

CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT



Memorandum – FINAL REVISED

To: City Plan Commission
From: Grace Brownell | Planner Technician
Date: December 20, 2024
RE: 101 New London Avenue
Application for Signage Variance

Owner/Applicant: Shanti Hospitality LLC
Location: 101 New London Avenue | AP 10, Lot 1405
Zoning: C-4 (highway business)
FLUM Designation: Highway Commercial/Services

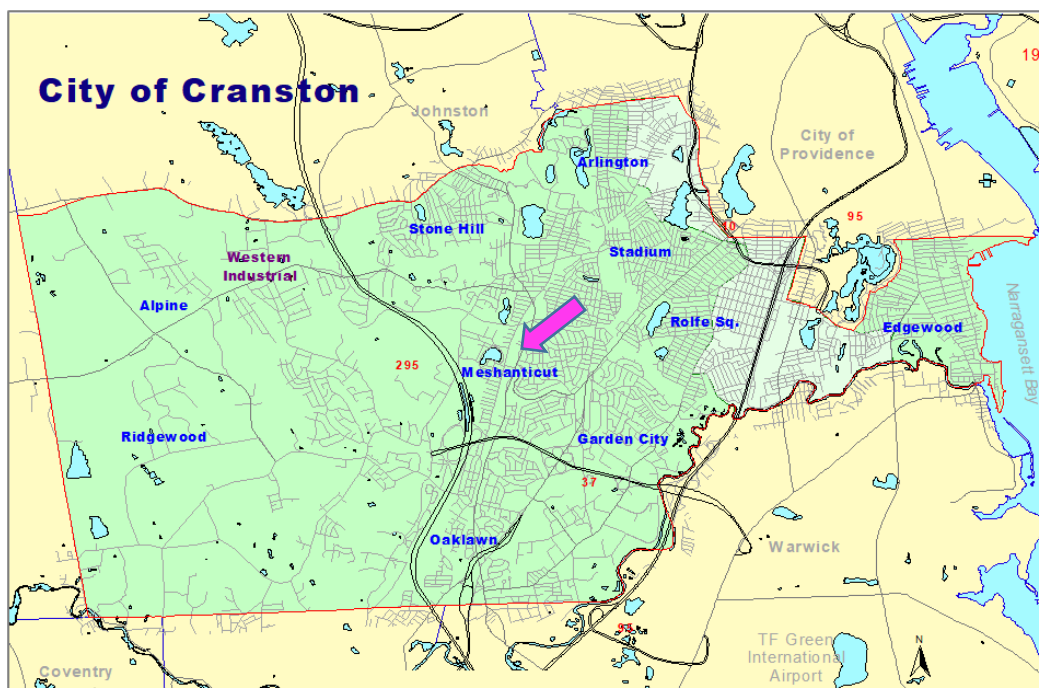
Subject Property:

The subject property is located at 101 New London Avenue, identified as Plat 10, Lot 1405, and has a land area of ± 2 acres, (87,120 sq. ft.) with frontage on New London Avenue.

Request:

To allow relief from variance and prohibited signage regulations, to replace an existing doubled-sided message board on a free-standing sign facing New London Avenue with a double-sided 3' x 7' digital advertising panel. The existing EconoLodge sign is proposed to remain. (17.92.010 – Variances and 17.72.010.G – Signs Prohibited Under This Section)

