

City Planning Department



Memo

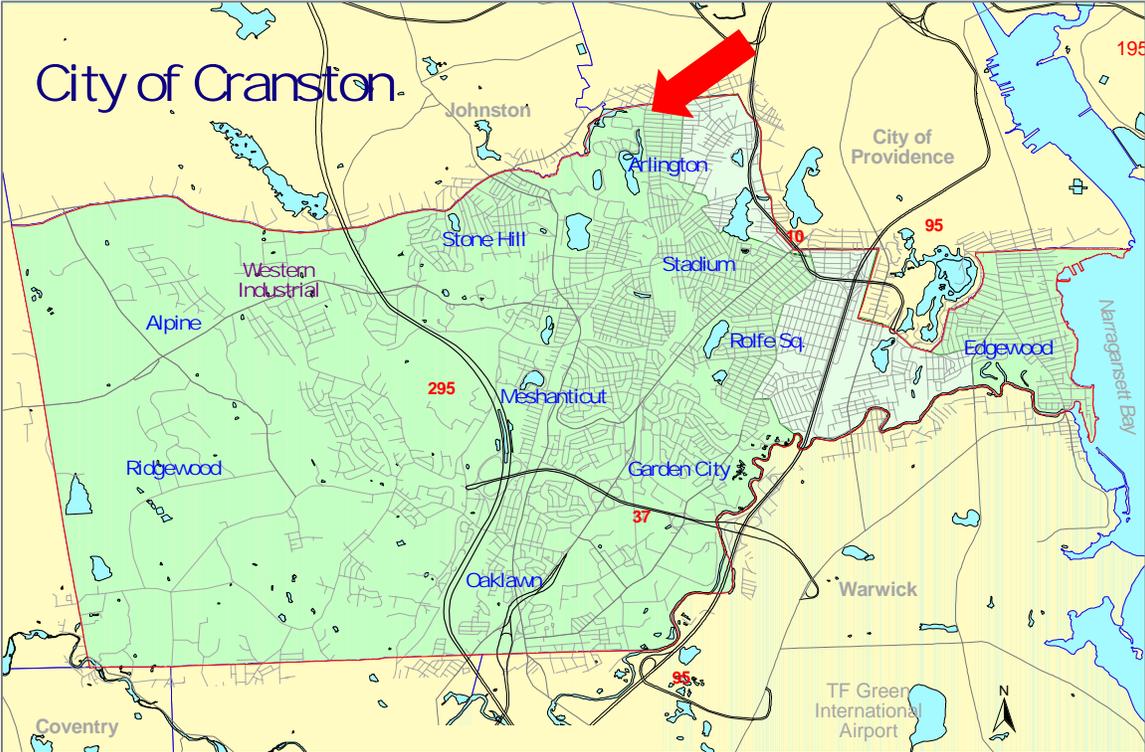
To: Cranston City Plan Commission
From: Alexander Berardo – Planning Technician
Date: March 3, 2023
Re: **Dimensional Variance @ 0 Queen Street**

Owner: Daniel Sweet
App: Gian Ventilato
Location: 0 Queen Street, AP 8, Lots 624, 2788, & 2790
Zone: B-2 (Single-, two-, and multi-family dwellings; minimum lot sizes vary)
FLU: Residential less than 10.39 units/acre

DIMENSIONAL VARIANCE REQUEST:

1. To secure relief to convert an existing legal non-conforming accessory structure on a lot previously merged by zoning into a single-family dwelling with reduced width, frontage, side, and rear setbacks. [17.20.120 – Schedule of Intensity Regulations]

