

# City Planning Department



## Memo

To: Cranston City Plan Commission  
From: Joshua Berry, AICP - Senior Planner / Administrative Officer  
Date: January 28, 2020  
Re: **Dimensional Variance @ 0 Laurel Hill Ave**

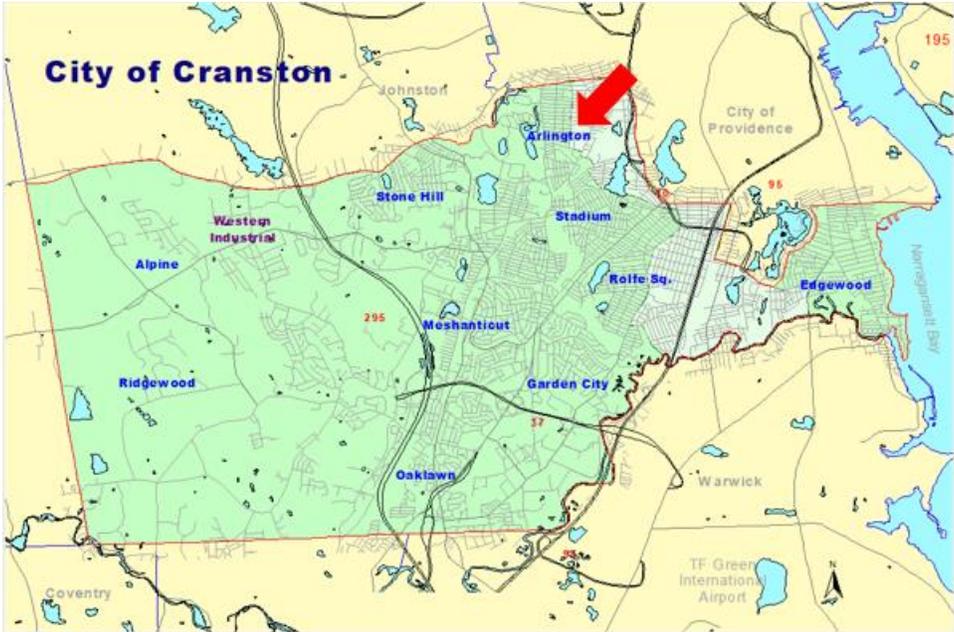
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**Owners:** Linda B. Marchetti; Trustee of Linda B. Marchetti Revocable  
**Applicant:** Brian Coutcher  
**Location:** 0 Laurel Hill Avenue; AP 7, Lot 1052  
**Zone:** B-1 (Single-family and two-family dwellings)  
**FLU:** Single/Two Family Residential Less than 10.89 units per acre

### DIMENSIONAL VARIANCE REQUESTS:

1. To construct a single-family dwelling on a lot with 5,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of area where 6,000 ft<sup>2</sup> is required. [Section 17.20.120 – Schedule of Intensity]
2. To construct a single-family dwelling on a lot with 50' of frontage while 60' is required. [Section 17.20.120 – Schedule of Intensity]

