

# Reexamination Report

## Jersey City Master Plan and Regulations

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The City of Jersey City adopted a new Master Plan in May of 2000, after more than a year of preparation, staff work and presentation and discussion within all six of the city's wards. The new Master Plan led to a total revision of the city's Zoning Ordinance into the Jersey City Land Development Ordinance, which was adopted in April of 2001.

The Master Plan was last reexamined in December of 2005. The Municipal Land Use Law requires a municipal review of the city's plans and regulations at least once every six years.

The reexamination report shall state:

- a. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in Jersey City at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.
- b. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.
- c. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.
- d. The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.
- e. The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L. 1992, c. 79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) into the land use plan

element of the municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.

These requirements are addressed as follows.

### **The major problems and objectives relating to land development in Jersey City at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.**

The last Master Plan Reexamination Report was produced last year in December of 2005. In it, several recommendations were made concerning the Harsimus Stem of the Pennsylvania Railroad, a renewed effort to establish the Warehouse District, parks and open space in the Jersey Avenue redevelopment plan, and changes to parts of the Neighborhood Commercial Zone. The 2005 Reexamination Report also made many recommendations for new redevelopment plans and several changes to the Land Development Ordinance.

Since last year's reexamination report, Jersey City has sustained a significant residential construction boom. This housing boom began on Jersey City's Hudson River waterfront, but has continued to move into new neighborhoods of Jersey City. While one of the most visible features of this housing boom has been the new high-rise towers now common in downtown, small scale infill housing throughout the city has brought change to many areas of Jersey City. Pressure to subdivide lots and new construction on undersized lots has been increasing. While the housing boom has brought new construction and new investment into many of Jersey City's neighborhoods, it has also exposed some failings in Jersey City's Land Development Ordinance.

Throughout Jersey City's neighborhoods, but particularly in the West Side and Greenville neighborhoods, there are concentrations of larger houses on larger lots than is typical of Jersey City. Several streets in these neighborhoods have rows of houses with lot sizes of 40 to 50 feet in width, whereas 25 feet is standard. These larger lots accommodate larger homes which often have unique architectural styles and individuality, yielding a neighborhood character that is quite distinct and differs from the rest of the R-1 zone. The character of these streets can be undermined by subdivision into smaller lots currently allowed by the standards of the R-1 district. The result is smaller homes with less room for the unique and varied architectural design features and building form that is standard on these streets filling in between the larger houses. This disrupts the housing pattern that gives these streets their unique appeal.

### **The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.**

After the adoption of the Zoning ordinance in April of 2001, the pace of residential infill development has continued to strengthen. In previous years, most of this infill development has been accommodated by new construction on previously existing 25x100 vacant lots scattered throughout Jersey City. As this "low-hanging fruit" has been

developed, pressure to build more residential units has moved to tearing down larger homes on large lots to be subdivided. The Planning division now regularly receives requests to subdivide and tear down older one and two-family homes with excellent architectural character to make way for two two-family homes on a standard or even substandard lots. This has diminished the architectural quality and unique character of many of Jersey City's residential streets.

**The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.**

There have not been any significant changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives which formed the basis of the master plan and development regulations in the past year.

**The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.**

It is recommended that the master plan be amended to include the following.

Section II, the Land Use Plan, describes Jersey City's residential neighborhoods, and notes that Greenville and the West Side frequently has larger lot sizes of 3,000 to 5,000 square feet, and lists "Preserving of the streetscape and character of the one- and two-family housing districts" as the first issue to be addressed by the zoning ordinance. The recommendations section should be amended to include a specific recommendation to create a separate "R-1A" zone to preserve the character of streets with many larger than the standard 25x100 lot sizes.

**The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L. 1992, c. 79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.**

Jersey City's Land Development Ordinance should be amended to include an "R-1A" zone, similar to the existing R-1 zone, but with larger minimum lot sizes, lot width, setbacks, and smaller lot coverage and building coverage ratios. This R-1A zone should

include all residential areas of Jersey City where large lots are common and influence the character of their respective neighborhoods.