

City Planning Department



Memo

To: Cranston City Plan Commission
From: Doug McLean, AICP, Principal Planner
Date: October 28, 2022
Re: "747 Pontiac Ave – Residential Apartment Conversion", AP 9, Lot 146
Major Land Development – Master Plan Application

Owner/App: Omni 747P, LLC (The Omni Group)
Location: 747 Pontiac Ave, AP 9, Lot 146
Zone: Currently A-6 (proposal to change to "C-2 with conditions")
FLU: Neighborhood Commercial/Services

I. Proposal

This memo contains background information, findings, and the recommendation for the Major Land Development - Master Plan application above noted. This application accompanied by a zone change petition from "A-6" to "C-2 with conditions" that is further detailed in a separate staff memo.

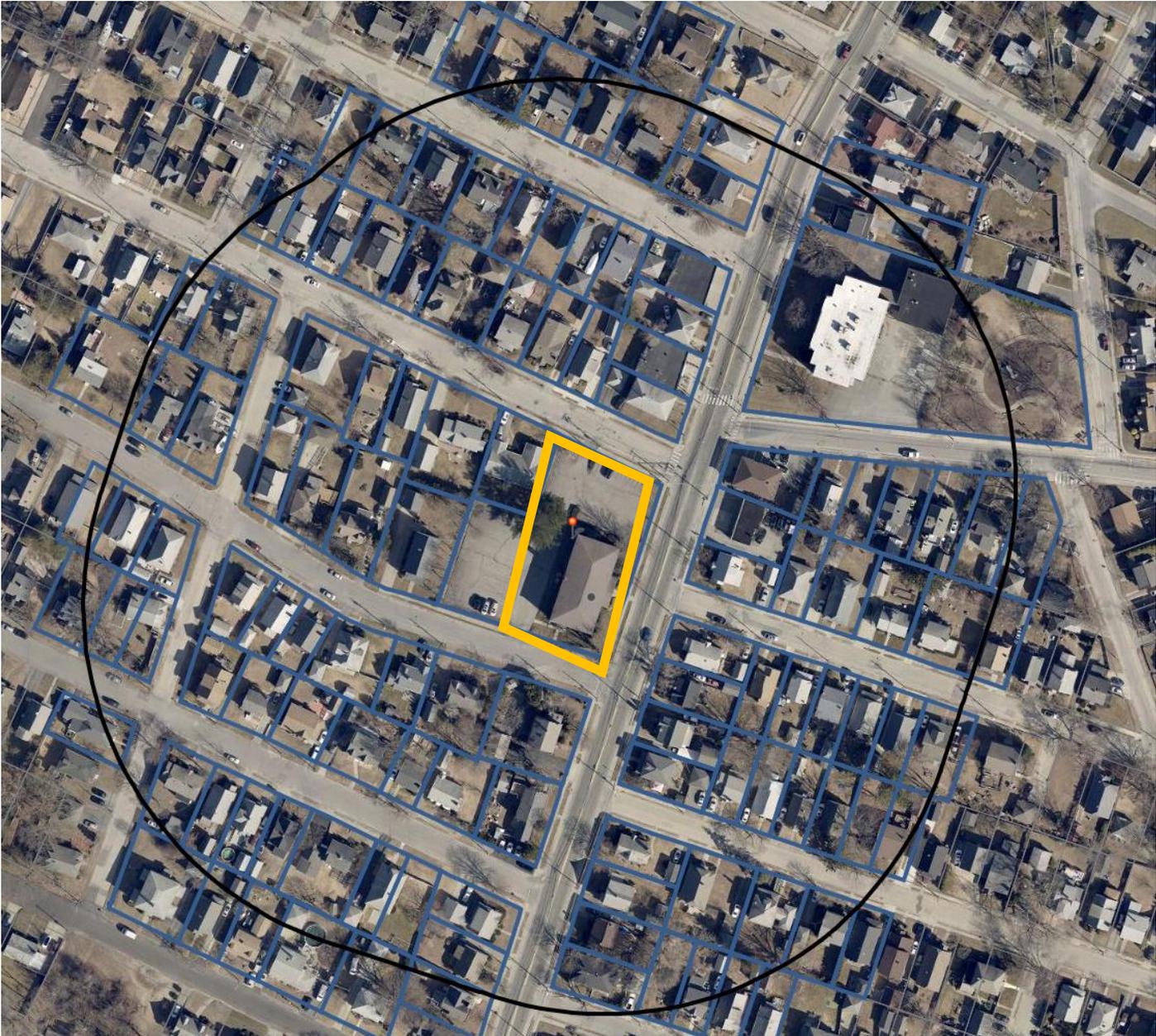
All staff memos and application materials on this matter can be found at the following link: <https://www.cranstonri.gov/plan-commission-11.1.22/>

