



City of East Providence Department of Planning and Economic Development

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Memorandum

Date: April 5th, 2024

To: East Providence Planning Board

From: East Providence Department of Planning and Economic Development

Re: Advisory Recommendation on Consistency with the 2010-2015 Comprehensive Plan and Subdivision and Land Development Review Regulations for the Metacomet Mixed-Use Waterfront District Development Proposal - 500 Veteran's Memorial Parkway

Applicant: Marshall Properties, Inc.

Parcels: Assessor's Map 107, Block 15, Parcel 1

Zoning: Metacomet Sub-district

I. INTRODUCTION

The East Providence Waterfront Special Development District Commission ("Commission") was created to oversee development review and approval for properties located within the East Providence Waterfront Special Development District. Development in the Waterfront District is subject to the waterfront zoning amendments adopted by the City Council on March 2, 2004 and as amended. The Waterfront Zoning requires a design review by a subcommittee of the Commission - the Design Review Committee ("DRC").

The Planning Board's role in this development review process is that of offering an advisory recommendation to the DRC and the Commission as to whether the development is consistent with the purposes and intent of the City's 2010-2015 Comprehensive Plan and Subdivision and Land Development Review Regulations.

The City of East Providence undertook the drafting of the East Providence Waterfront Special Development District Plan (Waterfront Plan) to articulate and frame a plan, vision and strategies to transform the City's underutilized waterfront along the Providence and Seekonk Rivers to a mix of land uses, including: commercial; office; medium and high density residential; entertainment and hospitality; restaurants; marinas; civic, and recreational uses, particularly those oriented towards the water. At the time of the original approval of the Waterfront Plan in December 2003, the Metacomet golf course property was not a part of the Waterfront District. By action of the City Council, the Metacomet Sub-

District was established through a rezoning and a Comprehensive Plan Amendment by a vote of the City Council in July, 2021. Upon the inclusion of the Metacomet Sub-District within the City's Waterfront District, the property was now subject to the zoning and review process standards established under the City's Waterfront Plan and the Waterfront District Zoning Ordinance as described under Chapter 19, Article IX of the Revised Ordinances of the City of East Providence, Zoning.

The Metacomet Sub-District, the specific sub-district where the development is proposed, defines within Section 19-481 the following general allowed uses within the sub-district: two family, three family and multi-family residential, artisan/live work space, a variety of retail uses including grocery stores, restaurants, coffee shops, delicatessens, and ice cream parlors, with both indoor and/or outdoor seating, office uses, health services uses, personal services uses and recreational and cultural uses. These allowed uses, in addition to other uses not listed within this memorandum, are fully defined under Section 19-481 of the Zoning Ordinance.

II. SPECIFICS OF THE PROPOSAL

A reduced 11 X 17 inch version of the development plan set and architectural plan set are attached to this memorandum for the Board's use in this review. It is important to note that the Board's role in this review process is not the approval of the development plan, but to offer an opinion to the DRC and the Commission as to whether the proposal in its current submission configuration, meets the purposes and intent of the City's current Comprehensive Plan and the City's Subdivision and Land Development Review Regulations.

Brief Site History and Existing Land Uses

The site at 500 Veteran's Memorial Parkway was formerly the Metacomet Golf Club that operated as a private 18-hole golf country club from 1926 to its closing in 2019. The property was eventually acquired by Marshall Properties, Inc., who are proposing the development under this application. The property also contained a clubhouse that was removed by the current owners in March, 2021. An existing golf course maintenance building remains on the property, but will eventually be demolished to accommodate the proposed development. A new golf course maintenance building is proposed to be built at the southeast corner of the property, with an access driveway to the building located on Fort Avenue. While there has been significant land use history over the past four years associated with the acquisition, rezoning, and development scope of this property, this memorandum, will not focus on re-capping this history. This memorandum will specifically focus on the current development proposal that has been submitted to the Planning Board to determine if the proposal as submitted, is in compliance with the goals and objectives of the City's 2010-2015 Comprehensive Plan and Subdivision and Land Development Review Regulations.

Overview of the Site Design

The following is a general overview of the project's site design as described within the project narrative submitted by the applicant:

The project site is located at 500 Veterans Memorial Parkway (Assessor's Map 107, Block 15, Parcel 1). The site is bordered by Lyon Avenue to the northwest which includes a mix of uses including commercial/residential buildings professional office buildings and Pierce Memorial Field; by Fort Street to the northeast which includes various residential properties; by various residential properties on Fisher Street and South Broadway to the east; by Metacomet Brook/Watchemoket Cove to the south which is a tributary to the Providence River to the west; and by Veterans Memorial Parkway (the "Parkway") to the southwest. The total parcel size is 140.638 acres; however, based on the City Zoning Ordinance requirements, the Useable Lot Area calculated for the development is listed in the application narrative as 94.9 acres.

The development, as submitted, is proposed to contain 890 residential units, consisting of a mix of multifamily rental units (845 apartment units), 22 duplex units and 24 townhouse units. Approximately 163,000 square feet of commercial space is proposed. The applicant plans to create a town center within the development that will be anchored by an 85,000 square foot grocery store and will be surrounded with neighborhood retail and service uses of varying square footage. This commercial area will be located in the northwest corner of the parcel with frontage on the Veteran's Memorial Parkway and Lyon Avenue. Primary and secondary access to the property will be provided exclusively through these three access points. As required under Waterfront District regulations, ten percent (10%) of the proposed housing within the development will be set aside and designated as affordable inclusionary housing. Additional amenities within the development include a proposed promenade for pedestrian traffic, and an outdoor public amphitheater. The applicant also is in the process of restoring a portion of the property's former private 18-hole golf layout into a 9-hole public golf course that is scheduled to open in the summer of 2024. This golf course will provide significant open-space acreage within the development and more importantly, will be managed as a public golf course facility. As a condition of approval of the development the applicant will deed a 9.6 acre parcel located in the northeast corner of the property, to the City of East Providence. This parcel would be used by the City for open space, most likely as a passive recreation use.

