Providence
City Plan Commission

November 17, 2026

AGENDA ITEM 1 ▪ 257 DEAN AND 14 CARGILL STREET





Views from Dean and West Streets

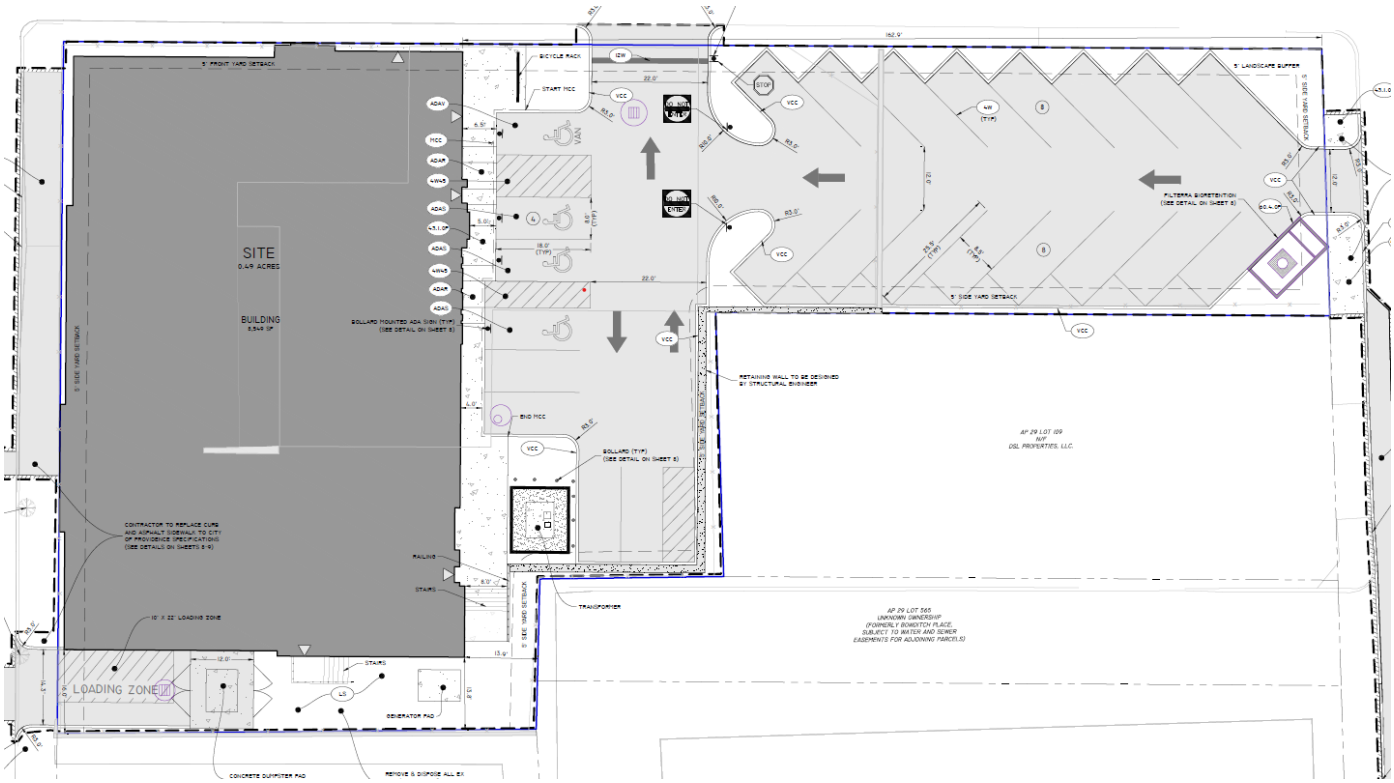


Rendering from West Street



Aerial view of the site

OVERVIEW			
Owner/applicant:	RI Public Health Institute, Applicant RIPHI Ventures Corp, Owner	**Project Description:**	Construction of a four story, approximately 52' tall medical services building with associated site amenities. The applicant is requesting a design waiver from the build-to percentage requirement on West Street and a dimensional variance from the parking requirement. The applicant is requesting to combine master and preliminary plan approval.
Case no./Project type:	**26-107UDR** Preliminary Plan		
Project location:	257 Dean and 14 Cargill Street AP 29 Lot 108 and 550 C-2 zoning district	**Recommendation:**	Approval of the master and preliminary plan and dimensional relief as detailed
Neighborhood:	Federal Hill	**Project planner:**	Choyon Manjrekar



