

GENERAL INFORMATION

Applicant: City of Bloomington

Location: 9721 James Avenue South

Request: 1) Final Site and Building Plans for an approximately 19,280 square-foot salt storage building and approximately 6,050 square-foot brine building; and
2) Variance to reduce the required structure setback from 30 feet to 25 feet along Irving Avenue South.

Existing Land Use and Zoning: Vacant warehouse; zoned General Industrial (I-3)

Surrounding Land Use and Zoning: North – Industrial office/warehouse w/exterior storage; zoned I-3
East and South – Industrial office/warehouse; zoned I-3
West – Industrial office/warehouse and Public Works facility; zoned I-2

Comprehensive Plan Designation: Industrial

CHRONOLOGY

Planning Commission	02/19/2026	Public hearing held, recommended approval (Vote: 4-0)
City Council	03/02/2026	Review scheduled (Consent Business)

DEADLINE FOR AGENCY ACTION

Application Date:	01/14/2026
60 Days:	03/15/2026
120 Days:	05/14/2026
Applicable Deadline:	03/15/2026

STAFF CONTACT

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PROPOSAL

The project consists of new 6,048 square-foot brine building and 19,280 square-foot salt storage building located at 9721 James Avenue South, replacing the facility located at 1800 West 96th Street. The existing building currently on the site has been purchased by the City and is scheduled to be removed in the near future. The site will consist of both the salt and brine buildings, an exterior wash down area, stormwater retention pond, sidewalk along James Avenue South and landscaping.

Building setbacks along Irving Avenue South are proposed to be 25 feet. City Code requires a minimum of 30 feet, so a variance has been requested to reduce the eastern building setback due to issues related to site access and grade.

ANALYSIS

Land Use

The subject property is zoned I-3, General Industrial. Salt shed and brine buildings, which would become an extension of the City of Bloomington's Public Works campus, are considered a government facility, limited and are permitted within the I-3 zoning district. The subject property is guided Industrial in the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed use is consistent with both the Future Land Use Designation in the Comp Plan and the underlying zoning of the property.

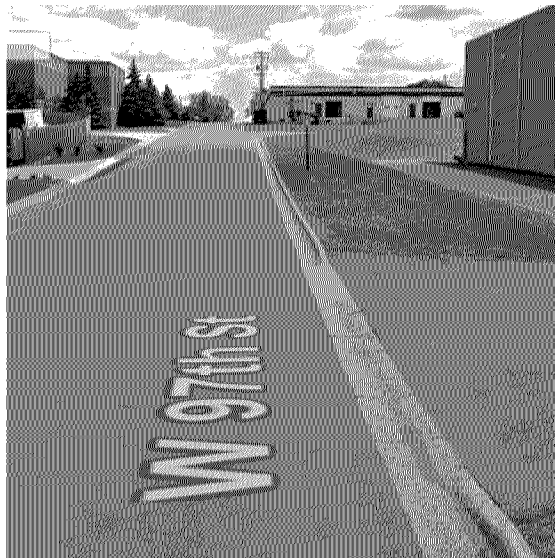
Setback Variance

The requested setback variance (five-foot reduction) is based on a practical difficulty in meeting the required 30-foot setback from Irving Avenue South. The elevation between James Avenue South and Irving Avenue South along West 97th Street increases substantially (approximately ten feet – see Figures 1 and 2 below). The salt storage building is proposed to have driveway access into the facility from West 97th Street. The further east the building and access drive/door can be located, the less steep the driveway would be. Full compliance with the setback would result in an approximately 8 percent driveway grade along W. 97th Street, which would create unsafe and impractical access conditions for large trucks and front-end loaders, especially during winter operations. With the proposed 25-foot setback, the driveway grade would be reduced to 6.8 percent, which is safer for Public Works operations and general traffic safety along West 97th Street. It should be noted that the existing building currently has a 25-foot setback to the eastern line.

Figure 1 – Existing Elevations Along West 97th Street



Figure 2 – Grade Along West 97th Street



Looking East and NW Site Corner



Looking West at NE Site Corner

In addition, the building’s finished floor elevation must be elevated to comply with the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District 100-year flood model. This flood protection requirement applies regardless of where the buildings are located on the site. However, locating the buildings farther east, closer to Irving Avenue South, allows the driveway grade to be reduced due to the higher elevation of West 97th Street in that area. The proposed buildings are anticipated to have a finished floor elevation approximately two feet above the 100-year flood elevation of 812 feet.

