

City Planning Department



Memo

To: Cranston City Plan Commission
From: Joshua Berry, AICP - Senior Planner / Administrative Officer
Date: April 29, 2021
Re: "Elite Drive Subdivision" Master Plan - Major Subdivision without street extension

Owner: Michael J. Spagnole & Irene A. Antonelli
Applicant: David M. Devany
Location: Elite Drive and Janet Drive, AP 26/4, Lot 50
Zone: A-20 (Single-family dwellings on lots of minimum areas of 20,000 ft²)
FLU: Single Family Residential 3.63 to 1 unit per acre

I. Proposal

The owner/applicant proposes to subdivide an existing 7.48 +/- acre lot into four (4) lots for the purpose of creating buildable lots intended for single-family development under A-20 zoning. The property is currently undeveloped, vegetated and has wetlands located in the southeast as well as a portion of a wetlands buffer for a stream that is between the project site and Route 295. The project would be served by public water and sewer. All four proposed lots far exceed the 20,000 ft² minimum. The proposed lot areas are as follows:

Lot 1 67,218 ft²
Lot 2 50,702 ft²
Lot 3 84,586 ft²
Lot 4 123,372 ft²

Instead of extending Janet Drive and Elite Drive to create street frontage for additional lots, the applicant proposes only four lots but requires relief for the 120' street frontage minimum in A-20 zoning. Relief for lot width (very similar concept to frontage but measured at the front setback line) is required for Lots 1, 2, & 3. The proposed project is consistent with the uses and density maximums prescribed in the Comprehensive Plan.

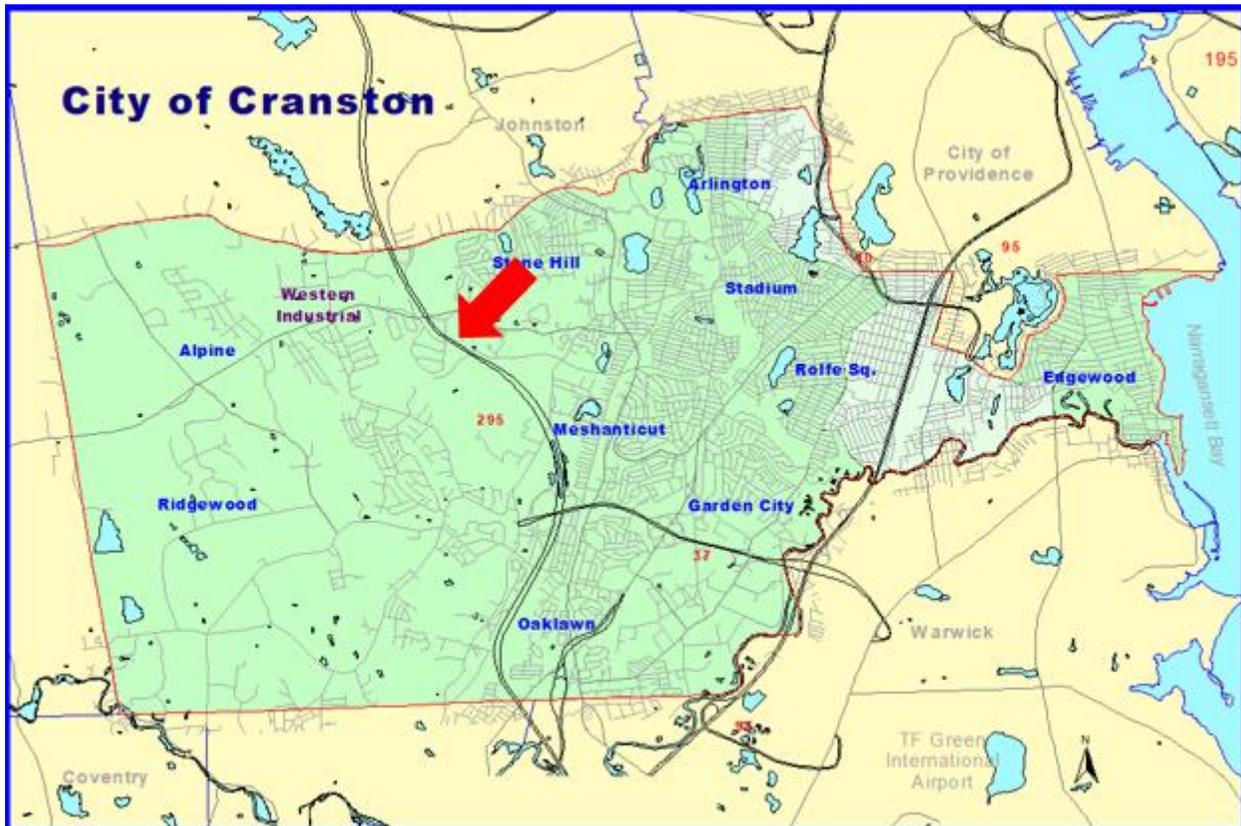
A four lot subdivision is normally a minor subdivision, but as relief is sought for lot width and frontage, the Subdivision Regulations allow for such applications to be classified as major subdivisions. This allows the applicant to obtain the first level of approval of the application before obtaining zoning relief without having to provide engineering details required for the preliminary plan stage.

