# HOEFLE, PHOENIX, GORMLEY & ROBERTS, PLLC

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March 30, 2022

#### HAND DELIVERED

Peter Stith, Principal Planner Portsmouth City Hall 1 Junkins Avenue Portsmouth, NH 03801

Re:

Mark Griffin, Owner/Applicant

728 State Street Tax Map 137/Lot 10

General Residence C District

Dear Mr. Stith & Zoning Board Members:

On behalf of Mark Griffin ("Griffin"), enclosed please find the following in support of a request for zoning relief:

- Digital Application submitted via Viewpoint this morning.
- Owner's Authorization.
- 3/30/2022 Memorandum and exhibits in support of Variance Application

We look forward to presenting this application to the Zoning Board at its April 19, 2022 meeting.

Very truly yours,

R. Timothy Phoenix Stephanie J. Johnson

Encl.

cc:

Mark Griffin

Attar Engineering, Inc. Reflective Designworks

DANIEL C. HOEFLE
R. TIMOTHY PHOENIX

R. PETER TAYLOR

MONICA F. KIESER SAMUEL HARKINSON AMANDA M. FREDERICK

LAWRENCE B. GORMLEY

KEVIN M. BAUM

JACOB J.B. MARVELLEY

OF COUNSEL: SAMUEL R. REID JOHN AHLGREN

STEPHEN H. ROBERTS

GREGORY D. ROBBINS

KIMBERLY J.H. MEMMESHEIMER

DUNCAN A. EDGAR

## **OWNER'S AUTHORIZATION**

I, Mark Griffin, Owner/Applicant of 728 State Street, Tax Map 137, Lot 10, hereby authorize law firm Hoefle, Phoenix, Gormley & Roberts, PLLC to represent me before the City of Portsmouth Zoning Board of Adjustment for permitting the project.

Respectfully submitted,

By:

Mark Griffin

#### **MEMORANDUM**

TO:

Portsmouth Zoning Board of Adjustment ("ZBA")

FROM:

R. Timothy Phoenix, Esquire

Stephanie J. Johnson, Esquire

DATE:

March 30, 2022

Re:

Mark Griffin, Owner/Applicant

Property Location: 728 State Street

Tax Map 137, Lot 10

Zoning District General Residence C ("GRC")

Dear Chairman Parrott and Zoning Board Members:

On behalf of Mark Griffin, Owner/Applicant ("Griffin"), we are pleased to submit this memorandum and attached exhibits in support of Zoning Relief to allow replacement of a non-conforming detached garage at 728 State Street, to be considered by the Portsmouth Zoning Board of Adjustment ("ZBA") at its April 19, 2022 meeting.

#### I. EXHIBITS

- A. Site Plan Set issued by Attar Engineering, Inc.
  - Existing Conditions Survey
  - Site Plan
  - Foundation/Framing Plan
- B. Architectural Plans issued by Reflective Designworks.
  - Perspective
  - Existing Elevations
  - Proposed Elevations
  - Sections
  - Volume Study
- C. Site Photographs.
- D. Tax Map 137.

#### II. PROPERTY/PROJECT

728 State Street is a 4,021 s.f. corner lot with frontage on three streets located in a thickly settled neighborhood. The lot contains 45.70 ft. of frontage on State Street (principal front) tapering to 32.80 ft. at Chatham Street. Upon the lot is a three-unit residential condominium occupying 1,585 s.f. as well as an 892 s.f. detached, three-stall, gabled-roof garage and workroom with a volume of 13,463 cu. ft. (the "Property"). The existing garage is over the Chatham Street lot line at the southeast corner and encroaches on the Winter and Chatham Street secondary front setback. It also is within 1.19' of the side lot line where 10 ft. is required.

Griffin plans to demolish the existing garage and rebuild a new, slightly smaller, 872 s.f. garage entirely on the lot with slightly improved setbacks (the "Project"). The design incorporates an eyebrow gable, which reduces volume to 11,938 cu. ft. Relief is required only because the proposed structure, while smaller in area and volume, does not conform to current setback and building coverage requirements. The new garage is nonetheless consistent with the neighborhood which includes several small lots with nonconforming accessory buildings.

(Exhibit C & D). Applicant's proposal is therefore reasonable and consistent with other properties in the surrounding area.