Sidewalks, multi-use paths and bicycle parking infrastructure are proposed as features within the project. Access to the East Bay Bike Path, located directly opposite the site along Veteran's Memorial Parkway will be provided through new connections that will cross over to the Path from the development.

The various driveways and associated parking lots are all inter-connected with internal on-site access drives. A series of pedestrian paths composed of pervious pavement/pavers are proposed throughout the site, with areas of open space provided central to the site and between the proposed buildings.

The application indicates that the layout of the development will respect the scenic nature of the Veteran's Memorial Parkway, with a 100' landscaped buffer along the full length of the property fronting on the Parkway. The development will keep all buildings at least 100 feet from the property line at Veteran's Memorial Parkway as required under Zoning. The applicant states that the design of the site places proposed residential uses between residential abutters to the east, and the proposed commercial areas on the western side of the property.

The applicant states in their narrative that certain trees have been and will be removed in connection with the proposed development, but that over 600 new trees are proposed to be added. The total number of trees at the development including the retention of some of the most important trees in the development, will be approximately 700. After development the total number of trees on the property will increase over what is presently there. The landscaping plan submitted as part of the application was prepared by a certified landscape architect. The applicant has indicated that they will also be working with an arborist throughout the course of development to ensure each planting is appropriate for its stated purposes such as screening, while maintaining the overall consistency in design.

Other than the golf course, the improved portion of the Development is intended to be constructed in two (2) separate phases, as set forth in the engineering submission on Sheet EX-03 of the application.

Inclusionary Requirements for New Housing Units within the Project Area – Affordable Housing

Developers of new residential market-rate multi-family developments located in the Waterfront District are required to provide affordable housing units for low and moderate income households equal to ten percent (10%) of the total new housing units located in the development. Based on this requirement, the developer will be responsible for the development of a sufficient number of residential units (whatever that number may be), to meet this goal. The application narrative indicates that 10% of the residential units will be set aside as affordable.

Open Space Provision

A sizeable portion of this project's acreage will consist of private and public open space. The development proposes to retain a significant portion of the property as a 9-hole public golf course. Additionally, portions of the commercial and residentially developed property will contain public gathering areas and "pocket parks" that will serve as additional open space areas to visitors and residents of the development. Also, nearly ten acres (9.6 acres) of the property will be deeded to the City at the northeast corner of the property. It is generally anticipated that this dedicated parcel would be utilized for passive recreation use by the City in the future.

Internal Circulation and Parking

The development will be organized by an internal privately owned roadway network that proposes a primary connection at the Veteran's Memorial Parkway, located approximately 300 hundred feet south of the existing entrance to the property. Two additional entry and exit points will be located at Lyon Avenue, in the vicinity of the proposed 85,000 square foot retail grocery store. The roadway network will provide several branching driveways that will lead to the various uses and the associated surface parking lots and some structured parking.

The parking summary for the development is as follows:

Total commercial and mixed use parking provided – 912 spaces

Total residential parking provided – 1,421 spaces

Total parking spaces provided - 2,333 spaces

Transportation and Completed Traffic Impact Studies (TIS)

The Site's primary access point, which is proposed on the Veteran's Memorial Parkway, a State owned right of way, will require the issuance of a Physical Alteration Permit (PAP) from RIDOT for all proposed changes within the state right of way. Since the roadway is designated as a scenic highway, an advisory opinion of the State Scenic Highway Board, will be a component of the PAP approval process by RIDOT.

Two traffic impact studies have been prepared for this development by Vanasse and Associates, Inc. and Crossman Engineering. The applicant has asked that these two studies be reviewed as complementary documents. Therefore, these studies were reviewed in tandem as a comprehensive overview of the traffic conditions and the overall impacts that the development would have on the general area and surrounding neighborhood. The Vanasse plan provides traffic data and several conclusions and recommendations based on data compiled by the firm. Field inventory data was collected in November 2020 and therefore, the study's narrative indicates that an upward adjustment (10%) was made to account for the reduction in traffic associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings of this report indicate among other things, that the development will generate approximately **11,000 new vehicle trips per day** on the Parkway, a significant increase from existing traffic counts.

The Crossman report provides updated data counts that were compiled in 2023 and provides a detailed plan for the installation of a two lane roundabout at Lyon Avenue and a reconfiguration of the intersection of the Parkway at South Broadway. The Crossman study was prepared for submittal to RIDOT to request consideration and concurrence on the design proposals for the Parkway. A March 18, 2024 response letter from RIDOT's Steven Pristawa (as attached) provides preliminary review comments relating to the proposed roundabout design submitted to RIDOT by the applicant as part of a design study and concept plan for the roundabout. The review comments provided by RIDOT infer that the roundabout is a viable option for traffic management, but does not represent an official approval of the design concept.

As required by the Commission, a traffic study peer review analysis has been completed by Pare Corporation. The March 15, 2024 peer review study letter completed by Managing Engineer Derek Hug, PE, is attached to this memorandum for the Board's information. The study provides an extensive list of review comments and recommendations that will require additional analysis by City staff before providing a detailed response to the DRC and Commission.

