

PARK AVENUE GATEWAY AREA IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT INVESTIGATION

**CITY OF PLAINFIELD
NEW JERSEY**

PREPARED BY:
NISHUANE GROUP LLC
105 GROVE STREET, SUITE 1
MONTCLAIR, NJ 07042



Park Avenue Gateway Area in Need of Redevelopment Investigation - Non-Condemnation

City of Plainfield, Union County, New Jersey

November 14, 2019

Prepared for:



The original of this report was signed in accordance with NJSA 45:14A-12.

Prepared by:

Steven Martini, PP, AICP
New Jersey Professional Planner
(PP) License #33LI00633000

Michele Delisfort, PP, AICP
New Jersey Professional Planner
(PP) License #33LI00615500





TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 Study Authorization	
1.2 Scope of Study	
1.3 Redevelopment Objectives	
1.4 Redevelopment Process	
1.5 Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area	
2.0 STUDY AREA CHARACTERISTICS	6
2.1 Locational Context	
2.2 Existing Land Use	
2.3 Existing Zoning	
2.4 Relevant Planning Studies	
2.5 Urban Enterprise Zone and Smart Growth Classification	
2.6 Municipal Actions	
3.0 LRHL STATUTORY CRITERIA	15
3.1 Application of Study Area Criteria	
4.0 STUDY AREA EVALUATION	17
4.1 Study Approach	
4.2 Property Evaluation	
4.3 Findings	
5.0 CONCLUSION	21

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Under statutory powers instituted by the State of New Jersey (C.40A: 12A-5) and the City Council Resolution R245-19 dated July 8, 2019, the Municipal Council of the City of Plainfield (the "City Council") authorized a preliminary investigation of property identified as Block 729, Lot 1 on the tax maps of the City of Plainfield, commonly known as 1204-48 Park Avenue in the City tax records, with frontage on Randolph Road and Laramie Road (hereinafter referred to as, the "Study Area").

Report Sections

This report contains five sections: Introduction, Study Area Characteristics, LRHL Statutory Criteria, Study Area Evaluation and Conclusion. Section 2 describes the Study Area in terms of its location, existing zoning and land use, physical, regulatory, fiscal and environmental conditions. Section 3 reviews and applies the statutory criteria and sets forth the findings based upon the characteristics and conditions of the Study Area that have been observed and analyzed. Section 4 summarizes and evaluates the Study Area, based upon the criteria set forth in the LRHL. Supporting documentation includes tax assessments, field observations, and photo surveys. Section 5 proposes recommendations to the City of Plainfield Planning Board relative to determining the redevelopment needs of the area.

Methodology

On October 18, 2018, a site visit was conducted to investigate and analyze existing conditions of the Study Area. A photo survey was completed in order to illustrate and inventory the physical

conditions of the Study Area. Additionally, in preparation of this analysis, the following records and documents were reviewed:

- Official Tax Maps of the City of Plainfield;
- Tax records for the property located within the Study Area;
- City of Plainfield Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance; and
- Ownership information
- City Council Resolution R245-19

To this end, this report is a collection of the findings based on the research conducted.

1.1. Study Authorization

On July 8, 2019, the City Council passed a resolution authorizing and directing the Planning Board to undertake an investigation of



the Study Area and to make recommendations to the City Council as to whether the Study Area is “in need of redevelopment” in accordance with criteria cited in the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq., (the “LRHL”). Once the Planning Board has made its recommendation, the City Council will consider whether to designate the Study Area as a Non-condemnation Redevelopment Area pursuant to the LRHL.

This report is written pursuant to Section 6 of the LRHL (N.J.S.A. 40A-12A-6) which requires the following:

1. No area of a municipality shall be determined a redevelopment area unless the governing body of the municipality shall, by resolution, authorize the planning board to undertake a preliminary investigation to determine whether the proposed area is a redevelopment area according to the criteria set forth in Section 5 of P.L. 1992/c.79 (C.40A:12A-5)... The governing body of a municipality shall assign the conduct of the investigation and hearing to the planning board of the municipality.

2. (1) Before proceeding to a public hearing on the matter, the planning board shall prepare a map showing the boundaries of the proposed redevelopment area and the location of the various parcels of property included therein. There shall be appended to the map, a statement setting forth the basis of the investigation.

(2) The Planning Board shall specify a date for and give notice of a hearing for purpose of persons who are interested in or would be affected by a determination that the delineated area is a redevelopment area.

1.2. Scope of Study

This study is undertaken as an initial attempt to engage, benefit and create opportunities through redevelopment planning, which involves the following steps:

- Conduct an inventory of the Study Area property and physical characteristics of the same;
- Assess whether the existing characteristics and conditions meet the criteria to recommend the need for redevelopment, as outlined within the LRHL;
- Propose findings and recommendations relevant to the determination of the need for redevelopment of the Study Area.

