

DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

Staff Report for September 9, 2024

NEW BUSINESS

1. Case No. 2024-19 DD-DPR: 200 Dyer Street - **Public Hearing*

The subject of the hearing will be an application by CV Properties LLC, requesting to demolish a portion of the existing structure at 200 Dyer Street, and to construct a new multi-story, mixed-use building consisting of 183 apartment units and one commercial unit on the site, located on a block bounded by Dyer, Dorrance, and Peck Street in Providence, RI. The applicant is requesting a Downtown District Demolition Waiver (Zoning Ordinance Section 1907.E.2) to demolish a portion of the existing structure. The applicant is also requesting a Development Incentive in the form of a Height Bonus (Zoning Ordinance Sections 603 and 1907.F). Additionally, the applicant is requesting Waivers (Zoning Ordinance Section 1907.E.1) from Zoning Ordinance Section 606, Design Standards for New Construction, to include Required Recess Line, Required Maximum Distance Between Building Entrances, and Required Ground Floor Transparency.

****The public hearing will be continued to the next DDRC meeting scheduled for Monday, October 7, 2024 at 4:45 pm.***

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2. Case No. 2024-21 DD-DPR: 75 Clifford Street - *Public Hearing*

The subject of the hearing will be an application by the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority, requesting a waiver from Providence Zoning Ordinance Section 1607.H, *Projecting Signs*, which limits the square footage and number of projecting signs allowed on a building façade in the D-1 Zone. The applicant is seeking to install five (5) new projecting signs on the parking garage.

Applicant: Jason Fredette/Poyant Signs
Owner: Rhode Island Convention Center Authority
Type of Review: Preliminary Plan Review

Building Description: Innovation District Parking Garage (2018). 7-level, 1,250 car parking garage with ground floor commercial space along Richmond Street. NON-CONTRIBUTING

Proposal: The applicant is requesting a waiver from Zoning Ordinance Section 1607.H, *Projecting Signs*, which allows only one projecting sign per façade, with maximum sign area per sign in the D-1 zone at 48-sf. The applicant is seeking to install five new internally illuminated projecting signs on the building, which exceed both the number and square footage of what is allowed. Additional signage proposed consists of a wall sign, vinyl window graphics, and a vehicle/pedestrian warning system.

Issues: Currently the garage does not have any signage related to parking, and the owner, the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority, proposes the installation of signage on the building facades for identification and wayfinding purposes. The sign plan under review by the DDRC consists of the following:

- Three internally illuminated (rectangular) double-sided blade signs with halo internally illuminated channel letters that identify the property. These signs measure 25' x 6' x 3' and are located on the Friendship, Clifford, and Richmond Street elevations. Each sign is 150-sf. **Waiver required.**
- Two internally illuminated (round) double-sided blade signs with push-thru graphics that identify the parking entrance and exits. These signs measure 3' x 3' and are located on the Friendship and Clifford Street elevations. Each sign measures 9-sf. **Waiver required.**
- One internally illuminated wall sign with halo illuminated channel letters on a backer to identify the property. This sign measures 31' x 14' (434-sf) and is located on the Clifford Street elevation. **Given the size of the wall to which the sign will be mounted, the square footage of this sign complies with the zoning regulations for wall signs in the D-1 zone.**
- Additional signage includes applied vinyl window graphics at the pedestrian stairwell entrances, and a vehicle/pedestrian warning system at vehicle entrances. **These signs are allowed by zoning.**

Note: The existing projecting sign and wall sign for the Dunkin' store on the ground floor of this building at the corner of Richmond and Clifford Streets were approved by the Administrative Officer in 2023. **They are included with this package to show the existing signage on the building.**

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Waiver

As per zoning ordinance section 1907.E.1.b, the DDRC is to hold a public hearing on any request for a waiver in accordance with Sections 1801.C and 1601.D. As per section 1907.E.1.a, the DDRC may grant waivers that carry out the purpose of the D-1 Zone and are in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the regulations. In granting a waiver, the DDRC may impose such conditions deemed necessary to carry out the purpose of the D-1 District.

As per City of Providence Land Development and Subdivision Review Regulations Section 1005.E, *Findings for waivers of design standards*, the DDRC is to make the positive written findings on each of the following provisions when granting a waiver:

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

The parking garage at 75 Clifford Street, with its prominent and lengthy facades, necessitates large scale identification and wayfinding signage for visibility to both motorists and pedestrians. Limiting this establishment to one projecting sign at 48-sf is impracticable.

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

The signs will not have an adverse impact on the surrounding natural environment, built environment, or pedestrian and traffic circulation. The signs will add to the vibrancy of the built environment and to the Downtown District.

c. 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.

Based on the review of the sign plan, the granting of the waiver is consistent with Objective BE-2, Strategy A of the Comprehensive Plan, which promotes design innovation and architectural diversity while preserving Providence's traditional character, and Section 101(K) of the Zoning Ordinance, which promotes a high level of quality design in the development of private and public facilities.

Recommendation: The Administrative Officer recommends that the DDRC make the following findings of fact:

- a) 75 Clifford Street is a non-contributing building to the Downtown District.
- b) The work proposed consists of the installation of new building signage.
- c) The application for major alterations/signs is complete.
- d) The request for waivers for non-conforming signs is in accord with zoning ordinance section 1907.
- e) The signs are in accord with the sign regulations set forth in zoning ordinance section 1607.

Based on the above analysis, and the plans and elevations submitted the Administrative Officer recommends the DDRC grant the waiver from zoning ordinance section 1607.H and preliminary plan approval of the signage plan. The final plan is subject to review and approval by the Administrative Officer.