

HIGHLAND PARK PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

September 12, 2024@ 7:30 P.M.

Council Chambers, Borough Hall

221 South Fifth Ave. Highland Park, NJ

Call to Order

A Regular Meeting of the Highland Park Planning Board was held Thursday, September 12, 2024 and was called to order by Chairperson Hand at 7:31 PM. Annual Notice of this meeting was provided to the Home News Tribune, Star Ledger and the Highland Park Planet on January 23, 2024 and was posted on the Borough website www.hpboro.com and on the bulletin board at Borough Hall, 221 South Fifth Avenue, Highland Park, NJ and has remained continuously posted as required by law.

Roll Call:

Present	Rebecca Hand, Alvin Chin, Matthew Hale, Jeff Perlman, Stephen Eisdorfer, Allan Williams
Absent	Scott Brescher, Daniel Stern Cardinale, Khahlidra Hadhazy, Paul Lanaris, Padraic Millet
<u>Board Professionals</u>	Roger Thomas, Esq., Bruce Koch, Borough Engineer, Chris Cosenza, Borough Planner, Maureen Pampinto, Recording Secretary

July 11, 2024 Regular Mtg.

Ms. Hand commented that the approval of the July 11, 2024 meeting will be postponed until required corrections are made.

Action on Any other Business:

Appointment of Recording Secretary Maureen Pampinto.

It was MOVED by Mr. Perlman and seconded by Mr. Chin that Maureen Pampinto is appointed as the Recording Secretary for the Planning Board.

ROLL CALL: Ayes - Hale, Chin, Williams, Eisdorfer, Hand and Perlman, Nays-None
Abstain - None

There being eight (6) ayes, no (0) nays, motion passed.

Consistency Review: Concerning Ordinance No. 24-2092, an Ordinance of the Borough of Highland Park, County of Middlesex, State of New Jersey, Adopting the Redevelopment Plan Entitled "810 North 2nd Avenue Redevelopment Plan".

Ms. Hand announced this ordinance has come to the Board on the question of whether this Board finds it substantially not inconsistent with the Master Plan.

Mr. Cosenza gave a presentation on the proposed Redevelopment Plan, beginning with providing background on the Ordinance review process. He stated that outside the downtown area, we have a site at 810 North Second Avenue, which contains a small commercial building. This Redevelopment Plan is intended to provide for a site-specific plan to encourage the reuse of the existing building and to provide for "small missing middle housing" within the existing building and maintain some of the vestiges of the industrial past.

This particular site is in the northwest part of the Borough, designated as Block 503, Lot 24, located on the west side of North Second Avenue. It is about a 7,000 square foot lot with a one and two story building, totaling about 5,400 square feet in floor area. There is a small parking area that is accessible by a driveway from North Second Avenue, which provides five (5) spaces.

The building was built in 1940 as a laboratory and was occupied as such through 2022 and it has been vacant since that time. Records show that there is no environmental contamination, no wetlands, no hazard floodplain areas, and the property is otherwise within a sewer service area.

The property was in the Conservation / Recreation Zone up until 200 I. In 2013, the ordinance to create the zoning for The Crossing property indicated certain lots to be re-zoned but not this particular lot, number 24. If you look at the recent 2019 Zoning Map, it shows Lot 24 in the PURD Zone. That is a mistake to be corrected.

In 2019, the Borough prepared a Master Plan Re-examination Report and an update to the Land Use Plan Element, in which we looked at several corridors, including the Cleveland Avenue Corridor. The Master Plan had extensive public outreach, and only 6% indicated that they thought the Cleveland Avenue Corridor should remain the same. Common issues that were brought up included encouraging an appropriate mix of uses, unpleasant streetscapes and vacant properties throughout the Corridor. The purpose of this Redevelopment Plan is to encourage adaptive reuse and to accommodate small apartments within the existing building. This will help preserve the inherent culture, heritage and historical value of the existing commercial building, and maintain the legacy of the industrial past of the Cleveland Avenue Corridor in a neighborhood that is otherwise dominated by single-family uses and has already undergone significant changes with the planned developments.