Proposed site plan

Project Summary

The development site is vacant, zoned C-2 and measures approximately 21,143 SF. The applicant is proposing to construct a four story, approximately 52' tall medical services building providing 35,414 SF of gross floor area, and associated site amenities including parking, landscaping and lighting. The applicant is requesting a design waiver from the front yard build-to percentage requirement on West Street. In addition, pursuant to Unified Development Review, the applicant is seeking a variance from the parking requirement where 66 spaces are required and a total of 24 will be provided onsite. In addition, the applicant has provided a letter of intent from the City to license 10 spaces in the proximate municipal parking garage for the development. The applicant is requesting to combine master and preliminary plan approval. The development plan is a resubmission of a plan that was previously reviewed by the City Plan Commission (CPC) in June, 2026 and denied as the CPC did not make positive findings on the variance request for parking.

Review of substantial change

The applicant has submitted an affidavit detailing the changes made to the plan since it was last reviewed. The previous plan proposed 20 spaces on site. The current submission proposes 24 onsite spaces. The City has provided a letter of intent to license 10 spaces for use by the development in the proximate municipal parking garage. In addition, Dean Street will be the only point of ingress and West Street will be the only point of egress, where ingress and egress from West Street was initially proposed. Changes have been made to the signage and lighting plans to reduce their effect on neighboring properties. The CPC is required to review the changes to determine if they represent a substantial change in circumstance to justify a new hearing on the variance request. The application can be reviewed only upon the CPC voting to make a positive finding.

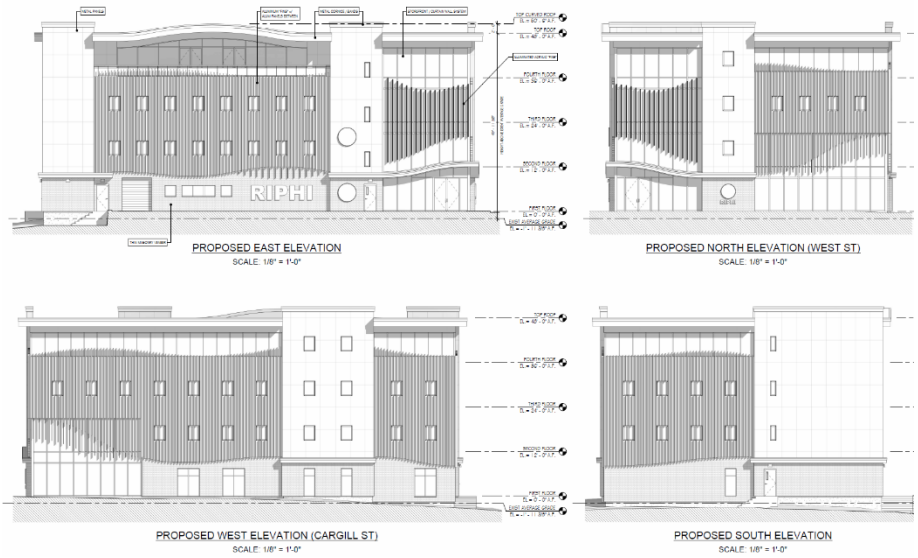
ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL ISSUES

Use

The subject lot is zoned C-2 where medical offices are permitted by right.

