

CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT



Memorandum – Unified Development Review

To: City Plan Commission
From: Brianna L. Valcourt, M.Arch; Senior Planner
Date: September 21, 2026
RE: “McDonnell Property” – Minor Subdivision with Zoning Relief

Recommendation: Approval of the proposed subdivision with the requested zoning relief.

I. General Information

Owners/Applicants: Angela and Kyle McDonnell & Michael and Sandra Bert
Representative: Robert D. Murray, Esq.
Location: Hoffman Avenue
Zoning: A-8 (Single-Family Residential 8,000SF)
Future Land Use Map: Single Family Residential 7.26 To 3.64 Unit Per Acre
Neighborhood: Glen Woods
Application Type: Minor Subdivision
Stage of Review: Preliminary Plan -- Unified Development Review
Certified Complete: September 9, 2026
Decision Due: December 13, 2026 (95 days)

Proposal

The applicant is proposing to subdivide the existing lot, AP 16 Lot 169, into two lots which will contain 8,000 sq. ft. and 8,120 sq. ft. The subdivision will require the City Plan Commission to grant a dimensional variance for each lot to have +/- 75 feet of street frontage where 80 feet is required.

17.20.120 Schedule of Intensity Regulation

Parcel A (fronts Hoffman Ave)

Standard	Required	Proposed	Relief Sought
Lot width/frontage	80 feet	75 feet	5 feet

Parcel B (fronts Melody Lane)

Standard	Required	Proposed	Relief Sought
Lot width/frontage	80 feet	75.12 feet	4.88 feet

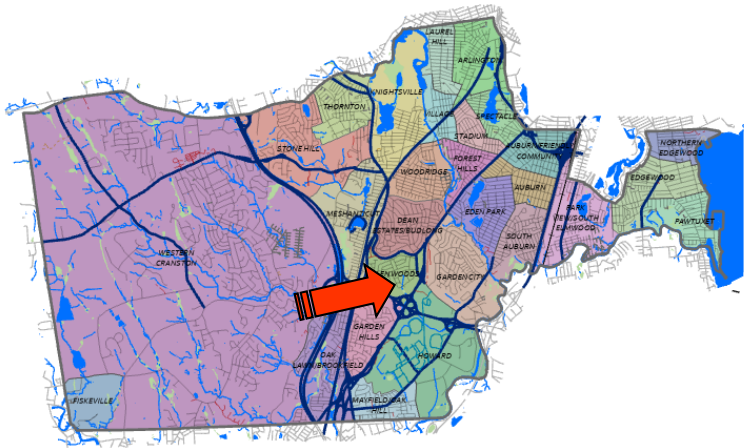
II. Surrounding Land Use & Context

Analysis using the Cranston Geographic Information System and the FEMA Flood Map Service Center indicates that:

1. The subject property is a part of the recorded subdivision “Cranston Park Plat”.
2. The site is located north of Route 37, easterly of Oaklawn Ave and westerly of New London Avenue in the Glen Hills neighborhood.
3. The site has a total area of approximately 16,121 sf and is zoned Residential A-8.
4. Public utilities are available at this proposed development and letters of service availability for public water have been received. No letters of availability have been received for sewer.

5. The subject property abuts developed A-8 and B-2 zoned parcels. The surrounding area is predominately single-family residential and is in close proximity to several residential condos.
6. The subject property is outside of any regulated resource areas under jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, (RIDEM).
7. The subject property is outside of any identified historic / cultural districts under the jurisdiction of the Local Historic District Commission, State Historical Preservation Commission, State, or National Registers of Historic Places.
8. The subject property is located in FEMA Flood Zone X (unshaded). Zone X (Unshaded) designates an area of minimal flood hazard. The area is therefore outside of the Special Flood Hazard District.

LOCATION MAP



STREET VIEWS



(View from Hoffman Avenue)



(View across the street from property on Hoffman Avenue)



(View from Melody Lane)



(View across the street from property on Melody Lane)

ZONING MAP



FUTURE LAND USE MAP



AERIAL PHOTO



[illegible]

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III. Requested Waivers

None to Report.

Commented [JB1]: Sidewalks exist already on both streets, so they retracted the waiver request for sidewalks.

