

City Planning Department



Memo

To: Cranston City Plan Commission
From: Doug McLean, AICP - Principal Planner
Date: September 2, 2021
Re: **“Sprague Covington Plat”** Master Plan - Major Land Development

Owner/App: Sprague Covington, LLC
Location: 1369 Park Avenue, AP 11, Lots 273 & 4062
Zone: C-3 (General business)
FLU: Neighborhood Commercial/Services

I. Proposal

The owner/applicant proposes to construct 8 dwelling units on a vacant piece of land with frontage on Park Avenue. This Major Land Development application is being proposed in coordination with a proposed change of zone request that is further detailed in a separate ordinance memo (see planning department webpage). The subject property includes 2 assessors' lots that will be merged into 1 parcel as a result of the subdivision. The property currently contains remnant asphalt from a previous use (restaurant) and 2 large signs. The end result of the project will be the removal of the signs and the development of 8 total dwelling units (within two 4-unit buildings) along with associated parking and landscaping improvements. The subject property is currently zoned C-3 and contains 23,594 sq.ft. (.54 acres). The applicant proposes to change the property's zone to C-2 with a condition to allow for up to 8 dwelling units on the combined parcel. The proposed use (multi-family residential) is allowed by-right in a C-2 zone and no variances are needed in association with this project.

The Plan Commission is charged with making a decision on the Master Plan stage of this Major Land Development application as well as with forwarding a recommendation on the proposed zone change application to the City Council.

II. Documents which are part of the Major Land Development application

1. Master Plan application;
2. Application filing fees;
3. Subdivision plan set entitled “Sprague Covington Plat,” prepared by Richard Bzdyra, PLS of Ocean State Planners with date of June 8, 2021.
4. Master Plan checklist;
5. Project Narrative by Ocean State Planners;
6. 100' radius map, list of abutters;
7. Letter regarding sewer availability signed by Edward Tally, Environmental Program Manager of the City of Cranston;
8. Letter regarding water availability from Providence Water;
9. Certificate of Municipal Leans;

NEIGHBORHOOD AERIAL
(subject parcels in orange, 400 ft. radius in black)