1.3. Redevelopment Objectives

The renewal activities of the Study Area should be undertaken in conformity with, and should be designed to meet the following objectives of an area investigation:

- To improve the functional and physical layout of the project area for contemplated new development and the removal of impediments to land deposition.
- To provide redevelopment that minimizes the need to relocate residents or businesses.
- To create new employment/or housing opportunities for residents.
- To coordinate redevelopment activities that mitigate and eradicate blighted conditions.

1.4 Redevelopment Process

The LRHL provides the statutory authority for municipalities to engage in a number of redevelopment activities, including: designating an “Area in Need of Redevelopment,” preparing and adopting redevelopment plans and implementing redevelopment projects. More specifically, a redevelopment designation allows the municipality to:

1. Adopt a redevelopment plan that will identify the manner in which an area will be developed, including its use and intensity.
2. Issue bonds for the purpose of redevelopment.
3. Acquire property.
4. Lease or convey property in lieu of the public bidding process.
5. Generate investment from a selected developer.
6. Grant tax exemptions and/or abatements.

The City can utilize the powers granted to municipalities under the LRHL to improve the conditions of the Study Area.

The LRHL sets forth a multi-step process that must be observed by the City Council and Planning Board in order to enable the City to lawfully exercise the powers provided by the statute. The steps required to declare an area in need of redevelopment must be undertaken pursuant to the LRHL. It should be noted that only upon completion of this public process is a municipality able to exercise the powers granted pursuant to the LRHL.

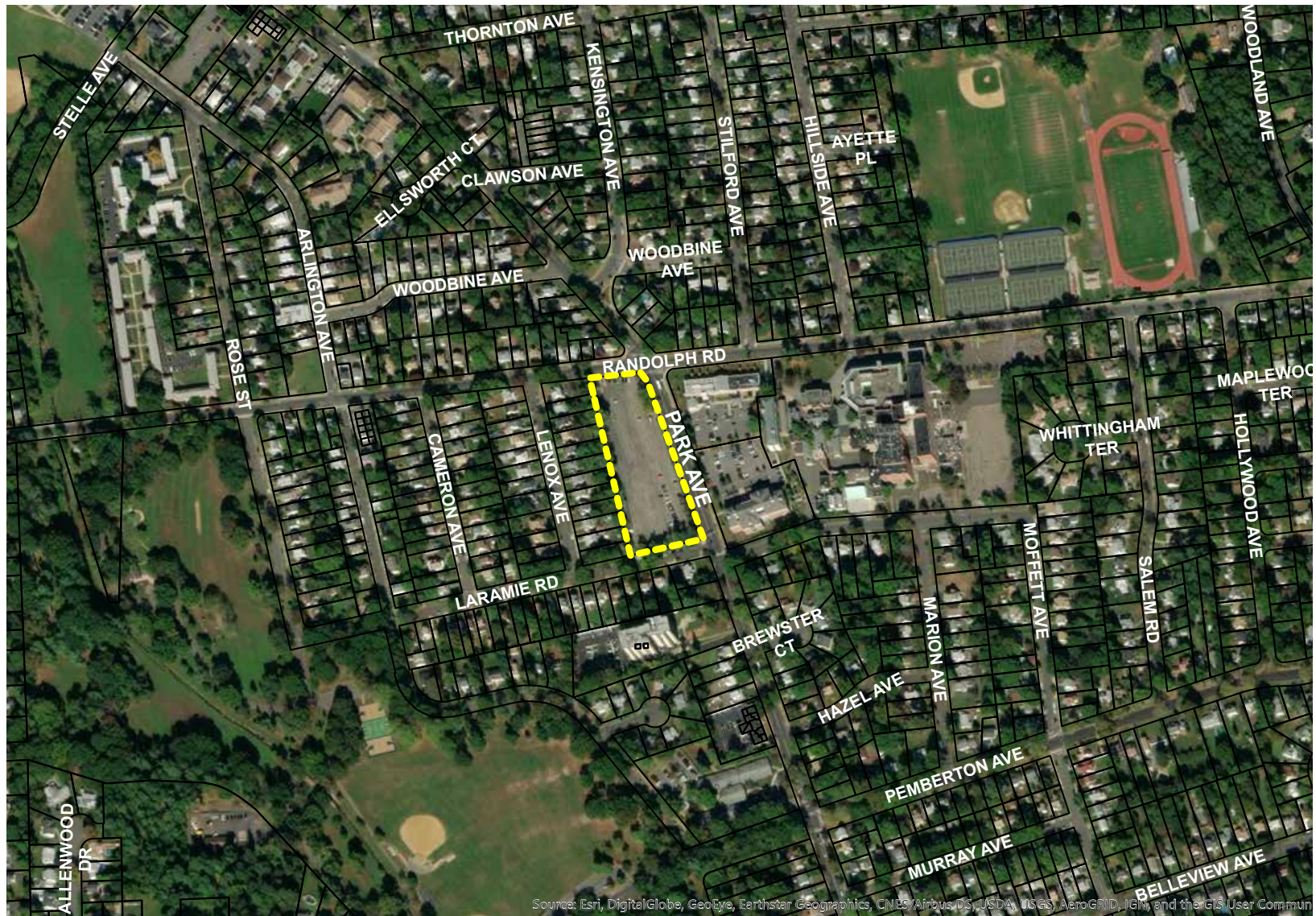
1.5 Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Areas

