

CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT



Memorandum

To: City Plan Commission
From: Brianna L. Valcourt, M.Arch; Senior Planner
Date: May 5, 2026
RE: 1016 Park Avenue – “KJ Amour Venue” – Development Plan Review with Zoning Relief

Recommendation: Approval of the change of use with the requested zoning relief for off-street parking.

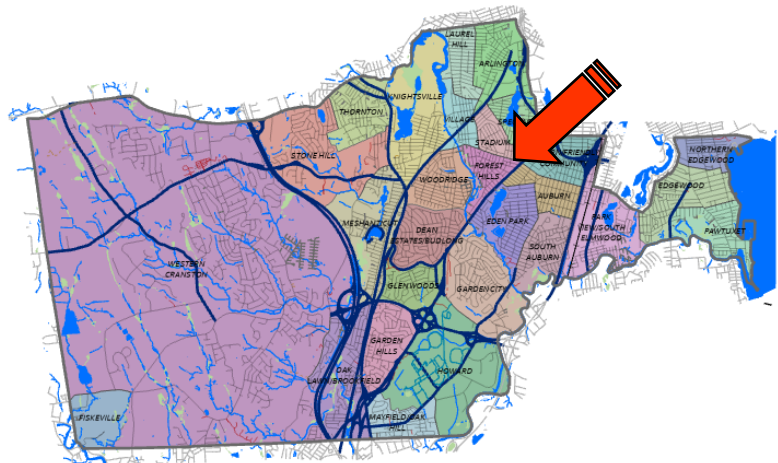
I. General Information

Owner: SLA LLC
Applicant: Katherine F. Gomez Rodriguez
Representative: Jenny Alcantara of Latino Tax & Accounting Professionals, LLC
Location: 1016 Park Avenue, AP 9 Lot 95
Zoning: C-4 (Highway Business)
Future Land Use Map: Highway/Commercial Services
Neighborhood: Forest Hills
Application Type: Development Plan Review
Stage of Review: Preliminary Plan (Unified Development Review)
Decision Due: August 1, 2026 (95 days)

Proposal: The applicant, Katherine Gomez, requests a change-of-use to operate an event venue/banquet hall in an existing building at 1016 Park Avenue. The previous use in this building was a dance studio. The proposal covers first-floor occupancy only. Since the first floor is not level with grade, ADA accessibility is provided through the rear access by an electric platform lift.

Dimensional Variance Request:

To allow the proposed event venue/banquet hall to move forward with less than the required number of parking spaces. [17.64 – Off Street Parking]



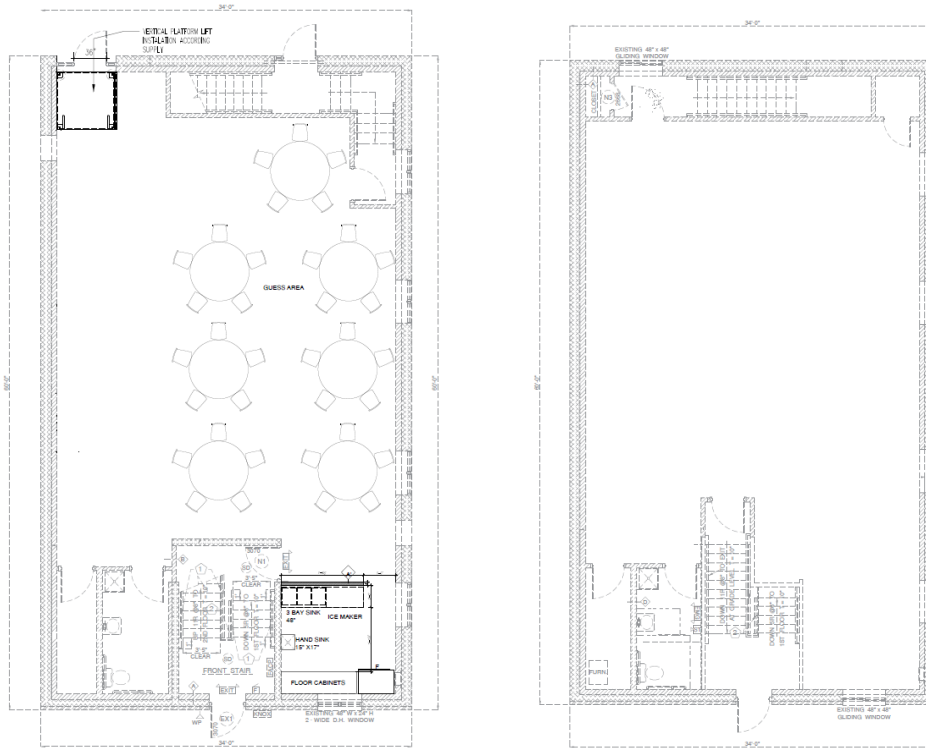
1016 Park Avenue – “KJ Amour Venue”

