



## CITY OF NEW BEDFORD DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

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# STAFF REPORT

## NEW BEDFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

August 3, 2020

### CASE # 2020.19: CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

47-49 Union Street (Map 53 Lot 196)

**OWNER** Whaler's Corner, LLC  
**APPLICANT:** 35A Union Street  
New Bedford, MA 02740



**OVERVIEW:** The applicant is seeking to demolish the existing one story building and construct a private surface parking lot.

**EXISTING CONDITIONS:** The **Frank W. Pease Building** at 47-49 Union Street was constructed in 1908 as a three-story building with a produce market in the first story and tenements in the upper two stories. The upper stories were removed in 1941, leaving the building in its current configuration as a one-story, four-bay, frame building. The exterior was altered c. 1970 to its current appearance. The south-facing, flat-roofed building on a stone foundation is clad in brick, stucco, and weathered wood shingles. It is accessed via a recessed door east of center flanked by two partially obscured multi-pane windows. Fenestration consists of two 36-light windows east and west of the door and a 21-light window at the west edge of the south elevation. The south elevation is protected by a shallow overhang clad in painted shingles. The cornice and parapet are clad in standing-seam metal sheeting. A small, NBRA asphalt-paved, mixed-use parking lot is immediately to the west and a portion of the lot to the north of the building, is part of the subject property.

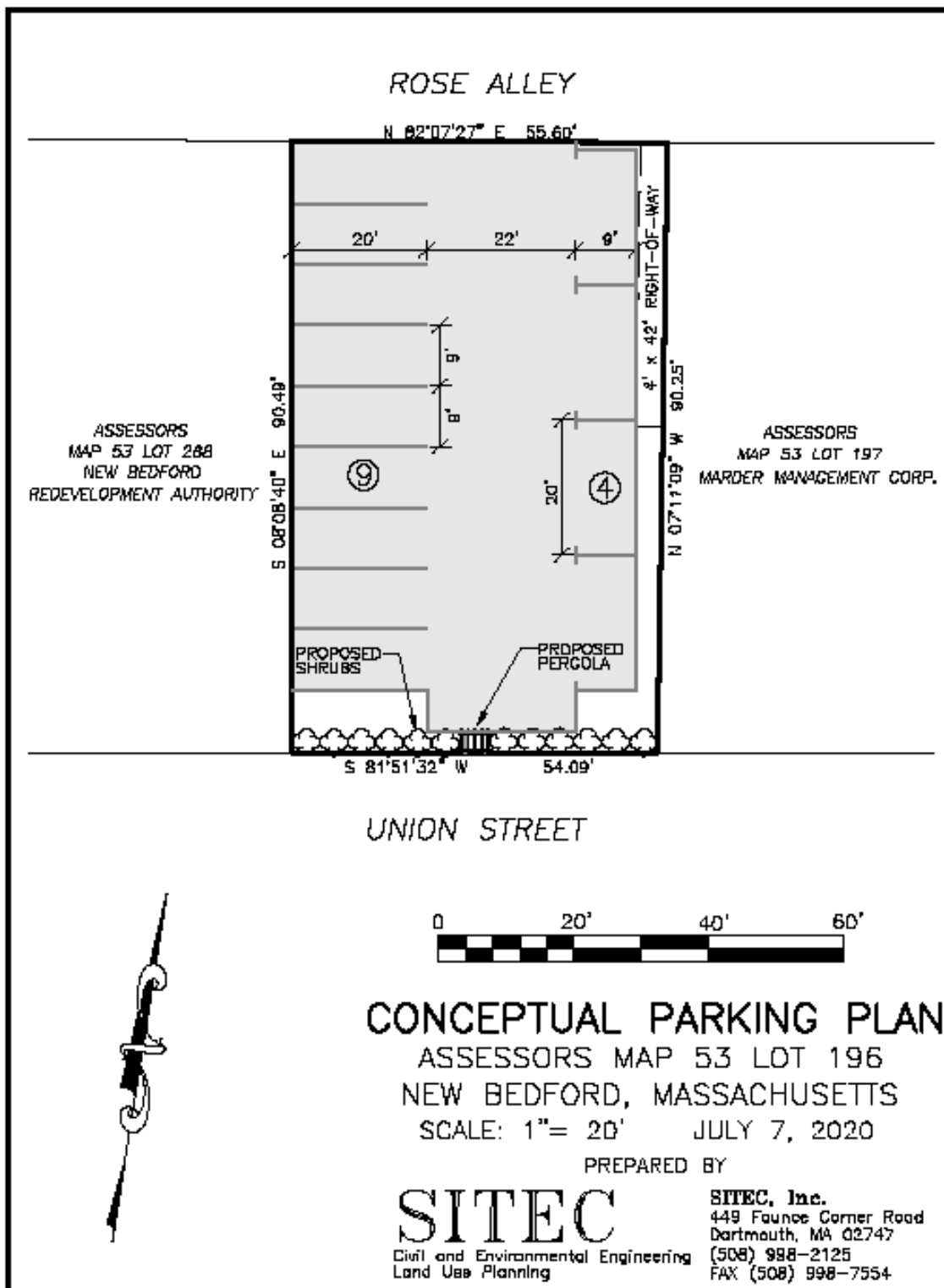
The building was purchased by the applicant in 2015, has remained vacant, and according to a review of building permits, no improvements have been made to the building.

