

Portsmouth, NH – Board of Adjustment
160 Essex Ave. – Request for Variance

Date: 06/16/2025

Chairman of the Board of Adjustment
C/O Planning Department, City of Portsmouth
1 Junkins Ave.
Portsmouth, NH 03801

RE: Request for variance of setbacks on both the right side (3' relief), and front property lines (13' relief), as well as relief for building coverage (8.2% relief).

To The Board of Adjustment Members,

Please find this statement addressing the requirements for variance on the proposed project located at 160 Essex Ave.

Overview:

The existing single-family structure was purchased by My wife and me in April of 2014 prior to having kids. Now, with two boys growing bigger by the day, our 2 bedrooms and 1 bathroom home feels pretty small. After 11 years of living in this neighborhood we just feel part of the community and would like to stay in the same location. The neighborhood is really an extension of our home for our kids. They are comfortable going from one's friend's house to another after the school day is out. We are proposing an addition to the house to make it more family friendly and more handicap accessible. We are planning on having one of our aging parents come and live with us and the current setup is not feasible. The addition will replace an existing single story; single car attached garage and breezeway and replace it with a two-car attached garage with living space above.

We have explored many different options to modernize our home to meet our current and future needs. The main difficulty is that the house does not currently sit within the required setbacks. The house is also slightly off parallel to the street and front property line. The design that we have come up with allows for a look that maintains the character of the neighborhood. It gives us a roof line that is perfect for solar panels. It will provide accessibility for my aging parents.

5 Criteria:

Per Section 10.233.21 – *The variance will not be contrary to the public interest.*

- The new structure would be in staying within the character of the neighborhood.
- The houses in the neighborhood are a mix of 1950's ranches, capes, tri-levels, split entries, bungalows, and 1 new construction. Most of the homes in the neighborhood have had similar additions added over the years. This addition would turn our 1950's ranch into they style of a 1950's tri-level.

Per Section 10.233.22 – *The spirit of the Ordinance will be observed.*

- The proposed addition would result in similar setbacks to many other homes within the neighborhood.
- The proposed relief is less than that of most of my neighbors' current setbacks.
- The proposed addition would allow for the use of a wheelchair accessible vehicle to pull into the garage and enter the house via the garage to a mud room with an accessible bathroom. A wheelchair lift will be able to bring someone from the mudroom to mid-level of the house with access to the kitchen and two bedrooms. This would greatly improve the safety especially in the winter months.

Per Section 10.233.23 – *Substantial justice is done.*

- Granting the variances will allow us to modernize our home to improve the livability of the home and make it more accessible for all our family members.
- Denial of the request would result in disproportionate hardship for the homeowner compared to any perceived benefit to the public.
- No harm will be done to the neighborhood or community should this application be granted.

Per Section 10.233.24 – *The value of the surrounding properties is not diminished.*

- This addition will bring the house more in line with some of the other homes on the street and help to increase the value of homes in the neighborhood.
- The scale of the addition is consistent with neighboring homes, and there is no evidence to suggest it would diminish nearby property values. Modernizing our home to match the upgrades of other properties in the neighborhood usually results in benefiting the surrounding area.

Per Section 10.233.25 – *Literal enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance would result in an unnecessary hardship.*

- As the house sits it does not meet the current zoning setbacks, and we are looking to create an addition with a similar front setback as the current garage we plan to take down. Building an addition using the current setbacks would not allow us to remove the

existing garage and improve grading. It would also result in the front of the addition to be in line with the neighbors bathroom window and other side window, bringing more noise into their home when the kids are out playing. The proposed addition would keep the front setback almost in line with the front setback of the neighbor's house making for a more uniform look for both of our houses from the street.

- We are asking for a front setback of 17 feet vs. the required 30 feet. 17 feet will allow for two cars to be parked within the bounds of the property and there will be 30 feet from the face of the garage to the edge of the roadway. This means that if sidewalks are ever installed at a later date, we would still have room for two vehicles in the drive and not block a future sidewalk. The house just to the south of us has a setback of 13 feet which is 4 feet more than what we are asking for.
- We are asking for a side setback of 7 feet vs. the required 10 feet. This is in line with other homes in the neighborhood. The neighbor has a side setback of 6 feet, and this would give us a distance of 13 feet between the two houses. This is almost identical to the two cape houses across the street from us.
- Strict adherence to the 20% coverage requirement would substantially limit the size and functionality of the proposed addition. Due to the existing home placement, these restrictions would prevent us from making reasonable improvements.
- Building to the existing zoning requirements would result in a home that is not as handicap accessible. The rooms would not flow well together and would involve another couple of steps from the garage to mud room that would have to be overcome. We have explored other options to build, but this seems like the most visually appealing from the street and in harmony with the neighborhood.

With all due respect to the board, we request that this variance be granted for our family.

Sincerely,

Stephen Parsons & Shannon Parsons (homeowners)
160 Essex Ave
Portsmouth, NH 03801
parsons_se@yahoo.com
781-254-6145

PARCEL IS SHOWN ON CITY OF PORTSMOUTH ASSESSOR'S MAP 233 AS LOT 63.

PARCEL IS NOT IN A SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREA AS SHOWN ON FIRM PANEL 33015C0270F.
EFFECTIVE JANUARY 29, 2021

PARCEL IS ABUTTED BY SINGLE FAMILY HOMES ON ALL SIDES AND IS GREATER THAN 300 FEET
FROM ANY WETLANDS.

DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS:	SRB
MIN. LOT AREA:	15,000 S.F.
FRONTAGE:	100 FEET
SETBACKS: FRONT	30 FEET
SIDE	10 FEET
REAR	30 FEET
MAXIMUM STRUCTURE HEIGHT:	35 FEET
MAXIMUM BUILDING COVERAGE	20%
MINIMUM OPEN SPACE:	40%

EXISTING DIMENSIONS

LOT AREA:	10,000 S.F.
FRONTAGE:	100 FEET
SETBACKS: FRONT	20 FEET
SIDE	19 FEET
REAR	45 FEET
STRUCTURE HEIGHT:	19 FEET
BUILDING COVERAGE	12.6%
OPEN SPACE:	75.6%

PROPOSED DIMENSIONS

LOT AREA:	10,000 S.F.
FRONTAGE:	100 FEET
SETBACKS: FRONT	17 FEET
SIDE	7 FEET
REAR	36 FEET
STRUCTURE HEIGHT:	27 FEET
BUILDING COVERAGE	28.2%
OPEN SPACE	64.3%

PHOTOS OF PROPERTY: FRONT RIGHT ELEVATION:



FRONT LEFT ELEVATION:



SOUTH SIDE AND BACK OF HOUSE:

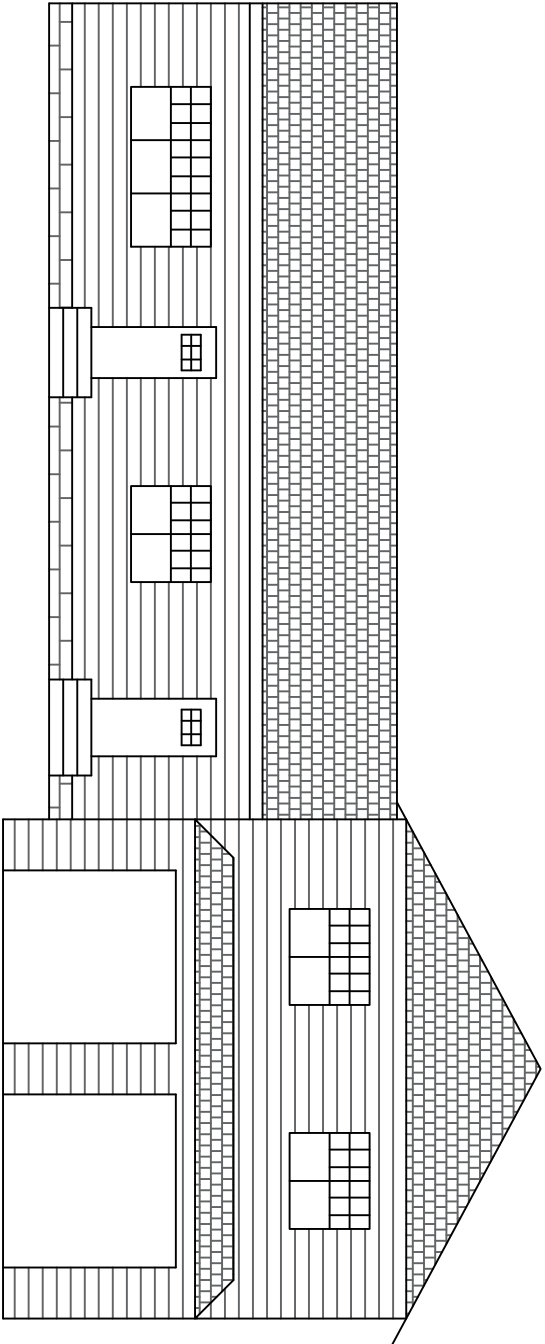


NORTH SIDE AND BACK OF HOUSE:

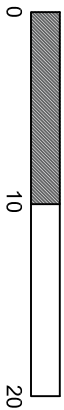


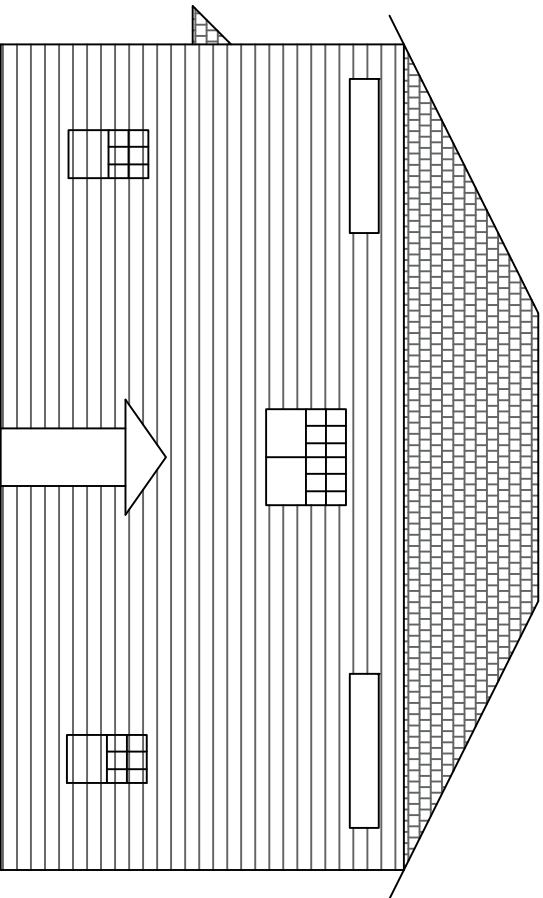
NORTH SIDE, AREA OF PROPOSED DEMOLITION AND NEW ADDITION. ADDITION WOULD COME ALMOST TO THE EDGE OF THE EXISTING PAVEMENT, ENCOMPASING THE EXISTING GARAGE, BREEZEWAY AND DRIVEWAY TO THE SIDE OF THE GARAGE AND EXTEND INTO THE BACK YARD.



