

## City Planning Department



## Memo

To: Cranston City Plan Commission  
From: Doug McLean, AICP - Principal Planner / Administrative Officer  
Date: March 8, 2021  
Re: **REVISED MEMO Special Use Permit Application for Minor Accessory Solar Energy System**

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**Owners:** Lombardi Family LLC  
**Applicant:** Cranston Country Club  
**Location:** Cranston County Club, Burlingame Road, AP 24, Lot 1  
**Zone:** A-80 (single family residential with at least 80,000 ft<sup>2</sup> lot size)  
**FLU:** Special Redevelopment Area

### **SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST:**

**To develop a ground-mounted Minor Accessory Solar Energy System as an accessory use to a golf course facility. Such a use is allowed through a Special Use Permit process per Zoning Ordinance Sec. 17.24.020.**

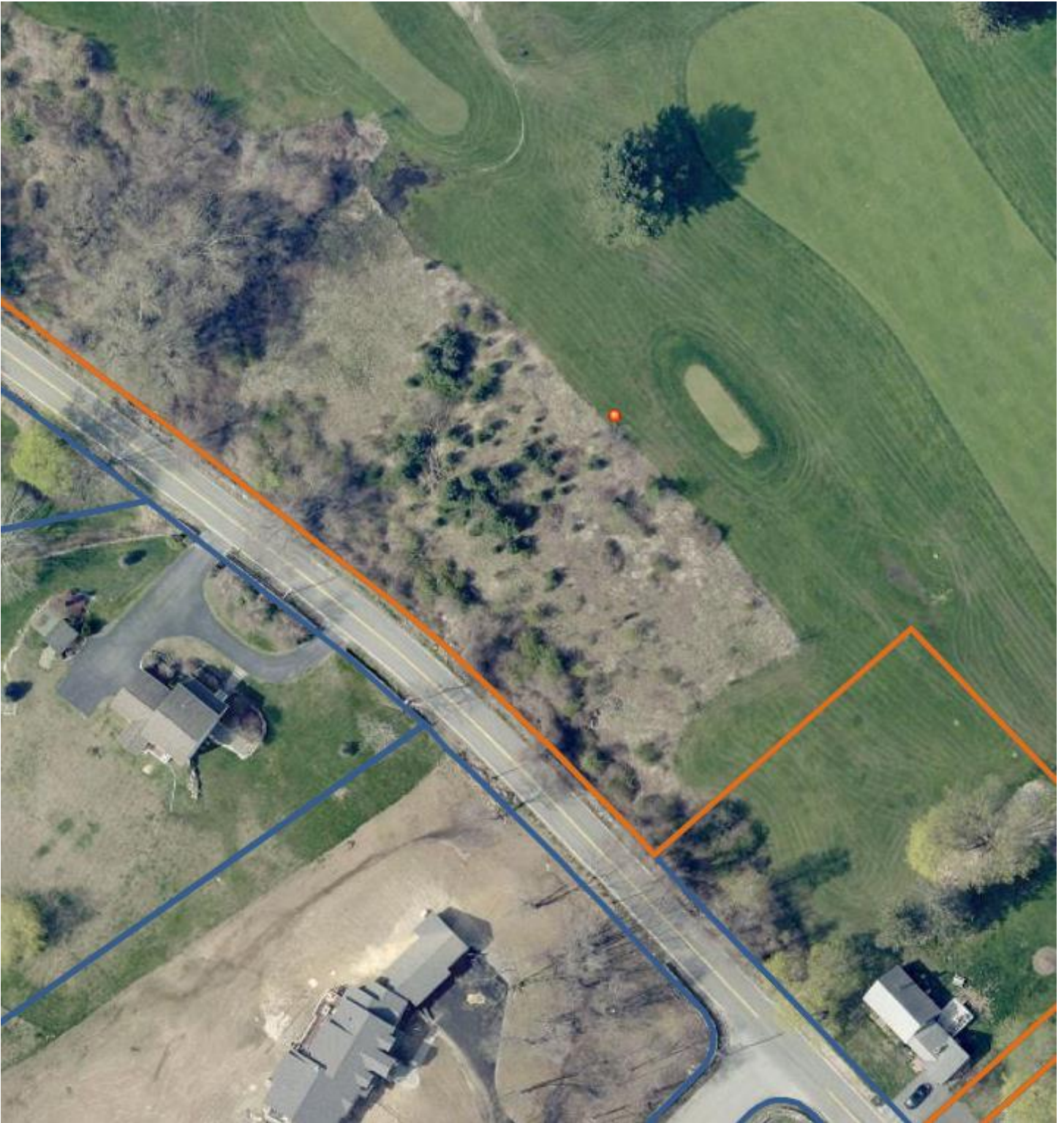
The Plan Commission is charged with making an advisory recommendation on the application to the Zoning Board of Review.

