

# City Planning Department



## Memo

To: Cranston City Plan Commission  
From: Alexander Berardo – Planning Technician  
Date: July 8, 2022  
Re: **Dimensional Variance @ 1114 Scituate Avenue**

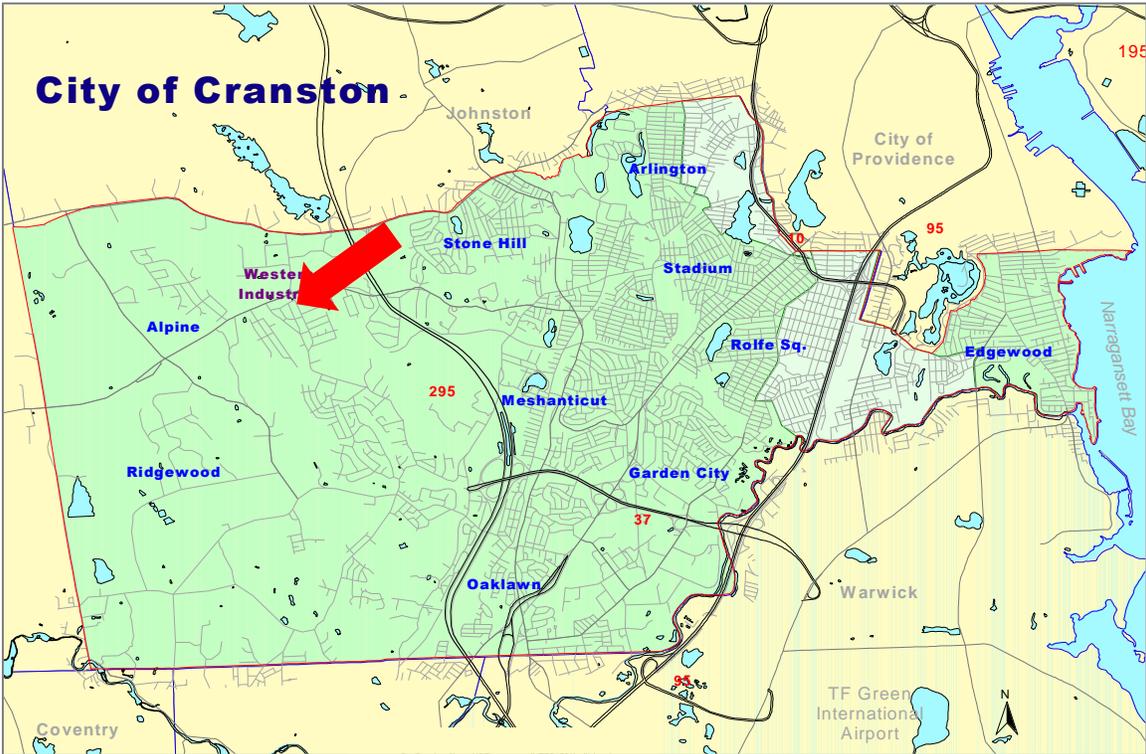
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**Owner:** Cranston Christian Fellowship  
**Applicant:** Hope Church  
**Location:** 1114 Scituate Avenue, AP 27, Lot 85  
**Zone:** A-20 (Single-family dwellings on 20,000 ft<sup>2</sup> minimum lots)  
**FLU:** Single-Family Residential 3.63 to 1.00 units/acre