PARCEL AERIAL



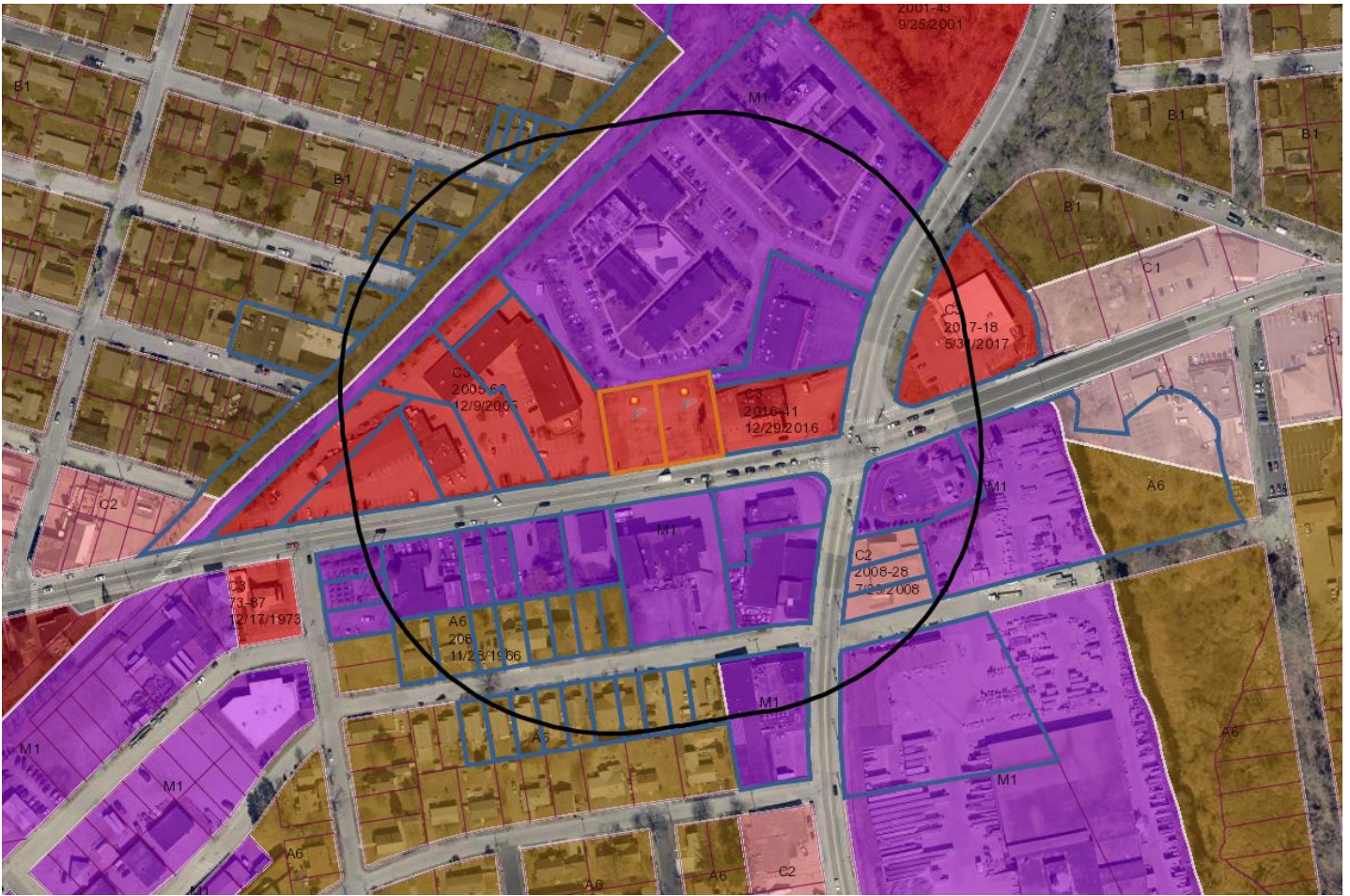
3-D AERIAL (facing north)



