

Memo

To: Cranston Planning Commission  
From: Gregory S Guertin, MA – Senior Planner  
Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP – Planning Director  
Date: March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023  
Re: **“Cranston Print Works Site Redevelopment”**  
Master Plan - Major Land Development

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**Owner/App:** CPW True Storage, LLC & CPW Apartments, LLC  
**Location:** 1381 Cranston Street, AP 8, Lots 195, 1617, and 2711  
**Zone:** Existing: M-1 (Restricted Industry) – Proposed: M-1 *with conditions*  
**FLU:** Special Redevelopment Area

**Link to application materials:** <https://www.cranstonri.gov/plan-commission-4.4.23/>

## I. Proposal

### 1. Major Land Development Master Plan

This proposal seeks to redevelop the historic Cranston Print Works parcel into a mixed-use residential/commercial site located at assessor's Plat 8, Lots 195, 1617, and 2711. The owner/applicant is CPW True Storage, LLC & CPW Apartments, LLC (670 N. Commercial Street, Suite 303, Manchester, NH 03101). The combined existing parcels of land contain 1,834,045 +/- square feet (42.1 +/- acres). The parcels are currently zoned M-1 for Restricted Industry.

### 2. Change of Zone (Ordinance #1-23-04)

The proposal requires a change of zone from M-1 (Restricted Industry) to M-1 *with conditions* to regulate the permitted uses, allowed density (maximum 150 units), Off-Street Parking requirements, to allow the proposed building height, and to alter the dimensional regulations for signage on this site.

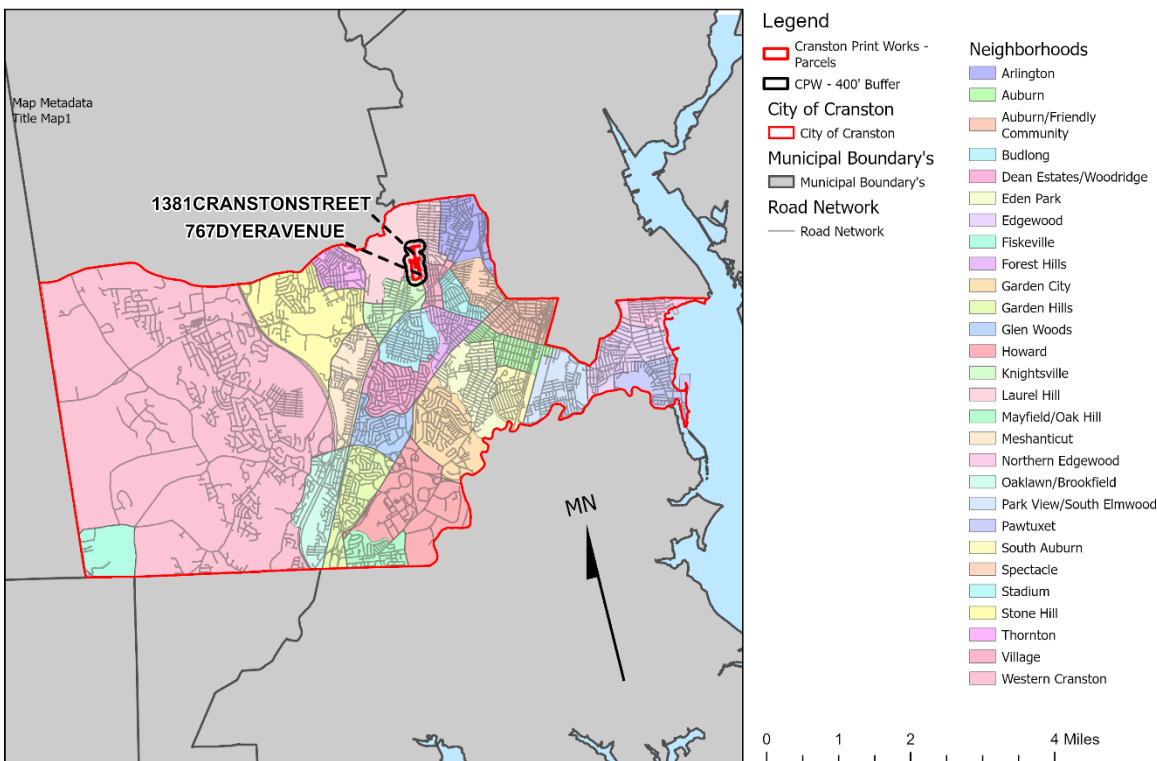
**This memo is intended to cover the MLD Master Plan application only.**