#### III. RELIEF REQUIRED

Variance Section	Required	Existing	Proposed
PZO §10.335 Reconstruction of Nonconforming Structure	Conform	Garage does not conform to yard requirements or building coverage	Replacement garage with smaller area, less volume as indicated below
PZO §10.571 Accessory Buildings, Structures, and Uses	Not in front yard Not closer than principal building	See below	See below
PZO §10.573.20 Setback for Accessory Structure <sup>1</sup>	5' secondary front	3.68' (Winter St.) 0.23' (Winter St.)	3.69' (Winter St.) 0.51' (Winter St.)
Structure		0.14' (Chatham St.) -0.06' (Chatham St.)	0.14' (Chatham St.) 0.04' (Chatham St.)
	10' side	1.38' 1.19'	1.56° 1.23°
PZO §10.521 Table of Dimensional Standards - Residential and Mixed Residential Districts	35% Building Coverage	61.60%	Slight decrease to 61.10%

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> An accessory structure greater than 10 ft. in height must be set back the height of the structure or the applicable yard requirement, whichever is less.

#### IV. VARIANCE REQUIREMENTS

- 1. The variances will not be contrary to the public interest.
- 2. The spirit of the ordinance is observed.

The first step in the ZBA's analysis is to determine whether granting the variances are not contrary to the public interest and are consistent with the spirit and intent of the ordinance, considered together pursuant to Malachy Glen Associates, Inc. v. Town of Chichester, 155 N.H. 102 (2007) and its progeny. Upon examination, it must be determined whether granting the variances "would unduly and to a marked degree conflict with the ordinance such that it violates the ordinance's basic zoning objectives." Id. "Mere conflict with the zoning ordinance is not enough." Id.

Portsmouth Zoning Ordinance ("PZO") Section 10.121 identifies the general purposes and intent of the ordinance "to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of Portsmouth...in accordance with the...Master Plan" This is accomplished by regulating:

- 1. The use of land, buildings and structures for business, industrial, residential and other purposes The intended use of the property is and will remain residential. The requested relief will allow a slightly smaller garage in the same location as the present garage.
- 2. The intensity of land use, including lot sizes, building coverage, building height and bulk, yards and open space The lot is comparable in size to others in the area and the intensity of use will not change, as a smaller garage is proposed. The proposed garage is smaller in area and volume and will be moved entirely onto the lot. The replacement garage is less non-conforming, as it will reduce building coverage on the lot and create slightly more open space. The decreased volume will also improve access to air and light for abutting owners.
- 3. The design of facilities for vehicular access, circulation, parking and loading The location of the garage will remain nearly the same, ensuring a straight route to the street, eliminating the need for turning radius and additional impervious surfaces.
- 4. The impact on properties on of outdoor lighting, noise, vibration, stormwater runoff and flooding The proposal replaces an existing garage with one smaller in area and volume with slightly improved setbacks and slightly reduced building coverage. There will be no increase in noise or lighting and no change to existing stormwater management. The existing garage incorporates gutters to direct stormwater and the proposed garage will also utilize gutters so there will be no increase in stormwater over existing conditions.
- 5. The preservation and enhancement of the visual environment The replacement of the deteriorating garage with one smaller in volume will improve the visual environment over existing conditions.
- 6. The preservation of historic districts and building and structures of historic architectural interest The Property is not in the Historic Overlay District.

7. The protection of natural resources, including groundwater, surface water, wetlands, wildlife habitat and air quality – Granting the variances will not undermine these purposes of the Ordinance where no wetlands exist near the Project, building coverage does not increase and open space remains compliant at 38.90%.

The intent of the GRC Zone is to "provide areas for single-family, two family and multifamily dwellings, with appropriate accessory uses, at moderate to high densities (ranging from approximately 5 to 12 dwelling units per acre), together with appropriate accessory uses and limited services." PZO §10.410 (emphasis added). The Property, like many in the neighborhood, contains a home and accessory building which do not comply with front and side setbacks. (Exhibit C & D). The proposal meets the intent of the GRC Zone because it allows for reconstruction of the accessory structure with a slight decrease in area and volume, and does not change the intensity of the use. Given these factors, granting the requested variances will not conflict with the basic zoning objectives of the PZO.

