

CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT



Memorandum – FINAL

To: City Plan Commission
From: Jonas U. Bruggemann, MSCRP | Senior Planner
Date: January 29, 2025
RE: 530-532 Wellington Avenue – Assessors Plat 3, Lot 107
“CanAm Self Storage” – Major Land Development Project: Preliminary Plan

I. Applicant | Property | Proposal

The Applicant and Owner is CanAm RI LLC.

The subject property is located off Wellington Avenue, identified as Assessor's Plat 3, Lot 107.

The property is zoned M-2 (General industry) and is not located in any municipal overlay district.

The Proposal is the complete interior and exterior renovation of an existing 1 to 3-story mill complex to accommodate a self-storage facility with an accessory office and associated parking and landscaping and will be serviced by public water and sewer. This project includes demolition of select attached and detached accessory structures.

III. Documents Submitted for This Application

1. Major Subdivision Plan entitled “Proposed Self-Storage Building” prepared by Joe Casali Engineering, Inc.; dated May 2, 2024.
2. Major Land Development Project – Preliminary Plan Application & Checklist, signed by Applicant Representative Michael Jobb Member; dated January 7, 2024.
3. Preliminary Plan Application Fee for \$15,500.00; dated January 7, 2024.
4. Conditional RIPDES CGP permit by RIDEM-OWR, dated January 2, 2025
5. Map 100' Abutters.
6. List of 100' Abutters.
7. Project Narrative and Stormwater Management Report, prepared by Joe Casali Engineering, Inc.; dated December 5, 2024.
8. Municipal Lean Certificate; dated January 3, 2025.
9. Notarized Affidavit of Notice of Compliance for Abutter Notices; signed by Applicant Legal Representative Robert D. Murray; dated January 17, 2025.

IV. Surrounding Land Use & Context

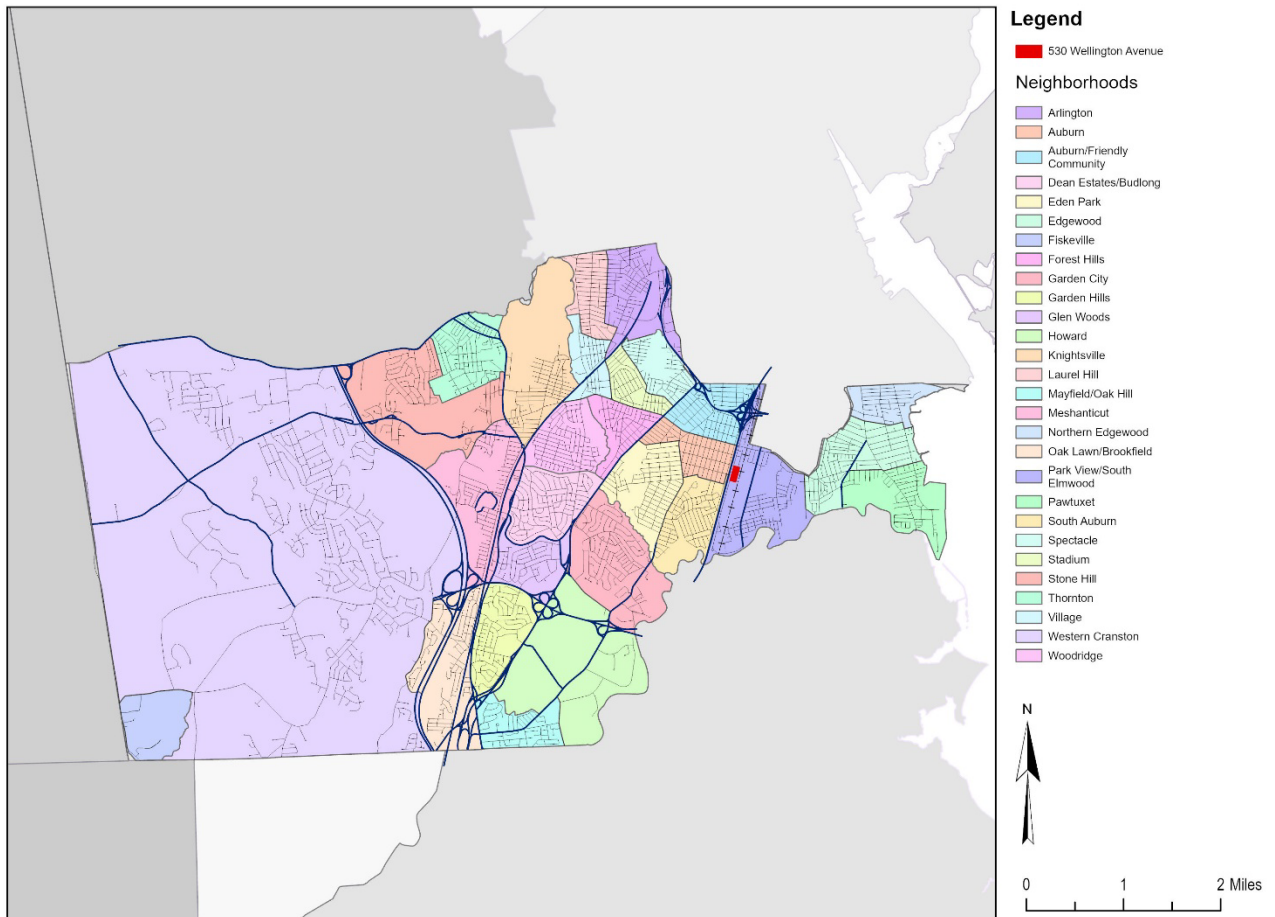
Analysis using the Cranston Geographic Information System and the FEMA Flood Map Service Center indicates that:

