

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: **Zoning Ordinance Map Amendment (Grid #11)** to change the designation of approximately 16.2 acres of vacant land bounded by Tyler Street, North Frontage Road/MLK Boulevard, Legion Avenue and Dwight Street (Vacant parcels along Route 34 West Corridor of M/B/P 341/1285/00200, M/B/P 314/0171/00100, M/B/P 315/1292/00301 & M//B/P 315/1287/00100). Addresses are: 32 Parmalee Avenue (+/- 4.8 acres), 467 Legion Avenue (+/-5.71 acres) , 0 Day Street (+/-0.09 acres) & 243 Legion Avenue (+/-5.6 acres). Proposed re-zoning is from RM 2 to BA for 32 Parmalee Avenue & portion of 467 Legion Avenue Parcel; From RM2 to BD2 for 0 Day Street and portion of 243 Legion Avenue parcels; From BA to BD2 for portion of 243 Legion Avenue parcel as indicated on the proposed map.

(Proposed BA district will be roughly 12.9 acres in size and proposed BD district will be roughly 3.3 acres in size)

Adoption of Design Guidelines Manual

REPORT: 1488-06

PUBLIC HEARING HELD ON JANUARY 15, 2014, TRANSCRIPT AVAILABLE FROM POST REPORTING

ADVICE: Approval

BACKGROUND

The proposed Zoning Ordinance Map Amendment to rezone approximately ±16.2 acres of land bounded by Ella Grasso Boulevard, North Frontage Road/MLK Boulevard, Legion Avenue, and Dwight Street (parcels along Route 34 West corridor) has been submitted by the City Plan Department, which is responsible for the continuous review of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the Zoning Ordinance. This map amendment is accompanied by a proposed Design Guidelines document to guide development of the long vacant parcels along Route 34 corridor in a vibrant, neighborhood friendly and sustainable direction

Over the past two decades, the City of New Haven as well as local non-profits worked on several plans to re-develop the captioned parcels along the Route 34 West corridor. These plans have not yet come to fruition either due to lack of consensus among stakeholders, economic condition or market changes. Most recently, in 2008, a draft Route 34 West Municipal Development Plan was prepared by The Cecil Group, Inc. which recommended residential/commercial mixed uses from Ella Grasso Boulevard to Orchard Street and bio-medical/office uses with some residential uses to the east of Orchard Street. These recommendations were based on the vision stated by the residents of the adjacent neighborhoods during the community workshops and market research. The Plan was never formally submitted to the Board of Aldermen and the state and since then market conditions have shifted again, with medical and health services and bio-science research expanding significantly in New Haven. In 2010, the City Plan Department (in association with consultant AKRF, Inc.) conducted another study i.e., the Incentive Housing Zone Study (IHZ) through a grant obtained from the state to promote affordable housing along the corridor. The Incentive Housing Zone is an overlay zone proposed by the state to help create affordable and workforce housing (Chapter 124b of State Statutes). Upon analysis of the current housing market and the existing zoning, the City staff realized that the zone as enabled by the state legislation would not be effective in the City.

A Design Guidelines Manual was also prepared as part of the IHZ study to ensure that neighborhood quality is not impacted due to incompatible new building types or site design. This manual provides guidelines for preferred housing styles, site design, open spaces, signage, and improvements needed for connectivity with the surrounding neighborhoods. This manual was useful in re-starting a dialogue on the proposed zone change for the vacant parcels along the Route 34 West corridor to encourage mixed use development. The West River residents were supportive of these guidelines and preferred that any zone change proposed along the corridor be accompanied by the adoption of this recommended Design Guidelines manual.

Since the economy seems to be gradually picking up, it is now appropriate to propose the attached zoning map change to encourage developments consistent with the residents' vision of encouraging neighborhood scale mixed use development along the corridor. The adoption of the accompanying design guidelines is recommended to protect neighborhood quality and character.

The current zoning for the parcels permits residential uses for the most part with some scattering of commercial uses. The zoning boundary lines currently follow the lines of old parcels, which have been merged, and are no longer relevant. The suggested zone change to BA on 32 Parmalee Avenue will allow for mixed use development at an FAR of 2.0. The suggested zone change to BA on 467 Legion Avenue and 0 Day Street (a tiny sliver parcel) will ensure that zoning is even on this parcel which is now partially BA and partially RM2, and allows for mixed use developments at an FAR of 2.0. The zoning on the eastern most parcel i.e., 243 Legion Avenue is suggested to be changed to a mixture of BA and BD 2 to encourage the type of mixed use, institutional development seen in the BD-2 zoned parcels immediately adjacent to it at 2 Howe Street & 914 Howard Avenue.

The re-zoning of the vacant parcels along Route 34 West corridor is an important step in re-connecting the neighborhoods currently separated by the undeveloped land in the corridor and enhancing the city's tax base. The map changes help give a clearer picture of the types and density of uses desired in the corridor. The adoption of the Design Guidelines (CPC Report 1488-14) will ensure that any development proposed on these parcels is of high-quality, visually appealing and sustainable. Both of these actions will ensure that future developments proposed on the vacant parcels along Route 34 West corridor comply with the vision of the residents in the surrounding area and citywide, and that the developments occur in a uniform and systematic manner.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

SECTIONS(S) 181 and 182 OF THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF NEW HAVEN

The City Plan Commission finds that, based on submitted information the proposed map amendment complies with Sections 181 and 182 of the Charter of the City of New Haven in that it is (i) uniform for each class of buildings or structures, (ii) made in accordance with the comprehensive plan, (iii) designed to lessen congestion in the streets, secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers, promote health and the general welfare, provide adequate light and air, prevent the overcrowding of land, avoid undue concentration of population, facilitate the adequate provisions for transportation, water, sewerage, parks and other public requirements, and (iv) made with reasonable consideration as to the character of the proposed BA District and its peculiar suitability for particular uses and with a view to conserving the value of buildings and encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout the City.