In considering whether variances "in a marked degree conflict with the ordinance such that they violate the ordinance's basic zoning objectives," Malachy Glen, supra, also held:

One way to ascertain whether granting the variance would violate basic zoning objectives is to determine whether it would <u>alter the essential character of the locality...</u>. Another approach to [determine] whether granting the variance violates basic zoning objectives is to examine whether granting the variance would threaten the public health, safety or welfare. (emphasis added)

There are numerous other properties in the immediate area that are similarly sized and include an accessory structure encroaching on front, side, or rear setbacks. (Exhibits C & D). The garage will essentially remain in the same location, shifted entirely onto the lot with a lower volume design, thus improving over existing conditions. Given the number of accessory buildings within side or rear setbacks, the proposal is in keeping with the surrounding area. Granting the variances neither alters the essential character of the locality nor threatens the public health, safety, or welfare. Accordingly, granting the variances to allow replacement of an existing garage with a smaller, less non-conforming garage is not contrary to the public interest and observe the spirit of the ordinance.

### 3. Granting the variances will not diminish surrounding property values.

The Project removes a deteriorating garage and replaces it with a new garage containing 1,525 cubic ft. less volume than the existing structure, thus improving the value of the Property

and improving access to air and light for abutting properties. The use of the accessory structure and its impacts will be match existing conditions. Accordingly, the variances will not diminish surrounding property values.

# 4. Denial of the variances results in an unnecessary hardship.

a. Special conditions distinguish the property from others in the area.

The Property contains three condominium units and a garage for unit owners on a very small 4,021 s.f. lot. The lot's tapering shape results in a narrow section where the existing three-car garage is located. The home and garage do not conform to front and/or side yard requirements, yet d4rive the location of a proposed replacement garage. These circumstances combine to create special conditions

b. No fair and substantial relationship exists between the general public purposes of the ordinance and its specific application in this instance.

The purpose of setbacks and nonconforming expansions is to prevent overcrowding and overburdening of land, improve sightlines for pedestrians and motorists, ensure adequate light and air circulation, and provide sufficient area for stormwater treatment. The Project moves the new garage entirely onto the lot, The existing home and garage do not conform to front and/or side yard requirements. the existing landscaped area and avoids the construction of a driveway that would increase impervious surfaces. Reconstructing the garage will not increase or change existing stormwater management. The slightly smaller garage will improve yard setbacks and its lower volume design will improve abutters access to air and light over existing conditions. Accordingly, there is no fair and substantial relationship between the purposes of the ordinance and its application in this instance.

#### c. The proposed use is reasonable.

If the use is permitted, it is deemed reasonable. <u>Vigeant v. Hudson</u>, 151 N.H. 747 (2005). Residential use is permitted in the GRC Zone and includes accessory buildings incidental to the permitted use. The proposed garage is reasonably sized, smaller and less non-conforming than the previous structure, and results in a more functional space.

#### 5. Substantial justice will be done by granting the variances.

If "there is no benefit to the public that would outweigh the hardship to the applicant" this factor is satisfied. <u>Harborside Associates</u>, L.P. v. Parade Residence Hotel, LLC, 162 N.H. 508

(2011). That is, "any loss to the [applicant] that is not outweighed by a gain to the general public is an injustice." Malachy Glen, supra at 109.

Griffin is constitutionally entitled to the use of the lot as he sees fit; including the reconstruction of an existing garage, subject only to its effect of the reconstructed garage on the dimensional requirements. "The right to use and enjoy one's property is a fundamental right protected by both the State and Federal Constitutions." N.H. CONST. pt. I, arts. 2, 12; U.S. CONST. amends. V, XIV; Town of Chesterfield v. Brooks, 126 N.H. 64 (1985) at 68. Part I, Article 12 of the New Hampshire Constitution provides in part that "no part of a man's property shall be taken from him, or applied to public uses, without his own consent, or that of the representative body of the people." Thus, our State Constitutional protections limit the police power of the State and its municipalities in their regulation of the use of property. L. Grossman & Sons, Inc. v. Town of Gilford, 118 N.H. 480, 482 (1978). "Property" in the constitutional sense has been interpreted to mean not the tangible property itself, but rather the right to possess, use, enjoy and dispose of it. Burrows v. City of Keene, 121 N.H. 590, 597 (1981) (emphasis added).

