

## Memo –

To: Cranston Planning Commission  
From: Gregory S Guertin, MA – Senior Planner  
Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP – Planning Director  
Date: March 31, 2023  
Re: Staff Memo for **Ordinance #1-23-04** Entitled “Zoning” (**CHANGE OF ZONE – 1381 Cranston Street and 767 Dyer Avenue**)

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### I. Ordinance Summaries

The applicants and owners (of AP 8 Lots 195, 1617, and 2711) CPW Apartments, LLC and CPW True Storage, LLC propose:

- **#1-23-04 Entitled “Zoning” (CHANGE OF ZONE – 1381 Cranston Street and 767 Dyer Avenue)**

An ordinance to amend Chapter 17 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled “Zoning” to change of zone from M-1 (Industrial Business) to M-1 *with conditions* to regulate the permitted uses, density, height, off-street parking, and signage allowed on the subject parcels.

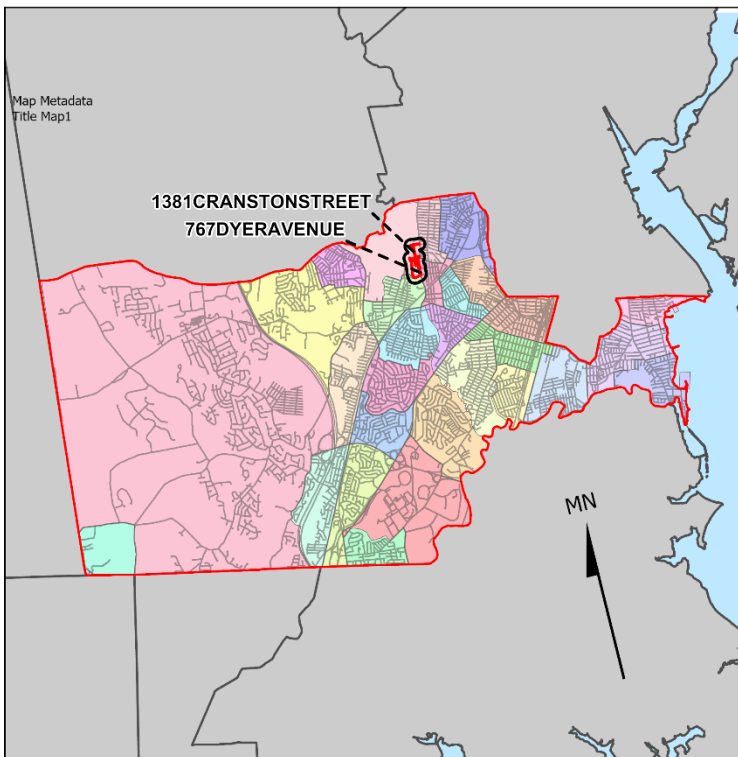
**There is a Major Land Development (MLD) Master Plan application scheduled to be heard by the City Plan Commission on 4/4/23. Please be aware that this memo is issued for the ordinance only. A separate staff memo has been issued to address the MLD application.**

**The ordinances and MLD Master Plan documents are available here:**

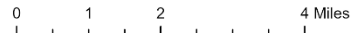
<https://www.cranstonri.gov/plan-commission-4.4.23/>

