

AMENDMENT TO THE MASTER PLAN LAND USE PLAN (ARTICLE II, SECTION II)

AMENDMENTS APPROVED BY THE JERSEY CITY PLANNING BOARD ON APRIL 7, 2015

REDEVELOPMENT PLANS

The City of Jersey City has numerous designated redevelopment areas located in neighborhoods throughout the City which are delineated on the City's Zoning Map. These areas have either been determined to be an "area in need of redevelopment," an "area in need of rehabilitation," or as a "non-condemnation redevelopment area" without the authorization to use eminent domain as outlined the State and Local Redevelopment Law (P.L. 1992, c. 79/N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5 and N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-6) or previous State Urban Renewal Laws (P.L. 1949, c. 187/N.J.S.A. 40:55-21.1). These redevelopment areas cover nearly half of the land area of the City and are the predominant planning documents directing future land use.

The Redevelopment Plans vary in terms of their scope, level of implementation and continued relevance given current conditions. Some plans are obsolete and do not reflect the market and land use policies of the City. Many plans have been either totally completed or substantially complete. All plans were developed and adopted with the intent of fostering growth and economic development through land development controls. Due to changing market conditions and consumer tastes, plans require amendment from time to time that must be approved by City Council. Moving forward, the Division of City Planning will continue to use Redevelopment Plans as a tool to promote the health, safety, morals and general welfare of Jersey City.

All Redevelopments should include but are not limited to the following goals and objectives:

1. Make sustainability a theme of future development and redevelopment that guides land use and transportation decisions.
2. Make walking and biking an easy, safe, desirable, and convenient mode of transport.
3. Encourage unique local quality retail sales and services that promote community character and distinctiveness.
4. Reduce automobile dependency by encouraging high density development in close proximity to mass transit with low automobile parking ratios and with bicycle parking requirements.
5. Provide for urban amenities such as transit, housing variety, open space, and entertainment that will attract new employers and a range of new residents to the area while sustaining existing neighborhoods.
6. Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing structures.
7. Encourage buildings to meet or exceed the US Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification or equivalent.

8. The removal or rehabilitation of vacated, deteriorated and obsolete structures.
9. The overall improvement of traffic circulation through the development of new and improved vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems which provide for separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic and the maximum use of public transportation.
10. To promote balanced development in accordance with applicable State laws and City requirements regarding affordable housing.
11. Creation of major new employment, housing, educational, recreational, commercial and retail opportunities for the residents of Jersey City.
12. Coordinate redevelopment activities to provide a uniform and consistent attack on blighted, dilapidated, and obsolete structures within the Area.
13. Balance industrial land use retention with new housing needs.
14. Leverage new transit facilities such as light rail to accommodate housing and employment needs.
15. Establish minimum stormwater management requirements and controls for development in order to reduce pollution from municipal sewer systems, direct discharges to surface waters, and combined sewer overflows, and to reduce flooding and erosion, enhance groundwater recharge, and promote rainwater harvesting.
16. Reflect the goals and objectives of the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (M.L.U.L.).

SCENIC CORRIDORS

New Jersey's *State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP)* provides a starting point for adopting policies with regard to scenic resources. The SDRP's policies are designed to protect, enhance, and where appropriate, rehabilitate historic, cultural and scenic resources. These policies are also designed to protect and enhance the natural and visual values of scenic and historic corridors by promoting the management of new growth and development in ways that complement the scenic and historic values associated with these corridors. The SDRP makes it clear that it is vital to New Jersey's future that our scenic and historic resources be properly managed.

Jersey City is not without its significant contributions to New Jersey's visual amenities. The Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, the Jersey City Medical Center, all of which are within Jersey City's borders and on the State and Federal Registers of Historic Structures and Places, offer viewers inspiring glimpses of our nation's history. The panorama of New York Harbor and Manhattan Island, are visual attractions that visitors from around the globe come to view. Jersey City's waterfront skyline and the historic neighborhoods round out the picture and give it context. All of these views are available from, of all places, the New Jersey Turnpike – Hudson County Extension.