SECTION 64(d)(2)c OF THE NEW HAVEN ZONING ORDINANCE

Section 64 (d) (2) requires that the City Plan Commission take into consideration in evaluating any amendment to the Zoning Map:

a. Errors in the existing ordinance, changes that have taken place in the city and in patterns of construction and land use, the supply of land and its peculiar suitability for various purposes, the effect of a map change on the surrounding area, the purposes of zoning and the comprehensive plan of the City of New Haven;

The captioned parcels proposed for zoning map amendment are located along Route 34 West corridor and have remained essentially vacant for more than two decades. The current zoning for 32 Parmalee Avenue and 0 Day Street (a tiny sliver parcel) is RM2 which allows only residential uses with some scattering of commercial uses. The current zoning on 243 Legion Avenue and 467 Legion Avenue is partially RM2 and partially BA with no definitive boundary for either of these zones on these parcels.

Since this land is bounded by major arterials to the north and south i.e., North Frontage Road/MLK Boulevard and Legion Avenue, and is also part of the West River, Dwight and the Hill neighborhoods, mixed use developments of neighborhood scale are ideally suitable here, particularly between Tyler Street and Orchard Street. The proposed zoning to BA on these parcels will enable such type of development as well as ensure that zoning is even on parcels that are currently divided by two zones (i.e., on 243 Legion Avenue and portion of 467 Legion Avenue). Any development proposed on the new BA Zone will be of a floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.0. The zoning on the eastern most parcel i.e., 243 Legion Avenue is proposed to be changed to a mixture of BA and BD 2 to encourage the type of mixed use, institutional development seen in the BD-2 zoned parcels immediately adjacent to it at 2 Howe Street & 914 Howard Avenue. The adoption of the accompanying Design Guidelines manual will ensure that the developments proposed are of high-quality, visually appealing, and sustainable.

The Comprehensive Plan of Development of the city also states in the Housing and Neighborhood Planning Section (Chapter IV, p. 16) that one of its goals is to “[encourage] the development of dramatically new neighborhood forms as part of revitalization programs at select locations.” Rezoning the captioned parcels will permit the development of new neighborhood forms, including new mixed use housing. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the need to steward and enhance the unique qualities of the city’s neighborhoods and reaffirms the City’s commitment to homeownership, mixed-income neighborhoods, an aesthetically pleasing environment, and neighborhood cultural identity.

b. Whether some other method or procedure under the zoning ordinance is more appropriate; and

Based on the discussion above and the examination of past land-use history in this area, it is evident that the present course of action is appropriate.


c. In the case of a map change, the size of the area involved. As a general policy, the City Plan Commission shall not consider favorably any petition which would result in a total contiguous area (separated only by streets, and excluding the area of streets) of less than two acres in the case of a residence district, less than one acre in the case of a Business District, or less than four acres in the case of an Industrial District.

The proposed zoning map amendment is for vacant land occupying approximately 16.2 acres of land, of which the land to be re-zoned as BA district will be 12.9 acres and the land to be re-zoned as BD2 district will be approximately 3.3 acres.

FINDINGS AND ADVICE

Based on all of the above it is the recommendation of the Commission that the proposed map amendment is in full compliance with the standards and requirements of Section(s) 181 and 182 of the Charter of the City of New Haven and Section 62(d)(2) of the New Haven Zoning Ordinance and should be approved.

ADOPTED: January 15, 2014
Edward Mattison
Chair

ATTEST: 
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA
Executive Director

SCHEDULE A

Title of City Plan Commission Advisory Report No: 1488-06

The City Plan Commission notes that the title of the City Plan Commission Report No: 1488-06 should be revised since the proposed zoning map amendment is for the vacant land bounded by Tyler Street, North Frontage Road/MLK Boulevard, Legion Avenue and Dwight Street with an approximate acreage of ± 16.2 acres only, as submitted before the Board of Aldermen. The title for the report should therefore be revised as follows:

1488-06 ZONING ORDINANCE MAP AMENDMENT(GRID #11) TO CHANGE THE DESIGNATION OF APPROXIMATELY 16.2 ACRES OF VACANT LAND BOUNDED BY TYLER STREET, NORTH FRONTAGE ROAD/MLK BOULEVARD, LEGION AVENUE AND DWIGHT STREET (VACANT PARCELS ALONG ROUTE 34 WEST CORRIDOR OF M/B/P 341/1285/00200, M/B/P 314/0171/00100, M/B/P 315/1292/00301 & M/B/P 315/1287/00100) AND ADOPTION OF THE ACCOMPANYING DESIGN GUIDELINES MANUAL. ADDRESSES FOR THESE PROPERTIES ARE: 32 PARMALEE AVENUE (± 4.8 ACRES), 467 LEGION AVENUE (± 5.71 ACRES), 0 DAY STREET (± 0.09 ACRES) & 243 LEGION AVENUE (± 5.6 ACRES).

SUGGESTED RE-ZONING IS FROM RM 2 TO BA FOR 32 PARMALEE AVENUE & PORTION OF 467 LEGION AVENUE PARCEL; FROM RM2 TO BD2 FOR 0 DAY STREET & PORTION OF 243 LEGION AVENUE PARCELS; FROM BA TO BD2 FOR PORTION OF 243 LEGION AVENUE PARCEL, AS INDICATED IN THE ATTACHED MAP.

(Proposed BA district will be roughly 12.9 acres in size and proposed BD district will be roughly 3.3 acres in size)