Code Compliance

The proposed development complies with most Code requirements. Table 1 provides a Code analysis of items that meet or exceed City Code. Table 2 identifies the required variance.

Table 1: City Code Analysis – Regulations in compliance

Standard	Code Required	Provided
Site area (min.) (Sec. 21.301.01)	NA	92,512 square feet
Minimum site width (Sec. 21.301.01)	100 feet	258 feet
Impervious surface coverage (max.) (Sec. 21.301.01)	NA	55.5 percent
Floor area ratio (Sec. 21.301.01)	1.0 Maximum	0.27
Building size (min.) (Sec. 21.301.01)	3,000 square feet	6,048 and 19,280 square feet
Building height (max.) (Sec. 21.301.10)	No limit	Brine Building – 32’-0” Salt Shed – 69’-0”
Landscaping (min.) (Sec. 21.301.15)	37 Trees 93 Shrubs	37 Trees 94 Shrubs

Table 2: City Code Analysis – Regulations requiring amendments or flexibility

Standard	Code Required	Provided
Structure setbacks (min.) (Sec. 21.301.02)	30 feet (front)	25 feet (front) (Variance requested)

Site and Building Design

The proposed site encompasses 92,512 square feet and includes two access points – one from James Avenue South and one from W. 97th Street. The proposed structures are located in the northern and eastern portions of the site, with vehicle circulation in the central portion. A stormwater management facility is proposed in the western portion of the site along James Avenue south, taking advantage of the natural grade of the site.

The applicant is also requesting City Council approval for a deferral from the sidewalk requirements set forth in Section 21.301.04 of the City Code, which requires new development to provide both public and private sidewalks. Only the City Council has the authority to defer construction of public sidewalks for nonresidential development according to Sec. 21.301.04(b)(1)(C).

The applicant seeks relief from this requirement due to difficulties and impracticalities associated with sidewalk construction. Along the Irving Avenue South and W. 97th Street frontages, sidewalk would not serve a functional purpose given there are no existing sidewalks on these industrial blocks. Adding sidewalks along Irving Avenue South or W. 97th Street would not connect to any existing sidewalk. Further, there are substantial grade changes along both street frontages and constructing a sidewalk would be particularly challenging. Staff is supportive of a deferral from public sidewalk requirements along Irving Avenue South and W. 97th Street, as the required conditions to allow for deferment are present in staff's judgment. Deferment of sidewalk construction along West 97th Street and Irving Avenue South elevated the approval process to the City Council. A Code compliant sidewalk along James Avenue South is proposed, as well as private sidewalk connections between the buildings and the street.

Brine Building

The new brine building would be constructed with a cast-in-place concrete wall structure and pre-finished exterior metal panels as the exterior façade. The roof structure will be a mono sloping (shed) roof utilizing metal bar joists, metal decking, and a pre-finished standing seam roof panel. The building is a one-storied sprinklered building with a brine room, mechanical spaces, accessible toilet room and vehicle wash down area.

Salt Building

The new salt storage building consists of a cast-in-place concrete foundation system with a weaved PVC fiber exterior for the walls and roof that are attached to a galvanized steel structural support system. The salt storage building is a one-story, unheated and un-sprinklered building with the sole purpose of holding and covering the salt needed for the City of Bloomington during the winter months. The City's exterior materials standards have an exception for buildings erected by government agencies for the purpose of storing chemical road materials (see Sec. 21.301.24(i)), as these materials do damage on exterior buildings over time.

Access, Circulation, and Parking

Site access will be provided from James Avenue South (minor collector road) and West 97th Street (local road). No off-street parking will be provided on the site.

There are no established parking requirements for this type of government facility. No off-street parking is proposed on site given use of the facility will be transient in nature with no staff permanently stationed on the site. Parking demand will be accommodated on the adjacent Public Works campus property. This approach to off-street parking is consistent with the existing facility

located at 1800 West 96th Street when it was developed. Staff is confident there is adequate off-street parking supply at the Public Works facility campus.

Landscaping, Screening and Lighting

Based on the site's developable landscaping area of 92,512 square feet, the Code requires 37 trees and 93 shrubs. The applicant has provided a compliant number of trees and shrubs per code requirements. There are no adjustments to the landscape plan that are recommended.