Dimensions and Site Design

The site is composed of two lots that will be merged into an irregularly shaped polygon with frontage on Cargill St, West St and Dean St. West St will be designated as the front yard from where direct access from the street will be provided. A height of approximately 52’ and four stories with a cellar is proposed. The applicant has received a 5% administrative modification from the 50’ height limit of the C-2 zone to allow for the proposed height. The front of the building will be set to West Street with the façade occupying approximately 31% of the build-to zone at the front lot line where 60% is required. A design waiver has been requested for the proposed siting. The building will meet the corner side setback build-to zone requirement addressing over 40% of the corner side lot line on Cargill Street.



Proposed Elevations

Staff Design Review

Per section 1904.D of the ordinance, land development projects shall be reviewed by DPD staff who will file a report to the CPC. Staff Planner Christopher Ise conducted the review and submits the following:

The applicant is proposing a contemporary building design for the RIPHI Headquarters that includes curved architectural features, vertical screening elements, large window areas, and a mix of modern exterior materials. The design creates a distinctive appearance while helping to break up the overall mass of the building.

The elevations show a consistent architectural style on all sides of the building with strong façade articulation, varied textures, and modern detailing. The curved roof and canopy elements add visual interest and help create a more inviting streetscape.

Staff requested improvements to the pedestrian experience along Cargill Street, particularly through larger window openings along the street-facing façade. In response, the applicant revised the design to include taller windows, which improved the building's relationship to the street and overall pedestrian experience.

Overall, the project presents a well-designed and visually interesting building that would contribute positively to the surrounding area and largely conforms to section 503 of the zoning ordinance. The proposal appears consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's goals of improving urban design and encouraging high-quality development.

Parking

The parking area consists of 16 diagonally parked spaces located parallel to West Street, four 90° handicapped spaces located adjacent to the side of the building and four additional standard sized spaces. In addition to the northern entrance off West street, the building will be directly accessible to pedestrians from the parking area. Vehicle access to the parking area will be provided from Dean and West Streets. In addition to the 24 spaces on site, the applicant has secured a letter of intent from the City to license 10 spaces dedicated to the development in the municipal garage to the south of the building. One loading space, required for over 20,000 SF of commercial development will be provided in the rear yard with ingress from Cargill Street. A total of 66 spaces are required based on the requirement of one space per 500 SF for 35,414 SF and factoring in the parking exemption for the first 2,500 SF of development in the C-2 zone. A traffic memo submitted with the plan also noted an additional 39 vacant spaces in the parking garage. A dimensional variance for parking has been requested for the shortfall of 42 spaces.

Environmental Management

Stormwater management and erosion control plans have been submitted. The stormwater system has been designed to treat stormwater using a bioretention system and convey it to a drain on Dean Street. The plan indicates that impervious coverage will be reduced, which is expected to reduce runoff levels from what currently exists. The erosion control plan will employ sediment barriers, drainage swales and designated stockpile areas. The plans shall be subject to the City Engineer's review at the final plan stage.

Landscaping

The applicant will plant 10 small trees and employ two existing trees totaling 3,600 SF to meet the canopy coverage requirement of approximately 3,200 SF, calculated as 15% of the 21,143 SF area of the development. Plantings will be made along the perimeter on West Street in addition to internal plantings. A five foot perimeter strip is required between the parking area and West Street but plantings will be made in a sawtooth pattern. The City Forester has approved a modification for the design of the planting strip.

Design Waiver—Findings

The applicant is seeking a design waiver from section 503.A.6.a of the zoning ordinance for the proposed front yard setback build-to percentage requirement on West Street where 60% is required but approximately 31% will be provided. Per section 1005.F, the CPC is required to make findings on the following criteria:

i. *Literal enforcement of the provision for which a waiver is sought is impracticable.*

The site is irregularly shaped with the length of the northern lot line on West Street more than double the length of the southern lot line. This makes it difficult to meet the build-to zone requirement of 60% without

drastically affecting the building's design and parking layout, which will be provided parallel to the front lot line.

ii. The design or development condition resulting from the waiver has no significant adverse impact on the surrounding natural environment, built environment, or pedestrian and traffic circulation.