LOCATION MAP



ZONING MAP



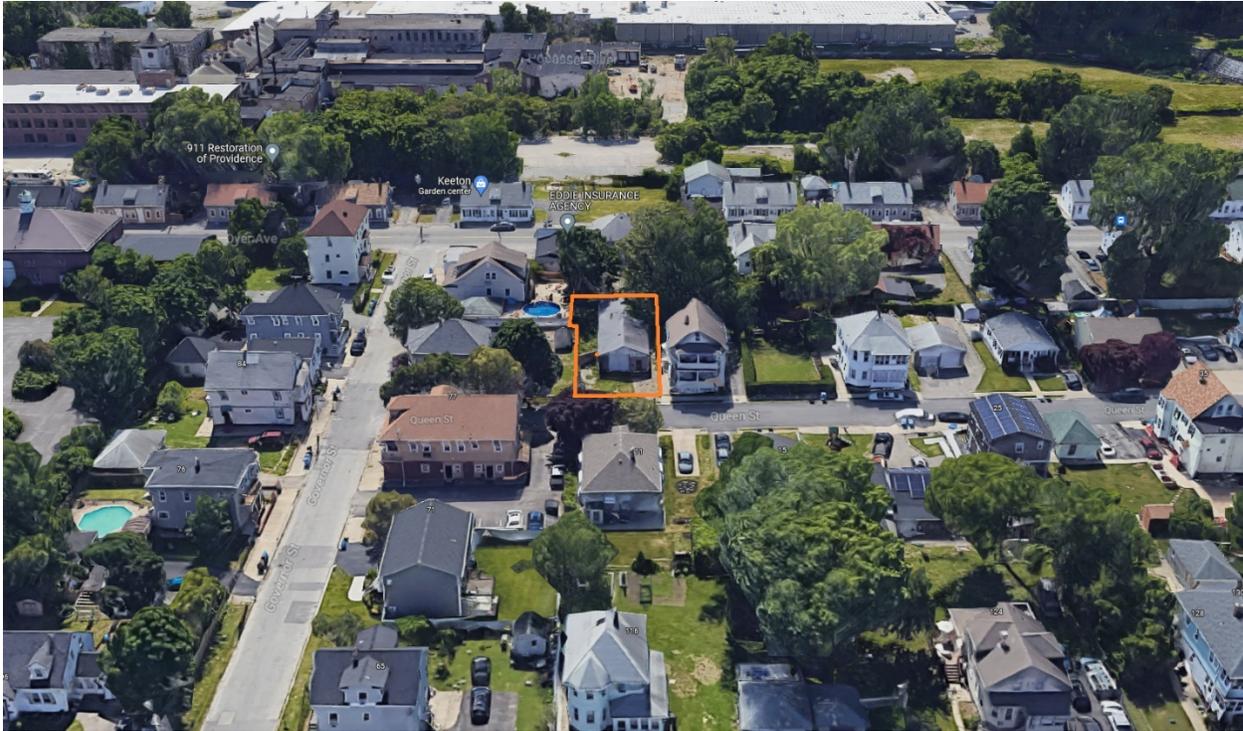
FUTURE LAND USE MAP



