

# Providence City Plan Commission

June 21, 2022



## AGENDA ITEM 6 ■ ZONING CHANGE AT 440-460 ROCHAMBEAU



An aerial view of the subject lots

### OVERVIEW

|                                |   |                             |   |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>PROPONENT:</b>              | Councilwoman Helen Anthony  | <b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION:</b> | The propoment is proposing to include 440-460 Rochambeau Ave into the historic overlay district   |
| <b>CASE NO./ PROJECT TYPE:</b> | CPC Referral 3511<br>Inclusion of property into historic district   |                             |   |
| <b>PROJECT LOCATION:</b>       | 440-460 Rochambeau<br>AP 93 Lots 14 and 339<br>R-1A zoning district | <b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>      | Advise City Council to consider an alternative zoning change that will allow for development of the site while preserving important built and natural features. |
| <b>NEIGHBORHOOD:</b>           | Blackstone  | <b>PROJECT PLANNER:</b>     | Choyon Manjrekar  |

**Discussion**

The subject property is best described as an estate, with a large single-family house and outbuildings amidst landscaped grounds surrounded by a stone wall, fencing and perimeter hedges and trees. It consists of two large lots. One is occupied by the house, an outbuilding containing a garage and a dwelling unit, and other small structures. The other lot contains no structures. There is extensive landscaping throughout the site, including some significant features. A colonnade of trees flanks the main driveway off of Rochambeau Ave. A stone wall lines the entire east and south sides of the property, with one gate for the driveway and a few other non-vehicular openings. A mature hedge runs along the east and west sides and a portion of the south side. Along the southwestern lot line, the large house is just visible over the wall through a buffer of dense vegetation.

The property measures 146,568 sf, or about 3.36 acres, and is zoned R-1A. This zone calls for detached single-family houses on lots of at least 7,500 sf. This single-family house pattern is the defining character of this area of the city, with almost every house, new and old, built on former estates, farms, swamps, or woodland. However, as with other former estates, this type of development would likely require the alteration of many of the character-defining elements of the estate, including removal of mature trees and creating openings in the wall for driveways.

The proposal to introduce the historic district to these lots would not change the single-family-house development rights for the property. It would, however, subject any new development to review by the Historic District Commission. This might result in a collection of new single-family houses that are aesthetically pleasing, but because each house would have to have street access and a certain amount of lot area, this would result in many penetrations of the wall for driveways and the displacement of much of the mature greenery on the site due to setback and lot coverage requirements. It is the DPD's opinion that a better solution would be to create a special district that would respond to the unique characteristic of the site. We feel that there is a solution involving preserving the important natural and built features, while allowing for new development that would preserve the development rights of the owner. This could be achieved through a combination of techniques such as minimizing the entries through the wall, setting buildings back from the street, allowing for multifamily or attached dwellings, and careful siting of buildings to avoid important landscaping features. A special zoning district for the site could specify maximum dwelling unit density, preservation of built and natural features, and other requirements as necessary.

**Recommendation**

The DPD recommends that the CPC should advise the City Council to consider an alternative zoning change that will allow for development of the site while preserving important built and natural features.