Only rain gardens (as defined in 21.601) are allowed to encroach into front landscape yards (first 20 feet along streets). The recommendation to include a rain garden feature as part of the infiltration basin and flood storage feature is recommended to ensure compliance with landscape yard requirements.

The proposed light fixtures are in compliance with the standards in Section 21.301.07 Exterior Lighting.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater must be managed to meet the City's and Watershed District's requirements for stormwater rate control (quantity), stormwater quality and volume.

The Stormwater Management plan calculations and narrative have been reviewed and appear to meet the requirements in the City of Bloomington Comprehensive Surface Water Management Plan. A maintenance plan has not yet been provided and will be required to be signed and filed at Hennepin County. This site is located within the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, so an additional permit will be required.

Utilities

The subject property is served by City sanitary sewer and water service. The City Engineer must approve utility plans prior to issuing grading or other building permits. Sanitary sewer service to the site is proposed to be provided via a 42" City sanitary sewer main located within James Avenue South. Based on the applicant's estimated peak hour wastewater flows, there is sufficient City sanitary sewer network capacity to handle the estimated flows from the proposed development.

A looped watermain will be required. The site is served by a 12" City watermain located within James Avenue South. A combined domestic/fire service connection to the brine building will be required. Finally, the proposed buildings must have adequate fire hydrant coverage.

Traffic Analysis

No significant impacts to the adjacent traffic patterns due to this building addition have been identified. The proposed industrial use and associated traffic is consistent with the neighborhood.

Fire Prevention and Public Safety

Emergency vehicle access and circulation design must meet or exceed the minimum standards of the Fire Code. Ensure that proposed landscaping doesn't interfere with access to the building and egress components.

The brine structure shall be fully sprinklered supplied by a looped water supply with a single combination domestic/fire main. Hydrant coverage shall be provided within 50 feet of the fire department connection and within 150 feet of all exterior walls of the structure. Hydrant locations, style etc. will be reviewed by the Utilities Division and Fire Prevention Division. The property and building addresses and numbers must be clearly visible from the street and entry point into the property. A lock box (Knox or DAMA) is required for the property. The location will be approved by the Fire Department and Fire Prevention Division.

Any changes made to the current plans, including building location, access road, water supply and addressing, shall be reviewed by the Fire Marshal to ensure continued compliance with the Fire Code.

Status of Enforcement Orders

The property lot is not subject to any enforcement orders.

OUTREACH

Outreach/Notification

- Mailed Notice (10-day notice – 500-foot buffer)
- Newspaper Notice (10-day notice – 02/05/26 Sun Current)
- Public Hearing Notice Online
- E-Subscribe Group Notification
- Inclusion on Development Map
- Signs on Site

PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW

The Planning Commission held a public hearing for the subject applications at their regular meeting on February 19, 2026. No one spoke during the hearing. Following brief discussion, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the Variance and Final site and Building Plan applications (Vote: 4-0). The full details of the discussion are found in the attached meeting minutes.

FINDINGS

Required Variance Findings - Section 21.501.10(g)(1)(A-F)

Zoning variances may only be approved when:

Required Finding	Finding Outcome/Discussion
(A) ... The variance is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance.	Finding Made – A 25-foot setback along a lower-volume street in an industrial area does not present and nuisance characteristics or conflicts with City Code. The proposed variance would improve operational and traffic safety in the area. The variance, reducing the front setback from 30 feet to 25 feet, is found to be in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance.
(B) ... The variance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.	Finding Made - The subject property is guided Industrial, which is consistent with the proposed industrial use. The proposed development is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
(C) ... The applicant for the variance establishes that there are practical difficulties in complying with the zoning ordinance. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties	Finding Made - The practical difficulties are created by elevation changes of the roadway serving the salt storage building, resulting in a driveway grade that presents operation and traffic safety challenges along West 97 th Street. In addition, practical difficulties are present in complying with the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District’s 100-year flood model, necessitating that the site grade be elevated. The applicant has established that there are practical difficulties in complying with the zoning ordinance.
(D) ... The property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the zoning ordinance.	Finding Made – The property owner, the City of Bloomington, proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner that is not permitted by the zoning ordinance. Reducing the structure setback 5 feet along Irving Avenue South is a minor setback reduction considering the site constraints and opportunities to improve operations and traffic safety for site ingress.
(E) ... The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.	Finding Made – The plight of the landowner is found to be due to the circumstances unique to the property and not created by the landowner. Site and roadway elevations necessitate elevating the development site and shifting the building slightly to the east to improve operations and traffic safety along West 97 th Street.
(F) ... The variance if granted will not alter the essential character of the locality.	Finding Made – The subject property, if the variance is granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality. The character would remain industrial in nature and consistent with the present conditions of the area.