IV. Public Comments

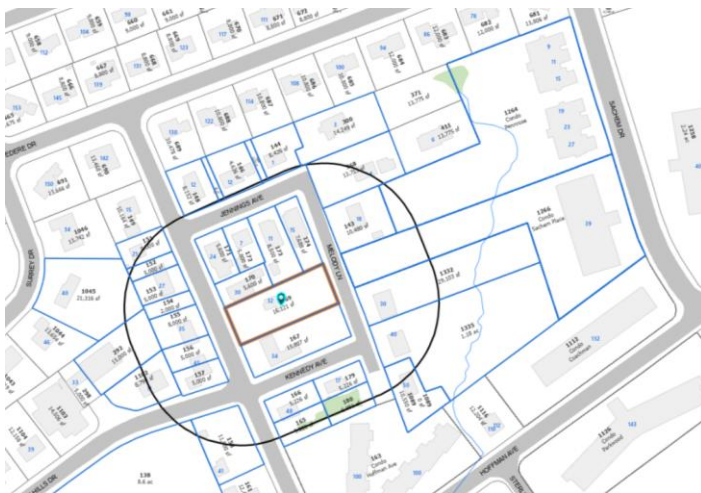
None to Report.

V. Municipal Review

Pursuant to RIGL §45-23-37, these Plans and submitted documents were distributed for comment to the following agencies. Responses are as follows:

1. Department of Public Works
 - a. Engineering Division: Mr. Frank Corrao, P.E., Public Works Director: Review completed with comment as follows: Concrete curbing shall be installed along the frontage of both properties, with a 3-ft transition on either side of each driveway opening. Driveway widths shall not exceed 20 ft. Pavement restoration along Hoffman Avenue shall be completed in accordance with DPW requirements. As Melody Lane was paved in 2022, curb-to-curb pavement restoration shall be required for the full limits of work associated with the sewer extension.
 - b. Traffic Safety Division: Mr. Stephen Mulcahy: Review not completed.
2. Providence Water Authority: Review completed comment as follows: Presently, there are sufficient reserves in the PWA system for this residential development. Prior to service connection, an evaluation of demand must be conducted to determine the size of the domestic service line and water meter.
3. Veolia Water: Staff conditioned that the letter of sewer availability is submitted prior to the recording of final plan due to staffing shortages in Cranston's sewer division which has caused delays in obtaining availability letters. City records show that there is an 8" sewer main in Hoffman Avenue but only a partial 8" sewer main in Melody Ave.
4. Department of Building Inspection & Zoning Enforcement: Mr. Stanley Pikul, Building Official: Review completed with no comments.
5. Fire Department: Mr. Armand Niquette: Review completed with no comments.

VI. Planning Analysis



200ft Radius Map: Defining the "Surrounding Area"

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Consistency with the Surrounding Area

Staff has reviewed this Application in consideration of the compatibility with the character of the surrounding area. Planning Staff have found that the proposal is **consistent** with the surrounding area. The proposed lot layout matches the adjacent lots regarding lot size. While nonconforming frontage is present within the surrounding area and is particularly evident among properties along the same block, the requested variances are limited in scope and are not anticipated to have a significant adverse impact on the established character of the surrounding area.

Within the surrounding area, defined as all properties located within a 200-ft radius of the subject property, there are a total of 29 lots. Of these, 24 lots contain single-family dwellings, 3 lots are municipally owned, and 2 lots contain residential condominiums. Of the 24 single-family lots, 1 lot has frontage equal to the 75-ft frontage proposed for each of the two new single-family lots, 17 lots have more than 75 feet of frontage, and 6 lots have less than 75 feet of frontage. The median frontage among the 24 single-family lots is 83 feet.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

- The proposal is **consistent** with the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map designation of "Single Family Residential 7.26 To 3.64 Unit Per Acre".
 - The existing subject parcel has a density of 2.70 U/a.
 - The proposed subject parcels have a density of 5.40 U/a.
- Staff find that the following goal and policies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan pertaining to residential development **support** the approval of this Application:
 - **Goal H-2:** Permit a variety of residential development types to achieve multiple community objectives.
 - **Policy H-1:** Maintain zoning densities that reflect planned municipal service levels and natural resource constraints.
 - **Policy H-3:** Enact flexible development standards that attain desired community objectives, but also provide a wide range of building types, uses, subdivisions, and site plans.
 - **Policy H-6:** Maintain a varied housing stock, with units of different age, size and type that are affordable to a wide range of incomes.

