

PLANNING TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

- c(1) & c(2) Bulk Variances (front & side setback, building & impervious coverage) Light Industrial (LI) Zone

Borough of Metuchen

PLANNING BOARD

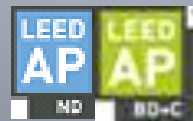
He's Equity, LLC

Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan – Warehouse Addition

100 Prospect Street

Block 152, Lots 51.01 & 51.02

David Glynn Roberts, PP, AICP, LLA,
April 20, 2023

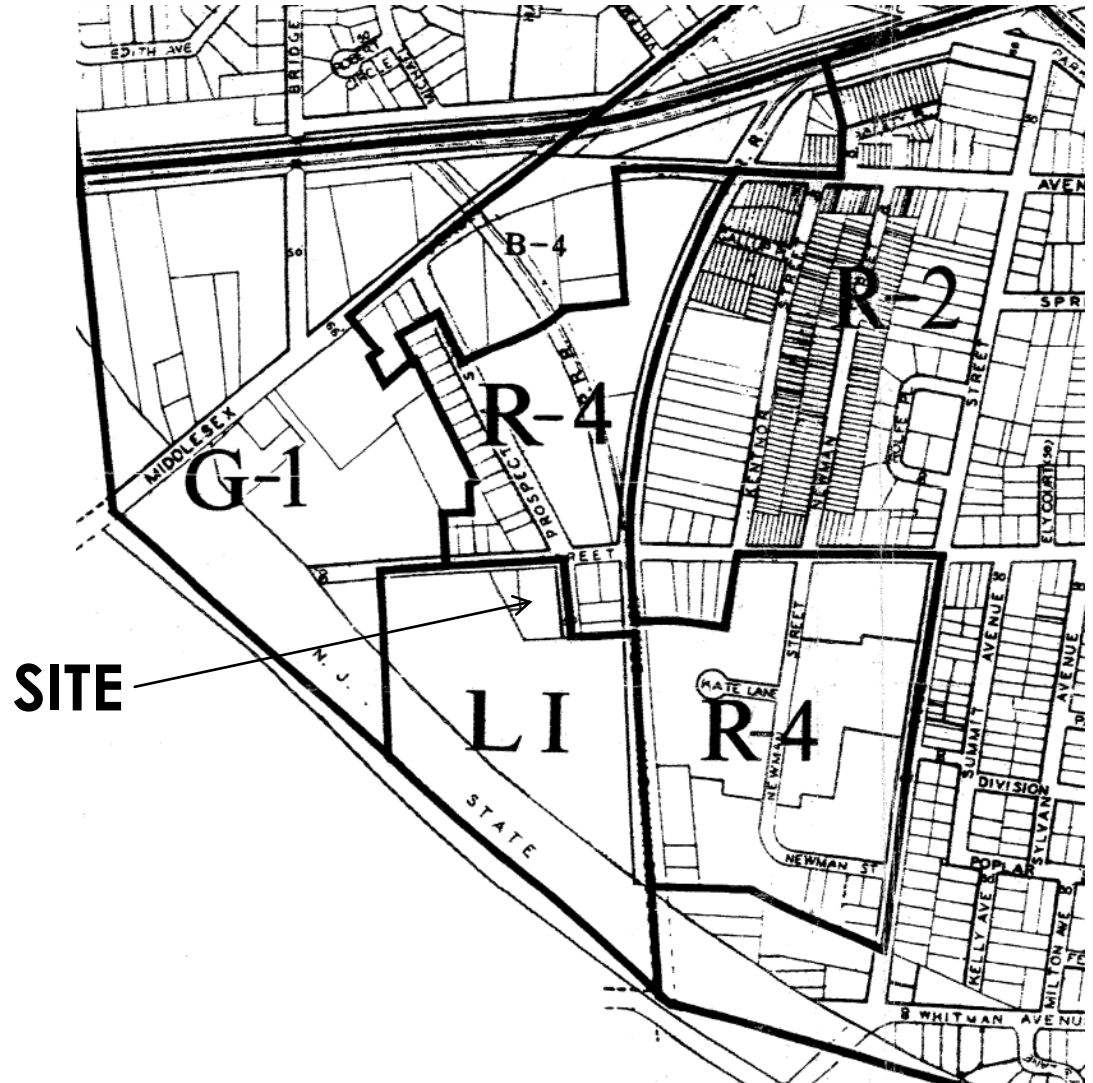


KEY



EXISTING ZONING

R-1A	RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
R-2	RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
R-2A	RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
R-3	RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
R-4	RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
R-5	OVERLAY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
B-1	CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
B-2	NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICT
B-3	OFFICE BUSINESS DISTRICT
B-4	RESTRICTED BUSINESS DISTRICT
D-1	DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT
F-1	FRANKLIN DEVELOPMENT
G-1	GATEWAY DEVELOPMENT
G-2	GATEWAY DEVELOPMENT
LI	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT



SURROUNDING AREA

Context



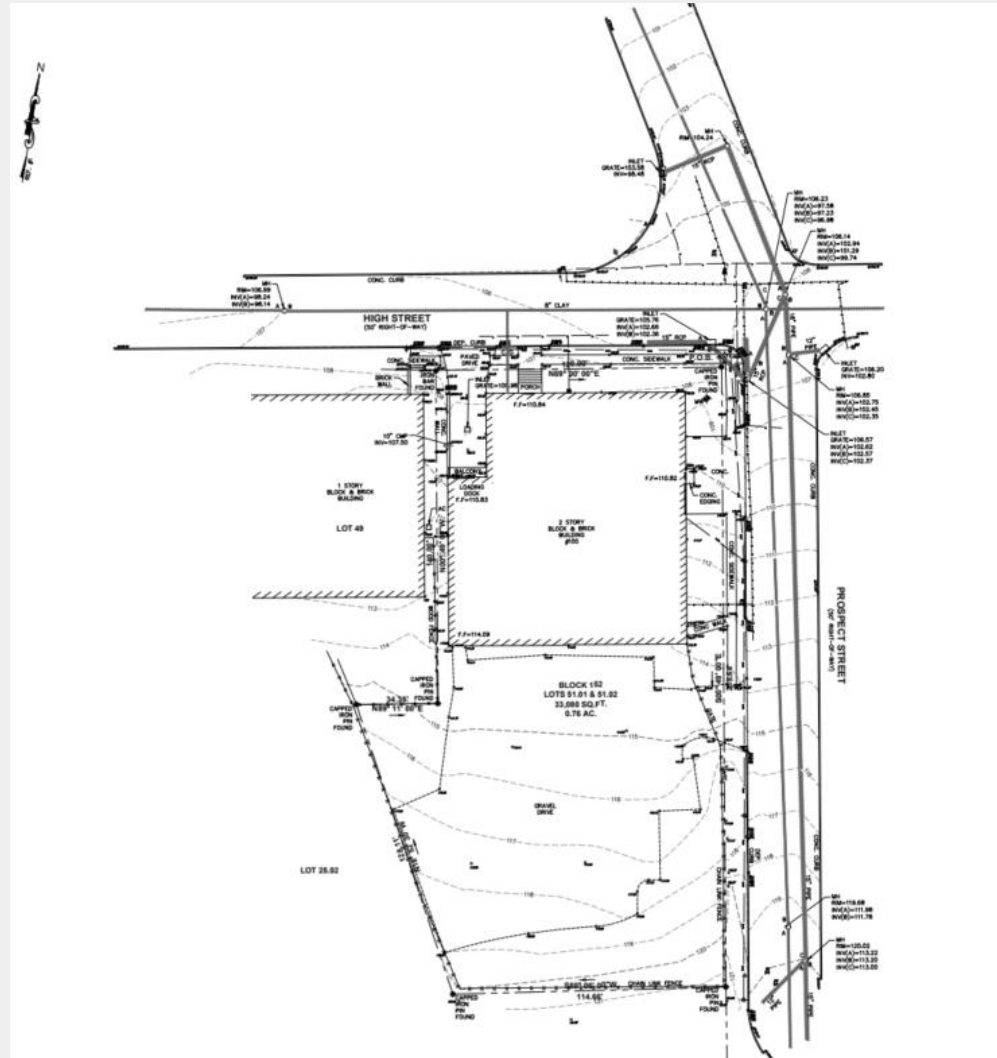
The subject site is improved with a two-story commercial warehouse. The adjacent properties west and south are also improved with commercial buildings and parking areas.



THE SITE

Existing Conditions

The existing site is improved with a two-story commercial building with existing loading docks on High Street and Prospect Street and an irregular graveled rear yard to the rear.