II. Documents which are part of the application

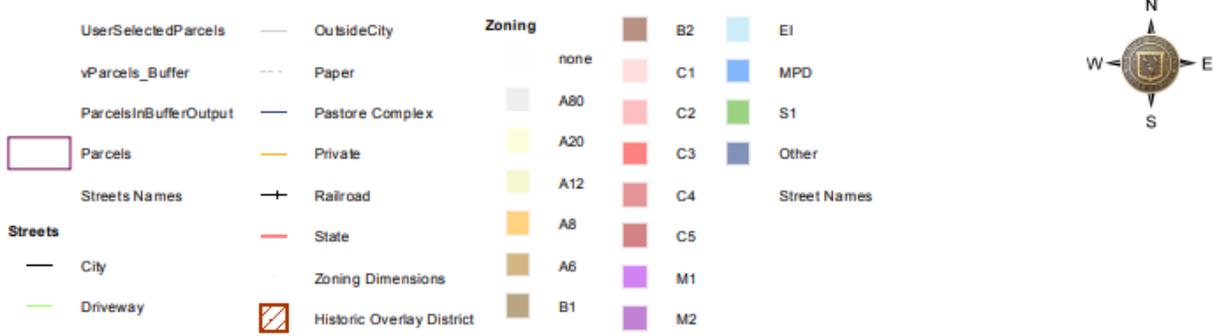
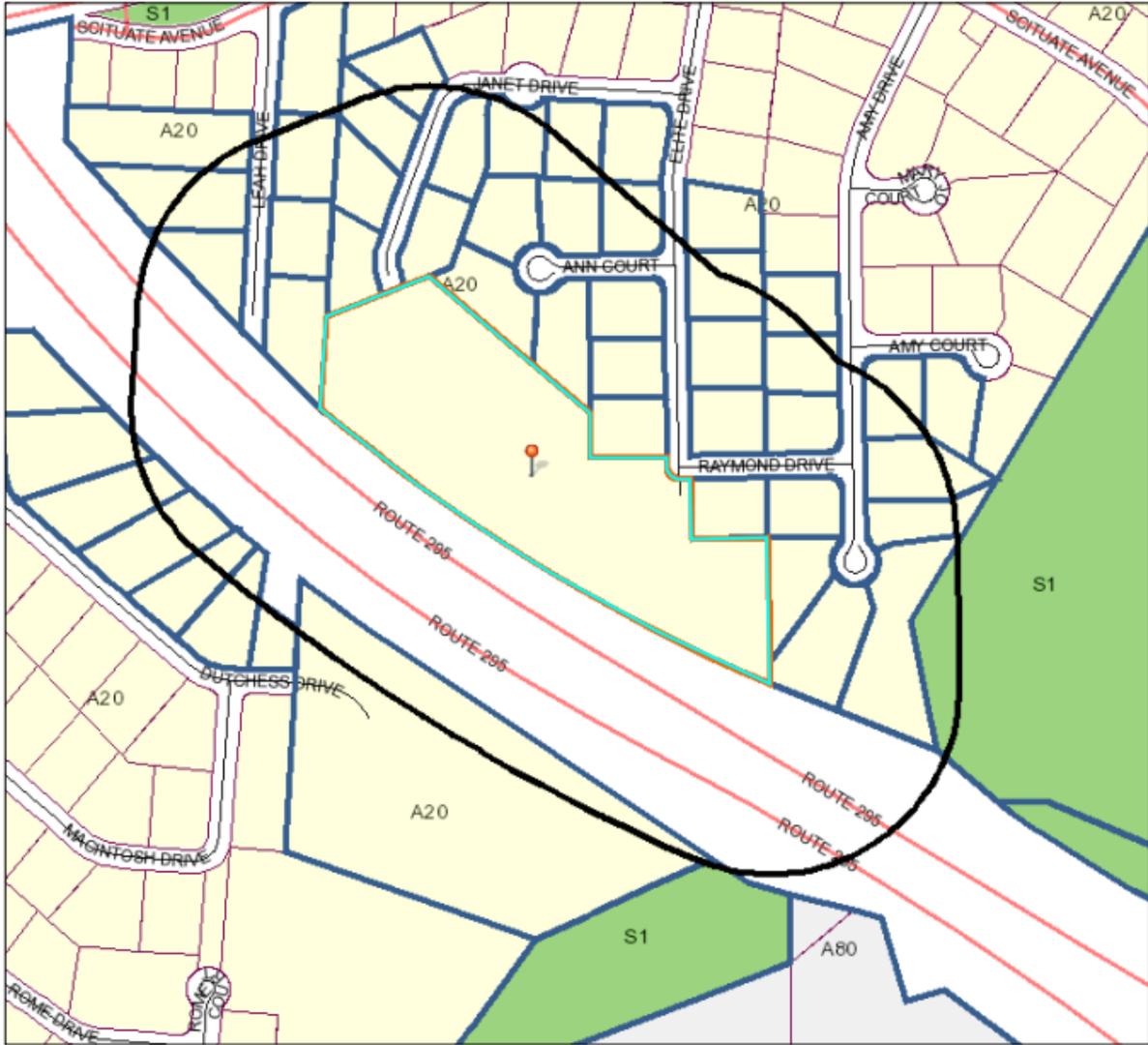
1. Master Plan application;
2. Application filing fees;