## LOCATION

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

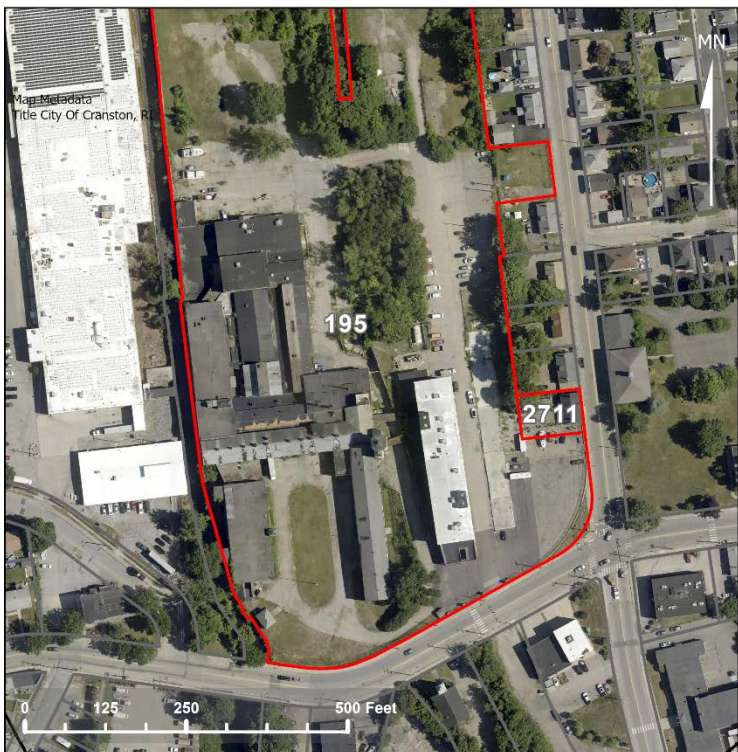


- Legend**
- Cranston Print Works - Parcels
  - CPW - 400' Buffer
  - City of Cranston**
  - City of Cranston
  - Municipal Boundary's**
  - Municipal Boundary's
  - Road Network**
  - Road Network
- Neighborhoods**
- Arlington
  - Auburn
  - Auburn/Friendly Community
  - Budlong
  - Dean Estates/Woodridge
  - Eden Park
  - Edgewood
  - Fiskeville
  - Forest Hills
  - Garden City
  - Garden Hills
  - Glen Woods
  - Howard
  - Knightsville
  - Laurel Hill
  - Mayfield/Oak Hill
  - Meshanticut
  - Northern Edgewood
  - Oaklawn/Brookfield
  - Park View/South Elmwood
  - Pawtuxet
  - South Auburn
  - Spectacle
  - Stadium
  - Stone Hill
  - Thornton
  - Village
  - Western Cranston

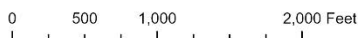
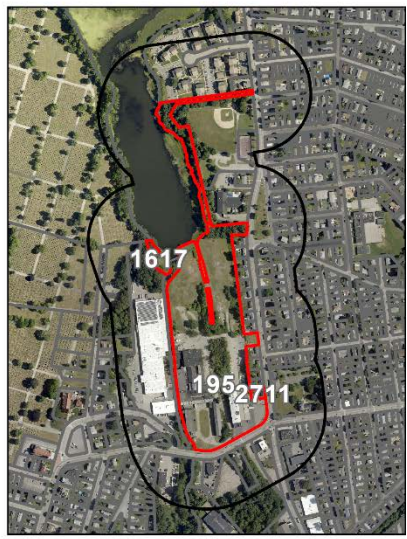


