



Memo

To: Cranston City Plan Commission
From: Gregory Guertin, Senior Planner
Date: January 31, 2023
Re: **“Gladstone City Elementary School”**
Master Plan - Major Land Development

Owner/App: City of Cranston/Cranston School District
Location: 50 Gladstone Street, AP 7-4, Lot 2357
Zone: B-1 (Residential with at least 8,000 sq.ft.)
FLU: Government/Institutional

I. Proposal

The project will entail the demolition and removal of the existing Gladstone Elementary School building and the construction of a new 109,970 sq ft. Gladstone Elementary School building and associated site improvements in its place. The total area of the site is 7.82 acres which will contain the new school as well as existing site elements, such as a playground and associated parking lot along Lawrence Street and the existing driveway along the east side of the site, between Asia Street and Gladstone Street.

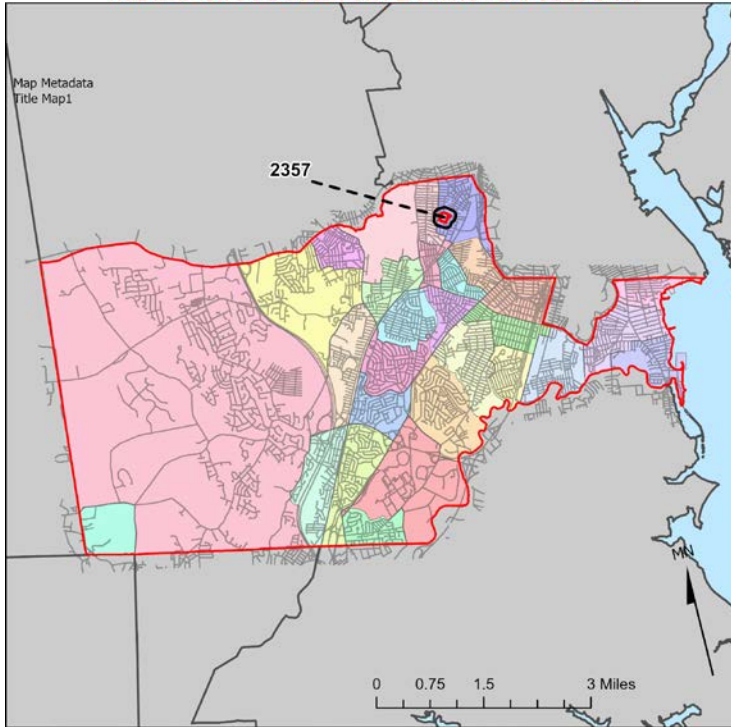
The use of a public school and public playgrounds is allowed by-right at this location. The project is requesting a dimensional variance for building height detailed within the planning analysis section of this memo. The variance is also addressed as part of a separate, standalone staff memo available on the City's Planning Department website.

The Plan Commission is charged with reviewing and rendering a decision on this Master Plan - Major Land Development as well as providing a recommendation on the dimensional variance for building height to the Zoning Board of Review.

There are two memos for this project, that utilize much of the same staff analysis and justification. This is being done to ensure that the proper information and findings are being memorialized for each separate request for the purpose of the record.