3. Subdivision plan set entitled "Elite Drive Subdivision," prepared by Eric M. Prive, PE and Robert G. Babcock PLS of DiPrete Engineering with a last revised date of 4/1/21.
4. Master Plan checklist;
5. Project Narrative signed by Eric Prive, PE dated 3/31/21;
6. Wetlands Letter of Findings signed by Christian Sutter, PWS dated 4/1/21;
7. 100' radius map, list of abutters and an Affidavit of Notice Compliance signed by Robert D. Murray, dated 4/16/21;
8. Letter regarding sewer availability signed by Edward Tally, Environmental Program Manager of the City of Cranston, dated 3/9/21.
9. Letter regarding water availability from Providence Water dated 2/26/21;
10. Certificate of Municipal Leans;
11. Zoning Board of Review Project Narrative.

LOCATION MAP



ZONING MAP

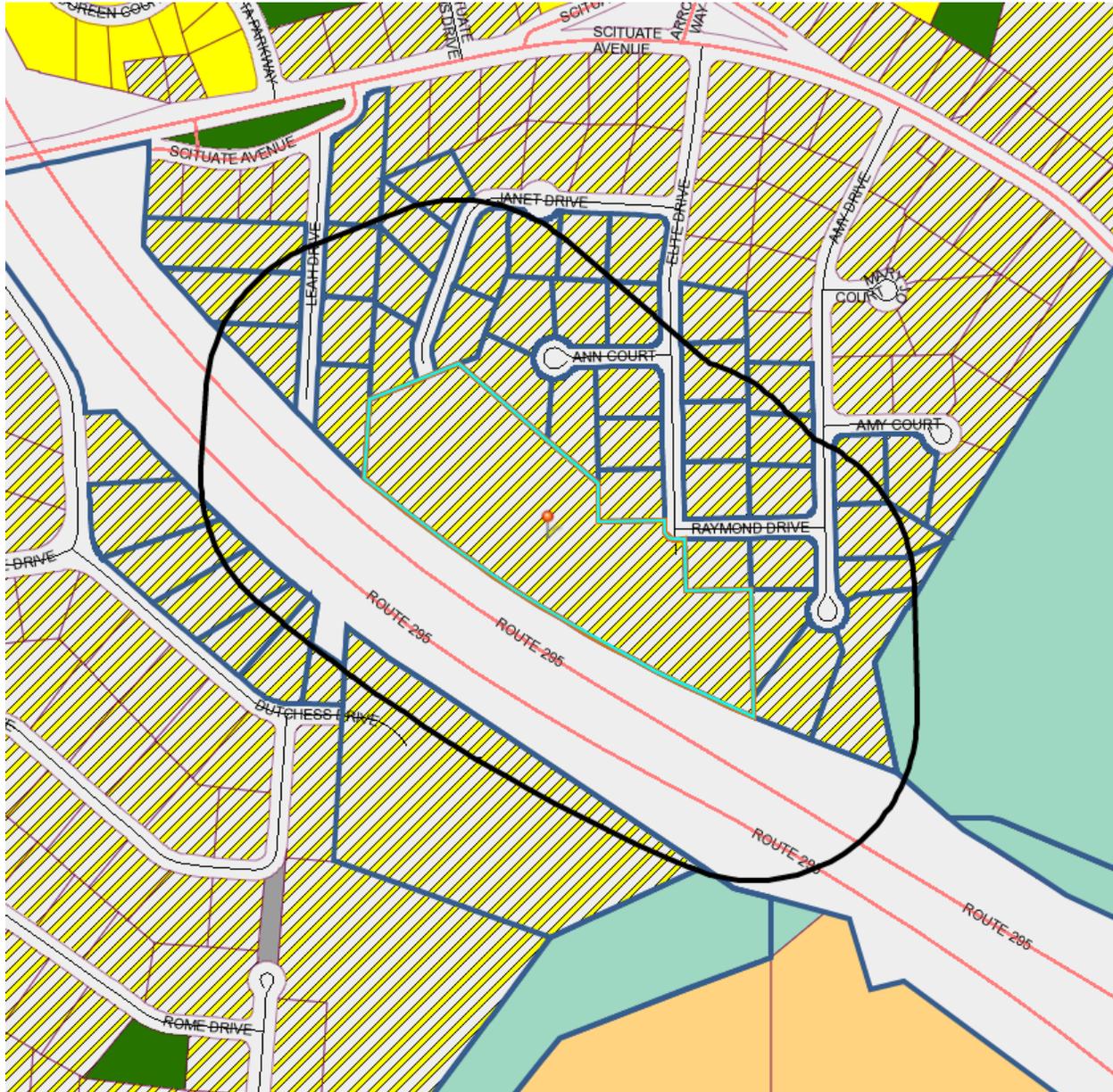


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City of Cranston

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

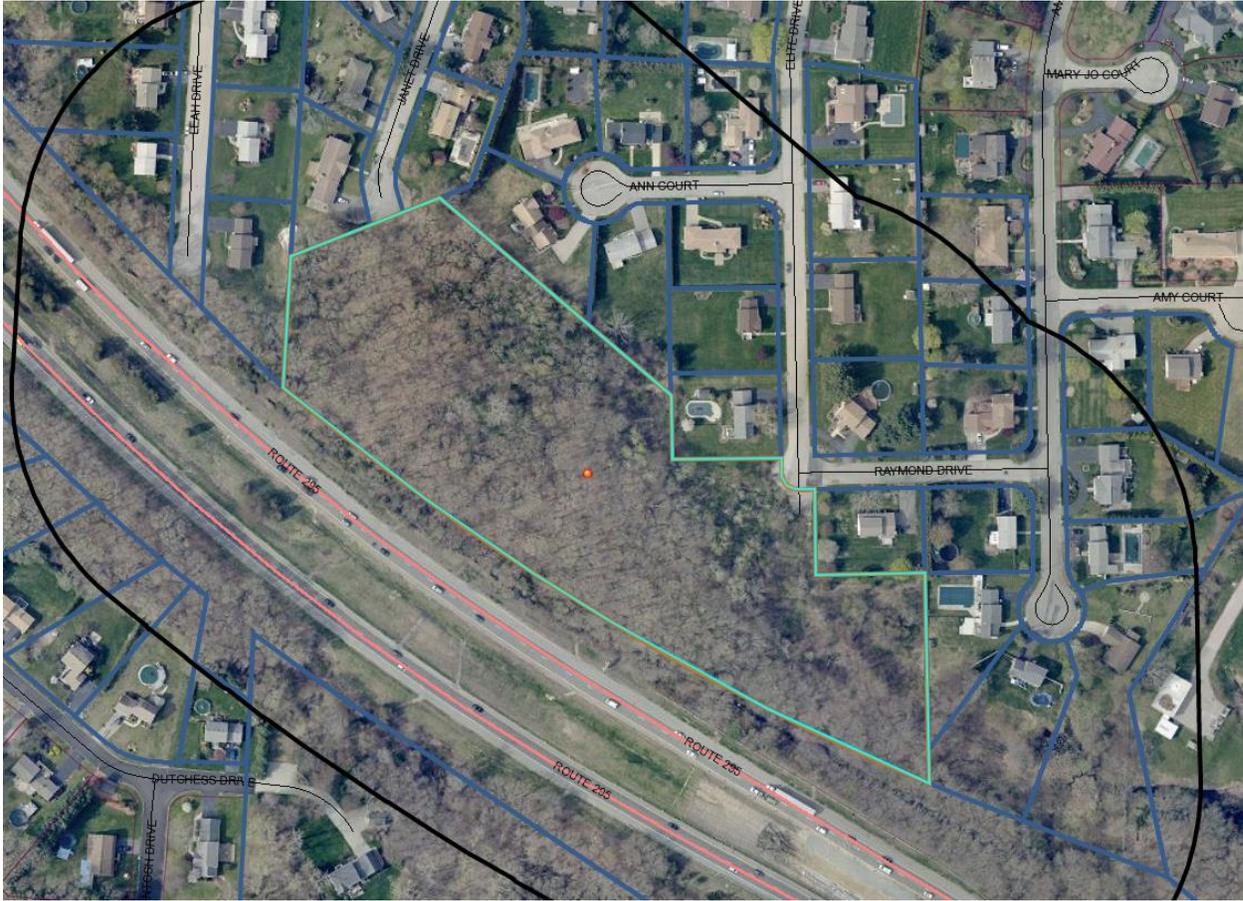


<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UserSelected... — Driveway vParcels_Buffer — OutsideCity ParcelsInBuff... --- Paper Parcels Streets Names — Pastore Complex Streets — City — State 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Driveway — OutsideCity --- Paper — Pastore Complex — Private + Railroad — State 	Future Land Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Governmenta... ■ Highway Commercial/... ■ Industrial ■ Mixed Plan Development ■ Multifamily ■ Neighborhood Commercial/... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Open Space ■ Residential Less Than 10.39 Units Per Acre ■ Right Of Way ■ Single Family Residential 3.83 To 1 Unit Per Acre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Single Family Residential 7.26 To 3.64 Unit Per Acre ■ Single Family Residential Less Than 1 Unit Per Acre ■ Single/Two Family Residential Less Than 10.89 Units Per Acre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Special Redevelopm... Area ■ Water Street Names
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AERIAL VIEW



3-D AERIAL VIEW (facing south)



SITE PLAN (snippet)



STREET VIEW (Elite Drive facing south)



STREET VIEW

(Janet Drive facing south)



III. Surrounding land use and context

Analysis using Geographic Information System indicates that:

1. The subject parcel is located in Eastern Cranston (speaking in general terms, but more specifically described as north-central Cranston) in the section of the Stone Hill neighborhood that is enclosed by I-295 to the west, Scituate Avenue to the north and the Providence Water Supply Board Headquarters/office/pump station to the east.
2. The entire abutting neighborhood as described above is zoned A-20 and has been develop and platted for conforming single-family lots. The subject property is the last/only undeveloped parcel in the neighborhood. The site and abutting neighborhood are all designated as Single Family Residential 3.63 to 1 Unit/acre on the Future Land Use Map.
3. There is a wetland area in the southeastern corner of the subject property. There is also a intermittent stream just off the southern property line which runs along I-295. This stream has a 100' riverbank wetland buffer that runs through the subject site, roughly parallel to the property line.
4. The site generally slopes downwards towards the wetland area in the southeastern corner of the parcel, with the highest elevated areas in the northwest bear Janet Drive.
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, Conservation Commission and the Fire Department. DPW has provided a letter regarding public sewer availability. **DPW has indicated that they would prefer that the subdivision be**

developed as proposed instead of requiring the extension of public roads. No other comments have been received at this time.

V. Interests of Others

None to report at this time.

VI. Planning Analysis

It is rare for the Plan Commission to see a four lot subdivision as a *major* subdivision. Typically, four lot subdivisions are *minor* subdivisions and go straight to the *preliminary* plan phase. However, in this case, relief is requested to allow the proposed subdivision design and the applicant is evoking the provision on the Subdivision Regulations to be reviewed as a *major* subdivision so that they may vest the project with a *master* plan approval and zoning relief prior to investing in the preliminary plan application. Staff respectfully reminds that Commission that master plan review is generally limited in scope to whether the proposed land use and concept are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and appropriate at this location.

