

City Planning Department



REVISED Memo

To: Cranston City Plan Commission
From: Doug McLean, AICP, Principal Planner
Date: November 4, 2022
Re: "747 Pontiac Ave – Residential Apartment Conversion", AP 9, Lot 146
Ordinance #9-22-01: Zone Change from "A-6" to "C-2 with conditions"

ALL REVISIONS TO THIS MEMO ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN YELLOW (see page 2):

I. Proposal

This memo contains background information, staff analysis, findings, and the recommendation for the zone change petition above noted. This zone change is accompanied by a Major Land Development - Master Plan application for the subject property that is further detailed in a separate staff memo.

All staff memos and application materials on this matter can be found at the following link: <https://www.cranstonri.gov/plan-commission-11.1.22/>

The proposed zone change is from "A-6" (single-family dwellings on lots of 6,000 sqft.) to "C-2 with conditions" (Neighborhood business). The specific "conditions" associated with this zone change are that the subject property shall be allowed a density bonus of up to 21 units, and that at least 15% of the units shall be deed restricted as affordable housing based on 80% of the area's median income level. It should be noted that multi-family dwellings are an allowed use within the C-2 zoning district.

A corresponding Comprehensive Plan Amendment petition is NOT needed in this case as the subject property is currently designated as "Neighborhood Commercial/Services". In this regard, the proposed zone change is consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan as the proposed C-2 zone is better aligned with the "Neighborhood Commercial/Services" designation as compared to the current A-6 zone.

The property owner and developer is Omni 747P, LLC (The Omni Group), P.O. Box 856, East Greenwich, RI 02818. The subject property is 28,020+/- sqft. and has an existing 3-story office building that will be redeveloped into 18 new multi-family units. The existing building footprint will not be changed and there are no new buildings being proposed as part of this proposal.

The City Plan Commission is charged with reviewing the staff findings and recommendation and providing a formal recommendation on Ordinance #9-22-01 to the City Council. The actual language and format of Ordinance #9-22-01 is attached at the close of this memo for reference.

MEMO REVISIONS:

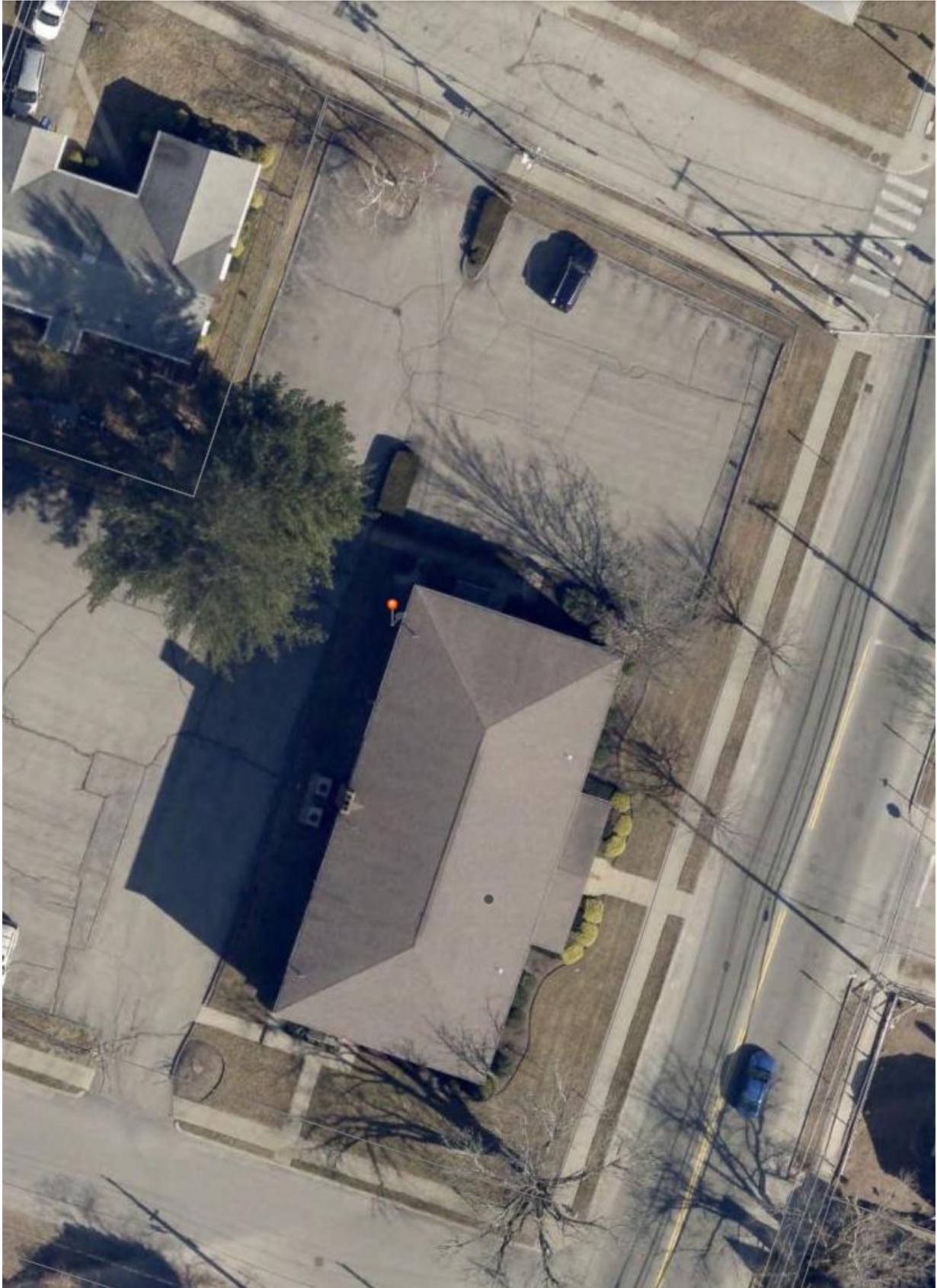
This memo has been revised to add the following information regarding the need to continue this matter to the November 15, 2022 Plan Commission meeting. Ordinance #9-22-01 was properly advertised and noticed for a Public Hearing at the November 1, 2022 Plan Commission meeting. The agenda for this meeting did not list the words “vote taken” next to this specific agenda item, which was an oversight by staff. Since it is standard practice for all voting items on the Plan Commission’s agenda to be accompanied by the words “vote taken”, the Commission elected to continue this matter in an abundance of caution to a future meeting to allow the agenda to be corrected. During the November 1, 2022 meeting, the matter was continued to a “date certain” of November 15, 2022, meaning all those interested parties who attended were able to hear the specific new date, and no further notice or advertisement is needed. The details of this continuance have been reviewed and confirmed by the Solicitor of the Plan Commission and is found to be proper in accordance with state law and local code.

NEIGHBORHOOD AERIAL VIEW

(subject parcel marked in orange, 400 foot radius marked in black)



PARCEL AERIAL VIEW



3-D VIEW



STREET VIEW
(from Pontiac Ave)



STREET VIEW
(from Norman Ave)



