

**CITY OF LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN
CITY PLAN COMMISSION
REPORT
October 2, 2017**

➤ **AGENDA ITEM – 17-1236 (Tim Acklin)**

Request for Exception to Standards for Commercial Design by James Wille dba CRDN for an exception to parking lot design and standards and building facade standards with construction of new facility at 722 Rose St.

➤ **ROUTING:** J&A, Public Hearing 10/3/17 6:00 p.m.

➤ **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The applicant (CRDN) is requesting two waivers from the Commercial Design Standards for the proposed development located on the parcel depicted on attached **MAP PC17-1236**. During the design review process it was determined that the applicant needed the following waivers:

- 1) *No parking stall may be closer to the street than the building setback line or the building on the same parcel, whichever is further from the street unless the applicant can demonstrate that there are no practical alternatives related specifically to the site.*
- 2) *The first floor facade shall include windows to provide visual interest and visual connection to the street. The total area of windows and doors on the street-facing facade, including trim, shall not be less than 20 percent of the total area of the facade, excluding gables.*

Both waivers pertain to its proximity to Hagar Street and that the parcel fronts two streets. (Rose and Hagar Streets)

First, the applicant is proposing to locate a 6-car parking lot between the building and Hagar Street. The applicant states that due to the preferred internal layout and function of the building they would not be able to locate the employee parking and an ADA employee entrance, a large semi-truck dock, and two smaller trucking docks on only two facades. Also the applicant states that they are proposing to site the building 57ft away from the property line at Hagar St, more than the width of a typical City lot and, due to this distance away from the lot line, this standard should not apply.

Second, the applicant does want to install windows along the façade that faces Hagar Street due to the internal function and layout of the building. The interior wall of the Hagar Street façade will be used for racking and windows would be more apt to get damaged if they were installed. Additionally the applicant also states that due to the distance the building is from the lot line at Hagar Street this standard should not apply.

The applicant (CRDN) specializes in cleaning fire and flood damaged textiles and goods and is proposing to construct a new building on this site. Plans for the proposed building and site layout are attached as part of the legislation.

➤ **GENERAL LOCATION:**

722 Rose Street. (Northeast corner of Rose and Hagar Streets)

➤ **RECOMMENDATION OF OTHER BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:**

The Common Council approved the rezoning of 613 Hagar Street, to combine with 722 Rose Street, for this development at their July 2017 meeting.

The Design Review Committee reviewed final plans for this development at their September 1, 2017 meeting.

➤ **CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:**

The site is shown as high intensity retail, office or housing. While this development proposal is proposing office space associated with the cleaning facilities, the predominant use is for cleaning. The zoning request is a consistent with the recommendation of the Comprehensive Plan, however, the proposed use is not predominantly retail, office or residential. Additionally, staff research on like facilities around the State, show industrial settings as the predominant land use pattern for this type of use. The Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan regarding Neighborhood Stabilization recommends adherence with site and building design guidelines as established in the Urban Design plan element in order to avoid inappropriate land uses and encourage private reinvestment, rehabilitation and maintenance of existing neighborhoods and neighborhood activity centers to ensure that established neighborhoods remain vital, attractive places to live and work.

Recommendations from the draft Hwy 53 Corridor Master Plan depict this area as an important node of neighborhood business/commercial activity in the corridor due to its close proximity to Copeland Park and Logger Field and that future development should foster pedestrian activities like retail, restaurants, etc. The proposed development does not meet this desire as there will be no retail space.

➤ **PLANNING RECOMMENDATION:**

The Commercial Design Standards were established to improve the appearance, quality and function of commercial structures in the City of La Crosse. While they are used to ensure that new construction is held to a higher standard of design and materials they can also be used to preserve and protect existing buildings, to protect existing character of an area, to foster future development and investment, and help dictate the type of activity that occurs in an area.