**AERIAL VIEW  
(400 foot radius in black)**

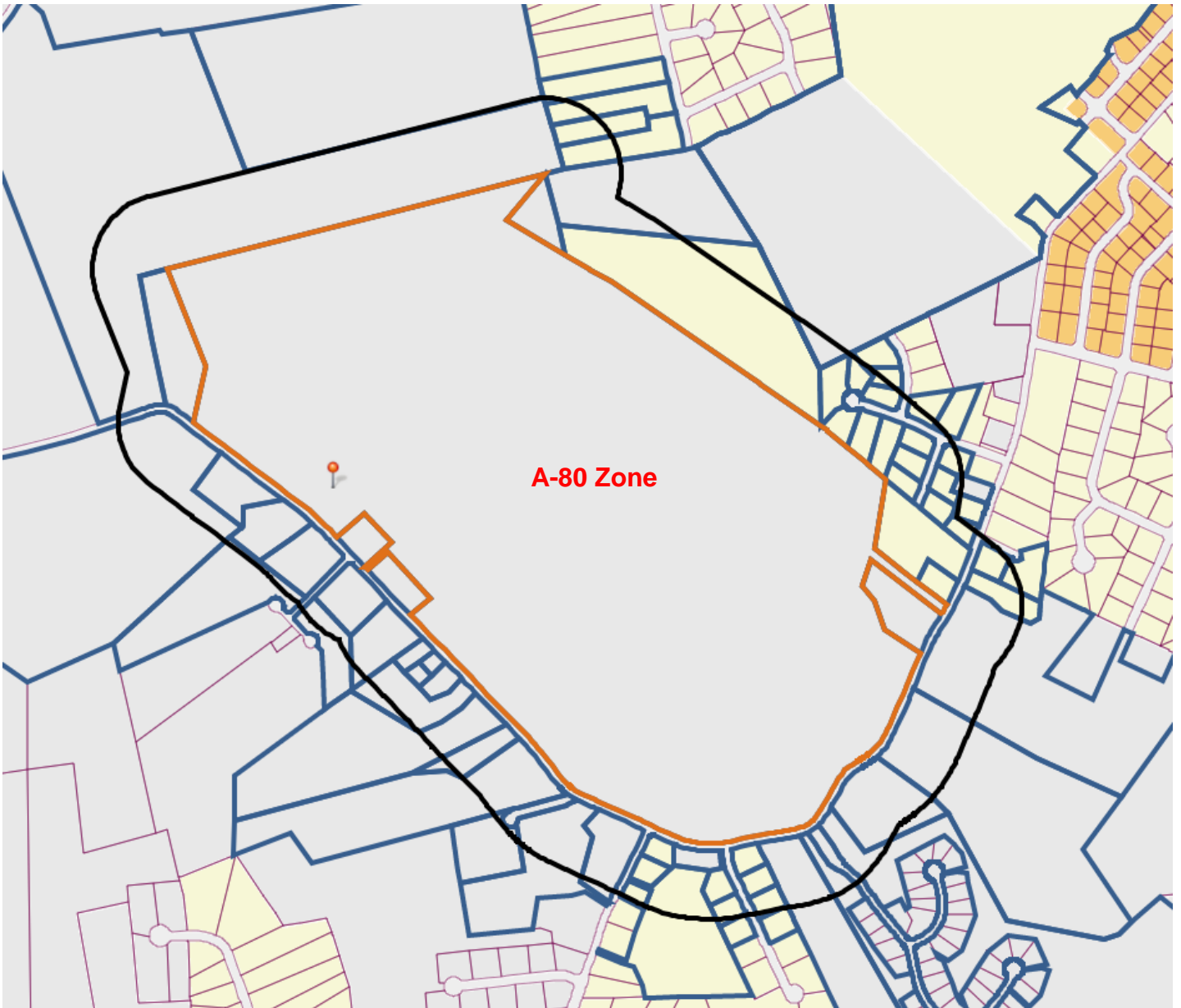




**AERIAL VIEW (close up)**

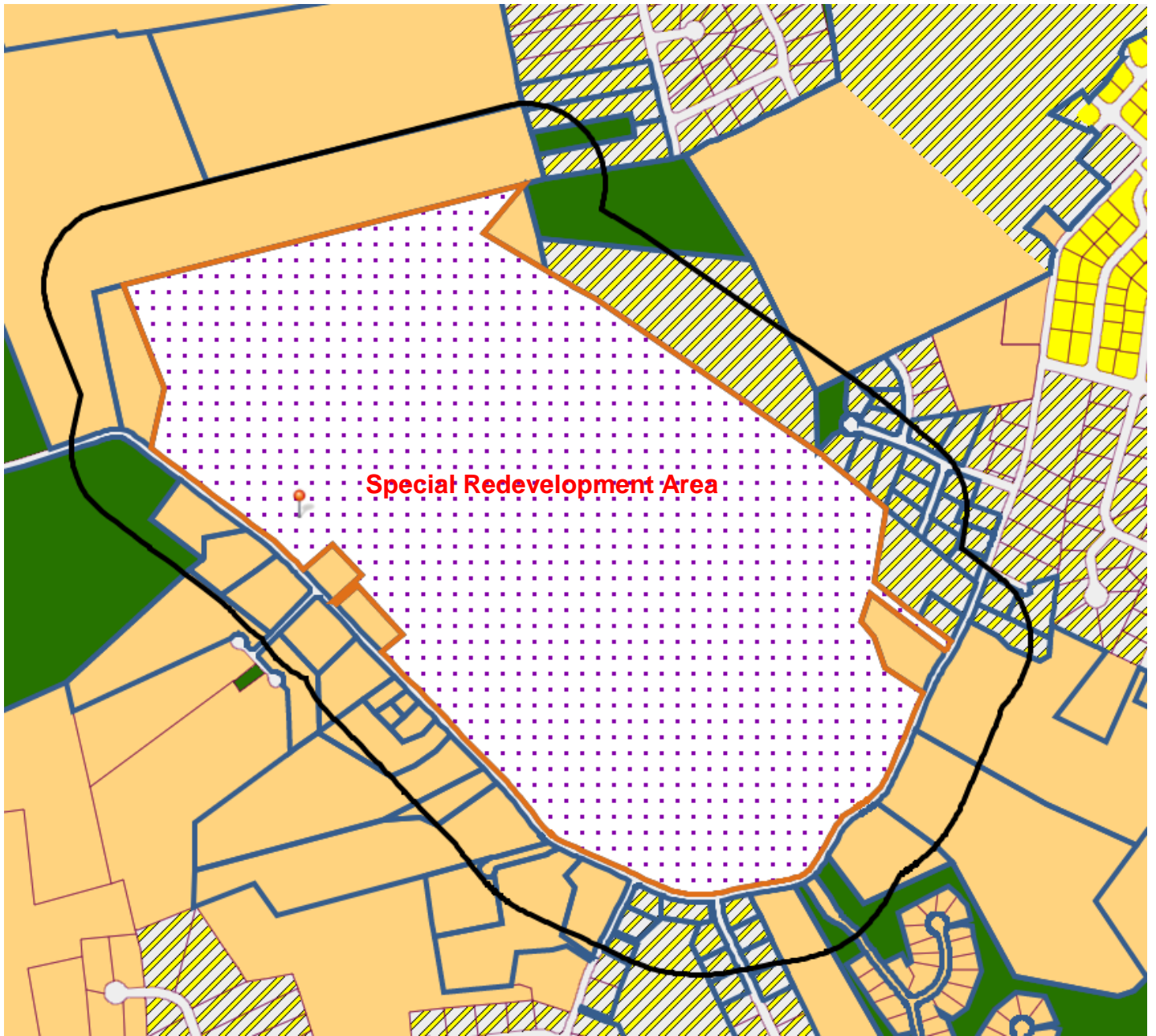


# ZONING MAP





# FUTURE LAND USE MAP



**3-D AERIAL VIEWS**







**STREET VIEW (from Burlingame Road facing north)**



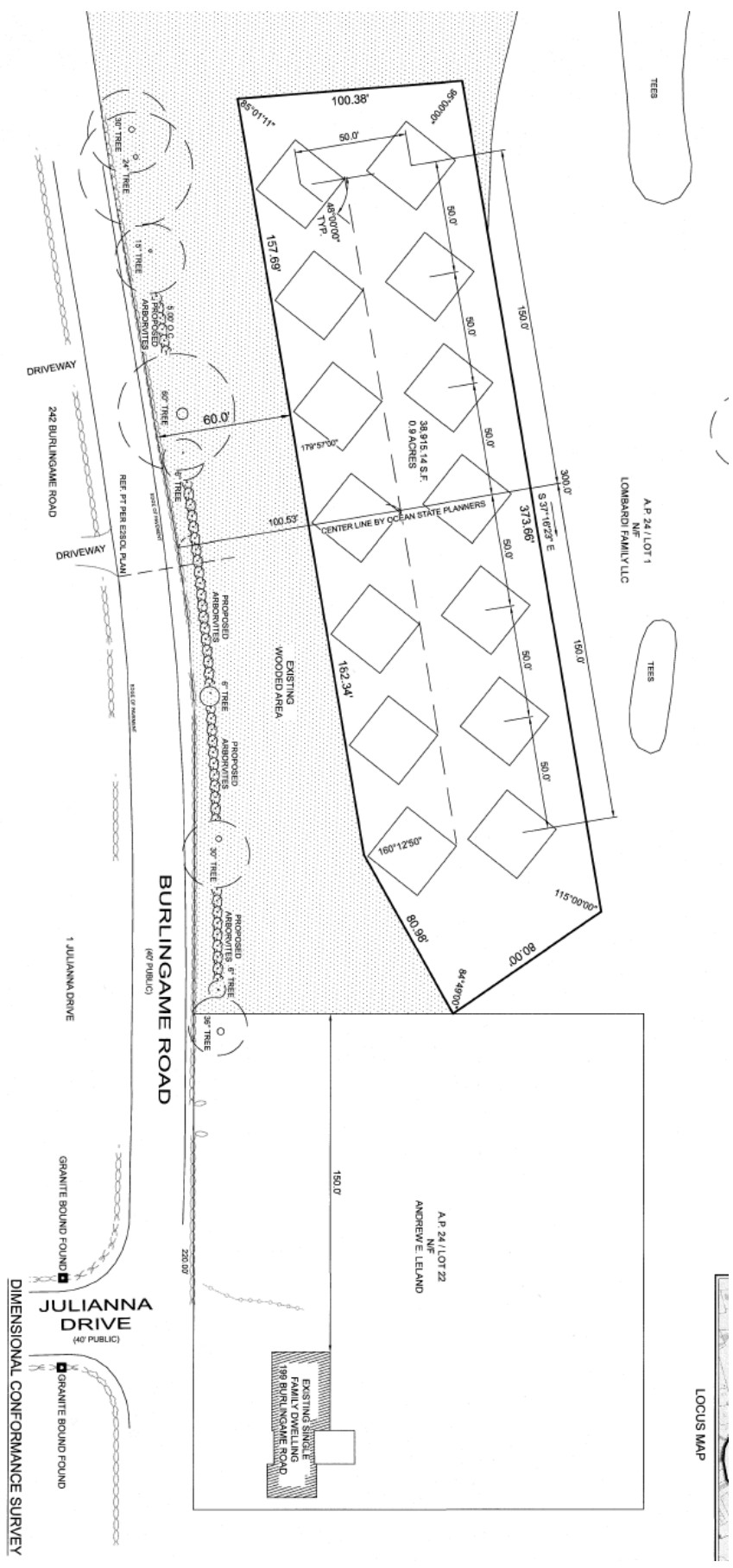


**STREET VIEW (from Burlingame Road facing south)**





# SITE PLAN



LOCUS MAP

DIMENSIONAL CONFORMANCE SURVEY

## **FINDINGS OF FACT:**

1. The proposal is to develop a ground-mounted Minor Accessory Solar Energy System (SES) on a portion of the Cranston Country Club (CCC). The energy generated by the proposed solar panels will be used to offset the energy used by the country club (121.80 KW DC).
2. The property is zoned A-80 which allows for single family residential with at least 80,000 ft<sup>2</sup> lot size. The use of a golf course/country club is allowed in an A-80 zone with a special use permit and is a legally permitted use at this property.
3. The A-80 and the S-1 zones are the only zones in which a ground-mounted Minor Accessory SES is required to receive a Special Use Permit. In other zones, included all other residential zones, such a use is allowed by-right.
4. The specific solar energy system being proposed is a dual axis "AllEarth Solar Tracker" which are designed to rotate to orient themselves for optimal exposure to the sun. This design requires less panels to produce the same amount of energy as compared to larger roof-mounted and other ground-mounted systems.
5. The applicant has stated that they have determined that a roof mounted system on their property is not practical based on structural issues and due to the orientation of the buildings.
6. The application complies with all standards of the zoning code, including the specific standards for a Minor Accessory SES within Sec. 17.24.020.