The proposed Major Land Development (MLD) is to convert an existing, underutilized office building into 18 new multi-family units. The associate zone change would allow for a density bonus to achieve the requested number of units. The zone change would also require that 15% of the units be deed restricted as affordable housing based on 80% of the area's median income level. That will represent a total of three (3) affordable housing units. Should the zone change be approved by the City Council, the proposal will meet the City's zoning requirements and will not otherwise require relief.

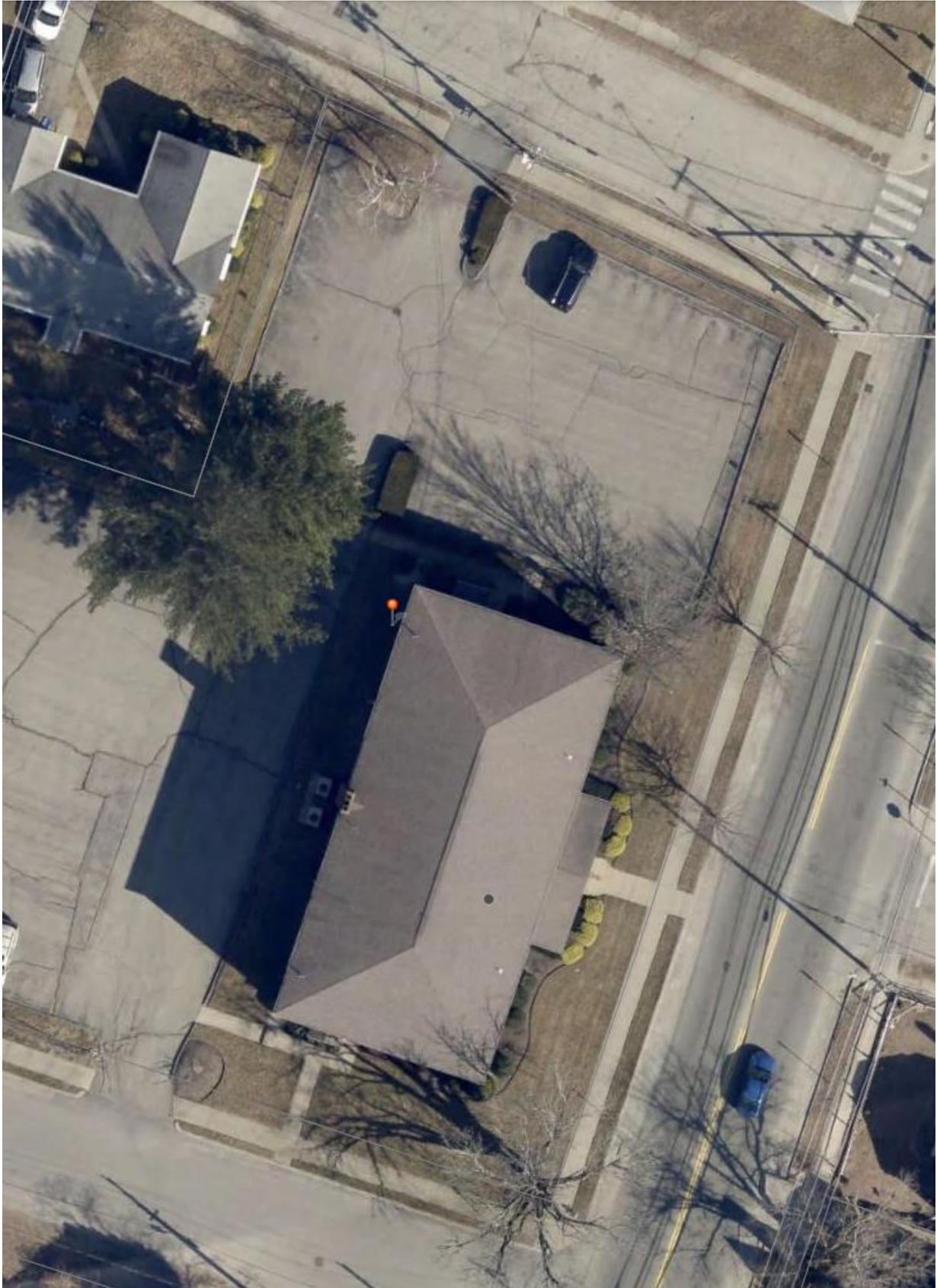
II. Documents as part of the proposed Major Land Development application:

1. Master Plan application and checklist;
2. Application filing fees;
3. Major Land Development site plan entitled "Residential Apartment Conversion" Comstock Industrial," prepared by Douglas Design Group, with last revisions dated 10/24/22;
4. Project Narrative prepared by The Omni Group;
5. Project "Concept Board" with floor plan prepared by The Omni Group;
6. 100' radius map and list of abutters;
7. Certificate of Municipal Liens.

NEIGHBORHOOD AERIAL VIEW
(subject parcel marked in orange, 400 foot radius marked in black)



PARCEL AERIAL VIEW



3-D VIEW



STREET VIEW
(from Pontiac Ave)



STREET VIEW
(from Norman Ave)



STREET VIEW (from Myrtle Ave)

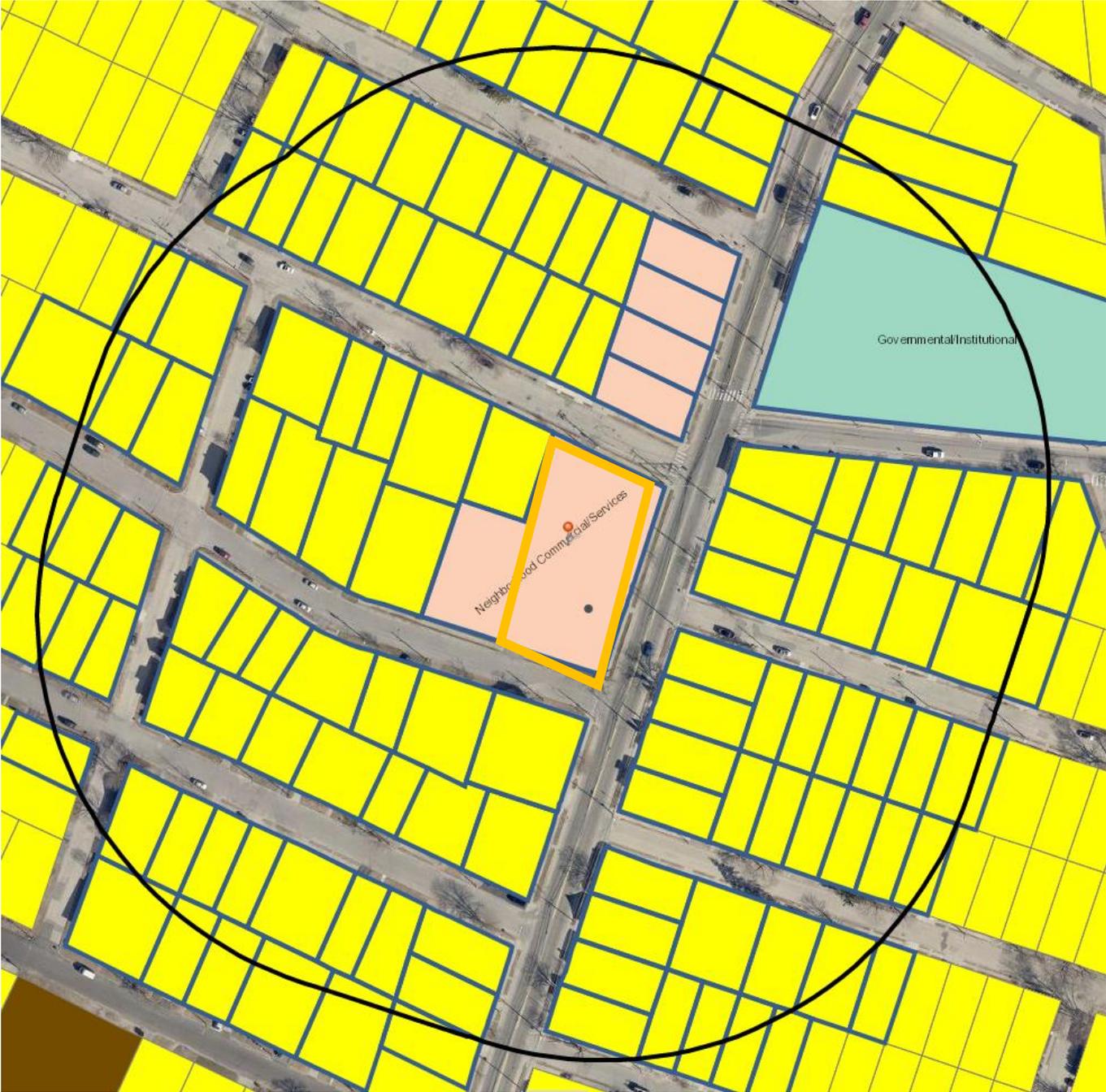


7 Pontiac
Anston

EXISTING ZONING MAP



FUTURE LAND USE MAP

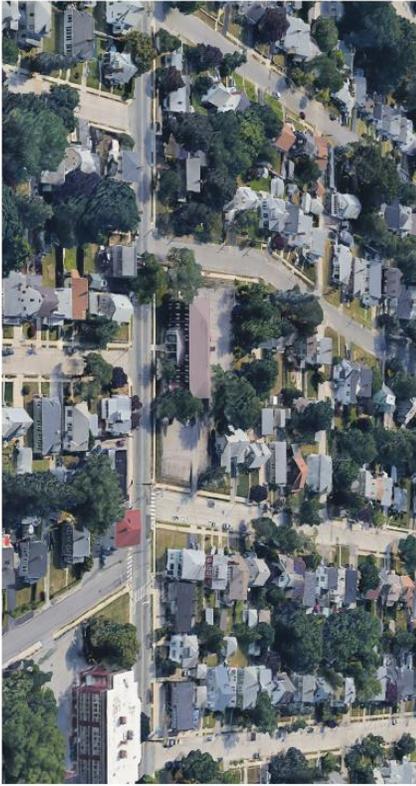
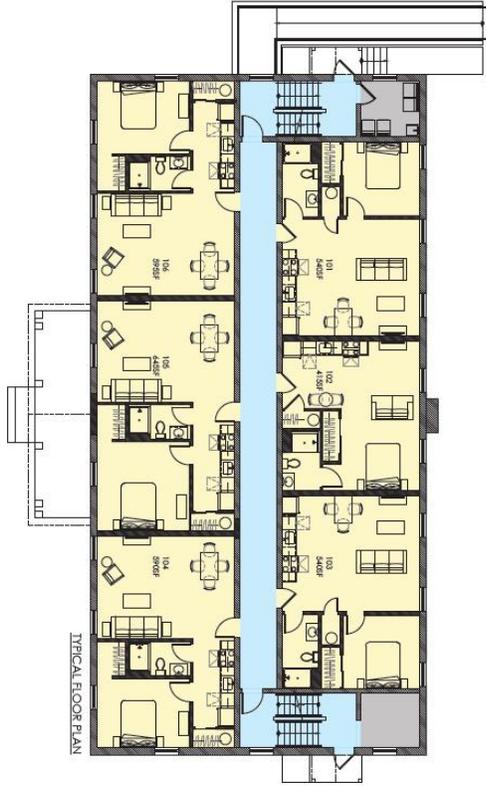