P.L. 2013, Chapter 159 amended the LRHL to allow two types of redevelopment areas: Condemnation Redevelopment Areas and Non- Condemnation Redevelopment Areas. The amendment requires the resolution authorizing the planning board to undertake a preliminary investigation to state whether the redevelopment area determination shall authorize the municipality to use all those powers provided by the State Legislature for use in a redevelopment area other than the use of eminent domain (a “Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area”) or whether the redevelopment area determination shall authorize the municipality to use all powers provided by the Legislature for use in a redevelopment area, including the power of eminent domain (a “Condemnation Redevelopment Area”). The City Council authorized a study for a Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area for the Study Area.

2.0 STUDY AREA CHARACTERISTICS

2.1. Locational Context

According to the 2017 American Community Survey, the Study Area is located in Census Tract 397, which has a total population of 5,361 residents. As depicted on Map 1, it is situated along the west side of Park Avenue, bounded by Randolph Road to the north and Laramie Road to the south. Park Avenue is a county road known as County Route 531. The Study Area consists of one tax parcel, as shown on Map 2. The parcel has a total area of 2.971 acres and is located in the 3rd Ward of the City. It is west of the JFK Muhlenberg Satellite Emergency Department and the Harold B. and Dorothy A. Snyder Schools of Nursing and Medical Imaging.



Study Area

Map 1: Study Area Aerial Map





 Study Area

Map 2: Tax Block and Lot Map

Regional Setting

The City of Plainfield is located within Union County, New Jersey. Plainfield is bordered by eight municipalities: in Union County, the Borough of Fanwood to the north and the Township of Scotch Plains to the north and east; in Somerset County, the Boroughs of Watchung and North Plainfield to the west; in Middlesex County, the Borough of Dunellen to the south, the Township of Piscataway to the southeast and the Borough of South Plainfield to the east.

Public Transportation

The City is served by two train stations located on New Jersey Transit's Raritan Valley Line: Plainfield Train Station and Netherwood Train Station. New Jersey Transit Bus Route 822 runs adjacent to the Study Area along Randolph Road.

2.2. Existing Land Use

The existing land uses of the Study Area are detailed in Map 3. Although the official land use of the Study Area is Professional Office/Medical, it is primarily used as a surface parking lot facility. The parking lot use has existed on the Study Area for decades. According to Plainfield Building Department records, a certificate of occupancy for the parking lot facility was received by Muhlenberg Hospital in 1969.

2.3. Existing Zoning

As shown on Map 4, the Study Area is located within the PO-1 Professional Office zoning district. As discussed in the City's Zoning Ordinance, the Professional Office District is intended to recognize

the existing land use pattern resulting from the conversion of residential housing to professional office space, and to provide standards for professional office development. This zoning district permits single-family dwellings; two-family dwellings; mixed-use residential dwellings; childcare centers (per N.J.S.A. 40:55D-66.6); offices, including medical offices; hospitals; and telecommunication facilities on existing buildings and structures.