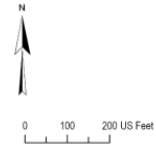
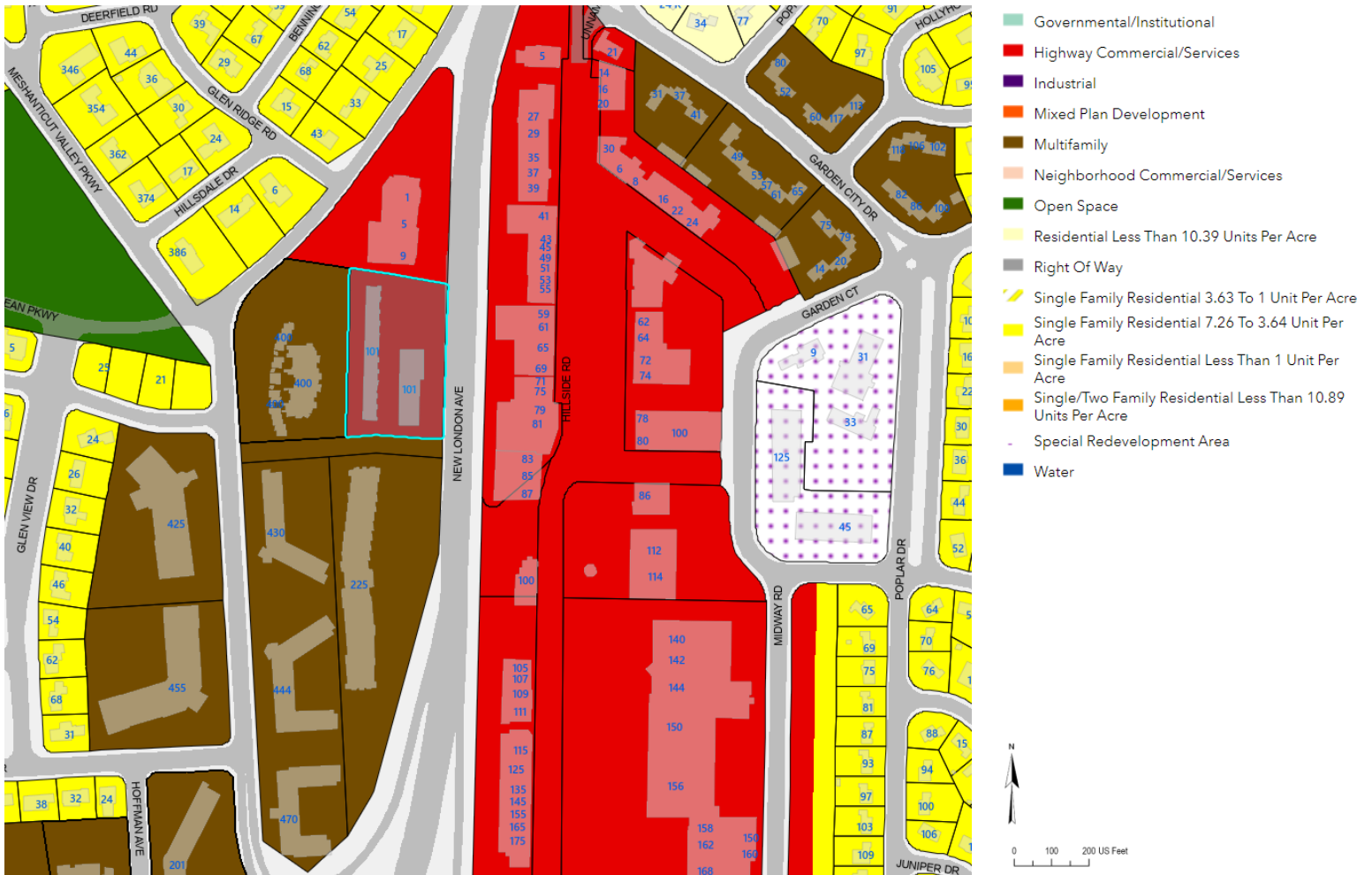
LOCATION MAP