The requested variances allow for a smaller, less non-conforming garage to be constructed than exists today. The Project retains the same use while slightly improving upon existing setbacks and building coverage, so there is no harm to the public in granting the variances. Conversely, Griffin will be greatly harmed by denial of any of the variances because he will be unable to have a more functional garage. Without question, substantial justice will be done by granting the variances.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

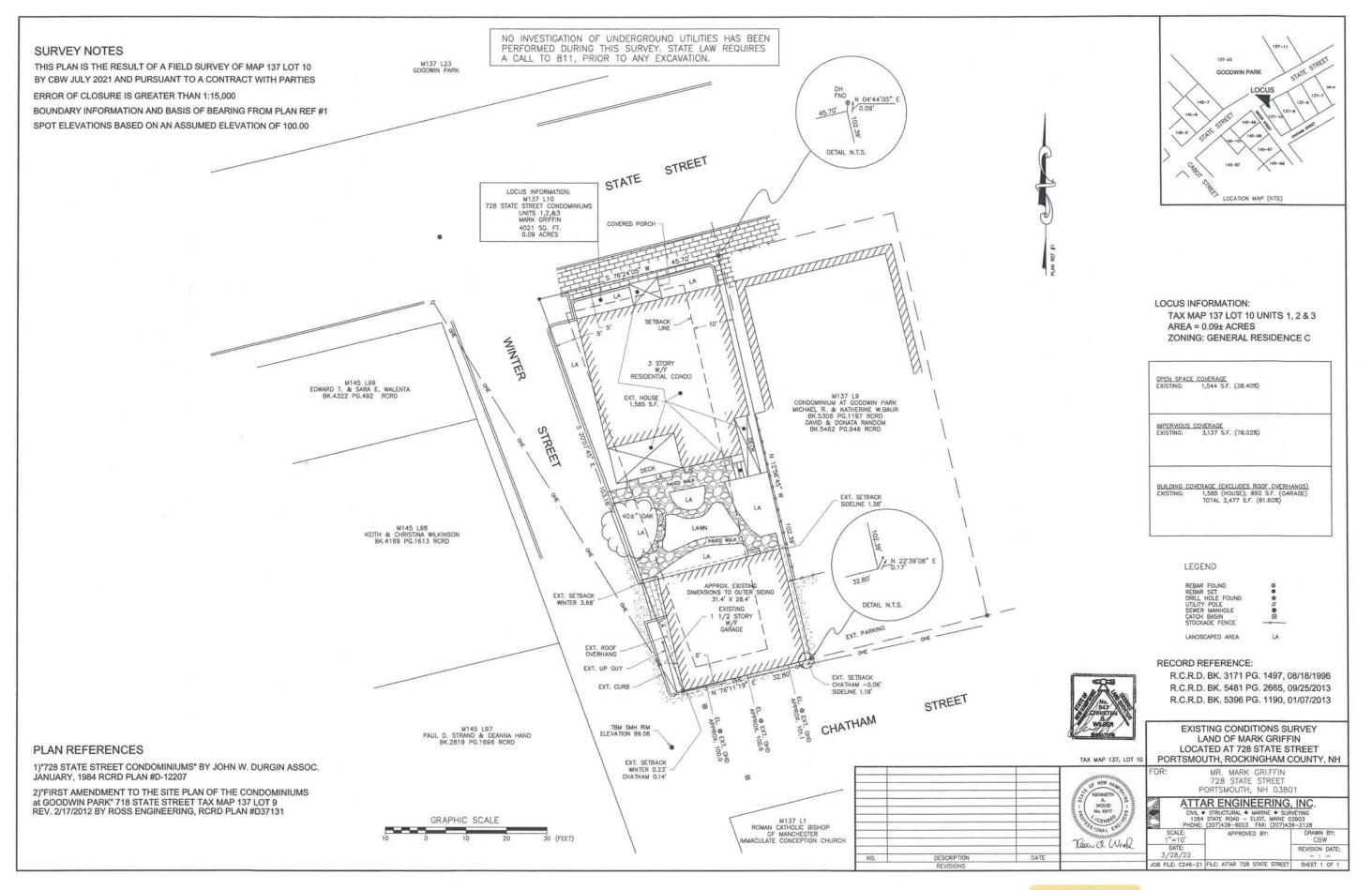
For all of the reasons stated, Mark Griffin respectfully requests that the Portsmouth Zoning Board of Adjustment grant the requested variances.

