



## City of New Bedford

### Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development

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DIRECTOR

## STAFF REPORT

### REPORT DATE

March 9, 2018

### PLANNING BOARD MEETING

March 14, 2018

Case #18-11: SITE PLAN REVIEW

Case #18-12: SPECIAL PERMIT

91 Cove Street

Map 21 Lot 53

**Applicant:** Green River Development, LLC  
430 Franklin Village Drive #123  
Franklin, MA

**Applicant's Agent:** SITEC  
449 Faunce Corner Road  
N. Dartmouth, MA 02747

**Owner:** WoodNB, LLC  
23219 W. 30<sup>th</sup> Street N  
Haskell, OK 74436



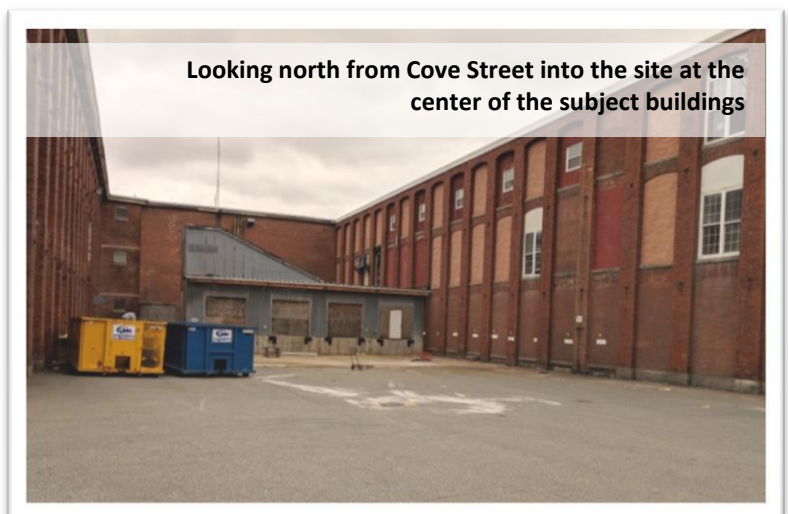
91 Cove Street

Looking northwest from Cove Street at Harbor Street entrance

### Overview

Request by applicant for **Site Plan Approval** and **Special Permit (Parking Reduction)** for the rehabilitation and conversion of a 149,300 SF portion of an existing 229,400 SF mill complex into a self-storage facility. The site is located at 91 Cove Street (Map 21, Lot 53) in an Industrial B zoning district and the Cove Street Mill Overlay district.

The applicant proposes to convert a portion of the former Berkshire Hathaway Mill—specifically a section of the mill structure located just west of Harbor Street and the two upper levels of the center structure (located between the two larger mill structures)—into a self-storage facility with interior parking garage. No changes are proposed for the westernmost structure on this site at this time. The project includes new parking, storm water management, and landscaping on the site.



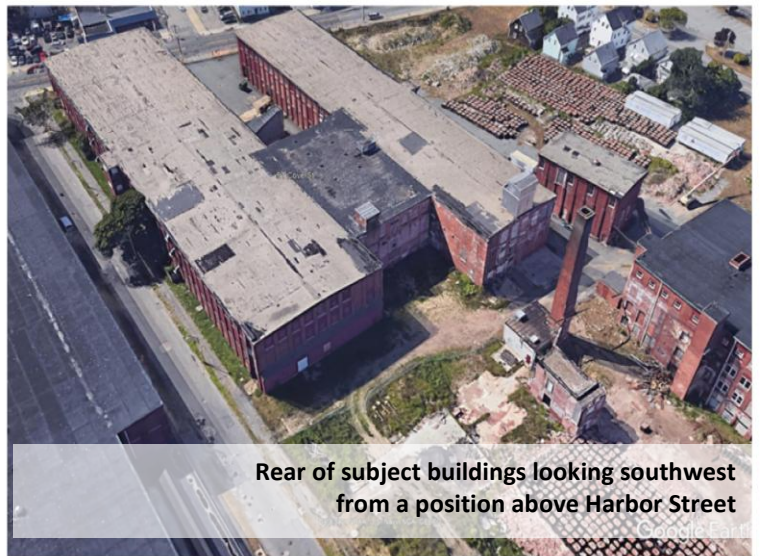
Looking north from Cove Street into the site at the center of the subject buildings

