



**TOWN OF COVENTRY, RI
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT**

STAFF REPORT

Project Name:	1160 Main St. Garage
Plan Type:	Unified Development Review (Minor Land Development w/ associated Use Variance)
Plan Review Phase:	Preliminary Plan
Owner:	PH Properties, LLC / Alex Deus Jr.
Applicant:	PH Properties, LLC
Address:	1160 Main St.
Plat / Lot / Zone:	AP 45 Lot 53 Zone GB Lot Size 0.26 acres
Existing Use:	General Automotive Repair
Proposed Use:	General Automotive Repair
Description:	Applicant proposes to construct a 669 SF addition to an existing 1,260 SF automotive repair garage on a 0.26 acre parcel. A Minor Land Development Application is required because the addition represents new commercial square footage under 7,500 SF. A Use Variance is required because the use of "General Automotive Repair, Automobile Body Shop" is not currently permitted in the GB zone.

I. PROJECT INFORMATION

Overview

This matter comes before the Planning Commission as a Unified Development Review, Preliminary Plan stage application. The application was before the Technical Review Committee on October 14, 2025. The comments from that meeting are included in this report.

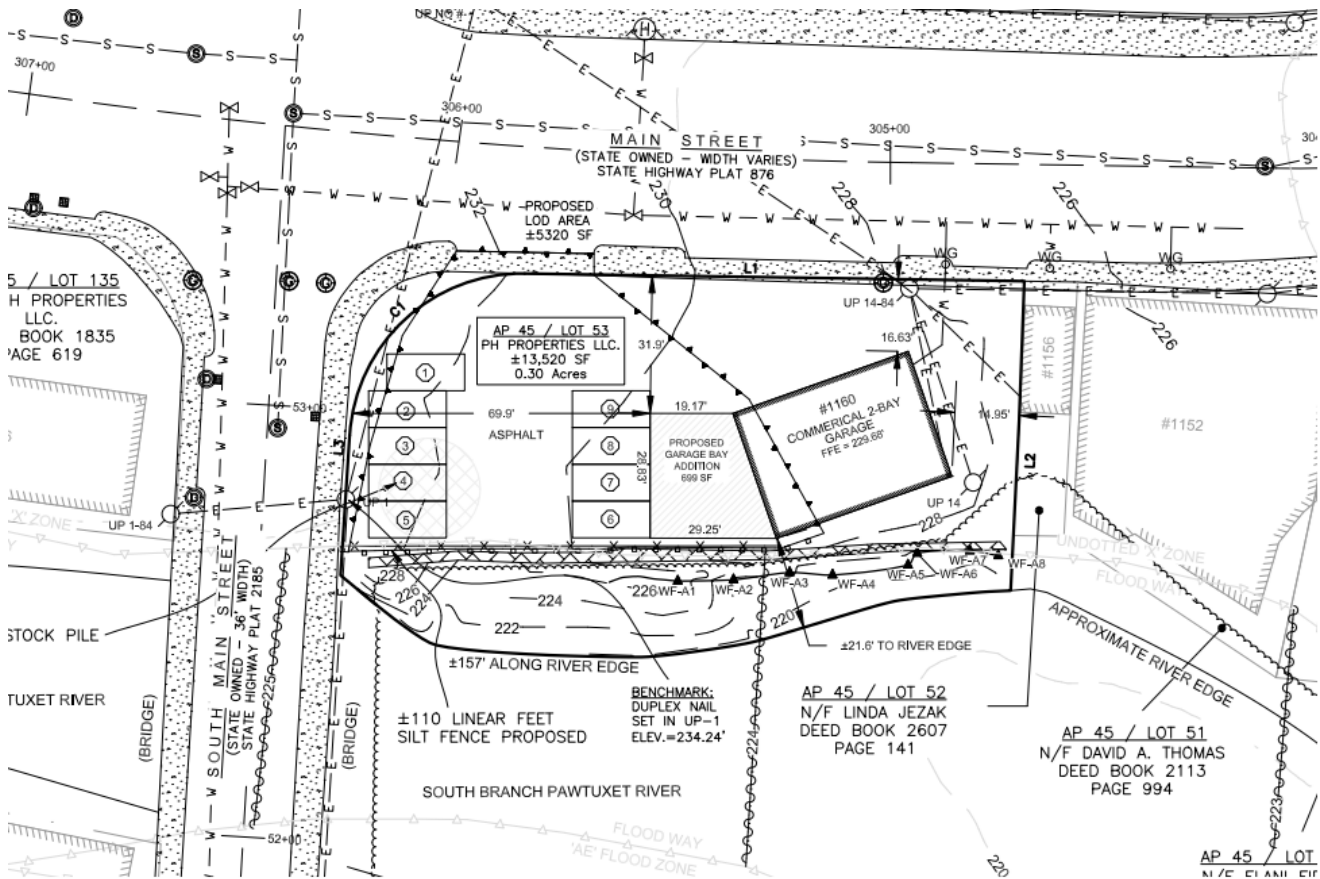
Existing Conditions



The subject parcel is located across the street from the Dave's Marketplace plaza on the corner of Main and South Main Streets, located in the GB zone. The current structure has been in existence since 1963, and has been used by Diversified Auto for less than 10 years. The entire usable portion of the parcel is covered with impervious surfaces, both asphalt and a building, while the southern section of the parcel is a forested riverbank. The parcel has several pre-existing non-conformities, but none are relevant to this application. The current use is General Automotive Repair, which is not allowed in the GB zone.

Approximately the southern third of the parcel is wetlands and is located within Zone "AE" (defined as the area of 1% annual chance of a flood) of the National Flood Insurance Maps for the Town of Coventry. The subject parcel is not located within a Groundwater Protection Zone, Local Historic District, or a Natural Heritage Area (RIDEM ID #125).

Proposed Conditions



The applicant proposes to construct a one-story, 699 square foot addition with a new garage bay attached to the western side of the current building. Included are the construction (stripping) of 9 parking spaces. There would be no increase of impervious cover on the parcel as the area where the new building is proposed is already asphalt. The building would be served by public water and sewer. This is shown on the plan set titled "1160 Main Street – Garage Minor Land Development Plan Assessor's Plat 45 Lot 53" dated January 16, 2025 by Coventry Survey Design Group.