7. Burlingame Road requires a minimum setback of 60 feet for any improvements from the public right-of-way. This is larger than the setback required for other A-80 lots based on underlying zoning standards. The increased setback on Burlingame Road is due to this roadway having been historically identified by the City as a potential location for roadway expansion. This proposal complies with that 60 foot setback requirement and staff has confirmed with the Department of Public Works that there is no imminent or anticipated roadway expansion for Burlingame Road.
8. Unlike larger scales of solar development that are allowed in the City, a Minor Accessory SES is exempt from zoning standards on visual screening/buffering. It should be noted there is existing vegetation between the proposed solar installation and the Burlingame Road ROW. On a voluntary basis, CCC has proposed approximately 40 new arborvitae to be added where there are gaps between existing trees. This approach to augmenting the existing vegetation is intended to provide a visual screen between the solar panels and the Burlingame Road ROW. The application includes a statement that the CCC is committed to monitoring the plantings and supplementing the identified areas.
9. With regard to project interconnection, 3-phase electric service is needed for the proposed solar panels. The service line is available today in the area of the CCC parking lot. National Grid will continue the service down Burlingame Road to the project areas. This upgrade will not require new poles areas, tree removal, or significant tree trimming. The 3-phase service will connect to an existing pole near the proposed installation and then be connected underground to the proposed solar installation.