ZONING MAP

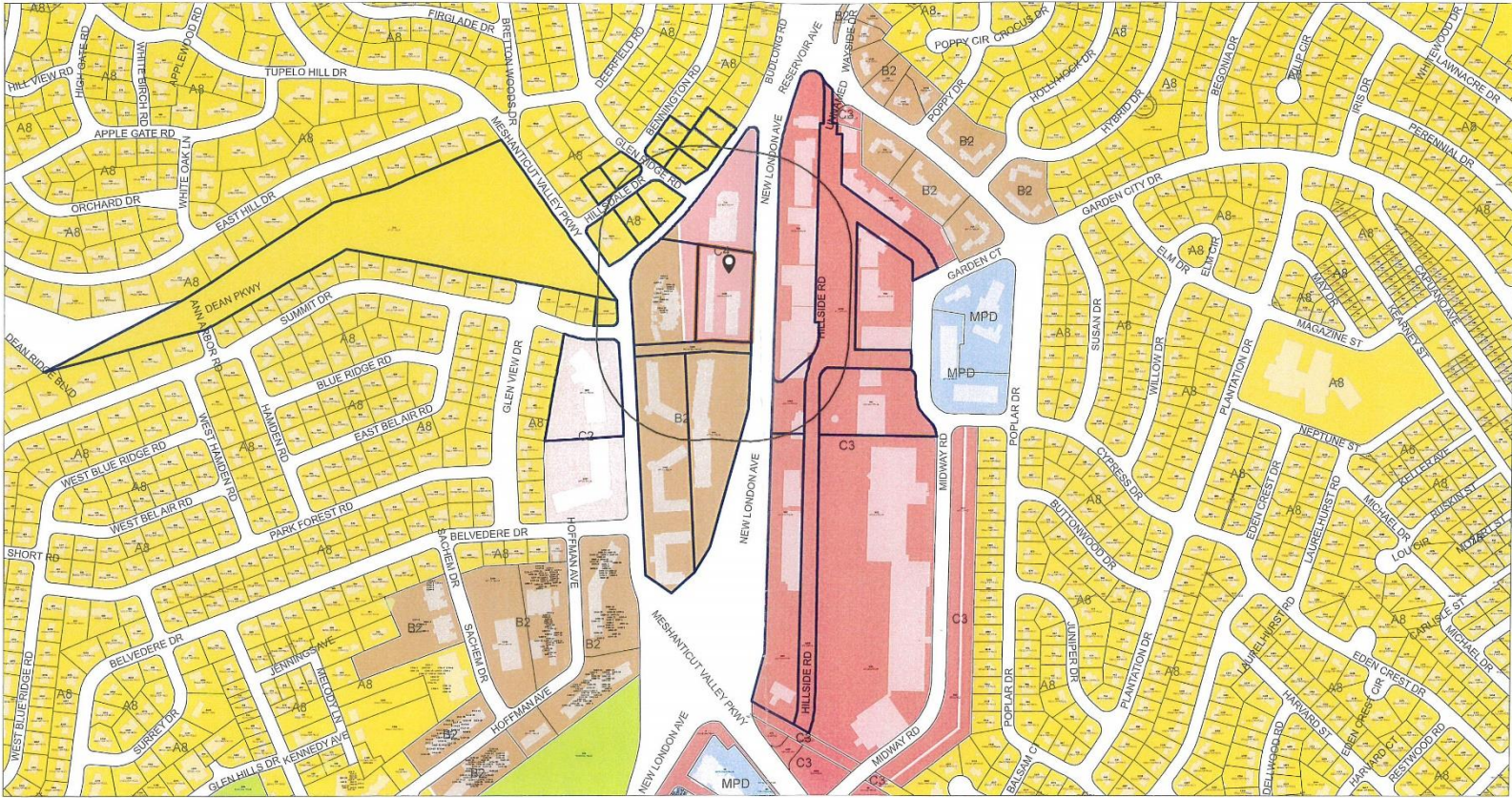



FUTURE LAND USE MAP



ABUTTER RADIUS MAP

101 New London Ave 400' Radius Plat 10 Lot 1405





<https://gisweb.cranston-ri.org/gis/>

SelectedParcelsBuffer	Cranston Boundary	A6	C2	M2
ParcelsInBuffer	Parcels	A8	C3	MPD
SelectedParcels	Cranston Boundary	A80	C4	Other
Hydro Poly 2001	Historic Overlay District	B1	C5	S1
Stream/Water Body	Zoning	B2	EI	
Swamp	A12	C1	M1	
Buildings	A20			

0 200 400 ft

Map Scale: 1:5,980

Map created by Web Application on 11/27/2024 3:28 PM

Disclaimer: This map/data/geospatial product is not the product of a Professional Land Survey. It was created for general reference, informational, planning and guidance use and is not a legally authoritative source as to location of natural or man-made features. Proper interpretation of this data may require the assistance of appropriate professional services. The City of Cranston makes no warranty, expressed or implied related to the spatial accuracy, reliability, completeness or currentness of this map/data.