2.4. Relevant Planning Studies

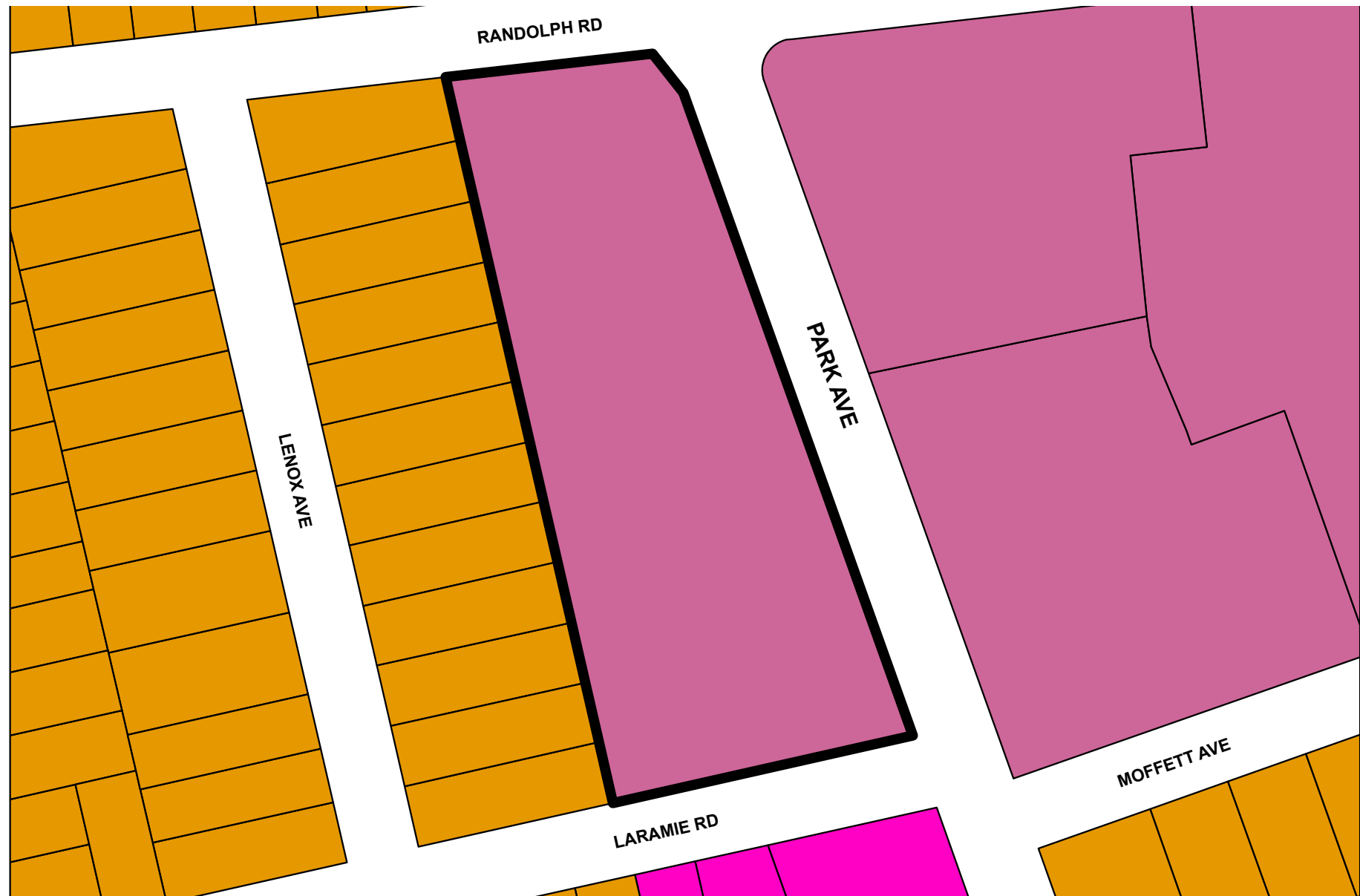
2009 Master Plan





The following excerpts from the 2009 City Master Plan are relevant to the potential redevelopment of land surrounding Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center:

- "Continue to utilize Muhlenberg facilities as the anchor for surrounding professional office land use pattern." Community Facilities, pg. 103.
- "The Land Use Element should continue to call out the Muhlenberg facility as the anchor for the surrounding Professional Office land use pattern, which should be expanded as a professional and medical corridor," Community Facilities, pg. 119.

2014 Muhlenberg Hospital Study

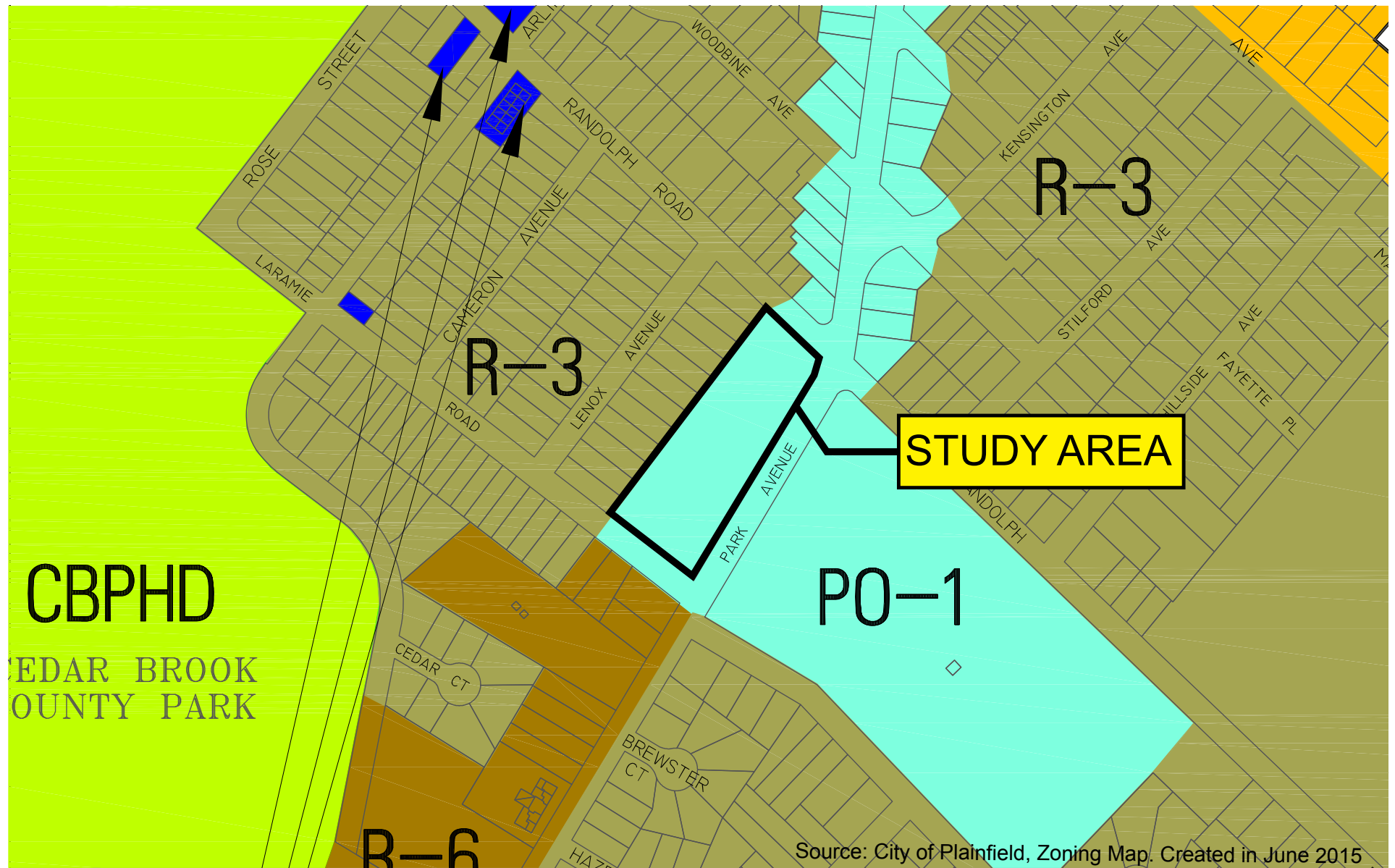
In August 2014, a study was conducted to envision the future of the Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center campus. The subject parcel was included in this study. This vision for the Muhlenberg campus consisted of "restoring a productive asset to the City with healthcare and complementary uses...The campus is envisioned to