LOCATION

THIS MAP IS TO BE USED FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY

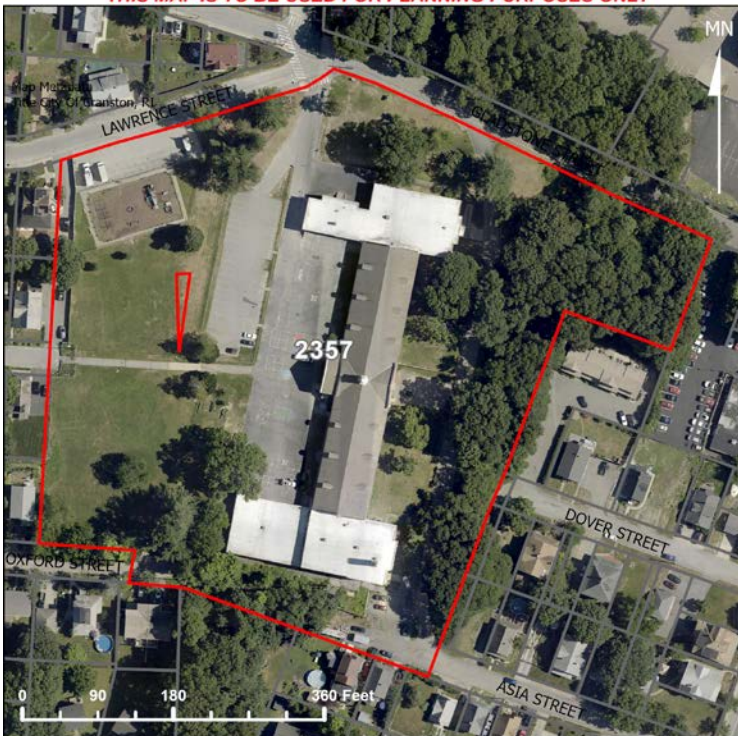


Legend

- Streets**
- Streets
- Gladstone Elementary School**
- Gladstone Elementary School
 - Gladstone Elementary School 400 ft Buffer
- City of Cranston**
- City of Cranston
- Municipal Boundary's**
- Municipal Boundary's
- 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
 - Meshanicut
 - 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



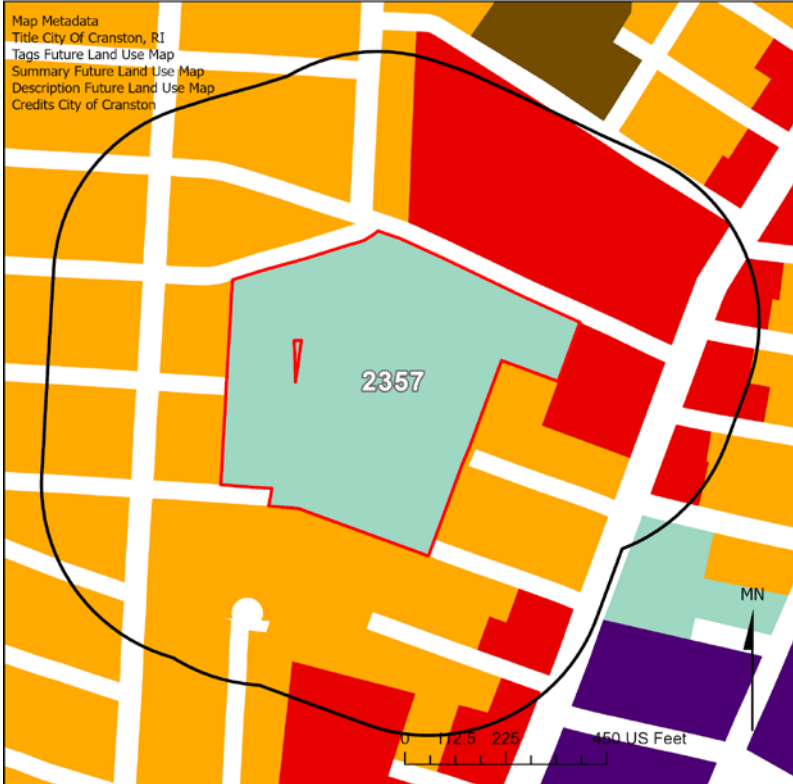
Legend

- Gladstone Elementary School
- Gladstone Elementary School 400 ft Buffer
- Citywide Parcels
- Streets



FUTURE LAND USE

THIS MAP IS TO BE USED FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY



Legend

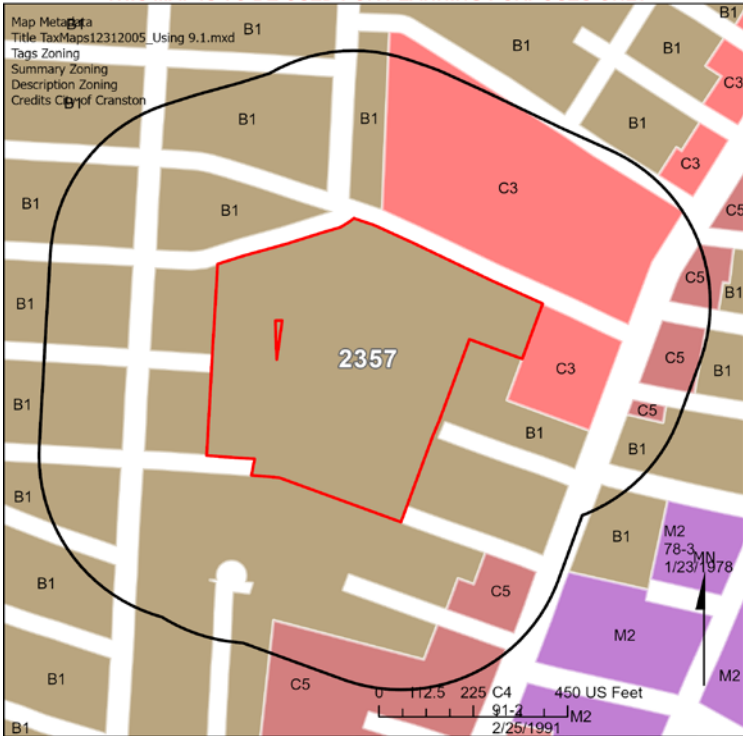
- Gladstone Elementary School
- Gladstone Elementary School 400 ft Buffer