**A separate staff memo will be issued to address the Change of Zone ordinance.**

**The following maps are based upon the City's GIS which does not accurately reflect the full extent of the parcel as depicted on the applicant's submitted plans. These aerials are for illustrative purposes to help understand the context of the proposal.**

# LOCATION

**THIS MAP IS TO BE USED FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY**



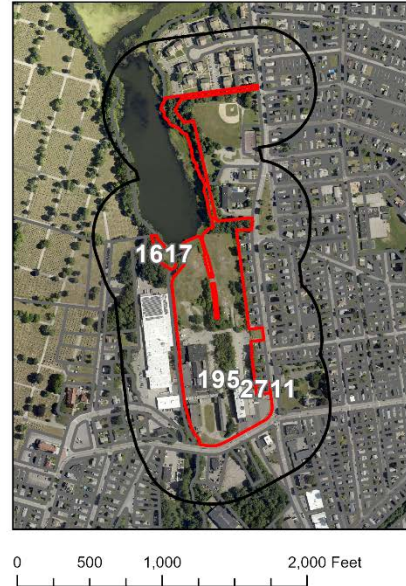
## AERIAL VIEW

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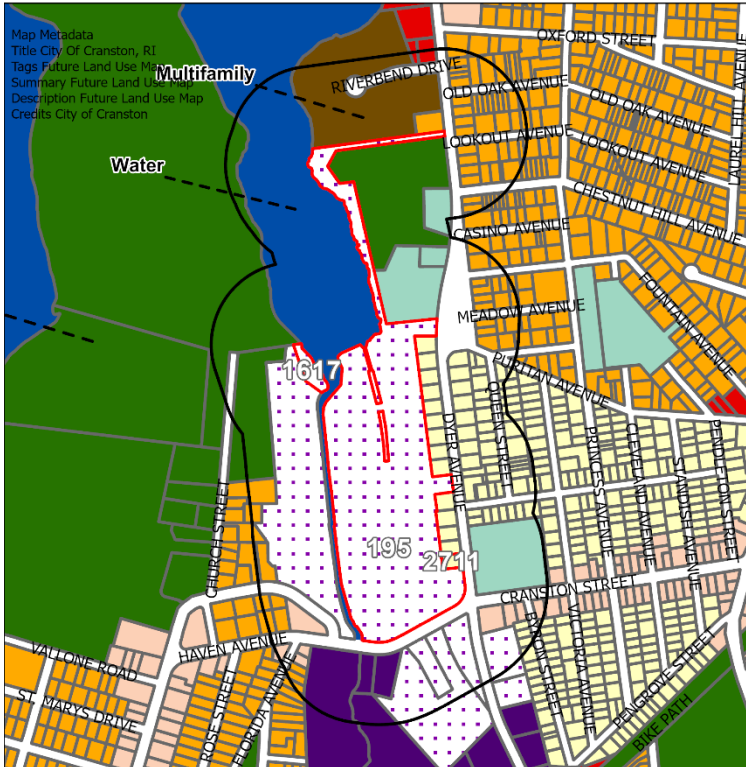
### Legend

