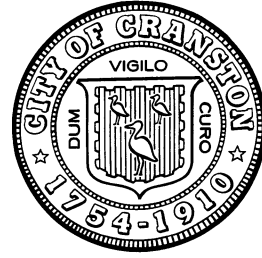


# City Planning Department



## Memo

To: Cranston City Plan Commission  
From: Doug McLean, AICP, Principal Planner  
Date: April 25, 2023  
Re: "747 Pontiac Ave – Residential Apartment Conversion", AP 9, Lot 146  
**Major Land Development – Preliminary Plan Application**

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**Owner/App:** Omni 747P, LLC (The Omni Group)  
**Location:** 747 Pontiac Ave, AP 9, Lot 146  
**Zone:** C-2 with conditions (Special Zone)  
**FLU:** Neighborhood Commercial/Services

### I. Proposal

This memo contains background information, findings, and the recommendation for the Major Land Development – Preliminary Plan application above noted. This application is consistent with the recently approved zone change from "A-6" to "C-2 with Conditions" adopted by the Town Council on 11/28/22 (Ordinance #9-22-01). This application received Preliminary Plan approval from the Development Plan Review Committee on 4/19/23. The immediate Major Land Development - Preliminary Plan hearing is the next step in the application process to demonstrate compliance with technical standards in front of the Plan Commission.

The Preliminary Plan application materials and a digital copy of this memo can be found at the following link: <https://www.cranstonri.gov/plan-commission-5.2.23/>

All previous staff memos and materials on this matter, inclusive of details on the zone change, can be found at the following link: <https://www.cranstonri.gov/plan-commission-11.1.22/>

The proposed Major Land Development is to convert an existing, underutilized office building into 18 new multi-family units. Per the zoning requirement for this property, at least 15% of the units must be deed restricted as affordable housing based on 80% of the area's median income level. This represents a total of three (3) affordable housing units.

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

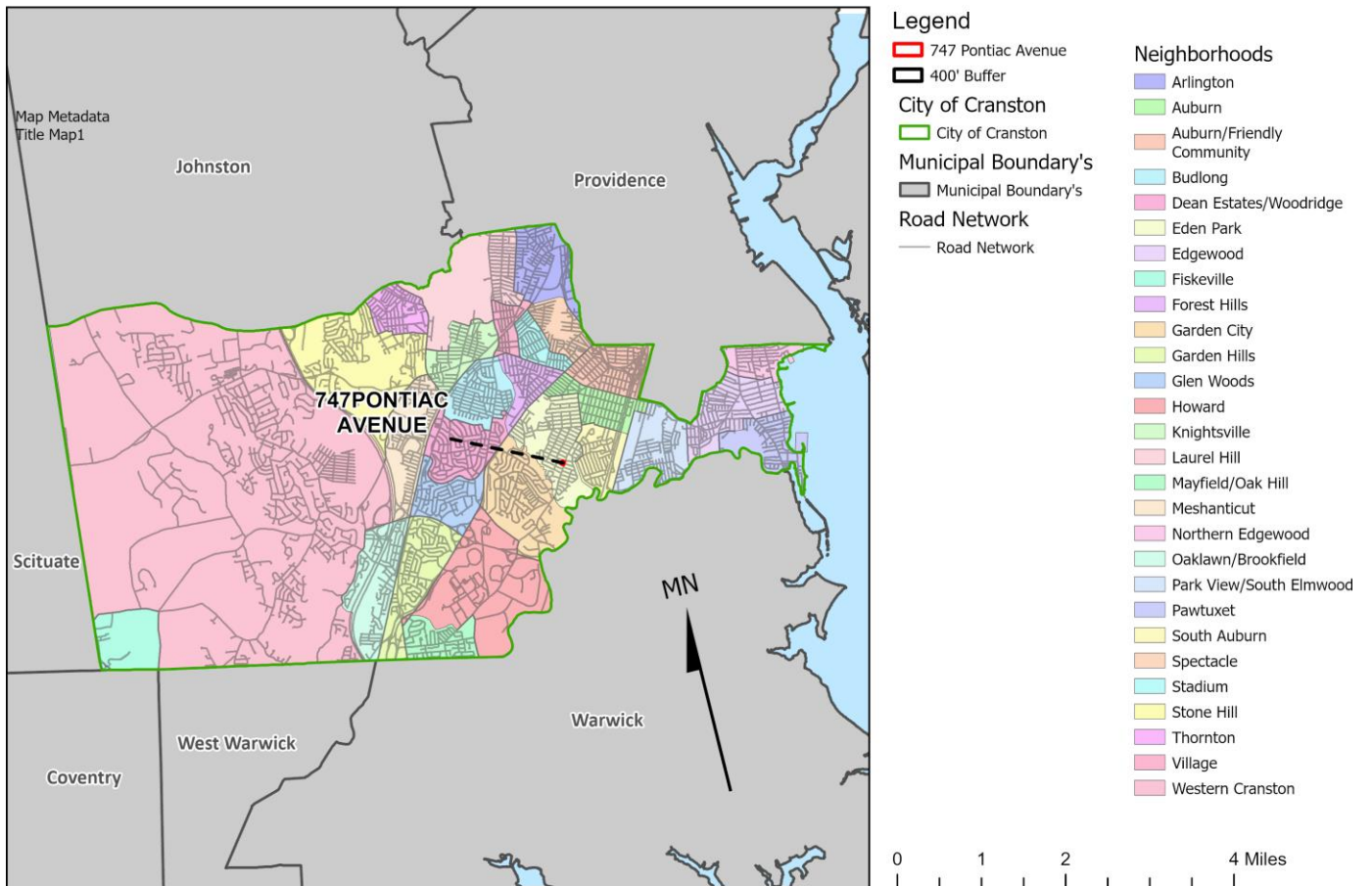
1. Preliminary Plan application and checklist;
2. Application filing fees;