## AERIAL VIEW

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

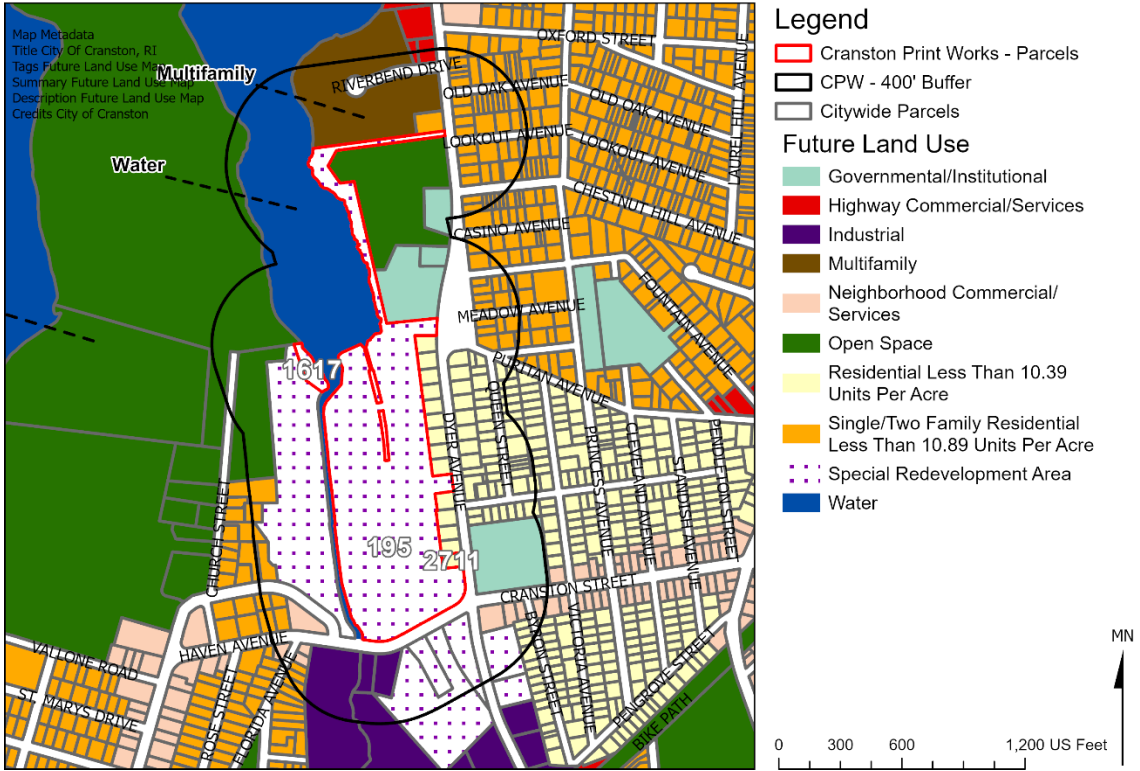


- Legend**
- Citywide Parcels
  - CPW - 400' Buffer
  - Cranston Print Works - Parcels