1. The subject property is located on the southeasterly side of Wellington Avenue and southwesterly side of Clarence Street.
2. The surrounding area is M-2 land, with A-6 and B-1 to the west across Interstate 95. Development in the area consists of a variety of industrial and commercial uses including manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, and big box commercial with a pocket of single, two, and multifamily residential development and business offices north of Clarence Street. The property lies between Interstate 95 and the Northeast Corridor railroad right-of-way owned by Amtrak.

3. The subject property is outside of any regulated resource areas under jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, (RIDEM).
4. The subject property is outside of any identified historic / cultural districts under jurisdiction of the Local Historic District Commission, State Historical Preservation Commission, State, or National Registers of Historic Places.
5. The subject property is identified as “Zone X – Area of Minimal Flood Hazard” on FEMA Flood Map Panel 44007C0318H, and outside of any regulated floodplain or flood hazard districts.

LOCATION

THIS MAP IS TO BE USED FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY



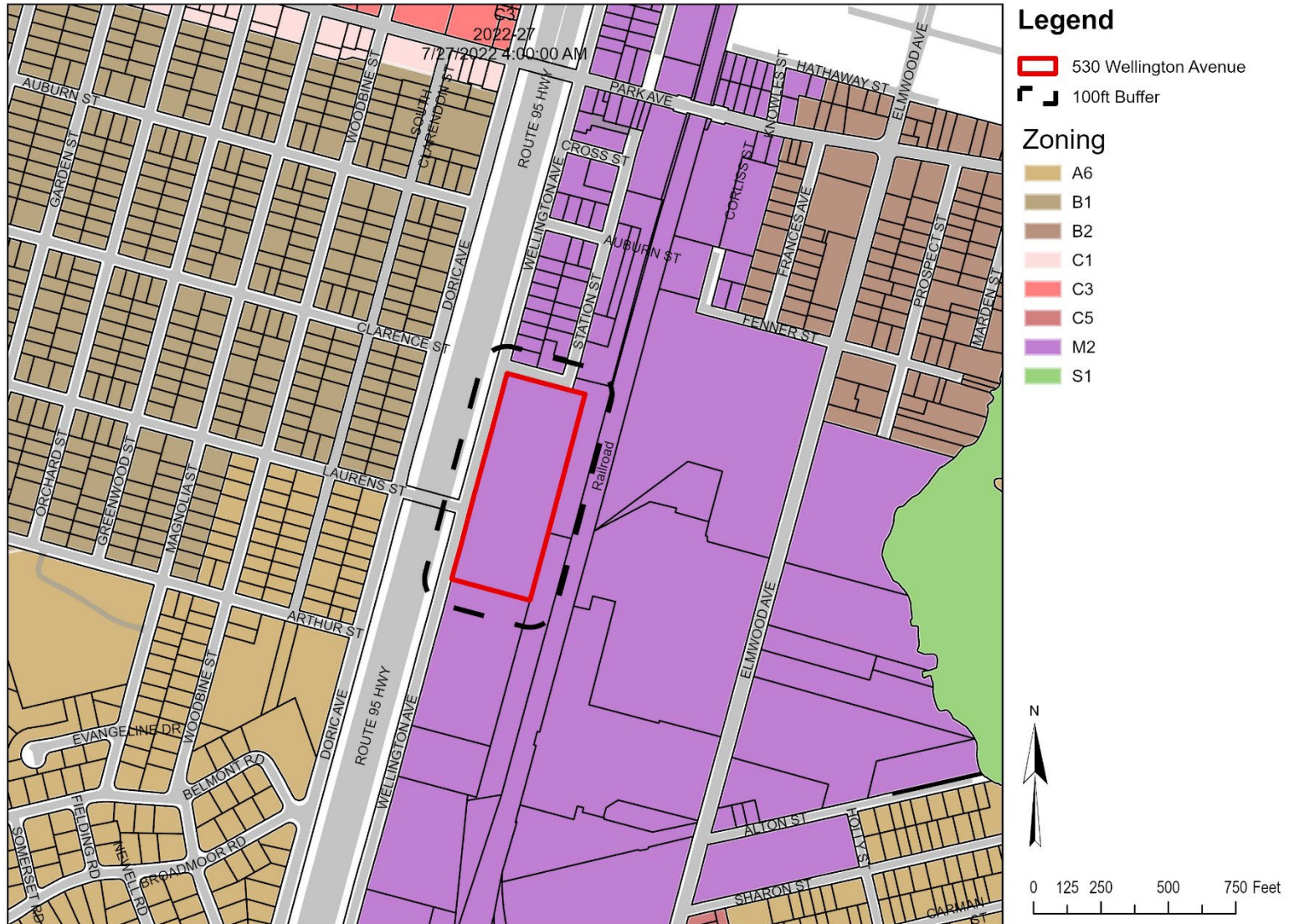


Legend

- 530 Wellington Avenue
- 100ft Buffer

ZONING MAP

THIS MAP IS TO BE USED FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY

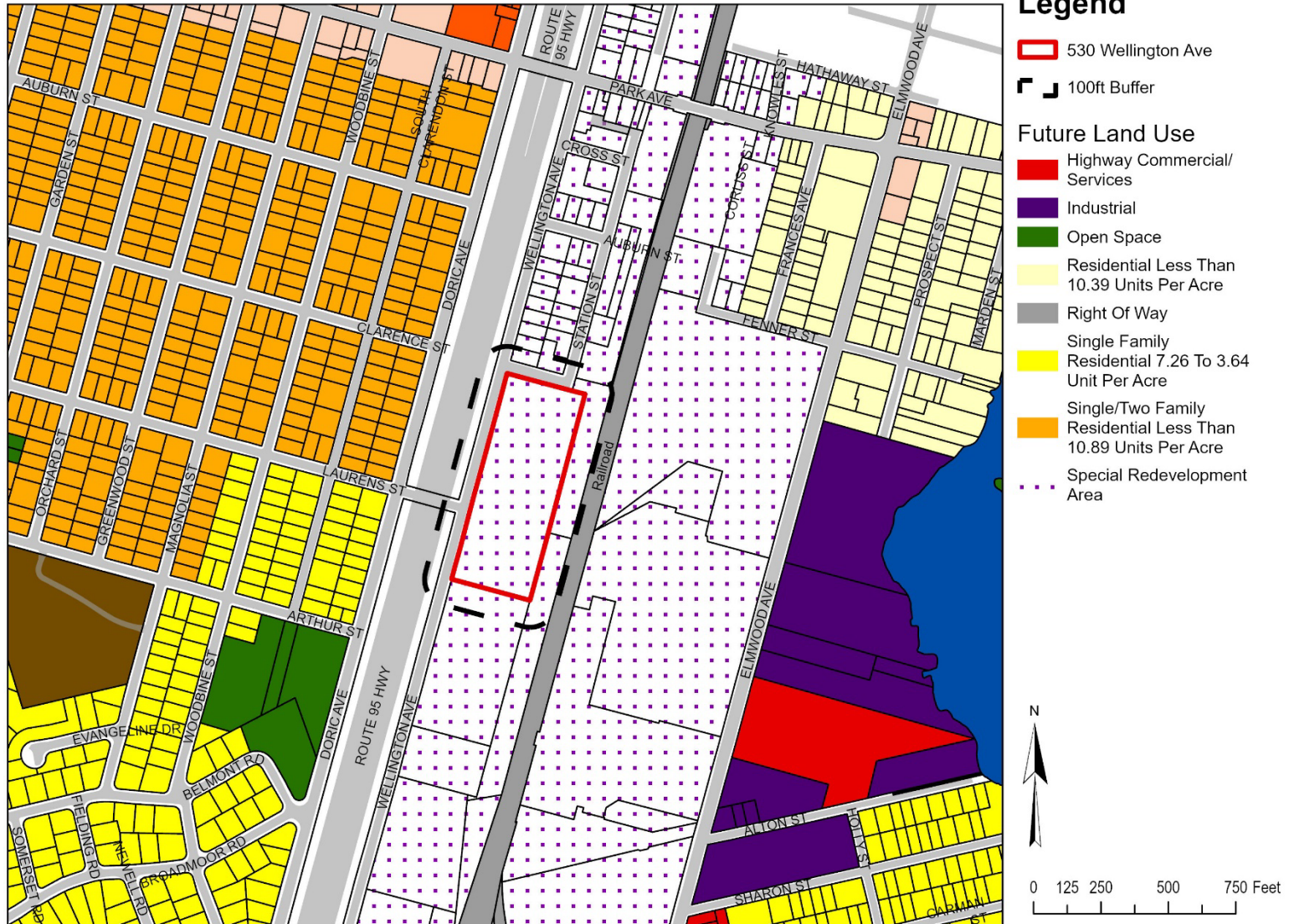


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FUTURE LAND USE

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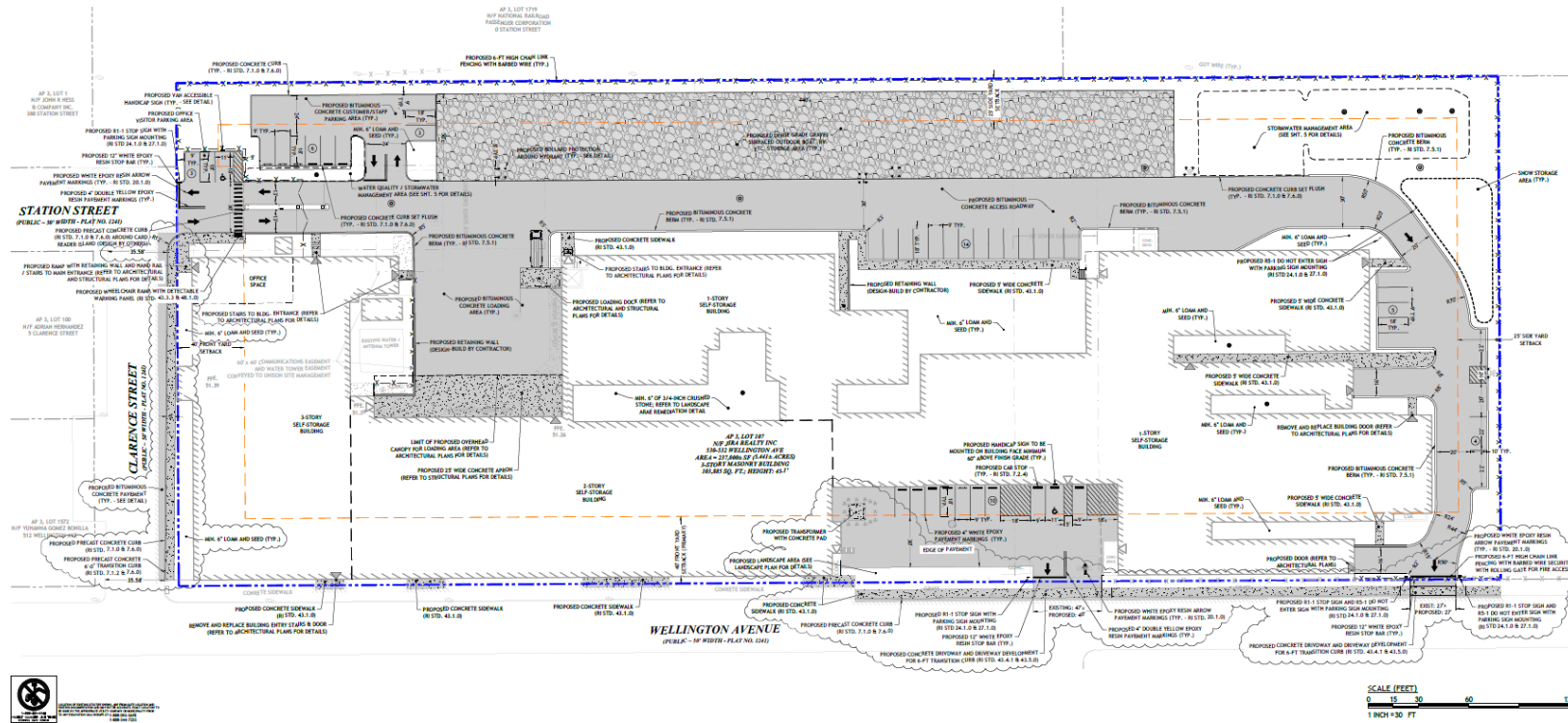


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Site Plan of Proposal



V. Municipal Review

