

City Planning Department



Memo

To: Cranston City Plan Commission
From: Doug McLean, AICP – Principal Planner / Administrative Officer
Date: February 24, 2022
Re: **Use and Dimensional Variances at 5 Aborn Street**

Owner/App: Bridge Group, LLC
Location: 5 Aborn Street, A.P. 1, Lot 30
Zone: C-3 (General Business).
FLU: Neighborhood Commercial/Services

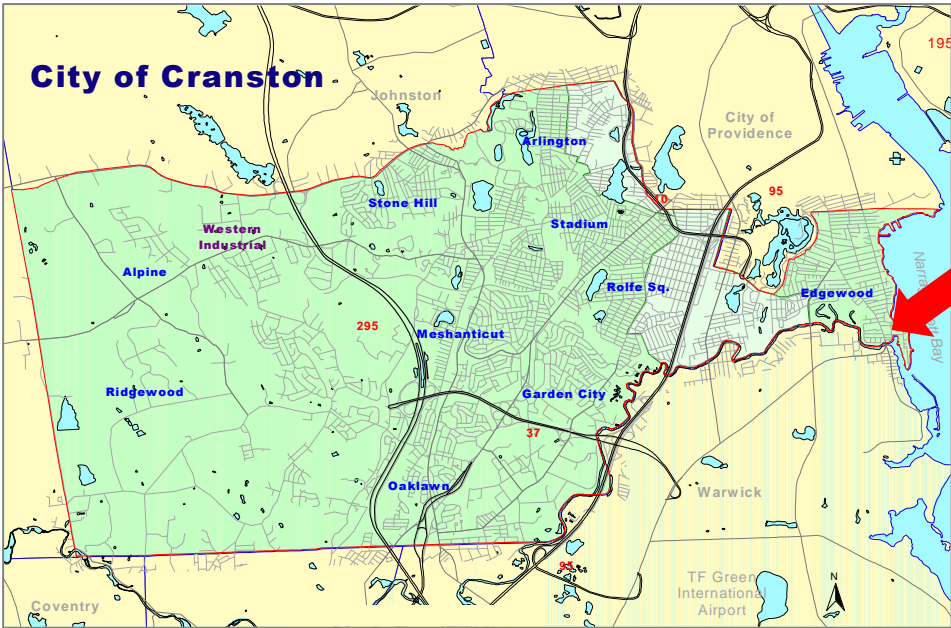
USE VARIANCE REQUEST:

- To allow the creation of a multifamily (3-unit) residential structure where multifamily dwelling units are not permitted [17.20.030 Schedule of Uses]

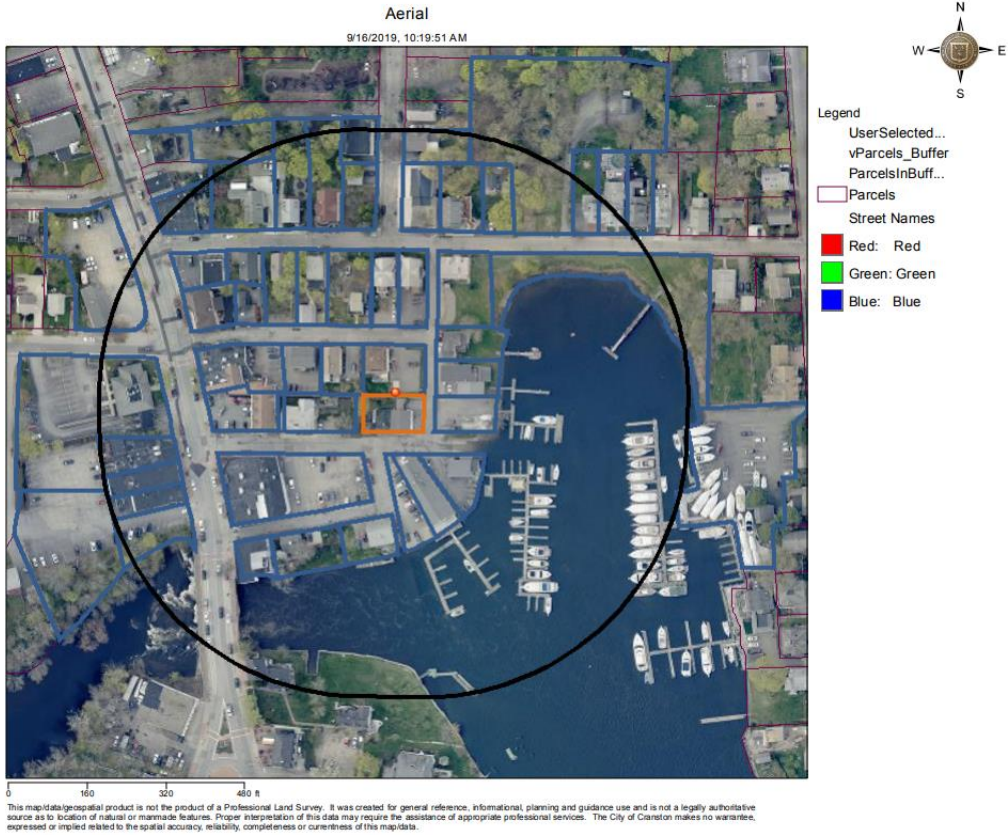
DIMENSIONAL VARIANCE REQUEST:

- To allow a multifamily (3-unit) structure on a 5,278 ft² lot where 14,000 ft² is required [17.20.090(A) Specific Requirements]

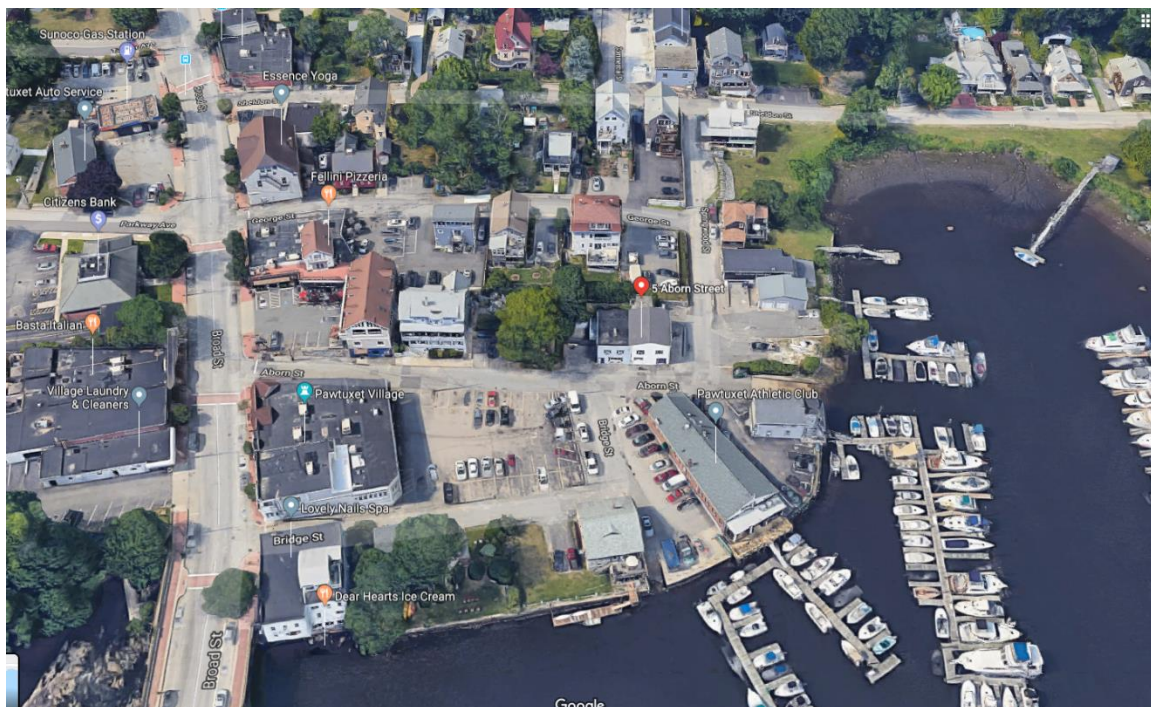
LOCATION MAP



NEIGHBORHOOD AERIAL (2019 Imagery)