The Planning Board has recognized the scenic value of the vistas provided by the New Jersey Turnpike and continues to seek to protect them from incompatible development.

In 1995, the Planning Board declared the vista along the New Jersey Turnpike – Hudson County Extension to be a “scenic corridor” meriting significant protections to match its significant contributions to the history and scenic values of our City, our State and our Nation.

In order to afford the protections so richly deserved by such elements, the Jersey City Zoning Ordinance should be amended to regulate and restrict development that would be destructive of or incompatible with these scenic resources. Chief among these are billboards, power lines, poorly designed and inappropriately located buildings, and inadequately screened unsightly land uses.

Billboards, tend to extend themselves higher and larger. This inherently interferes with the vistas blocked by the billboard’s mass. Additionally, the very nature of advertising design works to draw the eye to it and away from all else. Even though small in terms of overall vista, a well designed advertisement sign can dominate what is seen, causing loss of attention to the scenic resources before and beyond the billboard.

To prevent the disruption of the scenic corridor provided by the New Jersey Turnpike Extension, the Jersey City Zoning Ordinance should be amended to exclude the placement of any billboards along the Turnpike Extension’s visual corridor. No billboards should be permitted that could be expected to be readily visible, and therefore leasable, with reference to the Turnpike’s traffic volumes. These regulations should ban all billboards along the entire stretch of the Turnpike Extension in Jersey City.

All power lines and other overhead utilities should be required to be placed underground in this scenic corridor. As the Turnpike Extension traverses industrial zones, many of the permitted uses visible from the Turnpike Extension are not visually attractive. These land uses can, however, be screened with evergreen plantings and opaque, durable fences. Regulations should be proposed to assure the views down from the Turnpike are green and screened.

Further, it is recommended that the Zoning Ordinance be amended to ensure that all new construction, readily and reasonable expected to be visible from the Turnpike Extension, present an attractive façade design to the public traveling along the Turnpike Extension. These amendments shall require quality materials, adequate screening of roof top equipment, modest and subdued identification signs, a ban on all advertising signs, and limitations on height to protect the most significant view corridors. These limits will not prevent the development of significant structures, but rather will require that building placement be managed to coordinate with the vistas provided to the Harbor, Manhattan Island, the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, Port Liberte, the downtown waterfront of Jersey City, the Jersey City Medical Center and the historic neighborhoods.

ADDITIONAL LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

High Technology Uses

The City of Jersey City is an emerging center of high technology and telecommunication based uses, especially those associated with the finance/insurance/real estate (FIRE) sector and the internet. Jersey City has several competitive advantages that make it an attractive location for such uses including access to fiber optic data lines, ample electrical supply and transmission capacity, availability of skilled labor and proximity to the lower Manhattan financial and high technology districts. High technology and telecommunication uses tend to locate in Downtown and Journal Square where adequate infrastructure and space is available. However, they are increasingly found in neighborhoods throughout the City as the demand for services and the number of competing firms proliferate. These uses are beneficial to Jersey City's economic development because they support the growth of the service sector, especially businesses in FIRE. However, they present unique land use challenges because of the physical form that high technology and telecommunication uses often take.

High technology and telecommunication uses are often highly computerized and automated. As a result, they generate little activity, are typically staffed by a limited number of workers and require few of the amenities associated with other commercial and industrial uses. This includes windows for light and air, landscaping for buffering and screening and high quality urban design to enhance the streetscape. Most such uses can be located almost anywhere in Jersey City where the infrastructure will support operations. Structural requirements emphasize security and redundant utility systems, resulting in nondescript buildings with little relationship to the adjacent street and surrounding neighborhood. The potential adverse impacts range from reduces street-level activity to visually unattractive streetscapes and conflicting land uses. Consideration should be given to identifying sections of the City where high technology and telecommunication uses are appropriate. The development of design requirements for such uses including bulk standards, architectural guidelines, landscaping and buffering and screening is recommended. The importance of these uses is acknowledged, subject to appropriate location, design and buffering.