### **Existing Conditions**

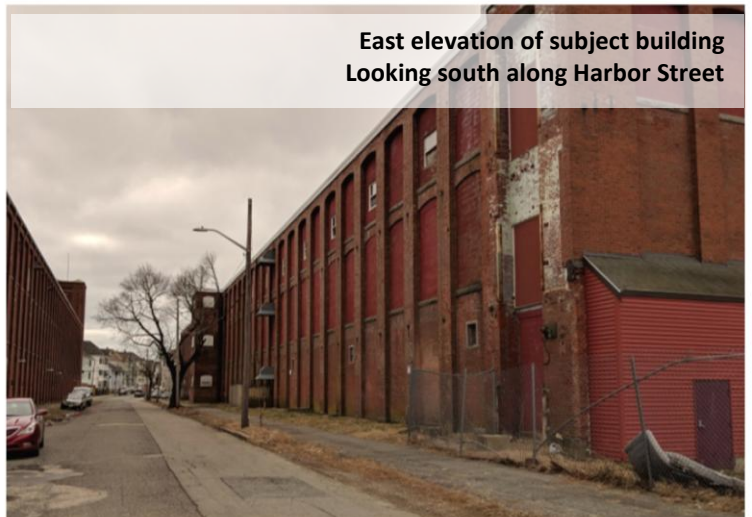
The project site in New Bedford's south end contains a 229,400 SF mill complex most recently known as New England Demolition and Salvage. These mill buildings were once part of the larger Berkshire Hathaway complex. The subject building is similar to abutting mills in mass and form and was most likely constructed in the 1890s-1900 period. The 2.78 acre corner lot has 283' of frontage on Cove Street and 352' on the adjacent Harbor Street. The brick and metal complex is "H" shaped with two primary buildings (east and west) with a connector building through the central courtyard. A four (4) bay loading dock is also located in the central courtyard and a small single story addition is located in the rear of the east building (north elevation). Currently, locked chain link fencing is in place around portions of the building and site.

The east mill building features a random assortment of window varieties at differing building areas and levels.

The applicant's existing conditions site plan (Sheet 7 of 10 within the plan set) indicates the presence of 16 diagonally striped off-street parking spaces along the west building's western edge. However, staff's review of the site finds that there are no existing parking spaces existing in this location and in fact, only large weeds and asphalt decay are found where parking is indicated. Access to these particular spaces, were they to exist, would be impossible without reliance on an access easement from the adjoining property to the west. The submitted plans do show such an access easement to the west ("*Access Easement BB Plan 159-88*") that adds roughly 15-20 feet in width to the drive and parking area thus rendering it usable. The easement provides the added benefit of including an existing curbcut along Cove Street. Without this easement this parking cannot be used or counted toward satisfying parking demand, thus it becomes a critical element of the plan. As such, staff recommends a copy of the recorded access easement be included in any final material submission should the project be approved.



**Rear of subject buildings looking southwest  
from a position above Harbor Street**



**East elevation of subject building  
Looking south along Harbor Street**



**West elevation of subject building  
View from Cove Street looking northeast**



The central courtyard (the center of the “H”) also consists of asphalt and has a concrete pad in front of an existing 4 bay elevated loading dock. The rear of the lot is currently unimproved with weeds and debris stockpiles. A limited grass strip exists in front of the east building and along the eastern property line.

Wall signage relevant to a former occupant currently exists on the south and west elevations of the east building. There are no ground signs on the property.

A concrete sidewalk is located in front of the property along Cove Street while an asphalt sidewalk in very poor condition runs along the property on Harbor Street.