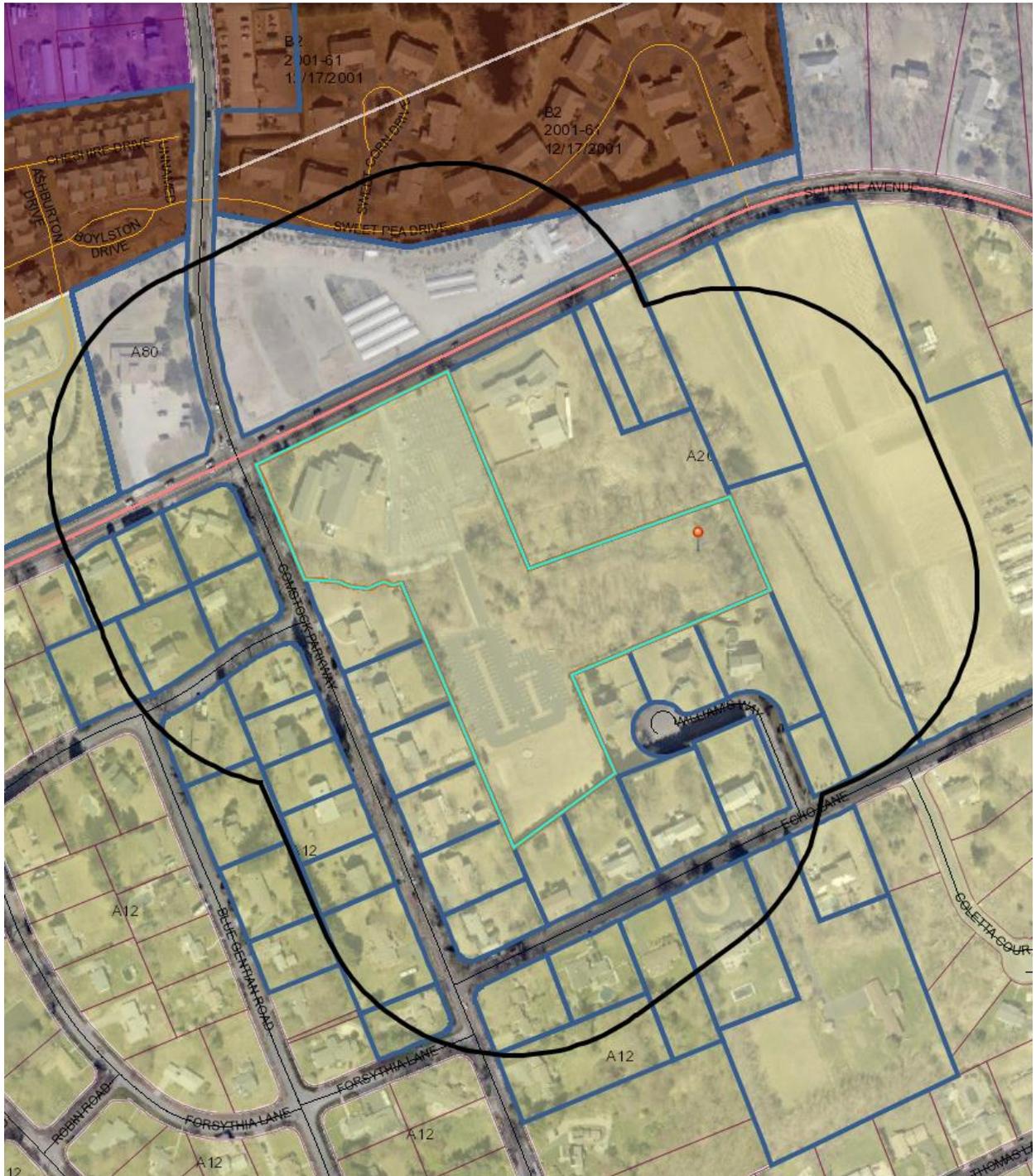
**DIMENSIONAL VARIANCE REQUEST:**

1. To install a double-sided LED message board on an existing free-standing sign increasing the allowable size permitted by previously granted variance. [17.20.120 – Schedule of Intensity Regulations; 17.72.010 – Signs]