The subject property abuts a City New Bedford Redevelopment Authority (NBRA) surface parking lot to the west. The NBRA lot once had a three story building which was removed sometime in the last mid-century. Both lots were in common ownership until 1997, when the lots were divided, and the NBRA purchased the lot located at the northeast corner of Union and N Water Streets.

**PROPOSAL:** The applicant is seeking to demolish the building to construct a private surface parking lot, which according to the submitted site plan, would accommodate 13 automobiles. Although not noted on the plan, it's assumed that the surface would be asphalt, and the plan indicates vegetation screening along the Union Street frontage only,

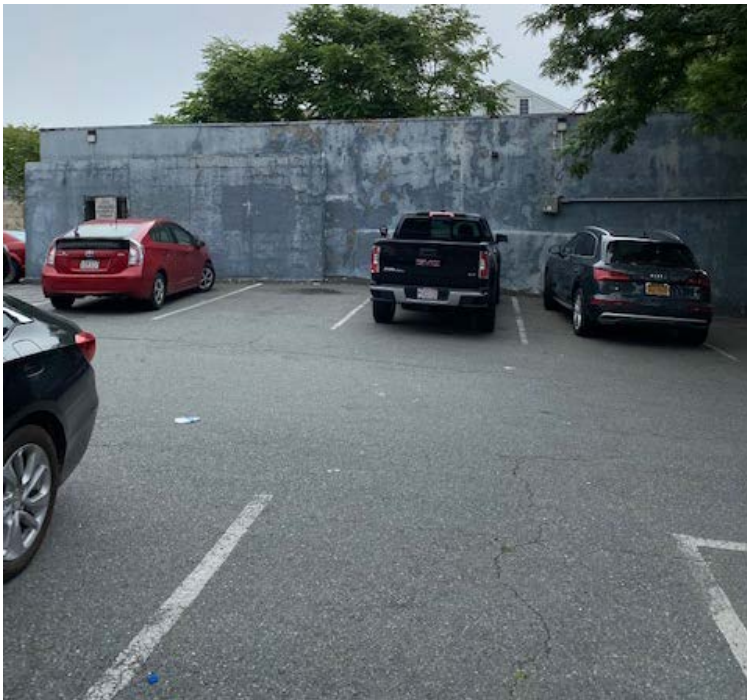


along with a pergola pedestrian entry. *See following Site Plan.*





**South Facade**



**West Facade**

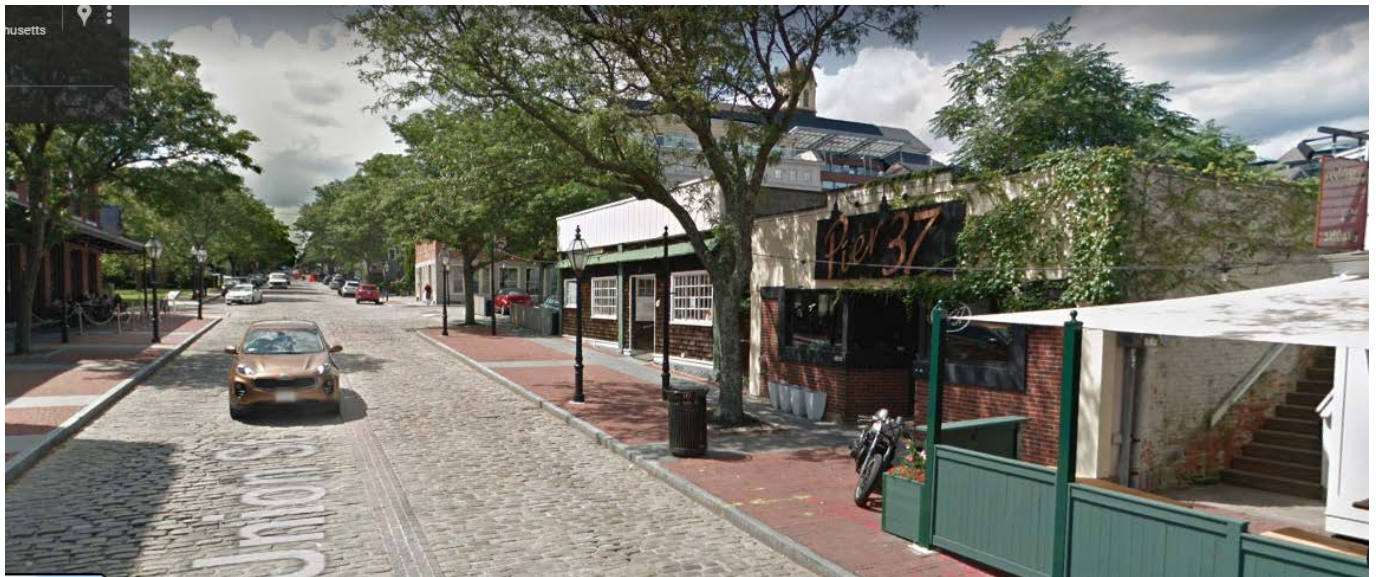


**North Facade**





**SUBJECT AREA STREETScape LOOKING EAST**



**SUBJECT AREA STREETScape LOOKING WEST**

**STATEMENT OF APPLICABLE GUIDELINES:** Due to the location of the building within the Local Historic District, the demolition request does not fall under the **City Ordinance: Sec. 2-157. - Demolition delay of buildings and structures.**

Demolition requests of this type fall under **MGL Chapter 40C: Section 6. Certificates of appropriateness, non-applicability or hardship; necessity; applications and plans, etc.; building and demolition permits restricted.**

*Except as the ordinance or by-law may otherwise provide in accordance with section eight or said section eight or nine, no building or structure within an historic district shall be constructed or altered in any way that affects exterior architectural features unless the commission shall first have issued a certificate of appropriateness, a certificate of non-applicability or a certificate of hardship with respect to such construction or alteration.*

*Any person who desires to obtain a certificate from the commission shall file with the commission an application for a certificate of appropriateness, a certificate of non-applicability or a certificate of hardship, as the case may be, in such form as the commission may reasonably determine, together with such plans, elevations, specifications, material and other information, including in the case of demolition or removal a statement of the proposed condition and appearance of the property thereafter, as may be reasonably deemed necessary by the commission to enable it to make a determination on the application.*

