

City of New Rochelle
Department of Development

MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

THRU: Charles B. Strome, III, CITY MANAGER

FROM: Craig King, COMMISSIONER OF DEVELOPMENT

DATE: November 24, 2008

SUBJECT: North Avenue Corridor Study - Declare Lead Agency; Issue
Positive Declaration for Preparation of GEIS

In September 2008, City Council reviewed options outlined by City staff pertaining to the rezoning of North Avenue between Eastchester Road and Burling Lane. This process began in October 2006 and has been subject to extensive discussion and public comment. On November 18th, additional comments were received by City Council regarding staff recommendations on this rezoning and GEIS effort. Based on these comments and other preceding comments from City Council and concerned citizens, Development staff is submitting the following recommended rezoning for North Avenue

The Development Department recommends a base zoning that allows moderate density/height of 3 stories or 40 feet, whichever is lower, a base Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 2.0, and maximum building coverage of 70% within a new North Avenue Zoning District with impervious surface coverage not to exceed 90%. This zoning height and density, if not completely echoing the present density and height on North Avenue, will allow a number of existing non-conforming properties to comply with zoning regulations or to expand and improve as-of-right.

However, from the outset, this analysis of zoning changes had sought to understand and measure the impacts of additional density along North Avenue. There was concern that too little density and height might lead to insufficient investment in this commercial corridor. Too much height and density might lead to negative impacts on adjoining neighborhoods. For the purpose of conducting a comprehensive GEIS, the Department of Development proposes further legislation that creates a new North Avenue Floating Zone (NAFZ) that can be mapped on sites within the NA Zoning District equal to or exceeding 25,000 SF. This zoning will allow, with City Council approval, an additional height up to 9 stories or 100 feet, whichever is lower, with additional FAR up to a total of 3.5. This option would set the upper limit on development in the corridor. Staff recommends that the GEIS would examine five alternatives: No Action (retain existing zoning), change to the base zoning (2.0 FAR, 3 Floors), and the maximum option (3.5 FAR, 9 Floors).

In addition to these three base options, gradations in density and height of 7 floors (80 feet) with a FAR density of 3.0 and 5 floors (60 feet) with a FAR density of 2.5 would also be examined. This GEIS methodology will provide City Council with a comprehensive understanding of the positive and negative impacts of the proposed changes and allow for an informed decision on the future of North Avenue.

The additional height and density, above the base of 3 stories and FAR of 2.0, can only be obtained if an applicant petitions the City Council. Like the Downtown Density Bonus (DDB), this height and density can only be awarded at the sole discretion of City Council. And like the DDB, this award of density and height would be based on the specific criteria:

Public Benefit	Maximum FAR Bonus
Design of a green building that achieves a United States Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification or higher.	1.0
Development or redevelopment achieves architectural design excellence that exceeds peer review standards	0.5
Development or redevelopment achieves the elimination of significantly underutilized or deteriorated buildings	1.0
Development of a brownfield site	0.5
Development or redevelopment generates additional public parking through shared mixed use or new additional parking	1.0

The following additional zoning changes are recommended as a result of recent discussions with Council members.

1. Rezone the following residential lots on the north side of Fifth Avenue east of North Avenue from Neighborhood Business (NB) to Two-Family Residence (R2-7.0):
 - Section 3, Block 0994, Lot 023
 - Section 3, Block 0994, Lot 026
 - Section 3, Block 0994, Lot 027
 - Section 3, Block 0994, Lot 028

This expansion of R2-7.0 was made to create a more effective buffer of residential properties along Fifth Avenue while still preserving sufficient depth of lot on North Avenue for new development in the future. In addition, and to further buffer residential properties on Fifth Avenue and Treno Street, property in the NA zone and adjoining to Fifth Avenue and Treno Street properties zoned R2-7.0 will have a 50 foot setback that will limit the height of these properties to no more than 40 feet from existing grade.

2. Rezone the previously zoned C-1M parcel to RMF-0.7. This is more consistent with the low-density multi-family uses that being planned for the renovation of Hartley Houses.
3. Rezone the previously zoned NB and LI properties at the eastern end of Park Place to RMF-0.7.
4. Health clubs and hotels/motels will not be an allowed use on the NA zone.

RECOMMENDATION

City staff recommends the City Council declare Lead Agency on the proposed North Avenue Zoning District, issue a Positive Declaration, which precipitates the preparation of a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS). The GEIS will analyze a no-build option, the base “as of right” option and the preferred option that would allow a density bonus up to 3.5 FAR and a height of 9 stories subject to City Council approval as well as a series of other options that will fully analyze the development and zoning and development opportunities in this critical corridor.