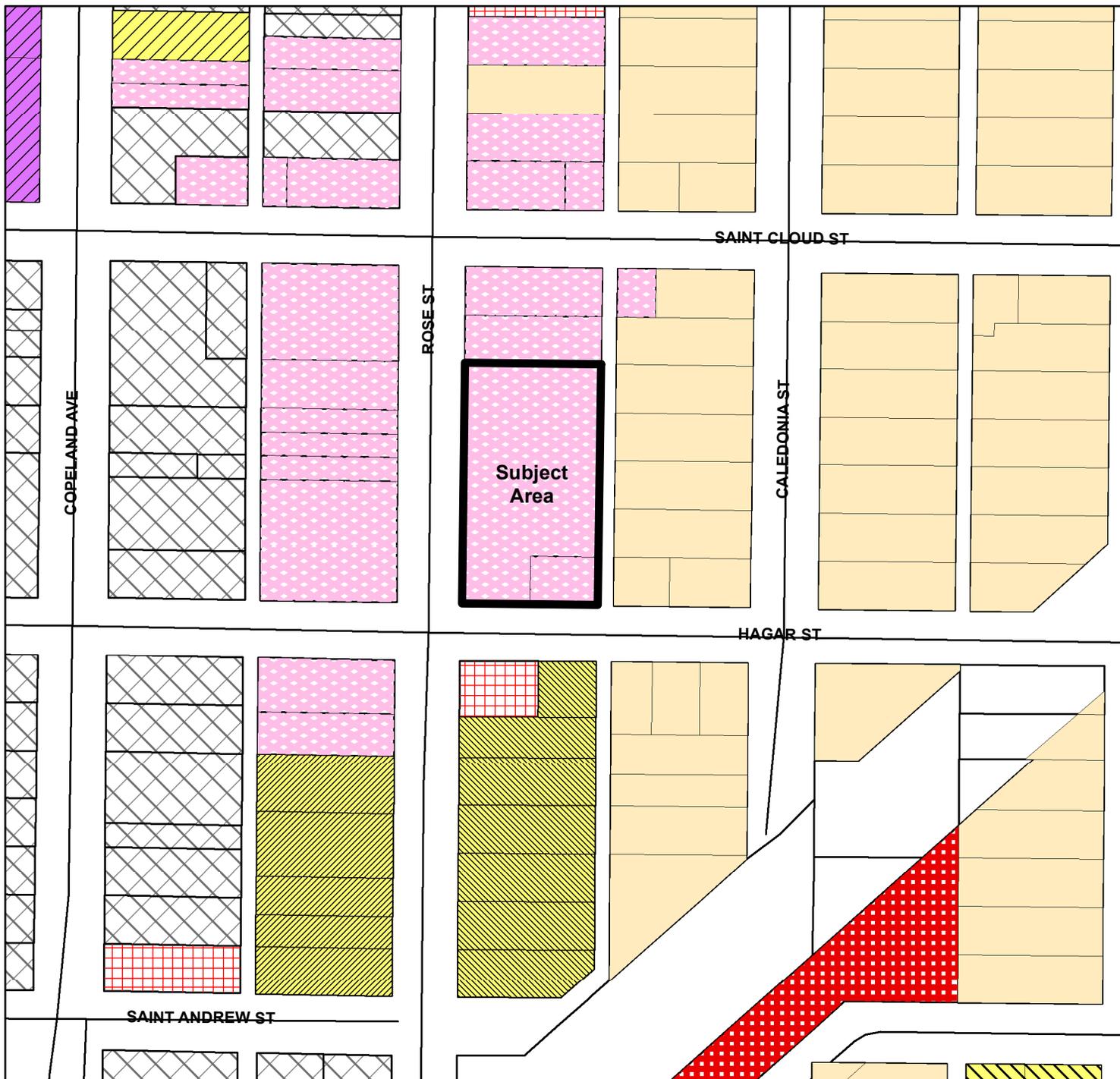
Elements of the proposed site and building design of this project are not in keeping with the existing character of the area nor with future development that was identified through the Hwy 53 Corridor Master Plan process. Due to the existing number of existing commercial buildings in this area, the recent investment by some building owners across Rose Street, the recent purchase and planned rehab and reuse of the former Buzz's Bikes and Masonic Temple Building, and its close proximity to Copeland Park and Logger's Field have , this commercial node is prime for a commercial revitalization much the way 2nd Street N is with the Charmant, Hampton Inn & Suites, the renovation of the former Plow Building, and the new La Crosse Distillery. This would include heavy emphasis on pedestrian interaction with buildings and connections from the street to the businesses through site placement, the use of storefronts, and architectural details of the building.

This project has the opportunity to set the tone for future growth in the this area, particularly because it is also on a corner lot. A corner lot offers a building visual prominence, visibility and access from two streets. The sides of corner lot buildings can be an important part of commercial nodes. A corner lot building has the potential to maintain the continuity and uniformity of the street appearance on two streets. In this way, it could serve as a street edge or would provide a physical anchor to a series of buildings, or create a gateway to a commercial district. Along with these potential qualities for buildings on corner lots comes the design responsibility to address both streets accordingly.

First, staff does not agree that, by moving the building 57 feet away from the lot line these standards should not apply. Placing the building in this manner just adds to the dis-connectivity to, and from, the street.

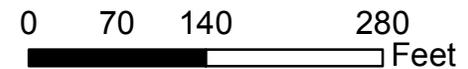
Second, staff does not feel that the existing site contains any hardships that would prohibit the owner's ability to reconfigure the layout of the parking and the building, nor the interior layout of the building to include windows. There have also been some commercial developments that have "windows" on the outside of the building for aesthetic purposes but are walls internally. Festival Foods on Losey Blvd is a good example.