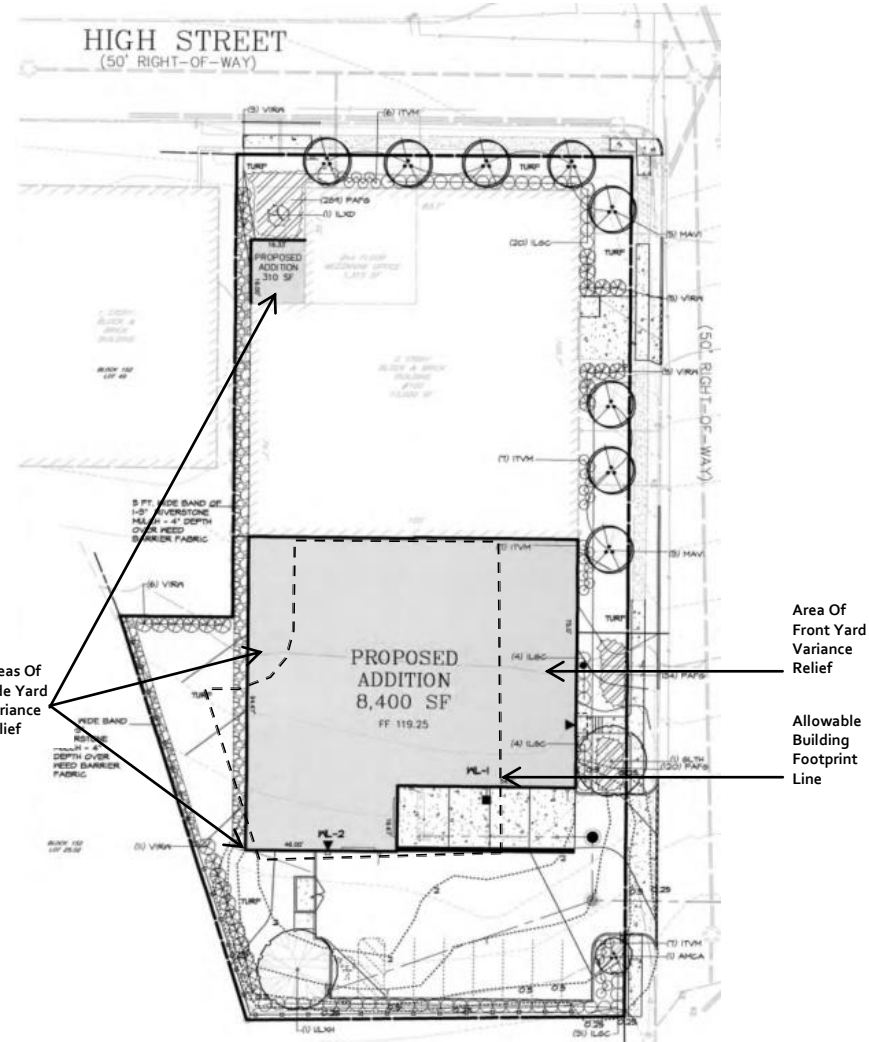


LI Zone Consistency

Proposed Site Plan

LI ZONE DATA					
LIGHT INDUSTRIAL ZONE					
SECTION	ITEM	REQUIRED	EXISTING	PROPOSED	CONDITION
ATTACHMENT 1	MINIMUM LOT AREA	40,000 SF	33,080 SF	33,080 SF	EX NON-COMFORMITY
ATTACHMENT 1	MINIMUM LOT WIDTH	200 FT	120.0 FT	120.0 FT	EX NON-COMFORMITY
ATTACHMENT 1	MINIMUM LOT DEPTH	200 FT	260.9 FT	260.9 FT	COMPLIES
SETBACK REQUIREMENTS:					
ATTACHMENT 1	FRONT YARD SETBACK	40 FT	9.9 FT	9.9 FT	EX NON-COMFORMITY
ATTACHMENT 1	SIDE YARD SETBACK	20 FT	4.6 FT	4.6 FT	EX NON-COMFORMITY
ATTACHMENT 1	REAR YARD SETBACK	50 FT	144.3 FT	51.3 FT	COMPLIES
ATTACHMENT 1	MAXIMUM BUILDING COVERAGE	50%	30.2%	56.6%	VARIANCE
ATTACHMENT 1	MAXIMUM IMPERVIOUS COVERAGE	70%	32.7%	75.3%	VARIANCE
ATTACHMENT 1	MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT	35 FT/3 STORIES	<35 FT	<35 FT	COMPLIES
PARKING:					
110-154.B	MINIMUM PARKING SPACES WAREHOUSE/STORAGE USE (1/1,000 SF) 2ND FLOOR OFFICE (1/250 SF)	18,710/1,000=18.7 STALLS 1,315/250=5.3 STALLS 24 STALLS	0 STALLS	8 STALLS *INCLUDING 1 EV STATION	EXCEPTION
110-155.B	MINIMUM LOADING BERTHS	4 BERTHS	1 BERTH	1 BERTH	EXCEPTION
110-153.D	STALL SIZE	9'x18'	N/A	9'x18'	COMPLIES
110-153.D	HANDICAPPED STALL SIZE	12'x18'	N/A	16'x18'	COMPLIES
110-153.E	MINIMUM DRIVE ISLE	22 FT	N/A	24 FT	COMPLIES
110-130.C	FRONT YARD PARKING LOT SETBACK	40 FT	N/A	10 FT	EXCEPTION
110-130.F	BUILDING SETBACK TO PARKING AREA	15 FT	N/A	0 FT	EXCEPTION
110-136.A	MASSING - MAXIMUM WALL/ROOF OR FOOTPRINT PLANE	150 FT	105.7 FT	180.7 FT	EXCEPTION