-  Study Area
-  Professional Office and Medical
-  Medium/High Density Residential
-  Low Moderate Density Residential

Map 3: Land Use Map





focus on uses that are compatible and complementary to healthcare and wellness facilities,” (pg. 5, Muhlenberg Hospital Study).

2.5. Urban Enterprise Zone and Smart Growth Classification

The Study Area is not located within a City-designated Urban Enterprise Zone. The Study Area is also not located within a designated Opportunity Zone.

Smart Growth Classification

Smart Growth commonly refers to growth that serves the environment, economy, and community equally. When possible, it attempts to concentrate development into already-existing communities. Additionally, it addresses the inherent interconnections between environmental protection, social equity, public health, and economic sustainability. Selected areas throughout the State of New Jersey are designated as a Smart Growth Area. They are designated by the Department of State, Office for Planning Advocacy, from spatial data relating to the NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan, and several other master plans.

The City of Plainfield is located in the smart growth boundary for a Metropolitan Planning Area 1 (PA1). This area includes a variety of municipalities that range from a large urban center to 19th century towns shaped by commuter rail. The communities in the area have strong ties to major metropolitan centers-New York/Newark/Jersey City Metropolitan Region; the Philadelphia/Camden/Trenton Metropolitan Region; and on a smaller scale the Easton/Phillipsburg Metropolitan Region.

The following are the ten (10) accepted principles of Smart Growth:

1. Mix land uses;
2. Take advantage of existing community's assets;
3. Foster walkable neighborhoods;
4. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices;
5. Promote distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
6. Preserve open space, farmland and critical environmental area;
7. Strengthen and encourage growth in existing communities;
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices;
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective; and
10. Encourage citizen and stakeholder participation in development decisions.

The Study Area should be classified as a Smart Growth area as it possesses multiple characteristics of Smart Growth. As demonstrated on Map 5 Smart Growth, the Study Area is in close proximity to multiple City amenities, including the JFK Muhlenberg Satellite Emergency Department, JFK Muhlenberg Harold B. and Dorothy A. Snyder Schools, Muhlenberg Post Office and Cedar Brook Park. Complementarily, the Study Area also promotes walkability and mass transportation access as NJ Transit Bus Route 822 stops along Randolph Road at the northern end of the Study Area. Additionally, a range of housing choices are present within the neighborhood surrounding the Study Area, such as single-family residences and multi-family dwelling units.



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



Study Area

5 Minute Walk

Bus Stops

Map 5: Smart Growth Map



2.6. Municipal Actions

Municipal records were requested from City departments regarding property management, building code violations, and other incidents that previously occurred within the Study Area. Research conducted indicates the following municipal actions.