Fiscal Impact Study (FIS)

As would be expected for a development of this size, the FIS for the proposed development is projected to have a net long term positive impact for the City in terms of revenue generation. A Fiscal Impact Executive Summary completed by 4Ward Planning provides a general statement of the potential projected revenues associated with this project.

Based on the report findings, the expected annual tax revenue generation for the property after full development condition, will be approximately **\$5.3 million**.

Net of projected municipal service costs, the projected fiscal impact is estimated at approximately **\$4.9 million**. (The report indicates this figure is exclusive of public school service costs.)

NOTE: The City anticipates that the applicant will be applying for a Tax Stabilization Agreement (TSA) for the property. The tax stabilization process is described under Article V of Chapter 16 of the East Providence Ordinances Sections 16-61 through 16-68. If a tax stabilization agreement is approved, this will represent a reduction in tax revenue for the period that the stabilization is in place. This in turn would reduce the amount of tax revenue the City will receive from the development in the initial years of the project's completion.

The submitted Fiscal Impact Study is currently being independently peer reviewed by RKG Associates, Inc., a firm specializing in economic planning and real estate consulting. It is expected that the peer review analysis results completed by RKG will be available sometime in mid-April.

Archaeological Study

Due to concerns expressed by the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission (RIHPC) and the Narragansett Tribe, the applicant hired the services of Public Archeology Lab (PAL), who developed an archaeological assessment and monitoring report for the site. A full Phase 1 archeological study is planned after RIHPC and the Narragansett Tribe approve of the study's methods and/or if any permitting authority requests a review by the RIHPC.

Stormwater Management and Remediation

Due to the site's proximity to the tidally influenced Watchemoket Cove and several identified wetland areas on site, this property falls under the jurisdiction of both the Rhode Island Coastal Resource Management Council (CRMC) and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM). This project requires a CRMC Category A Assent, a RIDEM Water Quality Certificate, and a Rhode Island Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (RIPDES) General Permit. Additionally, the site falls under the jurisdiction of the CRMC's Urban Coastal Greenway (UCG) Policy.

The application indicates that post development stormwater will be treated for water quality using Best Management Practices (BMP's) to manage the impacts of stormwater and prevent adverse impacts to water quality. The Site has been designed to meet the Rhode Island Storm Water Design and Installation Standards Manual (RISDISM). A full review and approval of the site's stormwater management system will be required under RIDEM's permitting review authority.

As required by the Commission, a drainage study peer review analysis has been completed by Pare Corporation. The March 15, 2024 peer review study letter completed by Managing Engineer, Robert Sykes, PE, is attached to this memorandum. Similar to the traffic peer review letter described above, this drainage study peer review letter provides a long list of review comments and recommendations that will require additional analysis by City staff before providing a detailed response to the DRC and Commission.

Utilities

The project will be serviced by both public water and public sewer utilities. Comments received from DPW and Fire indicate that a careful analysis of the sewer capacity for this development will need to be completed by the applicant to determine if there is sufficient capacity within the existing sewer system to accommodate the development, as proposed. Similarly, water utilities will require a thorough review by the City's Water Utility Division to ensure that an efficient system has been designed for the delivery of water utilities to the development.

Subdivision Requirements

No subdivision of land is proposed under the development proposal, as submitted. The 9.6 acre parcel that is projected to be eventually deeded to the City of East Providence has already been subdivided away from the primary parcel and is currently under ownership by the applicant.

III. CONSISTENCY WITH THE 2010-2015 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The "2003 East Providence Waterfront Special Development District Plan" (Waterfront Plan") was adopted by the City Council and incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan on December 2nd, 2003. Subsequent adoptions of the City's Comprehensive Plans have continued to include the Waterfront Plan as an element within the Plan.

The proposed land uses, as described within the application narrative, are in general compliance with the identified uses referenced in the Metacomet Sub-district's Use Schedule within Chapter 19, Zoning (Sec. 19-481 - Schedule of use regulations).

Numerous elements of the Comprehensive Plan can be referenced in addressing the project's consistency with the Comprehensive Plan including: the Land Use, Circulation, Community Services and Facilities, Housing, Natural Resources, Recreation and Open Space, Community Sustainability and Waterfront Plan Elements.

In reviewing the proposal for consistency, Planning has determined that the development proposal is consistent with the following goals and objectives described within the 2010-2015 East Providence Comprehensive Plan:

1. Land Use Element

Land Use Element Goal 1.0: Ensure that remaining vacant land or redeveloped parcels in the City are used for their maximum benefit to the community, and are of high-quality design and in character with the adjoining parcels and neighborhood.

The City is reviewing this application within the context of the site's existing zoning, which allows a variety of land uses that are currently permitted in the Metacomet Sub-District. The Planning Department, after an objective analysis of the proposed development, believes the overall development represents a high quality design that is generally in character with the neighborhood and is representative of a design that provides the maximum benefit to the community, particularly for its potential tax revenue generation and job growth opportunities.

Objective 1.2: Preserve appropriate properties as open space through donations, dedications or acquisitions.

The proposed development will include an agreement to provide 9.6 acres of public open space through a deed transfer to the City as part of the development proposal upon its approval. The development will also retain privately owned open space in the form of a 9-hole public golf course and several other smaller green space areas within the development that will serve as public open space within the mixed-use development.

Objective 1.3: Provide natural or man-made buffers between residential neighborhoods and incompatible adjacent non-residentially zoned properties and/or uses.