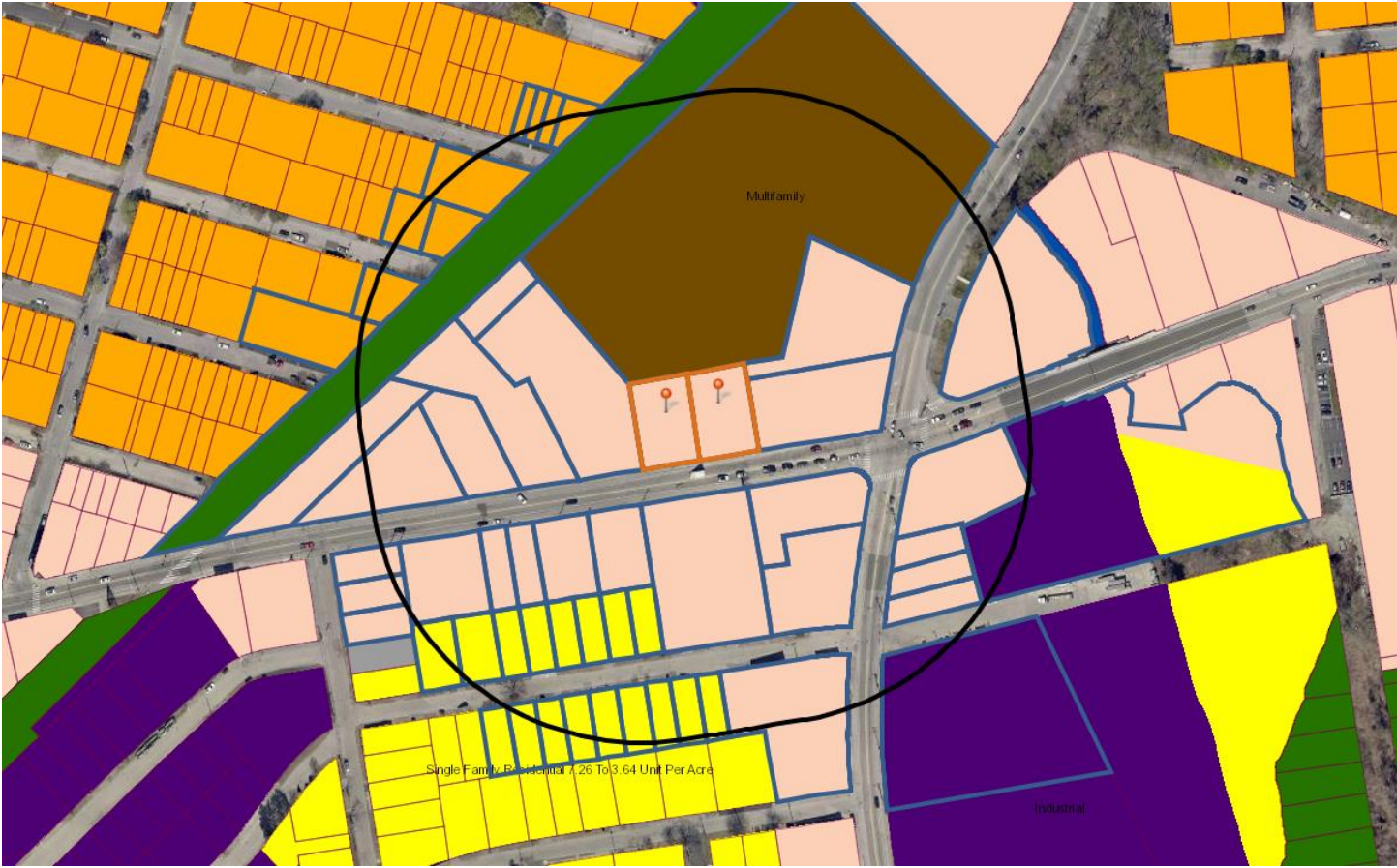
STREET VIEW
(Park Ave. facing north)