Future Land Use

- Governmental/Institutional
- Highway Commercial/Services
- Industrial
- Multifamily
- Single/Two Family Residential
Less Than 10.89 Units Per Acre

ZONING

THIS MAP IS TO BE USED FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY



Legend

- Gladstone Elementary School
- Gladstone Elementary School 400 ft Buffer

Zoning

- B1
- C3
- C4
- C5
- M2

3-D VIEW



STREET VIEW (From Gladstone Street)



STREET VIEW (From Lawrence Street)

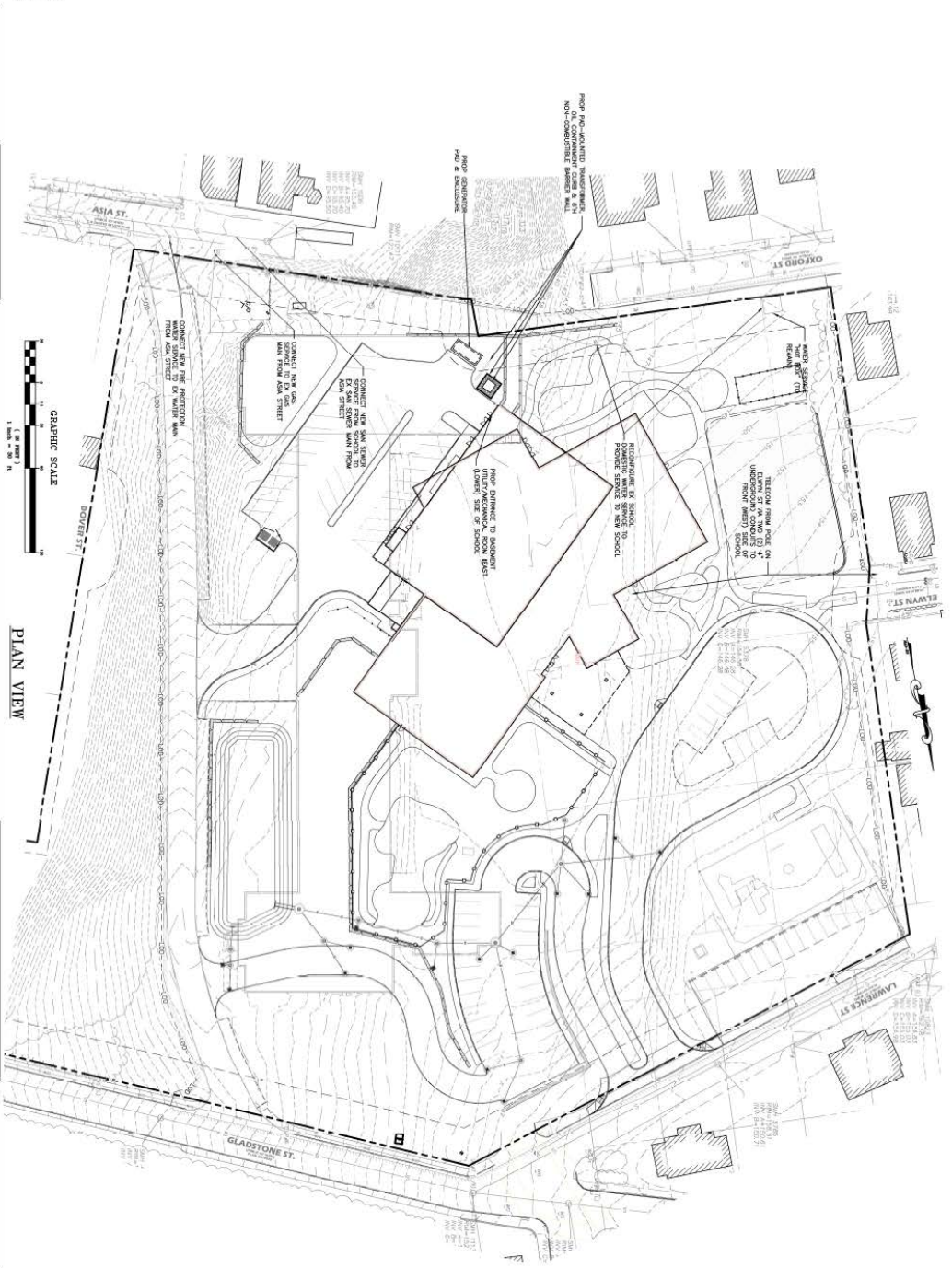


**EXISTING SCHOOL (PHOTO FROM NARRATIVE)
(View to west of center of existing school building;
cupola visible above roof peak (top elev. \approx 193))**



