requires that evidence be entered into the record of the proceedings showing that in granting a dimensional variance, the hardship that will be suffered by the owner of the subject property if the dimensional variance is not granted will amount to more than a mere inconvenience.*

Based on a review of plans, denial of the relief could result in more than a mere inconvenience as it would require the applicant to develop irregularly shaped buildings that follow the lot lines, which could be viewed as a hardship.

Recommendation—Dimensional Variance

Based on the foregoing discussion, the CPC should grant the requested dimensional relief for the front and side yard setback.

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.*

According to the future land use map of *Providence Tomorrow: The Comprehensive Plan* this area is intended for Neighborhood Commercial/Mixed Use development, where multifamily and mixed use development is encouraged, particularly in proximity to commercial corridors. Provision of housing would conform to objective H-2 of the plan which supports creation of new housing. Construction of mixed use development is in conformance with objective BE-3 of the plan which promotes compact urban development.

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

Use: Mixed use development consisting of commercial and residential development is permitted by right in the C-1 zone.

Dimension and Design: The development largely conforms to the dimensional and design requirements of the C-1 zone. Subject to the CPC granting relief from the front and side yard setback requirements, the development will conform the zoning ordinance.

Parking: The applicant shall include bicycle parking on the final plan.

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 negative environmental impacts are expected as the applicant is expected to come into conformance with all 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.*

There are no physical constraints that impact development of this property. The applicant is required to obtain any necessary encroachment permits when applying for permits.

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 bicycle and pedestrian access is provided from Plainfield Street.

Combination of stages

The applicant has requested to combine master and preliminary plan approval. It is the DPD's opinion that the CPC should combine stages, subject to granting the waiver from submission of state approvals, finding that the applicant meets the submission requirements for master and preliminary plan stages of review.

ACTION

RECOMMENDATION—Waiver from submission of state approvals

The CPC should vote to grant the waiver from submission of state approvals at the preliminary plan stage subject to the condition that the applicant submit the approvals with the final plan and return to the CPC if the approvals result in a change to the plan.

RECOMMENDATION—Combination of stages

Subject to waiving the state approval requirement, the CPC should vote to combine master and preliminary plan approval finding that all items required for both stages have been submitted.

RECOMMENDATION— Master and Preliminary Plan

Based on the foregoing discussion and conditioned on the CPC approving the items above, the master and preliminary plans should be approved subject to the following conditions:

1. The landscaping plan shall be subject to the City Forester's approval.
2. The applicant shall submit any required encroachment permits with the building permit application.
3. Final plan approval should be delegated to DPD staff.