Division of Code Enforcement and Inspections

On October 18, 2019, the Plainfield Division of Codes and Inspections provided Code violation records. Based on the records provided, three violations were issued on June 29, 2018. One violation was for maintenance of the exterior of the premises and structures, requiring the removal of all trash, debris and rubbish. The second violation was for the appearance of the exterior of the premises and structures, requiring that tree branches overhanging onto neighboring properties be cut and trimmed. The third violation was also for the appearance of the exterior of the premises and structures, requiring the cutting and maintenance of lawn, weeds, hedges and overgrowth.

Tax Collector

According to data provided by the Plainfield Tax Collector on October 24, 2014, the Study Area is considered tax exempt as the property is listed as charitable. Therefore, the Study Area does not pay any taxes to the City.

Fire Division

On October 17, 2019, the Plainfield Fire Division provided records pertinent to the Study Area. Based on records from January 1,

2000 to October 17, 2019, it was reported that there were no fire alarm incidents and no fire violation notices within the Study Area.

Police Division

On October 18, 2019, the Plainfield Police Division provided a report summarizing crime and crash incidents within the Study Area and adjacent properties/roadways between January 1, 2014 to October 18, 2019. This data is displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Police Data

Crime Incidents							
Incident Type	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total by Type
Aggravated Assault	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
Burglary	0	1	1	0	2	2	6
Theft	1	1	1	2	0	2	7
Theft of MV	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Rape/Sexual Assault	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	6	2	2	2	3	4	19
Motor Vehicular Crashes							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Crashes Reported	5	7	15	18	9	9	63
DUI	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	5	7	15	19	9	9	64

Source: City of Plainfield Police Division

As noted in Table 1 Police Data, a total of 19 crime incidents have occurred within the Study Area since 2014. Over two-thirds of the crimes reported were incidents of theft or burglary. There were four cases of aggravated assault in 2014, one case of rape/sexual assault in 2014, and one case of motor vehicle theft in 2018.

A total of 63 motor vehicle crashes have occurred within the Study Area and adjacent properties/roadways since 2014. There was also one DUI incident, which was recorded in 2017.

Planning Division

According to data provided by the Plainfield Planning Division on October 24, 2019, there have been no applications for the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Adjustment involving the Study Area. Additionally, there were no records of brownfield sites within Study Area.

Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority (PMUA)

According to data provided by the Plainfield Planning Division on October 27, 2019, there have been no applications for the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Adjustment involving the Study Area.

3.0 LRHL STATUTORY CRITERIA

Criteria for Area In Need of Redevelopment

The laws governing redevelopment by municipalities in New Jersey are set forth in the LRHL. This statute grants the governing body of a municipality the power to authorize the Planning Board to conduct

a study to determine whether an area is in need of redevelopment; to make such a determination following the completion of the study; and to adopt a redevelopment plan for the designated area. Such an area may be determined to be in need of redevelopment only if, after an investigation by the Planning Board and a public hearing for which notice has been given, it is found to meet one or more of the following eight criteria:

1. **"Criteria A."** The generality of buildings are substandard, unsafe, unsanitary, dilapidated, or obsolescent, or possess any of such characteristics, or are so lacking in light, air, or space, as to be conducive to unwholesome living or working conditions.
2. **"Criteria B."** The discontinuance of the use of a building or buildings previously used for commercial, manufacturing, retail, shopping malls or plazas, office parks or industrial purposes; the abandonment of such building or buildings; significant vacancies or such building or buildings for at least two consecutive years; or the same being allowed to fall into so great a state of disrepair as to be untenable.
3. **"Criteria C."** Land that is owned by the municipality, the county, a local housing authority, redevelopment agency or redevelopment entity, or unimproved vacant land that has remained so for a period of ten years prior to adoption of the resolution, and that by reason of its location, remoteness, lack of means of access to developed sections or portions of the municipality, or topography, or nature of the soil, is not likely to be developed through the instrumentality of private capital.
4. **"Criteria D."** Areas with buildings or improvements which, by reason of dilapidation, obsolescence, overcrowding, faulty

arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities, excessive land coverage, deleterious land use or obsolete layout, or any combination of these or other factors, are detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the community.

5. **"Criteria E."** A growing lack or total lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of the title, diverse ownership of the real properties therein or other similar conditions which impede land assemblage or discourage the undertaking of improvements, resulting in a stagnant and unproductive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety and welfare, which condition is presumed to be having a negative social or economic impact or otherwise being detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the surrounding area or the community in general.

6. **"Criteria F."** Areas, in excess of five contiguous acres, whereon buildings or improvements have been destroyed, consumed by fire, demolished or altered by the action of storm, fire, cyclone, tornado, earthquake or other casualty in such a way that the aggregate assessed value of the areas has been materially depreciated.

