



**Justin Roias**

Committee on State Legislative Affairs, Vice-Chair  
Committee on City Public Works, Member  
Committee on Ordinances, Member  
Councilor – Ward 4

Dear Members of the Zoning Board of Review,

My name is Justin Roias, and I am the Providence City Councilor for Ward 4, also known as the North End. I am writing to express my support for the special use permit application submitted by Hector Cabrera of New Way Community Center for the property located at 135 Flora St, Plat 72 Lot 484, in the R-4 Residential District.

New Way Community Center is a faith-based organization with deep roots in our North End neighborhood. I've been informed by Mr. Cabrera and fellow church leaders that they plan to use this lot for parking to serve their members and clients of the future community center. Given the range of programs they aim to provide—programs that will clearly benefit our neighbors—it's hard, as the councilor for this area, not to support this plan. The potential positive impact on the community speaks for itself.

What also compels my support for this application is New Way's authentic and long-standing connection to the North End. They are not an outside organization attempting to impose their will on this neighborhood; they have been an integral part of it for years. Many of their members and leaders are residents of the North End, establishing a sense of inherent accountability. Their local presence ensures that their programs are not only responsive to the needs and interests of our neighbors but also reflect a deep understanding of the community's priorities.

It is my hope that this inherent accountability, rooted in their status as neighbors in the North End, will extend to their plans for the parking lot. I trust that, as neighbors, New Way will make every effort to address any concerns in a thoughtful and responsible manner. Their vested interest in the well-being of the North End gives me confidence that they will strive to find a balance between the needs of the community center and the legitimate concerns raised by their fellow neighbors.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the concerns raised by neighbors regarding the proposal to convert this lot into a parking area, particularly about the entrance and exit points and the existing trees on the site. It is crucial that New Way prioritizes the preservation of as many trees as possible throughout this process. I understand they have previously met with the city forester to discuss and identify which trees are native and which are invasive, which is encouraging. However, I would like to respectfully emphasize that if tree removal is deemed necessary—regardless of whether the trees are invasive or not—they should commit to replanting any trees that are lost. Despite the inherent challenges of the lot, such as attracting illegal activity due to the tree canopy and vegetation, the neighbors have appreciated the tree cover, especially since our neighborhood lacks sufficient green space.

**Providence City Council**

Providence City Hall, 25 Dorrance Street, Providence, RI 02903



**Justin Roias**

Committee on State Legislative Affairs, Vice-Chair  
Committee on City Public Works, Member  
Committee on Ordinances, Member  
Councilor – Ward 4

Neighbors have also voiced concerns about the cleanliness of this lot, as the previous owner neglected maintenance, leading to issues like illegal dumping and uncut grass. I hope Mr. Cabrera and New Way will embrace a more responsible and thoughtful stewardship of the property. By all accounts, since assuming ownership, they have maintained and cared for the lot, despite its continued use by bad actors who have historically exploited the site as a dumping ground for illegal waste.

Their earlier engagement with neighbors during the meeting on Saturday, July 20th, regarding their proposal was a promising start, demonstrating a willingness to clarify intentions and seek input. As a councilor, I view this as just the beginning. I encourage New Way to keep that momentum going and continue ongoing discussions, especially with residents on Flora Street, whose properties border this parking lot. It's important that their concerns and perspectives are part of the conversation as we move forward together. I understand that the plans to convert this space into a parking lot may not satisfy every neighbor, but I hope we can maintain an open dialogue so that we can reach concessions that benefit everyone.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate and echo what I believe Mr. Cabrera and his colleagues have shared: the proposed parking lot is not simply a convenience; it is a crucial element for both the church and their vision for the community center. This proposed parking lot will significantly alleviate the off-street parking congestion that will be created by the church's membership and clients of the community center. By providing dedicated parking, we can help prevent overflow into our residential streets, which is a scenario that we all want to avoid. This thoughtful approach not only supports the church's operations but also contributes to the overall well-being of our neighborhood.

In closing, I hope this application is given thoughtful consideration as it seeks to address the needs of both New Way Community Center and the surrounding community.

Sincerely,

Justin Roias  
Providence City Councilor – Ward 4

**Providence City Council**

Providence City Hall, 25 Dorrance Street, Providence, RI 02903