The current use is not allowed in our current zoning and qualifies as a pre-existing non-conforming use. The use, "General Automotive Repair," used to be allowed by a Special Use Permit, but all Special Use Permits in Coventry were changed to Not Permitted due to changes in state law that made Special Use Permits no longer viable for the Town's approach to regulating such uses. It was always the intent that the use in question would be changed to Permitted by-right with some restrictions, but this application comes at a time when that has not yet happened. Thus, the paths before them are to either change the Zoning Code to allow for the use, or to seek relief in the form of a Use Variance. The applicant had applied to change the Zoning Code in February of 2025, but after no movement on that request had happened, the applicant changed their approach and applied for the Use Variance.

Variances

The applicant has requested relief from § 255-600 Table 6-1 E.3.02. This references the “Use Table” which denotes the use of “General Automotive Repair” as Not Permitted in the GB zone. The proposed addition of a new garage bay would therefore be considered the expansion of a non-conforming use.

Interdepartmental Review and Comments

Please see the attached report from the Technical Review Committee (dated October 14, 2025) for interdepartmental comments on this application.

Waivers

The applicant has not requested any waivers.

II. USE VARIANCE

Findings of Fact

Staff have conducted a review of the Use Variance component of this application for conformance with required standards set forth in RIGL Section 45-24-41. Staff’s findings are as follows:

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(1) states, “That the hardship from which the applicant seeks relief is due to the unique characteristics of the subject land or structure and not to the general characteristics of the surrounding area; and is not due to a physical or economic disability of the applicant, excepting those physical disabilities addressed in § 45-24-30(a)(16)”

1. The requested relief is appropriate given the unique conditions on the subject parcel in terms of the current use of auto repair shop. These unique conditions have resulted in the need to expand the auto repair use through the construction of a small building. Furthermore, the hardship from which the applicant seeks relief is not due to a physical or economic disability.