PROPOSED CONCEPT BOARD

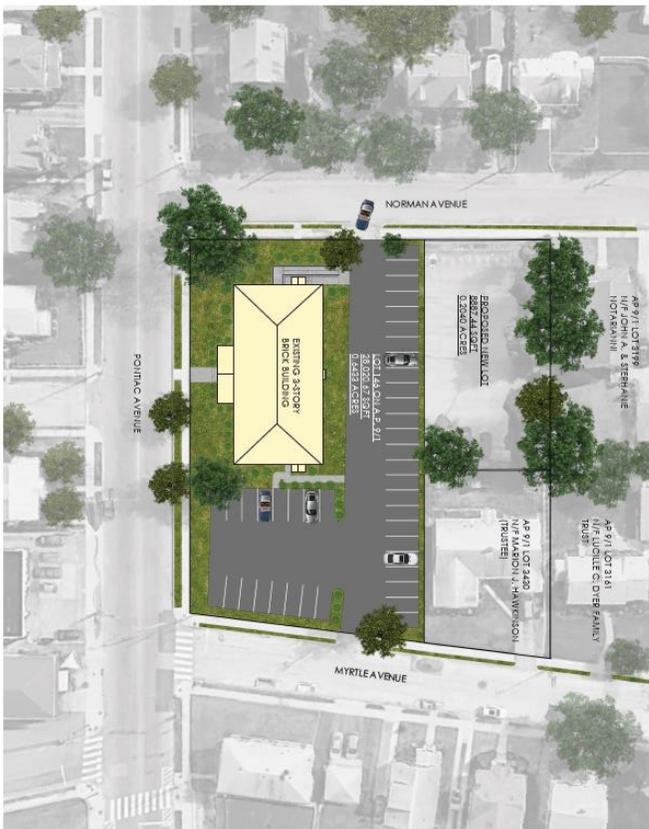
DEVELOPER:



PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL APARTMENT CONVERSION



SITE PLAN



- PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS:**
- 18 RESIDENTIAL APARTMENT UNITS
 - 1-BEDROOM & STUDIO UNITS
 - ON-SITE LAUNDRY
 - OFF-STREET PARKING (41 SPACES)
 - ACCESS CONTROL & BUILDING SECURITY
 - MODERN INTERIOR FINISHES & APPLIANCES



747 PONTIAC AVENUE



III. Surrounding land use and context

Analysis using Geographic Information System indicates that:

1. The subject parcel is located in Eastern Cranston with frontage on Pontiac Avenue.
2. The abutting properties contain a mix of land uses, including single-family dwelling, two-family dwelling, and commercial uses (auto repair and retail).
3. The subject property is host to an existing, 3-story office building.
4. The site is generally flat and does not offer significant topography.
5. The project is free of any regulated floodplains or historic/cultural districts.
6. The 2018 Natural Heritage Map does not show any known rare species located on or near the site.

