



TOWN OF COVENTRY, RI
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

STAFF REPORT

Project Name:	Mapledale Warehouse Addition
Plan Type:	Minor Land Development / Use and Dimensional Variances
Plan Review Phase:	Preliminary Plan Stage
Owner:	John F & Maria Medeiros
Applicant:	Cordtsen Design Architecture, Inc
Address:	28 Mapledale St
Plat / Lot / Zone:	AP 55 Lot 168 Zone R-20 Lot Size 0.78 acres
Existing Use:	Commercial
Proposed Use:	Commercial with additions
Description:	Applicant proposes to construct a 2,400 SF first-floor addition consisting of two new garage bays, as well as a 633 SF second-floor addition above a portion of the existing building. These additions would require dimensional variances for front and side setbacks. In addition, the applicant is applying for a Use Variance for the expansion of a pre-existing non-conforming use in a residential zone.

I. PROJECT INFORMATION

Overview

This matter comes before the Planning Commission as a Unified Development Review, Preliminary Plan stage application. The application was before the Technical Review Committee on February 17, 2026. This proposal was heard as a Pre-Application matter before the Planning Commission on December 17, 2025

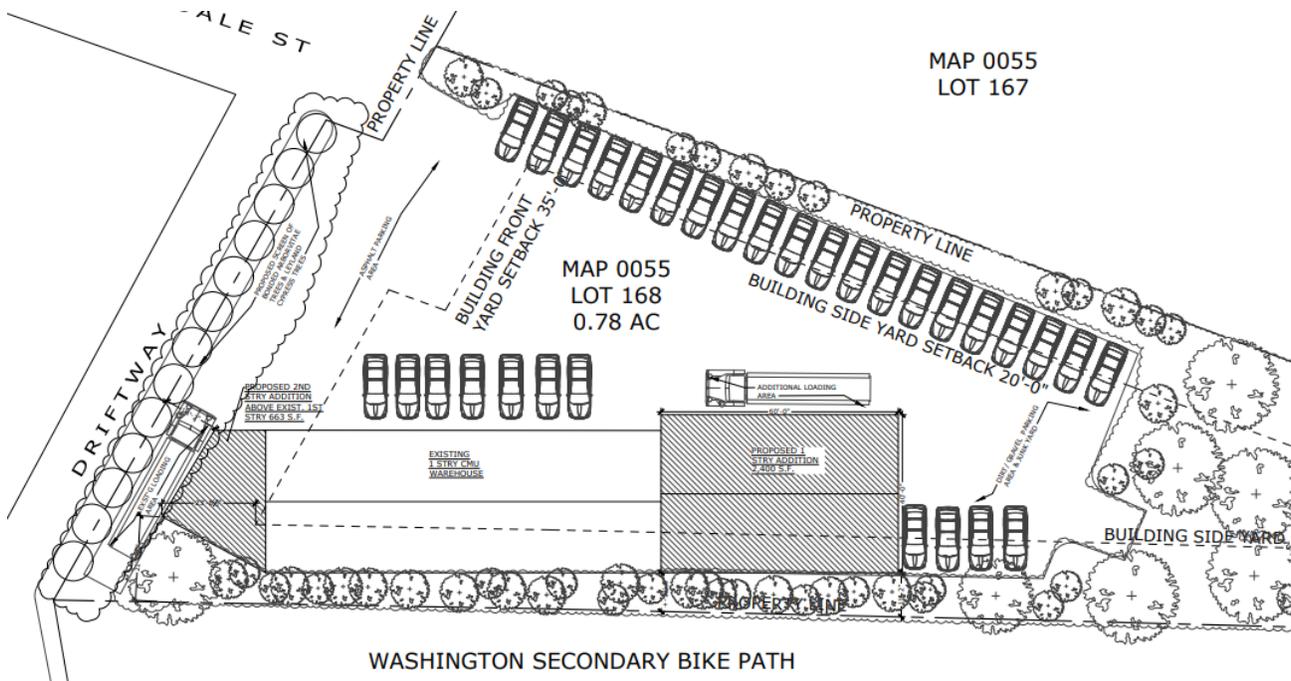
Background and Existing Conditions

This item will be reviewed as a Preliminary Plan stage for a proposed Minor Land Development with associated Dimensional and Use Variances of an 0.78-acre parcel at the location listed in the title block above. The subject parcel abuts a State-owned property to the north, the Trestle Trail greenway to the south and east, and a residential property to the west. The existing garage was built in 1963 and appears to be mostly unchanged since then other than a small addition on the western end of the building in the 1980's. There appear to be no wetlands on the property and the property is located in Zone X ("Area of Minimal Flood Hazard") of the FEMA flood zone.



Proposed Conditions

The applicant has proposed to build two additions to the existing structure. Along the eastern side of the building a 2,400 square foot addition consisting of two garage bays is proposed, along with a 633 square foot second floor addition on the western side of the building. This would be above a currently one floor section of the structure. Both additions would be approximately the same height of the current building, with a maximum height of 19'4". The applicant has proposed over 30 parking spaces where 23 are required, and have proposed two loading spaces where two are required. In addition, the applicant has proposed a row of mixed trees along the eastern edge of the property.



Zoning

The subject parcel is zoned R-20 (residential) and currently enjoys pre-existing non-conforming status for the commercial use in a residential zone. In addition, the existing structure sits in both the front and side setbacks. The proposed western construction would be located within the front and side setbacks, and the eastern addition would be located in the side setback, thus Dimensional Variances are required. The proposed expansion would also trigger a Use Variance as the proposed additions would be an expansion of a pre-existing and non-conforming use in a residential zone.