3. Major Land Development site plan entitled “Residential Apartment Conversion – Major Land Development – Preliminary Plan” prepared by Douglas Design Group, with last revisions dated 4/21/23;
4. Landscape Plan prepared by McGeorge Architecture.
5. Lighting Plan prepared by Visual, Designer Benjamin Rowe.
6. Stormwater Letter prepared by C.A. Pretzer Associates, Inc.
7. Project Narrative prepared by The Omni Group;
8. Project “Concept Board” with floor plan prepared by The Omni Group;
9. 100’ radius map and list of abutters;

## LOCATION MAP

### LOCATION

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



# NEIGHBORHOOD AERIAL VIEW

## AERIAL VIEW

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

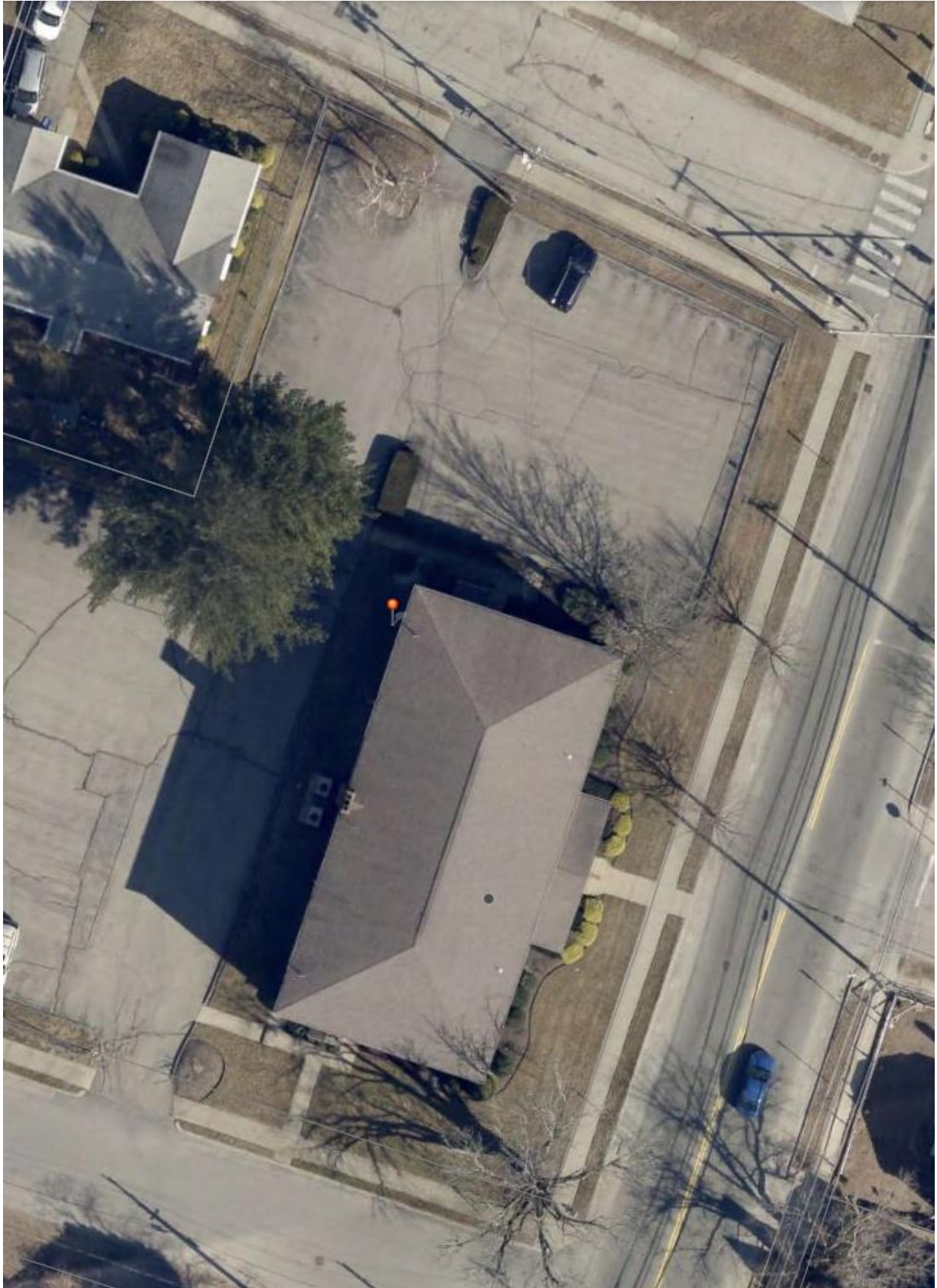


### Legend

- 747 Pontiac Avenue
- 400' Buffer



# PARCEL AERIAL VIEW



# 3-D VIEW



**STREET VIEW**  
**(from Pontiac Ave)**



**STREET VIEW**  
**(from Norman Ave)**



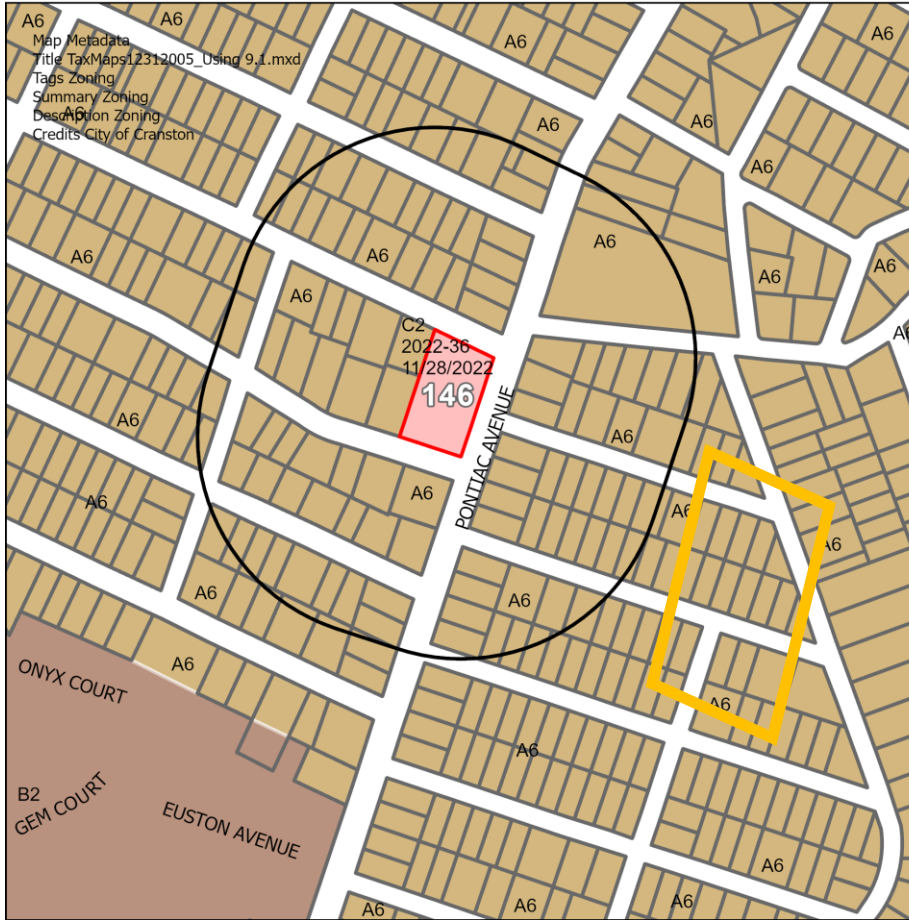
# STREET VIEW (from Myrtle Ave)