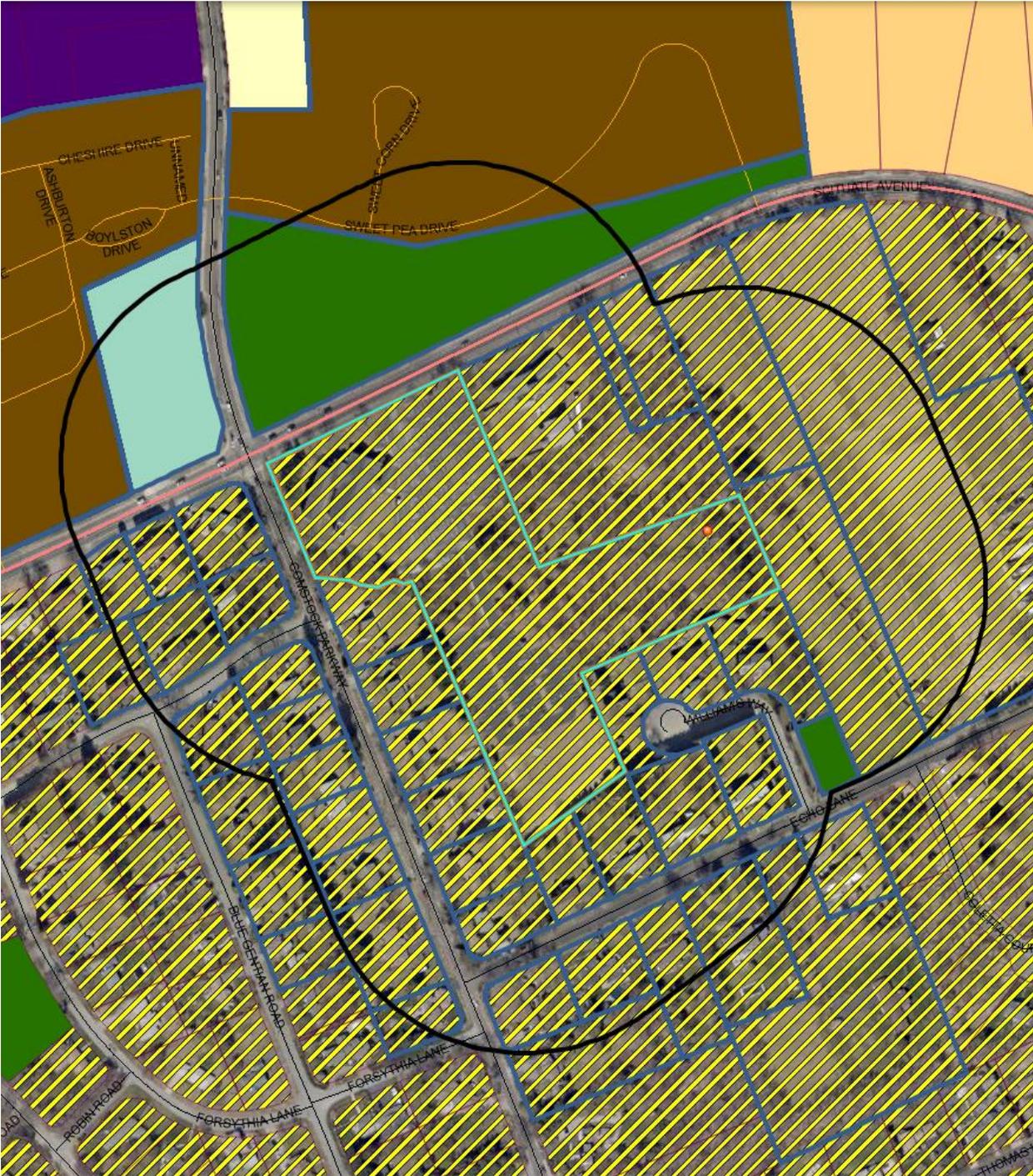
### LOCATION MAP



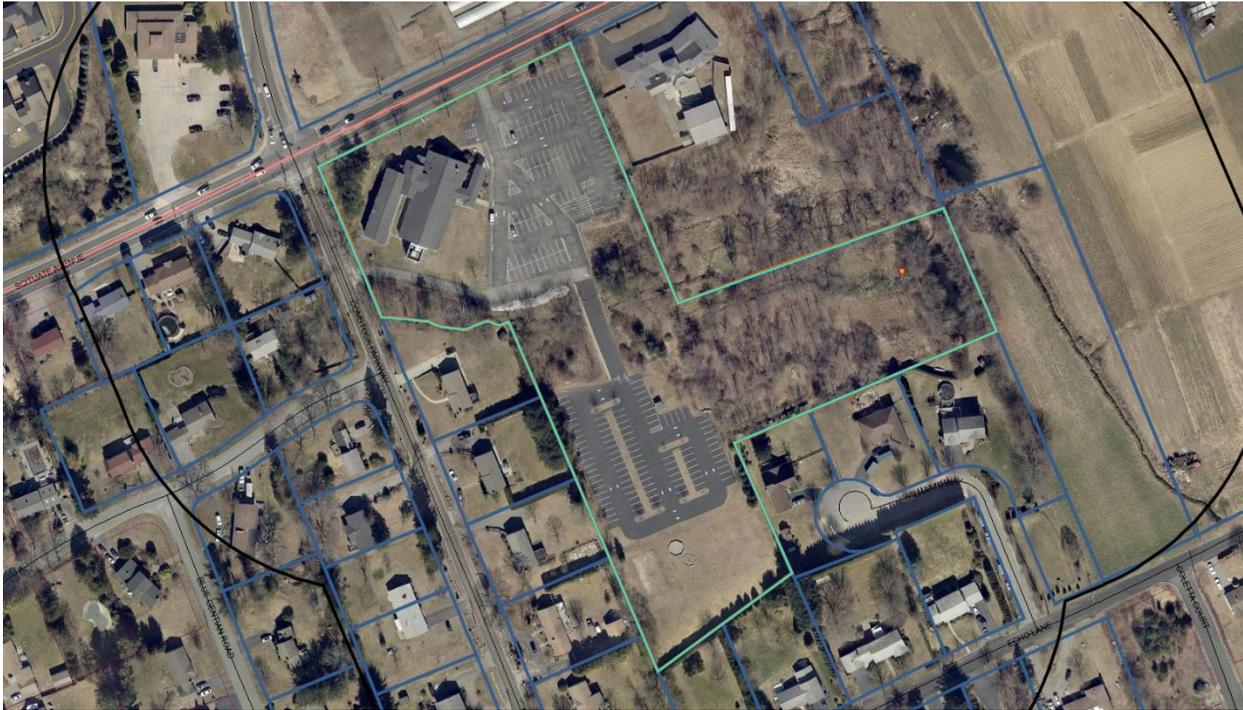
# ZONING MAP



# FUTURE