

# Memo

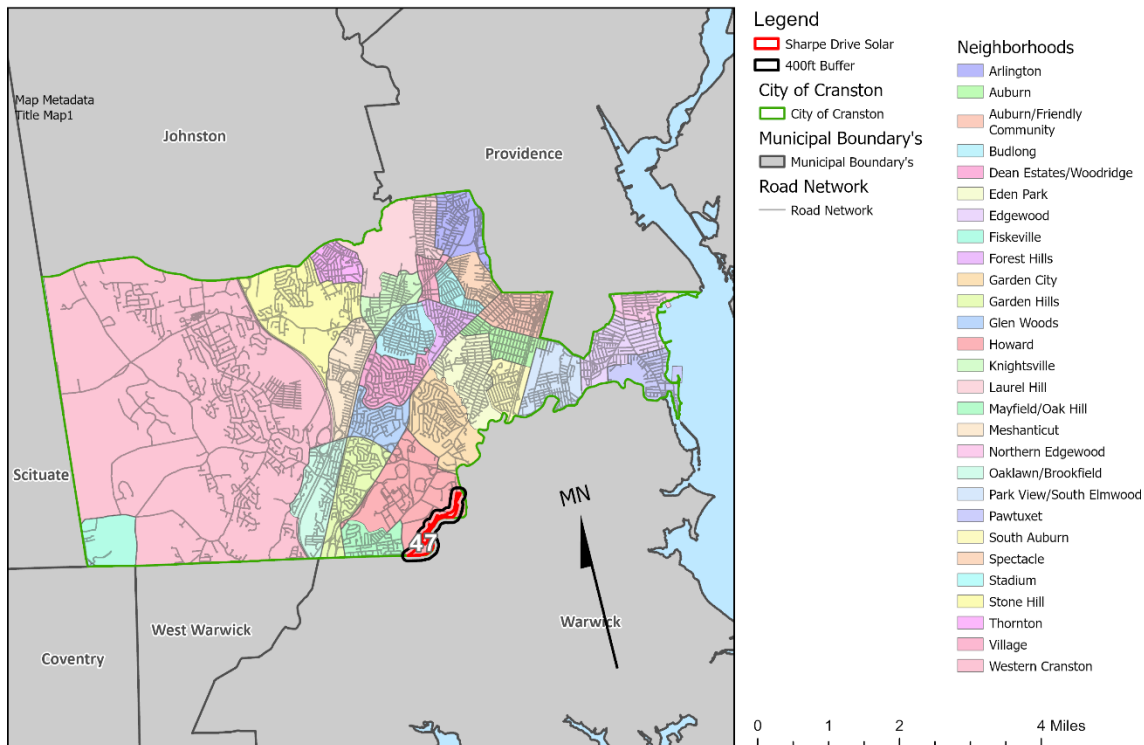
To: Cranston Planning Commission  
 From: Gregory Guertin - Senior Planner  
 Date: 7/6/23  
 Re: "Sharpe Drive Solar"  
**Major Land Development - Master Plan Application**

**Owner:** Pawtuxet River Authority  
**App:** Sharpe Solar, LLC  
**Location:** AP 13, Lot 47  
**Zone:** M-2 (General Industry)  
**FLU:** Open Space

**I. Project Description** The applicant has proposed a 0.4 MW AC Solar Photovoltaic System on an already disturbed 2.4 acres located on a 50 acre site.