### LOCATION MAP



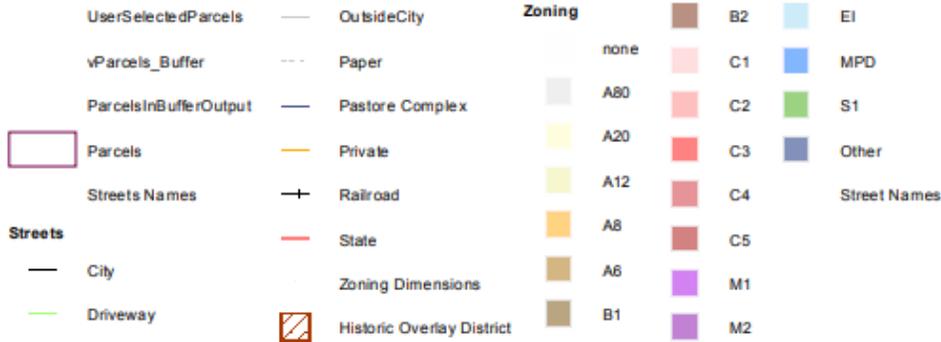
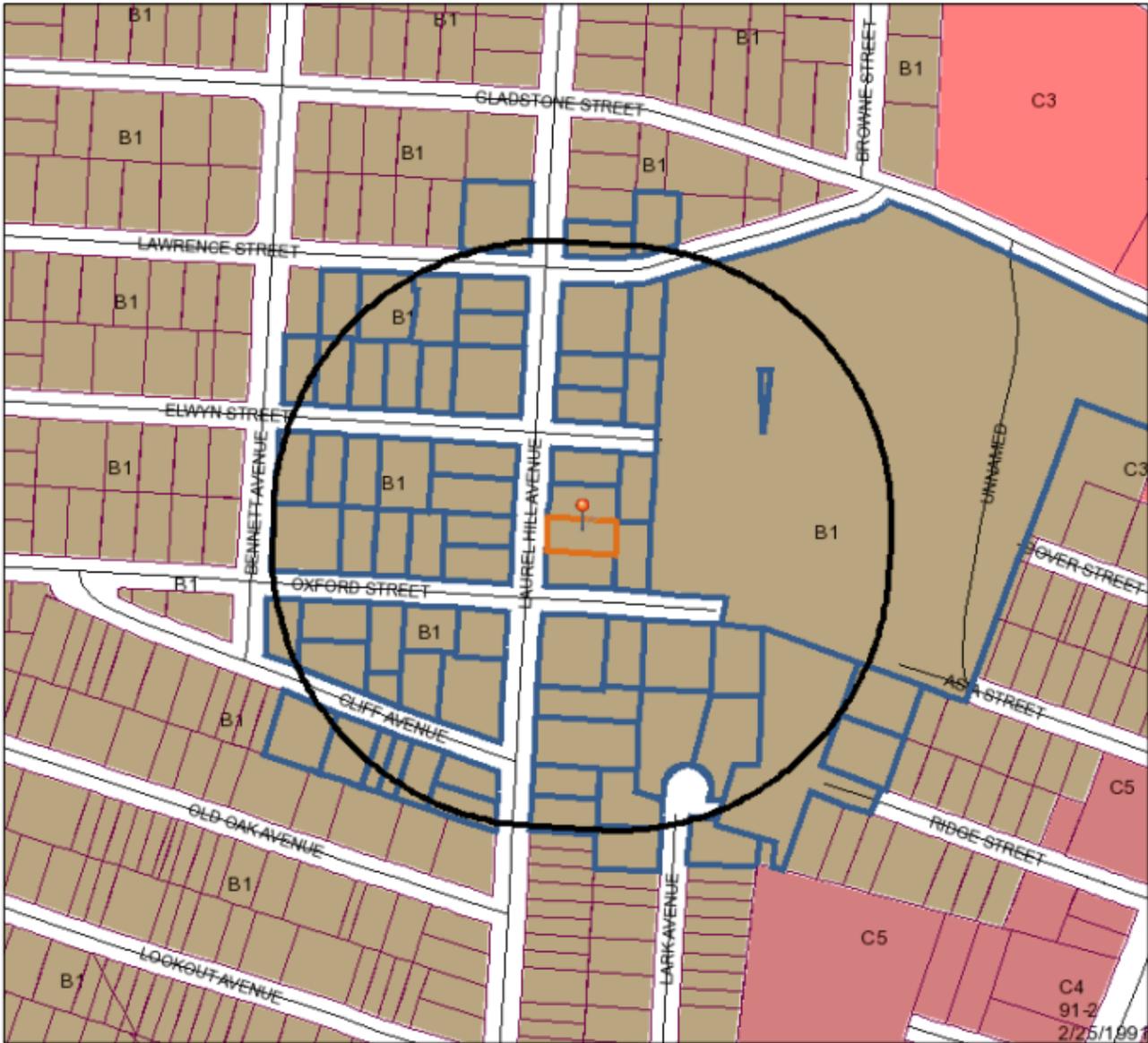
**AERIAL VIEW**