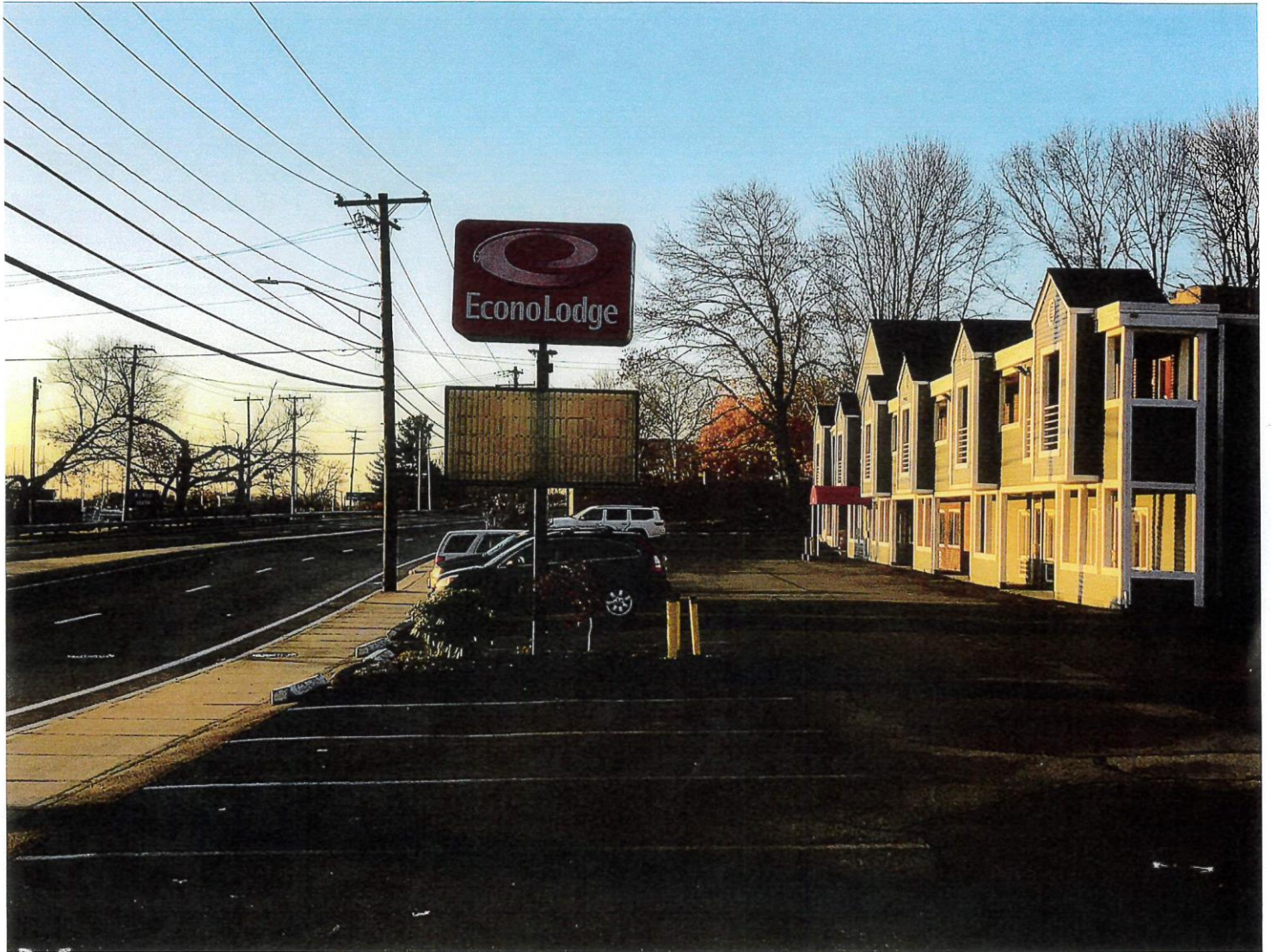
ARIEL VIEW

