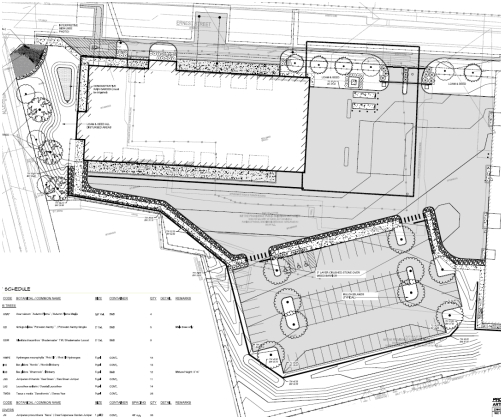


Providence City Plan Commission

February 18, 2025



AGENDA ITEM 1 ■ 20 ERNEST STREET



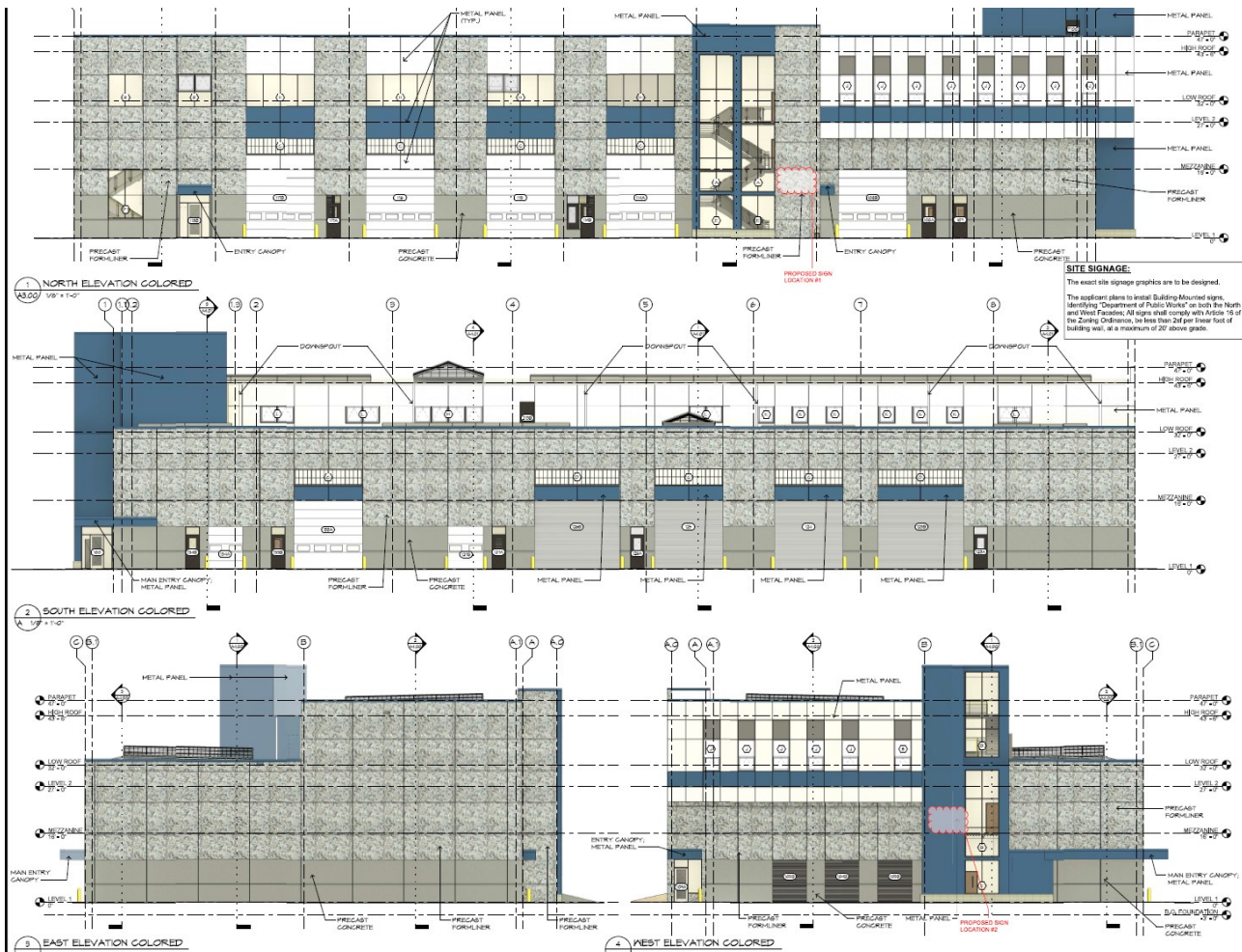
Site plan with building rendering



Aerial view of the site

OVERVIEW

OWNER/ APPLICANT:	City of Providence, Owner and Applicant	PROJECT DESCRIPTION:	The applicant is requesting to combine master and preliminary plan approval to construct a new public works facility building with associated parking. A variance from the driveway width limit is requested where a width of 35' is proposed but a maximum of 24' is permitted.
CASE NO./ PROJECT TYPE:	25-003 UDR Master and Preliminary Plan and variance pursuant to Unified Development Review (UDR)		
PROJECT LOCATION:	20 Ernest Street AP 101 Lot 796; M-1 zoning district	RECOMMENDATION:	Approval of the master and preliminary plan and variance as detailed
NEIGHBORHOOD:	Washington Park	PROJECT PLANNER:	Choyon Manjrekar



Building elevations

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The lot measures approximately 233,670 SF (5.3 acres) and is zoned M-1. The eastern portion of the lot is occupied by a City building. The proposed development consists of a new Department of Public Works (DPW) building with associated parking that will be built in the vacant portion of the lot. The applicant is proposing to construct a two-story, 43'6" tall Public Works Facility building with internal parking and office space providing a gross floor area of approximately 48,000 SF. In addition, 74 new parking spaces are proposed in the rear yard. Pursuant to Unified Development Review (UDR), the applicant is seeking a variance from the driveway width requirement where a width of 35' is proposed but 24' is permitted by right. The applicant is requesting to combine master and preliminary plan approval and is requesting waivers from submission of a signage plan, photometric plan, and DPW and State stormwater

management approvals at the preliminary plan stage.

ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL ISSUES

Use

The subject lot is zoned M-1 where Public Works Facility buildings are permitted by right.

Dimensions and site design

The building will be set to the front lot line with five vehicle bays accessible from Ernest Street and an additional four accessible from the parking area. The building will employ existing curb cuts. A height of two stories and approximately 43'6" is proposed which is within the 75' height limit of the M-1 zone. Vehicle maintenance bays and storage space will be located on the first floor and office space, meeting rooms and a locker room are proposed for the second story. The building's exterior is composed of concrete and metal paneling with glass providing transparency for the

stairways and upper stories. The first story is set back from the second story, providing dimensional variety on the façade.

Parking

A total of 48 parking spaces are needed to meet the requirement of one space per 1,000 SF. The applicant will meet this requirement with 74 spaces in the rear yard. Ten bicycle parking spaces will be provided of which five will be long term spaces in the shipping room.

Landscaping

With an area of disturbance of approximately 143,608SF which is greater than 50% of the lot area, the applicant is required to comply with the landscaping requirement for the entire lot, which requires 35,000 SF of canopy coverage. The plan is currently deficient, but the applicant has committed to meeting the landscaping requirement using a combination of existing plantings and landscaping the parking area. The revised plan shall be subject to the City Forester's approval.

Drainage and stormwater management

The applicant will employ sediment traps, silt fencing and assigned stockpile areas to control erosion off the site. A stormwater management plan will be presented before the CPC and shall be subject to the City Engineer's approval.

Waivers

The applicant has requested waivers from submission of a signage plan, photometric plan, and DPW and State stormwater management approvals. Building elevations indicate the proposed signage locations, which will be used to identify the building. The signs are within the allowable area for wall signs, but no designs have been provided. The photometric and stormwater management plans are contingent on finalizing the building's siting. Review of the stormwater management plan requires the action of City and State bodies, which can vary. The DPD recommends that the CPC grant the requested waivers with the condition that the items be submitted at the permitting stage. Granting the waivers would be in the interest of good planning practice as it would allow the applicant to proceed with the review and approval process.

Discussion—Dimensional Relief

The applicant is seeking dimensional relief from Section 1407.A.2 of the ordinance to maintain a two way driveway with a width of 35' where 24' is permitted by right.

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).*

As a public works facility, the lot is required to accommodate trucks and other large vehicles that have a wide turning radius. The application illustrates two scenarios with 12' and 15' aisles. Plans indicate that vehicles will encroach into opposing lanes of traffic when entering and exiting the site with 12' lanes. This condition is eliminated when 15' lanes are used. This is due to use of the lot and not related to a disability of the applicant.

2. *That the hardship is not the result of any prior action of the applicant.*

Based on plans provided, it appears that the hardship encountered by the applicant stems from the need to operate an existing DPW facility. As this is a public facility, the relief requested is not the result of a prior action of the applicant.

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 area is primarily industrial and in proximity to the port, which sees an abundance of large vehicle traffic. The requested relief would allow for continuation of uses that are in character with the surrounding neighborhood's character.

4. *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 result in an irregular traffic pattern with vehicles affecting the flow of traffic around the site.

Recommendation—Dimensional Variance

Based on the foregoing discussion, the CPC should grant the requested dimensional relief.

Findings—Land Development Project

Section 1005 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 Master and Preliminary Plans:

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 the Providence Comprehensive Plan intends for Business/Industrial use which are intended to foster the expansion of business and industrial uses. The development will conform to the comprehensive plan as public works buildings would be in character with the land use designation. The development would conform to the goal of chapter eight of the comprehensive plan which aims to sustain a high quality of life by providing efficient City services.

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

Use: Public works facilities are permitted by right in the zone.

Dimension and design: The development largely complies with the dimensional and design requirements of the M-1 zone. The development will conform to the ordinance subject to the CPC granting the relief requested through UDR and waiving the submission of the requested items at this stage.

Parking: The applicant will meet the vehicle and bicycle parking requirements.

Landscaping: The applicant will meet the canopy coverage requirement by developing a revised plan in consultation with the City Forester.

Lighting: A lighting and signage plan shall be submitted at the permitting stage subject to the CPC granting the waiver from submission at the preliminary plan stage.

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 conform to all 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.

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.*

Physical access to the site is provided from Ernest Street.

Recommendation—Waivers

The CPC should grant the requested waivers from submission of a lighting plan, signage plan, and submission of state approvals at the preliminary plan stage subject to the condition that they be submitted at the permitting stage.

Recommendation—Combination of stages

The CPC should vote to combine master and preliminary plan approval, having approved the requested waivers.

Recommendation—Land Development Project

1. The CPC should approve the master and preliminary plans.
2. The revised landscaping plan shall be subject to the City Forester's review and submitted with the final plan.
3. Final plan approval should be delegated to DPD staff.