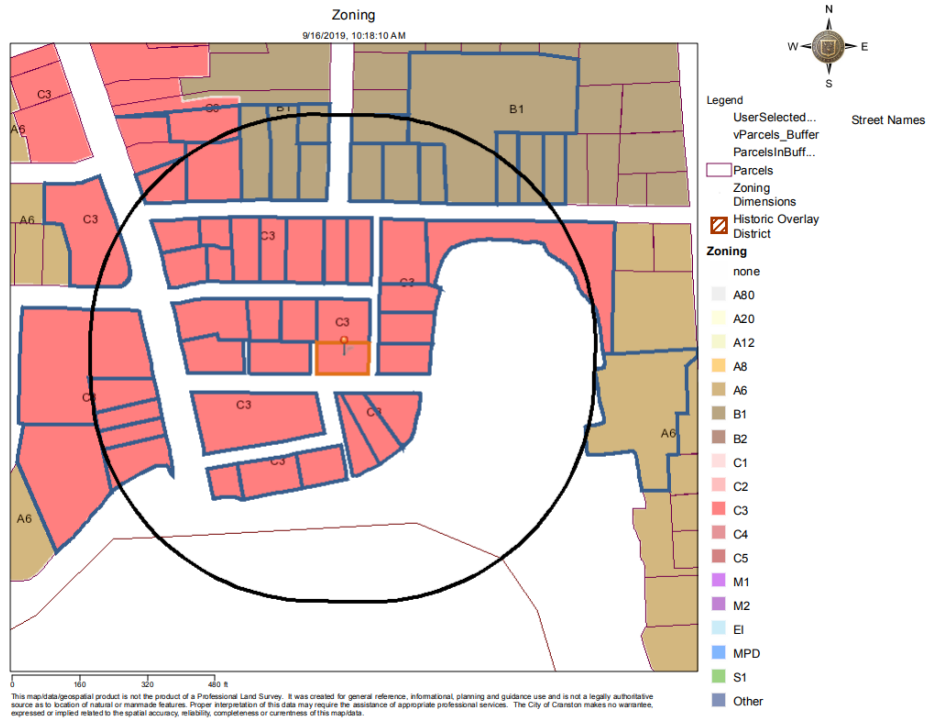
3-D AERIAL VIEW (Facing North)



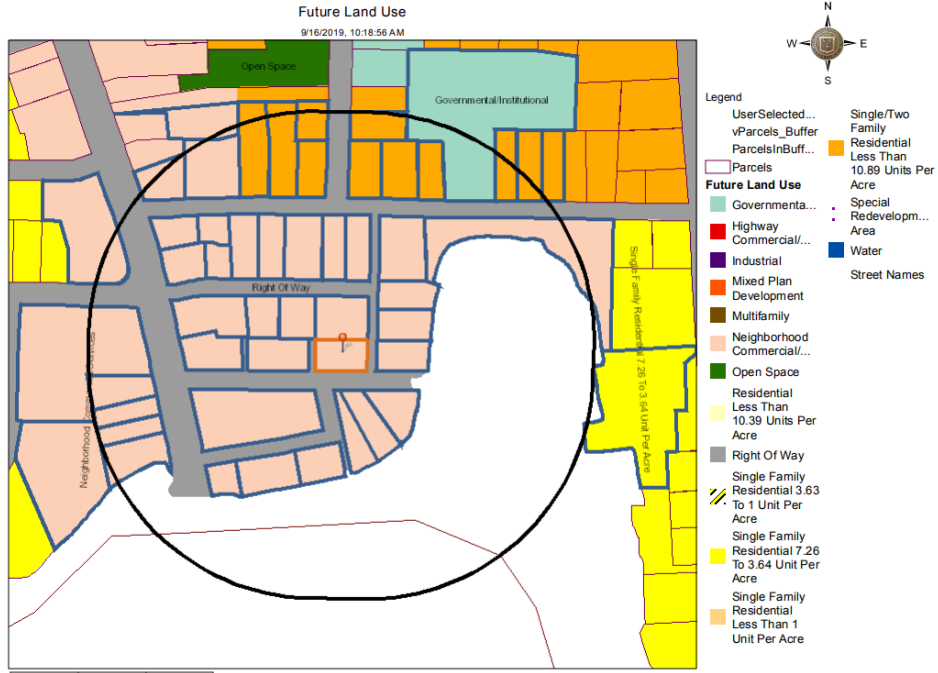
STREET VIEW (Facing North)