The development will buffer the mixed-use retail portion of the development from the adjacent residential areas along Fort Street with several proposed measures. The first is the dedication of an L-shaped 9.6 acre green space parcel to the City that will provide an approximately 200 to 280 foot wide buffer along portions of Fort Street and Lyon Avenue frontage. An additional 50 feet of buffer will be placed adjacent to this dedicated green space. Finally, the developer has proposed that multi-family residential development be constructed between the mixed use retail and Fort Street. Planning is of the opinion that these represent acceptable buffering measures.

Objective 1.4: Preserve the existing scale and character of developed areas of the community.

The development of the property, as proposed, will add a significant number of new trips to the Veteran's Memorial Parkway (approximately 11,000 vehicles per day). Planning is of the opinion that this issue is the most critical concern relating to the scale of the development and its impact on the community. This concern must be balanced against the positive benefits that the development would have on the City, including increased tax revenue, job growth potential and the creation of housing opportunities for new and existing East Providence residents.

Objective 1.5: Rezone parcels, where appropriate, to provide opportunities for development, residential, commercial, or mixed use, that is compatible with surrounding land uses.

The City Council approved a Comprehensive Plan amendment and rezoning of the parcel from Open Space (OS-1) to Metacomet Sub-district in 2021. These amendments allowed the applicant to develop the property with the proposed uses as identified in the development proposal. This decision by the City Council infers that the Council was of the opinion that the changes were compatible with surrounding land uses.

Objective 1.6: Target future land uses that will increase the tax base of East Providence as municipal costs increase and residential growth decreases.

At full buildout, the proposed development will significantly increase the tax base of the City based on the findings stated in the applicant's submitted FIS.

Objective 1.7: Target future land uses that will create significant job opportunities in the community, in a manner compatible with surrounding land uses.

The proposed mixed use development will create hundreds of permanent and part-time jobs in the community. The Metacomet Sub-district is located immediately across from the Veteran's Memorial Parkway Sub-district which also allows for the development of large scale mixed use development.

Land use Element Goal 2.0: Formulate City development codes that take a proactive stance on development in East Providence while recognizing the need to reduce the carbon footprint of the community and develop in a sustainable manner.

The Council's decision to amend the Comprehensive Plan and rezone the property represents a proactive stance in terms of supporting the development of this property into the mixed use project, as proposed. As part of the review process by the DRC and Commission, the issue of the development's density and its impacts on the neighboring community will be an important component of the review and project approval process (Further incorporating the residential and commercial uses on the site will help to more fully achieve this goal).

Objective 2.2: Continue to assess the existing zoning ordinance and revise as necessary to promote flexibility in development, to maintain the scale and character of existing areas and preserve the densities of existing residential neighborhoods.

In July 2021, the East Providence City Council approved a rezoning of the property from Open Space (OS-1) to Metacomet Sub-District. This new designation allows the developer to propose the mixed-use development currently under review. As stated above, the DRC and Commission's review, as it relates to development density, will be a critical consideration under the review and approval process.

Objective 2.7: Link the approval of new development proposals, including infill proposals, to the existing capabilities of the infrastructure.

It is important to determine that City infrastructure can support the development as proposed. Critical sewer and water utility capacity analyses are currently being completed by the developer and the results of these studies will be an important factor in determining if these utilities are capable of supporting this development at its proposed design scale.

Objective 2.9: Continue to implement the East Providence Waterfront Special Development District Plan requiring mixed use redevelopment with various residential, commercial, office, retail, hospitality, and light manufacturing uses in the northern and southern districts.

The development is consistent with the development goals and objectives identified for the Metacomet Sub-district and the overall Waterfront Plan, with a proposed high quality mixed-use development that provides public and private open space and a variety of uses including residential, retail and public and private recreational opportunities.

Land Use Element Goal 3.0: Continue to improve the image of the City's existing commercial development.

This mixed use development and its commercial component, will, in the opinion of Planning, have a positive impact on the image of the City's existing commercial development.

Objective 3.3: Identify commercial uses that will attract consumers to East Providence to shop and secure services, to work and live, as well as maintain and create new “destinations”, e.g. currently the East Bay Bicycle Path and the Loeff Carousel.

The mixed-use portion of the development will attract consumers to the City and will provide opportunities for new residents to live, work and shop and play in the City.

Objective 3.4: Diversify the City's existing tax base to reduce the tax burden on residential properties.

This development will further diversify the City’s tax base and in turn, help in reducing the overall tax burden on residents and businesses currently located in the City.

Objective 3.5: Continue to encourage a mix of land uses throughout the City.

This development provides a mix of land uses as described within this objective.

Objective 3.6: Continue to implement the East Providence Waterfront Special Development District Plan.

This development and its overall design review process, is consistent with this Land Use Element objective.

2. Circulation Element

The Circulation Element of the 2010-2015 Comprehensive Plan provides a narrative regarding the Veteran’s Memorial Parkway that is relevant to the Metacomet property. The narrative states as follows:

“Veteran’s Memorial Parkway In 1992, the State designated the Veteran’s Memorial Parkway as a Scenic Roadway under the State’s Scenic Roadway Program. The Roadway was designed by Olmstead Brothers in the early 20th Century and is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Veteran’s Memorial Parkway represents a truly unique transportation experience in the urban/suburban core. This roadway, however, serves as a major north/south corridor, delivering thousands of automobiles from Riverside to the I-195 corridor daily. Recent design plans for the City’s waterfront properties in the vicinity of the Parkway have proposed potential improvements to mitigate expanding traffic numbers, the potential for congestion delays and visual impacts to the Parkway. The City will continue to emphasize preservation of the Parkway’s scenic character while recognizing that careful design options must be considered in order to maintain safety and transportation efficiency.”

Circulation Element Goal 1.0: Improve access to vacant and underutilized parcels on the waterfront.

