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Cranford Historic Preservation Advisory Board

January 24 at 1:04pm

Township Committee Member Jean-Albert Maisonneuve asked HPAB for comments regarding the North Avenue Redevelopment Draft Study. The document below was sent to the Township Committee on January 21:

TO: Cranford Township Committee

FROM: Cranford Historic Preservation Advisory Board (HPAB)

RE: HPAB Comments on North Avenue Redevelopment Draft Study

DATE: January 21, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Preliminary Investigation Report for North Avenue East (Block 193, Lots 6.01, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and Block 195, Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.01, 9, 10, 11) as a "Condemnation Area in Need of Redevelopment" (Report). The Cranford Historic Preservation Advisory Board (HPAB) finds that the draft report fails to take into consideration several factors in its evaluation and recommendations including the following:

- The Rahway River Parkway Historic District, Union County Park System, and Central Railroad of New Jersey Main Line Historic District are proximate historic resources that could be impacted by redevelopment activity. These districts have been identified by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection - Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) based on extensive studies - the Rahway River Parkway Historic District was recognized in SHPO Opinion #4079 on 9/18/2002, the Union County Park System in SHPO Opinion #4424 on 3/18/2005, and the Central Railroad Historic District in SHPO Opinion #3500 on 7/19/1991. The three studies were also referenced in HPAB's Phase 1 Cranford Historic Resources Survey, November 2016, and recommended for further documentation in an upcoming Phase 2 survey effort.
- Cranford's historic downtown development pattern is based on small scale, individual building projects undertaken by investors, developers and businesses, rather than monolithic multi-use redevelopment projects. The origins of this small scale approach are clearly visible in the attached subdivision maps for this area: Revised Map of the Silas D. Drake Property, situated in Cranford, Union County, N.J., 1875 and the Sanborn Map of Cranford, NJ, Sheet 4, 1922. HPAB contends that a preferable approach for intervention in the North Avenue East study area would be to encourage scattered site, small scale redevelopment through incentives and design standards, coupled with increased enforcement for property maintenance and safety. There are numerous planning resources available to help guide less intensive approaches to redevelopment, including the following:
 - Infill Development Standards and Policy Guide, NJDCA, 2007
 - Infill Development Program, NJDCA, n.d.

- Managing Maryland's Growth, Models and Guidelines for Infill Development, MD Department of Planning, 2001
- Scattered Site Redevelopment Program, Phase 1A Redevelopment Plan, City of Asbury Park, 2003
- Given the Townships recent efforts to pursue flood protection, it is of serious concern that redevelopment in the flood zone is under consideration. As such, continued pursuit of development in the flood zone undermines claims of overdevelopment upstream, and increases risks for flood-prone residential areas in the North Cranford Historic District (NCHD) identified in NJ Department of Environmental Protection - Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Opinion #3838 on 8/23/2001. If serious about flood control, Cranford should in no way promote, enable, or otherwise endorse increased development or higher density in the flood zone and rather should pursue lower density and increased open space in the flood zone. Furthermore, flood-prone properties should be targets for buyouts or flood mitigation enhancements, while planned and rational development and redevelopment initiatives should be encouraged in areas westward, away from the river. If the study area remains as proposed, less intense, flood resistant uses should be incorporated for properties within the flood zone.
- The Report does not fully document the alternatives for intervention and evaluates only one redevelopment option. A fairer assessment should look at all of the available options, including: a no build option; non-redevelopment techniques; Area in Need of Rehabilitation; Non-Condemnation Area in Need of Redevelopment; and Condemnation Area in Need of Redevelopment. Only by comparing all of the alternatives can an informed decision be reached and appropriate steps be taken to improve the conditions cited as needing improvement that work for the Township, local business, and the residents now and in the future. HPAB's position is that planning which includes preserving the unique character and feel of Cranford will continue to make Cranford a desirable location for living and working and a model for sustainable growth. HPAB looks forward to working with Township officials and committees in developing those plans.