Required Final Site and Building Plan Findings - Section 21.501.01(d)(1-4):

Required Finding	Finding Outcome/Discussion
(1) The proposed development is not in conflict with the Comprehensive Plan.	Finding Made – The subject property is guided Industrial, which is consistent with the proposed public works uses. The proposed development, a salt shed and brine storage building, is not in conflict with Comprehensive Plan.
(2) The proposed development is not in conflict with any adopted district plan for the area.	Finding Made – The site is not located in an area with an adopted District Plan.
(3) The proposed development is not in conflict with city code provisions.	Finding Made – Subject to compliance with the conditions of approval and approval of the proposed setback variance, the development is not in conflict with City Code provisions or state law.
(4) The proposed development will not be injurious to the surrounding neighborhood or otherwise harm the public health, safety and welfare.	Finding Made – The proposed development is consistent with the industrial area and would be operated in a similar manner to adjacent properties. There is adequate roadway and utility capacity for the project. Assuming compliance with conditions of approval, the proposed development is not anticipated to be injurious to the surrounding neighborhood or otherwise harm the public health, safety, and welfare.

RECOMMENDATION

If removed from the Consent Business agenda, Planning Commission and staff recommend approval through the following motions:

Motion made by _____, seconded by _____, I move to adopt a resolution approving a variance to reduce the required eastern structure setback from 30 feet to 25 feet for the salt storage and brine buildings located at 9721 James Avenue South, subject to the conditions and Code requirements listed in the resolution.

Motion made by _____, seconded by _____, I move to approve Final Site and Building Plans for an approximately 19,280 square-foot salt storage building and approximately 6,050 square-foot brine building located at 9721 James Avenue South, subject to the conditions and Code requirements attached to the staff report.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

Case PL202600002

Project Description: Final Site and Building Plans for an approximately 19,280 square-foot salt storage building and approximately 6,050 square-foot brine building located at 9721 James Avenue South, and a variance to reduce the required eastern structure setback from 30 feet to 25 feet.

Address: 9721 James Avenue South

The following conditions of approval are arranged according to when they must be satisfied. In addition to conditions of approval, the use and improvements must also comply with all applicable local, state, and federal codes. Codes to which the applicant should pay particular attention are included below.

1. Prior to Permit A building permit for all required changes to accommodate the proposed use be obtained.
2. Prior to Permit Sewer Availability Charges (SAC) must be satisfied.
3. Prior to Permit Access, circulation, sidewalk and parking plans must be approved by the City Engineer.
4. Prior to Permit Grading, Drainage, Utility and Erosion Control plans must be approved by the City Engineer.
5. Prior to Permit Utility plan showing location of existing and proposed water main and fire hydrant locations must be approved by the Fire Marshal and Utilities Engineer (see § 6.20, Minnesota State Fire Code Sec. 508).
6. Prior to Permit A Nine Mile Creek Watershed District permit must be obtained and a copy submitted to the Engineering Division.
7. Prior to Permit Storm Water Management Plan must be provided that demonstrates compliance with the City's Comprehensive Surface Water Management Plan. A maintenance plan must be signed by the property owners and must be filed of record with Hennepin County.
8. Prior to Permit A National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) construction site permit and a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) must be provided if greater than one acre is disturbed (State of MN and Federal regulation).
10. Prior to Permit Exterior building materials must be approved by the Planning Manager (see § 21.301.24).
11. Prior to Permit Building must be provided with an automatic fire sprinkler system as approved by the Fire Marshal (see MN Bldg. Code Sec. 903, MN Rules Chapter 1306, and MN State Fire Code Sec. 903).
12. Prior to Permit Parking lot and site security lighting plans must satisfy the minimum requirements (see § 21.301.07).
13. Prior to Permit Landscape plan must be approved by the Planning Manager (see § 21.301.15).
14. Prior to C/O Prior to occupancy, life safety requirements must be reviewed and approved by the Fire Marshal.
15. Prior to C/O The developer must submit electronic utility as-builts to the Public Works Department prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy.

16. Ongoing The development is limited to as shown on the approved plans in Case File #PL202600002.
17. Ongoing All pickup and drop-off must occur on site and off public streets.