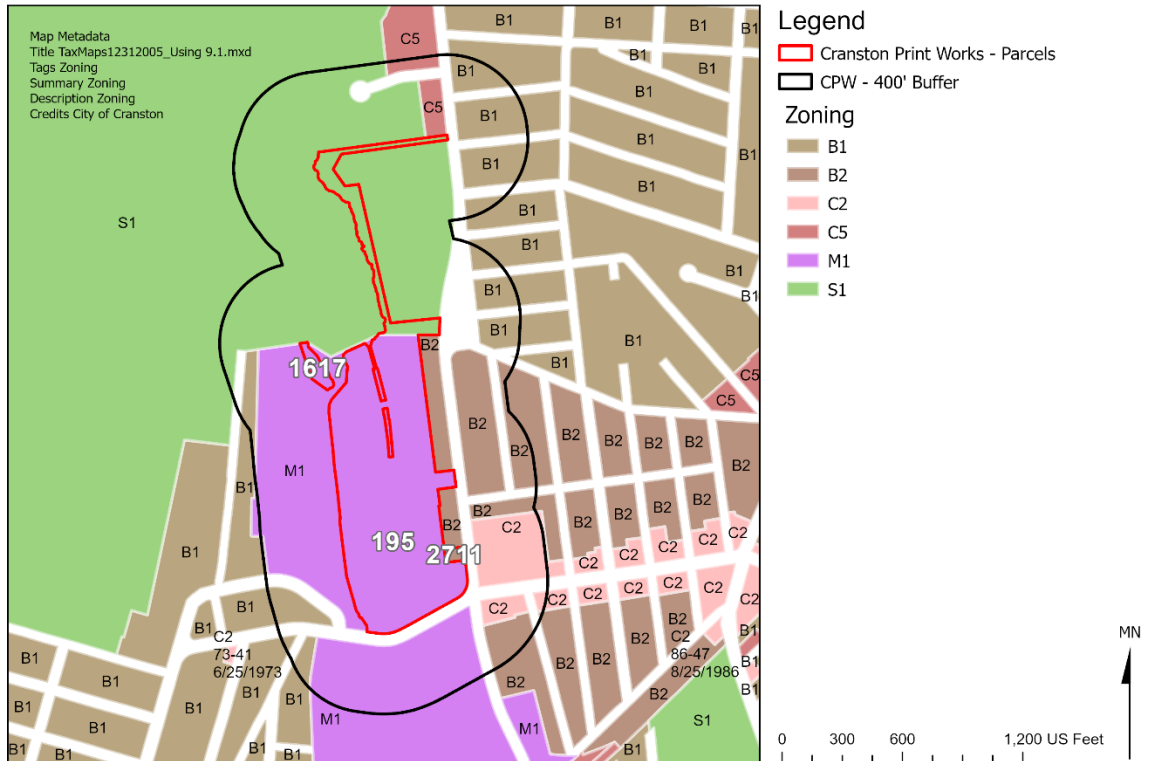
## FUTURE LAND USE

THIS MAP IS TO BE USED FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY



## 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. Planning Analysis

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. 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. Staff believe that Ordinance #1-23-04 adequately establishes a regulatory pathway for this project which would provide much needed housing, salvage a site of historic significance to the city, and reinvigorate an underutilized parcel of land with proposed uses that are of lesser nuisance to the surrounding area than those that are currently allowed by-right on the property.

### **#1-23-04 Entitled “Zoning” (CHANGE OF ZONE – 1381 Cranston Street and 767 Dyer Avenue)**

The applicant is seeking a change of zone for the subject lots, from an M-1 zone to an M-1 zone with conditions. Those conditions have been written into the proposed ordinance. This section provides a brief analysis of each proposed condition.

#### **1. Permissible Uses.**

- a. All uses (including self-storage and mini-storage) established in the City Code in the Schedule of Uses established in Section 17.20.030 for the M-1 industrial zone as a matter of right or by special use permit as of the effective date of this ordinance shall also apply to the Cranston Print Works Project.***

**Analysis:** The M-1 zone encompasses a broad array of industrial uses allowed by-right; many of which may not be appropriate or compatible with the multi-family component of this proposal. However, it should be noted that the site’s current industrial designation already allows for all uses permitted within the M-1 zoning designation as a matter of right.

Staff have no concerns with the current proposed uses of self-storage or mini-storage and do not foresee the creation of any additional nuisance by allowing these specific uses on this site regardless of retaining the base industrial zoning designation. The proposed M-1 with conditions is a suitable designation for this site. It should be noted that any future proposal for a project of scale, even if allowed by right in an industrial zone, would still be subject to review by development plan review committee to consider issues related to compatibility with the currently proposed uses on-site and the surrounding area.



***b. In addition, multi-family dwelling units and related amenities for residents such as a health, fitness club shall be allowed as a matter of right as if set forth as a permitted use within the M-1 Zoning District.***

**Analysis:** Staff have no concerns with the project as proposed with regards to compatibility of the amenity uses within the context of the subject parcels nor the surrounding area.

Housing is a much-needed asset in the City of Cranston and this project seeks to add 129 units to our housing supply. Broadly speaking this is seen as a net benefit for the city. Normally, with a project of this scale, the city would require a certain percentage of the proposed units to be deed restricted affordable. In lieu of requiring affordable housing on this site, the public benefit afforded by this proposal would be the preservation of a historic building that would otherwise further degrade to a point beyond purposeful reuse. This property hosted 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. The City's 2010 Comprehensive Plan – Element 5A. Historic Preservation: Action 6 calls for *Encouraging Private Preservation* by working with property owners to encourage preservation of known archeological and historic sites on their land. This proposal to preserve the historic assets located on the is seen by planning staff as a clear public benefit.

***2. Density. A maximum of one hundred fifty (150) dwelling units shall be permitted, Lot area requirements prescribed in Code Section 17.20.090 entitled Specific Requirements shall not apply.***

**Analysis:** The applicant is proposing 129 units as shown on their site plans. However, it is difficult to hold the applicant to such a specific number at this conceptual Master Plan phase, so a bit of flexibility was afforded with the 150-dwelling unit maximum. 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. It should also be noted that the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use map does not specify a specific density allotment for the subject parcels.