# EXISTING ZONING MAP

## ZONING

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



### Legend

747 Pontiac Avenue

400' Buffer

### Zoning

A6

B2

C2

0 145 290 580 US Feet

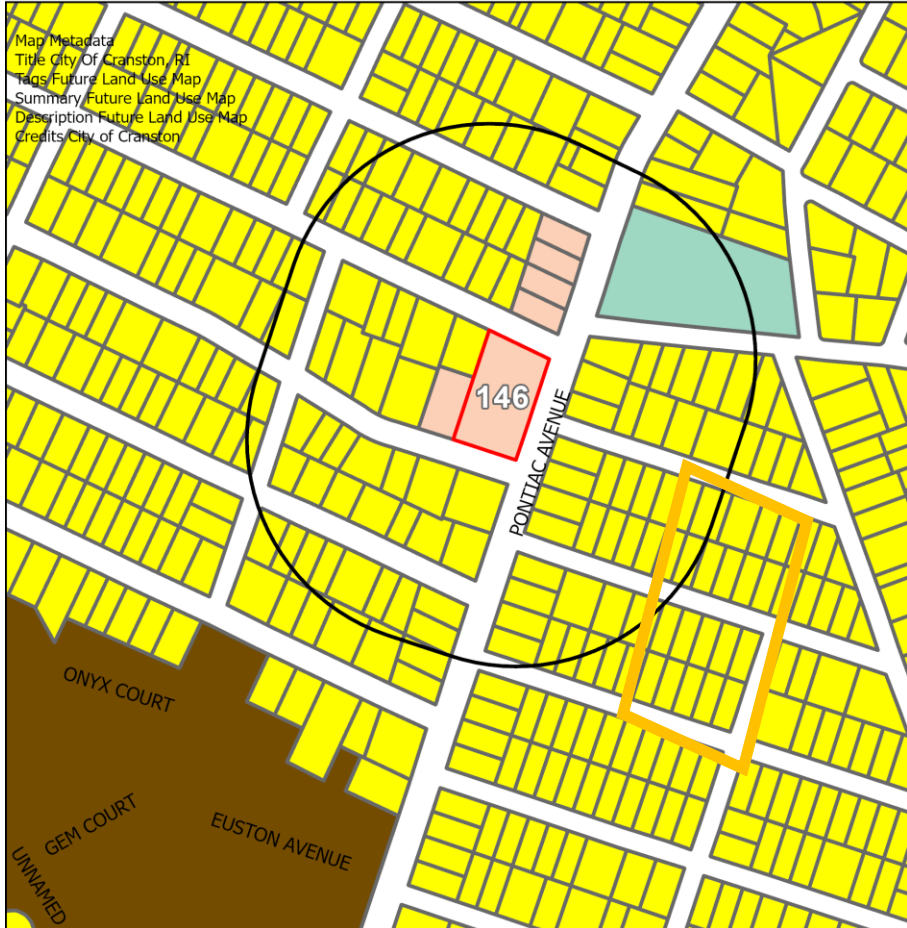




# FUTURE LAND USE MAP

## FUTURE LAND USE

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