## LOCATION

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



## AERIAL VIEW

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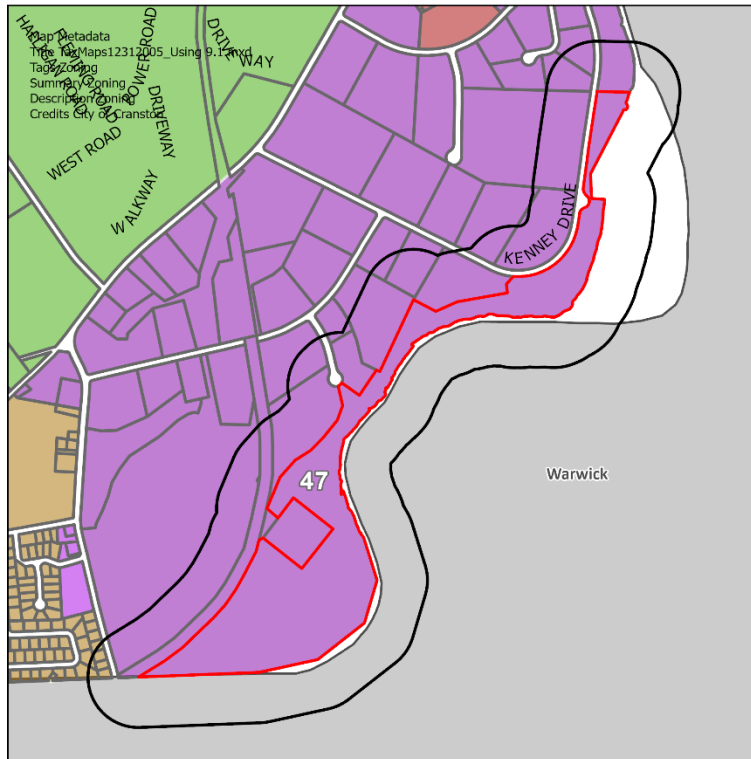
### Legend

- Sharpe Drive Solar
- 400ft Buffer



## ZONING

THIS MAP IS TO BE USED FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY



### Legend

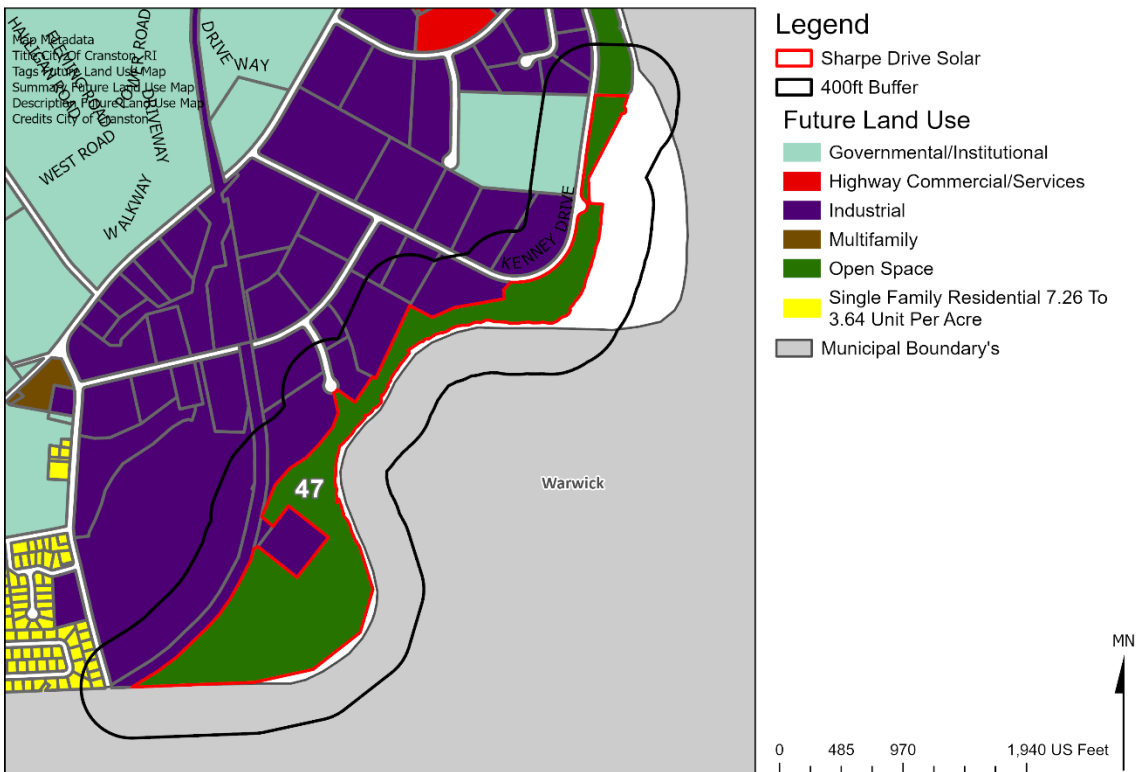
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### Zoning

