

# CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT



## Memorandum – FINAL

**To:** City Plan Commission  
**From:** Kenneth R. Kirkland MPA, MRP, AICP; Asst. City Planning Director  
**Date:** September 5, 2023  
**RE:** 56 Rolfe Sq. – Assessors Plat 5/1, Lots 591, 594-595, 597-599, 601-604, 609, 1835-1836, & 1838  
**Application for Use Variance**

**Owner:** Force Realty LLC  
**Applicant:** AI Events LLC  
**Location:** 56 Rolfe Square  
**Zoning:** C3 – General Business  
**FLUM Designation:** Neighborhood Commercial Services

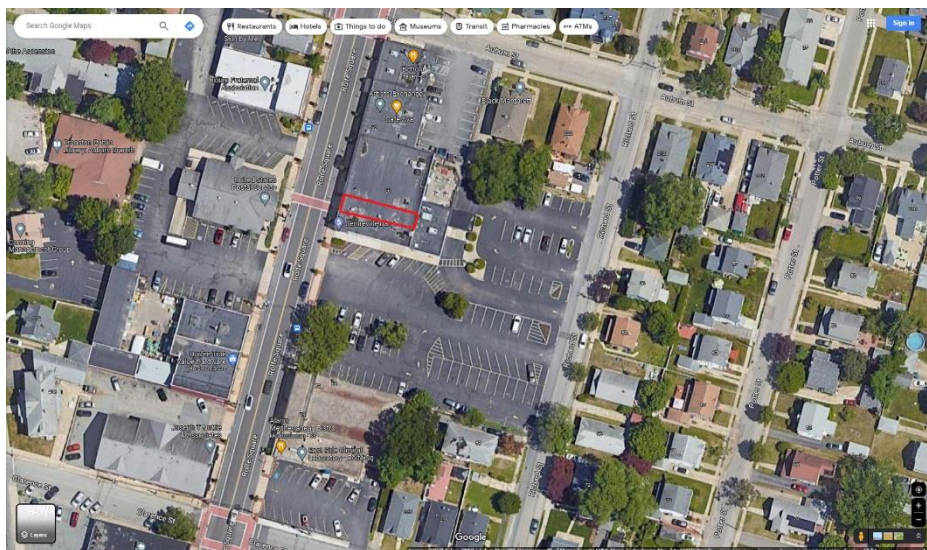
### Subject Property:

The subject property is located at 56 Rolfe Square, identified as Plat 5/1, Lot 595, and has a total combined land area of 0.32± acres, (14,199± sq. ft.,) with frontage on Rolfe Street. The property is currently vacant and was previously part of the Citizens Bank tenant space, which was subdivided into two (2) smaller spaces, the other half currently a Centerville Bank branch. There is a large parking lot to the immediate south, which contains approximately sixty (60) parking spaces for the surrounding businesses.

### Request:

To allow the operation of event space in a C3 zone (17.20.30 – Schedule of Uses)

