

PARKING VARIANCE REQUEST
SUMMARY REPORT
FOR
GARDEN CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CRANSTON, RI

PREPARED FOR:
CRANSTON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT
865 PARK AVENUE
CRANSTON, RI 02910

PREPARED BY:



COMMONWEALTH
ENGINEERS & CONSULTANTS, INC.
400 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02908
Tel. (401) 273-6600, Fax (401) 273-6674
www.commonwealth-eng.com

JUNE 2021

CEC PROJECT NO. 20040.00

I - INTRODUCTION

The following Parking Variance Request summary report has been prepared on behalf of the Cranston Public School District (CPS) by Commonwealth Engineers & Consultants, Inc. (CE&C) as a supplement to the Master/Preliminary Plan and Zoning Variance submissions for the Garden City Elementary School. The report discusses the existing and proposed on-site and street-side parking for the school, and provides justification for the requested waiver from the off-street parking requirements of the City of Cranston Zoning Ordinance.

II – EXISTING PARKING CONDITIONS

Garden City Elementary School currently serves just over 300 students, with a regular staff of forty-four (44) educators, administrators and support personnel. Based on Section 17.64.010 - Off-street parking, Item I.17 of the City of Cranston Zoning Ordinance, one (1) on-site parking space is required for each two (2) staff members at the school; this equates to twenty-two (22) required parking spaces.

Presently, there are only two (2) on-site spaces located on the west side of the bus drop-off driveway from Neptune Street. They are nominally marked/posted as ADA spaces, but neither conforms to applicable geometric and accessible path standards to be so classified; however, the fact that they are designated as ADA spaces typically precludes most staff from using them.

The majority of school staff parking therefore occurs as street-side parallel parking along the sidewalks adjacent to the school, particularly along Neptune Street (see photos below). Observations of the school and parking during typical school-day conditions did not note any specific problems or apparent deficiencies with the current on-street parking.

Per Section 17.64.010 - Off-street parking, A. Applicability:

'No land shall be used or occupied and no structure shall be erected or used unless the off-street parking spaces required herein are provided. Such parking spaces are not required for any structure or use existing at the time of enactment of this chapter; provided, however, that parking spaces as specified in this chapter shall be provided for any enlargement or alteration to any such existing structures or use.'

As the school was initially constructed in 1953, it pre-dates the current off-street parking requirements, and so is in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance by virtue of the referenced section. However, the proposed replacement/enlargement of the school requires that the full required number of off-street spaces be provided.

III – PROPOSED PARKING CONDITIONS

The proposed demolition and replacement of the Garden City Elementary School will increase the student capacity to 550 students, with a corresponding increase in regular staffing to ninety (90). At the one (1) space/two (2) employees ratio, this equates to forty-five (45) required on-site spaces, which is an increase of twenty-three (23) spaces above the current requirement.

The proposed site design includes the construction of a new twenty (20) space parking lot along the eastern leg of Neptune Street, between the proposed school playground (to the west), baseball field (to the north), and neighborhood play area (to the east). It also includes the creation of four (4) new spaces along the left (west) side of the existing bus drop-off driveway, roughly opposite the main entrance to the school. Additionally, two (2) ADA compliant spaces will be provided in each parking area, with both of the twenty (20) space parking lot spaces being van-accessible. This exceeds the requirements of ADA

Standards Section 208, which calls for just one (1) accessible parking space for each parking facility with 1-25 total parking spaces (equating to two (2) spaces total, one (1) space in each of the two (2) parking areas). The four (4) proposed ADA spaces are each fully compliant with ADA geometric and accessible path standards.

Therefore, the design proposes the creation of twenty-four (24) on-site parking spaces, which leaves twenty-one (21) required on-site spaces that will not be provided under the proposed design. It is anticipated and intended that those parking spaces shall continue to be available as street-side parking along the adjacent streets. In order to validate this approach, the available space along streets where parking is allowed under proposed conditions was evaluated, using the following parameters:

- Twenty-two (22) foot total stall length, comprised of eighteen (18) foot space and four (4) foot buffer
- No parking allowed adjacent to driveways, the loading area or ADA sidewalk ramps
- Parking only in areas without parking restrictions (see below)

It is noted that Per Zoning Ordinance Section 10.32.350 - No parking on certain streets—Near schools when school in session, the following parking restrictions currently exist on the streets around Garden City Elementary School:

R. Garden City School. Between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on days when Garden City School is in session, no vehicle shall remain standing for any period of time on the following streets:

- Magazine Street, north side, in front of the premises numbered 41 Magazine Street.
- Magazine Street, south side, from Plantation Drive easterly for a distance of three hundred fifty (350) feet.
- Plantation Drive, easterly side, between Magazine Street and Neptune Drive.

There are no restrictions on parking along either Neptune Street or Kearney Street; therefore, the available space on each is as follows:

Neptune Street: 595 LF/25 spaces

Kearney Street: 248 LF/11 spaces

Total Available Street-Side Parking: 36 spaces

Total Available On-Site & Street-Side Parking: 24 on-site + 36 street-side = 60 total spaces, 4 ADA

IV – ZONING VARIANCE REQUEST

Per Zoning Ordinance Section 17.92.010 – Variances, the CPS seeks relief from the full off-street parking requirements, in the amount of twenty-one (21) on-site spaces. The following are offered as justifications for granting this relief:

- In order to satisfy the needs of the CPS's educational programming and overall district planning, the design of the new school requires the expansion to 550 students and 90 staff.
- The proposed size of the new school building is what is required to accommodate that number of students.
- The proposed site design includes a number of elements that are necessary to the general and educational function of the school, including the playground area adjacent to the gymnasium, the loading area off Neptune Street, and the dedicated student drop-off lane along Magazine Street.

- There are a number of existing ancillary site elements within the school parcel that are of a significant and sensitive nature to the school and the broader community, which have been prioritized to be preserved; these include the memorial brick walkway and bench along Plantation Drive, the memorial playground along Neptune Street, the baseball field, and the community play area at the intersection of Neptune Street and Kearney Street.
- After excluding these various necessary elements from the area available for parking on the lot, proposed on-site parking has been provided both off of Neptune Street, and along the existing (to remain) bus drop-off driveway. These parking areas have been designed to provide the maximum number of spaces possible that comply with City of Cranston parking standards and applicable ADA requirements.
- The adjacent Neptune Street and Kearney Street do have sufficient space to accommodate more than the required off-street parking for which this relief is sought.
- The adjacent streets are currently, and have historically, been used for the vast majority of the staff parking at the school.
- The use of on-street parking for school staff is not unique to Garden City Elementary School among the schools in the CPS district; many other neighborhood schools around the City rely heavily on street-side parking for their staff.
- The requested relief satisfies each of the four (4) standards of Section 17.92.010.B.



Photo 1 – View to east along Neptune Street of existing street-side parking



Photo 2 – View to east along Neptune Street of existing street-side parking