

Jersey City Planning Board
360 Martin Luther King Drive
Jersey City, NJ 07302

DR. Project No.: 10893-002
May 10, 2024

**Re: MASTER PLAN CONSISTENCY MEMO
LUIS MUNOZ MARIN BOULEVARD REDEVELOPMENT PLAN
PROPOSED AMENDMENTS FOR SIXTH STREET EMBANKMENT
JERSEY CITY, HUDSON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

An application has been filed with the Jersey City Planning Board for consideration for a recommendation to City Council for adoption of the proposed amendments to the Luis Munoz Marin Boulevard Redevelopment Plan (“Redevelopment Plan”). The proposed amendments relate to development within District 2 (Block 11602, Lot 1) of the Redevelopment Plan Area, also known as Block 1 of the historic Pennsylvania Railroad Harsimus Branch Embankment. The amendments seek to clarify language within District 2 related to the Embankment base and to provide for three “tower” development options. Each tower option is to be treated as a singular set of standards with the designated redeveloper shall identify is chosen at the time of submission of Site Plan Application.

MASTER PLAN CONSISTENCY

The Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, N.J.S.A 40A:12A-1 et seq. requires that a Redevelopment Plan shall include an outline for the planning, development, redevelopment, or rehabilitation of the project area sufficient to indicate that this Redevelopment Plan achieves the stated objectives of the Jersey City Master Plan.

In 2021, the Jersey City Planning Board adopted the Our Jersey City Master Plan Vision (“Master Plan Vision”) that provided a framework on addressing the needs and challenges of the community that may come up as the city continues to grow. The following goals and objectives of the Master Plan Vision are advanced through the proposed Redevelopment Plan

- *“Connectivity and Mobility: Goal 2: Prioritize Connectivity Between Neighborhoods”*

This goal recognizes that while infrastructure investment and implementation generally occur on scales larger than that of a neighborhood, the need for investment in establishing a connected network that provides efficient, multimodal travel between neighborhoods of Jersey City is a core priority for Jersey City’s long-term future. The Redevelopment Plan requires that the roof of the development’s parking base include a 30-foot-wide public right-of-way (aka “the Embankment ROW”) to be utilized as public open space for pedestrian and bicycle use. The Embankment ROW is intended to connect to the next Embankment section to the west, which is encompassed in the Sixth Street Redevelopment Plan. The Embankment is intended to serve as a critical link between future regional greenway expansions such as the Hudson-Essex Greenway and the Bergen Arches to Manhattan and the NYC Metro area. Additionally, the Redevelopment Plan takes into consideration the possible future expansion of a light rail or trolley along the Embankment. The development scenarios envisioned within District 2 play a vital role in the goal of providing multi-modal connectivity within the city and larger region.

- “Social Equity: Goal 2: *Increase Flexibility of Programmable Space*”

This goal recognizes that land available for parks and open space is finite and when the opportunity to develop more open space presents itself, it should be designed to promote a variety of uses that include more than just traditional active recreation space such as fields and courts. The Redevelopment Plan allows development that is flexible and multifunctional in nature, and can be integrated within the community, to create a space that maximizes the Embankment to serve as a critical component of a larger open space network that can serve a mobility purpose as well as a public transit purpose as well as an open space and conservation purpose. Furthermore, the Redevelopment Plan contributes to a diversity of open space. Most open spaces in the city are highly programmed with structured recreation space. This new open space network, facilitated by the development project providing a critical connection from the street-level and urban grid to the elevated open space network, provides a unique open space experience for all Jersey City residents rooted in conservation, passive recreation, and a highly natural experience unlike that of a typical urban-centric park.

- “Climate Resilience: Goal 1: *Mitigate Impacts of Climate Change* ”

This objective acknowledges Jersey City's firsthand encounters with the severe effects of climate change, most notably flooding from recent hurricanes and superstorms. As a result, the city has emphasized the importance of planning for climate resiliency as a priority within any future projects in efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change throughout the city. The redevelopment plan area has directly experienced those tangible impacts within recent years. The redevelopment plan facilitates the dedication of the sixth street embankment land to be protected as natural, heavily planted open space, which serves a critical environmental and stormwater function in the most built-out, flood prone part of the city. The redevelopment plan takes this into consideration and promotes the construction of contemporary green infrastructure that may potentially become an integral part of Jersey City's stormwater management network within the community.

The Jersey City Planning Board also adopted a new Land Use Element of the Jersey City Master Plan in 2021. The following goals and objectives found within Chapter 3 of the Land Use Element (Land Use Principles) are advanced through the proposed Redevelopment Plan.

Land Use Element – Land Use Principles

- “*Continue efforts to enhance residential neighborhoods*”.

This principle recognizes the mix of various scales of buildings in Jersey City, including detached homes, townhomes and mid-rise apartment buildings as well as high-rise development. This Redevelopment Plan is consistent with these Land Use Principles as it proposes to redevelop the remnants of an unused railway with a contemporary urban greenway and a mixed-use residential development. This will provide the neighborhood with the potential for new development within a section of the city that is currently underutilized.