- Citywide Parcels
- Cranston Print Works - Parcels
- CPW - 400' Buffer



## FUTURE LAND USE

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### Legend

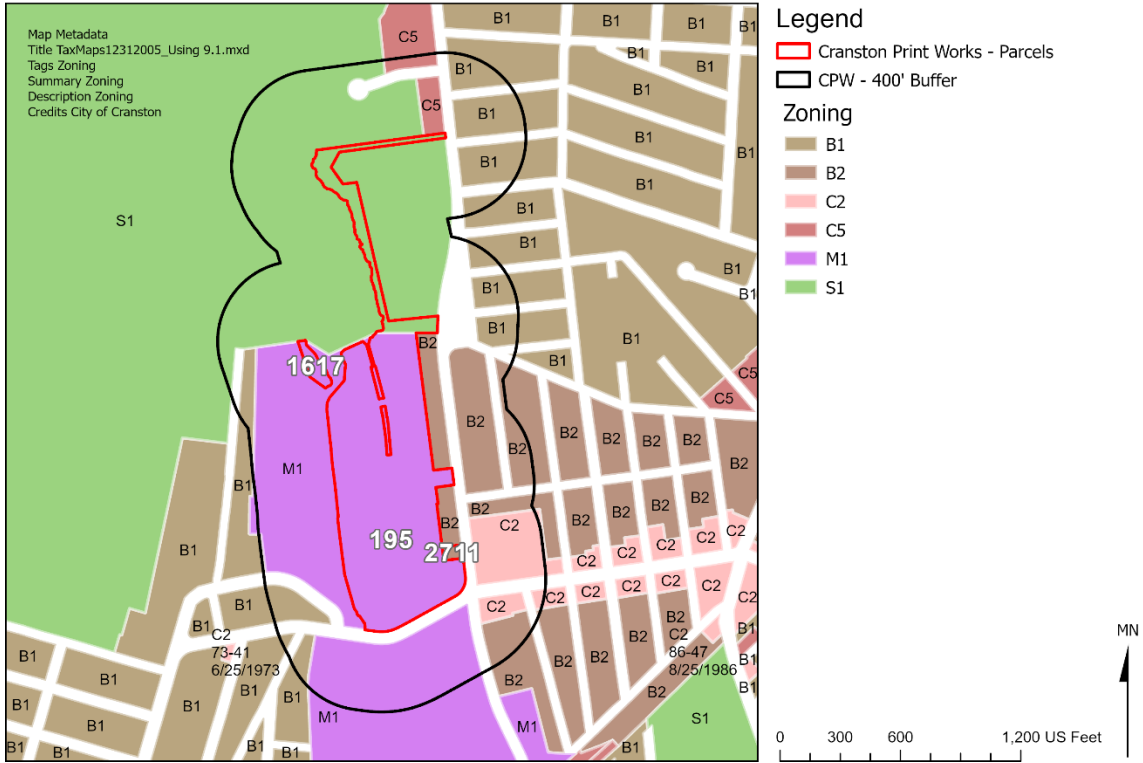
- Cranston Print Works - Parcels
- CPW - 400' Buffer
- Citywide Parcels

### Future Land Use

- Governmental/Institutional
- Highway Commercial/Services
- Industrial
- Multifamily
- Neighborhood Commercial/Services
- Open Space
- Residential Less Than 10.39 Units Per Acre
- Single/Two Family Residential Less Than 10.89 Units Per Acre
- Special Redevelopment Area
- Water