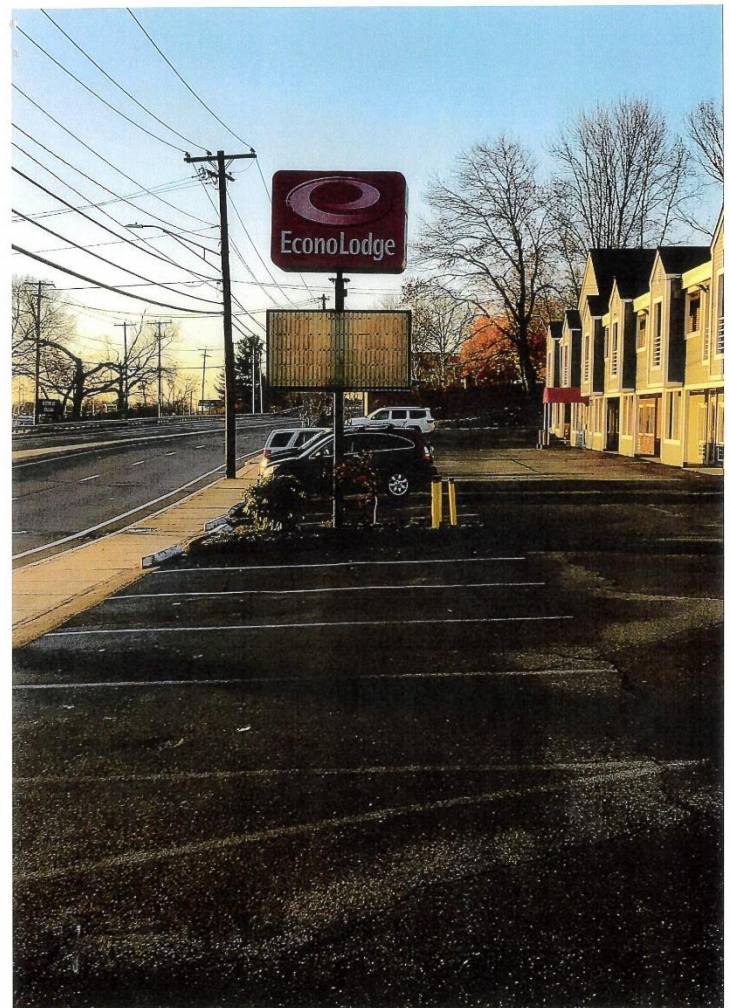
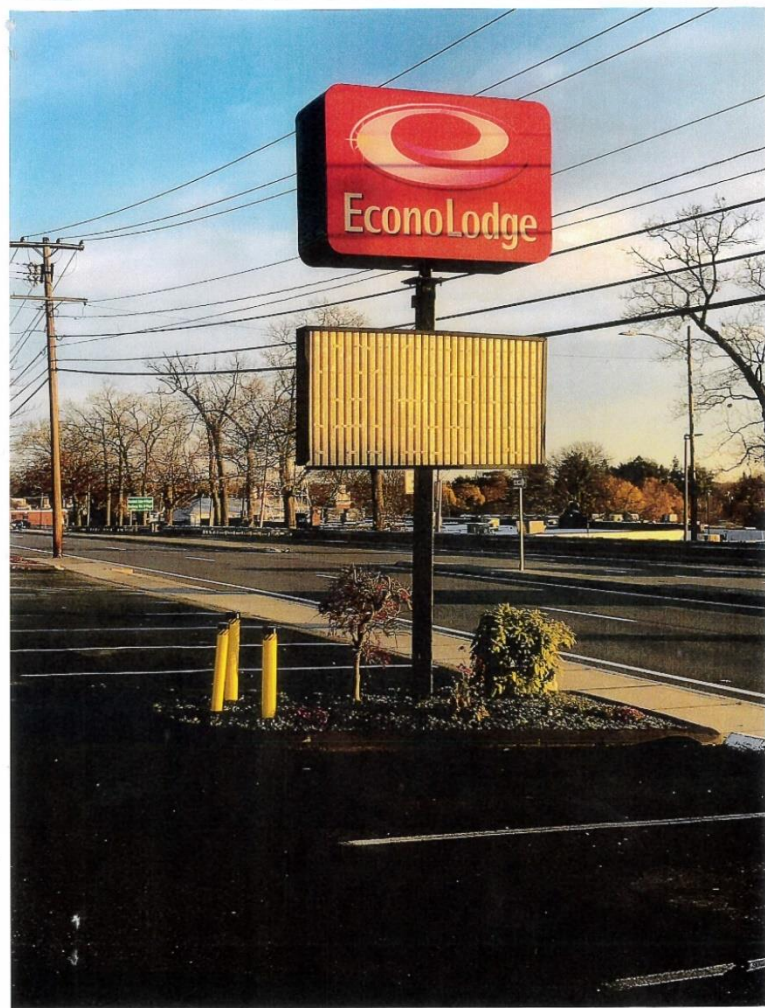