Parking and Traffic Circulation

- The proposed residential lot has sufficient land area to meet the minimum requirements of the zoning ordinance for off-street parking spaces.
- The proposed residential lots have adequate frontage and width to provide driveway access to the proposed single-family dwellings.
- Hoffman Avenue: The proposed single-family dwelling will require a new driveway access from Hoffman Avenue. As there is currently no curb along the subject property frontage, new concrete curbing and a curb cut shall be installed in accordance with DPW requirements, with the driveway constructed within the approved curb opening.
- Melody Lane: The proposed single-family dwelling will require a new driveway access from Melody Lane. As there is currently no curb along the subject property frontage, new concrete curbing and a curb cut shall be installed in accordance with DPW requirements, with the driveway constructed within the approved curb opening.

Utilities

- The proposed development will require confirmation of an appropriate method for providing sanitary sewer service to the proposed single-family dwelling on Melody Lane. Based on the existing sewer infrastructure, the sewer main on Hoffman Avenue extends along the frontage of the existing property, while the sewer main located on Melody Lane does not currently extend past the area of the proposed development.

- The final method of connecting both proposed dwellings to the public sewer system has not yet been established.
- Sewer connection to Parcel B (Melody Lane) may require either a sewer lateral and associated easement connecting the proposed dwelling to the existing sewer infrastructure on Hoffman Avenue or an extension of the existing sewer main along Melody Lane to provide service to the proposed lot.
- The submission of a sewer plan demonstrating the proposed method of providing sanitary sewer service to the proposed single-family dwellings on Parcel A and Parcel B prior to the recording of Final Plan.



Sanitary Sewers Map: Gravity Mains, Clean Out Cards and Manholes

Zoning Analysis

- The proposal intends to subdivide an existing oversized lot to create one new lot within the B-1 Zone.
- The existing lot is already nonconforming with respect to minimum lot width, and the proposed subdivision would create an additional lot with the same nonconforming frontage condition.
- The requested dimensional relief is limited in scope, with the proposed 75-ft frontage for Parcel A and the proposed 75.12-ft frontage for Parcel B, from the required 80-ft frontage.
- The proposed frontages representing a 6.10%–6.25% reduction, both fall within the 0%–25% range permitted for zoning modifications and, as such, could have been addressed through the administrative zoning modification process without requiring ZBR, followed by the applicable administrative minor subdivision review.

Summary

Planning Staff find that the project meets all standards for approval of the requested variances and subdivision standards. The proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map designation of "Single Family Residential 7.26 To 3.64 Unit Per Acre" and supports Goal H-2 and Policies H-1, H-3, and H-6 by providing additional residential development while maintaining compatibility with planned densities, allowing flexible development standards, and contributing to a varied housing stock. The requested dimensional relief is limited to lot frontage deficiencies resulting from the existing nonconforming frontage condition and will not adversely affect the character of the surrounding area or the intent of the Zoning Ordinance. The proposal proves to be adequate for conforming parking, access, and traffic circulation for the proposed residential development.

VII. Findings of Fact

Variance Standards

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The requested dimensional relief displays conformance and consistency with the required Findings of Fact in accordance with RIGL §45-23-50.1, § 45-24-41 and § 45-24-46.4 as well as Section VII of the Subdivision & Land Development Regulations as follows:

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – variances. (d)(1) states, “That the hardship from which the applicant seeks relief is due to the unique characteristics of the subject land or structure and not to the general characteristics of the surrounding area; and is not due to a physical or economic disability of the applicant, excepting those physical disabilities addressed in § 45-24-30(a)(16);”

- The hardship from which the applicant seeks relief arises from the unique dimensions and configuration of the subject parcel.
- The subject lot is approximately 75 ft in width by 215 ft in depth, resulting in approximately 16,121 sqft of lot area. The parcel therefore substantially exceeds the 8,000-sqft minimum lot area required for a single-family dwelling in the A-8 Zone, while its existing 75-ft frontage is deficient by 5 ft from the required 80-ft frontage.
- The proposed single-family lots contains approximately 75 ft of frontage, representing a 6.25% reduction from the 80 ft minimum width.
- The hardship from which the applicant seeks relief is attributable to the specific dimensions and configuration of the subject parcel and is not due to the general characteristics of the surrounding area or to a physical or economic disability of the applicant.

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – variances. (d)(3) states, “That the granting of the requested variance will not alter the general character of the surrounding area or impair the intent or purpose of the zoning ordinance or the comprehensive plan upon which the ordinance is based.”