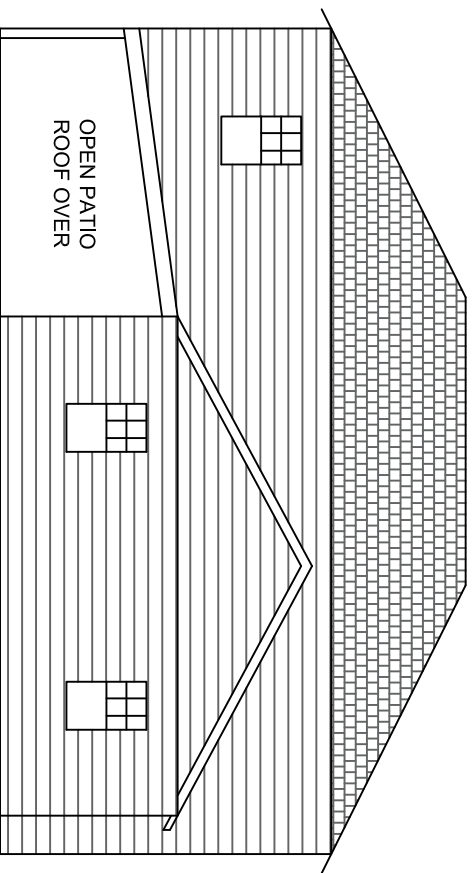
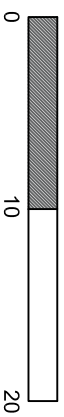


FRONT ELEVATION
1"=10'



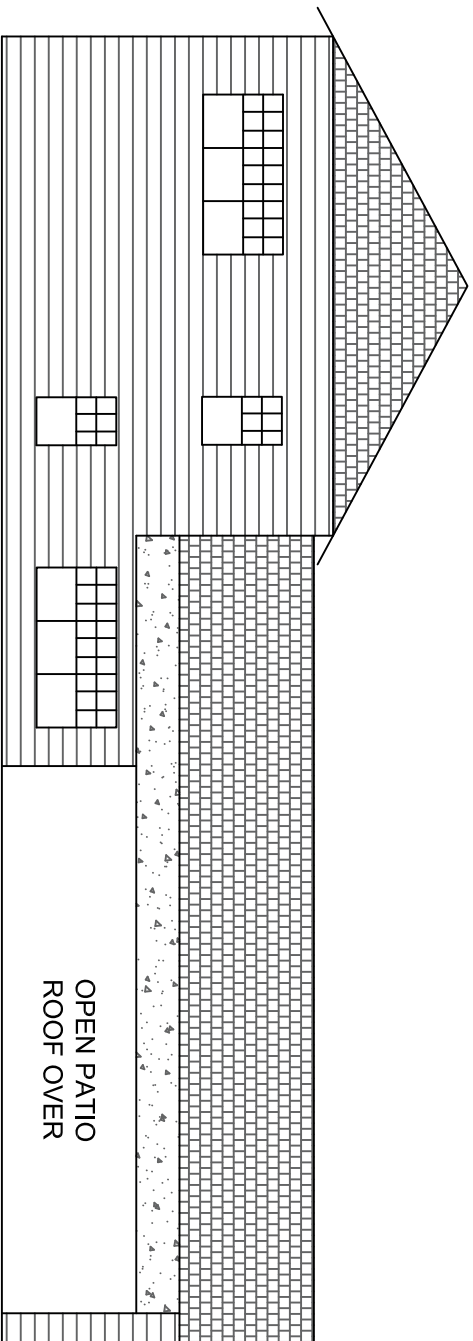


RIGHT ELEVATION
1"=10'