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(2) states, “That the hardship is not the result of any prior action of the applicant”

2. The applicant is not responsible for the subject parcel’s unique existing conditions which have resulted in the immediate application, and therefore the hardship is not the prior action of this applicant.

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(3) states, “That the granting of the requested variance will not alter the general character of the surrounding area or impair the intent or purpose of the zoning ordinance or the comprehensive plan upon which the ordinance is based”

3. The subject parcel's existing zoning designation is GB (General Business), and its Future Land Use designation is also Business. The current use of auto repair shop is consistent not only with the intent of both Zoning and Future Land Use, but also with the mix of business uses currently found in close proximity along Main Street and therefore it is not anticipated that this proposal will alter the character of the surrounding area.

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (e)(1) states, "In granting a use variance, the subject land or structure cannot yield any beneficial use if it is required to conform to the provisions of the zoning ordinance. Nonconforming use of neighboring land or structures in the same district and permitted use of lands or structures in an adjacent district shall not be considered in granting a use variance."

4. Due to the fact that the property has been in the auto repair use for over 50 years, it is staff's opinion that the current use does not present an undue, adverse impact to the subject property or surrounding area. Expansion of the existing auto repair business appears to be one of the most beneficial uses that could be considered here.

Recommendation

Without the benefit of hearing any public comments at the meeting, staff currently have no concerns with the proposed expansion of this pre-existing nonconforming use due to the unique nature of this particular property. Any positive consideration of this application should adopt the documented findings of fact and approve the Use Variance application with a condition that the applicant receive approval of its Final Plan – Minor Land Development application.

III. MINOR LAND DEVELOPMENT

Findings of Fact

Staff has conducted an orderly, thorough, and expeditious technical review of this Preliminary Plan application for conformance with required standards set forth in RIGL Section 45-23-60, as well as in the Town of Coventry's Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, and finds as follows:

RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(1) states, "The proposed development is consistent with the comprehensive community plan and/or has satisfactorily addressed the issues where there may be inconsistencies."

1. The Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use designation for the subject parcel is Business. The General Automotive Repair use proposed for this parcel is consistent with the Business designation.

RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(2) states, “The proposed development is in compliance with the standards and provisions of the municipality’s zoning ordinance.”

2. The current use for the subject parcel is a pre-existing non-conforming use within the GB zone.
3. Preliminary Plan approval is conditioned upon obtaining relief in the form of a Use Variance.
4. The proposal will not alter the general character of the surrounding area or impair the intent or purpose of the Coventry Zoning Code as consistent with the findings for the Use Variance component of this project.

*RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(3) states, “There will be no significant negative environmental impacts from the proposed development as shown on the **final** plan, with all required conditions for approval.” (emphasis added)*

5. This finding pertains specifically to the final plan; however, no significant environmental impacts are anticipated based on the Preliminary Plan level of detail required at this stage.
6. The applicant has received approval of a RIDEM Freshwater Wetlands Permit No. 24-0260.

RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(5) states, “All proposed land developments and all subdivision lots have adequate and permanent physical access to a public street. Lot frontage on a public street without physical access shall not be considered in compliance with this requirement.”

7. The subject parcel currently enjoys adequate permanent physical access to a public right-of-way (Main Street).
8. The proposed building will be accessed via the facility’s existing driveway, which provides for safe and adequate circulation for vehicular traffic as well as for emergency vehicles.

Recommendation

Staff finds this proposal consistent with the standards for required findings of fact set forth in RIGL Section 45-23-60 as well as with the Town of Coventry’s Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the documented findings of fact and waivers, and **approve** the Preliminary Plan application, subject to the conditions denoted below.

Conditions of approval

1. Preliminary Plan approval is conditioned upon strict adherence to the associated Use Variance Application as presented and approved.
2. The applicant shall submit the following items with its Final Plan application: a revised site plan with its Final Plan application containing the following edits:
 - a. Approval letter from the Central Coventry Fire District.
 - b. An analysis of Parking requirements to be added to the Record Plan.