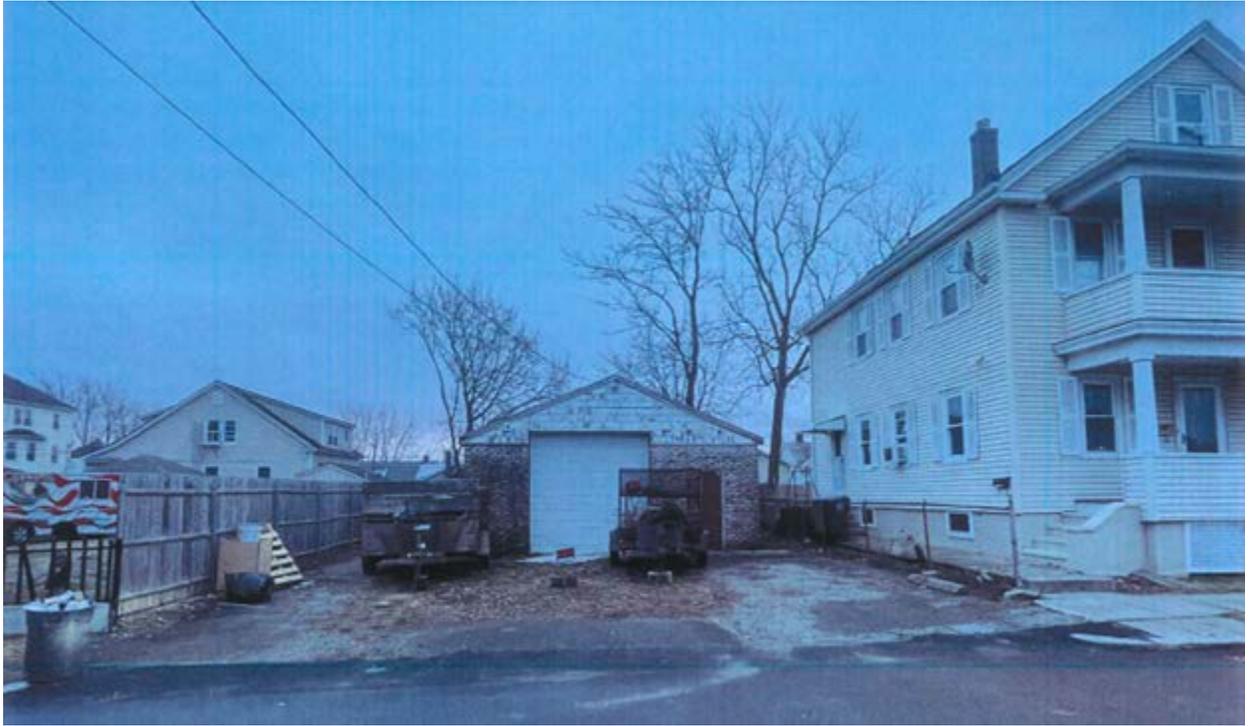
AERIAL VIEW



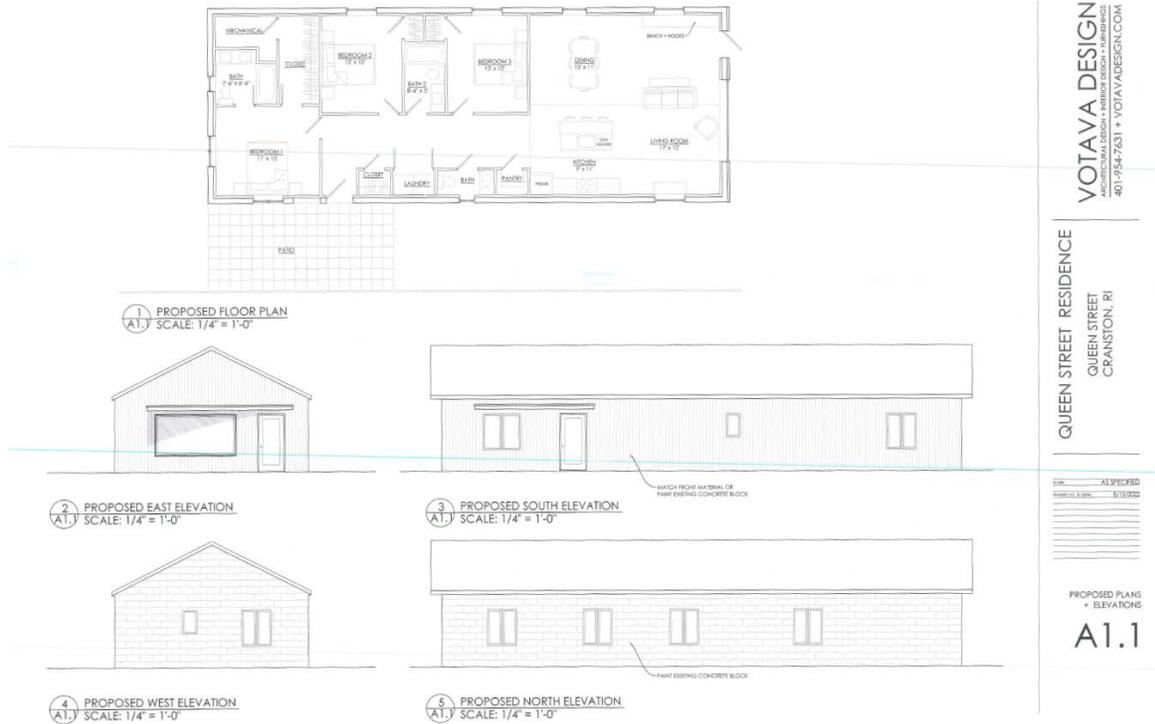
3-D AERIAL VIEW (facing west)