### ***3. Dimensional Regulations***

***The subject property shall comply with the intensity regulations set forth in Section 17.20.120 of this code entitled "Schedule of Intensity Regulations" for the M-1 zoning district with the exception of the maximum building height and maximum lot coverage restriction. The maximum building height shall be four (4) stories and fifty (50) feet with an additional ten (10) feet for roof top mechanical equipment. This***

***height limitation shall not apply to the existing bell tower on the premises. The maximum lot coverage shall be sixty (60) percent.***

**Analysis:** The city Code generally sets a maximum of three (3) stories or 35' building height citywide. The number of 50' was not picked at random, but is specifically recommended by the Comprehensive Plan's description of the Mixed-Use Plan Development – High Intensity (MPD-H) future land use category of Special Redevelopment Areas, "This mixed-use zone would be suited for predominantly mixed commercial development with live/work space or artists' lofts, and 45'-50' building heights" (p. 45). The comprehensive plan also goes on to name Cranston Print Works specifically as a potential location for this sort of development. Based on the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map designation of this site as a Special Redevelopment Area and that the characteristics of the proposal align with the description of the MPD-H category, a height of 50' aligns with the Comprehensive Plan's intention for this site.

Given the specific proposed uses of multi-family dwelling units and self-storage/mini-storage, staff does not believe that one additional story of height is going to negatively impact the area. Based on the current proposal, the proposed maximum height of 50' is inextricably tied to the existing and proposed buildings as depicted in the proposal. It should again be noted that any future proposal for a project of scale, even if allowed by right in an industrial zone, would be subject to review by development plan review to consider issues related to compatibility with the currently proposed uses on-site and the surrounding area. and the requested alterations to the dimensional regulations for the subject parcels.

### ***3. Off-Street Parking.***

***Off-Street parking shall be provided at no less than a ratio of 2.00 (two) spaces dwelling unit. Commercial uses, including self-storage and mini-storage shall provide a minimum of ten (10) off street parking spaces. Off street parking spaces may be designed to be nine (9) feet by eighteen (18) feet consistent with acceptable parking design standards.***

**Analysis:** 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. The proposal also meets city code regarding the dimensions of the parking spaces. The applicant proposes that the "off street parking spaces may be designed to be nine (9) feet by eighteen (18) feet. Planning staff have no concerns with either of these aspects of the proposal.

Regarding the ten (10) off street parking spaces the applicant has proposed for the self-storage and mini-storage component of the project; 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 more than 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 the ordinance.**



**4. Signage.**

Any signs on the subject property existing as of the date of the adoption of this Ordinance shall be allowed as a matter of right. The existing signage may be replaced in kind with a sign of equal or smaller square footage and/or at an equal or lessor height and width. Identification or incidental signage such as directory or circulating signage, no parking, entrance, exit, loading zone, and other similar directives are permitted to include identification or the logo of the property owner. Internal incidental or directional signage within the premises not visible to the public streets shall not be limited by the terms of this ordinance. This provision shall apply whether or not the incidental signage is visible or legible from a position from outside the subject property.

In lieu of Section 17.72.10 (4) – Signs. M-1 Industrial District, the following table shall be utilized for each sign in the Cranston Print Works Project.

<i>Sign Type</i>	<i>Maximum Area ****</i>	<i>Maximum Height</i>	<i>Minimum Setback</i>	<i>Minimum Vertical Clearance From Sidewalk</i>	<i>Minimum Vertical Clearance from Public Street</i>
<i>Monument</i>	<i>100 sf</i>	<i>8 ft</i>	<i>2 ft</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Wall/Building Marker (front façade)</i>	<i>2 sf per for each lineal foot of the front façade</i>	<i>15 ft</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Wall/Building Marker (side or rear of building)</i>	<i>2 sf per for each lineal foot of the building frontage on which the sign is located</i>	<i>15 ft</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Canopy</i>	<i>40 sf</i>	<i>9 sf</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>9 ft</i>	<i>12 ft</i>
<i>Identification/Incidental</i>	<i>30 sf</i>	<i>8 ft</i>	<i>5 ft</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Window</i>	<i>&lt;/=50% of window area</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Projecting (blade)</i>	<i>20 sf</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>9 ft</i>	<i>14 ft</i>
<i>Freestanding/Sign</i>	<i>300 sf</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>5 ft for Free Standing</i>		
<i>Roof, Integral</i>	<i>See definition</i>				