Pursuant to RIGL §45-23-37, these Plans and submitted documents were distributed for comment to the following agencies. Responses are as follows:

1. Department of Public Works
 - a. Engineering Division: Mr. Frank Corrao, P.E., Acting Public Works Director, has reviewed the Proposal and did not provide commentary at this time.
 - b. Traffic Safety Division: Mr. Steven Mulcahy has reviewed the Proposal and did not provide commentary at this time.
 - c. Sewer Division: Although Mr. Edward Tally, Environmental Program Manager, hasn't responded at this time, the existence of two 6" sewer lines on the Existing Conditions Plan indicates existing service. The Project Narrative report states that a sewer design review approval by the Cranston Department of Public Works and Veolia Water will be required due to the change of use. An approval letter could be conditioned for Final Plan submission.
 - d. Providence Water Supply Board: Although PWSB hasn't responded at this time, the existence of a two 4" water supply lines and one 6" fire protection water supply line on the Existing Conditions Plan indicates existing service. The Project Narrative report states that a water service design review approval by PWSB will be required due to the change of use. An approval letter could be conditioned for Final Plan submission.
2. Department of Building Inspection & Zoning Enforcement
 - a. Mr. David Rodio, Building Official, has reviewed the Proposal and did not provide commentary at this time.
 - b. Mr. Stanley Pikul, Alt. Building Official, has reviewed the Proposal and commented that the Applicant shall provide a signage master plan and a structural evaluation of the existing water tower as part of Plan Review of the Building Department.
3. Fire Department: Mr. Armand Niquette, Fire Marshal, has reviewed the Proposal and did not provide commentary at this time.