Interdepartmental Review and Comments

Please see the attached report from the Technical Review Committee (dated February 17, 2026) for interdepartmental comments on this application.

II. USE AND DIMENSIONAL VARIANCES

Findings of Fact

Staff have conducted a review of the **Use and Dimensional Variance** components of this application for conformance with required standards set forth in RIGL Section 45-24-41. Staff's findings are as follows:

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(1) states, “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 § 45-24-30(a)(16)”

1. The applicant has stated that for the Dimensional Variance “The hardship from which relief is sought is due to the unique characteristics of the subject property and existing structure. The property contains an existing commercial garage building constructed in 1963, prior to the adoption of current zoning regulations, and is a lawful preexisting nonconforming use within the R-20 Single-Family Residential zoning district. Because the existing building footprint and placement on the lot are so close to the rear setbacks, site constraints limit the ability to construct additions while complying with current setback requirements. These conditions are unique to the subject property and are not representative of surrounding residential properties. The hardship is not related to any physical or economic disability of the applicant.”
2. In terms of the Use Variance, that applicant states “The hardship arises from the unique condition of the property being a preexisting nonconforming commercial garage use located in a residential (R-20) zone. The existing building was constructed in 1963, prior to the current zoning regulations. The existing layout and location of the structure on the lot limit the ability to expand within current setback requirements. The requested relief is due to these pre-existing conditions and not due to any personal or economic circumstances of the applicant.”

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(2) states, “That the hardship is not the result of any prior action of the applicant”

3. According to the applicant “The hardship is not the result of any prior action by the applicant. The commercial garage use and the existing building configuration were established decades before the applicant purchased the property on January 3, 2003. The applicant did not create the nonconforming conditions and is seeking relief solely to allow reasonable improvements to an existing lawful use.”

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(3) states, “That the granting of the requested variance will not alter the general character of the surrounding area or impair the intent or purpose of the zoning ordinance or the comprehensive plan upon which the ordinance is based”

4. The applicant has stated that “The proposed additions are designed to match the existing garage building in scale, massing, and architectural character.”
5. Planning Staff opines that since the proposed addition will be less than a foot higher than the current structure, and the proposed screening that will be gained, staff is of the view that the general character of the surrounding area will be unaffected.

*RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (e)(1) states, “In granting a **use** variance, the subject land or structure cannot yield any beneficial use if it is required to conform to the provisions of the zoning ordinance. Nonconforming use of neighboring land or structures in the same district and permitted use of lands or structures in an adjacent district shall not be considered in granting a use variance.”*

6. As stated by the applicant, "Because the existing structure is already nonconforming and located within an R-20 residential zone, strict compliance with current setbacks and use regulations would prevent the reasonable use of the property as a commercial garage. The proposed addition is essential to allow continued and efficient use of the existing business, and without the variance, the property could not yield a beneficial use consistent with its long-standing operation."

*§45-24-41(e)(2): "In granting a **dimensional** variance, that the hardship suffered by the owner of the subject property if the dimensional variance is not granted amounts to more than a mere inconvenience, meaning that relief sought is minimal to a reasonable enjoyment of the permitted use to which the property is proposed to be devoted. The fact that a use may be more profitable or that a structure may be more valuable after the relief is granted is not grounds for relief."*

7. The applicant states "Because the existing structure is already nonconforming and located within an R-20 residential zone, strict compliance with current setbacks and use regulations would prevent the reasonable use of the property as a commercial garage. Aesthetically, this addition will allow new storage of commercial vehicles to be enclosed rather than being parked outside on the property. The proposed addition is essential to allow continued use of the existing business, and without the variance, the property could not yield a beneficial use consistent with its long-standing operation."

Use and Dimensional Variance Recommendations

Because the applicant is seeking both Use and Dimensional Variances, staff recommend the commission vote on these matters separately based on the two recommendations, based on the order below with the Use Variance first.

Use Variance: Without the benefit of hearing any public comments at the meeting, staff currently have no concerns with the proposed expansion of this pre-existing nonconforming use due to the unique nature of this particular property and the mitigation planned by the Applicant. Any positive consideration of this application should adopt the documented findings of fact and **approve** the Use Variance application with a condition that the applicant receive approval of its Dimensional Variance as well as the Minor Land Development application.

Dimensional Variance: In addition, staff currently have no concerns with the proposed expansion of the pre-existing structure due to the unique nature of this particular property and the mitigation planned by the Applicant. Staff find the arguments made by the applicant to be reasonable and sufficient for the granting of the Dimensional Variance. Any positive consideration of this application should adopt the documented findings of fact and **approve** the Dimensional Variance application with a condition that the applicant receive approval of the Minor Land Development application.

III. MINOR LAND DEVELOPMENT

Findings of Fact

Staff has conducted an orderly, thorough, and expeditious technical review of this Preliminary Plan application for conformance with required standards set forth in RIGL Section 45-23-60, as well as in the Town of Coventry's Subdivision and 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 community plan and/or has satisfactorily addressed the issues where there may be inconsistencies.”

1. The Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use designation for the subject parcel is High Density Residential. The current use, and proposal to continue this use, for this parcel is consistent with the historic use of this property.

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.”

2. The current use for the subject parcel is a pre-existing non-conforming use within the R-20 zone.
3. Preliminary Plan approval is conditioned upon obtaining relief in the form of Use and Dimensional Variances.

*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)*

4. This finding pertains specifically to the final plan; however, no significant environmental impacts are anticipated based on the Preliminary Plan level of detail required at this stage.

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.”

5. The subject parcel currently enjoys adequate permanent physical access to a public right-of-way (Mapledale Street).
6. The proposed addition will be accessed via the facility's existing driveway, which provides for safe and adequate circulation for vehicular traffic as well as for emergency vehicles.

Recommendation

Staff finds this proposal consistent with the standards for required findings of fact set forth in RIGL Section 45-23-60 as well as with the Town of Coventry's Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the documented findings of fact and waivers, and **approve** the Preliminary Plan application, subject to the conditions denoted below.