ZONING MAP



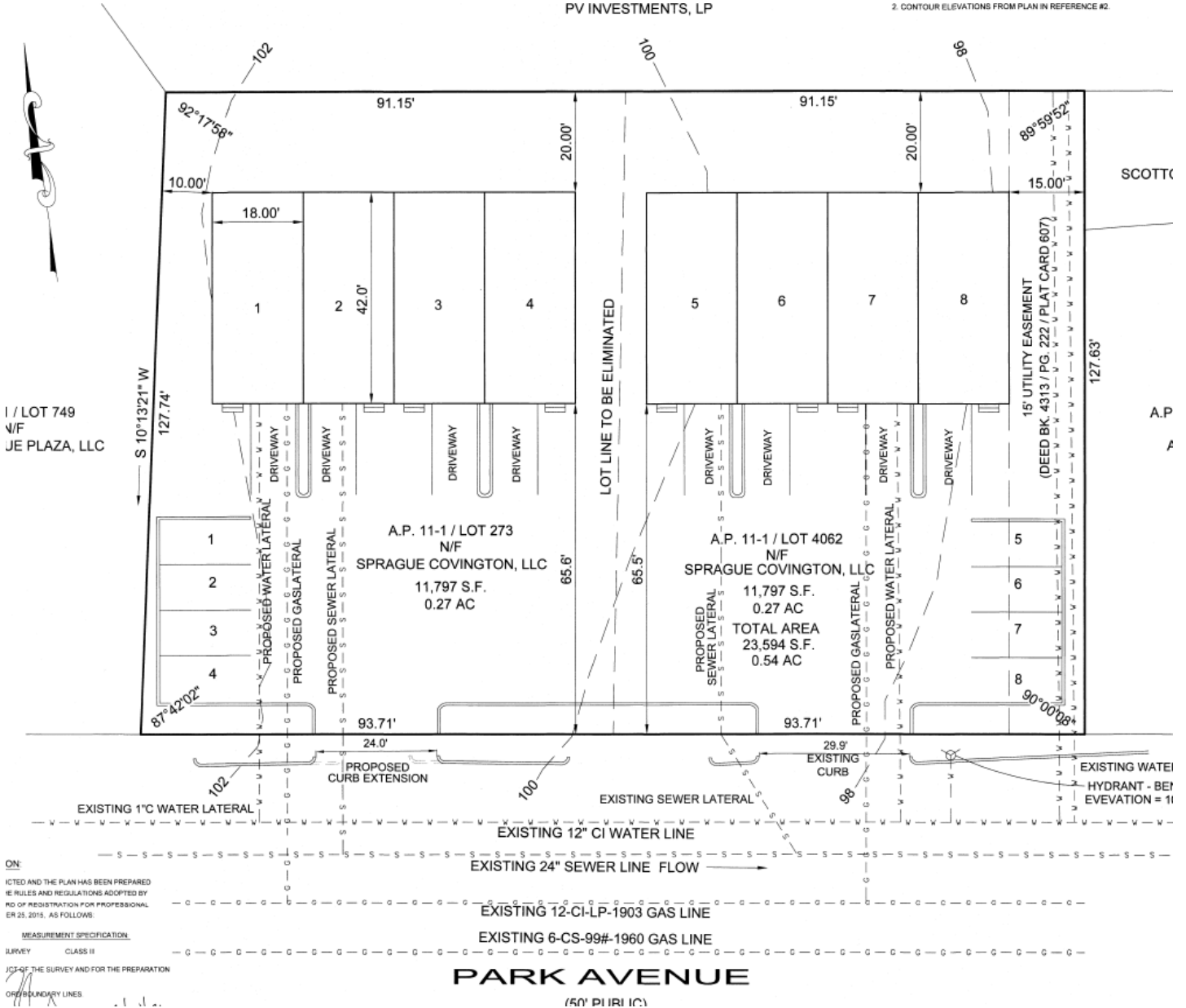
FUTURE LAND USE MAP



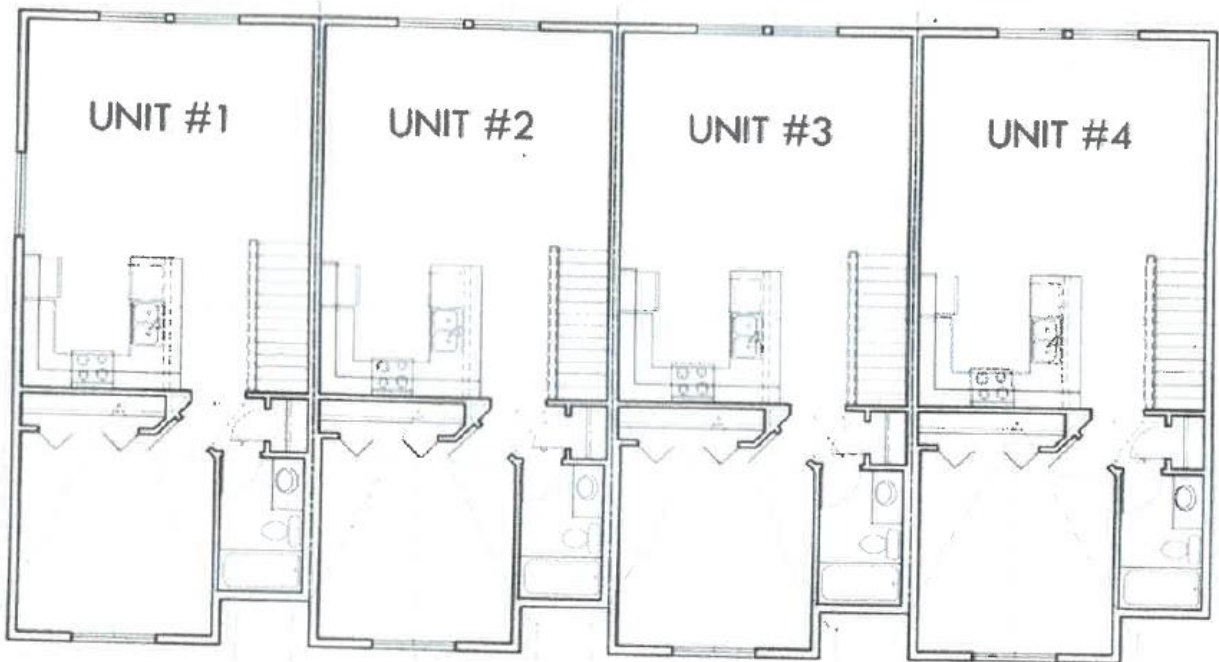
SITE PLAN (snippet)