IV. Staff / Agency Comments

Pursuant to RIGL 45-23-41 A3, these plans were distributed for comment to the Public Works Department, Engineering Division, Traffic Division, Building and Zoning Department, and the Fire Department.

- The City Traffic Engineer provided the following comment: *This office has reviewed the applicant's revised site plan based on revisions to the size of parking spaces and the revised aisle widths, there are no remaining concerns with this plan.*

No other City Departments have provided comments or concerns at this time. It should be noted that additional engineering details will be provided by applicant at the Preliminary Plan stage of the application and such information will be subject to City staff review.

V. Interests of Others

A joint site walk of the Plan Commission and the City Council was conducted on the subject property on October 19, 2022 in order to hear a project overview from the applicant and to better understand the conditions on the ground. This site walk included a quorum of both the Plan Commission and the City Council. Several interested residents from the neighborhood also attended the site walk and provided their feedback/concerns about the project. The minutes of the site walk have been posted to the Planning Department webpage as further background on this proposal.

Outside of the comments received at the joint site walk, no other public comments have been received by staff at this time.

VI. Planning Analysis

This project represents a unique Major Land Development proposal in that there is very limited development being proposed per se. The proposal is to convert an existing, underutilized office building into 18 multi-family apartment units with a mix of 1-bedroom (15) and studio units (3). It should be noted that the corresponding zone change would allow for up to 21 units to be built, however the applicant is only pursuing 18 units as part of this project. The zone change would also require that 15% of the units be deed restricted as affordable housing based on 80% of the area's median income level. That

will represent a total of three (3) affordable housing units. This proposal does not result in changes to the building footprint and does not result in any significant changes to the exterior “shell” of the building itself.

The only elements of the subject property that are changing as a result of this proposal are the re-striping of parking spaces, the addition of a new landscape strip along the rear property line, and the inclusion of a new dumpster enclosure toward the front of the property (Pontiac Ave side). For future stages of the Major Land Development proposal, the applicant will be required to provide a full Landscape Plan (inclusive of fencing details) as well as a stormwater engineering as part of the review of the project. Those detailed elements will be incorporated into the plan at the Preliminary Plan stage of the application, which must be reviewed by both the Development Plan Review Committee and the Plan Commission.

Based on staff review, this Major Land Development application is consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan with regard to both the Plan’s Future Land Use Map and the Plan’s policy framework. Further details on the how this proposal is specifically consistent with the Comprehensive Plan are covered in a separate staff memo for the corresponding zone change that can be found on the Planning Department webpage and are part of the record for this application. It should be noted there are additional background detail on this project within the separate staff memo that are not being repeated here, but for the record staff is of the view that this proposal is compatible with the surrounding area.

VII. Findings of Fact

An orderly, thorough and expeditious technical review of this Major Land Development - Master Plan application has been conducted. Property owners within a 100’ radius have been 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 subdivision is consistent with the City of Cranston Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designation of “Neighborhood Commercial/Services” because the application is specifically proposing a use (multi-family residential) that is allowed by this FLUM designation.
2. The proposal is consistent with the City of Cranston Comprehensive Plan policy framework because the weight of policies with the Plan – specifically the Housing Element - support the density bonus and affordable housing provision as is being provided here.

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. If the City Council approves the corresponding change of zone, the project will be in compliance with all zoning standards and will not impair the intent or purpose of the Cranston Zoning Code.

*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. This finding pertains specifically to the final plan, however, no significant negative environmental impacts as related to City code are anticipated based on review of the conceptual Master Plan application.
5. The Rhode Island November 2018 Natural Heritage map shows that there are no known rare species located on the site.
6. Significant cultural or historic resources that contribute to the attractiveness of the community have not been identified on 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.”

7. The proposed subdivision 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.

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 subject property will have adequate permanent physical access to three (3) public rights-of-way in the City of Cranston, such as Pontiac Ave, Myrtle Ave, and Norman Ave.

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 Major Land Development - Master Plan application.