

City Planning Department



Memo

To: Cranston City Plan Commission
From: Doug McLean – Principal Planner
Date: September 29, 2022
Re: Use and Dimensional Variance at 804 Reservoir Ave.

Owner: FJ Investments LLC
Applicant: Ingrid Guzman DBA Dulce Vida
Location: 804 Reservoir Ave. AP 9, Lots 572 and 573
Zone: C-1
FLU: Highway/Commercial Services

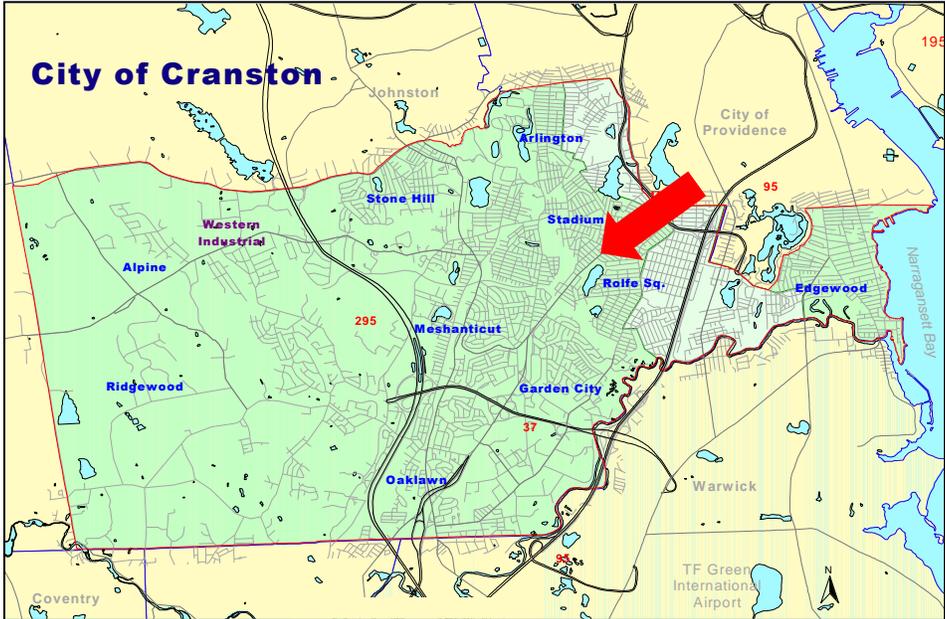
USE VARIANCE REQUEST:

To allow an operation that is most closely defined in zoning as a “banquet facility” within a C-1 zone whereas such a use is not allowed. [17.20.030 – Schedule of Uses]

DIMENSIONAL VARIANCE REQUEST:

To allow the proposed operation to move forward with less than the required number of parking spaces. [17.64 – Off Street Parking]