Wireless Communication

The wireless telecommunications industry has experienced significant growth during the past decade as the demand for portable voice and data transmission has increased. This growth is projected to continue resulting in the need for additional wireless telecommunication facilities. These facilities often have significant land use implications such as appropriate location, screening and buffering and visual impact. It is recommended that the City adopt a wireless telecommunications ordinance which regulates siting and addresses bulk, screening and buffering and aesthetic issues.

Housing for Senior Citizens

The statewide and national demographic trend resulting in an increase in the elderly population has also affected Jersey City. At present, senior citizens age 65 and over constitute approximately 44–nine percent of the City’s total population. This is projected to increase as the City’s population of “baby boomers”, those born between 1946 and 1964, ages and enters retirement. There is a need to more fully address senior citizen concerns, especially housing and supportive services. This includes assisted living, nursing homes and other forms of senior housing.

Signage

The provision of signage associated with commercial, industrial and residential development is a significant issue with land use and urban design implications. Signage has the potential to enhance development and contribute to the streetscape. However, it can have a detrimental impact if the size, height, number and design of signs is not adequately regulated.

A complete revision of the City’s sign regulations is recommended to ensure that high quality, attractive and compatible signage accompanies development. Careful consideration should be given to the regulation of billboards in order to preserve important view sheds, historic districts and residential areas.

Scrap Yards

Scrap yards have historically been scattered throughout the City and have, often times, been nuisances in the neighborhoods in which they are located. Facilities which were previously referred to as scrap/junk yards may be redefined as state licensed recycling facilities. These types of uses should be clearly defined, restricted to limited areas and prevented from expansion in order to mitigate the impact on adjacent properties and neighborhoods. Impacts such as noise, odor, truck traffic, lighting and aesthetics should be controlled through design standards.

Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS)

The Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS) were adopted by the State in 1997 in order to reduce the multiplicity of standards for residential subdivision and site improvements; to provide sound and continuing effective site improvement standards; to ensure predictability in site improvement standards; to provide for development reviews based upon objective standards rather than discretionary design standards; to streamline the development approval process; to promote design freedom; and separate the policy aspects of development review from technical determinations. The RSIS supercede municipal standards and govern any site improvements carried out in connection with residential subdivision, site plan approval and variance requests.

The RSIS are intended to provide consistency, uniformity and predictability in residential development throughout the State. However, they do not fully reflect the complex and fully developed environment in

urban areas such as Jersey City. It is therefore recommended that the zoning ordinance be revised to incorporate elements of the RSIS and, where appropriate, seek a waiver or exemption from certain standards for parking, streets and sidewalks. The City should seek special area designation and approval of special area standards under N.J.A.C. 5:21-3.5 for this purpose.

Formula Business

The downtown section of Jersey City has experienced rapid development and population growth. Most large development projects have occurred adjacent to or within walking distance of Jersey City's downtown historic districts. While the growth has generated new retail development and increased retail rents throughout the downtown area, there is concern about the potential effects that new retail establishments will have on Downtown's unique community character. Downtown Jersey City supports a great variety of small, unique local businesses while most national chains have been located within enclosed shopping malls or strip shopping centers within the area. It is desired that this pattern of retail development remain in order to preserve Downtown's distinctive sense of place and unique neighborhood character. Businesses that are easily recognized as offering the same merchandise or menu items and having the same branding and styling as many other locations throughout the region detract from this well established community character and instills a sense of sameness to our neighborhood streets causing our neighborhoods to feel less unique. As new retail space is built and old businesses turn over into new businesses it is crucial to protect the existing pattern of unique local businesses populating the ground floor retail spaces. This is best accomplished by defining in the Land Development Ordinance "formula businesses" as those establishments that lack local character by having multiple locations within the region that exhibit standardized characteristics such as logos, menus, store decor, etc, and limiting those businesses in select areas and implementing a cap in historic districts and other portions of downtown where the traditional neighborhood pattern of unique local businesses is most prevalent.