This major subdivision master plan application would be a by-right proposal if relief were not required for the substandard frontage for the four lots and lot width for Lots 1, 2 & 3. The applicant is requesting relief to allow the subdivision to be possible without the extension of Elite Drive and Janet Drive, public roadways in the City of Cranston. The existing frontage is sufficient for the four lots to connect individual driveways, as reflected by the applicant's Site Layout Plan, therefore the purpose of extending the road is not to provide vehicular access, but merely to comply with the A-20 zoning requirements for lot width and frontage. It is important to consider that all four of the proposed lots far exceed the 20,000 ft² minimum in A-2. The lots exceed the minimum area by 336% (Lot 1), 253% (Lot 2), 423% (Lot 3), and 617% (Lot 4) for an average of 407% of the minimum lot area per lot.

DPW has stated that they would prefer that the public roads **NOT** be extended, and have indicated support for the proposed design as the preferred path to develop the subject property.

A full analysis and recommendation on the variance requests are provided in a separate staff memo specifically addressing the variance application. To summarize, staff finds the requested relief to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and recommends **approval** in order to allow the proposed subdivision design which is anticipated to have the less possible impact to the environment, public resources and most importantly, the abutting neighbors than would a proposal which extended Elite Drive and/or Janet Drive.

Due to the size of the proposed lots, the subdivision is less dense than the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map allocation of Single Family Residential 3.63 To 1 Unit Per Acre with a proposed density of 0.53 units per acre. **The proposed use (single-family residential) and density are both consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.**

The wetlands located on-site and the 100' riverbank buffer for the intermittent stream identified just off-site are important considerations for this proposal. The wetland edge has been identified and delineated by Christian Sutter, PWS, Environmental Scientist for DiPrete Engineering. A

RIDEM Freshwater Wetlands Insignificant Alteration Permit must be obtained by the applicant prior to submittal of a Preliminary Plan application. The on-site wetland area is all located within proposed Lot 4. The applicant provided upland area calculations for Lot 4 which indicate that Lot 4 still has 101,310 ft² of area after the wetlands are subtracted from its total area of 123,372 ft². All of the proposed development and tree-clearing are outside of the wetland areas and buffers. It is clear that wetlands have been at least part of the reason why this site was not developed previously. Staff believes that the proposed site layout takes the wetlands into consideration to the greatest reasonable extent and will continue to monitor the wetland issues closely during the Preliminary Plan phase, should the Master Plan be approved.

There is a 15' wide drainage easement abutting AP 26 Lot 93. The easement does not appear to have any material impact on the proposal.

VII. Findings of Fact

An orderly, thorough and expeditious technical review of this Master Plan 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 on 4/21/21 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). The proposed resulting density of approximately 0.53 units per acre is less dense than and thereby consistent with the FLUM's designation of the subject parcel as “Single Family Residential Less 3.63 To 1 unit per acre.”
2. As mentioned in the Planning Analysis section of this memo as discussed in greater detail in the Planning staff memo specific to the variance application, the proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan in that the site layout offers attributes that have been identified as desired elements found in conservation subdivisions such as but not limited to more efficient/less sprawling development, minimizing disturbance, and programming public roadways and utilities.
3. Significant cultural, historic or natural features that contribute to the attractiveness of the community have not been identified on site.

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.”

4. Each of the proposed four lots require relief for lot frontage and lots 1, 2 and 3 require relief for lot width under the City's A-20 zoning requirements. Staff is in support of these requests so that the subdivision design can minimize impacts to the environment, neighbors and public resources.
5. The proposal will not alter the general character of the surrounding area or 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)*

6. This finding pertains specifically to the final plan, however, no significant environmental impacts are anticipated.
7. The project will be subject to all state and local regulations pertaining to environmental impacts and wetlands.
8. The Rhode Island November 2018 Natural Heritage map shows that there are no known rare species located on the 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.”

9. 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.
10. The design and location of building lots, utilities, drainage and other improvements will conform to local regulations for mitigation of flooding and soil erosion, details of which will be reviewed during the Preliminary Plan phase of the application.

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.”

11. The properties in question will have adequate permanent physical access to Janet Drive (Lots 1 & 2) and Elite Drive (Lots 3 & 4) via private driveways.
12. The proposed subdivision provides for safe and adequate local circulation for vehicular traffic.

VIII. 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 Master Plan application, subject to the conditions denoted below.

IX. Condition of approval

1. Prior to submittal of the Preliminary Plan application, the applicant shall obtain relief from the Zoning Board of Review for substandard lot width and frontage as applicable.