II. Drawings, Images and Maps

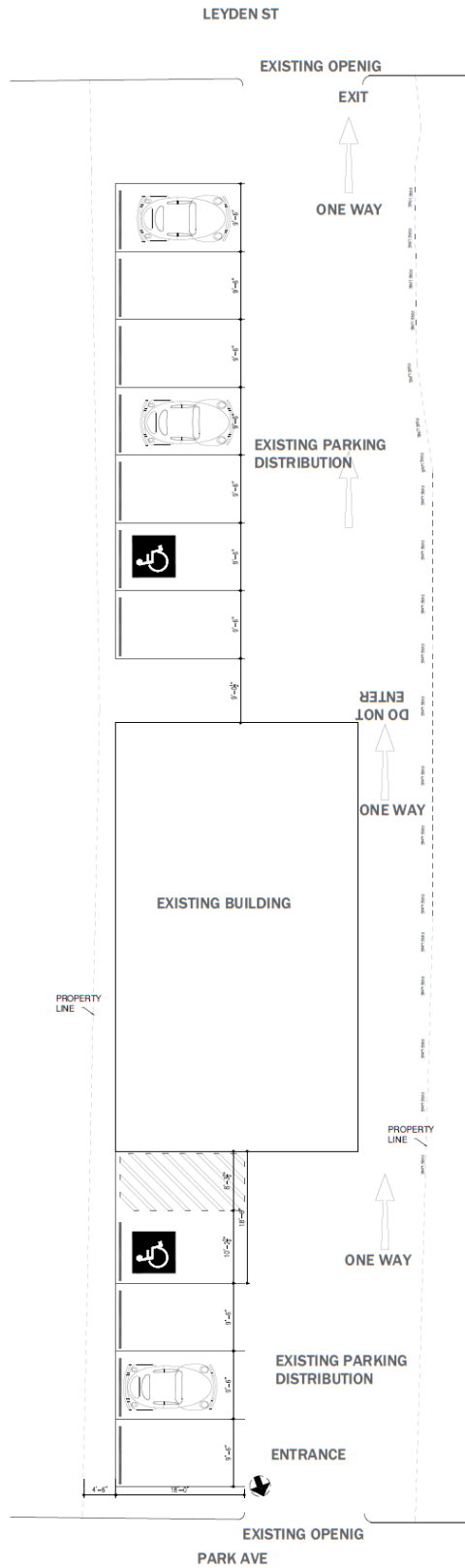
AERIAL VIEW



FLOOR PLANS



SITE PLAN



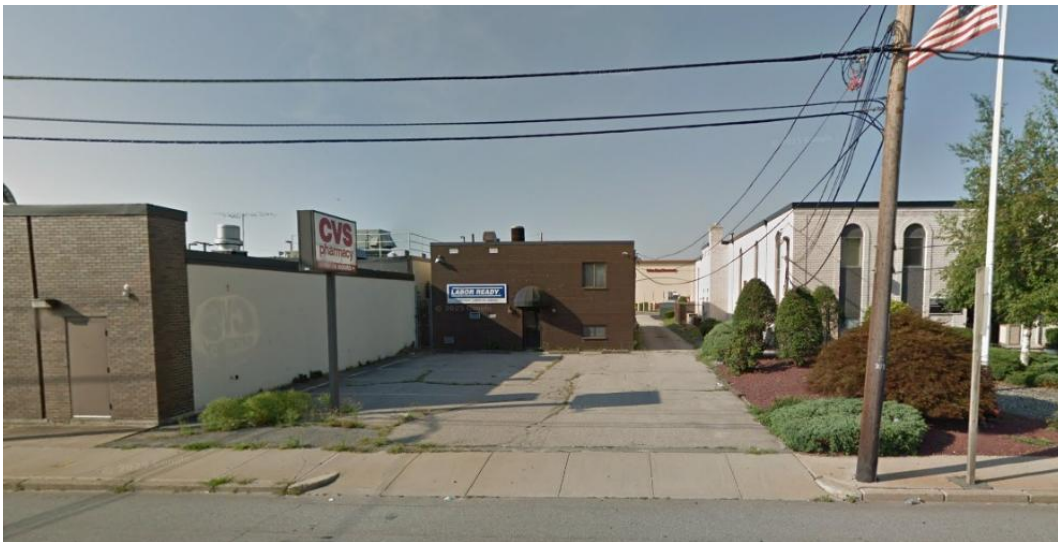
STREET VIEWS



View from Leyden Street (Google, 2025)



View from Park Avenue (Google, 2025)



View from Park Avenue (Google, 2008)

III. Site Description

1. The subject property is AP 9 Lot 95 located on Park Avenue in the Forest Hills neighborhood.
2. The existing building is proposed to be occupied by an allowed use in the C-4 zone.
3. The lots will be serviced by public water from Providence Water and public sewer.
4. The subject property abuts other commercial developments, C-4 zoned parcels, used for a variety of highway commercial services such as professional offices, large pharmacy chains, car dealer and bank.
5. The subject property is outside of any regulated resource areas under jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, (RIDEM).
6. The subject property is outside of any identified historic / cultural districts under jurisdiction of the Local Historic District Commission, State Historical Preservation Commission, State, or National Registers of Historic Places.
7. 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.

IV. Requested Zoning Relief

As part of the Waiver of Application requested at the Development Plan Review meeting on Wednesday, April 1, 2026, the waiver was not granted and the DPR Committee took jurisdiction of the application. Therefore, the application for a change-of-use with no extensive construction or improvements is before the City Plan Commission for a vote on the dimensional relief outlined below.

17.64.010 – *Off-street Parking*, relating to minimum off-street parking spaces to serve the proposed use.

Standard	Required	Proposed	Relief Sought
one space for each three seats provided for patron use (1:3)	12 parking spaces	11 parking spaces	1 parking space

V. Requested Waivers

A waiver for landscaping and drainage is requested.

§ 17.84.140(C) Landscape Standards.

§ 17.84.160 Drainage/erosion standards.

Sections X.B.16 and X.B.18 (sidewalks and curbing)

VI. Public Comments

None to Report.

VII. 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: no comment.
 - b. Traffic Safety Division: Mr. Steven Mulcahy: no comment.
 - c. Sewer Division: Mr. Edward Tally, Environmental Program Manager, no comment. Review is not required as no new sewer service is proposed.

d. Providence Water: Review is not required as no new water service is proposed.

2. Department of Building Inspection & Zoning Enforcement

a. Mr. Stanley Pikul, Building Official: Stanley Pikul (Building Official) noted that the zoning ordinance requires on-site parking and that the 11 on-site spaces are insufficient for the proposed use. The proposed use is subject to the Off-Street Parking Space Requirements of “Eating and drinking establishments”: one space for each three seats provided for patron use.