10. With regard to the Special Use Permit standards of review (Zoning Sec. 17.92.020), the applicant must demonstrate the proposal meets the following requirements:

- a. It shall be compatible with its surroundings;
- b. It shall not be injurious, obnoxious or offensive to the neighborhood;
- c. It shall not hinder the future development of the city;
- d. It shall promote the general welfare of the city; and
- e. It shall be in conformance with the purposes and intent of the comprehensive plan.

11. Staff is of the view that the application has provided a substantial level of detail within the submitted materials to demonstrate compliance with all related regulatory issues – including the Special Use Permit criteria.

12. The Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element includes the following language regarding Renewable Energy Production and Consumption (as recently amended):

“Cranston should actively encourage the availability and implementation of energy infrastructure on rooftops, parking lots and industrial sites throughout the City. The Zoning Ordinance permit the development of renewable energy production facilities in M-1 and M-2 Zoning districts, and should promote the development of multiple renewable energy production facilities within the City. Such developments further the City’s green development objectives by improving air quality and reducing reliance on traditional energy sources.”

Staff is of the view the above language is relevant to the proposed project as this scale of solar development (minor accessory) is allowed by SUP in an A-80 zone. This project will provide renewable energy to an existing business in the community and will not result in undue negative impacts to surrounding neighborhood.