# ZONING

THIS MAP IS TO BE USED FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY



# 3-D AERIAL (facing northwest)



**3-D AERIAL (facing northwest)**



**3-D AERIAL (facing northeast)**



**3-D AERIAL (facing southeast)**



# SITE PLANS (color)



## PHOTOS



## PHOTOS





# PHOTOS



# PHOTOS



## PHOTOS



## PHOTOS



## PHOTOS



## PHOTOS



# PHOTOS



## **II. Documents which are part of the application**

1. Master Plan application signed by Mr. Chris Reynolds (owner of CPW True Storage, LLC & CPW Apartments, LLC) dated 2/6/2023.
2. Filing fee in the form of check #13080, in the amount of \$21,944.00 & check #13753 in the amount of \$5,362.40 (for Pre-Application fee and Master Plan Application Fee), from Contractor Construction, LLC.
3. Master Plan Major Land Development plan set entitled "Site Redevelopment" prepared by Allen & Major Associates, Inc.
4. 100' radius map, list of abutters and copies of the mailing labels.
5. Project narrative summary prepared by Allen & Major Associates, Inc. dated 1/26/2023
6. Drainage Summary prepared by Allen & Major Associates, Inc, dated 12/12/2022
7. Preliminary Traffic Scoping Assessment prepared by Vanasse & Associates Inc, dated 12/20/2022
8. Peer Review from Pare Engineering dated March 24, 2023
9. Peer Review Response from Vanasse dated March 30, 2023
10. Wetlands edge verification letter from RIDEM dated 12/16/2022
11. Sewer availability letter dated 11/06/2022
12. Providence Water availability letter dated 10/13/2022
13. Resume of Michael A, Malynowski, PE of Allen & Major Associates, Inc
14. Municipal Lien Certificates (3)

## **III. Surrounding land use and context**

*Analysis using the City of Cranston Geographic Information System indicates that:*

1. The subject parcel is in the Laurel Hill neighborhood of Cranston, situated at the intersection of Cranston Street and Dyer Avenue.
2. The surrounding neighborhood is a mix of B-1, B-2, C-2, C-5, M-1, and S-1 (Open Space).
3. The subject parcels elevations range from 82' in along the northeast side of the site to 50' along the southwest side of the site. There are steep slopes on the northeast, north and central areas of the site while the site is also moderately flat within the southern, northwest and north-northeast areas of the site.
4. The site is located adjacent to the Pocasset River along the western property line and is bounded by vertical stone and concrete retaining walls.
5. There is an isolated wetland flagged in the central portion of the site. The wetland and river edge were delineated by Applied Bio-Systems, Inc. on 4/15/2022 and field located by Allen & Major Associates, Inc.
6. Significant portions of the proposed development are located within the AE zone (100-yr floodplain).

## **IV. Staff / Agency Comments**

Pursuant to RIGL 45-23-41 A3, these plans were distributed for comment to the Providence Water Supply Board, Veolia Water, Public Works Department / Engineering Division, Building and Zoning Department, and the Fire Department. Additionally

planning staff met with members of the technical review committee on 11/14/22 to review these plans. Responses are as follows:

1. **The Providence Water Supply Board** – Has provided a letter regarding water availability.
2. **Veolia Water** – Has provided a letter regarding sewer availability.
3. **Public Works Department**
  - **Engineering & Traffic Safety Divisions** – Reviewed the plan and the Preliminary Traffic Scoping Assessment and provided the following comment: “It is the opinion of this office along with Director Bernardo that prior to further advancement of the proposed 1381 Cranston Street Mixed-Use Development project, a comprehensive traffic impact study and subsequent peer review be provided. The study is expected to be inclusive of all items outlined in the Vanasse & Associates interim traffic document dated December 20, 2022 in addition to traffic impacts associated with any proposed development within the study area.”
  - Following the peer review Traffic Safety stated “While the comments provided in the subject peer review by Pare Corp under sections 3, 5, & 6 are significant, it is the specific comment noted under section 6.c that is most concerning and, therefore, the City should seek mitigation measures [at the preliminary plan stage of review] from the developer(s).”
4. **Fire Department** – Reviewed the plan with staff and has no concerns at this time.
5. **Building and Zoning Department** – Reviewed the plan with staff and has no concerns at this time.

#### **IV. Interests of Others**

None to report currently.