Conditions of Approval

1. Preliminary Plan approval is conditioned upon strict adherence to the associated Use and Dimensional Variance Applications as presented and approved.
2. The applicant shall submit a proposed Record Plan with the Final Plan application.
3. Applicant shall design any lighting to be located and shielded to reduce any potential adverse impacts to adjacent residential properties.
4. The applicant shall plant a minimum of 13 trees along the eastern edge of the property to screen the abutting residential properties. The trees shall be a minimum of 6 feet high at initial planting and shall be of an appropriate species to be viable long term.
5. Applicant shall be responsible for the maintenance of newly planted trees along the eastern edge of the property for a minimum of two (2) years.



TOWN OF COVENTRY
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TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: February 17, 2026
PROJECT NAME: "Mapledale Warehouse Addition"
PROPERTIES: AP 55, Lot 168
ADDRESS: 28 Mapledale Street
ZONE: R-20 (Residential)
OWNER: John F & Maria Medeiros
APPLICANT: Cordtsen Design Architecture

This matter came before the Coventry Technical Review Committee at its February 17, 2026 meeting as a Preliminary Plan Application for a Minor Land Development project in accordance with Article V, D.3. of the Coventry Subdivision & Land Development Regulations.

An application and plan were initially submitted for review on January 20, 2026. The applicant proposes to construct a 2,400 SF first-floor addition consisting of two new garage bays, as well as a 633 SF second-floor addition above a portion of the existing building. In addition, the applicant is applying for a Use Variance for the expansion of a pre-existing non-conforming use and for Dimensional Variances for the expansion in both the front and side setbacks. This project will be reviewed under Unified Development Review in which both the Minor Land Development, the Use Variance, and the Dimensional Variances will be decided by the Planning Commission.

The members of the Technical Review Committee reviewed the following documents related to this application when preparing the comments below:

Mapledale Warehouse Addition - Use Variance Form.pdf
Mapledale Warehouse Addition - Dimensional Variance Form.pdf
Mapledale Warehouse Addition - Preliminary Plan Set.pdf
Mapledale Warehouse Addition - Project Narrative.pdf

TOWN ENGINEER

- A. Submission of a Town of Coventry Soil Erosion and Sediment Control (SESC) Application will be required for the project.
- B. The Preliminary Plan Set does not indicate if the existing ground surface within the proposed footprint is being considered impervious. This information should be noted on the plans.
- C. Typical Section A-A on Sheet A 2.1 shows a proposed foundation drain. Where does the water collected in this pipe drain to?

- D. My previous comment regarding floor drains was never answered. It appears that the slab pitches towards the overhead doors and there are no floor drains. Please confirm.
- E. Upon project completion, a Certificate of Conformance (COC) from the Engineer of Record (EOR) shall be required. The COC shall certify that the constructed project meets all required standards, regulations and specifications in the permitting and construction documents. A certificate of occupancy will not be issued until COC is received and accepted by the town.

PRINCIPAL PLANNER

- This Minor Land Development application is being handled through Unified Development Review due to the need for a Use Variance and for Dimensional Variances.
- The Applicant is seeking a Use Variance for the expansion of a pre-existing non-conforming use, and Dimensional Variances for front and side setbacks.
- Staff note the Applicant has proposed a row of Arborvitae plantings along the eastern side of the property as additional screening.
- Staff request the size of the Arborvitae at initial planting.
- Planning staff are seeking confirmation of the height of the addition.
- The required number of parking spaces shall be stated and shown on the plan, along with the two required loading spaces.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR DESIGNEE

- Is this building connected to Town sewer? This project will require sewer approvals from the Town of West Warwick.
- Arborvitae will not survive on this property due to diesel exhausts – DPW recommends other types of tree plantings, such as ginkgo, zelkova, honey locusts, or Ilex cymosa.
- Any arborvitae plantings should be bonded and should be alive after three growing seasons.

FIRE REPRESENTATIVE

- No comments at this time.

POLICE CHIEF

- No comments at this time.

PLANNING COMMISSION CHAIR

The Planning Commission Chair recused as this item will be heard before the Planning Commission.