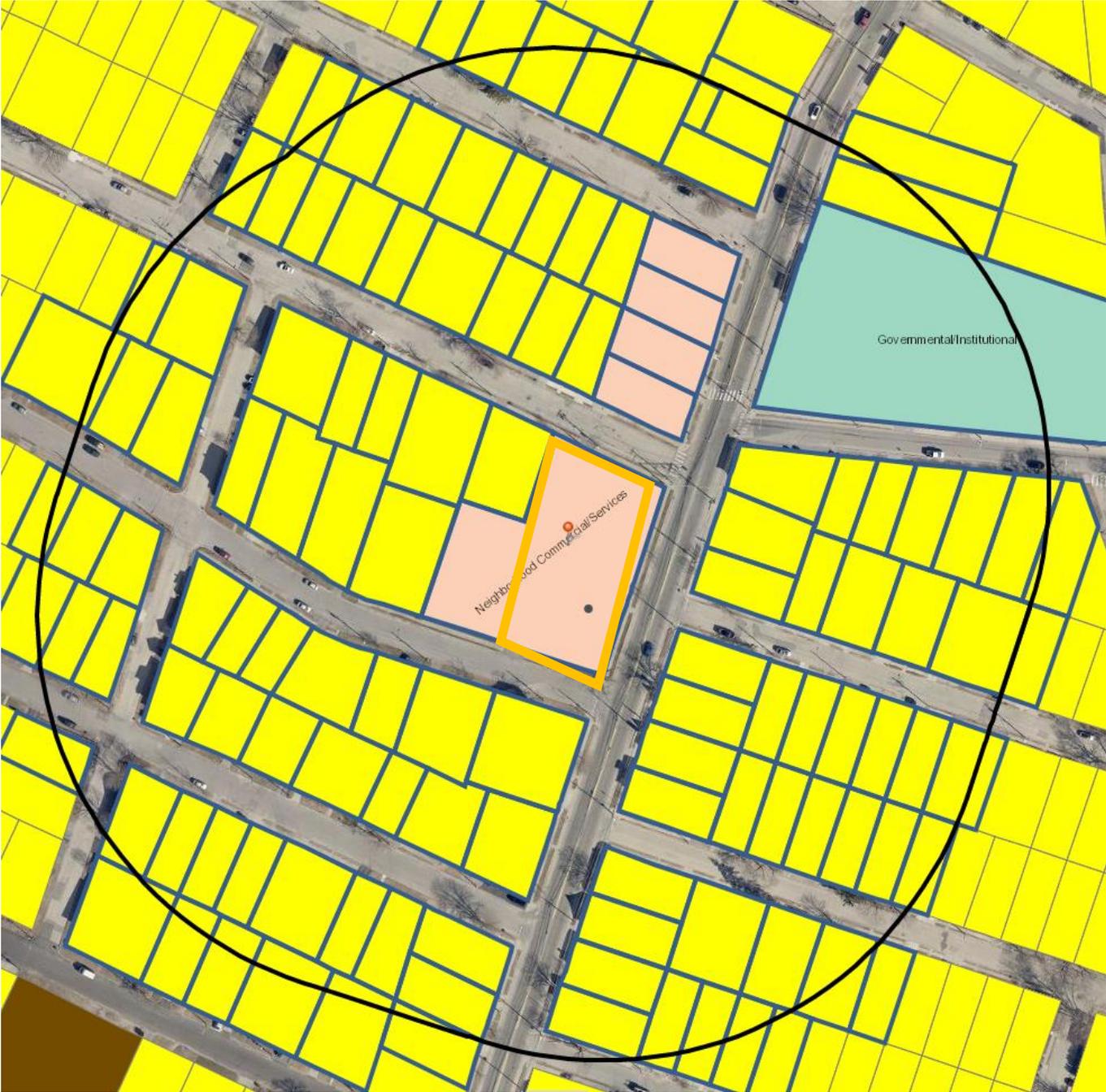
STREET VIEW (from Myrtle Ave)