ZONING MAP

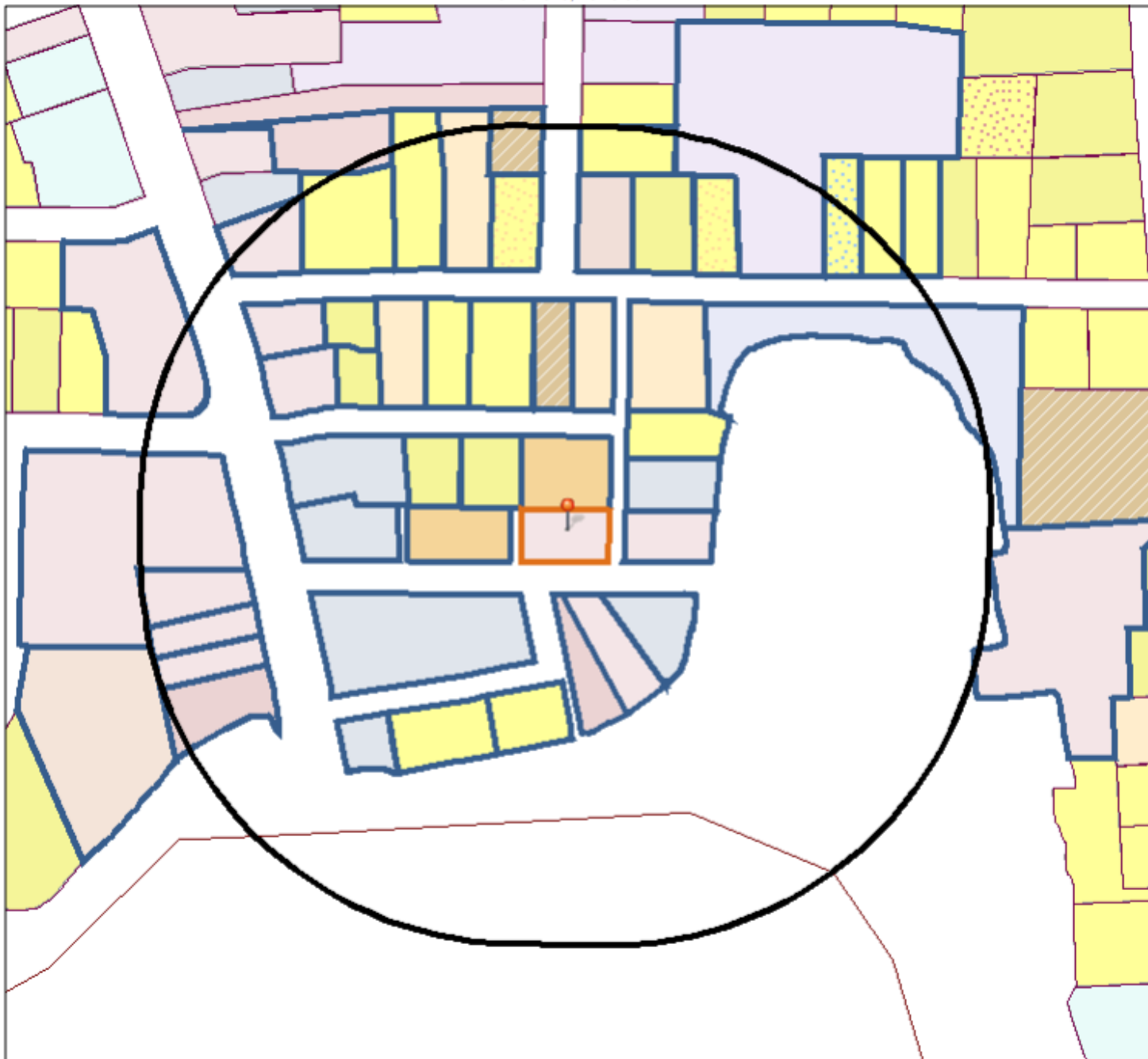


FUTURE LAND USE MAP



Current Use

9/16/2019, 10:16:59 AM



- Legend**
- UserSelected...
 - vParcels_Buffer
 - ParcelsInBuff...
 - Parcels
- Land Use (Parcels)**
- <all other values>
 - Single Family
 - Two Family
 - Three Family
 - Four Family
 - Five Family
 - Residential Condo
 - Apartment 6+
 - Residential Accessory Land
 - Residential Other Improvements
 - Residential Land Developable
 - Residential Land Potential
 - Residential Land Undevelopable
 - Mobile Home Park
 - Mixed Use
 - Mixed Use Accessory Land
 - Commercial Small Business
 - Commercial Large Business
 - Commercial Condo
 - Commercial Accessory Land
- Commercial Land Developable
 - Commercial Land Potential
 - Commercial Land Undevelopable
 - Commercial Land Other
 - Industrial
 - Industrial Condo
 - Industrial Accessory Land
 - Industrial Land Developable
 - Industrial Land Potential
 - Industrial Land Undevelopable
 - Parking Lot
 - Municipal
 - State
 - Federal
 - School
 - Religious
 - Charitable
 - Executive Charter
 - National R.R.
 - Utility R.R.
 - Golf Course
 - Golf Accessory Land
 - Cemeteries
 - Farm-Forest
 - Street Names