It will be vitally important that access to this development be properly designed so as to mitigate traffic congestion issues in the vicinity of the development. RIDOT’s approval of the proposed changes to the Veteran’s Memorial Parkway will be pivotal along with a determination by the DRC and the Commission that the density of the development as proposed, does not adversely or overtly affect traffic movements in the vicinity of the development. The proposed roundabout will improve access to underutilized parcels to the west of the Parkway and could provide a terminus for the extension of Waterfront Drive.

Objective 2.1: Focus on providing walkable neighborhoods and a development scale that supports pedestrian movement within the City's Waterfront Special Development District.

The development will provide an internal network of private roadways, sidewalk areas and open space that will provide a walkable environment within the development. Final plans for accessing the East Bay Bike Path from the development are still in progress. Therefore, a definitive statement on safely supporting bicyclist and pedestrian access to the development is somewhat premature. A more thorough opinion will be able to be rendered once RIDOT endorses the Parkway's alterations and with the eventual issuance of a Physical Alteration Permit (PAP) for the property.

Objective 2.2: Integrate neighborhoods, services, and recreation areas with bikeways and walkways.

Plans to integrate the development with the neighborhood and to improve the connections with the nearby East Bay Bike Path to and from the development.

Objective 2.3: Encourage the construction of sidewalks within areas where the greatest pedestrian traffic is generated, particularly in areas near schools, libraries and municipal recreation facilities.

The internal development area proposes sidewalks and other areas for pedestrians to safely traverse the various uses within the development. Planning is of the opinion that the installation of sidewalks on Lyon Avenue and Fort Street would provide important public infrastructure that would allow pedestrians to move safely between the development area and nearby Pierce Field and the local neighborhood. A crosswalk at Lyon Avenue would also be a beneficial addition in promoting a safe pedestrian network.

Objective 2.5: Work with RIPTA to monitor and recommend changes in bus service based on ridership patterns.

The developer and the City are in discussion with RIPTA on bringing bus service to this development in order to increase transit opportunities to a major new development and to reduce automobile traffic to and from the development.

Objective 2.6: Provide transportation service for low-income and elderly residents through the use of local systems and facilities.

It is hoped that expanded RIPTA bus service at this location will improve and enhance transportation services for low-income and elderly residents.

Objective 2.7: Encourage the use of alternative transit modes by including provision for bus turnouts, transit shelters and bicycle parking facilities in new and revitalized private development, as well as public right-of-way improvements, where appropriate.

As stated above, the developer and the City are in discussion with RIPTA on bringing bus service to this development in order to increase transit opportunities to a major new development and to potentially reduce automobile traffic to and from the development.

Objective 2.8: Improve accessibility to public and private facilities for handicapped residents.

This development will be required to meet all of the requirements for handicapped accessibility as described within federally mandated ADA requirements.

Circulation Element Goal 4.0: Improve safety and traffic flow on the City's arterial roadways.

The Department of Planning's most critical concern relates to the impacts that this development could have on traffic flow along the Veteran's Memorial Parkway, a major arterial that provides an important north/south connection within the City and to Interstate-195. Adding an additional 11,000 vehicles per day will require a thorough analysis to ascertain if the Parkway can adequately and safely absorb the proposed additional traffic volume.

Objective 4.2: Consider options for improving access to key development sites through use of innovative traffic design systems such as roundabouts and dedicated acceleration and deceleration lanes.

The developer proposes to establish a new two-lane roundabout on Veteran's Memorial Parkway at Lyon Avenue that is still under concept review by the RIDOT. This roundabout is an important component to providing safer and more efficient access to the proposed development. The proposed roundabout provides the potential to reduce traffic speeds in the vicinity of the development, at a location where vehicle speeds are routinely exceeded. A roundabout is also more practical than a signalized intersection in terms of gaining access to the development from the primary entrance on the Veteran's Memorial Parkway and the two secondary access driveways on Lyon Avenue. Planning strongly opposes any option to install a signalized intersection at this location. More specifics on the final status of the roundabout design as well as proposed modifications to the South Broadway/Veteran's Memorial Parkway intersection will be known once RIDOT has issued an approval of the submitted designs.

3. Economic Development Element

Economic Development Element Goal 2: Facilitate economic development of appropriate vacant or underutilized parcels of land within the City to broaden the tax base and create local and regional job opportunities.

Subsequent to the rezoning of this former private country club from open space to the Metacomet Waterfront Sub-district by the East Providence City Council, the property has become a vacant property that will, once developed, further broaden the City's tax base and create a significant number of job opportunities, both locally and regionally.

Objective 1.3: Encourage small retail and service businesses that meet the local needs of the residents of East Providence.

The development includes commercial buildings that will support small retail and service businesses.

Objective 2.1: Maintain, for an appropriate period of time, a Waterfront Special Development District Commission as prescribed under State Law to facilitate the redevelopment of important large vacant commercial and industrial properties along the City of East Providence waterfront. The Commission should administer the City's Waterfront Special Development District Plan and

implement the goals and objectives identified within this plan utilizing the economic development tools available to them including Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Special Assessment Districts, Bonding and their powers of eminent domain if necessary.

This development is being reviewed by the Commission under the Rules and Regulations established by State Law which dictates the process for all development proposals within the Waterfront District.

Objective 2.7: Balance economic development objectives with environmental and historical sensitivity and the need to buffer adjacent land uses carefully.

While this development will bring significant economic benefit to the City in terms of tax revenue and job growth, it is important that the development be analyzed carefully in terms of its overall development density and its potential impacts to the local neighborhood and the roadway system. The most critical of these impacts is related to traffic flow along the Veteran’s Memorial Parkway. Public Archeology Lab (PAL) have developed an archaeological assessment and monitoring report for the site. The Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission (RIHPC) has indicated that in the event any permitting agency requests that the RIHPC to review future project plans, they will require an archeological survey.