PV INVESTMENTS, LP

2. CONTOUR ELEVATIONS FROM PLAN IN REFERENCE #2



RENDERING AND FLOOR PLAN



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 Park Avenue.
2. The abutting neighborhood contains a wide mix of land uses, ranging from multi-family residential, to commercial plazas, to limited industrial uses.
3. There are no wetlands or other significant natural features within the 400 foot radius of the subject property.
4. The site has minimal topography and slopes gently downward towards the east.
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. The City Traffic Engineer has provided comment that the 3 existing cur cuts should be reduced to one (1) curb cut to be located generally in the center of the combined property frontage. It should be noted that this comment has been transmitted to the applicant and the applicant is in general agreement with making such a revision as part of their Preliminary Plan submittal. Staff would not that revisions to the proposed Master Plan are not needed at this time as a revision to curb cuts is more appropriately handled during the Preliminary stage of application where such technical engineering details are best addressed.

V. Interests of Others

None to report at this time.

VI. Planning Analysis

This Master Plan application should be considered in close coordination with the proposed change of zone application to rezone the property from C-3 to C-2 with the condition that up to 8 dwelling units can be constructed on the combined subject property. The conditional nature of this rezone request must be considered in tandem with the specific development outcomes being proposed by the Master Plan and the context of surrounding neighborhood. Staff highly recommends that any interested party in this proposal review the totality of both this Master Plan memo and the Change of Zone memo (Ordinance 7-21-10) in order to consider the full range of information available on the project.

As previously mentioned, the site is currently host to remnant asphalt from a previous use (restaurant) and 2 large signs (see Street View on page 5 of this memo). The proposal will

remove the existing signage, which would be considered an aesthetic improvement to the subject site from staff's perspective. Additionally, staff finds the design of the proposed dwelling units will fit the character of the surrounding neighborhood, which contains other multi-family apartment complexes and a range of commercial and industrial uses. The final development outcome of the proposal will represent a significant aesthetic improvement and functionality of the site compared to current conditions.

Staff reviewed the City's Comprehensive Plan to determine if the proposed Master Plan as well as the concurrent zone change request is consistent with the Plan for the use and density being proposed. The property has a Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designation of Neighborhood Commercial/Services. Such a FLUM designation allows for both the zoning designations of C-3 and C-2 so in this instance a Comprehensive Plan amendments is not necessary to allow for the rezone. Additionally, the use of multi-family residential (housing with at least 3-units in 1 building) is identified as an allowed use in the Neighborhood Commercial/Services designation. Based on the underlying zoning allowances of the C-2 zone, a multi-family development would be an allowed use but the maximum number of dwelling units that the property could yield based on the site's square footage is five (5) units. The applicant is requesting an increase in density to allow for up to 8 units, representing an addition of three (3) dwelling units above what the underlying zoning would allow. It should be noted the Comprehensive Plan does not restrict housing density for properties within the Neighborhood Commercial/Services designation. Furthermore, the proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Housing Element in that development of infill lots is encouraged in Eastern Cranston. Based on the above, staff finds that the rezone proposal is consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

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 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) designation of Neighborhood Commercial/Services in that multi-family dwelling residential is an allowed use.
2. The proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Housing Element in that development of infill lots is encouraged in Eastern Cranston.
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. The proposed Major Land Development project is being brought forward in concurrence with a zone change application that, if approved, would allow for the proposed use and density to be in compliance with the zoning ordinance. If such a zone change receives subsequent approval, the proposal will meet the standards and provisions of the zoning ordinance.
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 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.”

8. 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.

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.”

9. The subject property will have adequate permanent physical access to a public right-of-way through conforming lot frontage on Park Avenue.
10. 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 receive approval from the City Council for the proposed conditional zone change. Failing such approval, the applicant may seek a minor amendment to revise the plans in order to meet the required zoning provisions.