LOCATION MAP



AERIAL VIEW - NEIGHBORHOOD



AERIAL VIEW - PARCEL



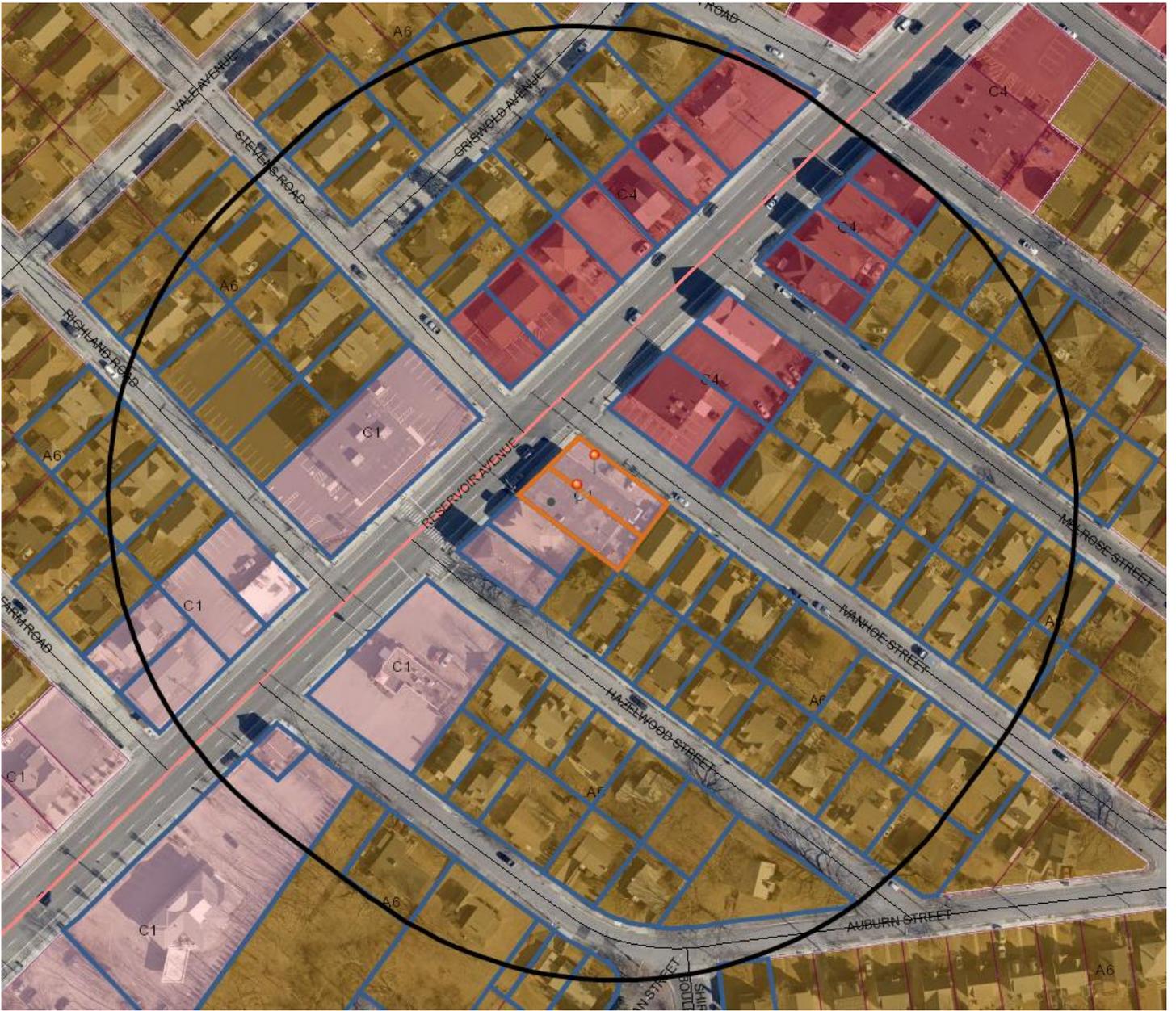
3-D VIEW (RESERVOIR AVENUE IN FOREGROUND)