In addition to individual reviews, the Technical Review Committee (TRC) held a public meeting on January 15, 2025 to review and provide comments and recommendations to the Applicant and the City Plan Commission.

During the meeting, the Applicant volunteered to make the following revisions to the plan:

- The proposed transformer in the small parking lot across from Laurens Street was located closer to the building as recommended by RI Energy.

The TRC made the following recommendations:

- Curbing and sidewalks should be installed along the public streets and the existing sidewalks and curbing should be brought into compliance with City standards.
 - *New curbing and sidewalks have been provided in the revised plans.*
- The applicant should provide evidence that the portion of Station Street that is now designated as 530 Wellington Avenue has been properly abandoned.
 - *Evidence of proper abandonment has been provided by the Applicant.*
- The fire hydrant on the south end of the property should be assessed.
 - *If the hydrant is in poor condition and beyond repair, it should be removed.*
- The sewer easement along the east side of the property should be abandoned.

- The easement is superfluous and maintaining the easement may create more issues in the future than removing it.
- *The Applicant is in the process of reviewing this option.*
- Signage plans and a structural assessment for the water tower have been requested as part of the permitting process of the Building Department.
 - *These items will be dealt with separately from the Planning approval process.*

VI. Planning Analysis

Consistency with the Surrounding Area

The Proposal is generally consistent with the surrounding area.

- The subject parcel and abutting properties are zoned M-2 (General industrial).
- There are significant physical buffers between the subject parcel and nearby residentially zoned parcels such as Interstate 95 to the west and the commercial and industrial development surrounding the rest of the property.
- While there are some residential and light commercial uses just north of Clarence Avenue, the use (self-storage) is consistent with the M-2 Zoning District and should provide minimal disturbances to residential abutters.
- There is an approved preliminary plan for a self-storage facility on the abutting property to the south.
- Self-storage uses typically create very few vehicle trips and produce few nuisances, especially compared to most other industrial uses.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

- The Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designates the subject property as "*Special Redevelopment Area*."
 - The 2012 Comprehensive Plan states that Special Redevelopment Areas fall under one three categories and this area is defined as follows:
 - "Areas in which the City anticipates undertaking redevelopment through mixed-planned development ordinances such as the Elmwood/Wellington industrial corridor, the Cranston Printworks, and the site of the former Trolley Barn;"
 - This FLUM designation is meant to encourage proposals for transit-oriented development (TOD) around a potential MBTA commuter rail station that was considered in the 2014 Rhode Island State Rail Plan. There are currently no plans or proposals for a rail station or associated TOD.
 - Present contamination of hazardous substances may restrict any potential residential use of the subject property.
 - The location is between I-95 and the Northeast Corridor which makes this parcel a particularly high nuisance area that is appropriate for industrial uses. Absent the draw of high frequency transit, the residential uses as envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan should probably not be located near the noise and air quality nuisances of this location.
 - While the use is not explicitly encouraged in the Comprehensive Plan, it is compatible with the Comprehensive Plan as the Special Redevelopment Area does not explicitly prohibit any uses.
 - Per the Comprehensive Plan, the M-2 zoning district is an appropriate zoning classification for self-service storage uses.
 - Therefore, Staff finds that the Application is consistent with the FLUM designation.
- The Comprehensive Plan outlines goals, policies, and action items pertaining to this Proposal which Staff find support the approval of this Application, specifically:

- Goal ED-3: The City shall have an efficient and predictable development process throughout all departments of the City.
- Policy ED-15: Work with regulatory staff to proactively inform and assist developers in regulatory and approval processes and otherwise improve relations with developers, businesses, and property owners.
- Policy ED-22: Add to the City's taxable property base by constructing industrial and commercial structures which are properly designed and sited in keeping with environmental, planning and design considerations.