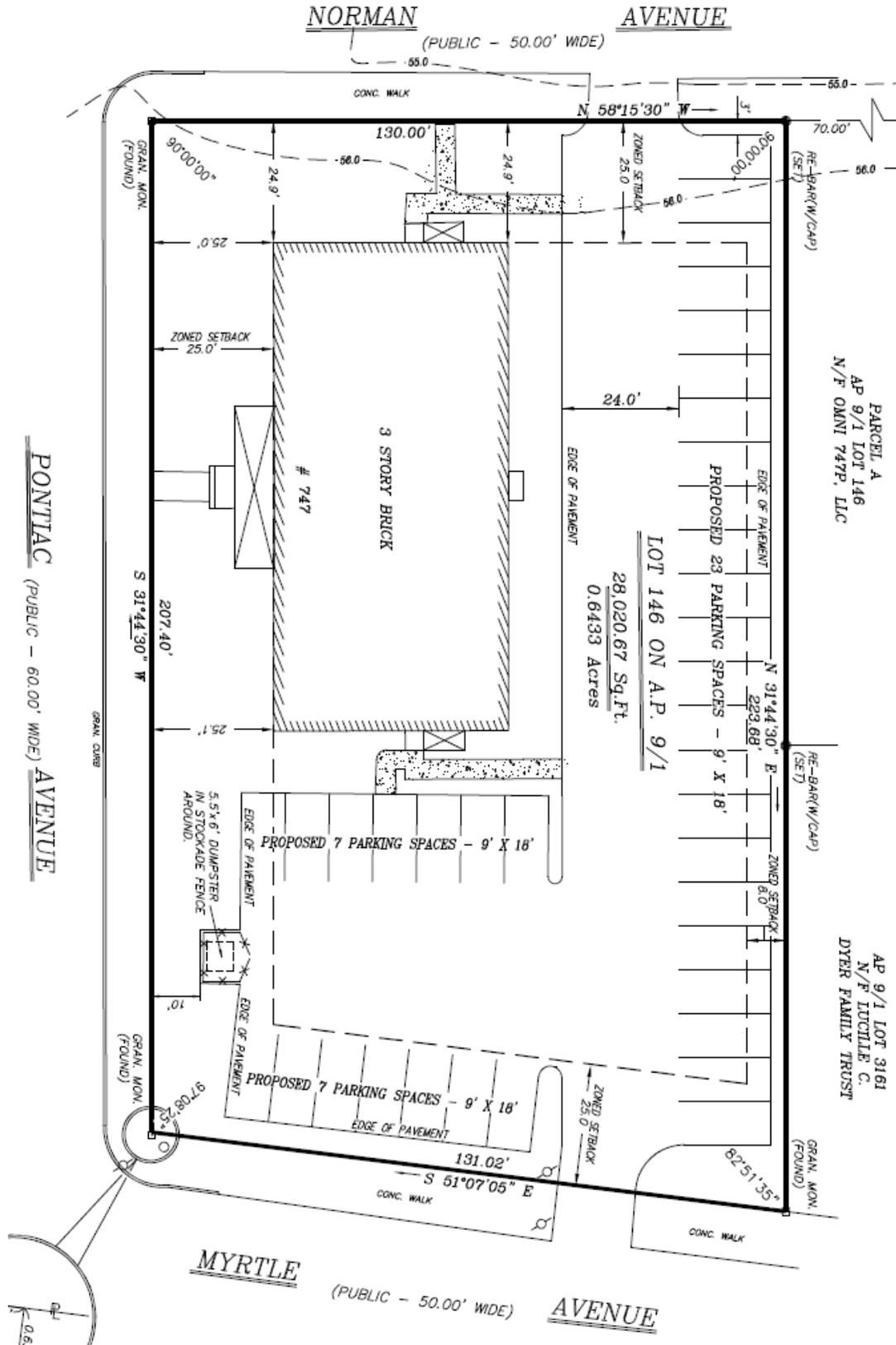
EXISTING ZONING MAP



FUTURE LAND USE MAP



PROPOSED MASTER PLAN



II. Planning Analysis

A joint site walk of the Plan Commission and the City Council was conducted on the subject property on October 19, 2022 in order to hear a project overview from the applicant and to better understand the conditions on the ground. This site walk included a quorum of both the Plan Commission and the City Council. Several interested residents from the neighborhood also attended the site walk and provided their feedback/concerns about the project. The minutes of the site walk have been posted to the Planning Department webpage as further background on this proposal.

As Plan Commission members may recall, the subject property (AP 9, Lot 146) was recently subdivided into 2 new lots, one of which (the smaller lot) will be left as a conforming A-6 lot for future development of a single-family house, and the other lot (the larger lot) is the focus of this zone change petition.

Based on staff review, the zone change petition is consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan with regard to both the Plan's Future Land Use Map and the Plan's policy framework. The Future Land Use Map designation for the subject property is "Neighborhood Commercial/Services". This designation is specific intension is for properties to be zoned either C-1, C-2, or C-3. The applicant is seeking a zone change to "C-2 with conditions" so the proposed zoning district is better aligned with the Future Land Use Map as opposed to the current zoning district of A-6. It should be noted that the "Neighborhood Commercial/Services" does not have a maximum density limit so the proposal to develop 18 units is not in conflict with any density allowances as specified within the Comprehensive Plan.

As previously discussed, the "conditions" associated with this zone change are to allow a density bonus of up to 21 units, and at least 15% of the units shall be deed restricted as affordable housing based on 80% of the area's median income level. At this point the applicant is only seeking to develop a total of 18 apartment units as part of the corresponding Major Land Development so the proposal will not be utilizing all of the allowed density on the site. The inclusion of 15% affordable housing as part of this zone change is included at the request of Planning Department staff to assist in fulfilling the City's affordable housing goals. The Comprehensive Plan has numerous policies on the subject of affordable housing that can be found in the Housing Element. Staff has reviewed the totality of policies within the Housing Element and finds that the change of zone is consistent with these policies with regard to both the density bonus allowance and the inclusion of a 15% affordable housing requirement.