The vision for this Redevelopment Plan is to provide an opportunity for "small missing middle housing," whether that is through adapted reuse or - if that does not work out - a single-family home with an ADU (accessory dwelling unit) at the site or a two-family home. The permitted land uses are going to be multi-family apartments but only if the building is adapted for reuse. If the building cannot be reused, it can be demolished but only a single- or a two-family home would be permitted. In terms of bulk regulations, if the building is to be reused, it must utilize the existing footprint, with some modest improvements to the setback. If the building is to be demolished, a single- or two family home would be subject to the same standards of the underlying zoning ordinance.

Development and design standards are only applicable for adaptive reuse to a multi-family building. For this property, the parking requirement is one (1) parking space per unit. The standards also seek to improve the driveway and parking area setbacks. When we reviewed the existing survey and site conditions, the existing parking lot actually encroaches over into the neighboring property. The Redevelopment Plan requires that to be pulled back and provide buffer landscaping. The existing shrubbery along the front of building will be required to be removed and replaced with pedestrian-scale such as foundation plantings and street trees as necessary. Lighting will need to be angled the right way and in a lower color temperature so as to be more compatible with neighboring homes and prevent glare. Finally, we incorporated green infrastructure strategies to encourage developers to do more than just the bare minimum. Ultimately, this Redevelopment Plan allows for a single- or two-family home to be built with an option for the existing building to be adaptively reused with apartments, provided that is within the same scale, massing, and limited floor area ratio. As to the number of apartments, whatever they can fit will depend on how many parking spaces they provide.

Mr. Cosenza stated that he thought the Redevelopment Plan provides a balance that is appropriate for the site and the neighborhood. It is better than the existing use and at managing the future use of the property as opposed to an application to the Board of Adjustment.

Ms. Hand asked what the current zoning regulation does. Mr. Cosenza said the current zoning permits only single family homes.

Mr. Hale asked if it becomes apartments how many apartments do you think might be able to fit? Mr. Cosenza answered that will probably be based on their development approach. He anticipates between four (4) and six (6) units. With the existing building having five (5) parking spaces, they would need to have an accessible parking space, so they would lose a parking space. They can add more spaces if they peel away part of the

building, which is part of the one story portion to the street. They may have to do that anyway because it's blocking site access. Mr. Hale asked of those units would there be an affordable component? Mr. Cosenza said based on the affordable housing regulations, if they achieve five (5) or more units, the requirement is to have one (1) affordable unit. If they go to four (4) or less, there would be no such requirement.

Mr. Hale referred to the presentation and said part of the property that fronts Wayside Road and asked about the overgrown section? It looks like it has a white fence wrapped around the corner. Mr. Cosenza replied that's open space that is part of the common area of The Crossing property.

Mr. Eisdorfer asked if there is a property line there. Mr. Cosenza referred to his presentation and said where you see the contrast between the screen aerial and the dotted line identifying the site that is the property line.

Mr. Perlman asked if it was owned by the same owner. Mr. Cosenza replied that it is not the same owner as with Lot 24, it is owned by The Crossing association.

Mr. Chin asked for clarification for the parking encroachment on the neighboring property. Mr. Cosenza clarified that at the rear, part of the parking area encroaches onto the neighboring property by about a foot. Additionally, as seen in the bottom of the image, there is a small one- story portion of the building. That part of the building is actually on top of the property line and the Redevelopment Plan requires that it be removed.