- The general character of the surrounding area is residential, and the proposed subdivision will maintain that established residential character by creating one additional residential lot within the A-8 Zone.
 - Although the subdivision will result in the creation of a nonconforming lot, the proposed development will remain consistent with the existing residential development pattern and surrounding A-8 zoned lots.
- The requested relief will not impair the intent or purpose of the Zoning Ordinance or the Comprehensive Plan upon which the ordinance is based.
 - The proposal will continue to provide residential development largely consistent with the A-8 Zone and will not introduce a use, density, or development pattern that is inconsistent with the surrounding area.
 - The dimensional relief for lot frontage results from the unique lot configuration and pre-existing nonconformity.
 - The dimensional relief for frontage is supported by the ability to maintain compliance with the Zoning Ordinance for the required minimums of setbacks, lot coverage, and parking.

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – variances. (e)(2) states, “In granting a dimensional variance, that the hardship suffered by the owner of the subject property if the dimensional variance is not granted amounts to more than a mere inconvenience, meaning that relief sought is minimal to a reasonable enjoyment of the permitted use to which the property is proposed to be devoted. The fact that a use may be more profitable or that a structure may be more valuable after the relief is granted is not grounds for relief. The zoning board of review, or, where unified development review is enabled pursuant to § 45-24-46.4, the planning board or commission has the power to grant dimensional variances where the use is permitted by special-use permit.”

- Given that the proposed new lot will otherwise meet the applicable dimensional requirements of the A-8 zone and will provide adequate access and sufficient area to accommodate two single-family developments, the denial of the requested dimensional relief would amount to more than a mere inconvenience.

Subdivision Standards

This Preliminary Plan application displays conformance and consistency with the required Findings of Fact in accordance with RIGL § 45-23-60 as well as the Subdivision & Land Development Regulations as follows:

RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(1) states, “The proposed development is consistent with the comprehensive plan and/or has satisfactorily addressed the issues where there may be inconsistencies.”

- The proposal is **consistent** with the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map designation of “Single/Two-Family Residential Less Than 10.89 Units Per Acre” as well as the following goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan:
 - **Goal H-2:** Permit a variety of residential development types to achieve multiple community objectives.
 - **Policy H-1:** Maintain zoning densities that reflect planned municipal service levels and natural resource constraints.
 - **Policy H-3:** Enact flexible development standards that attain desired community objectives, but also provide a wide range of building types, uses, subdivisions, and site plans.
 - **Policy H-6:** Maintain a varied housing stock, with units of different age, size and type that are affordable to a wide range of incomes.

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 or has obtained relief from the same, or another provision of this chapter that exempts compliance with a specific provision or standard.”

- The proposal seeks dimensional zoning relief for substandard lot frontage/lot width for both proposed lots which if granted, will establish compliance with the standards and provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.

*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)*

- This finding pertains specifically to the Final Plan; however, no significant environmental impacts are anticipated as:
 - The proposal is located outside of the floodplain.
 - The location of both new single-family homes on these parcels create new residential units with minimal environmental impacts and where it can utilize existing urban infrastructure.
 - The Proposal will be subject to all state and local regulations pertaining to environmental impacts and wetlands.
 - RIDEM's 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.”

- The proposal 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 physical and permanent physical access to a public street unless there are local zoning ordinance provisions allowing exceptions to this requirement or the applicant has obtained the required relief from this provision.”

- All lots in this proposal will have adequate physical and permanent physical access to a public city street.
- The proposal provides for safe and adequate local circulation for vehicular traffic.

VIII. Recommendation

Staff finds this Proposal **consistent** with the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, and the standards for required Findings of Fact set forth in RIGL § 45-24-41, RIGL § 45-23-60 and Section III(L) of the Subdivision & Land Development Regulations.

Staff therefore recommends that the City Plan Commission adopt the Findings of Fact documented above and **APPROVE** the Preliminary Plan submittal under Unified Development Review with the following variances and subject to the following conditions of approval.

See variances & condition on following page...

Variances

- Parcel A (Hoffman Ave): The applicant is requesting a dimensional variance to allow 75 feet of street frontage where 80 feet is required, requiring 5 feet of relief.
- Parcel B (Melody Lane): The applicant is requesting a dimensional variance to allow 75.12 feet of street frontage where 80 feet is required, requiring 4.88 feet of relief.

Conditions of Approval

1. The submission of a sewer plan to demonstrate the proposed method of providing sanitary sewer service to the proposed single-family dwellings on Parcel A and Parcel B prior to the recording of Final Plan. The sewer plan shall be prepared in accordance with the City of Cranston's Annex A – Design of Sewers, reviewed according to the City's applicable Sewer Design Plan Review Guidelines and approved by the Department of Public Works.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brianna L. Valcourt

Brianna L. Valcourt, M.Arch
Senior Planner/Administrative Officer

Cc: City Planning Director
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