Objective 5.5 Buffer commercial and industrial activities from adjoining uses where possible to alleviate incompatibilities.

The commercial uses including the proposed grocery store, will be located at the northwest corner of the property. Multi-family residential is proposed between the commercial uses and the single family residential neighborhood to the east. The development will also provide a green buffer space and a dedication of public land that will further buffer the neighborhood for the more intensive commercial uses.

4. Community Services and Facilities Element

Community Services and Facilities Element Goal 1.0: Maintain high quality and cost effectiveness of municipal services and public utilities in East Providence.

It is vitally important that this development be approved in a manner that does not unduly constrain the ability of the City to deliver high quality and cost effective municipal services and public utilities. To that end, the developer will be required to conduct capacity analyses for important public utilities that will be serving the development including sewer and water utility capacity and for service capacity of the Fire Department.

5. Housing Element

Housing Element Goal 1.0: Ensure that a diversity of housing exists in the city providing residents with a range of decent, safe, and affordable choices.

The development proposes 890 residential units that will include no less than 10% affordable.

Housing Element Goal 2.0: Increase the supply of affordable housing for the various household income groups in the City.

As stated above, the development, will provide residential housing units that will meet the district's requirement that 10% of the proposed units be designated as affordable.

Objective 2.2: Encourage and provide incentives to developers to increase the number of affordable housing units.

Again, the developer has proposed to develop the site with no less than 10% of the units meeting the District's housing affordability requirements.

Housing Element Goal 6.0: Ensure a balance between housing development and the environment, including open space, recreational, and economic development opportunities.

Based on a review of the submitted plans, Planning is of the opinion that the development provides a balance of uses that include new residential development, open space and recreation opportunities and green space preservation.

Objective 6.2 Follow the East Providence Waterfront Special Development District Plan for mixed use developments in the waterfront districts.

The development is consistent with the development goals and objectives identified for the Metacomet Sub-district and the overall Waterfront Plan, with a high quality residential development that provides for the provision of residential, retail, service and recreational uses including public open space that will provide for both active and passive recreational opportunities for the City's residents.

6. Natural Resources Element

Natural Resources Element Goal 1.0: Preserve and protect the water bodies and groundwater and their sources within the City of East Providence for continuation of their natural beauty and as components of the East Providence ecosystem.

The development will retain the southern half of the development parcel as a 9-hole public golf course. The developer should provide assurances that the golf course will use low impact best management practices that strive to reduce the use of fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides along with a watering plan to maintain a quality course that provides scenic beauty and wildlife habitat while minimizing negative impacts to the environment.

Objective 1.4: Provide for the protection of all freshwater wetlands including those that are outside of the designated Critical Areas.

Freshwater wetlands within the development area are restricted to the golf course portion of the development. Based on a review of the golf course development, layout alterations to these wetland areas are not being proposed.

Natural Resource Element Goal 2.0: Preserve private open lands in their natural state where possible to ensure their maintenance as wildlife and fish habitats, natural drainage areas, and areas of passive recreation and outdoor education.

With the rezoning of the property, the developer has proposed a mixed use development that includes a significant portion of acreage that will be preserved as private open space, primarily through the preservation of a portion of the property as a 9-hole public golf course.

Objective 2.2: Where significant open lands are developed, require preservation of open space and resources to the maximum extent possible.

The Planning Department is of the opinion that the developer has expended considerable effort to preserve as much acreage of both public and private open space as possible including the preservation of a portion of the prior golf course use and the dedication of nearly 10 acres of public open space to the City.

Natural Resources Goal 3.0: Preserve and expand public access to the City's waterfront for passive and active recreational activities.

As stated previously the portion of this property that is to be retained for golf use will provide direct public access to Watchemoket Cove, a scenic tidal waterbody. The waterfront on this property was previously only accessible to private country club members of the Metacomet Golf Club.

Objective 3.1: Require pedestrian access to the waterfront as part of any private mixed use development in waterfront areas.

The development provides direct access to Watchemoket Cove, a coastal and scenic tidally influenced waterbody. The proposed 9-hole public golf course will immediately abut this Cove and as such, will provide ample pedestrian access to the public.

7. Recreation and Open Space Element

Objective 7.1: Continue to utilize the City's Waterfront District Development Plan to guide responsible development in the Waterfront District.

Under this Element of the Comprehensive Plan, this mixed use proposal is consistent with the development goals and objectives identified for the Metacomet Sub-district and the overall Waterfront Plan. From the perspective of adequate open space provision and opportunities for the public, the development has proposed that a significant portion of the property be utilized as either privately owned open space (through the retention of a 9-hole public golf course that was previously a private country club that restricted public access) or public open space through the dedication of municipally owned public open space (through the donation of 9.6 acres of the site to the City of East Providence by the developer).

Objective 7.2: Systematically diminish barriers that presently reduce public access to the waterfront and its amenities.

When this property existed as a private golf country club, access to the property was restricted to members and their guests only. Members of the public who accessed this property without authorization from the club were subject to immediate removal from the property. This proposal includes a public 9-hole golf course that will be available to anyone who wishes to pay the course green fees that will allow full access to the waterfront shoreline at Watchemoket Cove.

Recreation and Open Space Element Goal 8.0: Preserve, expand and enhance open space within the City of East Providence while broadening access to the public where warranted.

The development proposes to retain significant acreage of the property as open space in the form of public open space and private open space (through the retention of a 9-hole public golf course).