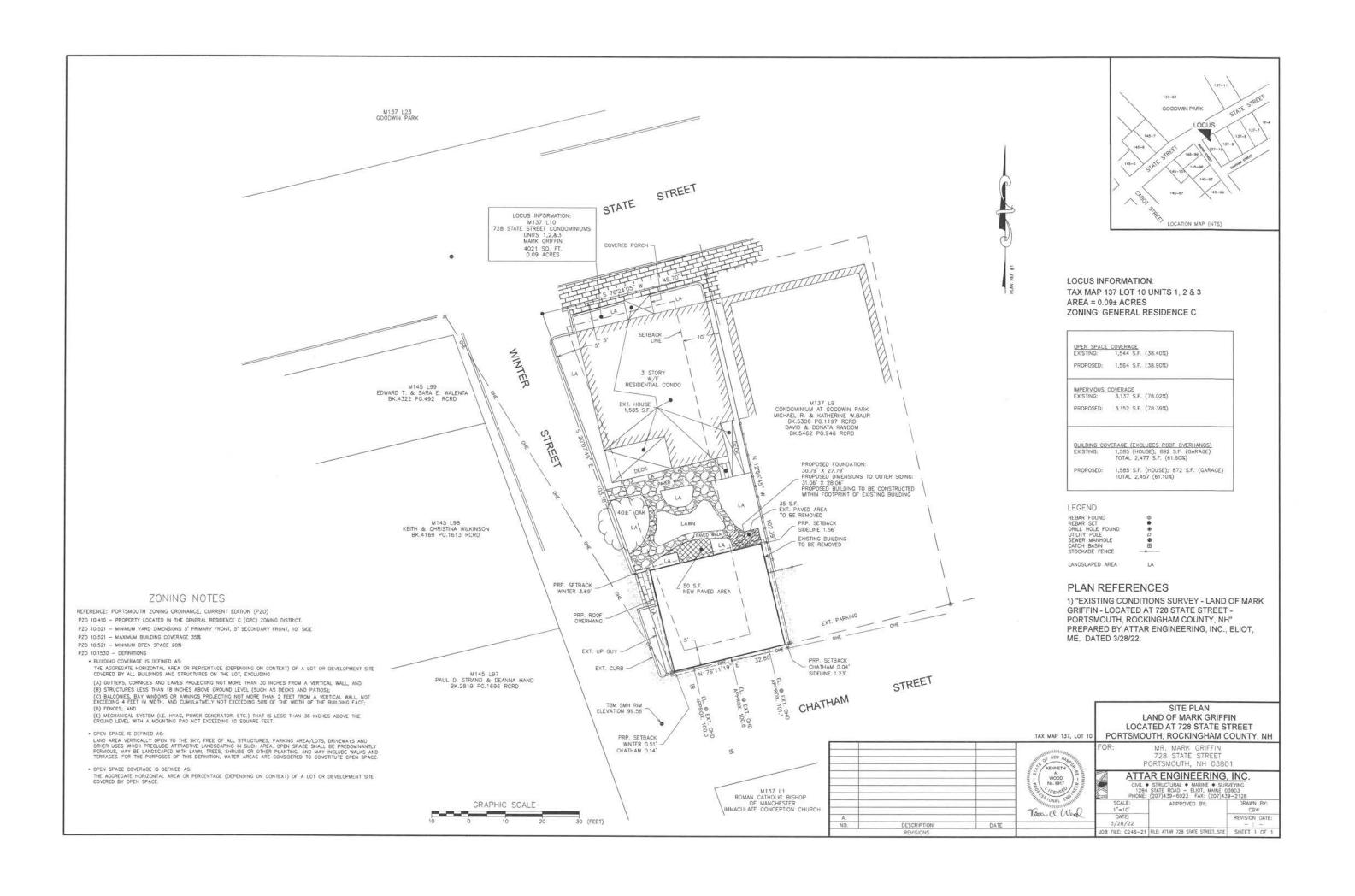
Respectfully submitted,

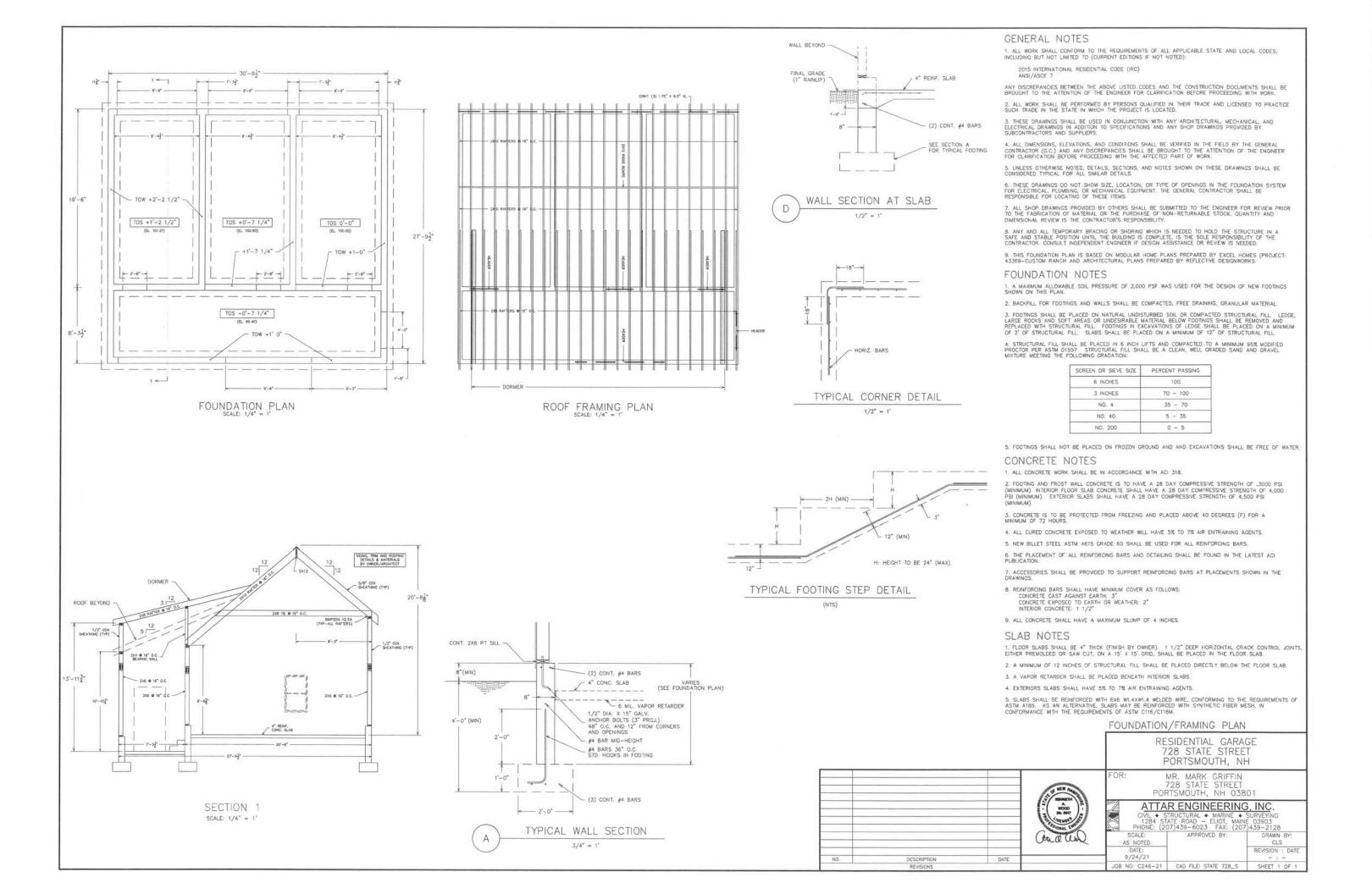
Mark Griffin

R. Timothy Phoenix

Stephanie J. Johnson





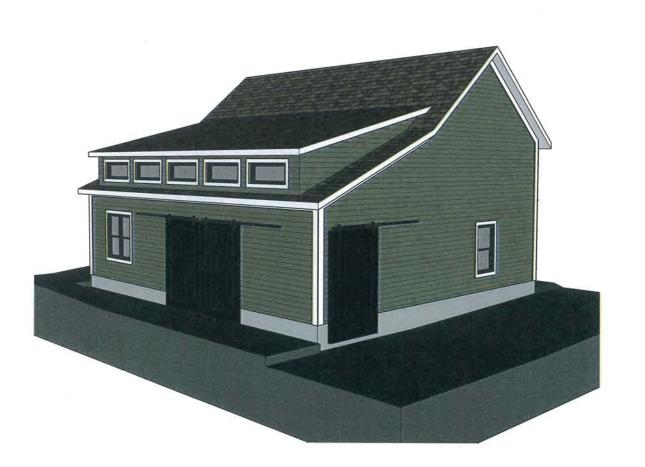