### Legend

747 Pontiac Avenue

400' Buffer

### Future Land Use

Governmental/Institutional

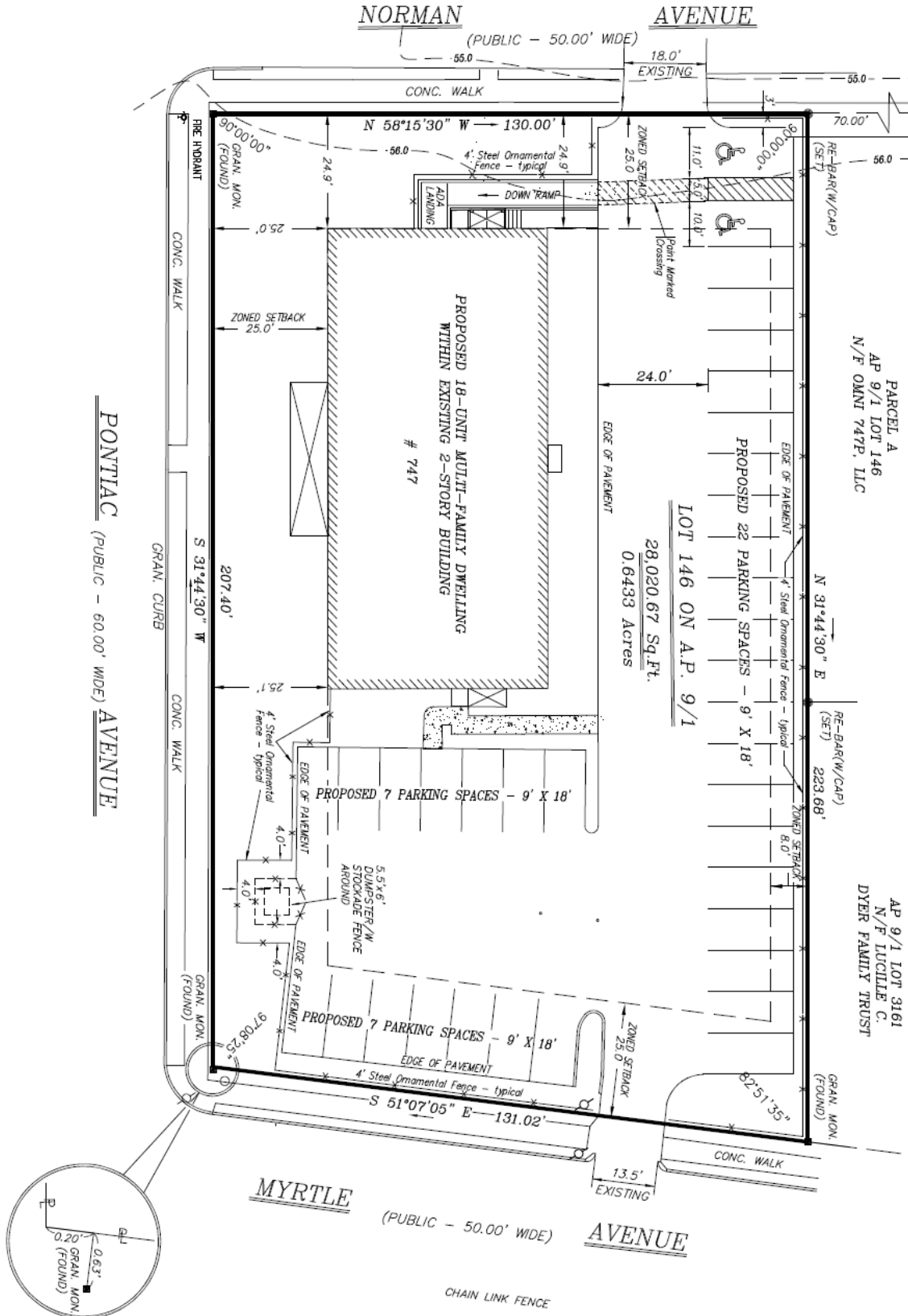
Multifamily

Neighborhood Commercial/  
Services

Single Family Residential 7.26 To  
3.64 Unit Per Acre



# PROPOSED PRELIMINARY PLAN



# PROPOSED LANDSCAPE PLAN

DEVELOPER:



## I PROPOSED LANDSCAPING PLAN



### LANDSCAPING GENERAL NOTES:

- THE SITE IS APPROXIMATELY 30% LANDSCAPED, WHICH EXCEEDS THE 15% REQUIRED BY THE CRANSTON CODE OF ORDINANCE SECTION 17.94.140-C.1.B.
- LANDSCAPING ON PLAN IS ALL EXISTING WITH THE EXCEPTION OF NEW TREES ALONG PROPERTY LINE, NEW ARBOVITAE AND NEW STREET TREES.
- APPROXIMATELY 50 NEW EMERALD GREEN ARBOVITAE TO BE PLANTED AS ILLUSTRATED ON THE PLAN, AT A MINIMUM HEIGHT OF 5'-0" AT THE TIME OF PLANTING, TO ACHIEVE A BUFFER HEIGHT OF AT LEAST 8'-0" WITHIN THREE GROWING SEASONS.
- EXISTING STREET TREES TO BE REMOVED, 11 NEW CLEVELAND SELECT PEAR STREET TREES TO BE PLANTED AS ILLUSTRATED ON THE PLAN, WITH 2.5" CALIPERS AT THE TIME OF PLANTING.
- EXISTING CHAIN LINK FENCE TO BE REMOVED IN ITS ENTIRETY AND REPLACED WITH A 4'-0" ORNAMENTAL STEEL FENCE AS ILLUSTRATED ON THE PLAN.
- WHEREAS DPR CODE REQUIRES A SPECIFIC STANDARD THAT APPLICANT DOES NOT INTEND TO MEET, THE APPLICANT REQUESTS WAIVERS FROM THE CRANSTON CODE OF ORDINANCE 17.94.140-C.7.B., 17.94.140-C.7.C., 17.94.150-A.3.



THE CITY OF  
**CRANSTON**

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, Norman Avenue, and Myrtle Avenue.
2. The surrounding properties contain a mix of land uses, including single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings, and a small mix of commercial uses (auto repair and retail).
3. The subject property is host to an existing, 2.5-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.

As part of a pre-application discussion of this plan, many initial comments from Department Heads have already been addressed and incorporated into the applicant's revised plans. No additional comments or concerns are reported at this time.

### **V. Interests of Others**

No 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 this property was recently approved for a zone change to "C-2 with Conditions" and 15% of the proposed units (3 total units) will be deed restricted as affordable housing based on 80% of the area's median income level. 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 landscaping, new fencing around the perimeter of site, a new down-ramp at the south property entrance for ADA accessibility, new wall-mounted exterior lights, and the inclusion of a new dumpster enclosure toward the front of the property (Pontiac Ave side).

Based on staff review, this Major Land Development – Preliminary Plan 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. The Comprehensive Plan has numerous policies on the subject of density and affordable housing that can be found in

the Housing Element. Staff has reviewed the totality of policies within the Housing Element and finds that the primary elements of the proposal, inclusive of the density and the 15% affordable housing component, are found to be consistent with these Comprehensive Plan policies. It should be noted that the “Neighborhood Commercial/Services” allows for multi-family residential uses, and does not have a maximum density limit so the proposal to develop 18 units is not in conflict with any density allowances as specified within the Comprehensive Plan.

Staff is of the view that this proposal is generally compatible with the surrounding neighborhood based on the limited physical changes to the property and the utilization of the existing building. It is well accepted that the traffic and parking demand for residential uses is below that of similar-sized commercial or office uses. The applicant is providing the required number of parking spaces which is 2 spaces per unit (36 required, 36 provided). Additionally, the applicant has stated that this development will include security measures, such as background checks, cameras, and a building access control system as means to protect the residents.

## **VII. Findings of Fact**

An orderly, thorough, and expeditious technical review of this Major Land Development – Preliminary 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 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 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 proposal 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 and affordable housing components that are being proposed 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. The project is in compliance with the recently approved Zone Change from “A-6” to “C-2 with Conditions” adopted by the Town Council on 11/28/22 (Ordinance #9-22-01). Additionally, this proposal 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 Preliminary 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 project 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 – Preliminary Plan application.