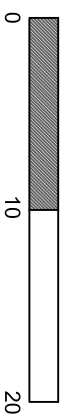


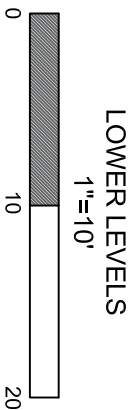
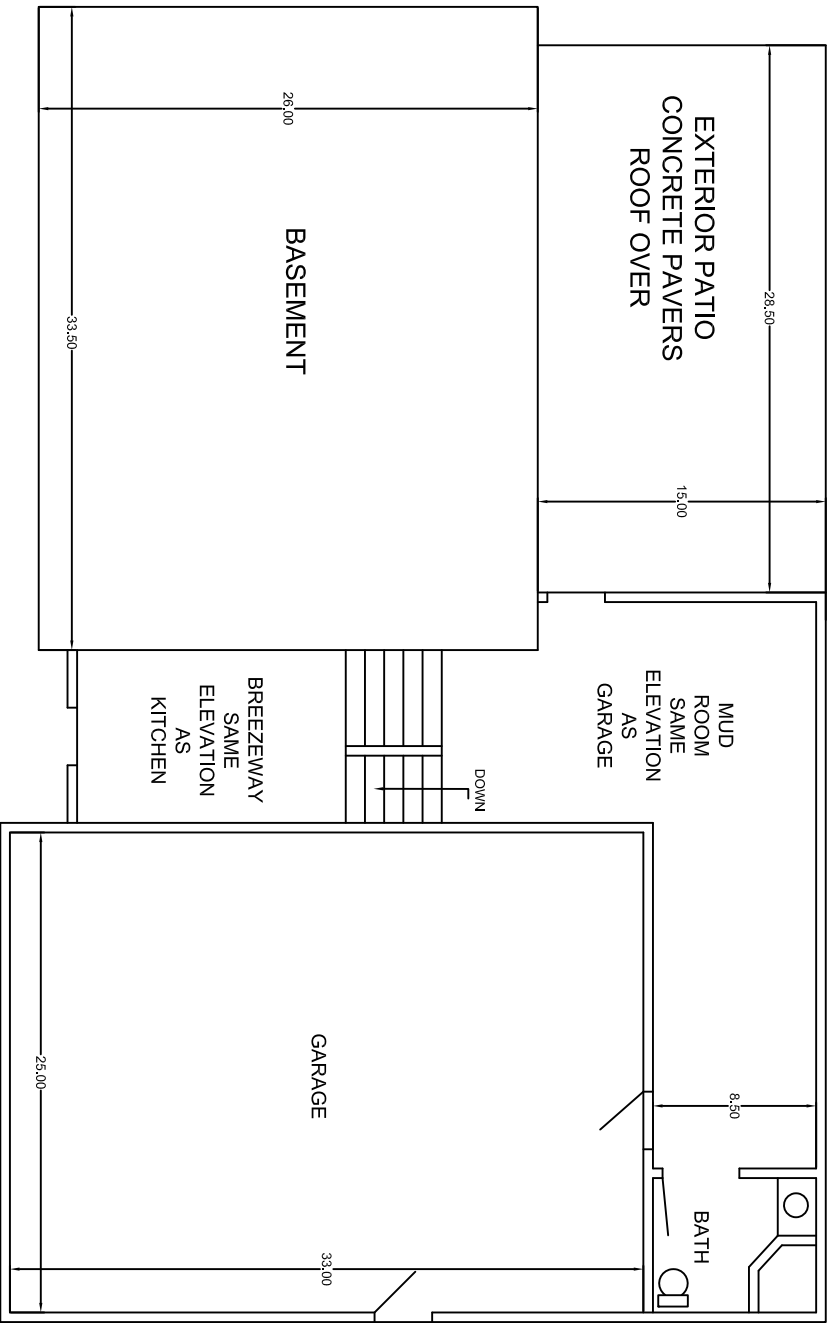
LEFT ELEVATION
1"=10'

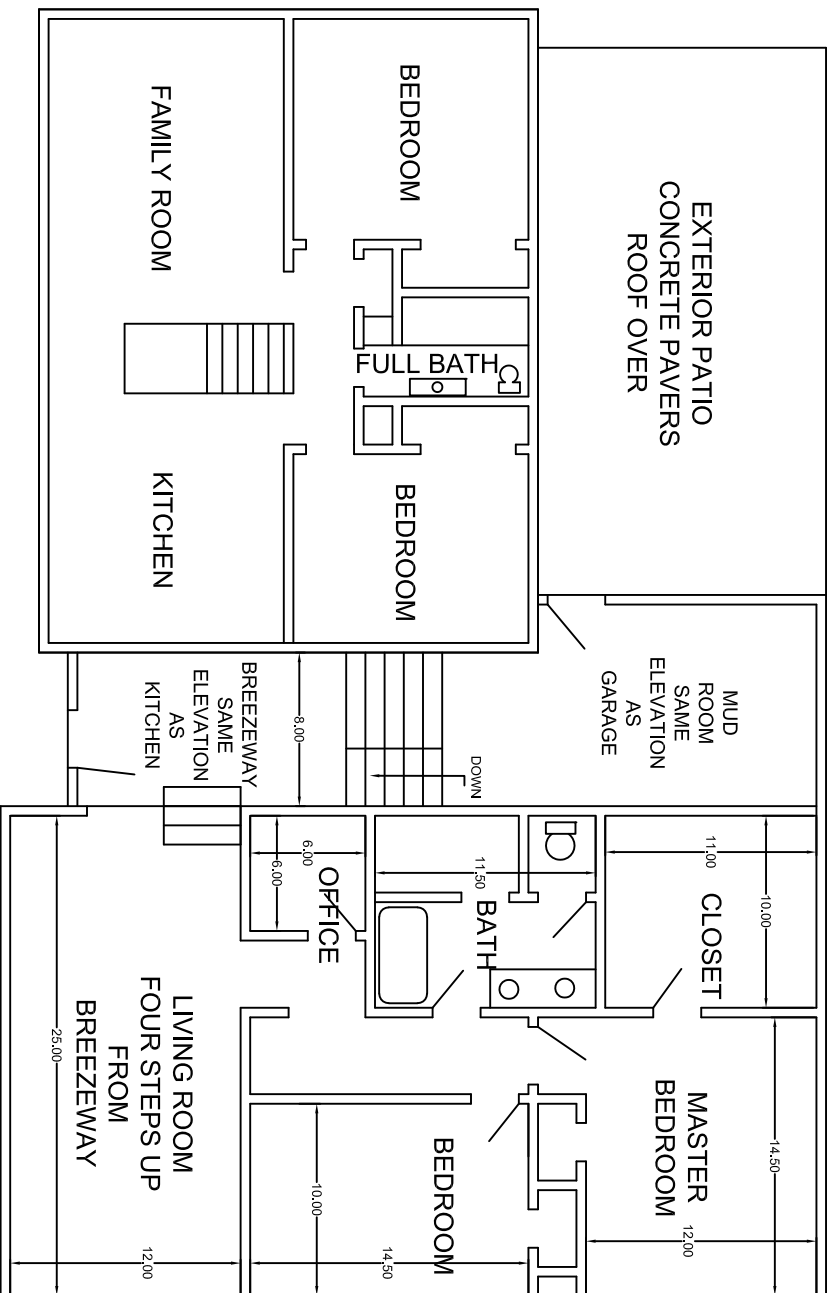




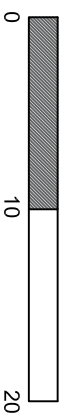
REAR ELEVATION
1"=10'