LAND USE MAP



**AERIAL VIEW**



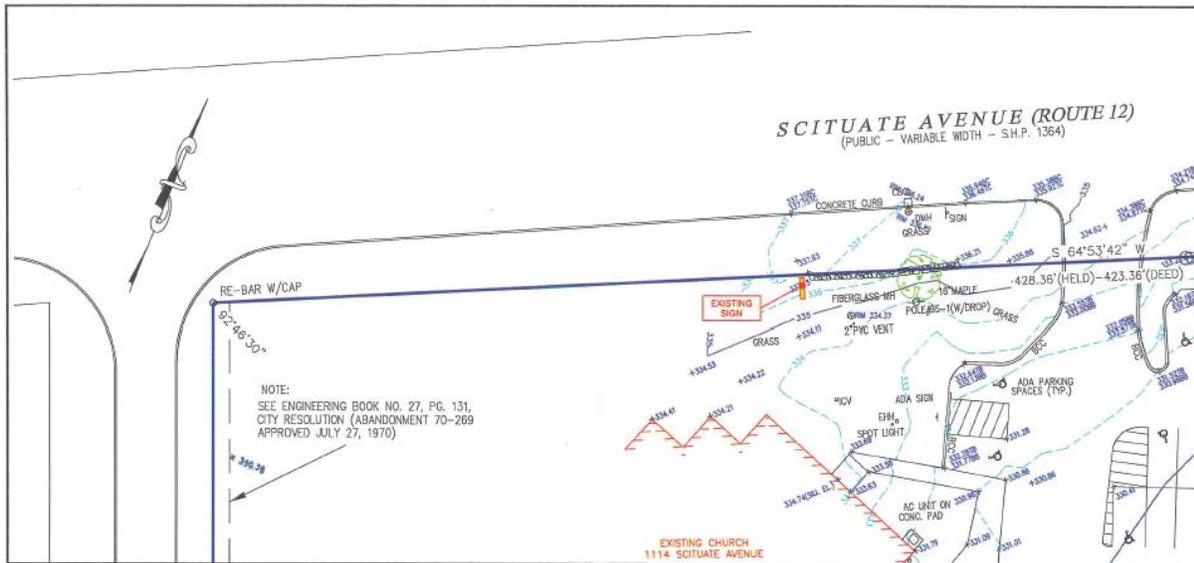
**3-D AERIAL VIEW (facing west)**



