

# Providence City Plan Commission

November 18, 2025



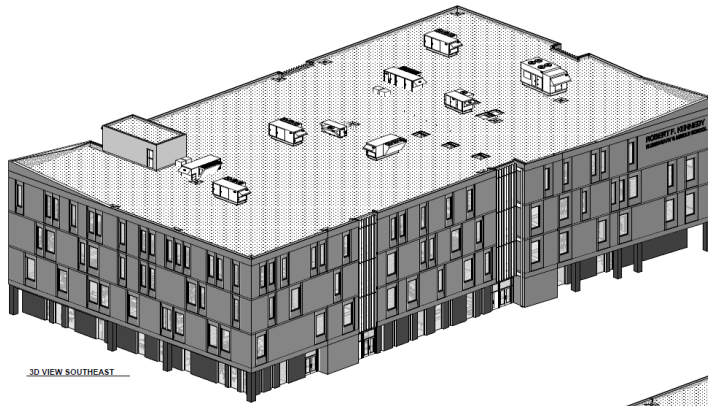
## AGENDA ITEM 2 ■ 195 NELSON STREET / RFK SCHOOL



Current view of building with parking area



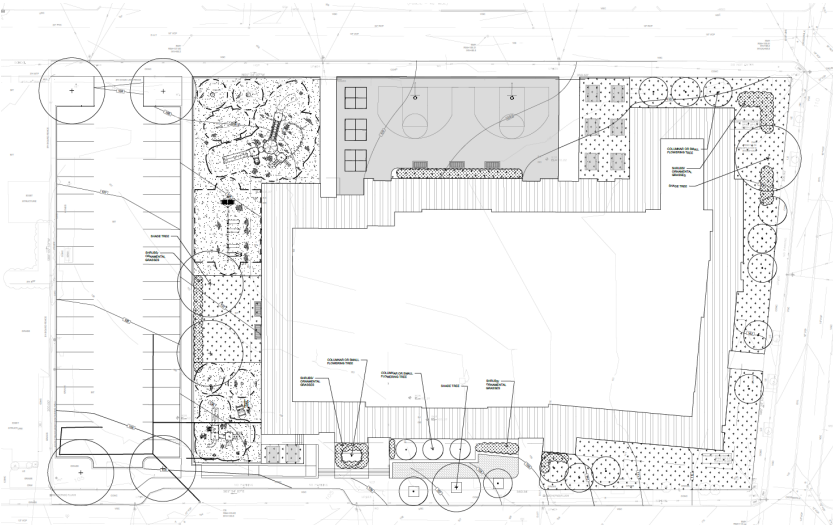
Aerial view of the site



Building rendering

### OVERVIEW

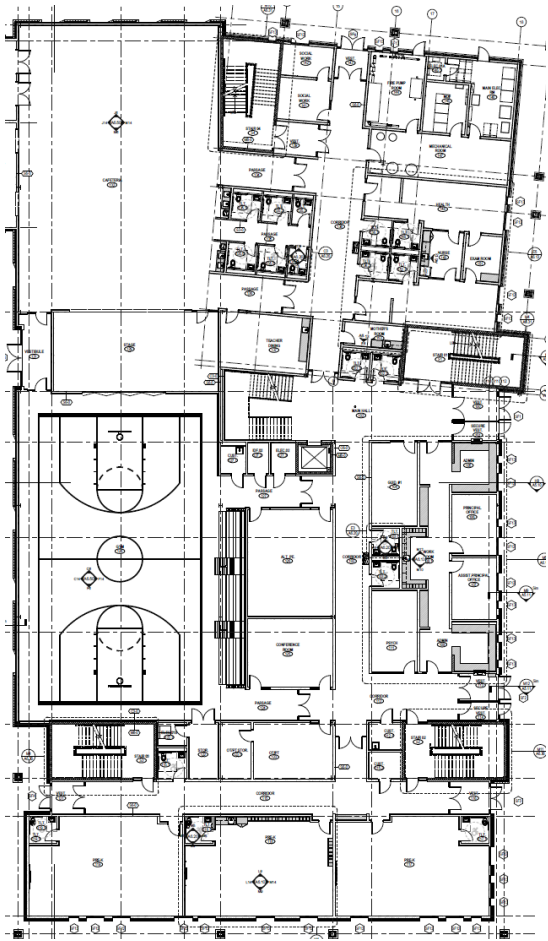
<b>OWNER/ APPLICANT:</b>	Providence Public Buildings Authority, Applicant  City of Providence, Owner	<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</b>	The applicant is proposing to construct a four story, 59' tall school building serving pre-K to 8th grade students in the PS zone. A combination of the master/ preliminary plan is requested in addition to a dimensional adjustment for height, which is a maximum of 50' in the zone. In addition, the applicant is requesting waivers from submission of certain items at the preliminary plan stage.
<b>CASE NO./ PROJECT TYPE:</b>	<b>25-075 MA</b> Master and Preliminary Plan		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION:</b>	95 Nelson Street  AP 85 Lot 195  Public space zoning district	<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	Approval of the master and preliminary plan and dimensional adjustment as detailed
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD:</b>	Elmhurst	<b>PROJECT PLANNER:</b>	Choyon Manjrekar