*No building permit for construction of a building or structure or for alteration of an exterior architectural feature within an historic district and **no demolition permit for demolition or removal of a building or structure within an historic district shall be issued by a city or town or any department thereof until the certificate required by this section has been issued by the commission.***

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Building: The subject building has been altered and retains minimal original historic fabric. No structural assessment of the building has been provided. The building has experienced deferred maintenance and has been vacant for several years, however its location and site placement, with its frontage to the sidewalk, contributes positively to the urban form, streetscape density and building rhythm. The building provides a visual cohesive relationship in context to the neighboring buildings.

Parking Lot: The proposed surface parking lot, adjacent to a preexisting lot, would result in a large void along the lower part of the City's "Main Street", becoming a dominating asphalt break in the urban fabric, interrupting the streetscape, expanding the distances between destinations, and undermine walkability.

The proposal of demolition for the construction of a surface parking lot does not align with the City's strategies for high-quality architectural and urban design within an established urban context and would not provide a cohesive and attractive environment for the people who live, work, shop, recreate and visit the Whaling National Historical Park and the Historic District.

Downtown Parking: Although there has been a long-standing perception that there is inadequate parking within the downtown, a year-long parking study, focused on the downtown and waterfront, indicated that there is more than sufficient parking supply for demand, and since the release of the study in 2018 the City has been making enhancements to the parking supply efficiencies and system management.

Staff recommends that the Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of 47-49 Union Street for the purposes of constructing a surface parking lot not be approved as it does not meet the District Guidelines in its placement, materials (assumed asphalt) and it breaks the rhythm and consistency of the streetscape.