When considering the merits of this zone change, it is important to review the details of the corresponding Major Land Development to better understand the specific outcomes of this zone change. The proposed Major Land Development application is required to receive a positive vote from the Plan Commission in order for Ordinance #9-22-01 to move forward to the Ordinance Committee and City Council level of review. This is a unique Major Land Development proposal in that there is very limited development being proposed per se. The proposal is to re-use an existing, underutilized office building into 18 multi-family apartment units with a mix of 1-bedroom (15) and studio units (3). This proposal does not result in changes to the building footprint and does not result in any significant changes to the exterior "shell" of the building itself. The proposal does include changes to the interior layout of the building, but those issues are regulated through the building permit process and are not germane to the review of the zone change petition or Major Land Development applications.

The only elements of the subject property that are changing as a result of this proposal are the re-striping of parking spaces, the addition of a new landscape strip along the rear property line, and the inclusion of a new dumpster enclosure toward the front of the property (Pontiac Ave side). For future stages of the Major Land Development proposal, the applicant will be required to provide a full Landscape Plan (inclusive of fencing details) as well as a stormwater engineering as part of the review of the project. Those detailed elements will be incorporated into the plan at the Preliminary Plan stage of the application, which must be reviewed by both the Development Plan Review Committee and the Plan Commission.

Based on staff's review of the proposal, inclusive the of the proposed multi-family residential use and the limited exterior changes to the site, staff is of the view that this proposal is generally compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. It is well accepted that the traffic and parking demand for residential uses is below that of similar-sized commercial or office uses. The applicant is providing slightly more than the required number of parking spaces which is 2 space per unit (36 required, 37 provided). It is generally understood that small apartment units such as this, with a mixture of 1-bedroom and studios, are limited in the number of cars that are typically associated with each unit. In other zone change petitions, staff has entertained proposals with an average of 1.25 parking spaces per unit. In this case, by meeting the zoning requirement of 2 cars per unit, the project has provided sufficient parking and is likely to experience some empty spaces even with a fully occupied building. Additionally, the applicant has stated that this development will include security measures, such as background checks, cameras, and a building access control system as mean to protect the residents.

III. Findings

Cranston Comprehensive Plan 2010

The proposed zone change from "A-6" to "C-2 with conditions" has been review with respect to consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. As further detailed within the staff memo on this matter dated 10/28/22, this petition is consistent with the Future Plan Land Use Map designation of "Neighborhood Commercial/Services" based on the fact that this property is specifically intended for C-1, C-2 and C-3 zones. Additionally, the proposed zone change is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's policy framework with specific regard to the density bonus and the inclusion of 15% affordable housing based on the totality of policies within the Plan's Housing Element. Based on the above, staff finds that Ordinance #9-22-01 is consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Findings Under §17.04.010 City Code

Sec. 17.120.030 requires that the City Plan Commission as part of its recommendation to the City Council "Include a demonstration of recognition and consideration of each of the applicable purposes of zoning as presented in Section 17.04.010 of this title." Section 17.04.010 set forth the General Purpose for Title 17 (Zoning Ordinance) of the City Code. To the extent that any development of the subject properties will be required to comply with all aspects of the Zoning Ordinance, including Development Plan Review, and will be required to comply with City of Cranston Subdivision and Land Development

Regulations, staff finds that the proposed rezone will adequately address the appropriate purposes detailed in §17.04.010.

IV. Recommendation

Ordinance #9-22-01: Zone Change from “A-6” to “C-2 with conditions”

Based on the findings that Ordinance #9-22-01 is consistent with City’s Comprehensive Plan and adequately addresses the appropriate purposes detailed in §17.04.010, and based on the fact that the proposal is a re-use of an existing building with no new building additions or major site changes, and based on the fact that the proposal includes 15% affordable housing to further the City’s stated affordable housing goals, staff recommends that the Plan Commission send a **positive recommendation** on this application to the City Council.