

**PARK-MADISON
IN NEED OF
REDEVELOPMENT
STUDY**

**CITY OF PLAINFIELD
PLANNING BOARD**

Prepared by:

William Nierstedt, PP, AICP License- 3451
Director, Division of Planning and Community Development

April 3, 2000
Revised April 13, 2000

Table of Contents

- I. PURPOSE
- II. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF REDEVELOPMENT POWERS AND PROCEDURES
Conditions Establishing Need For Redevelopment
- III. STUDY OF THE RECOMMENDED AREA AND SITE
- IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
- V. PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY

I. PURPOSE

On March 1, 2000, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A: 12A-1 et seq., the City Council of the City of Plainfield adopted a resolution directing the Planning Board to conduct a preliminary investigation and hearing in order to evaluate and make recommendations to the governing body as to whether the area and the property located on tax map sheet 162 and described as Block 246, Lot 1 (107-263 West Front Street) is in need of redevelopment utilizing the statutory criteria set forth in the New Jersey Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (NJLRHL), N.J. S. A. 40A:12A-1 et seq. (see attached)

This report discusses the statutory standards under which the Planning Board and Governing Body must act when conducting this evaluation and when recommending and making decision in this regard. The first section of the report describes the redevelopment powers and procedures, the second section provides an analysis of the subject property, and the third section puts forth findings and recommendations regarding the applicability of the statutory criteria relative to the subject property.

Accompanying this report is a map showing the subject property investigated.

II. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF REDEVELOPMENT POWERS AND PROCEDURES

Conditions Establishing Need for Redevelopment

P.L. 1949 c. 306 has been supplemented and amended as the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (LRHL). The criteria which the City must therefore utilize in order to make a determination as to the designation of an area as a redevelopment area can be found at N.J.S.A. 40A: 12A-5. Following this statute, the City may determine any area In Need of Redevelopment if within the delineated area any one of the following conditions is found:

- 1) The generality of buildings is 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) The discontinuance of the use of buildings previously used for commercial, manufacturing, or industrial purposes; the abandonment of such buildings or the same being allowed to fall into so great a state of disrepair as to be untenable.
- 3) Land that is owned by the municipality, the county, a local housing authority, development 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) Areas with buildings or improvements which, by reason of dilapidation, obsolescent, 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) A growing lack or total lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of the title, diverse ownership of the real property therein or other conditions, resulting in a stagnant or not fully productive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety, and welfare.
- 6) 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 area has been materially depreciated.
- 7) 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. 431 (C40A: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 described in P.L.1 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 government body has adopted a redevelopment plan ordinance including the area of the enterprise zone.

III. STUDY OF THE RECOMMENDED AREA AND SITE

The City of Plainfield master plan identifies the area in which the subject property is located as the City's downtown retail center. Recommended land uses include retail, commercial service establishments, offices, institutions, schools and mixed-use residential dwellings. The master plan specifically identifies the Park-Madison area as a Targeted Area for Redevelopment. Such areas are generally characterized by the poor structural conditions of buildings, the evident lack of investment, lack of maintenance, and abandonment. It further identifies the entire Central Business District (CBD), of which the Park-Madison property is a part, as a Development Area. The master plan calls for substantial streetscape and other infrastructure improvements to the CBD. It recommends that a detailed improvement plan be developed incorporating a specific theme to identify the downtown as a unique and pedestrian friendly place. It also calls for the development and enforcement of design

standards to maintain the downtown as an attractive shopping center. Finally, the master plan continues to recommend mixed-use development of the Park-Madison/Teppers Redevelopment Areas as the best development option.

The present zoning ordinance is consistent with this in that the property is in the B-2 Central Business District. The proposed zoning ordinance further advances this concept and calls for the area to be identified as the Central Business District Zone. This zone is intended to serve as the downtown retail center, as well as a broader, regional population. The surrounding area character is defined as retail and service business establishments along West Front Street and Park Avenue, mixed commercial, utility, social service and vacant land uses along West Second Street, and mixed commercial, residential and vacant land uses along Madison Avenue. The site is also located within the City's Urban Enterprise Zone.

The subject property is specifically identified as 100-150 Park Avenue, 101-137 Madison Avenue, 107-263 West Front Street, and 100-233 West Second Street. It is listed on the Tax Assessor records as Block 246, lot 1. It is formerly known as Block 401, lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7; Block 402, lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11; and Block 406, lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23. It constitutes the entire block bounded by the above streets. The block is 4.00 acres in size. The City of Plainfield has owned it since June 13, 1978.

At one time a thriving commercial area with numerous structures and land uses, the site was declared an urban renewal area in 1962. (See attached Sanborn Map.) All of the structures that were on the site have been subsequently demolished. The site has been vacant for over twenty years. While the site has been the subject of numerous redevelopment concepts over the past twenty years, none have come to fruition. The site remains a vacant promise of what the city's downtown could be.

IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the above analysis of the subject property and the statutory criteria found within the NJLRHL, the Division of Planning and Community Development is of the opinion that the subject property DOES satisfy at least one of the statutory criteria and thus is IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT. The criteria the Division believes is pertinent to this study are criteria numbers 3, 5 and 7 as identified above:

3. Land that is owned by the municipality, the county, a local housing authority, development 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.

The City of Plainfield has owned the property since for over 20 years. It has not been developed by any private entity throughout this entire time period.

5. A growing lack or total lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of the title, diverse ownership of the real property therein or other conditions, resulting in a stagnant or not fully productive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety, and welfare.

The property constitutes an under-utilized and vacant site that is clearly not being utilized to its highest and best use. The site location is extremely important to the City of Plainfield as it is located in the heart of the central business district. Having such a site vacant for over twenty years has created a real sense that no developer of magnitude wants to invest in Plainfield. This in turn has resulted in creation of a continuum of existing businesses not willing to invest in their downtown properties because of an uncertain retail future. It could also be viewed as one of many components in the decision by Federated Department Stores to move Macy's, the last major retailer in the downtown area, out of the city. It is hoped that the redevelopment of Park-Madison will stop the downward economic investment pattern and begin a new ability of the city to attract commercial investment and return Plainfield to a central shopping area not only for city residents but also for the central New Jersey region.

7. 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. 431 (C40A: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 described in P.L.1 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 government body has adopted a redevelopment plan ordinance including the area of the enterprise zone.

The city does have an enterprise zone that has been designated in full compliance with the "New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zone Act", and the subject site is located within this Urban Enterprise Zone.

Based upon the above findings, it is the recommendation of the Division of Planning and Community Development that the Planning Board find the subject property In Need of Redevelopment. It should further adopt a resolution recommending that City Council adopt a resolution making a formal designation of such a determination and directing the Planning Board to prepare a redevelopment plan for the property.

V. PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY

As required by the Local Redevelopment Housing Law, (NJSA 40A:12A-6) the Planning Board gave public notice in The Courier News and Star Ledger on April 7 and April 10, 2000. Public notices were sent to all property owners and parties whose names are listed on the assessment records as claimants of an interest in any parcel on April 10, 2000. A public hearing was held on this matter on April 20, 2000 at the City Hall Library, 515 Watchung Avenue, Plainfield. A map showing all of the affected properties, as well as a statement setting forth the basis for the investigation was prepared by the Division of Planning and Community Development. These documents were available in the City Clerk and Planning Offices as of April 7. Public comments at the hearing will be stated in the Planning Board minutes in this matter.