The surrounding neighborhood is a mix of industrial, retail/commercial and multifamily residential uses. Directly south across Cove Street is a bakery, a restaurant and multifamily dwellings. As the crow flies, the subject parcel is roughly a block from the city’s south terminal. As previously noted, the site, itself, once part of the larger Berkshire Hathaway Mill complex, abuts several other remaining brick mills and former brick mill sites. Selective demolition of blighted mill buildings over the years has resulted in unimproved sites directly adjacent to this property in the rear (north) and west side.

### **Proposed Conditions**

The applicant proposes to convert the east mill structure and the two upper levels of the center structure into a self-storage facility. The ground level of the center building is proposed to be converted into an interior parking garage. No changes are proposed for the west building at this time and it is not within the scope of the development. Two metal structures on the site, one being the loading dock structure and the second being a small one story metal addition at the rear of the east building, will be demolished to accommodate the site conversion. The project includes new off-street parking, storm water management, lighting and some landscaping.

The developer proposes to have 910 self-storage units of varying size inside the building, 255 on the ground floor level, 330 on the second floor and 325 on the third floor. The business will have a total of five (5) employees, and will be open seven days a week from 6am-7pm, serving an estimated thirty (30) customers per day. An office space is proposed at the southwest corner of the building. Customers would access storage spaces in one of three ways: via a doorway under a canopied loading area, through one of the open air parking areas or through an access area in the interior parking “garage”.

Under the proposal design, the existing loading dock in the center of the site and the single story addition in the rear of the east building will be demolished and removed from the site.

**Parking.** The applicant requests a special permit for a reduction in the parking requirement. Under ordinance (which does not provide a parking standard specific to self-storage units) the project is required to have 620 off-street parking spaces contrasting with the 73 spaces being proposed. New parking areas will be added in the center of the site and in the rear of the east building. While the new parking lots will accommodate 57 (9’ x 20’) parking spaces, the application notes that existing spaces on the western edge of the site would remain.

### **IMPORTANT!**

There is a significant series of differences within the plan set submitted for this project. The architectural drawings prepared by Annino Inc., in particular Sheet A1.1, differs from the engineering plans prepared by SITEC, in particular Sheet 1 of 10 SL-1. Parking, circulation, handicap accessible parking, etc. differ between the plans. This presents significant challenges in executing a technical review of this proposal. Staff recommends that differences between these plans be both reconciled at the public meeting and remedied in a submission of final plan set materials.

Specifically, the proposed site plan shows off-street parking as being segmented into four distinct parking areas:

- In the center of the complex (26 spaces) exterior parking would be accessed via the existing on-site driveway off of Cove Street. The lot would be bisected by a sliding security gate limiting access to all but the first 8 parking spaces and front entrance to the facility.
- In the center of the complex on the ground level of the central building (15 spaces); this is an interior parking garage area also accessed via the existing driveway off of Cove Street. Access to the garage would be limited/controlled.
- Exterior parking at the rear of the east building would be accessed through the central garage<sup>1</sup> (16 spaces).
- Existing parking along the west building. (16 spaces) *See comments under “existing conditions” related to this parking.*

Four ADA accessible parking spaces with transfer zones have been indicated on the Site Layout (Sheet 1, SL-1), two of which would be within the interior garage space and two others closer toward the Cove Street end of the east building where the retail entrance is located.<sup>2</sup>

The parking requirement for this project reflects a new use for the central and eastern building; it does not, however, address or consider any future use of the west building which would generate its own parking demand/requirements. It is reasonable to assume that any future use(s) for the west building would require the site to return for parking relief.

**Circulation.** Customers to the site would generally access the property directly off of Cove Street at a curb cut to be centrally located between the east and west buildings. This curb cut would be aligned with the entrance to Viall Street to the south. The proposed curb cut would have a concrete driveway brow and 4’ of granite transition curbing into the site at which point the remaining curb would be of bituminous.