**AERIAL VIEW (close up)**



# ZONING MAP

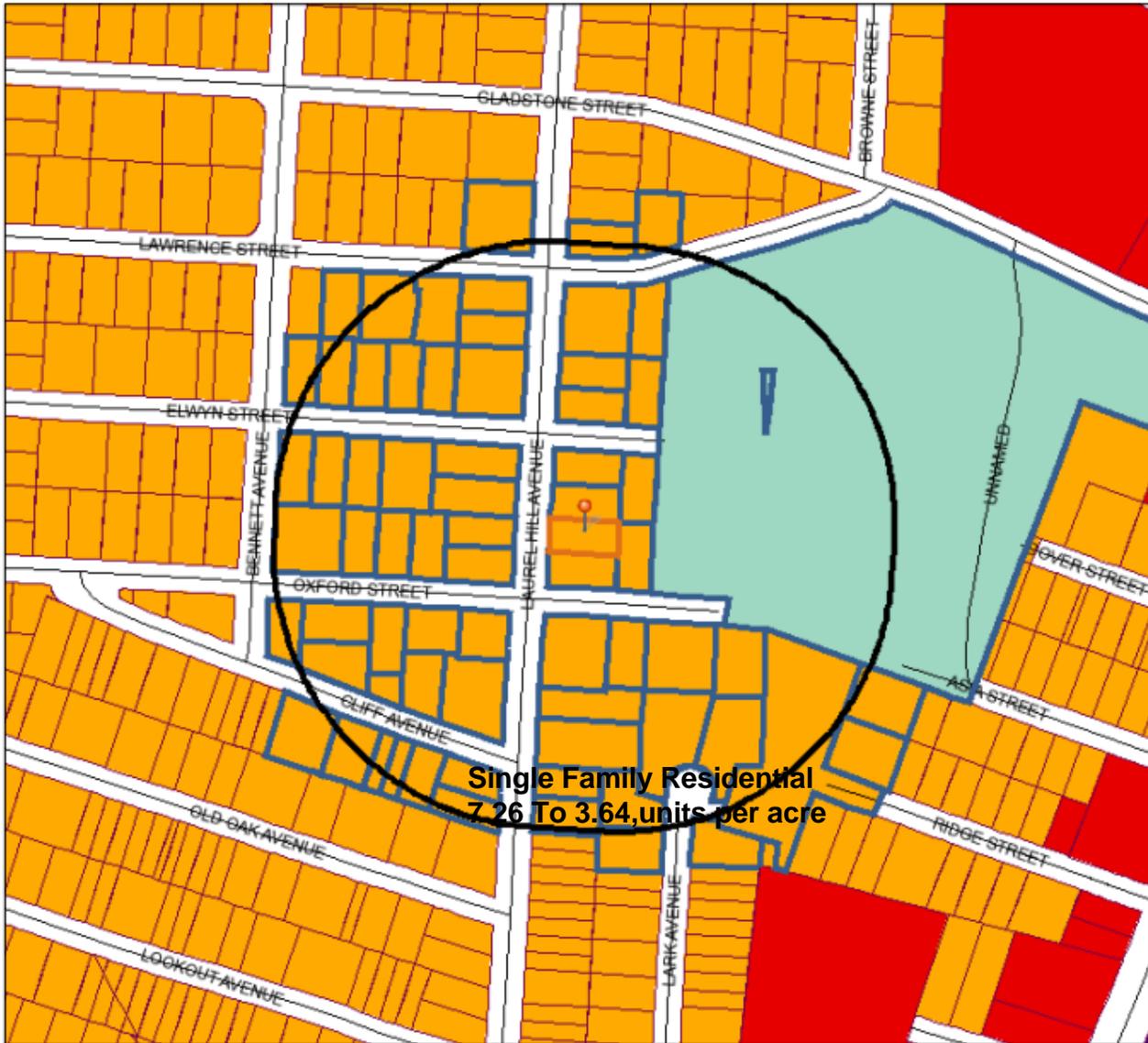


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# FUTURE LAND USE MAP



**Single Family Residential  
7.26 To 3.64, units per acre**



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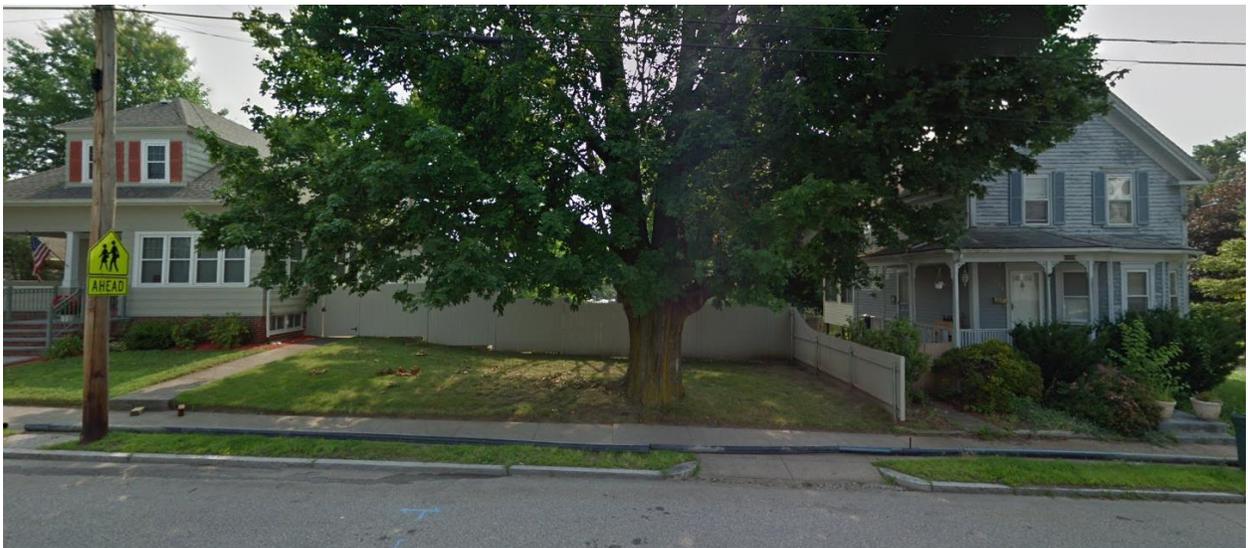
0      0.03      0.06      0.09 mi