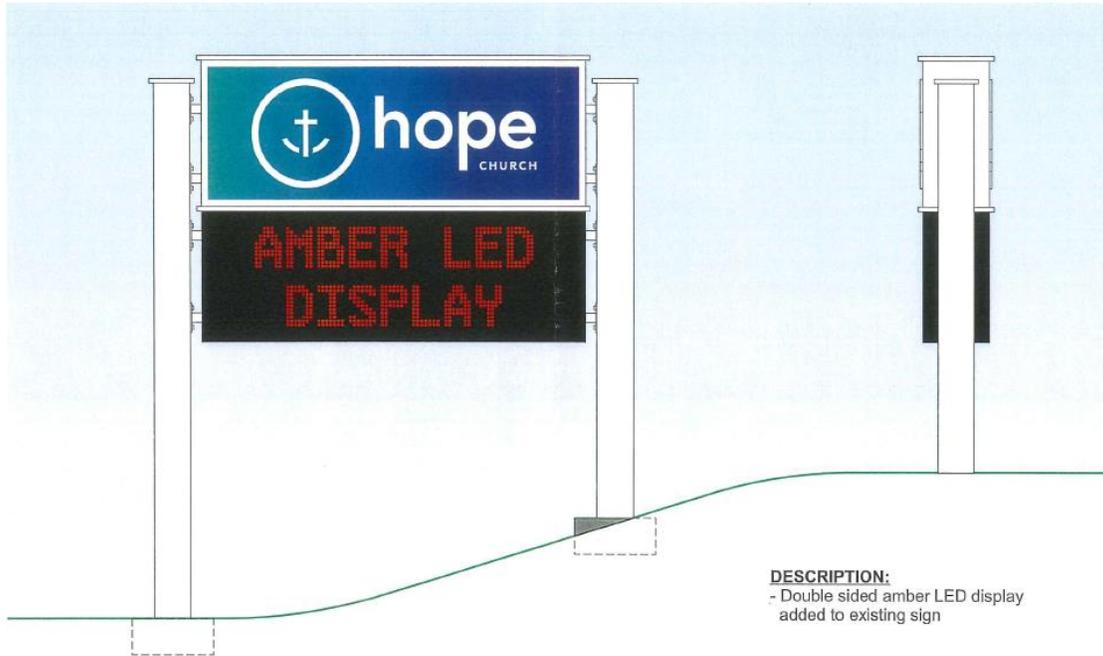
# STREET VIEW



# SITE PLAN



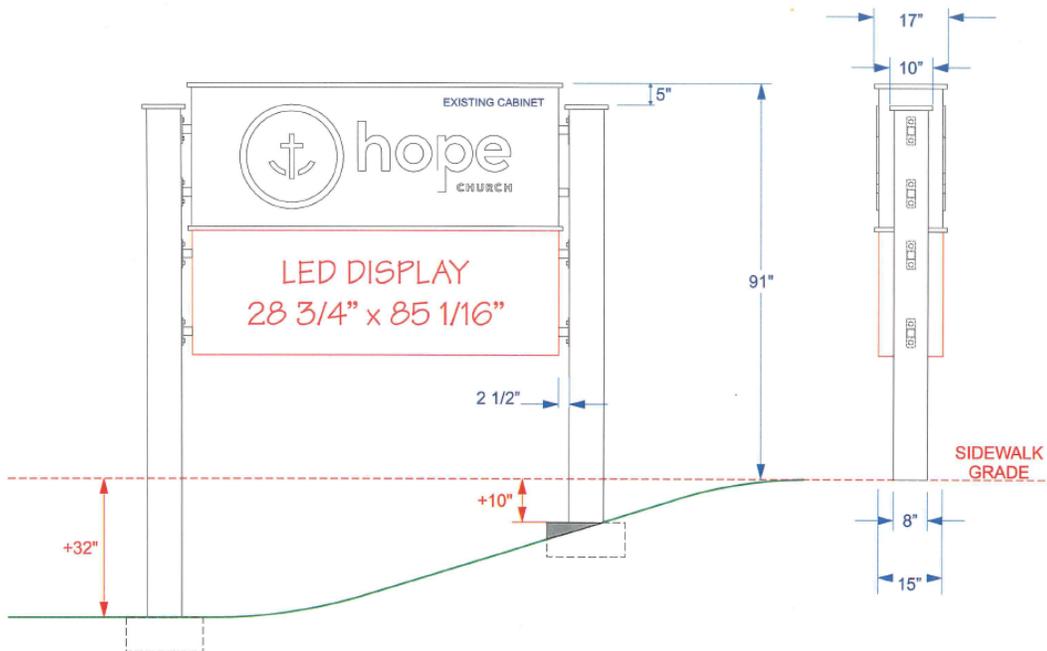
# PROPOSED SIGN



Is: 1/2" = 1'