Granting of the waiver would not have an adverse impact on the surrounding environment as it would only relate to development occurring on the site and would not affect traffic or pedestrian circulation outside of it. Tree plantings will be made at the front lot line, separating the parking area from the street and providing continuity from the building.

iii. Granting of the waiver is in the best interest of good planning, urban design, and/or architecture practice, as evidenced by consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

Granting the waiver would be in the interest of good planning practice as it would allow for development of the site within the constraints permitted by the lot's layout.

Design Waiver—Action

Based on the foregoing discussion, it is the DPD's opinion that the CPC should grant the design waiver based on the above findings.

Dimensional Variance – Findings

The applicant is requesting a variance from the parking requirement, proposing to provide a total of 24 spaces where 66 are required.

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

i. 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 C-2 zone is intended for dense commercial and mixed use development like the subject plan being proposed. The subject property is oddly shaped. It has ample space for a substantial building but cannot accommodate the required parking due to its size and shape. This condition is not related to a disability, or prior action of the applicant.

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

As described, the hardship is not the result of any prior action of the applicant as it is related to the unique character of the property which is not attributable to a prior action of the applicant.

iii. 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 applicant has submitted a traffic memo analyzing parking conditions in the vicinity of the site and analyzed the amount of vacant street parking. The memo notes that 517 onstreet parking spaces are available within 1/8th of a

mile of the site, which is considered a walkable distance. The memo observed that 67 of those spaces are usually vacant. Included in this number were 39 spaces observed to be vacant in the public safety parking garage. As noted, the City intends to license 10 spaces in the public safety garage for the use. The spaces will be reorganized, metered, and available to the public in the near future. Based on the memo, the parking available in the vicinity will exceed the required amount of 66 spaces. As the parking requirement will be fulfilled by existing onstreet and structured spaces in addition to offstreet parking provided by the development, a change to the neighborhood's character is not expected.

iv. 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.

As the site is intended for dense commercial development, denial of the relief would result in a hardship as it would limit the use of the site given what's permitted in the C-2 zone.

Dimensional Variance – Action

Based on the foregoing discussion, the DPD recommends that the requested relief be granted.

Combination of Stages—Action

The Administrative Officer (AO) has determined that the applicant has met the submission requirements for the master and preliminary plan stages and has combined the stages per section 501.B of the Development Review Regulations.

Land Development Project – Findings

Section 1005 of the Commission's *Development Review Regulations* requires that the City Plan Commission make the following findings a part of their approval of all subdivision 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 Plan stages:

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 neighborhood commercial/mixed use development intended for traditional pedestrian and transit oriented uses in buildings set close to the street. The development will conform to objective ED1 of the plan which promotes investment in various economic sectors including health and life sciences.

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

Use: Medical Offices are permitted by right in the C-2 zone.

Dimension and design: The development will comply with the dimensional and design requirements of the C-2 zone subject to the CPC granting the design waiver from the front yard build-to zone requirement.

Parking: The applicant will meet the parking requirement subject to the CPC granting a dimensional variance for parking.

Landscaping: The applicant will meet the canopy coverage requirement and the final landscaping plan shall be subject to the City Forester's approval.

Lighting: The plan will meet the lighting requirement.

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 environmental impacts are expected as the applicant is required to conform to applicable environmental regulations, which shall be reflected in the final plan.

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 applicant is required to merge the lots prior to final approval. There are no apparent 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.

Adequate street access is provided from Dean and West Streets.

Minor Subdivision— Action

Based on the analysis and findings contained in this report, the CPC should vote to approve the master and preliminary plans pursuant to dimensional relief being granted through unified development review and subject to the following conditions:

1. The landscaping plan shall be subject to the City Forester's review.
2. The drainage and erosion control plans shall be subject to the City Engineer's approval.
3. The subject lots shall be merged prior to final approval.