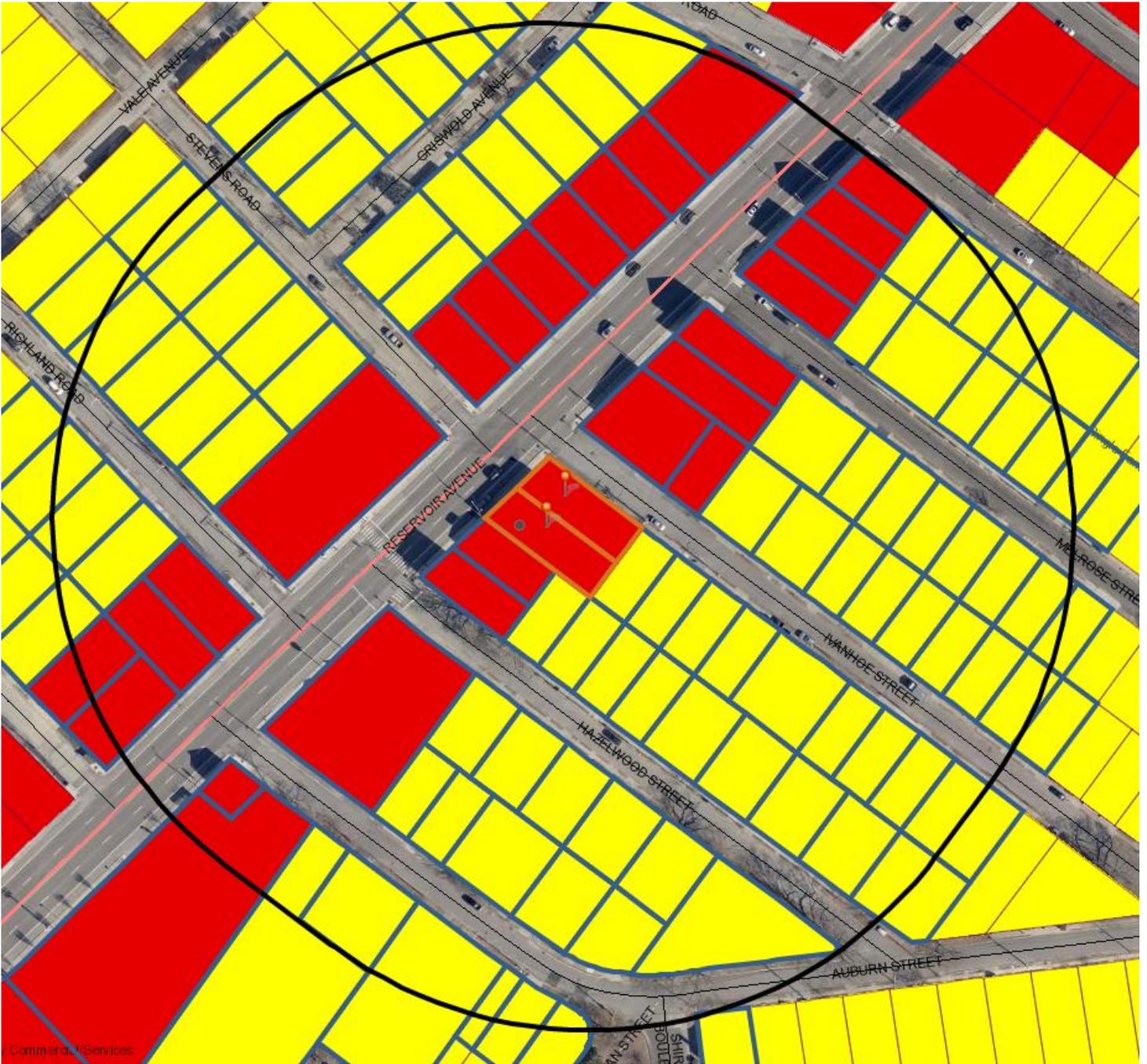
STREET VIEW



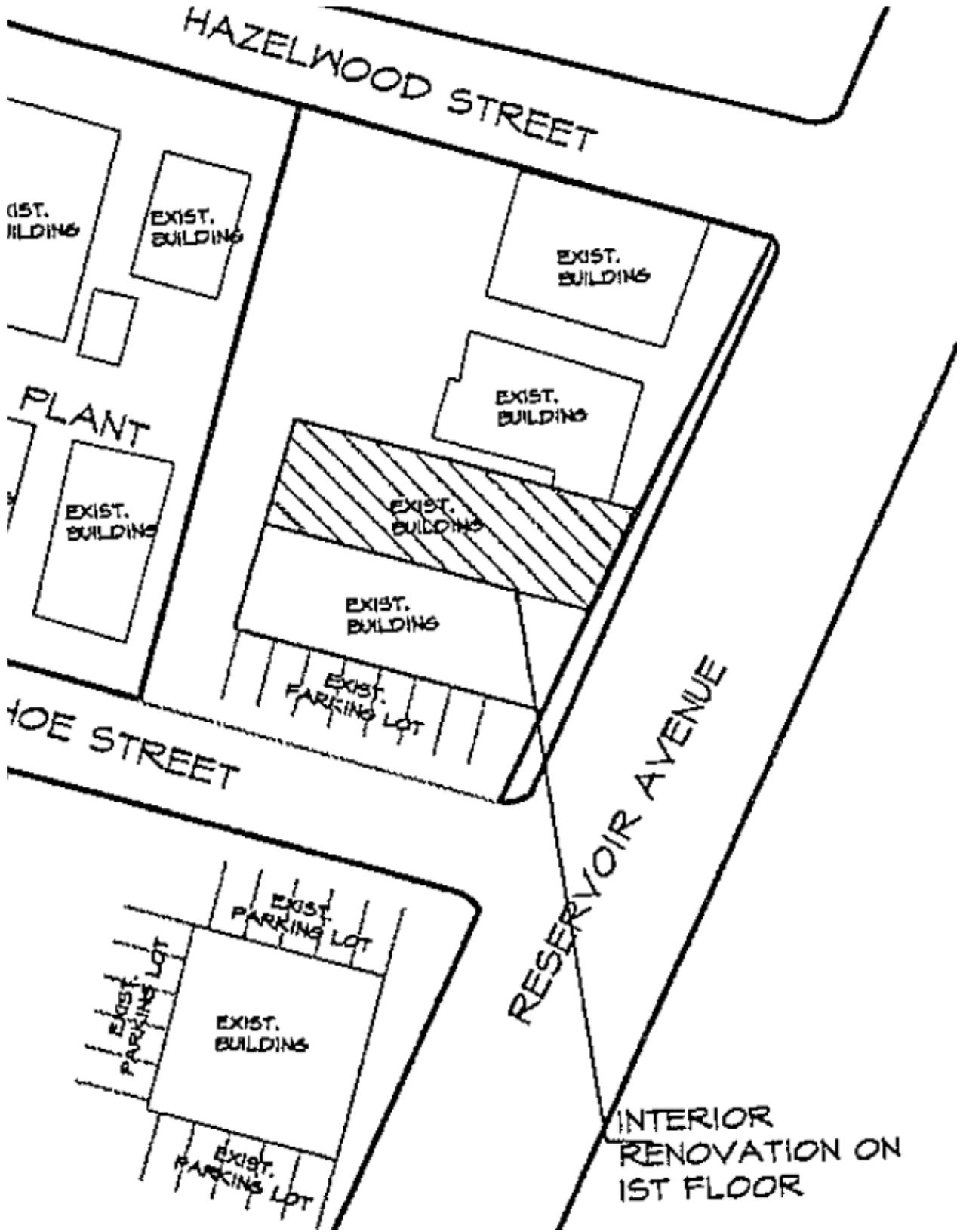
ZONING MAP



FUTURE LAND USE MAP



ARCHITECT PLAN



FINDINGS:

1. The applicant proposes to use a portion of a commercial building at 800-804 Reservoir Ave as a venue to host events, such as weddings, showers, birthday celebrations, and other social occasions. The property is the site of the former Rainbow Bakery.
2. The subject lot comprises 9,189 sq.ft. and is zoned C-1.
3. The property is surrounded by commercial uses to the north and south along Reservoir Ave., and residential uses directly to the east.
4. A "banquet facility" (the closest defined zoning use) is not allowed in the C-1 zone and it is only allowed in the C-4 and C-5 zones.
5. A "banquet facility" is defined in the Cranston zoning code as: "...an establishment which is rented by individuals or groups to accommodate private functions including, but not limited to, banquets, weddings, anniversaries and other similar celebrations. Such a use may include: 1) kitchen facilities for the preparation or catering of food; 2) the sale of alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption, only during scheduled events and not open to the general public; and 3) outdoor gardens or reception facilities."
6. Staff is of the view that a banquet facility is a more intense land use than a bakery as it relates to peak vehicle trip generation and peak parking needs.
7. The applicant has stated they will limit events to approximately 75 people.
8. The applicant has stated that most events would occur on weekends.
9. The applicant has stated that there will be no kitchen facilities included with this use and all food or beverage will be brought in from an outside source.
10. The property has 10 existing parking spaces. The existing parking spaces are non-conforming in their layout as they require cars to back out directly onto the public right-of-way. It is staff's understanding that broad relief from the parking code has been requested as part of this petition.
11. The 10 existing parking spaces serve the entire property, including the other commercial tenant space within this building.