3. Upon project completion, a Certificate of Conformance (COC) from the Engineer of Record (EOR) shall be required. The COC shall certify that the constructed project meets all required standards, regulations and specifications in the permitting and construction documents. The COC shall be focused on site civil related work. Work includes, but is not limited to; all drainage system components, earth grading, roadway subbase, pavement and curbing, concrete flatwork, underground utilities (sewer, electric, water, etc.), survey markers and monuments, fire cisterns, signage, fencing and landscaping. EOR shall partner with a qualified sub-consultant to perform necessary inspection related duties if EOR does not perform these duties in-house. All coordination between EOR and inspection sub-consultant shall be finalized before construction commences. A certificate of occupancy will not be issued until COC is received and accepted by the town.

Pursuant to Article XII. Appeals, Subsection A. Procedure for Appeals to the Board of Appeal of the Coventry Subdivision Regulations, the decision of the Planning Commission herein may be appealed in writing by any party aggrieved by said decision to the Coventry Board of Appeal. Any such appeal shall be made within 20 days of the day of the decision is recorded and posted in the Town Clerk's Office.



TOWN OF COVENTRY

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TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: October 14, 2025
PROJECT NAME: "1160 Main Street Garage"
PROPERTIES: AP 45, Lot 53
ADDRESS: 1160 Main Street
ZONE: GB (General Business)
OWNER/APPLICANT: Alexander Deus Jr/ PH Properties, LLC

This matter came before the Coventry Technical Review Committee at its October 14, 2025 meeting as a Preliminary Plan Application for a Minor Land Development project in accordance with Article V, D.3. of the Coventry Subdivision & Land Development Regulations.

An application and plan were initially submitted for review on September 15, 2025. The applicant proposes to construct a 669 SF addition to an existing 1,260 SF automotive repair garage on a 0.26 acre parcel. A Minor Land Development Application is required because the addition represents new commercial square footage under 7,500 SF. A Use Variance is required because the use of "General Automotive Repair, Automobile Body Shop" is not currently permitted in the GB zone. This project will be reviewed under Unified Development Review in which both the Minor Land Development and the Use Variance will be decided by the Planning Commission.

The members of the Technical Review Committee reviewed the following documents related to this application when preparing the comments below:

1160 Main St Garage - Preliminary Plan Set.pdf
1160 Main St Garage - Project Narrative.pdf
1160 Main St Garage - Use Variance Application.pdf

TOWN ENGINEER

Plans

- 1) Submission of a Town of Coventry Soil Erosion and Sediment Control (SESC) Application will be required for the project.
- 2) A Town of Coventry Commercial Sewer Connection Application will be required for the proposed sewer connection.
- 3) Confirm number of employees for minimum parking requirements.

PRINCIPAL PLANNER DESIGNEE

- Planning Staff note that this Minor Land Development has been elevated to a Unified Development Application due to an associated Use Variance. The Use Variance is due to the expansion of a non-conforming use.
- Staff note that the entire parcel is impervious surface.
- Staff note that there are multiple pre-existing non-conformities with the current lot that are not germane to this proposal.
- Staff note the applicant must abide by § 255-930A.(2) which states, in part: "Suitable separation shall be made between the pedestrian sidewalk and the vehicular parking or moving area with the use of appropriate bumper, wheel guards, or traffic islands..."
- Staff will be looking for an analysis of parking requirements to be added to the Record Plan.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

- It is a pleasure to be able to provide as favorable comment for a company that is experiencing success and wants to expand in Town. Business growth within the context of a growing company demonstrates the positive business outlook for this community. As identified by the engineer of record, the primary issue would be the approval of RIDEM for building within the 200' riverbank setback.

FIRE REPRESENTATIVE

- No comments at this time.

POLICE CHIEF

- No comments at this time.

PLANNING COMMISSION CHAIR

The Planning Commission Chair recused as this item will be heard before the Planning Commission.