#### **VI. Planning Analysis**

Much of the analysis which would be appropriate for and included in this section is reflected and included in the accompanying ordinance **#1-23-04** which can be found here: <https://www.cranstonri.gov/plan-commission-4.4.23/>

- *Existing Conditions and Historical Context*

The owners/applicants CPW Apartments, LLC and CPW True Storage, LLC have proposed a redevelopment project for the Cranston Print Works site. The proposal for this project would seek to rehabilitate the existing structures and site of historic significance to the City of Cranston that would otherwise continue to wither and degrade to a point beyond purposeful reuse if not adequately restored. This property housed active businesses since the early 1800's and up until an economic depression following the civil war. Since then, many of the mill buildings that had been on this site have been demolished and of those that are still intact today, only one remains in active use. This proposal to preserve the historic assets located on the is seen by planning staff as a clear public benefit.

The applicant intends to work with the Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Office to receive Historic Tax Credits to ensure that the existing buildings are adequately restored and put into meaningful use. The owners/applicants of this project have engaged in many such projects in and outside of the State of Rhode Island with positive outcomes that are worthy of note, such as: US Rubber Lofts (Providence, RI), Tourister Mill (Warren, RI), American Wire (Pawtucket, RI), et al.

- *Special Redevelopment Zone*

The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map designation for this site is a Special Redevelopment Area which is defined as “Areas in which the City anticipates undertaking redevelopment through mixed-planned development ordinances such as the Elmwood/Wellington industrial corridor, **the Cranston Printworks**, and the site of the former Trolley Barn;”. Furthermore, this scale of development would best fit under the Mixed-Use Planned Development – High Intensity category, which is described as “a *mixed-use zone(which) would be suited for predominantly mixed commercial development, with live/work space or artists’ lofts, and 45’-50’ building heights... It would also be suitable for encouraging significant redevelopment, and improved when it is adjacent to public transportation.*” in the Comprehensive Plan.

Staff would note that Special Redevelopment Zones, as defined in the Comprehensive Plan, call for a mix of residential and commercial uses, not industrial. However, of all the potential industrial uses, the applicant’s proposal to include self-storage and mini storage is seen by staff as the least injurious, obnoxious, or offensive industrial use possible to abut residential development. Self-storage is generally seen as a low-impact use; traffic impacts of self-storage is notoriously low, there are no significant parking needs, and there are typically no environmental impacts caused by the operation of self-storage facilities. Given the public benefit of preserving the historic mills, what uses are currently allowed by right within the site in an M-1 zone, and the low-impact nature of the proposed industrial use, staff find the proposed use of self-storage/mini-storage to be acceptable.

- *Consistency with the Surrounding Area*

The surrounding neighborhood is a mix of B-1, B-2, C-2, C-5, M-1 and S-1 (Open Space). There are approximately 50 two-family homes, 20 single family homes, 10 multi-family buildings, and a mix of industrial, commercial, and municipal facilities. There is no residential density requirement for Special Redevelopment Areas’. Staff did however analyze the subject parcel against the surrounding residential parcels to provide some context for consistency with the nearby residential neighborhood. The applicant is proposing 129 units as shown on their site plans with 150-dwelling unit maximum identified in Proposed Ordinance #1-23-04. Currently, 5 of the units are proposed as 3-bedrooms, 94 of the units are proposed to have 2-bedrooms and 30 of the units are proposed to have one-bedroom each. The proposed density is 3.06 units per acre for the site as a whole and 7.22 units per acre when using the upland area (total acreage of developable land). If the applicant were to eventually meet the full allotment of 150 units the density for the site as measured by units per acre would be 3.6 units per acre for the site as a whole and 8.4 units per acre when using the upland area (total acreage of developable land). Those calculations are all well under what the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map calls for density within the surrounding neighborhoods within a 400’ buffer of the subject parcels which have been categorized as residential less than 10.39 units per acre and single or two family residential less than 10.89 units per acre.

- *Streetscape value & aesthetics*

New additions, notably the newly developed self-storage and mini-storage components of the proposal will mostly be obscured from the Dyer Avenue with the exception of one building proposed to be located at the corner of the parcel at the intersection of Cranston Street. Staff feels that special consideration should be provided to the design of this building to ensure that it fits with the character of the area, especially in regard to the genuine historic asset of the Sprague Mansion site.