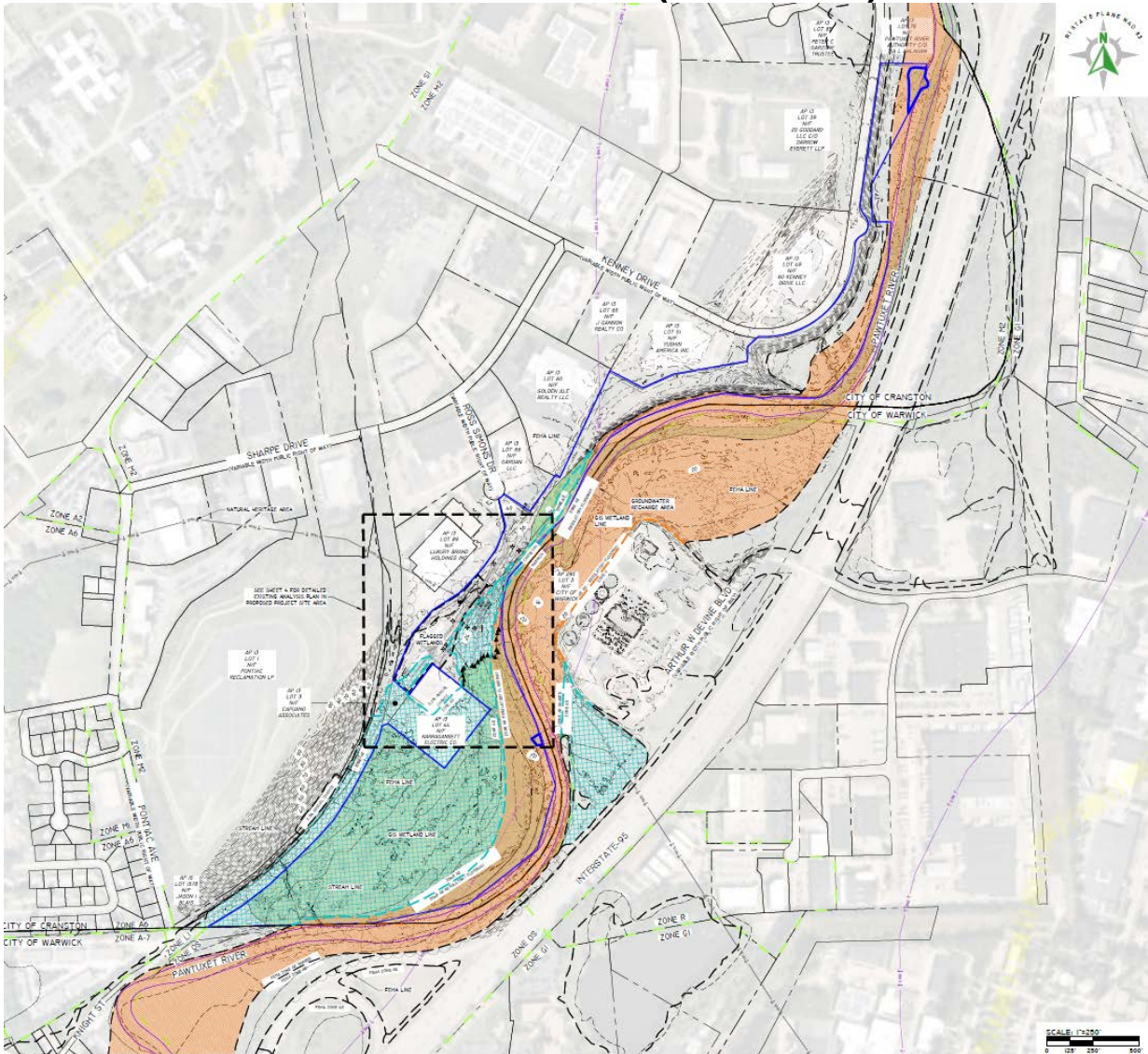
- A6
- C5
- M1
- M2
- S1
- Municipal Boundary's