7. **"Criteria G."** In any municipality in which an enterprise zone has been designated pursuant to the New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zones Act, P.L. 1983, c. 303 (C.52:27H-60 et seq.) the execution of the actions prescribed in that act for the adoption by the municipality and approval by the New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zone Authority of the zone development plan for the area of the enterprise zone shall be considered sufficient for the determination that the area is in need of redevelopment pursuant to sections 5 and 6 of P.L. 1992, c. 79 (C.40A:12A-5 and 40A:12A-6) for the purpose of granting tax exemptions within the enterprise zone

district pursuant to the provisions of P.L. 1991, c. 431 (C.40A:20-1 et seq.) or the adoption of a tax abatement and exemption ordinance pursuant to the provisions of P.L. 1991, c. 441 (C.40A:21-1 et seq.). The municipality shall not utilize any other redevelopment powers within the urban enterprise zone unless the municipal governing body and planning board have also taken the actions and fulfilled the requirements prescribed in P.L. 1992, c. 79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) for determining that the area is in need of redevelopment or an area in need of rehabilitation and the municipal governing body has adopted a redevelopment plan ordinance including the area of the enterprise zone.

8. **"Criteria H."** The designation of the delineated area is consistent with smart growth planning principles adopted pursuant to law or regulation.

In addition to the above criteria, individual properties that do not meet any of the statutory conditions may still be included within an area in need of redevelopment provided that within the area as a whole, one or more of the expressed conditions are prevalent. This provision is referred to as **"Section 3"** and is set forth under N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-3, which states in part that "a redevelopment area may include lands, buildings, or improvements which of themselves are not detrimental to public health, safety or welfare, but the inclusion of which is found necessary, with or without change in this condition, for the effective redevelopment of the area of which they are a part."

3.1 Application of Study Area Criteria

The finding that an area is in need of redevelopment is an area wide determination. As such, the statutory charge for a positive finding

of redevelopment eligibility requires a demonstration of physical deterioration, [illustrated] by the presence of improvements, which are dilapidated, obsolete and faulty in term of arrangement, lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities or in any way detrimental to the safety, health, morals or general welfare of the community.

The conditions evidenced by this needs determination study are measured against the criteria for designation of a Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area and summarized in a fashion that enables a determination to be made regarding whether one or more criteria is prevalent within the Study Area.

4.0 STUDY AREA EVALUATION

4.1 Study Approach

Nishuane Group, LLC conducted site visits and prepared a photo survey of the Study Area to establish and confirm existing conditions and land uses. The firm reviewed relevant plans and municipal documents (i.e. City of Plainfield's Master Plan, City of Plainfield's Land Use Ordinance, and City Council Resolution) related to the Study Area. Property records of the Study Area were obtained from City agencies in support of the existing conditions assessment. The information retrieved by the firm allowed planners to holistically evaluate the conditions of the Study Area.

4.2 Property Evaluation

Property Improvement Evaluation

The following table is an evaluation of the Study Area's property

assessment. Table 2 below contains the information taken from the City's tax records which include building description, land value, property improvement cost, the value of the property and the overall improvement ratio.

Table 2: Study Area Property Information

Block	Lots	Street Address	Land Descrip.	Land Value	Improve-ment Value	Total Value	Improve-ment Ratio
729	1	1204-1248 Park Avenue	2.971 acres	891000	155800	1046800	0.15

Properties with improvement values that are equal to or less than the land value generate normal economic productivity. Properties where the land is worth more than the improvements often indicate that the improvements are old, obsolete, and/or deteriorated so that they depreciate, rather than appreciate, in value as would be the case with economically productive properties. As illustrated in Table 2, the Study Area's land value far exceeds the improvement value indicating that the property is underutilized and investment is not occurring on the property.



1204-1248 PARK AVENUE (BLOCK 729, LOT 1) PROPERTY EVALUATION

Property Characteristics

A parking lot with an area of 2.971 acres (or 129,417 square feet). The Study Area fronts on three City streets: Randolph Road to the north; Park Avenue to east; and Laramie Road to the South. It is currently used as a surface parking lot and contains 257 parking spaces¹.

Site Analysis

Previously, the site was primarily used as parking for the Muhlenberg Hospital. The site now serves the parking needs of the adjacent Nursing School. Since the demand for parking for the Nursing School is less than the Hospital, the parking lot is not fully utilized. Additionally, the asphalt pavement covers the majority of the site. Ineffective drainage was also noted during the site visit. Minimal pervious coverage was observed.

At the time of the site visit (between 11:00am and 12:00pm on Friday, October 18, 2019), it was estimated that approximately 20% to 25% of the delineated parking spaces were utilized by students of the Nursing School. All parked vehicles were concentrated at the southern portion of the Study Area. The parcel consists of one functional point of egress and ingress positioned along the frontage of Randolph Road. Consequently, the lot is underutilized and is an obsolescent and inefficient layout of the parcel.

Two accessory buildings are present at the southwest portion of

¹ 2014 Muhlenberg Hospital Study. Pg. 20.



the Study Area. These buildings previously served as maintenance garages for the former Muhlenberg Hospital. As noted in the accompanying site photos, the windows and doors of both buildings are boarded up.