STREET VIEW

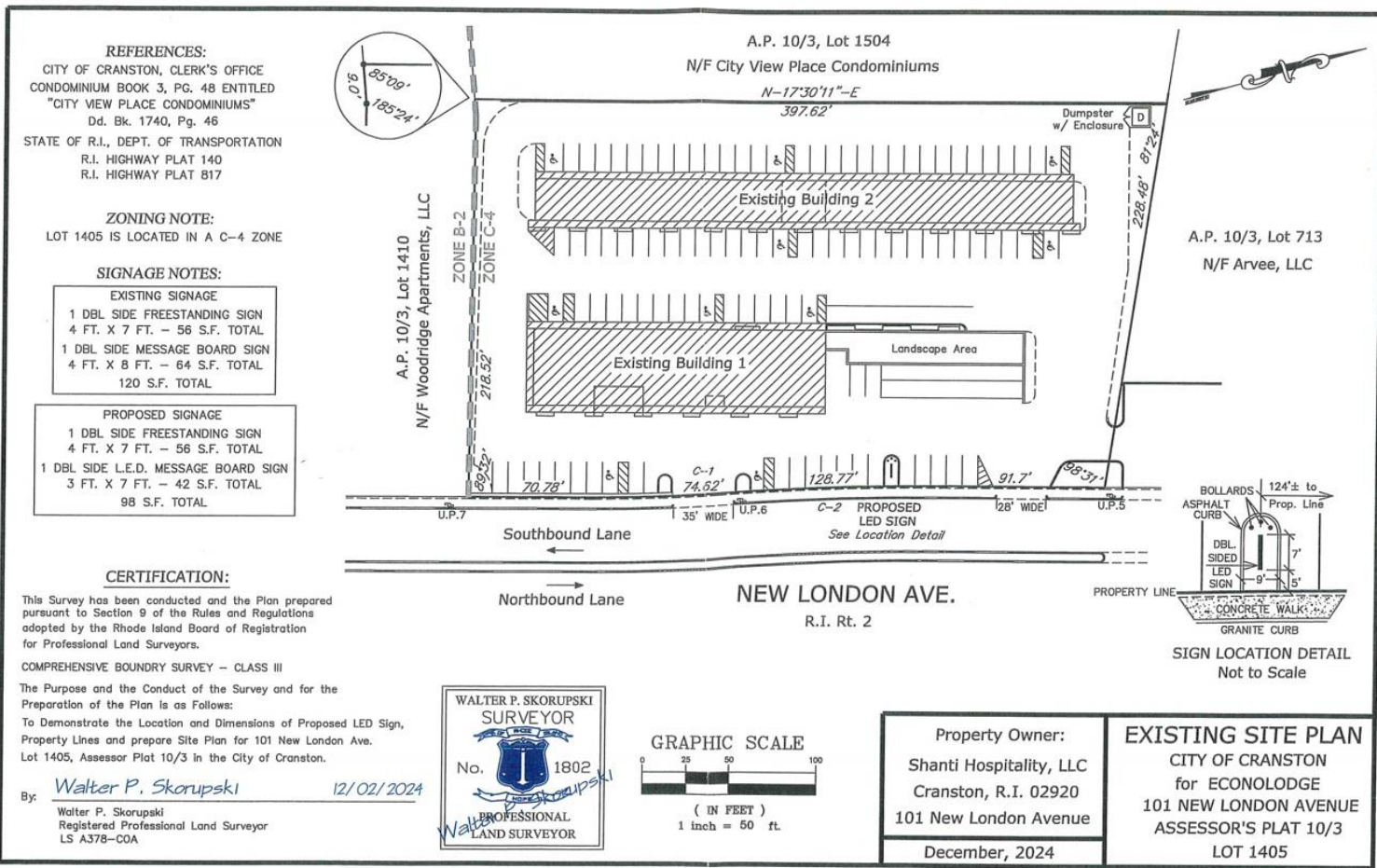


SIDE VIEWS





EXISTING CONDITIONS PLAN



EXISTING CONDITIONS/PROPOSAL PLAN

DRAWING :		REVISION : 1	DATE :
		CLIENT	
		ECONOLOGDE HOTEL	
		ADDRESS	
		101 NEW LONDON AVENUE CRANSTON, RI	
		PROJECT	
		Signage	
		FILE NAME	
		ECONOLOGDE HOTEL	
		DESIGNER	
		GILMAR	
		COMMENTS	
		APPROVAL	
		 	
		Office: 508-388-9568 Cell: 508-825-3024 244 LIBERTY STREET, SUITE 8, BROCKTON, MA 02301	