- *“Ensure the City’s available housing is balanced and meets the needs of all current and future city residents”.*

This section of the Master Plan goes on to state that a part of the City’s distinctive character stems from the economic diversity of its residents and that housing affordability has become a major issue. This recommendation echoes issues addressed in the Housing Element of the Master Plan and goes on to state that this housing need is demonstrated by the large number of rent-burdened households who pay more than 30% of their income for housing. The proposed amendments to the Redevelopment Plan are consistent with this recommendation as two of the proposed development scenarios incorporate affordable housing.

- *“Improve open space assets and connect them to each other and into the community.”*

The Land Use Principles call for a balanced approach to growth that integrates an increase in outdoor recreation space congruently with population growth. This principle also encourages the City to leverage opportunities to reuse legacy infrastructure for greenways. The Redevelopment Plan proposes new open spaces as part of the redevelopment to improve and redevelop an unused rail right-of-way into a public open greenway that will connect other open spaces within the area as part of a citywide network of parks and open spaces. The Plan Area is located in a part of the city with substantial bike infrastructure and can facilitate connections between major destinations throughout Downtown and the Heights and Journal Square neighborhoods. In all, the Redevelopment Plan will provide for a beneficial infill project in terms of open space to serve the immediate neighborhood and increase the overall open space network through the city.

Open Space Element – Goals + Objectives

- *“Address gaps through new land and improved facilities”.*

Similar to the previous Land Use Principles, the Open Space Element of the 2021 Master Plan identifies the above goal regarding gaps in the open space network. As stated, the proposed Redevelopment Plan calls for new public open space in a densely populated area of the city where there is an opportunity to redevelop the already existing infrastructure. The Area is highly accessible from a pedestrian standpoint, is well connected to other civic spaces/community facilities, and connects into several multimodal transit networks, making the site an ideal location for not only a new high-density development but the infill of additional open space for public use.

- *“Tie future private development to expanded publicly accessible space”.*

The Open Space Element of the 2021 Master Plan recommends that the City continue to expand its park system with the cooperation of private developers in agreement with the members of the community. The Redevelopment Plan requires that the development include a 30-foot-wide open space which is intended to provide access and connectivity to the planned open space further to the west.

- *“Create productive landscapes in underutilized or interstitial spaces, and along the waterfront shorelines”.*

The Open Space Element of the 2021 Master Plan also identifies the above goal regarding underutilized spaces. As stated, the proposed Redevelopment Plan calls for new public open space and mixed-use

residential development to enhance the local community. Allowing the redevelopment of the existing area with accessible open space and mixed-use residential development would utilize this space with a greater potential to advance the goals and objectives of the open space element.

Circulation Element – Goals + Objectives

- 3.2.1 Goal 1: Coordinate transportation and land use planning in a systematic and comprehensive manner.
 - Objective G1-1: Develop and implement smart growth strategies that locate new residential development within walking distance of bus stops and passenger rail stations, with the highest density zones located within walking distance of passenger rail stations; that mixes residential land use with commercial land use; and that locates industrial zones near port facilities, freight rail lines, regional highways and the NJDOT Portway projects.
 - Objective G1-2: Support transit-dependent growth by creating street-level pedestrian friendly environments, providing frequent and reliable local bus service, and developing new transportation infrastructure.
 - Strategy G1-A: Use zoning, incentives, and capital improvement programs to: a) Encourage pedestrian-scale, mixed-use development and redevelopment within walking distance of public transportation, and industrial development and redevelopment near port facilities, freight rail lines, regional highways and Portway; b) Create complete streets that accommodate bicyclists, pedestrians and various types of vehicles (scooters, cars, buses, trucks, light rail, etc.) as appropriate; accommodate on-street parking to buffer pedestrians from moving vehicles; use street trees to establish a street wall, buffer pedestrians from traffic, provide shade, and reduce storm water runoff and urban heat island effect; and create an inviting public realm through building and public space design and building and public space relationship to the street; c) Create new public spaces and green connectivity, and to increase mass transit connectivity, including development of new stations and services.

The proposed Redevelopment Plan aligns with the goal, objective, and strategy as outlined in the circulation element by introducing new zoning to provide for a pedestrian-friendly mixed-use development in close proximity to major transit networks, surrounded by complete streets and facilitating the creation of new street-facing public spaces along major bike/ped/vehicular corridors where the current condition is dominated by impervious coverage. The Redevelopment of the site is consistent with Smart Growth principles and TOD best practices in siting high density with mixed income opportunities and public amenities in a transit-rich urban core.

Based on the above, it is concluded that this Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Jersey City Master Plan and it is designed to effectuate the Master Plan pursuant to the New Jersey “Local Redevelopment and Housing Law”, N.J.S.A.40A:12A-7.d. Available land is scarce in the area and therefore

repurposing an underutilized section of the city for new housing and open space opportunities as envisioned by the Luis Munoz Boulevard Redevelopment Plan, as proposed to be amended, is fully consistent with and enhances the goals of the Master Plan.