110-136.D	ROOF-FLAT ROOF ON ONE STORY BLDG.	FLAT ROOF PROHIBITED	FLAT ROOF	FLAT ROOF	EXCEPTION
110-151.D	DRIVEWAY WIDTH - 2-WAY TRAFFIC	35 FT	35 FT	41.2 FT	EXCEPTION
110-175.B	PARKING LOT BUFFERING/SCREENING	10 FT	10.2 FT	10 FT	COMPLIES
110-178.A	PARKING LOT LANDSCAPING-DECIDUOUS TREES FOR 11+ PARKING LOT	ONE TREE PER 5 SPACES 11 SPACES = 2 TREES	NONE	2 TREES ALONG PERIMETER OF PARKING LOT	COMPLIES
110-178.B	FOUNDATION LANDSCAPING ALONG PERIMETER OF BUILDING	FOUNDATION PLANTS ALONG HIGH ST. AND PROSPECT ST.	NONE	FOUNDATION PLANTS ALONG HIGH ST. AND PROSPECT ST.	COMPLIES

The proposed addition is needed to make the building functional as a permitted warehouse use, but the subject parcel is undersized for the required setbacks and the existing building is legally nonconforming with regard to both front and side yard setbacks. The undersized lot also presents a hardship with regard to the need for minor deviations in building and lot coverage.



NEGATIVE CRITERIA

Impact on surrounding area...

High Street frontage opposite single family homes will be de-activated by removing the existing entry, loading dock and driveway and replacing it with landscaping.

High Street frontage opposite single family homes at the corner of High Street will improved by reducing the size of the driveway serving the existing loading dock and adding landscaping between the building and sidewalk.



Impact on surrounding area...

The area of the proposed addition would improve a neglected and unsightly portion of the site.