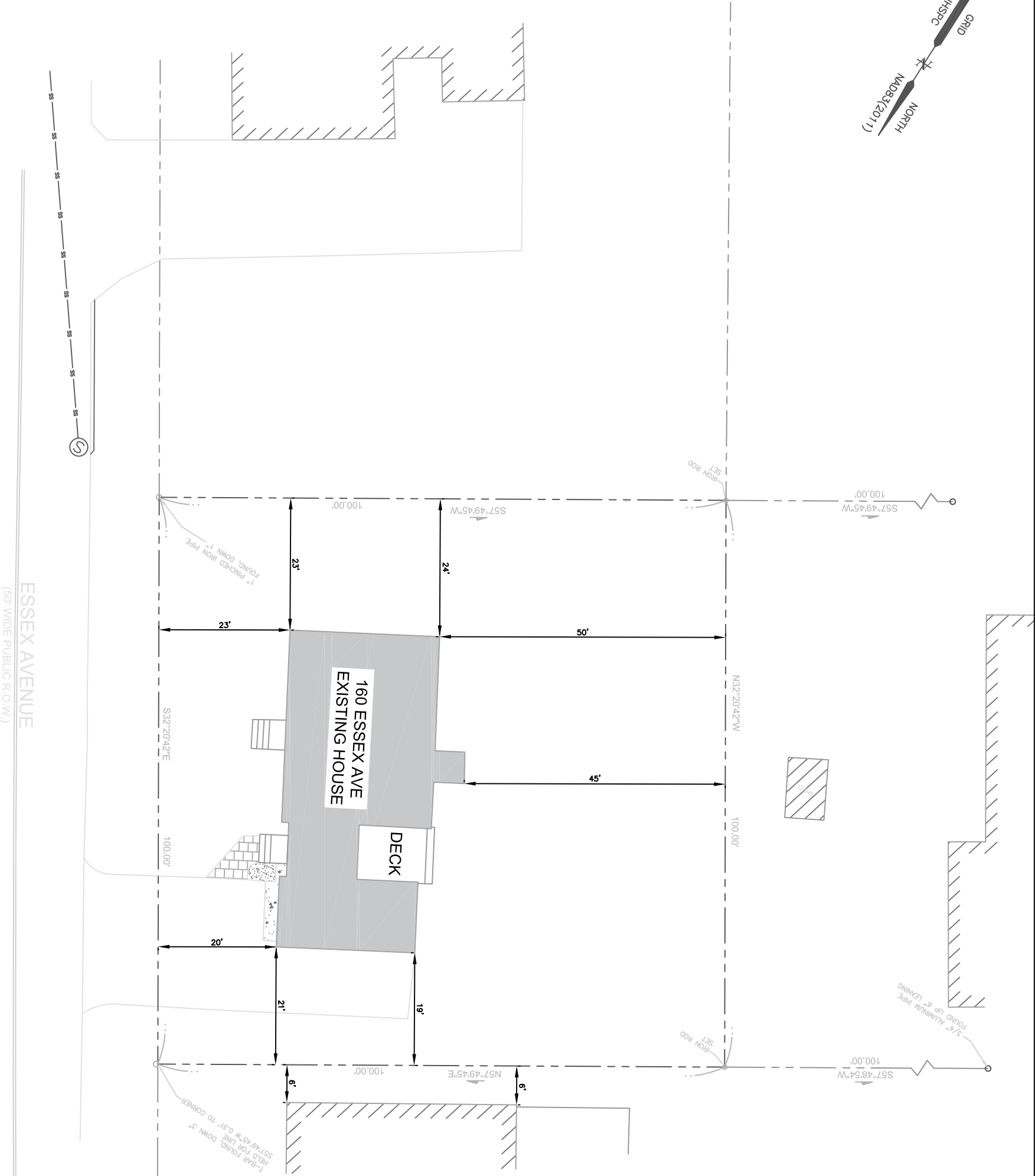
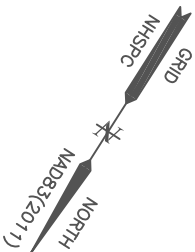