Perspective

By: Chris Kiper 21 OCT 2021











View from main house on State Street



**View from Chatham Street** 





**View from Winter Street** 



**View from Chatham Street** 

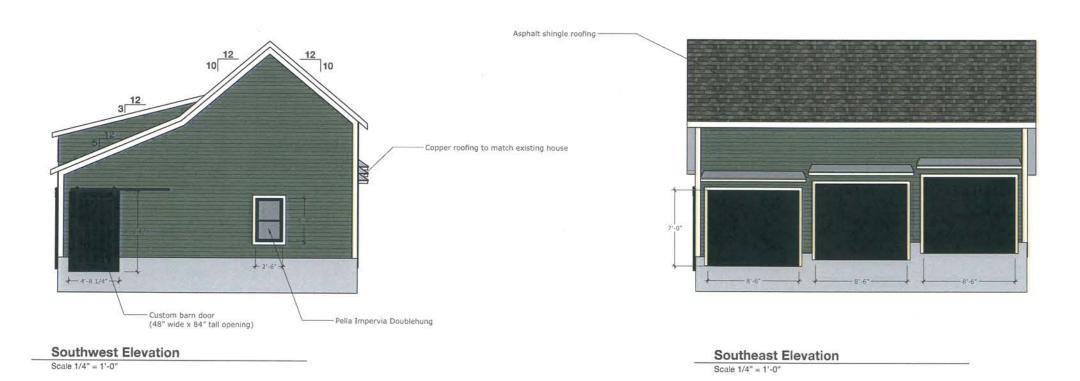
Elevation

By: Chris Kiper

21 OCT 2021

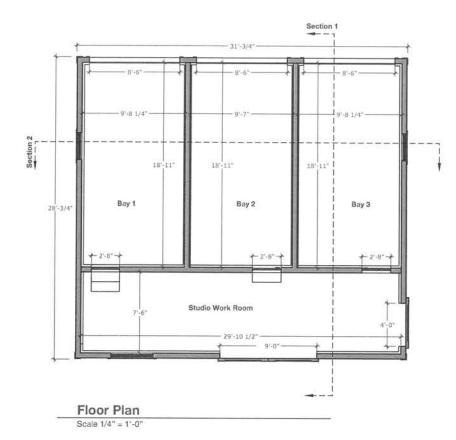
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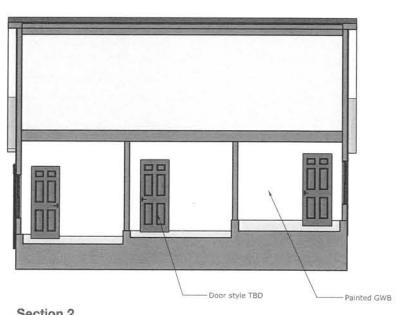


