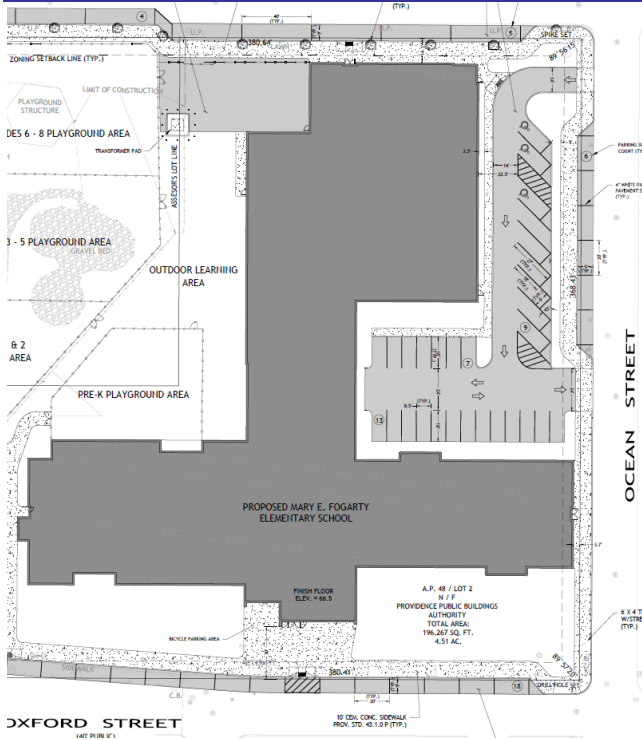


# Providence City Plan Commission

May 21, 2024



## AGENDA ITEM 6 ■ 199 OXFORD STREET



Site plan



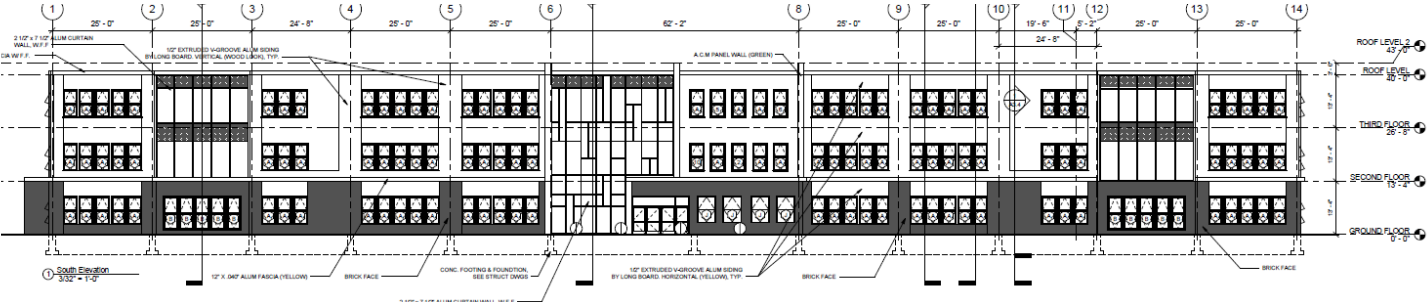
View from corner of Ocean and Oxford Streets



Aerial view of the site

### OVERVIEW

<b>OWNER/ APPLICANT:</b>	City of Providence, Owner and Applicant	<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</b>	The applicant is requesting master plan approval for construction of a three story pre-k to middle school building following demolition of the structure. The applicant is requesting a variance from the corner side yard setback pursuant to Unified Development Review (UDR).
<b>CASE NO./ PROJECT TYPE:</b>	<b>24-021 UDR</b> Master Plan and variance pursuant to Unified Development Review (UDR)		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION:</b>	199 Oxford Street AP 48 Lot 2; PS zoning district	<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	Approval of the master plan and variance as detailed
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD:</b>	Lower South Providence	<b>PROJECT PLANNER:</b>	Choyon Manjrekar



Oxford Street elevation and rendering

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The subject lot measures approximately 101,785 SF (2.33 acres) in the PS zone with frontage on Oxford, Sayles and Ocean Streets, and occupied by a school building. The applicant is proposing to construct a three story, 40’ tall pre-k to middle school building following demolition of the existing structure. In addition to master plan approval the applicant is seeking a variance from the corner side setback requirement on Ocean Street pursuant to UDR where a minimum of 10’ is required in the PS zone but approximately 3.7’ will be provided.

**ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL ISSUES**

Use

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

Dimensions and site design

Both Oxford Street and Sayles Streets are considered front lot lines as the subject lot is a through lot. The building is laid out in a ‘T’ shape, occupying the length of Oxford Street and extending northwards to Sayles Street. The building will meet and exceed the minimum front yard setback of 10’ from both streets. A variance from the corner side setback requirement of 10’ is requested as a setback of 3’7” from Ocean Street is proposed.

The eastern and western portion of the building fronting on Oxford Street will be composed of two towers providing learning houses for two classes on the first and second floors and learning houses for grades 7 and 8 on the third floor. Each house will be composed of learning studios and common space. The first floor extension toward Sayles Street will also include a gymnasium, cafeteria, and office space.

The façade is composed of brick, aluminum siding and glass, with ample transparency on each face. The 40’ height as calculated from average grade is within the 50’ height limit of the zone.

Three separate playgrounds for different grades will be located in the park on the adjacent lot.

Parking

A total of 22 parking spaces are needed to meet the requirement of one space per three employees with 66 employees expected. The applicant will meet the requirement onsite providing a total of 29 spaces on the lot.

Forty eight bicycle parking spaces will be provided to meet the requirement of three spaces per classroom.

Landscaping

With a lot area of 2.3 acres, approximately 30,500 SF of canopy coverage is required. The applicant will meet and exceed this requirement, proposing approximately 59,000 SF of canopy coverage on the site and in the adjoining park.

**Discussion—Dimensional Variance**

The applicant is seeking dimensional relief from the corner side setback requirement where 10’ is required in the PS zone but approximately 3’7” will be provided.

**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).*

The proposed school will be built upon demolition of the existing structure. Based on plans provided, the building’s layout and design are necessary to update the facility to meet the educational programming needs outlined in State and City regulations. As described, the building’s design requires it to extend parallel to Oxford Street in order to provide learning studios and classroom space for each class. The relief requested is not influenced by the character of the surrounding area but by the unique character of the proposed building, which is designed to achieve certain educational outcomes.

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 a school building that meets contemporary educational standards. 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 relief requested is required to update the existing school building, which is the current use of the site. A negative effect on neighborhood character is not expected as the use will remain the same, but the facility will be enhanced. The portion of the building that will encroach into the setback will be located in an area currently used for parking. The building could have less of an impact on surrounding property than parking space.

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 requiring the building to maintain the setback would reduce its footprint and affect its function.

#### **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 Plan:

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 Providence Tomorrow: The Comprehensive Plan intends for public space/open space. The plan describes this area as one intended for open space and public facilities. As schools are intended for this designation, the development would conform to the comprehensive plan. The development would conform to objective CS-1 of the comprehensive plan which encourages development and provision of public educational facilities in the City.

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 largely complies with the dimensional and design requirements of the PS zone. Subject to the CPC granting the relief for the corner side setback requested through UDR, the development will conform to the ordinance.

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

Landscaping: The applicant will meet the canopy coverage 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 negative environmental impacts are expected as the applicant is required 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 Oxford, Ocean and Sayles Streets.

**Recommendation—Land Development Project**

Based on the foregoing discussion, the CPC should vote to approve the master plan.