Consistency with the Zoning Ordinance

- The Zoning Map and Ordinance designates the subject property as "M-2."
 - The proposed use (self-service storage) is permitted in the M-2 zoning district.
 - The building encroaches on the minimum front yard setback requirements (Section 17.20.120 of the Zoning Ordinance) along Wellington Avenue and Clarence Street and exceeds the maximum building height for the M-2. However, the building predates the current regulations and is therefore "pre-existing non-conforming" for both items.
 - No additions or expansions that would make the building more non-conforming are proposed.
 - Zoning Relief will therefore not be required.
- Staff find that the Application is directly consistent with the Zoning Ordinance.

Access to the Site, Circulation, and Fencing

- Vehicular access to the site will be achieved via two existing two-way access points and one existing exit only area onto public streets. Access to the front of the building is provided by a two-way access point along Wellington Avenue leading into a small parking lot. Primary access is from the corner of Clarence Street and Station Street.
- Existing issues regarding parking on sidewalks and the public right-of-way are addressed.
 - The site previously featured multiple entrances along Wellington Avenue and Clarence Street.
 - The Proposal provides only one entrance from Wellington Avenue from the small parking lot and all other entrances will be from inside the property. Self-storage typically creates few vehicle trips, and the parking provided on the site should be adequate.
- The Proposal provides for safe and adequate local circulation for pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
 - The Department of Public Works and the Fire Department reviewed the plan and determined that it provides adequate access for private vehicles and emergency services.
 - Curbing and sidewalks are proposed along public streets which should significantly improve safety and access for pedestrians.
- A 6' high chain link fence with barbed wire will be constructed along the eastern and southern property lines, preventing unauthorized access.
- The final design of the driveway and fencing will be subject to review by the City's Department of Inspections and Zoning, Department of Public Works, and the Fire Department.

Environmental Impact

No significant environmental impacts are anticipated. The Proposal will be subject to all state and local regulations pertaining to environmental impacts and wetlands.

- The subject property is outside of any regulated resource areas under jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, (RIDEM).
- RIDEM's Natural Heritage Map shows that there are no known rare species located on the site.
- The proposal includes an overall improvement of environmental conditions regarding soil contaminants.
 - Past industrial uses of the subject property have created high levels of contamination in the surrounding soils and within the building itself.
 - While many of the identified contaminants have been removed or sealed on the subject property, unidentified contaminants may still be present.
 - The Applicant is working with RIDEM to address management of contaminants on site.
 - The proposed stormwater management plan accommodates for capped soil contaminated areas and will avoid further contamination of surrounding soil, groundwater, and waterways. This will be a significant improvement to existing conditions.
- The Proposal will improve stormwater management on the site and will have no impact on flood hazard zones.
 - The subject property is identified as "Zone X – Area of Minimal Flood Hazard" on FEMA Flood Map Panel 44007C0318H, and outside of any regulated floodplain or flood hazard districts.
 - Many existing stormwater structures are in poor condition and likely non-functional. New stormwater infrastructure is proposed to provide water quality improvements through filtering and create a more controlled release of runoff into Fenner Pond.
 - The Proposal includes a 2.7% reduction of impervious area and landscaping which should reduce stormwater runoff.
 - Other improvements to stormwater and water quality management are in consideration following reviews of soil contamination and submission to RIDEM's Office of Water Resources/Stormwater Program for a Construction Stormwater Application (CSA).
- Review and approval of the site's Remedial Action Work Plan (RAWP), Soils Management Plan (SMP), and Environmental Land Usage Restriction (ELUR) will be required by the DEM's Office of Waste Management.