\*\*\*\* Note that the maximum area for signage within the district shall be per side of each sign.

**Analysis:** The proposed signage table differs from city code in multiple ways. The below table was produced by staff to illustrate those differences. The “M1” column shows the

allowed dimensions for each sign type in an M1 zone. The “**PROP**” column shows the proposed dimensions for each sign type as depicted in the table included in the ordinance. The cells highlighted in yellow indicate a difference, or potential difference, between the differences in what is allowed in an M-1 zone per city code and what is being proposed in the ordinance.

Sign Type	Maximum Area (sqft)		Maximum Height		Minimum Setback		Min Vert Clearance from Sidewalk		Min Vert Clearance from Pub. Street	
	M1	PROP	M1	PROP	M1	PROP	M1	PROP	M1	PROP
Monument	50	100	4	8	2	2	NA	NA	NA	NA
Building Marker	45	2 sf per for each lineal foot of the front façade	10	15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Canopy	40	40	9	9	NA	NA	9	9	12	12
Incidental	4	30	6	8	5	5	NA	NA	NA	NA
Identification	10	30	6	8	5	5	NA	NA	NA	NA
Window	<=50% of window area	<=50% of window area	NA	15	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Wall	45	2 sf per for each lineal foot of the front façade	20	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Projecting	20	20	18	NA	NA	NA	9	9	14	14
Freestanding	50	300	15	NA	5	5	NA	NA	NA	NA
Billboard	300	NA	12	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

In general terms, staff has no major concerns with the signage package as proposed given the size and complexity of the site. Staff does not believe that the applicant will utilize the upper reaches of these signage allotments and believes the applicant has shown themselves to install good quality and aesthetically pleasing signage at their past developments and anticipate similar results on this site.

**Comprehensive Plan Consistency Analysis:**

Staff find that the Ordinances provides a regulatory framework for the Cranston Print Works Project that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Staff have identified the following non-exclusive list of goals and policies which are consistent with the ordinances and associated project:



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.

Staff also finds that the proposal realizes the potential of the Mixed-Use Plan Development – High Intensity FLUM designation. The description fits the proposed project and is supported by the Land Use Element (p. 36).

### **III. Findings per City Code §17.120.030**

#### (A): Consistency with the Cranston Comprehensive Plan 2010:

There are a significant number of Comprehensive Plan goals and policies that are in support of a positive consideration of both Ordinance #4-22-04 and #4-22-05, including but not limited to LUG-2, HA-3, HG-3, HP-3.1, HP-3.2, HG-4, HP4.1, HP-4.2, and HG-6. For these reasons, **Ordinance #1-23-04 is consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan.**

#### (B). Recognition and Consideration of the Purposes of Zoning in City Code §17.04.010:

The general purposes of zoning as prescribed by city Code Section §17.04.010 have been recognized and considered in review of the proposed ordinances. The ordinances are found to be consistent with the general purposes of zoning.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

##### **Ordinance #1-23-04 Entitled “Zoning” (CHANGE OF ZONE – 1381 Cranston Street and 767 Dyer Avenue)**

Due to the finding that the rezone from M-1 to M-1 *with conditions* is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies, would directly address current housing and economic development needs of the city, would preserve a historically significant site to the city, is consistent with the surrounding area and is generally consistent with the purposes of zoning as detailed in City Code Section §17.04.010, staff recommends that the Plan Commission send a **positive recommendation** on Ordinance **1-23-04** to the City Council.