SITE PLAN (SCREENSHOT)

Submitted Date: 03/08/2018 09:51:44 AM
 13/03/2018 9:51:44 AM



PLAN VIEW

C-1.3

Fingold Alexander Architects

PROJECT NAME: Gladstone Elementary School
 PROJECT ADDRESS: 111 Gladstone St, Gladstone, NJ 07033
 PROJECT NUMBER: FA-2018-001
 PROJECT DATE: 03/08/2018
 PROJECT TYPE: School Building
 CLIENT: Gladstone Township
 ARCHITECT: Fingold Alexander Architects
 111 Gladstone St, Gladstone, NJ 07033
 TEL: 908.765.1111
 FAX: 908.765.1112
 WWW: www.fingoldalexander.com
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 ENGINEERS: Fingold Alexander Architects
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DATE: 03/08/2018
 SCALE: AS SHOWN
 NORTH

PROJECT INFORMATION:
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SITE PLAN – EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS (SCREENSHOT)



2 Exterior Elevation - North
3/64" = 1'-0"



1 Exterior Elevation - South
3/64" = 1'-0"

Exterior Elevations

Gladstone Elementary School
50 Gladstone Street, Cranston, RI 02910-2790

Project: Alexander Architects Inc
11/2022

II. Documents which are part of the Master Plan application and available on the Planning Department webpage:

1. Master Plan application form and checklist.
2. 200' radius map and list of abutters.
3. Plan set entitled "Gladstone Elementary – Plan Set"
4. Stormwater Management Report prepared by Commonwealth Engineers and Consultants, P.E.; Timothy Behan
5. Building Height Variance Request Summary Memo

III. Surrounding land use and context

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

1. The project site is approximately 7.82 acres in size.
2. The subject site is currently occupied by the existing Gladstone Elementary School to be demolished.
3. The subject site is also host to existing playground space to be retained.
4. The subject site is zoned B-1, the surrounding area within a 400' radius is predominately zoned B-1, with some C-3 and C-4 zoned Parcels

IV. Staff / Agency Comments

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 Division** – Provided no comment at this time
Public Works Department / Traffic Safety Division – Traffic Safety Division has some concerns with student off-loading and loading & egress to the site. However, these concerns relate to specific design and operational details that are better addressed at the preliminary plan design stage of review.
4. **Fire Department** – Provided no comment at this time
5. **Building and Zoning Department** – Provided no comment at this time

V. Interests of Others

None to report at this time

VI. Waivers & Variances

The applicant has applied for a dimensional variance for proposed buildings height. The maximum building height within a B-1 zone is 35 ft, the proposed building height is 88.44 ft.

VII. Planning Analysis

The following text represents a portion of the narrative information provided by the applicant. In an effort to concisely describe the project and the critical issues pertinent for Major Land Development consideration, staff has transmitted the following text from the applicant's narrative for Plan Commission review.

EXISTING CONDITIONS/BUILDING HEIGHT

Gladstone Elementary School is a multi-story brick masonry structure constructed in the early 1950's. It is situated on A.P. 7-4 Lot 2357 at 50 Gladstone Street, in a B1 zoning district. Per **Section 17.20.120 – SCHEDULE OF INTENSITY REGULATIONS**, the maximum building height in a B1 zoning district is thirty-five (35) feet. The school currently serves ≈530 students.

The site can be characterized as having steep to very steep topography (particularly on the east side of the parcel), with an overall grade differential of approximately sixty (60) feet, from a high elevation in the northwest corner of ≈162 and a low elevation in the southeast corner of ≈102. This significant grade differential informed the design of the existing school, such that the front (western) exposure is two stories high with a steep peaked roof, while the rear (eastern) exposure ranges from three (3) to five (5) stories high. There are a number of existing site elements within the school parcel that are of importance to the school and the broader community, which have been prioritized to be preserved. These include the playground and associated parking lot along Lawrence Street and the existing driveway along the east side of the site, between Asia Street and Gladstone Street.