Vehicles entering the site would have the option of parking in either outdoor or interior spaces. Vehicles parking outside in the center lot would exit back onto Cove Street by returning to the entrance; an alternate exit would be traveling through the central building’s interior garage and exiting behind the building directly onto Harbor Street. Vehicular circulation within the garage is one way north and a gate at the Harbor Street exit will prevent entry onto the site from that point.

Note: here again the submitted engineering plans and architectural plans depict different elements, in this case, differing circulation patterns for the rear lot.

The plan adds curbed and landscaped areas to direct and control vehicular movement throughout the site. One curbed area will provide protection for a fire hydrant which is currently protected by bollards.



<sup>1</sup> According to the SITEC engineering plan (Sheet SL-1); the architectural plan (Sheet A1.1) depicts the same number of spaces but a different parking layout.

<sup>2</sup> The presence of ADA spaces as described in this report is predicated on what has been depicted in Sitec’s Site Layout Plan, (Sheet 1 of 10 SL-1); architectural plan sheets do not depict ADA spaces.

**Landscaping.** The landscaped areas indicate a mixture of lawn areas and minimally planted areas. The proposed plantings include (A) Pfitzer Juniper, (B) four 2-2.5" caliper red maple trees (one at each corner of the east building), and (C) Virginia Sweetspire.



While the landscaping is not extensive, the amount of space available for plantings is diminished by the need for parking and limitations of the site, itself.

**Snow/Trash Removal.** The engineer's Site Layout (Sheet SL-1) indicates three primary areas for snow disposal: the front of the east building directly off of Cove Street, the front of the west building and the area just to the rear of the center building/parking area. The Planning Board may wish to more specifically discuss snow disposal plans with the applicant, particularly the capacity of these areas to handle the amount of snow that could be potentially removed from 58 exterior parking spaces.

It is unclear from the submitted plans as to the plan for commercial removal of trash at this site, both from the office section of the business and that which users of the storage spaces will generate. This information, along with any screening intended, should be indicated on a final plan set.

**Stormwater.** The site currently does not have any on-site stormwater management. The project proposes the addition of three (3) onsite recharge systems with deep sump catch basins to handle the storm water from the parking areas. The applicant represents that building roof drains will remain connected to the municipal system, something which should be verified as being acceptable to DPI.

**Lighting.** The submitted Lighting Plan (Sheet LIGHT-1) depicts five locations for new pole lights (RAB Lighting with 18' mount height). Three of the lights are proposed for the center parking lots of Cove Street, one being just off the entrance, and the remaining two lights are located behind the building along the northern property line.

Additional information is needed as regards the extent of lighting being provided for the interior garage, security lighting around the building (wall packs, etc.) and any lighting off the rear of the building to provide increased security for the rear parking lot.

**Signage.** No signage is shown on the submitted plans. Any future proposed signage would require a separate permit review by the Zoning Enforcement Officer. Any proposed ground sign would additionally require site plan approval from the Planning Board. Staff recommends any decision to approve this project clarify that point.

### **Review Comments**

As required under city ordinance, the case submittal documents were distributed to City Clerk, City Solicitor, Health Department, Inspectional Services, Engineering, Public Infrastructure, Conservation Commission, Fire Department and School Department.

The Conservation Commission has indicated that "this project is not in or within 100' of any State or Local Wetland Resource Areas. Therefore, no permit is required from the Conservation Commission.

Any additional comments received will be made available at the public meeting.

### **Master Plan Goal**

Insofar as this proposal would support the active use of an existing commercial building and support new business within the city, staff finds that this proposal is consistent with the master plan's goal [of establishing a sound foundation for future growth that builds upon its coastal location, preserves its historic legacy, and expands cultural and workforce opportunities] as it improves the neighborhood, and attracts emerging businesses and commercial enterprise.