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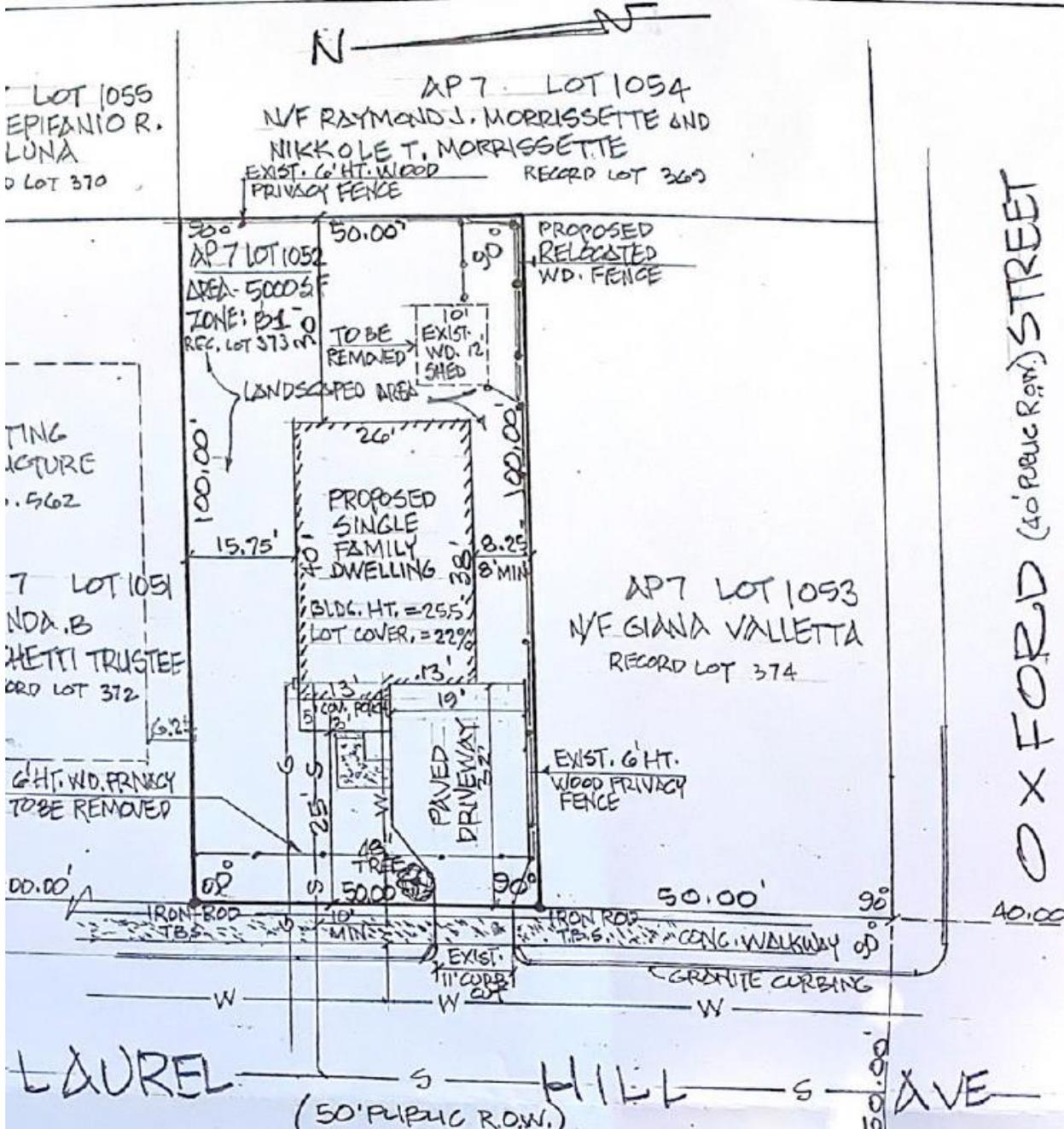
### 3-D AERIAL VIEW