The existing building height (as measured from the lowest surface grade within six feet of the building to the top of the cupola) is approximately 82 feet (top of cupola elev. ≈193, lowest surface grade along the southeast corner of the building ≈110.8). Therefore, the height of the existing building is forty-seven (47) feet over the current maximum allowable building height of thirty-five (35) feet. As the school was initially constructed in 1953, it pre-dates the current zoning and associated building height requirements, and so is considered "Nonconforming by Dimension" as defined in **Section 17.04**. However, the proposed replacement/enlargement of the school requires that the current maximum building height of thirty-five (35) feet be applied, or relief from same be granted.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS/BUILDING HEIGHT

The proposed demolition and replacement of the Gladstone Elementary School will increase the student capacity to ≈800 students, with a corresponding increase in regular staffing to one-hundred thirteen (113).

Proposed exterior improvements consist of multiple play areas suitable for elementary school students, adequate on-site parking for the increased number of teachers and support staff, and associated access driveways, including a dedicated bus unloading/loading loop and non-bussed student unloading/loading zone. Note that these proposed improvements must be located outside of the existing site features to remain (described previously).

The proposed new school building has been designed to provide interior and exterior spaces that conform to current educational standards, which are appreciably different than those that were in effect at the time of the construction of the existing school. It has also been designed to meet current architectural and energy/environmental standards. Finally, the school has been designed to be as cost-effective as possible, from the standpoints of both initial construction cost as well as long-term operational costs.

To these ends, the building design proposes to provide three (3) upper levels consisting predominantly of learning areas, and one (1) double-height lower level providing a dedicated gymnasium and other support areas (storage & utility rooms). Exterior access to the upper levels will be from the front (west) and north & south sides of the building, while access to the lower level will be from the rear (east) side of the building.

Because the measurement of the zoning building height is taken from the lowest portion of the site to the highest element of the building, the effective building height is equivalent to a five (5) story building. The total building height from the lower level floor (elevation 126) to the top of rooftop access stairway (elevation 212) will be 86 feet; the total zoning height (as measured from the proposed minimum average elevation of 123.66 along the lower level of the building to the top of rooftop access stairway elevation 212) will be 88.44 feet (rounded to 89 feet). This results in a not-to-exceed variance request of fifty-four (54) feet (89 feet proposed minus 35 feet allowed).

It should also be noted that the proposed location of the new school will be appreciably further away from the nearest dwellings (on the side of greatest exposure) than the existing school is (i.e. the houses at the west end of Asia Street and the east end of Oxford Street). More particularly, the distance between the existing school and #44 Asia Street is approximately eighty-eight (88) feet, while the distance to the new school will be \approx 200 feet. The distance between the existing school and 70/72 Oxford Street is approximately ninety-three (93) feet, while the distance to the new school will be \approx 144 feet. Therefore, the visual impact of the new school, particularly on the south side, will be moderated by its more centralized location on the site.

VIII. Findings of Fact

An orderly, thorough, and expeditious technical review of this Preliminary Plan has been conducted. Property owners within a 100' radius have been notified first class mail prior to the public meeting, and the meeting agenda has been properly posted.

Staff has reviewed the Preliminary 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.

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 redevelopment of the existing school is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan – Future Land Use Map designation of the parcel as “Government/Institutional” because this designation is suitable for the public school uses as being proposed.

2. Significant cultural, historic, or natural features that contribute to the attractiveness of the community will not be unduly negatively impacted through this proposal.

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.”

3. The proposed redevelopment of the existing school is compliant with the *majority* of the zoning provisions currently in place for this parcel of land. The proposed variance for building height is the only request for relief from the zoning code. It is understood that the applicant has submitted a corresponding variance application. Based on the condition of approval included as part of this decision, should the Zoning Board of Review allow for the requested relief, the application will be consistent with this required finding.

*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)*

4. The current site is developed as a school building and surrounding public amenities such as the existing playground. The proposed development will bring the site drainage infiltration into current standards and provide improvements in this regard. The project is subject to all local, state and federal standards regarding environmental impacts. At this point, staff finds that there will be no significant negative environmental impacts from the proposed development as shown on the plan.
5. The Rhode Island November 2018 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.”

6. The proposed project does not incorporate a subdivision of land or any improvements that would create physical constraints to development such that future building would be impracticable.
7. The design and location of building lots, utilities, drainage and other improvements conform to local regulations for mitigation of flooding and soil erosion.

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.”

8. The property in question has adequate permanent physical access from both Lawrence Street and Gladstone Street, all being improved public roadways located directly around the subject parcel.

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 documented findings of fact and **approve** the Master Plan application, subject to the conditions denoted below.

X. Conditions of approval

1. The project shall receive subsequent approval from the Zoning Board of Review for the height variance request. Failing such approval, the applicant may seek a minor amendment to revise the plans to meet the required zoning provisions.