

## City Planning Department



## Memo

To: Cranston City Plan Commission  
From: Doug McLean, AICP – Principal Planner / Administrative Officer  
Date: April 28, 2021  
Re: Dimensional Variances at 10 Orchard Valley Drive

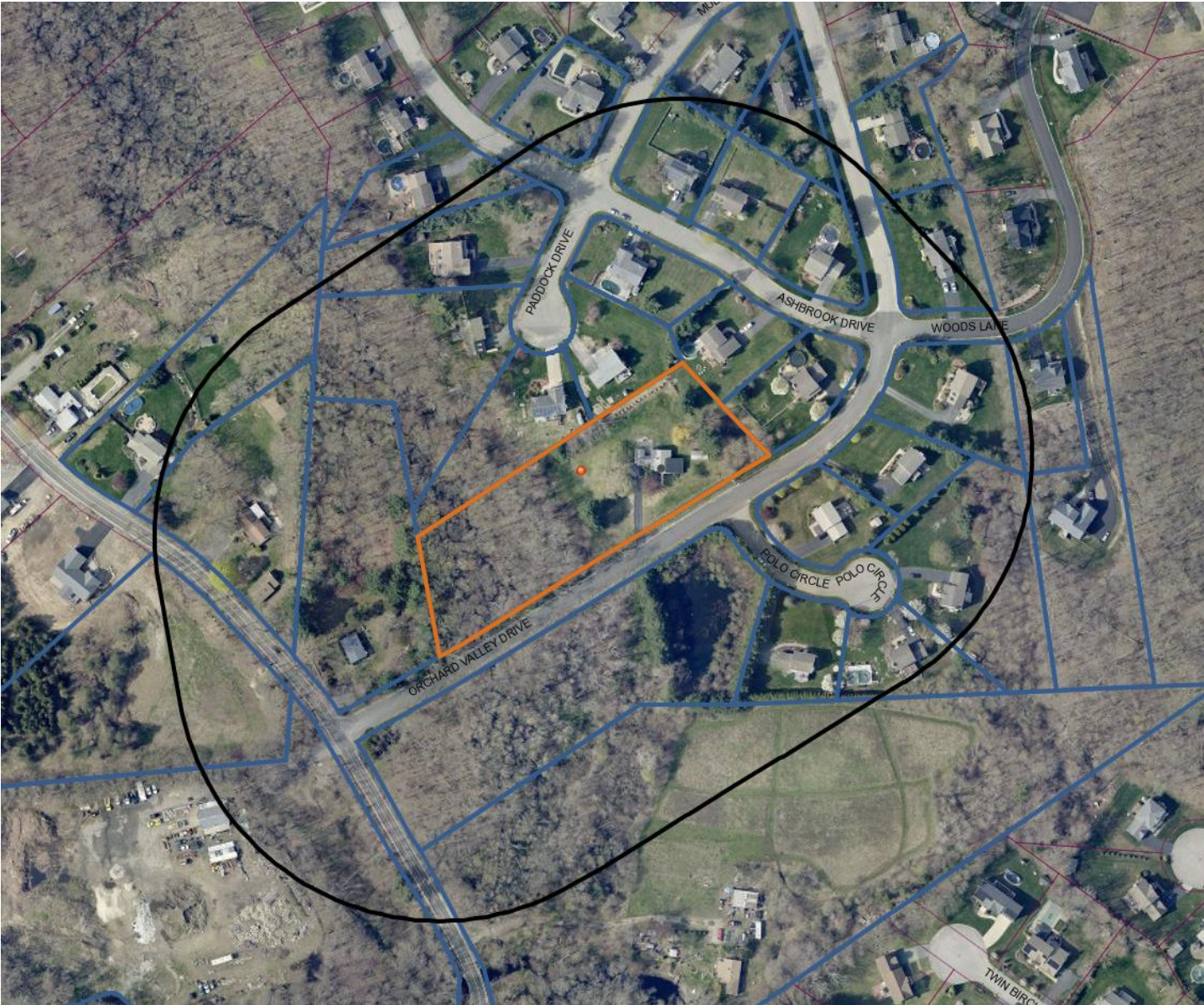
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**Owner/App:** Christina Rousseau (f/k/a Christina Cummiskey)  
**Location:** 10 Orchard Valley Drive, AP 28, Lot 16  
**Zone:** A-80 (Single-family dwellings on lots of minimum areas of 80,000 ft<sup>2</sup>)  
**FLU:** Single Family Residential less than 1 unit per acre