### STREET VIEW



# SITE PLAN



## FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The applicant proposes to build a single-family residence on a substandard lot of record (AP 7, Lot 1052). The lot is substandard in area (5,000 ft<sup>2</sup> where 6,000 ft<sup>2</sup> is required) and lot width & frontage (50' where 60' is required).
2. The lot is currently undeveloped. It serves as a rear/side yard for the adjacent two-family residence under common ownership and has a shed which is to be removed. The subject lot is not merged to the adjacent lot.

3. No other relief is needed as part of the proposed application.
4. The surrounding neighborhood (400-foot radius) is comprised completely of B-1 zoned parcels. The vast majority of uses within the radius are single and two-family homes. Other uses include Gladstone Elementary School the east of the subject site, and a few three-family and one multifamily use. Many of the lots have 50' of frontage, consistent with the proposal.
5. Lots with 5,000 ft<sup>2</sup> and 50' of frontage are commonly found within the neighborhood (400-foot radius). Relief, if granted, would not be out of character with the area and is not anticipated to have a negatively impact on the neighborhood.
6. The Cranston Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map designates the subject parcels as "Single/Two Family Residential Less than 10.89 units per acre". The proposed density of the project is 8.71 units/per acres so the project is consistent with the designation of the Future Land Use Map.
7. The Land Use Plan Element recognizes that many existing lots in the eastern portion of the city are undersized, and the Comprehensive Plan supports the development of these lots, stating: *"...the City grants variances routinely when properties are 5,000 square feet limiting the purpose and effectiveness of the existing minimum size requirements. The City needs to address this issue and consider changing regulations to reflect the higher density in these areas, which are essentially built out and have an older housing stock."* The Comprehensive Plan supports the development of undersized lots and provides clear policy direction relevant to this proposal.
8. The proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Housing Element in that development of infill lots is encouraged in Eastern Cranston.

## **PLANNING ANALYSIS:**

The applicant proposes to develop a single-family house on a vacant lot. The lot is abutting another lot under common ownership, but the lots are not merged, so the only issues to resolve are the substandard area (5,000 ft<sup>2</sup> where 6,000 ft<sup>2</sup> is required) and frontage (50' where 60' is required).

Staff makes several positive findings on this application. The proposed use is consistent with B-1 zoning. The applicant is NOT seeking a two-family, so the request is the least necessary. The allocation of minimum lot area and frontage was imposed after this area was platted with 5,000 ft<sup>2</sup> lots, so the hardship was not the result of any prior action of the applicant. The majority of the lots in the nearby area have 50' of frontage, and many are 5,000 ft<sup>2</sup>, some even with two units on them. The proposed single-family would be consistent with the surrounding area in terms of land use, frontage and area, and therefore would not negatively impact the neighborhood.

Importantly, staff finds the application to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The Future Land Use Map designates the subject parcels as "Single/Two Family Residential Less than 10.89 units per acre". The proposed density of the project is 8.71 units/per acre. The Land Use Plan Element recognizes that many existing lots in the eastern portion of the city are undersized, and the Comprehensive Plan supports the development of these lots, stating: *"...the City grants*

*variances routinely when properties are 5,000 square feet limiting the purpose and effectiveness of the existing minimum size requirements. The City needs to address this issue and consider changing regulations to reflect the higher density in these areas, which are essentially built out and have an older housing stock.”* The Comprehensive Plan supports the development of undersized lots and provides clear policy direction relevant to this proposal.

Staff also finds no issues with the specifics of the development plan. There is an existing curb cut consistent with the proposed location for the driveway. The existing shed is to be removed. The portion of the existing fence facing the street is to be removed, but the portion along the property line to the south is to remain, so staff anticipated minimal visual impact to the abutter to the south. Staff notes that there is a 48” tree (possibly oak) adjacent to the driveway. The tree is shown on the site plan, but it is not clear whether the tree will need to be trimmed or removed as to allow construction vehicles access to the site. Staff would encourage the developer to preserve the tree if possible, but acknowledges the applicant’s right to remove the tree if need be. It may be determined that the installation of the driveway would significantly impact the root system.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Due to the fact that the application is consistent with the Cranston Comprehensive Plan, and due to the fact that the proposed lot size is consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, staff recommends the Plan Commission forward a **positive recommendation** to the Zoning Board of Review.