Site plan with parking and landscaping



North and South Elevations



First floor layout

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The development site, which is zoned PS and measures approximately 69,989 SF is occupied by school building that will be demolished. The applicant is proposing to construct a four story, 59’ tall K-8 school building with associated ancillary improvements including parking, landscaping and recreational areas. A dimensional adjustment for height is requested as the proposed height exceeds the 50’ height limit of the PS zone. The applicant is requesting to combine master and preliminary plan approval and requesting waivers from submission of city and state approvals, a lighting plan, signage plan and stormwater management plan, at the preliminary plan stage.

**ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL ISSUES**

Use

The subject lot is zoned PS where educational facilities are permitted by right.

Dimensions and site design

The development fronts Nelson Street to the west, Jastram Street to the east, Eaton Street to the north and abuts the R-3 zone to the south. The main entrance will be accessible from Jastram Street, with secondary entrances on Eaton and Nelson Streets. The parking area at the building’s rear will be separated from the building by a landscaped playground. The site’s grade slopes downward from the rear of the lot towards Eaton Street. A height of approximately 59’ is proposed when measured from average grade, for which a dimensional adjustment has been requested as height is limited to 50’ in the PS zone.

The building's exterior will be treated with glazed brick on the ground floor and brick, fiber cement panel and glass on the upper stories. Sections of the façade will be broken up by recessed Louvre windows and with projections on other parts of the façade.

#### Findings—Dimensional Adjustments

The applicant is seeking a dimensional adjustment for a height of 59' where 50' is permitted by right in the PS zone. The DPD makes the following findings in conformance with section 1005.B of the Development Review Regulations (DRR).

*1. The application is eligible for a dimensional adjustment because it meets one or more of the eligibility criteria of Section 1904.E.1 of the Zoning Ordinance.*

The applicant is eligible for the adjustment per section 1904.E.1.a and c of the ordinance through provision of open space for public use and the location, size and type of use requiring an adjustment. The slope of the site results in a slightly higher average grade than measured from a level surface. Per the applicant, the additional height is influenced by the Rhode Island Department of Education which requires classrooms to be of a regulation size with certain ceiling heights that result in the need for the adjustment. The applicant has indicated that the recreation space will be available for public use and portions of the building will be used for public after school programs.

*2. The requested or approved dimensional adjustment is within the allowable adjustments listed in Section 1904.E.2 of the Zoning Ordinance.*

The CPC may grant an adjustment for additional height up to 24' not to exceed two stories per section 1904.E.2 of the ordinance.

*3. The extent of the dimensional adjustment is reasonably related to the condition that makes the project eligible for the dimensional adjustment.*

The applicant is providing an amenity with publicly available space on a site with a sloping grade. The DPD finds that the size, location and type of use is reasonably related to the dimensional adjustment.

#### ACTION—Dimensional Adjustment

The CPC should vote to grant the dimensional adjustment, finding that the applicant meets the criteria for dimensional adjustments in 1904.E of the ordinance and having made positive findings in conformance with section 1005.B of the DRR.