13. The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map designation for this property is “Special Redevelopment Area”. This designation suggest that this property may be appropriate for a wide mix of uses and scales of development as one of the major parcels in the City identified for having unique redevelopment potential. Given the wide range of uses and scales of development that are supported by the Comprehensive Plan for this property, staff finds that the proposed project for a Minor Accessory SES is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map.

## **PLANNING ANALYSIS:**

This is the first application the City has received for a ground-mounted Minor Accessory solar installation in an A-80 zone, and thus the first solar project the City is reviewing under the Special Use Permit requirements.

The proposed solar system is approximately 38,900 ft<sup>2</sup> (0.9 acres) in total area. The proposed solar panels will not exceed 12 feet in height and will be located 60 feet from the Burlingame Road right of way. There is existing vegetation between the proposed solar panels and the Burlingame Road ROW and the abutters across the street. The applicant has proposed additional evergreen vegetation in this area to augment the existing vegetation to provide a visual screen. Based on the materials submitted, staff is of the view that the applicant has provided a substantial level of

detail to demonstrate compliance with all related zoning code and regulatory issues, including the special use permit criteria. Staff is of the view that the project is consistent with City's Comprehensive Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Due to the fact that the application is consistent with the Cranston Comprehensive Plan, and due to the fact that the applicant has demonstrated compliance with all required sections of zoning, including the Special Use Permit criteria, staff recommends the Plan Commission forward a **positive recommendation** to the Zoning Board of Review.