12. The applicant has stated that they have agreed to lease an additional 15 parking spaces located on a nearby property. The ability to allow parking on a separate site is an authority granted to the Zoning Board of Review and the applicant has requested such consideration.
13. It is unclear based on the information provided how many parking spaces would be required by code for the subject property, inclusive of the proposed banquet facility and the other commercial tenant space on the property. Based on the fact that the applicant is seeking relief from the parking code, it is assumed that some amount of parking variance may be needed beyond the 10 on-site and 15 off-site spaces proposed.
14. The subject lot is located on Reservoir Avenue – a state-owned major arterial roadway in the City of Cranston. It is unclear if RIDOT would have any role in reviewing the proposed application based on the potential increase in traffic generation.
15. Although the Comprehensive Plan is not explicit in discussing the use of banquet facilities, the Future Land Use Map designation of this property of "Highway/Commercial Services" is supportive of heavier commercial uses. Therefore, staff finds the application is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
16. Staff is encouraged by the positive elements of this proposal, such as the growth of a new business within the City and the applicant's efforts to pursue off-site parking arrangements. However, staff has concerns about this application's compatibility with the surrounding residential properties based on the potential peak vehicle trip generation and peak parking needs. In weighing these differing factors, staff is of the view that the potential impacts to the surrounding residential properties does not lend itself to a positive recommendation on the Use Variance.

RECOMMENDATION:

Due to the finding that a Use Variance contains a high standard of review that has not been demonstrated by the applicant, staff recommends the Plan Commission provide a negative recommendation on this application to the Zoning Board of Review.