3. Fire Department: Mr. Armand Niquette: Armand Niquette (Fire Marshal) advised the applicant that the assembly use triggers assembly occupancy requirements. For assemblies of over 50 people, a fire alarm system is required. The type of system local (occupants must call 911 when the alarm sounds) or municipal (automatically dispatches fire apparatus) will depend on the final occupancy count and configuration.

VIII. Planning Analysis

Consistency with the Surrounding Area

- Staff has reviewed this Application in consideration of the compatibility with the general character of the surrounding area. Planning Staff have found that the proposal is **consistent** with the surrounding area. The proposed use matches the existing infrastructure on the site and allows for enough parking on-site based on the large presence of parking in proximity to this lot. The surrounding area primarily consists of businesses open during daytime business hours (approximately 9am-5pm), which contrasts to the proposed use. The proposed use is proposed to operate most frequently on weekends and evening hours after 5pm, which would minimally overlap in hours of operation with the local businesses.
- Granting the waiver for landscaping and sidewalks would also be consistent with the area, as none of the connecting lots have landscaping onsite or sidewalks along Leyden Street.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

- Although the Comprehensive Plan is not explicit in discussing the use of banquet facilities, the Future Land Use Map designation of this property of “Highway/Commercial Services” is supportive of heavier commercial uses. Therefore, staff finds the application is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Staff find that the following goals, policies, and action items outlined in the Comprehensive Plan pertaining to residential development support the approval of this Application:
 - Goal ED-2: Attract capital into the Cranston area and expand the City’s economic base.
 - Goal ED-3: The City shall have an efficient and predictable development process throughout all departments of the City.
 - Policy ED-3: Encourage the creation and growth of startup and **early-stage business**.
 - Policy ED-8: Maintain and enhance the growth of a diverse array of **small, growth-oriented**, value-adding business concerns.
 - Policy ED-23: Revitalize **underused areas** of the City for uses that are in keeping with the needs and values of the community.
 - Policy ED-29: Encourage new retailers to **utilize existing sites**, including the former Trolley Barn and Route 2 Corridor, to **gain entry into the market**.

Parking and Traffic Circulation

- No changes to existing circulation are proposed. No changes to the nearby existing uses would be affected by the circulation as proposed.

- Staff is encouraged by several positive elements of this proposal, including the establishment and growth of a new business within the City and the applicant's proactive efforts to pursue off-site parking arrangements.
- The property has 11 existing parking spaces. The existing parking spaces are conforming in size, and because vehicles enter and exit the site in a forward-facing motion onto the public right-of-way, the configuration supports safe vehicular circulation. While the parking aisle does not meet the full 24-foot width requirement and relief from the parking code has been requested as part of this petition, staff recognizes that the existing layout has functioned on the site and may be reasonably accommodated through the requested dimensional relief.

Zoning Analysis

- Cranston's Zoning Ordinance requires one space for each three seats; Staff finds that the request to allow 11 on-site parking spaces where 12 parking spaces are required is minimal in nature. In weighing these factors, together with the overall benefits of the proposal and the mitigation measures offered by the applicant, staff is of the view that the application supports a positive recommendation on the Dimensional Variance for parking relief.

Summary

- Planning Staff find that the project meets all standards for approval of the requested variance and a change-of-use.
- A "banquet facility" is defined in the Cranston zoning code as: "...an establishment which is rented by individuals or groups to accommodate private functions including, but not limited to, banquets, weddings, anniversaries and other similar celebrations. Such a use may include: 1) kitchen facilities for the preparation or catering of food; 2) the sale of alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption, only during scheduled events and not open to the general public; and 3) outdoor gardens or reception facilities."
- The applicant has stated that there will be no kitchen facilities included with this use and all food or beverage will be brought in from an outside source.
- Staff is of the view that a banquet facility is a similar intensity land use as a dance studio (prior use) as it relates to peak vehicle trip generation and peak parking needs.
 - In recognition of the need to balance strict regulatory compliance with practical considerations, there is a trade-off between technical standards and the ability to accommodate reasonable redevelopment and reuse of existing sites.
 - To support a business-friendly community, particularly where modest variances are requested and where the intent of the regulations can still be met, this trade-off reflects that full compliance offers limited additional public benefit.
 - The proposal does not seek to make the property less compliant than it currently exists.
 - Requiring the site to be brought into full compliance with all current regulations would likely impose an undue burden on the applicant relative to the scale of the proposed change in use.