### AERIAL PHOTO



## STREET VIEW



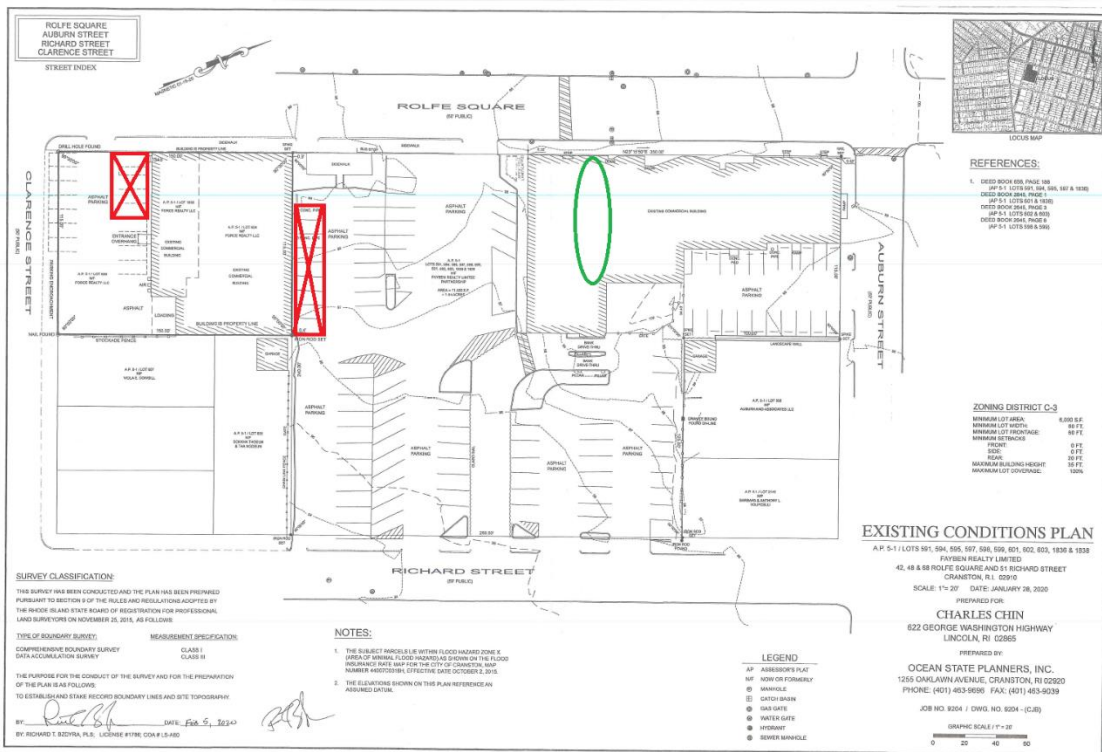
## PARKING LOT PHOTOS







**PLAN**



Staff notes the subject tenant space in green, as well as other parking spaces no longer in service due to previously issued variances. Staff finds these minor reductions would not significantly impact the Application.

### Findings of Fact:

- The Applicant has requested specific relief in their Application, namely:
  - 17.92.010 – Variances (Use)
  - 17.20.030 – Schedule of Uses
- It should be noted that that this Application requires a use variance, which calls for a higher standard of review.
- Staff has reviewed this Application in consideration with the use’s compatibility with the surrounding area that the proposed use does not appear to impose undue nuisances beyond any other by-right use on this site and the immediate surrounding area.
  - The Zoning Ordinance doesn’t specifically define “event space” but does define a “banquet facility” which is relegated to heavier commercial zones, (C-4 and C-5). The Application describes a smaller such use for less-intense activities, (birthday parties, baby showers, and small gatherings) which may fit a technical definition, but clearly demonstrate a less-intense and scaled-down version of said definition.
  - Given the typical hours of operation for the proposed use is complementary to the typical daytime uses, Staff finds that parking would be sufficient, even though certain spaces shown on the Existing Conditions Plan submitted with the Application are no longer present.
  - Staff also notes that the proposed use would add additional nighttime uses to the neighborhood, which would create a local destination spot for the neighborhood.
- The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designates the subject property as “*Neighborhood Commercial Services*.”
  - Per the Comprehensive Plan, “C-1, C-2, & C-3 are appropriate zoning classifications for Neighborhood Commercial Service,” which is oriented towards providing services to local neighborhoods.
  - The Zoning Ordinance doesn’t specifically define “event space” but does define a “banquet facility” which is relegated to heavier commercial zones, (C-4 and C-5). If the Ordinance recognizes different definitions as “sliding scales” of a particular or similar use, Staff views the Application for “event space” as a less-intense version of a “banquet facility” that the Ordinance did not originally account for.
- The Comprehensive Plan outlines goals and policies pertaining to Rolfe Square which Staff find to support the approval of this Application, specifically:
  - Economic Development Goal 6: Target development sites for Smart Growth projects.
    - Economic Development Policy 6.4: Encourage redevelopment opportunities at locations near Garden City Center, **Rolfe Square**, Knightsville, and along I-295
  - Economic Development Goal 7: Improve/build neighborhood commercial areas at various sites through formulating and implementing revitalization projects.
    - Economic Development Policy 7.1 Promote the development or redevelopment of neighborhood commercial centers to service local market areas to reduce cross-town traffic...Redevelopment of neighborhood centers should continue to occur at Pawtuxet Village, Knightsville, and **Rolfe Square**.
  - Economic Development Goal 11: Target sites for industrial and commercial projects.
    - Economic Development Policy 11.3: Promote leisure and/or entertainment-related businesses to compliment the Park Theater redevelopment in **Rolfe Square**.

In review of the Comprehensive Plan, Staff finds that the Application is neither directly consistent nor inconsistent with the Future Land Use Map designation. However, upon review of the goals and policy framework within the Comprehensive Plan that is supportive of this Application the weight of evidence within the Plan is supportive of the Application.

**Recommendation:**

In accordance with RIGL §45-24-41(b), Staff finds this Application generally consistent with the goals and purposes of the Comprehensive Plan and is compatible with the general character of the surrounding neighborhood. Staff therefore recommends that the City Plan Commission adopt the Findings of Fact documented above and forward a **POSITIVE RECOMMENDATION** on the Application to the Zoning Board of Review.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kenneth R. Kirkland". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K".

Kenneth R. Kirkland, MPA, MRP, AICP  
Assistant City Planning Director

**Cc:** City Planning Director  
Applicant Representative  
File