- *Traffic Impact and Access*

Per the request of DPW Director Richard Bernardo and our Traffic Safety Division the applicant has provided a Traffic Impact and Access Study for this proposal on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. A peer review has been conducted by Pare Corporation and submitted to the City and the applicant for review on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The applicants traffic engineer responded to the peer review to address the concerns highlighted by the peer review on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Planning staff anticipate coordination with Engineering Division staff, Traffic Safety Staff and the applicant to address these concerns prior to the preliminary plan stage of review. All documents and correspondence referenced above can be found on the planning departments website: <https://www.cranstonri.gov/plan-commission-4.4.23/>

- *Off-Street Parking*

There are 270 parking spaces proposed on the site plan, 258 being allocated to the multi-family and 12 for Self-Storage/Mini-Storage. City Code Section 17.64 Off-Street Parking stipulates that multifamily uses provide 2 parking spaces per unit. The proposal meets that requirement with 2.00 (two) spaces per dwelling unit. Planning staff have no concerns with either of these aspects of the proposal.

Regarding the off-street parking spaces the applicant has identified to be allocated the self-storage and mini-storage component of the project. This number differs slightly from the 10 parking spaces allocated for this use in Proposed Ordinance #1-23-04. The site plans provided at the next Preliminary Plan stage of the Major Land Development process should mirror what is approved in Proposed Ordinance #1-23-04.

City code dictates that industrial uses require “one space for each employee-used vehicle or one space for each four employees employed at maximum employment.” The applicant has stated that only one employee will be on station to oversee the self-storage and mini-storage component of the development. Therefore the applicant has stated that they will be providing parking spaces in addition to what city code requires. **It is planning staffs view that this is more than enough parking for the proposed use and would recommend either reducing the number of spaces allocated for the self-storage and mini-storage component of this development or approving the proposed allotment as stated in Proposed Ordinance #1-23-04.**

- *Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan*

Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan goals and policies:



LUG-2 – Promote mixed use (commercial, industrial, and residential) development that will:

- Focus on a few key redevelopment sites;
- Improve the quality of new development;
- Incorporate ‘smart growth’ principles.

HA-3 – Encourage Housing that is mixed into commercial projects.

HG -3 – Achieve a balance between economic development and housing in the City.

HP-3 – Continue to identify and implement appropriate economic incentive programs to encourage historic preservation and rehabilitation.

HP-3.1 – Provide housing resources to support the range of jobs that reflects the City’s economic base and encourage the development of housing at levels that are consistent with household purchasing power.

HP-3.2 – Maintain the stability of established neighborhoods in connection with continued economic development and revitalization: in particular, protect neighborhoods abutting the City’s major commercial corridors from adverse impacts arising from incompatible uses.

HG-4 – Promote housing opportunity for a wide range of household types and income levels.

HP-4.1 – Maintain a varied housing stock, with units of different age, size and type that are affordable to a wide range of incomes.

HP-4.2 – Identify potential sites for redevelopment options for future residential use, and mixed use.

HP-6 – Continue to work with private property owners to encourage preservation of known archaeological and historic sites on their land.

## **VII. Waivers and Variances**

None to report currently.

## **VIII. Findings of Fact**

An orderly, thorough, and expeditious technical review of this Master Plan has been conducted. Property owners within a 100’ radius have been duly notified via first class mail, a display advertisement was published in the Cranston Herald on 3/22/23 and the meeting agenda has been properly posted.