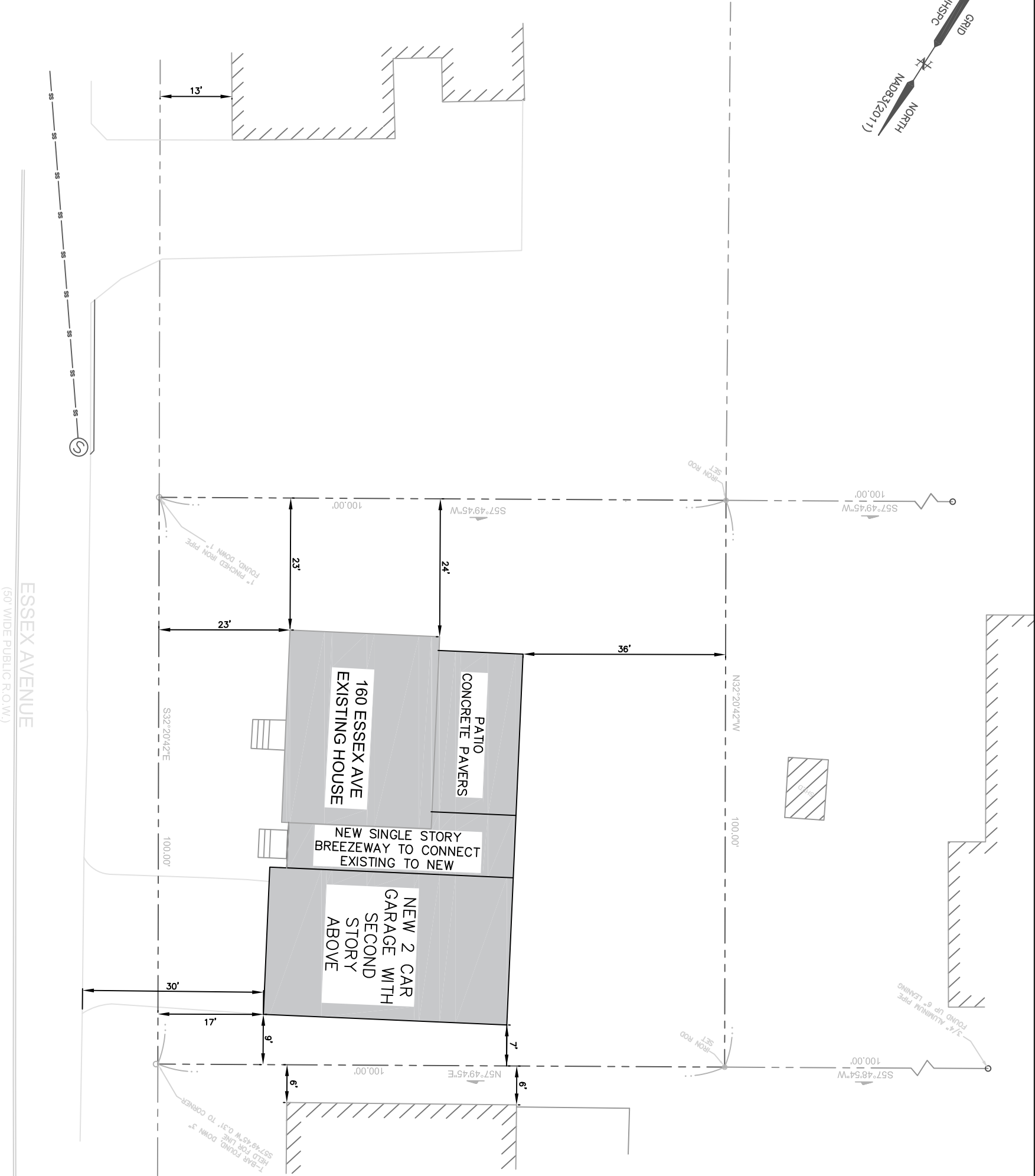
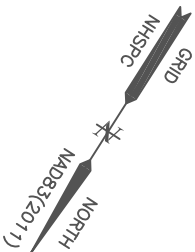
UPPER LEVELS
1"=10'





- NOTES:
- 1.) DRAWN FROM INFORMATION FOUND ON DEED BK 5524 PG. 1178
 - 2.) PARCEL CONTAINS LOTS 25 & 26 ON PLAN ENTITLED "PLAN OF DANIELS PARK, MADE BY C.A. THAYER CE, DATED JUNE 1918" AND RECORDED IN THE ROCKINGHAM COUNTY REGISTRY OF DEEDS AS PLAN # D-0241
 - 3.) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TAKEN FROM PLAN ENTITLED "LOT LINE REVISION PORTSMOUTH, NH, DATED JULY 9, 1979" AND RECORDED AS PLAN C-8851
 - 4.) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TAKEN FROM EXISTING CONDITIONS PLAN "PARSONS RESIDENCE 160 ESSEX AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NH" DATED NOVEMBER 2024

160 ESSEX AVE		
PORTSMOUTH, NH		
TOTAL LOT AREA = 10,000 SQ.FT.		
EXISTING CONDITIONS		
SCALE : 1 INCH = 20 FEET		JUNE 16, 2025