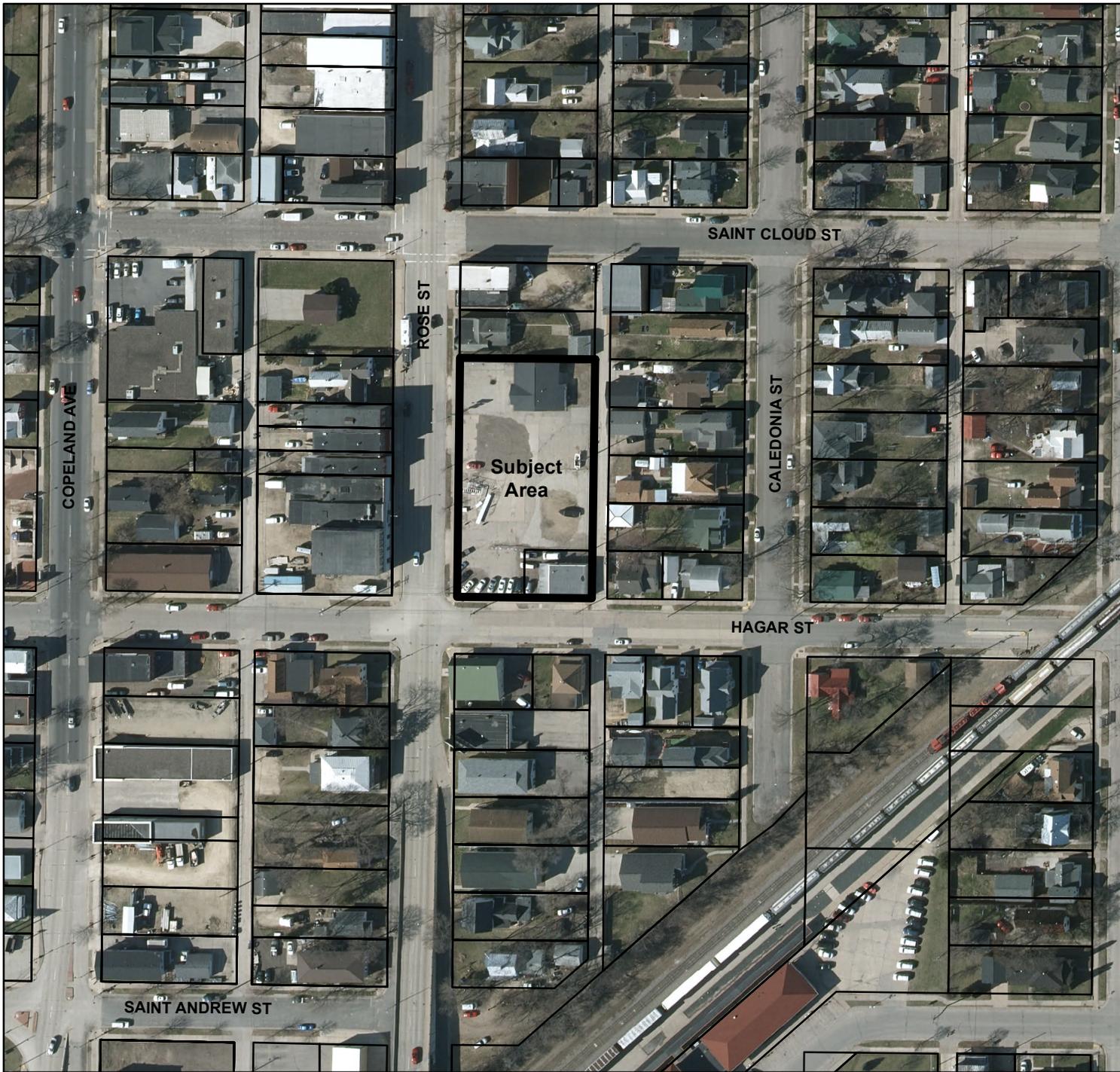
Staff is fully aware that business is not a retail business and the building is designed to fit their needs. This business is actually more industrial in nature and is usually found in industrial parks in other communities. Staff is requesting that the owner understands where they are proposing to construct their building and provide a context sensitive design. One that can be easily converted for future use as a retail or commercial space in the future if needed. **This request is recommended for denial.**



BASIC ZONING DISTRICTS

-  R1 - SINGLE FAMILY
-  R2 - RESIDENCE
-  WR - WASHBURN RES
-  R3 - SPECIAL RESIDENCE
-  R4 - LOW DENSITY MULTI
-  R5 - MULTIPLE DWELLING
-  R6 - SPECIAL MULTIPLE
-  PD - PLANNED DEVELOP
-  TND - TRAD NEIGH DEV.
-  C1 - LOCAL BUSINESS
-  C2 - COMMERCIAL
-  C3 - COMMUNITY BUSINESS
-  M1 - LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
-  M2 - HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
-  PS - PUBLIC & SEMI-PUBLIC
-  PL - PARKING LOT
-  UT - PUBLIC UTILITY
-  CON - CONSERVANCY
-  FW - FLOODWAY
-  A1 - AGRICULTURAL
-  EA - EXCLUSIVE AG
-  City Limits
-  SUBJECT PROPERTY





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