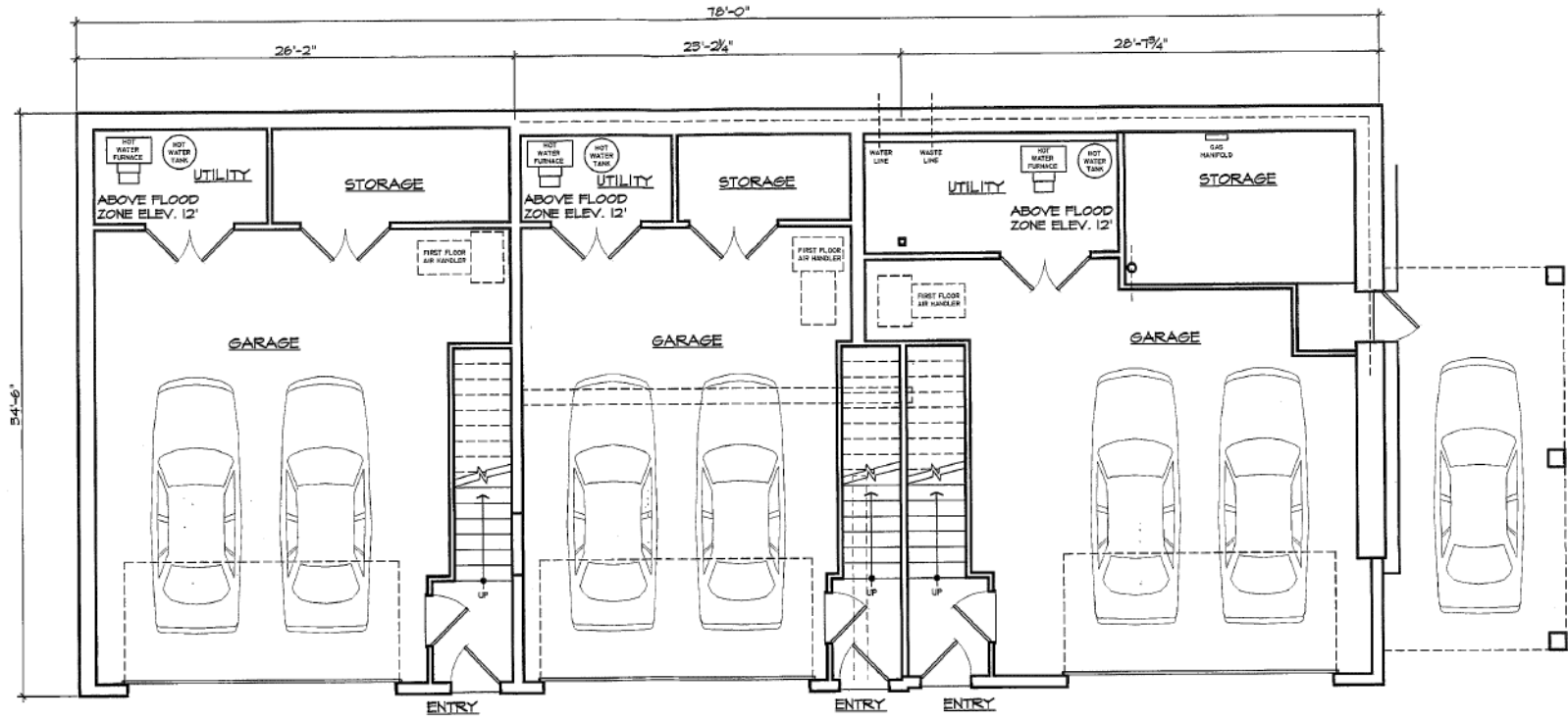
0 160 320 480 ft

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CONCEPTUAL