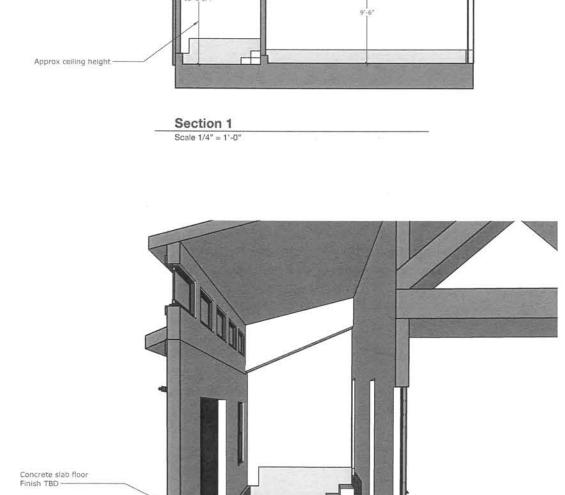


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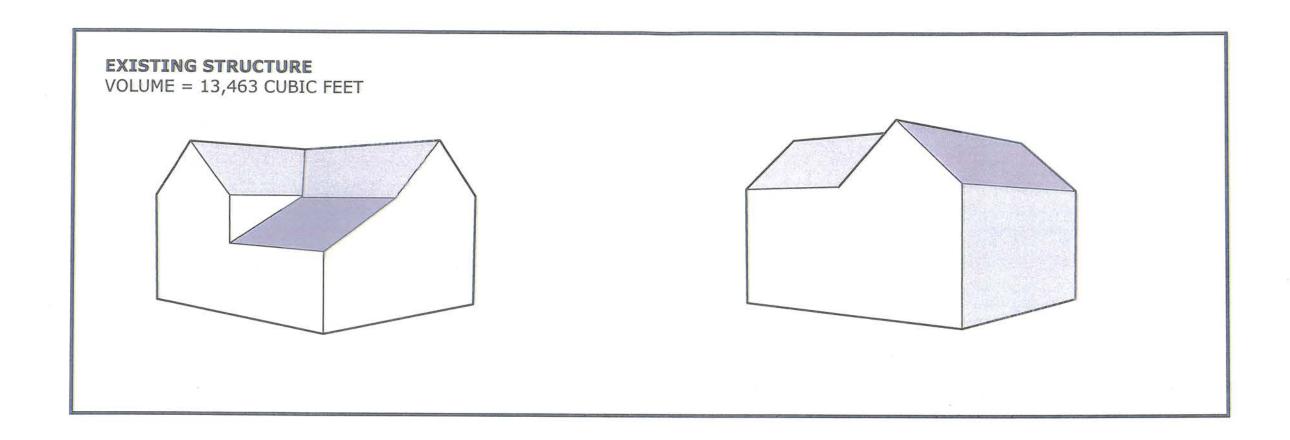


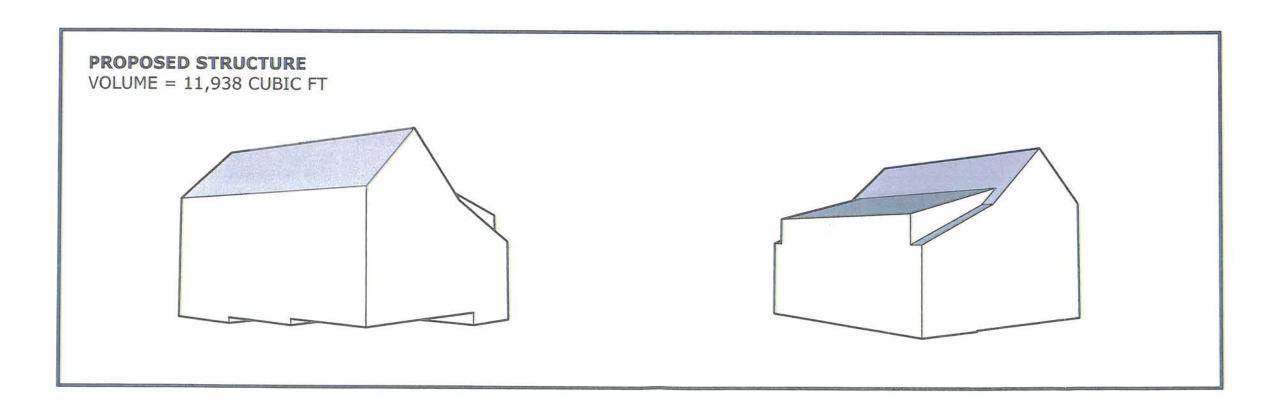
Framing described in structural plans —

Painted GWB-

Interior Perspective "Studio/Work Room"

# 728 STATE STREET VOLUME STUDY





Google Maps 728 State Street



Imagery ©2022 Maine GeoLibrary, Maxar Technologies, U.S. Geological Survey, USDA Farm Service Agency, Map data ©2022 50 ft





Portsmouth, New Hampshire



Image capture: Oct 2008

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Google Maps 62 Winter St



Image capture: Oct 2008 © 2022 Google

Google Maps 40 Winter St



Image capture: Sep 2017 © 2022 Google



9 Chatham St



Image capture: Sep 2017

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