

TO: Hon. Mayor & Council
City Manager Charles Strome, III

FROM: Matthew Fasciano 

DATE: November 16, 2012

RE: **Community-College Planning Committee – FINAL REPORT**

Pursuant to the Community-College Planning Committee Document (incorporated herein by reference), the Committee respectfully submits this final report for the Council's information.

INTRODUCTION

The Committee began to meet in mid-November 2011. We have met regularly since then in an effort to meet the objectives outlined in the Planning Document. The Committee submitted an interim report (incorporated herein by reference) to the Mayor, the Council and to the City Manager in February 2012, held a public comment session on March 15, 2012, and then submitted a status report (incorporated herein by reference) to the same parties in May 2012. In that document, the Committee reported that it continued to meet regularly, that it held the March public comment session, that the College had issued a Call for Concepts (incorporated herein by reference) seeking proposals for North Avenue development, and that it re-affirmed its recommendations contained in the interim report. The Committee also informed the Mayor, Council, and City Manager of its intention to extend its work for another six months. This extension was contingent upon the City Council temporarily extending the College's current occupancy limit on student housing by an additional five years.

On July 17, 2012, The City Council amended Ordinance 163 extending the College's current student housing occupancy limit provided that the Committee submit its final report with the recommendation of this extension.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Over the course of the Committee's work, the following sites, in no particular order, were considered as the most viable options for the development of residence halls to meet the College's housing need:

1. **President and Hubert Streets (East Campus)** – sites considered here consisted of properties currently owned by Iona College;
2. **Montgomery Place** – a site considered here consisted of properties currently owned by Iona College;
3. **Mayflower Avenue (West Campus)** – sites considered here consisted of properties currently owned by Iona College;
4. **North Avenue** – sites considered here consisted of properties *not* currently owned by Iona College.

NORTH AVENUE PROPOSAL

As indicated above, the College issued a Call for Concepts to develop a residence hall or halls along North Avenue. They received a single, viable proposal (hereinafter, the "NA proposal") for North Avenue development from a local developer. The NA proposal called for the development of two buildings. "Building A" would be a seven-story residence hall along North Avenue, near the College. This building would consist of ground-floor commercial space with six floors of student housing above,

providing approximately 260 beds for Iona students. The residence hall portion would be managed by Iona College which may ultimately take title to the building after 30 years. It is the express intention of the College to ultimately own the building and property, barring any unforeseen circumstances. The Committee supports the proposal for "Building A".

Outside the scope of the call for concepts, the NA proposal also called for the development of the second, five-story building, "Building B", on property on a nearby side street just off of North Avenue. "Building B" would be developed only if the following conditions are met: a) the College determines that it lacks development options on property it currently owns, or may acquire hereafter; b) the College determines that this is the best option for the College; and c) is prepared to manage the operation or control of any such "Building B" development agreed to with this developer. The proposal contemplates that the College retains the right to first consider the development of any property currently owned, or acquired hereafter, by the College to meet its future housing needs, but that the College commit to considering the development of "Building B", with this developer, as an *off-campus option* and further commit to managing the operation or control of any such "Building B" development agreed to with this developer.

The Committee supports the proposal for "Building B", if pursued by the College and condition c), described above, is met. The developer has acknowledged that, in the event that, once considered, the College opts not to pursue "Building B" or that it would not be responsible for managing the operations or control of the development, then this Committee's support of the suitability of the "Building B" portion of the NA proposal would be withdrawn.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee has worked extensively to achieve the objectives set forth in the planning document. As a result of this effort, the Committee believes that the following recommendations best meet those objectives and are in the best interest of all interested parties.

After careful consideration of the possible development of sites discussed throughout the process, including a review of the applicable zoning designations, possible economic impact, and the potential impact on the surrounding communities, the Committee respectfully submits the following final recommendations:

1. Extension of the College's student housing occupancy limit by an additional five years;
2. Creation of a special permitting process, described in more detail, below, to accommodate the development of college related facilities – including but not limited to the proposals for "Building A" and "Building B", above – within a specified radius of a College or University;
3. Development of the "Building A" residence hall along North Avenue as consistent with the NA proposal described above;
4. Future development of Building B as an off-campus option for residence hall development by the College, if all of the above conditions a), b), and c), above, are met;
5. Implementation of appropriate measures, by the appropriate parties and/or agencies, to promote safety, i.e., street lighting, traffic signals, security and police presence, etc., for Iona students and other members of the community, accompanying any related development projects;
6. Continued and increased efforts by both the College and community members to promote positive, productive relationships between the College and members of the surrounding communities;

7. Community participation in the College's Master Planning Process (See, 'Long Term Planning', below).

ZONING

Since the current zoning does not currently allow for the construction of such a proposal – "Building A" or "Building B", in furtherance of an objective to encourage the exploration of future college development needs along the North Avenue Corridor, the Committee recommends that the City of New Rochelle consider amending the City's zoning ordinance to include college related facilities as a use allowed by special permit in the NA zone, within a certain radius of a college, that would facilitate the reasonable development of college related facilities and provide a transparent and less burdensome approval process for a college and/or private developers with respect to future development in that zone. This would allow for the development of "Building A" and for the potential development of "Building B" if the conditions specified above, are met.

The Committee recommends that specific parameters for such a special permitting process be developed and adopted by the City as soon as possible, but in essence, an application would have to comply with specifications around:

- i. Distance from a college/university;
- ii. Minimum parcel size;
- iii. Restrictions on bed placement;
- iv. A Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.) and/or building height restrictions which would take into account the surrounding structures and the character of the neighborhood, in the reasonable discretion of the City, for developments not fronting on North Avenue;
- v. Restrictions on future use of the property;
- vi. Requirements around control and management of the property; and
- vii. The number of parking spaces, if required.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

In the event that the development of "Building A" along North Avenue does not come to pass, the Committee understands that the College retains the right to develop and construct, with the limits of the law, student residence halls on property that it currently owns, or may hereafter acquire. Please note that during the course of the planning process, the College committed not to build a three-story, one hundred plus bed student residence hall on President and Hubert Streets and/or the historical ten story residence hall on Mayflower Avenue for the duration of the occupation extension.

LONG TERM PLANNING

Iona College Master Planning Process – the College recently issued a "request for proposal" (RFP) to companies that are experienced in assisting institutions like Iona in creating a comprehensive long range, diverse Master Plan. It is the College's intent that the Master Plan will guide the College for the next 10 years towards excellence when contemplating future development within the College community. The College anticipates that this process will commence on or around *January 2, 2013* and is likely to conclude by *September 30, 2013*. The information and concepts presented in the Plan are intended to guide the College's decisions on uses of its lands – that it currently owns or may acquire hereafter – as well as the provision of its facilities. The Master Plan is one of many key planning documents which will be augmented as, and when, necessary by institutional indicators including, but not limited to, annual budgets, enrollment management indicators, student academic performances, program changes, etc. As part of the Master Planning process, the College will review all of its campuses, learning centers, athletic facilities, and residence halls. *At a fitting point in the Master Planning Process,*

the College has indicated that it plans to solicit feedback and input from faculty and staff, students, parents, community stakeholders and City staff and, where appropriate, to inform its proposed Master Plan. The proposed Master Plan will be presented to the College's President and its Board of Trustees for review and approval.