VII. Interests of Others

None to Report.

VIII. Additional Matters

None at this time.

IX. Waivers

None Requested.

X. Findings of Fact

An orderly, thorough, and expeditious technical review of this Master Plan has been conducted. Property owners within a 100' radius have been notified via first class mail and the meeting agenda has been properly posted.

Staff has reviewed this Master Plan application for conformance and consistency with the required Findings of Fact in accordance with RIGL § 45-23-60 as well as the Subdivision & Land Development Regulations and finds as follows:

RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(1) states, “The proposed development is consistent with the comprehensive plan and/or has satisfactorily addressed the issues where there may be inconsistencies.”

- The Proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan’s Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designation. The proposed use of self-service storage facility is compatible with the FLUM designation “*Special Redevelopment District*.”

RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(2) states, “The proposed development is in compliance with the standards and provisions of the municipality’s zoning ordinance.”

- The Proposal is consistent with the Zoning Ordinance.
 - The proposed use (self-service storage) is a use by-right in the M-2.

*RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(3) states, “There will be no significant negative environmental impacts from the proposed development as shown on the **final** plan, with all required conditions for approval.” (emphasis added)*

- No significant environmental impacts are anticipated.
- The Proposal will be subject to all state and local regulations pertaining to environmental impacts, wetlands and erosion control.
- RIDEM’s Natural Heritage Map shows that there are no known rare species located on the site.

RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(4) states, “The subdivision, as proposed, will not result in the creation of individual lots with any physical constraints to development that building on those lots according to pertinent regulations and building standards would be impracticable. (See definition of Buildable lot). Lots with physical constraints to development may be created only if identified as permanent open space or permanently reserved for a public purpose on the approved, recorded plans.”

- The Proposal 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 design and location of building lots, utilities, drainage, and other improvements will conform to local regulations for mitigation of flooding and soil erosion.

RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(5) states, “All proposed land developments and all subdivision lots have adequate and permanent physical access to a public street. Lot frontage on a public street without physical access shall not be considered in compliance with this requirement.”

- The Proposal will have adequate permanent physical access to Wellington Avenue, Station Street, and Clarence Street, all are public city streets.
- The Proposal provides for safe and adequate local circulation for vehicular traffic.

XI. Recommendation

Staff finds this Proposal generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, and the standards for required Findings of Fact set forth in RIGL § 45-23-60.

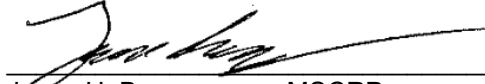
Staff therefore recommends that the City Plan Commission adopt the Findings of Fact documented above and **APPROVE** the Preliminary Plan submittal subject to the conditions denoted below.

XII. Recommended Conditions of Approval

The Final Plan submittal shall be subject to the following:

1. All outside approvals from relevant state and local agencies shall be provided, in particular the final design review approval from the Providence Water Supply Board for the proposed water service and from the City of Cranston Department of Public Works and Veolia Water for the proposed sewer service.
2. Existing curbing and sidewalks along Wellington Avenue and Clarence Street shall be reconstructed to the standards of the Department of Public Works.
3. Provision of a written assessment of the fire hydrant on the south end of the property. If the fire hydrant is determined to be beyond repair, it shall be removed by the applicant. (Alt: the fire hydrant shall be removed unless the hydrant is determined to be serviceable to the standards of the Cranston Fire Department and Providence Water.
4. Provision of an ADA compliant sidewalk ramp along Wellington Avenue parallel to the northern curb cut on Laurens Street.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jonas U. Bruggemann, MSCRP
Senior Planner / Administrative Officer

Cc: Applicant
City Planning Director
File