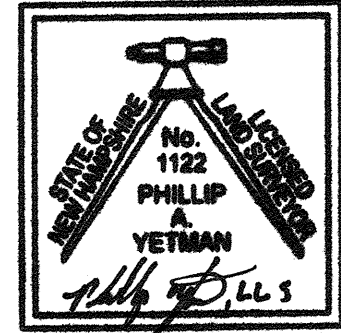
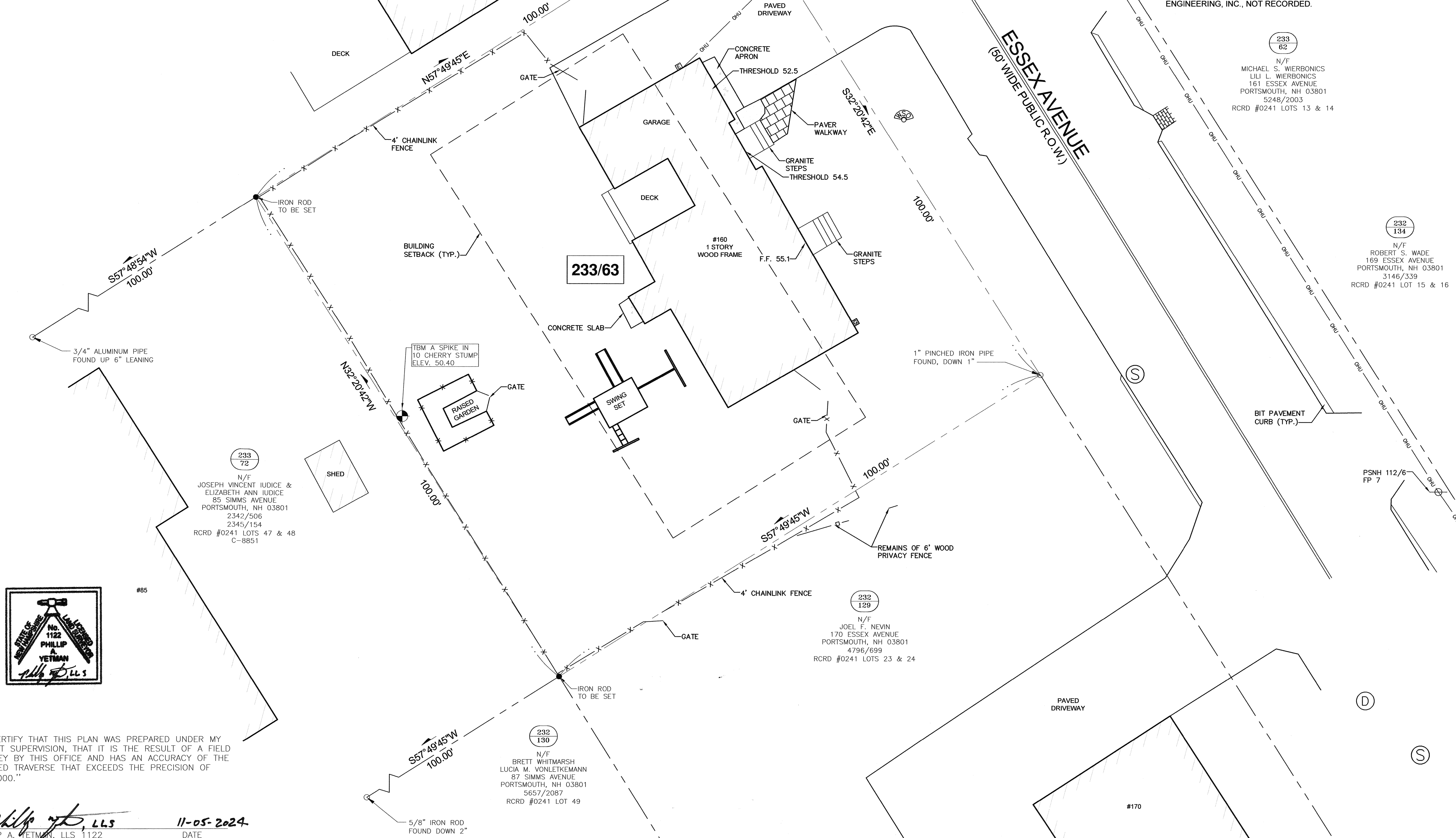
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PORTSMOUTH, NH	
TOTAL LOT AREA = 10,000 SQ.FT.	
PROPOSED CONDITIONS	
SCALE : 1 INCH = 20 FEET	JUNE 16, 2025

LEGEND:

DESCRIPTION	SYMBOL
ASSESSOR'S MAP & LOT	
BENCHMARK	
SET 5/8 REBAR WITH SURVEYOR CAP (LLS 1122)	
PIPE FOUND	
DRAIN MANHOLE	
SEWER MANHOLE	
UTILITY POLE	
WATER SHUT OFF	
ELEVATION	
FINISHED FLOOR	
NOW OR FORMERLY	
ROCKINGHAM COUNTY REGISTRY OF DEEDS	
TYPICAL	
DOUBLE YELLOW LINE	
EDGE OF PAVEMENT	
FENCE	
OVERHEAD UTILITY LINE	
PROPERTY LINE	
ABUTTERS PROPERTY LINE (APPROXIMATE)	

NORTH
GRID
NAD83(2011)
NHSPC



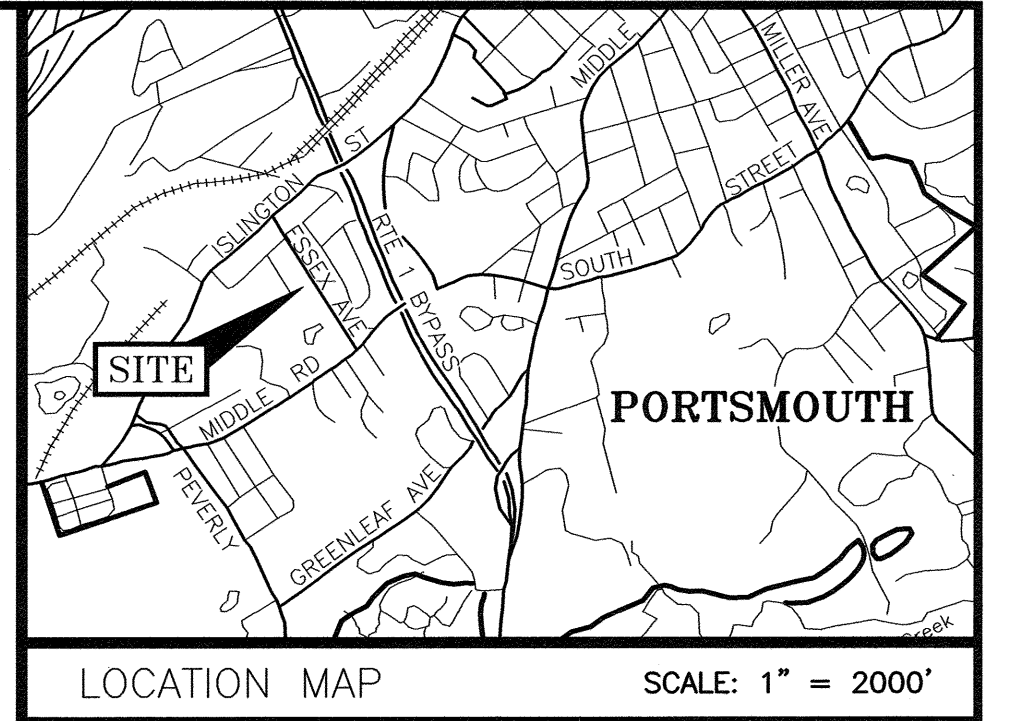
"I" CERTIFY THAT THIS PLAN WAS PREPARED UNDER MY DIRECT SUPERVISION, THAT IT IS THE RESULT OF A FIELD SURVEY BY THIS OFFICE AND HAS AN ACCURACY OF THE CLOSED TRAVERSE THAT EXCEEDS THE PRECISION OF 1:15,000."