IX. Findings of Fact – Variance Standards

Staff Note: RIGL § 45-24-41.(d)(2) is not listed as a finding of fact as it cannot be used to deny requests for dimensional relief for projects being reviewed under Unified Development Review. This is due to the signing of HB5794B / S1086Aaa on June 27, 2025 which amended RIGL § 45-24-46.4.

Staff has reviewed the requested dimensional relief for 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.

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 is due to the unique characteristics of the subject land as the long and narrow shape of the lot does not provide enough land area to meet the landscaping requirements and the parking requirements for a majority of commercial uses permitted in the C-4 zone.
- The hardship from which the applicant seeks relief is not due to the general characteristics of the surrounding area; and is not due 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 granting of the requested variance will allow existing dimensional non-conformities to be utilized for an allowed use which is consistent with Goal ED-2, Goal ED-3, Policy ED-3. Policy ED-8, Policy ED-23 and Policy ED-29.
- 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 as the applicant is proposing no significant alterations to the lot.

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.”

- Provided that the proposed change-of-use meets all but one-dimensional standard and is able to provide safe and adequate access for a banquet facility, the denial of the variance would be 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.

X. Findings of Fact – DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW

Staff has reviewed the requested development for conformance and consistency with the following standards in accordance with The City of Cranston’s Zoning Ordinance § 17.84.060 – General standards for approval.

§ 17.84.060 A. A Development complies with zoning and other city codes and regulations and is consistent with the comprehensive plan.

- The use of “banquet facility” is an allowed use in the C-4 zone and the Future Land Use Map designation of this property of “Highway/Commercial Services” is supportive of the “banquet facility” use.
- The change-of-use to allow a new business to occupy the existing building at 1016 Park Avenue is consistent with Goal ED-2, Goal ED-3, Policy ED-3. Policy ED-8, Policy ED-23 and Policy ED-29.

§ 17.84.060 B. Erosion is controlled in accordance with Chapter 15.28 “soil erosion and sedimentation control” of the city code so that erosion shall not impact abutting properties or public streets.

- The proposal does not seek to make the property less compliant than it currently exists.

§ 17.84.060 C. Storm water runoff is treated using best management practices so that there shall be no increased runoff from a development. (All developments shall meet the standards set in the Rhode Island Stormwater Design and Installation Standards Manual as most recently amended.)

- There is no change to impervious surface and no increase to net runoff.

§ 17.84.060 D. Vehicular and pedestrian movement within and access to and egress from a development are safe and efficient and provisions are made for snow removal.

- The proposal does not seek to make the property less compliant than it has been in over a decade.

§ 17.84.060 E. Site improvements, utilities, infrastructure, streets, sidewalks, and parking areas will be constructed in compliance with the applicable city regulations and standards.

- The proposal does not seek to make the property less compliant than it currently exists.
- The abutting properties are also out of compliance.

§ 17.84.060 F. The location, arrangement, appearance and quantity of off-street parking and loading are adequate to serve the development and comply with zoning.

- The proposal lacks 1 off-street parking spot based on zoning.
- The parcel has always served commercial businesses with limited number of parking spots.
- The proposal does not seek to make the property less compliant than it currently exists.

XI. 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 § 45-23-50.1, § 45-24-41 and § 45-24-46.4.

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 waivers.

Variances

1. Application shall be granted zoning relief from Section 17.64.010 to allow 11 off-street parking spaces where 12 parking spaces are required.

Waivers

1. The requested waiver from Subsections X.B.16 (Curbs) and X.B.18 (Sidewalks) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations shall be granted to maintain the existing conditions on the site.

Respectfully Submitted,



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

Cc: City Planning Director
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