### **DIMENSIONAL VARIANCE REQUESTS:**

1. To create two (2) lots with substandard area, where 33,300 ft<sup>2</sup> and 54,900 ft<sup>2</sup> of lot area is proposed (respectively) when 80,000 ft<sup>2</sup> is required. [Section 17.20.120 – Schedule of Intensity]
2. To create one (1) lot with substandard lot frontage/width, where 185' of frontage is proposed when 200' is required. [Section 17.20.120 – Schedule of Intensity]
3. To allow for the development of a new single family dwelling within the rear yard setback, where the dwelling will be 72' from the rear property line when 100' is required. [Section 17.20.120 – Schedule of Intensity]

**AERIAL VIEW (400 ft radius line shown in black)**



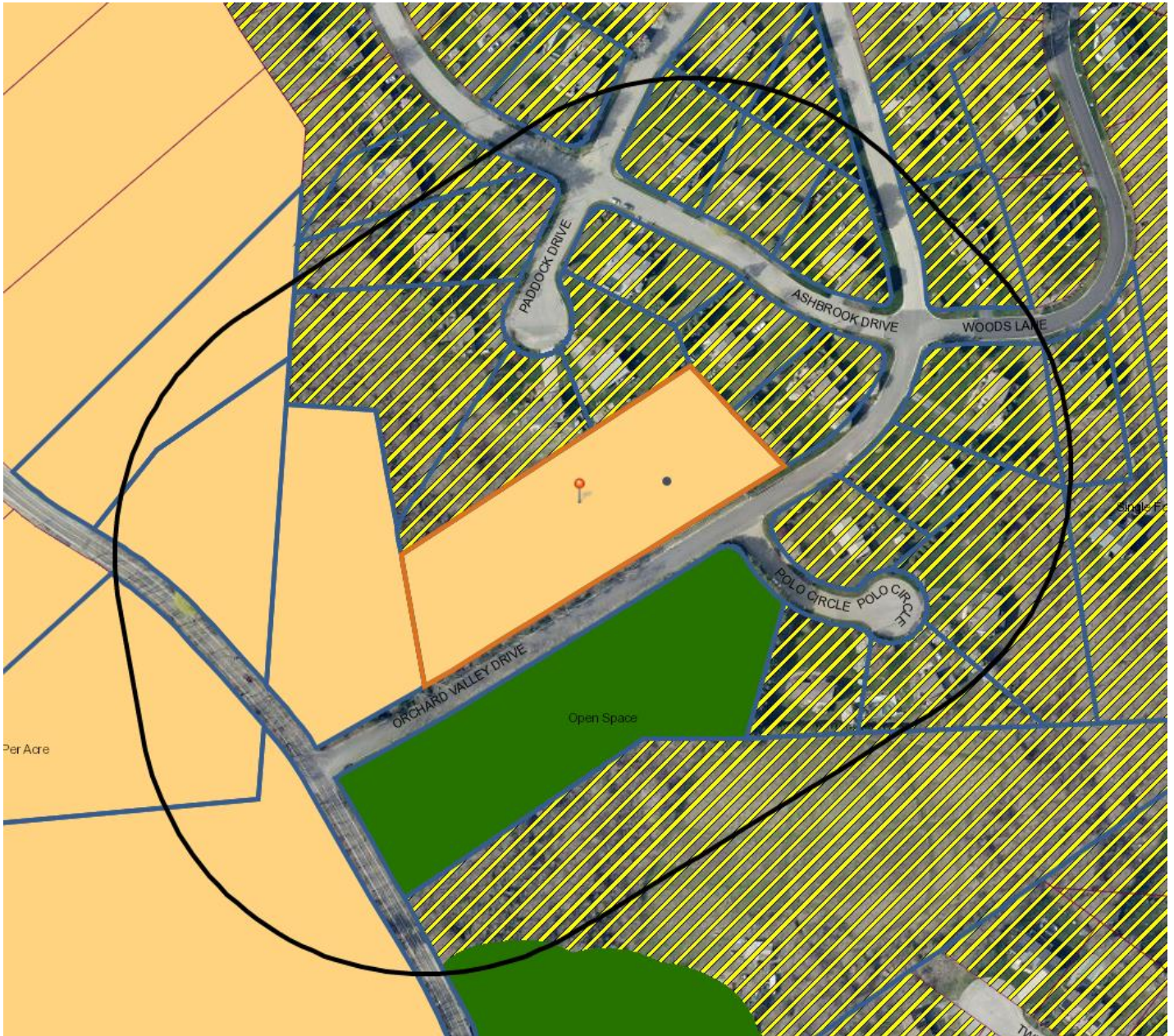
# AERIAL VIEW OF PARCEL



# ZONING MAP



# FUTURE LAND USE MAP



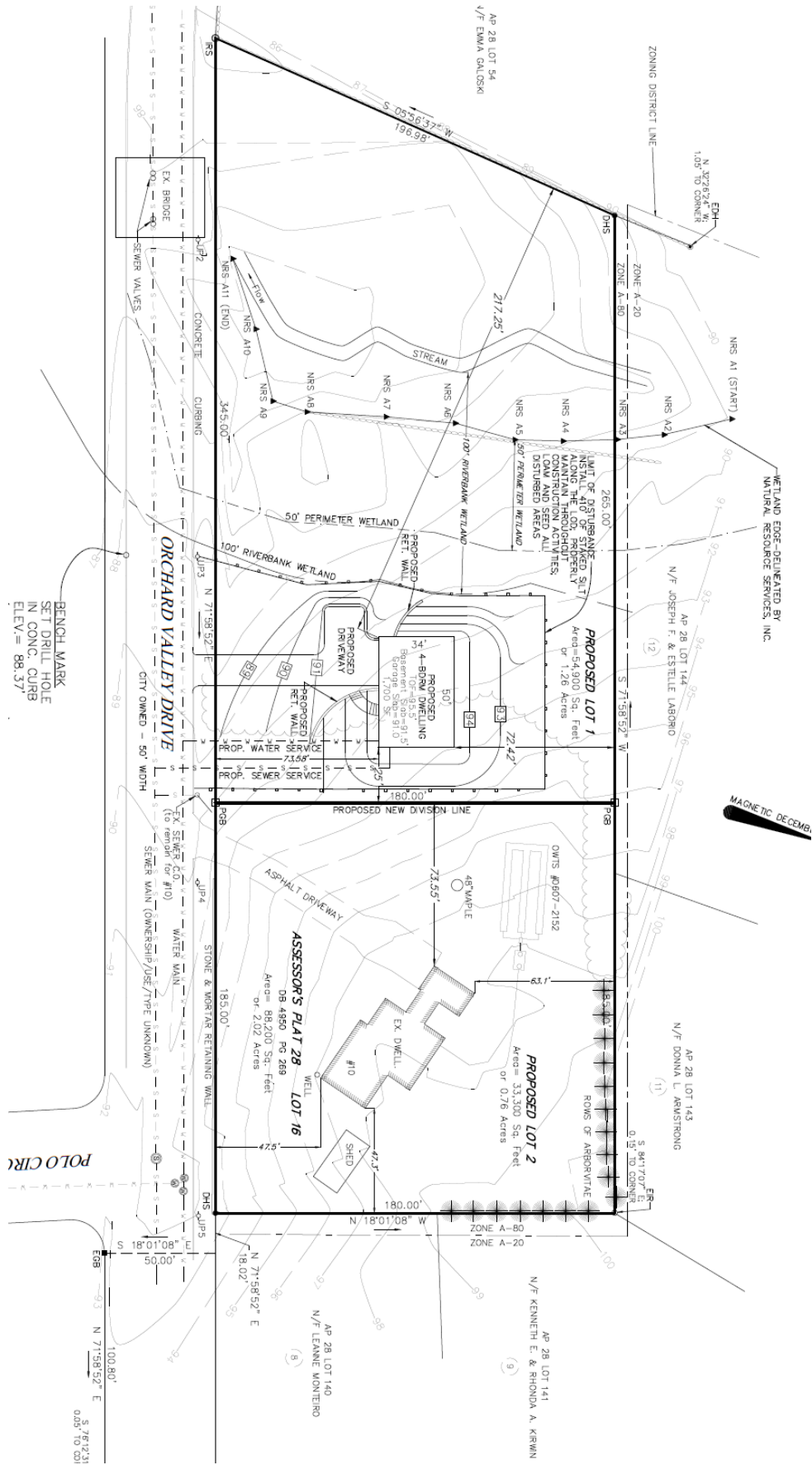
### 3-D AERIAL VIEW (facing north)