Philip A. Yetman, LLS 1122
DATE

11-05-2024
DATE

PLAN REFERENCES:

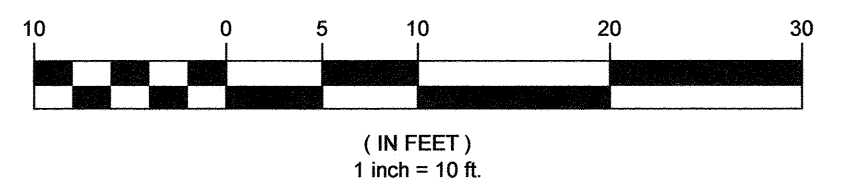
- DANIELS PARK PORTSMOUTH, N.H., BELMONT REALTY CO. PROVIDENCE, R.I., SCALE: 60' = 1", DATED JUNE 1918, PREPARED BY: C.A. THAYER ENGR., RCRD PLAN# 0241
- PLAN OF LOT PORTSMOUTH, N.H. FOR GEO. B. & MARIE R. UNDERWOOD, SCALE: 1 IN. = 40 FT., DATED: OCT. 1972, PREPARED BY: JOHN W. DURGIN CIVIL ENGINEERS, RCRD PLAN B-3290
- PLAN OF LOTS PORTSMOUTH, N.H. FOR CALLEPO APOSTOLAKES, SCALE: 1 IN. = 20 FT., DATED: NOVEMBER 1972, PREPARED BY: JOHN W. DURGIN CIVIL ENGINEERS, RCRD C-3494.
- LOT LINE REVISION PORTSMOUTH, N.H. FOR ALFRED & IRENE BOUTOTE, SCALE: 1 INCH = 20 FEET, DATED: JULY 9, 1979, PREPARED BY: JOHN W. DURGIN ASSOCIATES, INC., RCRD C-8851
- SUBDIVISION PLAN FOR RUTH P. MERCER PORTSMOUTH, N.H., SCALE: 1 IN. = 20 FT., DATED: APRIL 18, 1986, PREPARED BY: EMERY ENGINEERING, RCRD C-15324.
- EXISTING CONDITIONS SITE PLAN FOR PROPERTY AT 88 SIMS AVENUE PORTSMOUTH, COUNTY OF ROCKINGHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE OWNED BY CHANCE B. ALLEN & EDWARD R. ALLEN, SCALE: 1" = 10', DATED: 5/22/17, PREPARED BY: NORTH EASTERLY SURVEYING, INC., NOT RECORDED
- STANDARD BOUNDARY SURVEY TAX MAP 232 LOT 128, OWNERS: ROBERT WESTHELLE & WHITNEY WESTHELLE 198 ESSEX AVENUE, CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, COUNTY OF ROCKINGHAM, STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, SCALE: 1" = 20', DATED: 1/27/20, PREPARED BY: AMBIT ENGINEERING, INC., NOT RECORDED.



NOTES:

- PARCEL IS SHOWN ON THE CITY OF PORTSMOUTH ASSESSOR'S MAP 233 AS LOT 63.
- OWNERS OF RECORD:
SHANNON M. PARSONS &
STEPHEN E. PARSONS
160 ESSEX AVENUE
PORTSMOUTH, NH 03801
5524/1178
RCRD #0241 LOTS 25 & 26
RCRD C-8851
- PARCEL IS NOT IN A SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREA AS SHOWN ON FIRM PANEL 33015C0270F. EFFECTIVE JANUARY 29, 2021.
- EXISTING LOT AREA:
10,000 S.F.
0.2286 ACRES
- PARCEL IS LOCATED IN THE SINGLE RESIDENCE B (SRB) DISTRICT.
- DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS:
MIN. LOT AREA: 15,000 S.F.
FRONTAGE: 100 FEET
SETBACKS: FRONT 30 FEET
SIDE 10 FEET
REAR 30 FEET
MAXIMUM STRUCTURE HEIGHT: 35 FEET
MAXIMUM BUILDING COVERAGE: 20%
MINIMUM OPEN SPACE: 40%
- THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN IS TO SHOW THE EXISTING CONDITIONS ON ASSESSOR'S MAP 233 LOT 63 IN THE CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, N.H..
- VETRICAL DATUM IS NAVD88. BASIS OF VERTICAL DATUM IS REDUNDANT RTN GNSS OBSERVATIONS.
- ABUTTING STRUCTURES SHOWN ARE APPROXIMATE ONLY.

GRAPHIC SCALE



0	11/05/2024	ISSUED FOR COMMENT	CSA	PAY																																								
REV.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY	CHK.																																								
DRAWING ISSUE STATUS																																												
SITE SURVEY																																												
<div><div></div><div><div>HALEY WARD</div><div>ENGINEERING ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYING</div><div>200 Griffin Road, Unit 14 Portsmouth, NH 03801 603-430-9282</div></div></div>																																												
PROJECT																																												
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