Staff has reviewed this Master Plan application for conformance with required standards set forth in RIGL Section 45-23-60, as well as the City of Cranston’s Subdivision and Land Development Regulations and finds as follows:

*RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(1) states, “The proposed development is consistent with the comprehensive community plan and/or has satisfactorily addressed the issues where there may be inconsistencies.”*

1. The proposed Major Land Development is consistent with the City of Cranston Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM). . The proposed density is 3.06 units per acre for the site as a whole and 7.22 units per acre when using the upland area (total acreage of developable land). If the applicant were to eventually meet the full allotment of 150 units the density for the site as measured by units per acre would be 3.6 units per acre for the site as a whole and 8.4 units per acre when using the upland area (total acreage of developable land). Those calculations are all well under what the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map calls for density within the surrounding neighborhoods within a 400' buffer of the subject parcels which have been categorized as residential less than 10.39 units per acre and single or two family residential less than 10.89 units per acre.
  
2. Additionally, Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan goals and policies:
  - a. LUG-2 – Promote mixed use (commercial, industrial, and residential) development that will:
    - i. Focus on a few key redevelopment sites;
    - ii. Improve the quality of new development;
    - iii. Incorporate 'smart growth' principles.
    - iv.
  - b. HA-3 – Encourage Housing that is mixed into commercial projects.
  - c. HG -3 – Achieve a balance between economic development and housing in the City.
  - d. HP-3 – Continue to identify and implement appropriate economic incentive programs to encourage historic preservation and rehabilitation.
  - e. HP-3.1 – Provide housing resources to support the range of jobs that reflects the City's economic base and encourage the development of housing at levels that are consistent with household purchasing power.
  - f. HP-3.2 – Maintain the stability of established neighborhoods in connection with continued economic development and revitalization: in particular, protect neighborhoods abutting the City's major commercial corridors from adverse impacts arising from incompatible uses.
  - g. HG-4 – Promote housing opportunity for a wide range of household types and income levels.
  - h. HP-4.1 – Maintain a varied housing stock, with units of different age, size and type that are affordable to a wide range of incomes.
  - i. HP-4.2 – Identify potential sites for redevelopment options for future residential use, and mixed use.
  - j. HP-6 – Continue to work with private property owners to encourage preservation of known archaeological and historic sites on their land.

*RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(2) states, "The proposed development is in compliance with the standards and provisions of the municipality's zoning ordinance."*

1. To the extent that any development of the subject property 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.

*RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(3) states, “There will be no significant negative environmental impacts from the proposed development as shown on the **final** plan, with all required conditions for approval.” (Emphasis added)*

1. This finding pertains specifically to the final plan; however, no significant environmental impacts are anticipated.
2. The project will be subject to all state and local regulations pertaining to environmental impacts and wetlands.
3. The Rhode DEM's Natural Heritage map shows that there are no known rare species located on the site.

*RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(4) states, “The subdivision, as proposed, will not result in the creation of individual lots with any physical constraints to development that building on those lots according to pertinent regulations and building standards would be impracticable. (See definition of Buildable lot). Lots with physical constraints to development may be created only if identified as permanent open space or permanently reserved for a public purpose on the approved, recorded plans.”*

1. The proposed development will not result in the creation of individual lots with such physical constraints to development that building on those lots according to pertinent regulations and building standards would be impracticable.
2. The design and location of building lots, utilities, drainage and other improvements will conform to local regulations for mitigation of flooding and soil erosion, details of which will be reviewed during the Preliminary Plan phase of the application.

*RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(5) states, “All proposed land developments and all subdivision lots have adequate and permanent physical access to a public street. Lot frontage on a public street without physical access shall not be considered in compliance with this requirement.”*

1. The properties in question has adequate permanent physical access to a Dyer Avenue and Cranston Street.

## **IX. Recommendation**

Staff finds this proposal consistent with the standards for required findings of fact set forth in RIGL Section 45-23-60 as well as with the City of Cranston's Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the findings of fact documented above and **approve** the Master Plan submittal subject to the condition denoted below.

## **X. Conditions of approval**

1. Applicant shall obtain approval of the conditional special zone by the City Council prior to application to the Development Plan Review Committee for Preliminary Plan consideration.
2. Applicant shall obtain all necessary approval from outside State agencies prior to application of the Preliminary Plan application to the City Plan Commission.