# FUTURE LAND USE

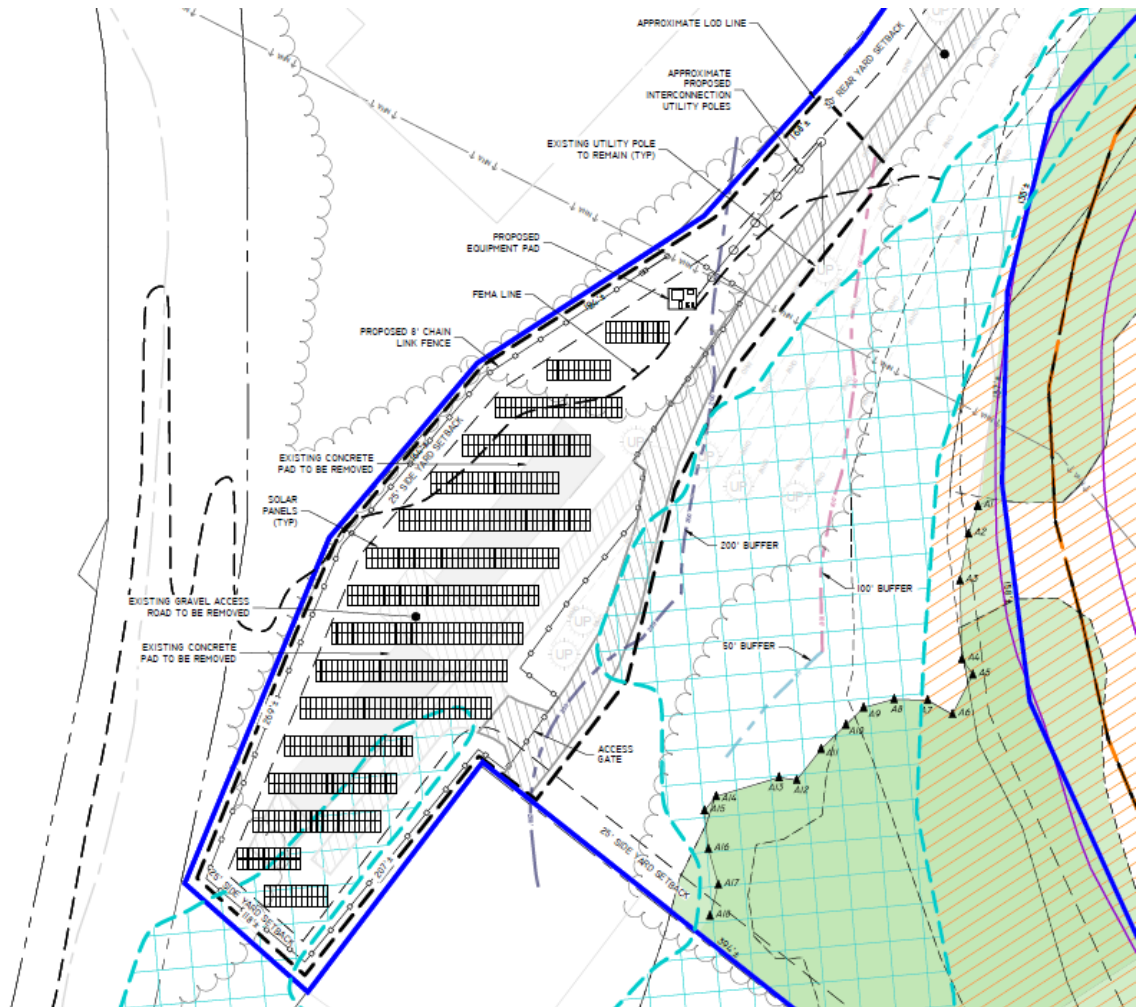
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# SITE PLAN EXHIBIT (FULL SITE)



# SITE PLAN EXHIBIT (LIMIT OF DISTURBANCE)



## II. Documents which are part of the application

- Master Plan Application and Checklist signed by Robert Nero (Representative of the owner; Pawtuxet River Authority) and Ralph Palumbo (Representative of the applicant Sharpe Solar, LLC) submitted 5/1/23.
- Filing fee in the form of a check, in the amount of \$650
- Master Plan Major Land Development plan set prepared by DiPrete Engineering
- 100' radius map, list of abutters and copies of the mailing labels.
- Project narrative summary prepared by DiPrete Engineering Inc. dated 4/27/2023.
- Project Report titled "Sharpe Drive Solar Development Plan Review and Major Land Development Project" prepared by Pimentel Consulting, Inc. dated 6/30/23
- Notice of Lease between The Pawtuxet River Authority and Revity Energy LLC
- Assignment of Lease Agreement by Revity Energy LLC and for Sharpe Solar, LLC
- Amended Environmental Land Usage Restriction, dated 2/26/13
- Municipal Lien Certificates

## III. Surrounding land use and context

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

1. The subject parcel is in the Howard neighborhood of Cranston, situated off Ross Simmons Drive, located directly along the Pawtuxet River.
2. The surrounding area is zoned is almost entirely M2, with very few parcels in the surrounding area being zoned M-1, or A-6.
3. The parcel is located within the 100-year FEMA flood zone, however nearly all proposed disturbance is located outside of the FEMA flood zone. The solar development itself is located within FEMA Flood Zone AE (1% annual chance flood, 100-year flood zone) and FEMA Zone X (0.2 percent annual chance flood, minimal flood hazard)
4. It is anticipated that RIDEM Wetlands approval will come as part of the Preliminary Plan submission and staff have added a condition of approval to the enclosed Master Plan decision as such.
5. All proposed disturbance (2.4 acres of the 50-acre property) is located within an already existing disturbed area on site.