JOB: 2022 Hope Church LOCATION: 1114 Schutte Ave., Cranston RI	FILE: C-Hope church wht DATE: 2/24/22 REVISED: x	PROJECT MANAGER: Kevin F. DESIGNED BY: Jeff R.	CLIENT APPROVAL: _____ Date: _____ NOTICE TO CLIENT This drawing is a representation of how your sign will appear. By signing this drawing you are accepting the design as it is presented on this page.	221 Jefferson Boulevard & Warwick, RI v / 401.738.8555 f / 401.738.8244 <a href="http://www.aathirty.com">www.aathirty.com</a>
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Scale: 1/2" = 1'

JOB: 2022 Hope Church LOCATION: 1114 Schutte Ave., Cranston RI	FILE: C-Hope church detls DATE: 2/24/22 REVISED: 6/7/22	PROJECT MANAGER: Kevin F. DESIGNED BY: Jeff R.	CLIENT APPROVAL: _____ Date: _____ NOTICE TO CLIENT This drawing is a representation of how your sign will appear. By signing this drawing you are accepting the design as it is presented on this page.	221 Jefferson Boulevard & Warwick, RI v / 401.738.8555 f / 401.738.8244 <a href="http://www.aathirty.com">www.aathirty.com</a>
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## PLANNING STAFF FINDINGS

1. The subject parcel (AP 27, Lot 85) hosts a church, which is an allowed Institutional use (Place of Religious Worship) in an A-20 zone. The lot well exceed minimum area and frontage standards for the A-20 zone, as it is a 119,790 ft<sup>2</sup> corner lot with sufficient frontage on both Comstock Parkway and Scituate Avenue.
2. The applicant previously received a variance in 1988 for a previous freestanding, changeable-letter sign that exceeded the maximum allowable area and encroached into the front setback. This sign has since been removed and replaced with another freestanding sign of roughly 33 ft<sup>2</sup> featuring the church logo in the same location.
3. The applicant seeks to add a double-sided LED sign face of roughly equal dimensions directly beneath the existing freestanding sign, which would exceed the maximum allowable sign area of 50 ft<sup>2</sup> by roughly 15 ft<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, LED signs are not explicitly allowed in the City's sign code.
4. The LED sign would serve the same purpose as the former changeable-letter sign which was allowed by variance and can be seen as a contemporary equivalent.
5. The LED sign will be monochromatic (amber/red lettering against black background) which greatly reduces its brightness and intensity and, by extension, reduces its visual impact in the residential areas to the church's east and west. A plant nursery is located across Scituate Avenue.
6. The Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Principle 4 advises to "*Protect and stabilize existing residential neighborhoods by basing land use decisions on neighborhood needs and quality of life*" and to "*Protect the natural, historic and visual resources that define the neighborhoods*" (p.34).

## STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff finds that granting relief to allow the addition of a double-faced LED sign beneath the existing freestanding sign would neither negatively alter the character of the neighborhood nor negatively impact the visual resources of the area as discussed in the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Principle 4. Staff recognizes that changeable-letter signs are commonly used by churches and considers the proposed LED sign to be a modern equivalent to older, hand-changed signs. Staff also believes that the specific characteristics of this sign – monochromatic amber or red lettering against a black background – enable it to make as little of a visual impact as possible, which will be particularly noticeable at nighttime in an otherwise-dark and residential area. Finally, Staff does not believe the total area of the proposed signage exceeds the maximum standard to a degree that will be noticeable given that the size of the lot on which the church is located.

## RECOMMENDATION

Due to the findings that the application is generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and that it does not alter the character of the neighborhood, staff recommends the Plan Commission forward a **positive recommendation** on the application to the Zoning Board of Review.