Mr. Eisdorfer asked if there's history of contamination there. Mr. Cosenza replied that based on the records he reviewed there was none. Mr. Williams said the companies that were there made biological products so there's a possibility that you could have some biological contamination still there. Mr. Cosenza responded that it certainly could. He thinks any demolition that occurs will have to be coordinated through Code Enforcement to make sure it's disposed of correctly. Mr. Eisdorfer asked if there were other non-residential uses in the immediate vicinity? Mr. Cosenza said no. Mr. Eisdorfer added at this point this is an isolated lot in a residential area. Mr. Cosenza said yes. Mr. Eisdorfer said as he understands it from what Mr. Cosenza said he thinks for development standards they're going to be required to eliminate the one story portion of the building. Mr. Cosenza said yes but he's not referring to the entire front of the building, rather the back of the building there is a small shed-like structure. That portion of the building is actually on top of the property line shared with the house next door. It can be replaced with an awning structure for access. Mr. Eisdorfer asked if the remainder is all two stories? Mr. Cosenza replied the portion along North Second is one story, the portion to the rear of the building is two stories. Mr. Eisdorfer said when he read the recent development it said existing height. Since you're not envisioning that the building will be knocked down and have to comply with that standard because once you knock it down or modify it then this option goes away. Mr. Cosenza answered yes. To be clear what this is referring to is saying to any redeveloper that they cannot go taller and make it more massive than what it is today. The redeveloper can stretch the upper roof a little bit to a front yard step back 35 feet. The intent of the Redevelopment Plan is to provide for some flexibility, but not to lose control and do wrong by the residential neighborhood. They are used to this massing and it would not be appropriate to allow for the building to double the space. Mr. Eisdorfer said it is to the existing building with a caveat, say that the building is removed does it revert back to the RA-E standards. Mr. Cosenza said it was not necessary to say related to adaptive reuse because subsection A in the very beginning stipulates that these regulations only apply to existing buildings. The following subsection B says single- and two-family homes are permitted and point to the RA standards. Mr. Eisdorfer asked if there are any developers interested in doing this? Mr. Cosenza answered, yes that is actually what started this project. The Mayor and Council were interested in the concept of adapted reuse. During the development of the Redevelopment Plan, Mr. Cosenza inserted standards where in case it does not work out, the zoning should for a traditional house to be built. Mr. Eisdorfer stated the conversion of non-residential building to residential building is ordinarily very expensive. I take it that this would not be governed by the Rehabilitation Code and it would be covered by the current version of the Building Code. Mr. Koch replied that he would have to refer to Mr. Brescher on that, he's not here as that's what he governs. Mr. Eisdorfer said his experience is it's often cheaper to knock down the building and build from scratch. Mr. Cosenza added during the process of collaborating with the redeveloper, he was charged with trying to create a plan that would fit into the neighborhood. It's not worthy of the Borough to prepare a

Redevelopment Plan that cannot be done.

Mr. Perlman asked if they decide to demolish the existing structure for single- or two-family home, are they going to have to abide by the regulations for the site standards such as shrubbery, landscaping and the garage that's in front of the house. Mr. Cosenza stated yes, they will need to comply with the new residential form-based code.

Mr. Chin said assuming that the developer does choose to demolish and then build a single family house would an ADU be required? Mr. Cosenza stated that an ADU would be permissive, but not required. Mr. Chin said there could just be a single family house and nothing else besides that. Mr. Cosenza answered, yes, there could be and they would not be required to enter a Redevelopment Agreement. If someone want to use the existing building as adaptive reuse, they will have to enter in a Redevelopment Agreement with the Borough.

Mr. Hale said just to be clear if there is a single-family home, there is an ADU that is allowed, but if there is a two-family home, there would be no ADU. Mr. Cosenza replied that was correct.

Ms. Hand asked if there was anything else the Board would like to discuss, questions or updates.

Mr. Williams asked if anyone knows what is going into the restaurant between First and Second. Mr. Hale replied it's going to be a Mediterranean restaurant.

Mr. Eisdorfer ask for an update on the SuperFresh Redevelopment Plan. They have an opening date for the 20th. Mr. Cosenza answered given that no site work's proposed at this time, so it does not trigger an application for development. Borough Attorney Thomas agreed with Mr. Cosenza and added it is occupying the exact same use. He agreed there's no requirement for a site plan; however, if that plan does envision other elements and as soon as they start doing other elements which will require modifications they will be required to come before the Board. In terms of driveway modifications, I assume that's something that is going to be subject to a temporary CO (certificate of occupancy). Mr. Cosenza answered his assumption was it's probably going to be related to a TCO (temporary certificate of occupancy) and further negotiation but he did not have an update.

Ms. Hand opened the floor for public comment, seeing no one, the public comment was closed.

It was MOVED by Mr. Hale and seconded by Mr. Williams that Ordinance 24-2092 is not inconsistent with the Master Plan.

ROLL CALL: Ayes - Hand, Eisdorfer, Hale, Perlman, Chin, Williams Nays-None
Abstain - None

There being eight (8) ayes, no (0) nays, motion passed.

Public Comment on any item not on the Agenda

Ms. Hand opened the floor for public comment, seeing no one, the public comment was closed.

Adjournment

There was a motion to adjourn from Mr. Eisdorfer and a second by Mr. Perlman at 8:09 pm the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Pampinto
Recording Secretary