## 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.

- **The Providence Water Supply Board** – No comment provided at this time.
- **Veolia Water** – No comment provided at this time.
- **Public Works Department** – No comment provided at this time.

- **Fire Department** – No comment provided at this time.
- **Building and Zoning Department** – No comments provided at this time.
- **Bureau of Traffic Safety** - No comment provided at this time.

## V. Interests of Others

None to report currently.

## VI. Planning Analysis

### *Consistency with the Surrounding Area*

The subject parcel is zoned M-2 and the surrounding area is zoned almost entirely M2, with very few parcels within a 400' radius of the parcel being zoned M-1, or A-6. All abutting parcels to the actual site of disturbance are zoned M-2.

### *Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan*

The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map calls for Open Space at this location whereas current zoning is designated as M-2 General Industry. Staff acknowledges this inconsistency but feel that this proposal has addressed the issue of inconsistency in a few ways.

- All proposed development on this parcel is located in an already disturbed area of the site. By utilizing an already disturbed portion of this site the development can be implemented without encroaching on any undisturbed, ecologically sensitive, or valuable portions of the watershed thus preserving the integrity of the surrounding open space.
- The owner of the property is the Pawtuxet River Authority, who's mission is "to protect and improve RI's Pawtuxet River and it's watershed." The intention of the non-profit is to utilize the funds generated via the lease agreement with Sharpe Drive, LLC. to offset the expenses of their headquarters; by which the ownership and operation of said headquarters is a requirement of RI General Law. This offsetting of expenses aids the non-profit in preserving and protecting over 100 acres of land within the Pawtuxet River Watershed and more specifically the remainder of the undeveloped 50 acres of land located on this parcel.
- The installation of this photovoltaic system requires a relatively small land area while generating a substantial amount of energy compared to traditional energy sources.
- By generating revenue for the Pawtuxet River Authority, minimizing ecological impacts on this site, and contributing to clean energy generation within Cranston, this solar development can be a powerful tool in sustainable land management for the non-profit.

### *Access to the Site and Fencing*

Access to the site will be achieved via an existing 16ft wide gravel driveway. The facility will be surrounded by, at a minimum, an 8ft high fence; preventing unauthorized access. The final design of the driveway and fencing will be subject to review of the City's Department of Public Works and the Fire Department.

### *Environmental Impact*

The parcel included a RIDEM Natural Heritage Area and is located within a Groundwater Reservoir Area. The applicant has stated that due to the location of the panels on a pre-existing disturbed area on site and that there are no anticipated impacts on either the protected species or the groundwater in the area. This project is subject to RIDEM approval, and the applicant has stated that they will be coordinating with a wetland biologist during the design process to ensure the prevention of any impact on the sensitive species located in the subject parcel.

## **VII. 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 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 has satisfactorily addressed the issues where there may be inconsistencies with the Comprehensive Plan.

*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.”*

2. Staff finds that the proposed Master Plan Application is in compliance with the municipality's Zoning Ordinance.

*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)*

3. This finding pertains specifically to the final plan; however, no significant environmental impacts are anticipated.
4. The project will be subject to all state and local regulations pertaining to environmental impacts and wetlands.



5. The Rhode DEM's Natural Heritage map shows that are known rare species located on the site and the applicant has stated that they will be coordinating with a wetland biologist during the design process to ensure the prevention of any impact on the sensitive species located in the subject parcel.

*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 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.
7. 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.”*

8. The properties in question have adequate permanent physical access to a Sharpe Drive.

### **VIII. 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 conditions denoted below.

#### **Conditions of approval:**

1. Applicant shall obtain all necessary approvals from outside State agencies, including wetland edge verification from RIDEM, prior to Preliminary Plan submission.
2. The applicant will submit a class I survey prior to Development Plan Review Preliminary Plan submission.