Objective 8.1: Create a contiguous greenbelt network to function as a passive recreation, non-vehicular circulation, ecological landscape buffer and physical link between natural, recreational and historic points of interest.

As stated above, this proposal includes a public 9-hole golf course that will provide full access to the waterfront shoreline at Watchemoket Cove. The preservation of a portion of the property as a 9-hole golf course provides some linkage to the history associated with the original Donald Ross designed golf course, where several of the holes associated with the original layout are retained.

Recreation and Open space Element Goal 9.0: Coordinate the development and preservation of open spaces so that together they contribute to a satisfying urban environment for City residents.

As previously stated, the development proposes to retain significant acreage of the property as open space in the form of public open space and private open space.

Objective 9.6: Require all future subdivisions, commercial developments, and Land Development Projects to provide for open space, active recreation space, buffers, and/or landscaping.

The development provides for public open space, active recreation space, green buffers and according to the developer will be planted with over 600 new trees on the property.

Objective 10.1: Require open space, buffers and landscaping of all developments.

The development provides significant public and private open space that includes extensive landscaping improvements and stormwater treatment facilities that incorporate the latest Best Management Practices (BMP's) standards. Significant vegetation on the property, including a large number of proposed new trees on the property will contribute to the mitigation of air pollution.

8. Community Sustainability Element

Community Sustainability Element Goal 3.0: Utilize “green” building and Low Impact Development (LID) techniques for all new development and modifications to existing development.

Objective 3.1: Utilize the Waterfront District Commission’s Stormwater Management Study and City Stormwater Management Plan to improve the quality of stormwater runoff entering coastal waters, local streams, and wetlands.

The developer indicates that they will be utilizing Best Management Practices (BMP’s) and Low Impact Development (LID) standards in the design of the development. It is imperative that as the property is developed to the extent indicated within the application, that the drainage system design for the retention and treatment of stormwater runoff be sufficient to the extent that they will incur no greater off site runoff than that which currently exists on the property. This determination will be ascertained through a full permit review process under the RIDEM.

9. Waterfront Plan Element

The proposal is also consistent with several objectives of the 2003 East Providence Waterfront Special Development District Plan, which is a part of the East Providence Comprehensive Plan, including:

1. Expand the Tax Base - Waterfront development should provide positive fiscal impacts to the City while expanding the tax base and/or reduce the tax burden on residents.

Based on the submitted Fiscal Impact Statement’s findings, the expected annual tax revenue generation for the property after full development condition, will be approximately **\$5.3 million**.

Net of projected municipal service costs, the projected fiscal impact is estimated at approximately **\$4.9 million** (not including education costs).

2. Generate New Jobs - Implementation of waterfront development will generate a substantial number of new employment opportunities for the State’s economy.

The development of Metacomet has the potential of creating hundreds of new permanent and temporary construction related jobs. There will also be spin-off economic benefits to the local economy resulting from new residents who will utilize the goods and services of local businesses within the development and those that are located in the vicinity of the development.

3. Create a Regional Destination - Encourage development that will create a “destination” for East Providence residents and that will draw visitors, businesses and investors from beyond East Providence.

It is anticipated that the Metacomet proposal and other active development proposals in the Waterfront District will generate further development interest in the City’s waterfront. This is most notable for residents who wish to actively and passively utilize recreational amenities such as the East Bay Bike Path and the area’s increasingly attractive waterfront amenities.

4. Expand Opportunities equally for all Persons - Assist in creating an environment of market-driven redevelopment opportunities that will create new opportunities for higher-wage employment, and for housing, recreational, cultural and waterfront public access opportunities for all persons, especially to those with low to moderate incomes and to minority populations.

The Planning Department is of the opinion that the proposed development meets the above stated goal through the inclusion of significant open space, the provision of affordable housing as part of the development and a potential to generate new permanent and temporary jobs that will be a significant economic benefit to the City and the region.

IV. CONSISTENCY WITH THE PURPOSES OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT AND SUBDIVISION REVIEW REGULATIONS

Section 1 -2. General Purposes of the Subdivision Regulations states: The general purposes of these Regulations is to establish procedural and substantive provisions for the subdivision and development of land that will, consistent with the provisions of the East Providence Comprehensive Plan and the East Providence Zoning Ordinance, accomplish the following:

(a) Protect the public health, safety and welfare of the community.

Under this application process, the proposed development will need to be reviewed and approved in a manner that will result in positive impacts that promote the protection of the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of East Providence.

(b) Provide for the orderly, thorough and expeditious review and approval of land developments and subdivisions.

The proposed development is being reviewed by municipal staff, the Planning Board, and committees associated with the Commission in conformance with City regulations and ordinances, and within the time frames allotted for such review.

(c) Promote high quality and appropriate design and construction of subdivisions and land development projects.

Under the Commission's design review process, the proposed design submitted by the applicant, appears to meet the general standards for a high quality design, as proposed.

(d) Protect existing natural and built environments and mitigate all significant negative impacts of any proposed development on the existing environment.

All aspects of this development will be subject to a thorough review analysis and approval process by all appropriate State and local permitting authorities, as it relates to impacts on the existing environment.

(e) Promote the design of land developments and subdivisions which are well-integrated with the surrounding neighborhoods with regard to natural and built features, and which concentrate development in areas which can best support intensive use by reason of natural characteristics and existing infrastructure.

The proposed development would connect to existing City infrastructure, roads, sanitary sewer and water utilities. Pending studies being completed by the applicant will ensure adequate service capacity exists for the development.