EXISTING
8FT X 4FT



PROPOSAL
REMOVED THE EXISTING BOX
INSTALL A MESSAGE SIGN
7FTX3FT



WWW.BPSIGNSANDPRINTING.COM

E-mail: signs@bpsignsandprinting.com

Findings of Fact:

- The existing non-conforming freestanding sign has two components, in which there is no record of previous Zoning Board of Review approval. The top portion (56') includes a double-sided "EconoLodge" identification sign with the lower portion including an additional two-sided manual message board (64') for a total area of 120 sf. The applicant proposes to convert the bottom portion manual message board into a digital LED sign while retaining the existing height dimensions of the entire sign itself. The existing signage is pre-existing non-conforming as the sign is 17.9' in height where 15' is allowed in the C-4 Zone. The lower portion proposed to be converted to a LED message board is additionally proposed to be reduced in size from 64 sf. to 42 sf. If approved, the sign's total area will be reduced by 18.5% at 98 sf., where the required maximum allowable area for a freestanding sign is 50 sf. in the C-4 zone.
- The Applicant has requested specific relief in their application, namely:
 - 17.72.010.G. Signs Prohibited Under This Section
 - *"All signs not expressly permitted under this section or exempt from regulation hereunder in accordance with the previous section are prohibited in the city."*
- Electronic LED message signs of any type are not permitted in the zoning code in any zone as per Section 17.72.010.G. [Signs Prohibited Under This Section] of the Zoning Ordinance.
 - There are other "animated signs" in the direct nearby area, including one static LED sign facing New London Avenue and Chapel View Boulevard on 2000 Chapel View Boulevard in addition the static LED billboard sign for the Garden City Center, located at 100 Midway Rd, Cranston, St 02920.
- The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designates the subject property as "Highway Commercial/Services."
 - The Comprehensive Plan is silent on LED signage specifically as an appropriate use.

Analysis:

The following will restate several issues that have previously been stated by City Planning Department staff in regard to past analyses of digital LED signage.

- Digital LED signage can be visually overwhelming and may create a sense of clutter or sensory overload for passerby drivers. This can distract from the overall visual aesthetic of an area, even if it is an industrial zone located near a highway. It is in planning staff's view that LED signage distracts from the overall visual aesthetic of the City of Cranston.
- Staff provides reference to the following articles with consideration to the safety of LED signage:
 - "Driver Visual Behavior in the Presence of Commercial Electronic Variable Message Signs (CEVMS)" by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) states that LED signage can create minimal distractions [Article linked here](#).
 - "A Peer-Reviewed Critique of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Report Titled: "Driver Visual Behavior in the Presence of Commercial Electronic Variable Message Signs (CEVMS)"" [Article linked here](#), states that the FHWA report has significant flaws in its methodology and produces conclusions that are not reflected in the data.
 - "Compendium of a Decade's Worth of Research Studies on Distraction from Digital Billboards..." [Article linked here](#) provides more recent and comprehensive evidence demonstrating that digital signage are more distracting than traditional signage and thereby are associated with more crashes.

- The Comprehensive Plan outlines goals, policies, and action items pertaining to commercial (re)development which Staff find support the denial of this Application, specifically:
 - Goal TC-1: Improve and maintain an efficient flow of traffic, particularly in commercial centers and along major arterials.
 - Policy TC-16: Reduce speeding and cut-through traffic and accidents.
 - The installation of a digital LED free-standing sign could potentially create a distraction for drivers and affect traffic safety, which could refute the goal of maintaining an efficient flow of traffic in addition to reducing the number of accidents related to visual obstruction from LED signage.
- There are no guidelines for signage development which would allow the LED signage to aesthetically fit in with the existing commercial centers of highway/arterial commercial areas, which can bring consideration to factors such as sign visibility, dwell time, and intensity of illumination. Thus, the installation of the LED signage is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan's economic development goals and policies.

Recommendation:

In accordance with RIGL § 45-24-41(b) and Section 17.92.010(A) of the Zoning Ordinance, Staff finds this Application to be inconsistent with the goals and purposes of the Comprehensive Plan and determines that it is not compatible with the general character of the surrounding neighborhood. Staff therefore recommends that the City Plan Commission adopt the Findings of Fact documented above and forward a **NEGATIVE RECOMMENDATION** on the Application to the Zoning Board of Review.

Respectfully Submitted,



Grace Brownell,
Planner Technician/Administrative Officer

Cc: City Planning Director
File