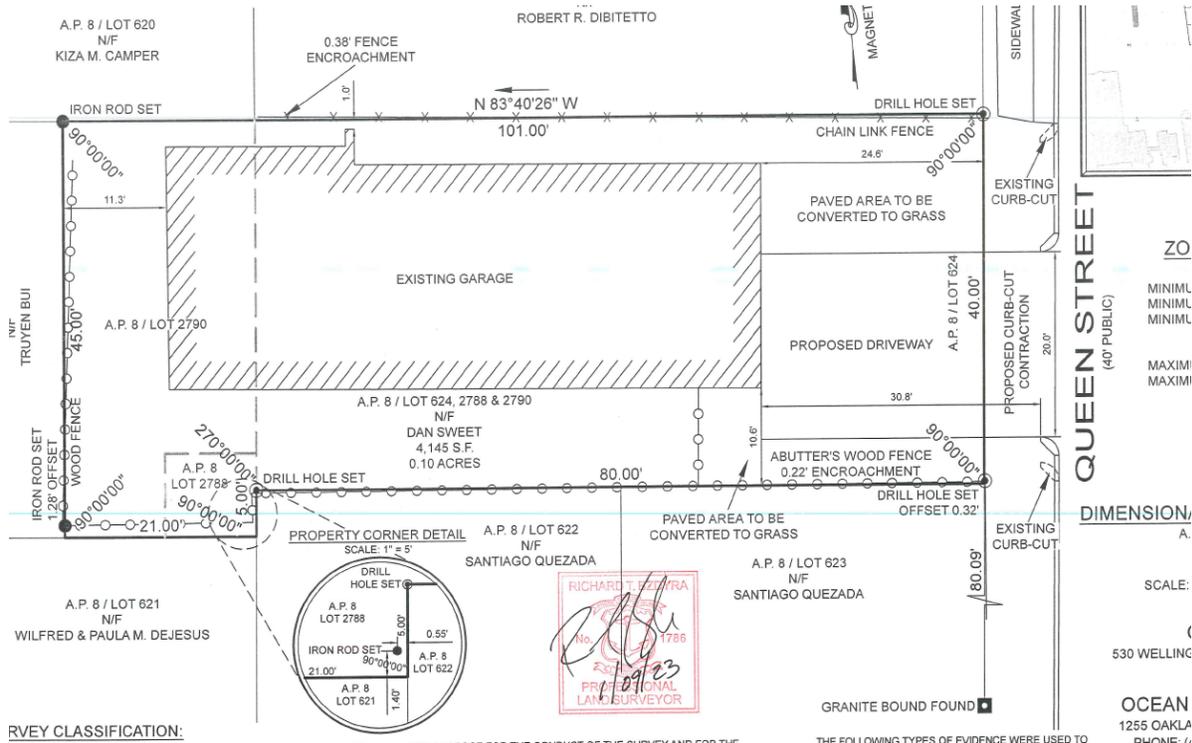
STREET VIEWS



ELEVATION AND FLOOR PLAN



SITE PLAN (exerpt)



PLANNING STAFF FINDINGS

1. The subject parcel is comprised of three adjacent, substandard lots of record which collectively have 4,124 ft² of area and 40 feet of frontage. The minimum standards for by-right development of single-family houses in a B-2 zone are 6,000 ft² of area and 60 feet of frontage.
2. The applicant seeks to convert an existing garage/workshop on the subject parcel into a single-family house, which would entail an interior retrofit (no conditions relating to the building's footprint will change as a result of the proposal). Staff was unable to confirm the age of the building and whether it should be treated as a pre-existing non-conforming structure; it does not appear to be accessory to any nearby residential building and has not been under common ownership with a neighboring parcel since c.1900.
3. The existing structure encroaches into three of the four setbacks (by 7 feet into the 8-foot northern side setback; by 9.7 feet into the 20-foot rear setback; and by 0.6 feet into the 25-foot front setback, respectively). An informal measurement using the City's GIS software suggests lot coverage is around 40%, which also slightly exceeds the 35% coverage limit for that zone.
4. The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designates the subject parcel as Residential less than 10.39 Units/Acre. The density that would result from the proposal is 10.56 units/acre, which slightly exceeds the FLUM's prescribed density.
5. The applicant did not submit a neighborhood analysis as part of the application. Staff notes that a basic review of the surroundings via GIS suggests there are around twice as many two-family homes as single-family homes within a 400-foot radius of the subject parcel, with a few multifamily and mixed-use buildings scattered throughout. A more detailed review of all lots within the radius that front on Queen Street indicates the average record lot size is 4,430 ft², while the average unit density is 12.37 units/acre.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff finds that granting relief would be consistent with the following goals expressed in the Comprehensive Plan:

- Housing Goal 4: *Promote Housing Opportunity for a wide range of household types and income levels.*
- Economic Development Goal 4: *Revitalize underused areas of the City for uses that are in keeping with the needs and values of the community.*
- Land Use Principle 4: *Protect and stabilize existing residential neighborhoods by basing land use decisions on neighborhood needs and quality of life.*

The applicant aims to convert an existing building that is currently vacant, but was previously used as a workshop/garage (which is not allowed in a B-2 zone), into a single-family dwelling (allowed use). The existing building would be retrofitted with no associated changes to its footprint – granting relief would not increase the nonconformities currently observed on site with regard to setbacks, area, and lot coverage. The retrofit would, however, create a new housing unit in the neighborhood by revitalizing an existing, but currently derelict, building that is already part of the neighborhood's fabric – and in doing so, it would clearly improve the aesthetic

condition of the site as compared to its present state. (The description of Land Use Principle 4 specifically references protecting the “visual resources that define the neighborhood.”)

Staff recognizes that the proposal would slightly exceed the density prescription of the site’s Future Land Use Designation (10.56 vs. 10.39 units/acre) but notes that the average unit density on the subject parcel’s block within a 400-foot radius is higher than what the applicant proposes (12.37 units/acre). In the absence of a formal neighborhood analysis provided by the applicant, Staff reviewed the surrounding area within a 400-foot radius via GIS and found two-family dwellings outnumber single-family dwellings by roughly two to one; most of the two-family dwellings and half of the single-family dwellings are located on undersized lots; and the sizes of the lots along Queen Street appear to be typical of lot sizes found in the broader 400-foot radius. Given the information available, Staff believes that granting relief would not represent a perceptible deviation from the general character and density of the neighborhood.

RECOMMENDATION

Due to the findings that the application is generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan’s Housing Goal 4, Economic Development Goal 4, and Land Use Principle 4, staff recommends the Plan Commission forward a **positive recommendation** on the application to the Zoning Board of Review.