(f) Encourage design and improvement standards to reflect the intent of the East Providence Comprehensive Plan with regard to the physical character of the various neighborhoods, districts, and special and critical areas of the City.

The applicant will be tasked with the responsibility to propose a building and site design that reflects the intent of the East Providence Comprehensive Plan, which includes the Waterfront Special Development District Plan, and specifically reflects the proposed land uses allowed within the Metacomet Sub-district. Based on submitted plans, the general uses meet this requirement. Planning does harbor some concern regarding the overall density of the development, most notably, the effect of the proposed density on the projected approximately 11,000 vehicles per day that would be added to the Veteran's Memorial Parkway.

(g) Promote thorough technical review of all proposed land developments and subdivisions by appropriate officials.

This proposed development has been the subject of multiple meetings between City and Waterfront Commission staff, the developer and the developer's consultants. The development plan has been reviewed by staff from the Departments of Planning, Public Works, Fire, and the DRC and Waterfront Commission.

(h) Encourage dedications of public land and impact mitigation to be based on clear documentation of needs and to be fairly applied and administered.

Dedication of public land appears adequate based on the development as proposed. As it relates to impact mitigation, there will need to be a determination that the proposed density of the development and its impact on the transportation network surrounding the development is sufficient to warrant the development's approval at the proposed density. Planning is of the opinion that there may be the need to discuss a lower density of development that will reduce impacts to the transportation network, most notably, the Veteran's Memorial Parkway. This will be under the purview of the DRC and Waterfront Commission to render this decision.

(i) Provide for the establishment and consistent application of procedures for local record keeping on all matters of land development and subdivision review, approval and construction.

The proposed development is being reviewed under the Regulations and Ordinances adopted by the City and pertinent record are being kept.

Staff is of the opinion that site layout and design, along with proposed landscape improvements, drainage improvements and the planned land uses of the proposed development creates a development that is generally consistent with the East Providence Comprehensive Plan and does not detract from neighboring residential development in the vicinity of the proposed development with the noted caveat that the overall density of the development may exceed that which can be satisfactorily handled by the existing roadways surrounding the development.

V. LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO RESOLVE POTENTIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INCONSISTENCY ISSUES

Planning is of the opinion that the submitted development proposal is consistent with a number of important goals and objectives within the 2010-2015 Comprehensive Plan (as noted within this memorandum). There are, however several objectives written within the original plan that could be interpreted as inconsistent. The narrative below provides an overview of why these inconsistency objectives have been resolved through a legislative action by the City Council. To that end, the following objectives have been identified by the Planning Department that could be construed to be inconsistent, but in fact have been legislatively settled through a rezoning and Comprehensive Plan modification vote by the City Council:

1. Recreation and Open Space

Objective 6.2: Support the continued operation and maintenance of the three private golf courses presently operating within the City.

This 2010-2015 Comprehensive Plan objective recognizes the value of our City's golf courses and was written at a time when preservation of our private country clubs was, and still remains a priority. In reviewing Metacomet's challenges in its final years before closure, the fiscal constraints associated with its continued operation, and the fiscal burden associated with the City moving to acquire the property through eminent domain, it is clear that the Metacomet Country Club experienced insurmountable challenges that eliminated the prospects of continuing the use of the property as a private country club or even as a standalone privately owned public golf course facility.

The property's private sale and subsequent request for a rezoning and Comprehensive Plan amendment by the property owner were thoroughly reviewed and received a legislative vote of the City Council. As such, the former Metacomet property now exists as a property that, from a general land use perspective, is consistent with the 2010-2015 Comprehensive Plan and the City's Subdivision and Land Development Review Regulations.

Objective 9.4: Investigate means for the protection and preservation of the City's private golf courses.

During the land use modification review process for this property, the City Council investigated various options for the preservation of the property, including the possibility of an eminent domain acquisition. After considerable research and discussion and the identified fiscal burdens associated with a public takings, the Council ultimately voted to forego eminent domain and instead voted in favor of the property owner's request for a Comprehensive Plan amendment and rezoning as a new sub-district within the Waterfront District.

Objective 10.5: Maintain the Open Space - 1 Zoning District designations.

Ultimately, the Council voted to amend the property's Zoning from OS-1 to Metacomet Sub-District to facilitate the property's development as it is currently proposed. A 9.6 acre portion of the original property has been subdivided into a parcel and it retains its OS-1 designation. This parcel will, upon

approval of the development by the Commission, be deeded to the City for use as a passive recreational purposes.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the above analysis and review of the submitted development proposal, the Planning Department recommends that the Planning Board offer an advisory opinion to the DRC and Waterfront Commission that the development, as proposed, is consistent with the purposes and intent of the City's 2010-2015 Comprehensive Plan based on recent Plan modifications approved by vote of the East Providence City Council and further that the development is consistent with Section 1 -2. General Purposes of the Subdivision and Land Development Review Regulations.

Issues associated with the overall density of the development and its impacts on the transportation network, public utilities, environmental and archaeological resources will require a full review by the DRC and Waterfront Commission. Final review of these commissions will consider the applicant's responses related to comments from reviewers such as RIDOT, RIDEM, CRMC, the Scenic Highway Board and various City Departments. As a result, the application may require a revisit to the Planning Board to determine if Comprehensive Plan consistency will be affected as a result of any substantial amendments to the application.

KAB/JFM/jfm

Attachments – Reduced copy of appropriate site plans

Cc. East Providence City Council
East Providence Waterfront Commission
Daniel Borges, Public Works Director
Lt. Michael Carey, Acting Fire Chief
Raymond Lavey, Waterfront District Executive Director
Mayor Roberto L. DaSilva