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Google Earth

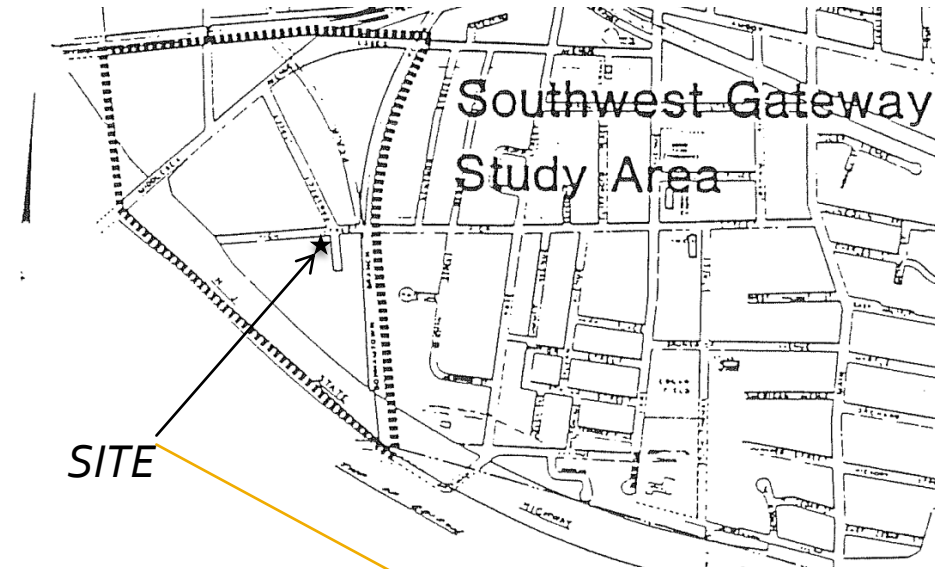
2016 Master Plan Reexamination

July 8, 2016

Land Use:

"As noted in the 2000 and 2006 Reexamination Reports, Metuchen is a mature community with little vacant land available. As such, future growth will continue to occur primarily through adaptive reuse, occasional infill and redevelopment of previously developed parcels."

"The Borough should evaluate the impacts to the Southwest Gateway plan of the potential new interchange at Route 27 and -287. The Borough should continue to pursue a full interchange at this location and improve the visual quality/image of the Route 27 corridor within the remaining redevelopment and infill sites in the Southwest Gateway District."



Hardship (c1) and “Flexible c” (c2) Conditions:

Hardship (c1)

- *The LI Zone front and side yards of 40’/20’ were based on a lot of at least 200 feet in width and depth and 40,000 SF in area.*
 - *The subject lot has a nonconforming width of 120 feet, leaving a conforming building envelope of only 60 feet in width for a commercial building, while the existing building is 100 feet wide and is designed and has been used for warehousing;*
 - *If the subject lot conformed to the minimum 200-foot width, it would also conform to the 40,000 SF lot area and be able to support a building footprint of 140 feet in width;*
 - *The subject lot is also irregularly shaped in the rear, where the addition is proposed.*

Benefits Outweigh Detriments (c2)

- *The current site exterior is unsightly. The proposed development, including the deviations for setbacks, building and lot coverage will improve the site appearance and remove activity on High Street, which advance purposes of zoning:*
 - *“a. To encourage municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of all lands in this State, in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, morals and general welfare”.*
 - *“g. To provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for a variety of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial and industrial uses and open space, both public and private, according to their respective environmental requirements in order to meet the needs of all New Jersey citizens”.*
 - *“i. To promote a desirable visual environment through creative development techniques and good civic design and arrangement”.*

Negative Criteria:

NO SUBSTANTIAL ADVERSE IMPACT ON PUBLIC WELFARE:

- The Board must determine that the grant of the Variances will not adversely impact the surrounding area:
 - The proposed development is a permitted use in the Light Industrial Zone and is immediately abutting other similar commercial uses. Landscape buffering improvements are being added on both street frontages to improve the site appearance to residential homes across the street.
 - Prospect Street ends just past the site and only the corner with High Street is residential in character.
 - While the proposed addition to the building increases its storage capacity, the proposed site plan eliminates activity on High Street and reduces it on Prospect Street, focusing the principal commercial activities to the rear – out of sight of residents.

Negative Criteria:

NO SUBSTANTIAL IMPAIRMENT OF ZONE PLAN & ORDINANCE:

- The Board must determine that the grant of the Variances will not substantially impair the purpose and intent of the Master Plan and land development standards:
 - The proposed use is consistent with the Master Plan, which recognizes that Metuchen is fully developed and encourages infill and adaptive reuse of existing buildings.
 - The removal of the entry and loading dock on the High Street side of the building facing existing homes and the installation of landscape plantings along both street frontages helps advance the Master Plan goal of maintaining the character of existing neighborhoods.

Conclusions:

- The requested front and side yard relief for the proposed addition to allow existing setbacks to be extended is justified by the narrow width, irregular shape of the rear and undersized nature of the subject parcel.
- The undersized parcel creates a hardship in expanding the subject building to make it more suitable for storage use, as the proposed building would not need building and lot coverage relief if the lot was not 6,000 SF less than the minimum required lot area.
- The proposed addition will be completely obscured from the homes on High Street by the existing two-story building. The addition would be across from the rear yard of the dwelling on the corner of Prospect and High and would be buffered by landscape plantings.
- **The requested relief would result in a substantially improved commercial property and can be granted without substantial detriment to surrounding properties and without substantial adverse impact on the Zone (Master) Plan.**