### **Materials for Consideration**

The engineered plan submittal is shown as the Proposed Self Storage Facility, 91 Cove Street New Bedford, Massachusetts owner WoodNB, LLC, Applicant: Green River Development, dated January 2, 2018. Plans were prepared by SITEC, in Dartmouth, MA and stamped by Steve Gioiosa. The plan set consists of the following sheets:

- Cover Sheet
- Sheet 1 Site Layout SL-1
- Sheet 2 Locus Map LOCUS-1
- Sheet 3 Site Grading SG-1
- Sheet 4 Landscape Plan LP-1
- Sheet 5 Site Utilities SU-1
- Sheet 6 Lighting Plan LIGHT-1
- Sheet 7 Existing Conditions EC-1
- Sheet 8 Demolition Plan DEMO-1
- Sheet 9 Erosion Control Plan ECP-1
- Sheet 10 Detail Sheet DET-1

The following additional plan set materials—all undated and unstamped—were also provided, titled as Right Space Storage and shown as Annino Incorporated Architects, Planners, 125 North Washington Street North Attleboro, MA:

- Sheet A3.1 Proposed Exterior Elevations
- Sheet A3.2 Proposed Exterior Elevations
- Sheet A3.3 Proposed Exterior Elevations
- Sheet A1.1 Proposed Floor Plan
- Sheet A1.2 Proposed Floor Plan
- Sheet A1.3 Proposed Floor Plan

In addition to the foregoing submitted materials, the Planning Board may also wish to consider:

- **Waivers**  
The applicant has not submitted any waiver petitions for consideration by the Planning Board.
- **Development Impact Statement (DIS)**  
Although not required unless the Board requests it, the applicant has not provided a DIS for the proposed development.
- **Traffic Impact & Access Study**  
Although not required unless the Board requests it, the applicant has not provided a traffic analysis for the proposed development.

### **#18-11 Site Plan Approval**

In considering Site Plan Approval for the proposed project, the Board must find the plan to meet a number of objectives identified in Section 5470 of the City's (c.9) Zoning Ordinance including:

- **Adequate access to each structure for fire and service equipment;**
- **Adequate provision for utilities and stormwater drainage;**
- **Site alteration shall be designed after considering the qualities of the specific location, proposed land use, the design of building form, grading, egress points and other aspects of the development so as to:**
  - Minimize cut/fill volumes, removal of 6" caliper trees and larger, removal of stone walls, displacement of wetland vegetation, extent of stormwater flow increase from the site, soil erosion and the threat of air/water pollution;
  - Maximize pedestrian/vehicular safety to/from the site;
  - Minimize the obstruction of scenic views from publicly accessible locations;
  - Minimize visual intrusion by controlling layout/visibility of parking, storage and outdoor service areas viewed from public ways and residential areas;
  - Minimize glare from vehicle headlights and lighting fixtures;
  - Minimize unreasonable departure from the character, materials and scale of buildings in the vicinity;
  - Minimize contamination of groundwater from on-site wastewater disposal systems or operations on the premises involving the use, storage, handling or containment of solid/liquid wastes and hazardous substances;
  - Ensure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance;
  - Minimize damage to existing adjacent public ways;
  - Promote orderly and reasonable internal circulation within the site so as to protect public safety.

In light of the proposed development, its reuse and reactivation of an existing industrial parcel converted to a less intensive site use, the limitations inherent in the site layout by virtue of the mass of the existing building and configuration on the site, the introduction of clear parking, circulation pathways for both vehicles and pedestrians, new lighting, reworked curb cuts into the site, limitations presented through gates and fencing that operationally control the proposed development, utility enhancements, etc. Staff finds that with the conditions presented under "staff recommendations" this proposal satisfies these objectives.

### **#18-12 Special Permit**

In considering the application for Special Permit for parking reduction, the Board must take into account the characteristics of the site and of the proposal in relation to that site, in addition to any specific factors that may be set forth under Section 5300 of the zoning ordinance.