### STREET VIEW



# Site Plan (site snippet)



## FIDNINGS OF FACT

1. The owner/applicant proposes to subdivide an existing 2.02-acre lot into two (2) lots for the purpose of creating another buildable lot. In addition to the requested relief for lot dimensions, the applicant has also requested rear yard setback relief for a proposed dwelling. The numeric details of the requested relief is shown on page 1 of this memo.
2. The existing lot currently has one (1) single-family residence. The lot also contains a stream and associated wetland buffers that are shown on the plan.
3. The subdivision plan has received RIDEM approval without the need for a wetlands permit as to the proposed improvements avoid conflicts with the wetland buffer.
4. As part of the subdivision plan, proposed Lot 1 would be 1.26 acres and would be host to a proposed new single-family residence. Proposed Lot 1 also contains all of the wetlands on the site. Proposed Lot 2 would be 0.76 acres and would be host to the existing single family dwelling.
5. The lot is zoned A-80. The majority of abutting lots are zoned A-20, as shown on the zoning map on page 4 of this memo. This provides important context for the appropriateness of the request as it relates to neighborhood character.
6. The average lots size of the 2 proposed lots would be 1.01 acres per lot. This is larger than the average lots size for residential parcels within the surrounding neighborhood.
7. The applicant has provided a narrative with their application that provides the following statements:
  - i. *“The house is located further from the street [requiring a rear yard setback relief] because the lot drops off toward the street and the Applicant does not want to make the driveway too steep which would require more fill near the wetland setback.”*
  - ii. *“My family plans to continue living in our house so I am invested in making sure the addition of a new single-family dwelling will be done thoughtfully and will not adversely impact me or my neighbors.”*
  - iii. *“There will be limited disturbance of property behind the proposed structure leaving natural vegetation which will serve as a privacy screen to the rear abutter. The size of the lots and the design of the new dwelling will be in keeping with the general character of the neighborhood.”*

Planning staff finds this application to represent a “sensitive design” in terms of adding a new developable lot without creating impacts to the nearby wetland, and without altering the character of the neighborhood or surrounding parcels.

8. Although this property would be a suitable candidate for a rezone to A-20, planning staff is of the view that a full rezone application, which would also necessitate a comprehensive plan amendment, would be more costly and burdensome than warranted to achieve such a small scale of development (one additional buildable lot). As such, planning staff encouraged the applicant to utilize dimensional relief through the Zoning Board of Review as the best tool to consider this subdivision.



9. The proposed subdivision is compliant with the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map which designates the property as “Single Family Residential less than 1 unit per acre”. The proposed project density is 1 unit per 1.01 acres. As such the project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

## **PLANNING ANALYSIS**

Upon review of this application, it is planning staff’s opinion that the proposed lot is subject to unique circumstances as it is surrounded by A-20 lots on 3 sides. The subdivision proposal represents a sensitive design that is intended to fit with the character of the neighborhood. It should be noted that the potential for this lot to be rezoned to A-20 was discussed with the applicant in the early consideration of this subdivision. The conclusion of that discussion was that this lot would receive a positive staff consideration if the applicant was to pursue a rezone to A-20. However, planning staff guided the applicant to approach this through dimensional variances instead of a rezone for 2 reasons: 1) the cost and effort that a rezone applicant would entail did not seem warranted to achieve such a small scale of development (i.e.: only one additional single family dwelling), especially when considering the need for a companion comprehensive plan amendment that would cost approximately \$5,000 in advertising alone. 2) The City is only allowed to amend its comprehensive plan four (4) times in a year (limited by state law), and planning staff is of the opinion that it is inadvisable to utilize this finite resource for such a small project when there could be a more pressing needs for comprehensive plan amendments later in the year.

The application is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map which designates the property as “Single Family Residential less than 1 unit per acre”. The proposed project density meets this threshold as the subdivision represents 1 unit per 1.01 acres.

## **Recommendation**

Due to the finding that the application is consistent with the Cranston Comprehensive Plan, and due to the finding that the application incorporates a sensitive design that will not have a negative impact on the nearby wetland and will not alter the character of the surrounding neighborhood, staff recommends the Plan Commission forward a **positive recommendation** on the application to the Zoning Board of Review.