The cumulative physical issues on the site present detrimental impacts to the safety, health, morals, and general welfare of the public. With the majority of the Study Area containing impervious coverage, minimal open space, this contributes to the heat island effect. The vast asphalt coverage has resulted in ineffective drainage, which may cause flooding and runoff onto adjacent properties. Curbs and islands are deteriorating depicting that the parking lot is not being maintained properly and therefore creating hazardous conditions, particularly for patrons walking from the parking lot to the Nursing School. These existing conditions thwart adjacent development and do not support nearby properties as it disrupts the neighborhood character and is an eyesore.

Satisfies LRHL Criteria:

- **Criteria "D":** The existing impervious asphalt coverage spans the majority of the 2.971 acre site despite the fact that the parking demand for the use it serves only uses one quarter of the parking spaces. The existing impervious asphalt coverage is excessive given that the majority of the lot is impervious and the number of parking spaces provided greatly exceed the number of spaces needed for the current use. The existing circulation configuration of the lot is inefficient and obsolete because there is a single point of egress and ingress and the patrons who park there occupy the opposite end of this access point. The parking lot is no longer used for its intended purpose (as a parking facility serving Muhlenberg Hospital). Overall, the conditions of the Study Area are detrimental

to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community because of its excessive impervious coverage and inadequate vehicular access.

- **Criteria "E":** As stated above, the Study Area is used for parking for the Nursing School, which is located on Block 13, Lot 38.02. The fact that the parking and the principal use for which the parking serves are located on two different lots discourages further improvements of the Study Area. As a result, the use of the Study Area remains stagnant and largely unproductive (only 25% is currently used for parking by the Nursing School). The lack of proper utilization of the Study Area has a negative economic impact in that the improvement value of the Study Area is far below the value of the land.

- **Criteria "H":** The Study Area is consistent with Smart Growth principles because it is in close proximity to multiple City amenities, including the JFK Muhlenberg Satellite Emergency Department, Harold B. and Dorothy A. Snyder Schools, Muhlenberg Post Office and Cedar Brook Park. The Study Area also promotes walkability and mass transportation access as NJ Transit Bus Route 822 stops along Randolph Road. Further, various housing choices are present within the neighborhood surrounding the Study Area, such as single-family residences and multi-family dwelling units.

Recommendation:

Based on the existing conditions of the Study Area and the satisfied LRHL criteria, the Study Area should be designated as an "area in need of redevelopment."

4.3. Findings

Based upon the analysis of existing conditions within the Study Area, it can be concluded that the parcel meets several of the LRHL statutory criteria. Due to its close proximity to facilities and public transportation, the Study Area contains the characteristics of the aforementioned smart growth principles in Section 2.5 of this study. It is suggested that the Plainfield Planning Board recommend that the City Council designate the Study Area as a Non-Condensation Redevelopment Area based on the findings below:

Area In Need of Redevelopment Criteria

A: Criteria "A" does not apply to the Study Area.

B: Criteria "B" does not apply to the Study Area.

C: Criteria "C" does not apply to the Study Area.

D: Criteria "D" was applied to the Study Area. The layout of the parking lot is obsolete as it only contains one point of egress and ingress and the current parking lot facility greatly exceeds the existing parking demand resulting in excessive land coverage.

E: Criteria "E" was applied to the Study Area. The Study Area is used for parking for the Nursing School, which is located on a different lot across Park Avenue. Since the parking and the principal use of the Nursing School are located on two different lots, this discourages further improvements of the Study Area. As a result, the use of the Study Area remains stagnant and largely unproductive as only 25% of the existing parking supply is currently used by the Nursing School. The lack of proper utilization of the Study Area

has a negative economic impact in that the improvement value of the Study Area is far below the value of the land.

F: Criteria "F" does not apply to the Study Area.

G: Criteria "G" does not apply to the Study Area.

H: Criteria "H" was applied to the Study Area. In 2003, the LRHL was amended to include smart growth criteria which encouraged livable neighborhoods. It is a planning approach that directs new growth to locations where infrastructure and services are available, limits sprawl development, protects the environment, and enhances and rebuilds existing communities. The existing neighborhood, in which the Study Area is located, has public transportation options as well as high walkability, surrounding mixed use development, open space and other City amenities. It lends itself to increase the intensity.

Section 3: This criterion does not apply to the Study Area.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The foregoing investigation report has been prepared to determine whether the Study Area meets the statutory criteria for designating an “Area in Need of Redevelopment” pursuant to the LRHL. The Study Area shows signs of underutilization of the existing parking lot use, and obsolete layout in addition to opportunities for new and appropriate development. The existing conditions of the Study Area have deterred investments and improvements. In its current state, the site does not support or further the development goals and objectives of the Master Plan.

For the reasons articulated in Sections 2.6 and 4.0 of this study relating to the underutilization of the Study Area and revitalization of the Park Avenue Gateway, it is recommended that the City Council and Planning Board take the action necessary as prescribed by the LRHL to designate the Study Area as a Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area. Once designated as a Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area”, a redevelopment plan can be prepared and implemented to ensure its proper utilization and development.