- **Social, economic, or community needs which are served by the proposal.**

The vision of the City includes the creation of dynamic neighborhoods. This proposal allows the restoration of an existing property and provides a new commercial enterprise within the neighborhood.
- **Traffic flow and safety, including parking and loading.**

Parking space allotment presents a challenge for this redevelopment proposal given the sheer number of proposed storage units (910) and the limitations for on-site parking. To allow for better space planning, staff recommends the board discuss industry standards for percentage of units with visitors on any given day/anticipated clientele, the number of staff onsite at any given time and the need to accommodate oversized vehicles, such as trucks and full-size SUVs.
- **Adequacy of utilities and other public services.**

Whereas the applicant is proposing complete utility and public services, there is no anticipated issue with this adequacy. Conditioning any approval on DPI's approval of adequacy to this end is recommended.
- **Neighborhood character and social structures.**

This neighborhood is a mix of commercial uses, former industrial spaces, and residential single and multi-family dwellings. Many of the city's historic mill buildings have been and are being preserved and transformed for new uses, such as this proposal for commercial self-storage. Adaptive reuse of this structure would reactivate a large empty building in this section of the south end.
- **Impacts on the natural environment**

The applicant is adapting and renovating an existing structure and this application for parking reduction is for the utilization of urban space currently used for parking; there will be no anticipated negative impacts on the natural environment as a result of granting the special permit.
- **Potential fiscal impact, including impact on City services, tax base, and employment**

Having this property renovated and the site improved will provide a positive fiscal impact on the city and the broader neighborhood by improving property values. Outside of water/sewer/trash services (which would be needed for any use), staff does not believe any additional city services are necessitated by this application.



## Staff Recommendations



**Site Plan Approval.** Having reviewed the submitted materials, planning staff offers the following recommendations for conditions to the Planning Board should it act favorably on the requested site plan approval for the project:

- ☐ That the following specific conditions be applied to this decision:
  - A copy of the recorded easement providing curbcut and vehicular access for the 16 “existing” off-street parking spaces should be provided to the City Planner.
  - A final revised set of architectural and engineering plans shall be submitted to Planning and the Department of Inspectional Services which clearly reconciles and corrects all outstanding discrepancies between plans.
  - This approval shall not include any signage; any future ground sign shall be required to secure necessary approval from the Planning Board.
  - A plan including additional information about snow disposal and trash locations and screening shall be provided to the satisfaction of the City Planner.
- ☐ That the following general conditions also be applied to this decision:
  - The project shall be completed according to the plans, notes, reports, and specifications submitted for consideration and final approval by the Planning Board.
  - The project shall be undertaken in a manner consistent with the (forthcoming) Memorandum from the Department of Public Infrastructure received and placed on file and the Planning Board incorporates the DPI memo as part of these conditions.
  - The applicant shall submit final plan revisions to the Planning Division in the following formats: one (1) -11” x 17” Plan Set and one (1) CD or USB with Plan Set in PDF format and shall ensure that these same plans are properly submitted to the Department of Inspectional Services.
  - The applicant shall ensure that a copy of the Notice of Decision, bearing the certification of the New Bedford City Clerk signifying no appeal has been made against the project’s approval, be provided for the Planning Division Case file folder.
  - The applicant shall present any proposed modification from the approved plans for consideration to the City Planner for determination as to whether the modified plan must return before this Board for further review.
  - The rights authorized by the granted approval must be exercised by issuance of a Building Permit by the Department of Inspectional Services and acted upon within one year from the date the decision was granted or they will lapse.



**Special Permit.** Having reviewed the submitted materials, the characteristics of the site and the factors outlined in this staff report, staff recommends favorable action on the special permit permitting the provision of 73 total off-street parking spaces where 620 are required.

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**Materials Provided by the Applicant** are available at: <http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/planning/planning-board/planning-board-agenda-info-2018/>);



## 91 Cove Street Map: 21, Lot: 53

*NOTE: Property line is approximate; for discussion purposes, only. Aerial map is oriented north.*