RENDERING



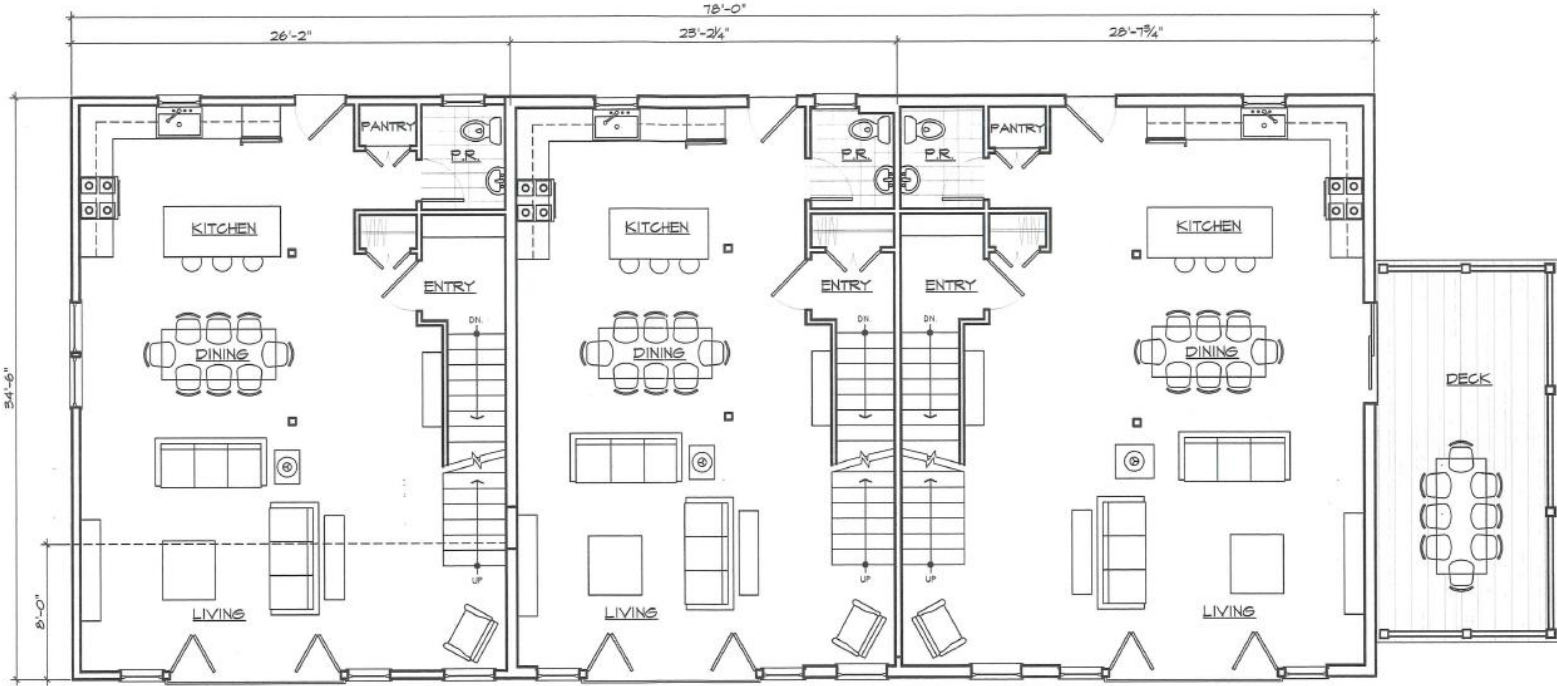
PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN



1 PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

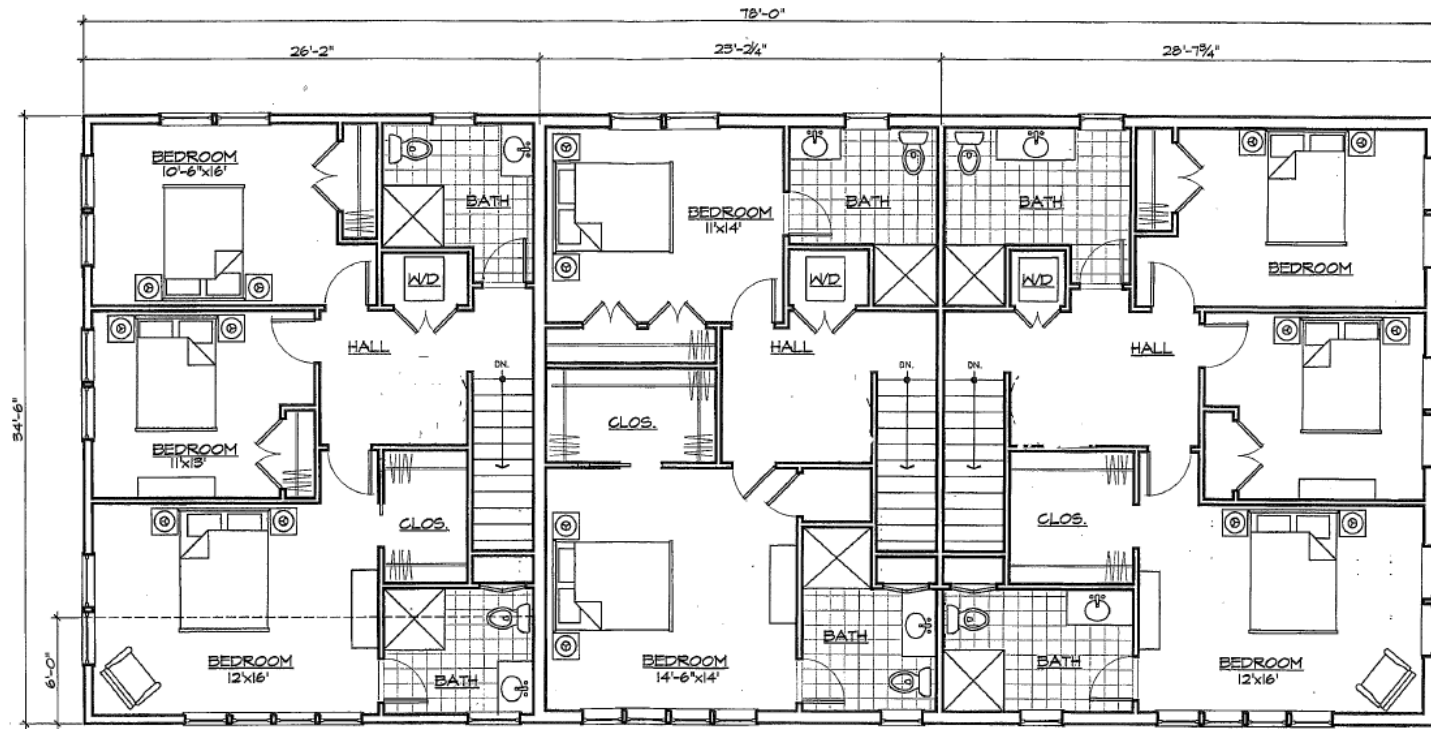
CONFIRM WITH SURVEYOR AND BUILDING OFFICIAL IF PROPERTY IS IN THE "COASTAL A" ZONE.

PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN



1 PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

PROPOSED SECOND FLOOR PLAN



① PROPOSED SECOND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. In 2002 the Zoning Board of Review approved a variance application allowing the conversion of the previously existing industrial building to two (2) residential units. The conversion of the building to a 2-family residential use occurred shortly after this approval.
2. In 2019 the Zoning Board of Review approved a variance to add an additional floor, add a third residential unit, and add roof-top decking. That approval was appealed to Superior Court and the applicant will no longer pursue that approval.
3. The applicant is now submitting a new proposal to add an additional floor, and add a third residential unit, but with an alternative building design that no longer includes the roof-top decking.
4. The proposed addition of a third residential unit triggers both a use and dimensional variance. The lot is zoned C-3 (in which 3-family dwellings are not an allowed use) and the lot is substandard in size for a 3-family dwelling (5,278 sqft is provided whereas 14,000 sqft is required).
5. The proposed structure meets all setback requirements for the C-3 zone.
6. The current zoning is C-3 General Commercial and the Future Land Use Map identifies the area as Neighborhood Commercial. Both maps have zoning "clustered" rather than following corridors.
7. 33 other residential uses currently exist in the C-3 zone adjacent to the subject property- including two four-family structures as direct abutters. Only 18 of the 50 parcels in the 400' buffer that are zoned commercial are NOT used for residential purposes.
8. The current density of the lot is 16.51 units/acre. The proposed density is 24.76 units/acre. The density of the neighboring residential lots is approximately 33 units/acre (both built in 1920).
9. Other residential properties in the 400' range were built from 1760-1930 and contain 2-6 units. Multifamily uses predate Cranston zoning in all cases.
10. Two-family uses in the 400' range are a mix of preexisting nonconforming and variances granted within the last ten years.
11. The Comprehensive Plan supports the preservation and improvement of existing nonconforming two and three-family dwellings as well as reduction of the burden zoning places on said properties [HA-5].
12. The Comprehensive Plan supports the review of existing zoning to match it as closely as possible to the existing neighborhood [HA-6] and the protection of existing neighborhoods by ensuring zoning matches the existing built environment [LU-26], potentially through the creation of a neighborhood preservation overlay district [HA-14].

PLANNING ANALYSIS:

Even if the subject property were zoned for or designated on the Future Land Use Map as residential, it would be above the highest density permitted or planned for the City. However, even in use as a three-family structure, the subject property would be less dense than many portions of Pawtuxet Village, including several properties within the 400' buffer on the maps- the majority of which are also zoned for/depicted as commercial. The majority of these parcels and structures predate City zoning, often by decades or even hundreds of years. With this in mind, the proposed development is very much in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.

The existing structure is a two-story building created in stages and featuring a mix of cinderblock and vinyl siding. The proposed redevelopment of the site will present a cohesive façade, greatly improving the aesthetics of the street and bringing this parcel into greater conformity with the general look and feel of Pawtuxet Village.

Upon review of the Comprehensive Plan, it is clear that the improvement of a residential property in an existing residential neighborhood, regardless of zoning, is a priority of the City. All references to such effect specifically mention that the City's current zoning provisions do not reflect the existing built environment. This is a particularly challenging issue in a historic area like Pawtuxet Village where the entire neighborhood is older than the City's Zoning Code, thus requiring variances for most modifications of the use or structure.

RECOMMENDATION:

Due to the findings that the application is generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and that it does not negatively 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.