#### Parking

Sixteen parking spaces are needed to meet the requirement of one space per three employees with 46 employees expected. The applicant will meet the parking requirement, providing a total of 39 standard spaces in the parking area. Drop-off areas will be provided on Jastram, Eaton and Nelson Streets. A total of 104 bicycle parking spaces will be provided on the corners of Jastram and Eaton Streets fulfilling the requirement of 3 spaces for each of the 49 classrooms.

#### Traffic Management

The applicant has provided a traffic memo outlining how the development would affect current traffic conditions. The school can be accessed from Nelson, Jastram and Eaton Streets. Nelson Street is one-way northbound and only open to bus traffic between 6:30 am to 9:30 am and from 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Jastram Street is one way southbound and Eaton and Smith Streets allow for two-way traffic. Bus pickups and dropoffs occur on the west side of the school on Nelson Street and vehicles drop students on the east side on Jastram Street. The study describes periods of congestion that

last approximately 20 minutes during pickup and dropoff hours. Per the study, vehicles are parked on the street and partially on the sidewalk with some cases of parents leaving cars unattended as they drop children into the school. The study also notes that a number of students walk to school accompanied by parents. There is ample signage providing notice of parking restrictions and school speed limits. The memo provides suggestions to improve or maintain traffic conditions including maintaining the number of crossing guards, having a two bell dismissal system and allowing for sidewalk parking to make space for vehicles to pass between cars parked on both sides of the street. The applicant shall work with the Traffic Engineer to implement best practices to allow for the smoother flow of traffic.

#### Landscaping

The PS zone requires 30% of canopy coverage for a lot size of approximately 70,000 SF amounting to approximately 21,000 SF. The applicant will meet this requirement by planting large and medium trees around the perimeter of the site on the Eaton, Nelson and Jastram Street frontages, and within the parking lot.

#### Environmental management

A soil erosion plan has been submitted with a waiver requested from submission of the drainage plan at the preliminary plan stage. The applicant will use sediment barriers, a designated stockpile area, and a planting and sediment removal schedule to control erosion during construction.

The applicant has requested a waiver from submission of a stormwater management plan at the preliminary plan stage. A drainage plan that will employ underground infiltration systems and direct runoff toward the street is included with the plan but no calculations are included. Upon submission, the plan shall be subject to the City Engineer's approval and approval from the Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC) and Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM).

#### Waivers

The applicant has requested waivers from submission of the following at the preliminary plan stage: Lighting plan, signage plan, submission of municipal and state approvals, and a stormwater management plan.

Per the applicant, signage and lighting plans will be finalized upon approval of the building's siting at the final plan. The applicant will develop the stormwater calculations based on the submitted drainage plan and submit them for state approval. The DPD is not opposed to granting the requested waivers as the applicant has demonstrated progress on completing each submission. Further, the time required by state bodies to take action can vary. Waiving these items would be consistent with good planning practice as it would allow the applicant to proceed with the approval process as plans are developed.

#### Action—Waivers

The DPD recommends that the CPC grant the requested waivers subject to the following conditions:

- The waived items listed above shall be submitted at the permitting stage. The City Engineer's approval of the drainage plan is required prior to permit review.
- The applicant shall apply for a major or minor change, should approval of any waived items result in a change the site plan.

## Combination of stages

The applicant is requesting to combine master and preliminary plan approval. Subject to granting the waivers, the DPD recommends that the CPC combine approval, finding that the applicant has submitted the required elements for both stages.

### **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 public space/open space. The plan describes this area as one intended to include public buildings and open space. The development will conform to the comprehensive plan as schools are permitted by right and the will be providing amenities for public use. The development will conform to objective CS-8 of the comprehensive plan which encourages development of schools and improvement of the learning environment for City students.

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

Use: Educational facilities are permitted by right in the PS zone.

Dimension and design: The development will comply with the dimensional requirements of PS zone subject to the CPC granting a dimensional adjustment for height.

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

Landscaping: The applicant will meet the canopy coverage requirement.

Lighting: A conforming lighting plan shall be submitted a the permitting 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 Nelson, Eaton and Jastram streets.

**Action—Combination of stages**

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

**Action—Land Development Project**

The CPC should vote to approve the master and preliminary plans subject to the following conditions:

1. The applicant and their traffic engineers shall work with the City Traffic Engineer on implementation of the recommendations in the traffic memo.
2. The drainage plan shall be subject to the City Engineer's approval prior to submission.