

**BERGENFIELD PLANNING BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 18, 2025**

Councilman Lodato called the meeting to order at 8:05 P.M.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT

In compliances with the Open Public Meetings Act, the notice requirements have been satisfied. Meeting dates are confirmed at the Annual Meeting. Notice of this meeting was provided to the Record, Star Ledger, and Cablevision, posted on a municipal public notice bulletin board and published on the borough website.

Any board member having a conflict of interest involving any matter to come before the board this evening is reminded they must recuse himself/herself from participating in any discussion on this matter.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Councilman Lodato.

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilman Lodato, Romeo Abenoja, Ernesto Acosta, Joel Nunez, Edgar Dimaren, and Praveen Joseph

Absent: Mayor Amatorio, Robert Rivas, and Jason Bergman

Also Present: Gloria Oh, Planning Board Attorney, and Hilda Tavitian, Planning Board Clerk

APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – July 28, 2025

Motion By: Board member Abenoja

Second By: Board member Dimaren

All present, voting in favor. None opposed.

CORRESPONDENCE

Four letters received from Bergen County Conservation District. There are just advisory notifying the Board applications were submitted and approved for the following properties: 61 Highgate Terrace, 66 Westview Drive, parking lot improvements at 241 New Bridge Road, and 65 Thames Boulevard.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Comments by members of audience on matters not on evening's agenda

Barry Doll, resident, inquired when the application for W. Main Street and Washington Avenue will be heard by the Board.

Councilman Lodato stated the application has been submitted and most likely will be heard at the September meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Site Plan
2. Parking Legal
3. Capital Improvements
4. Master Plan

5. Liaison to Board of Adjustment

The Committee Reports were dispensed with.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Redevelopment Plan – 150 S. Washington Avenue

Lyndsay Knight, Economic Development Planner from Neglia Group, stated her colleague was previously before the Board to introduce an Area in Need of Redevelopment Study for 150 S. Washington Avenue. There are three steps in the redevelopment process. The first step is doing an area in need of redevelopment study. The next step is to first present it to the Mayor and Council and then to the Planning Board for review, provide comments, and referral back to the Council. It is a public process where the public can comment. The third step is the site plan application where they come back to the Planning Board to present. Redevelopment is a legal process that is undertaken by a municipality to help enhance, revitalize, rehabilitate, or rebuild areas in need of redevelopment as defined by the New Jersey Redevelopment Law. Ms. Knight stated some of the benefits of redevelopment include: increasing the control over development patterns for the properties within the development area, entering a contractual agreement with a private developer to stimulate revitalization of the redevelopment area, apply for grant funding specific to the area, and revise municipal ordinances to reflect the intent of the redevelopment plan.

Ms. Knight stated the property is currently 0.68 acres, existing zoning is B-2, and is located next to the Roy W. Brown Middle School. The existing zoning is B-2, business and professional zone. The minimum lot area is 10,000 sq. ft., minimum lot width is 100 ft., minimum front yard is 15 ft., minimum side yard on each side is 15 ft., minimum rear yard is 25 ft., maximum improved coverage is 70 ft., maximum lot coverage is 35 ft., and building height of 40 ft./3 stories. Ms. Knight stated with this redevelopment plan, they are proposing to increase the minimum lot area to 29,500 sq. ft., minimum lot width will be 145 ft., minimum lot depth will be 200 ft., minimum front yard will be 20 ft. to allow larger frontage, minimum rear yard will be 15 ft., minimum side yard will be 10 ft. on each side, maximum residential density will be 45 units with 20% of the residential units being affordable units, maximum height will be 55 ft./4 stories, and the maximum lot coverage will be up to 70 ft. The first floor will be fully parking with a small retail space, a café or some store utilized by the neighborhood. In addition to the permitted uses, they also included design and streetscape guidelines of street furniture, setbacks, types of trees, tree grades, etc. to create a uniform look along S. Washington Avenue. It will create a more welcoming pedestrian experience.

Lastly, Ms. Knight stated they also look at the master plan consistency. She stated objective #1 in the land use section is “Support the upgrading of substandard properties through code enforcement efforts, zoning ordinance amendments, and other initiatives”. The redevelopment process is exactly what this objective is talking about. They are taking an underutilized property that has been obsolescent and the building has gone in a way that is not normally built. A number of additions have been put on the property over time that is not up to modern building practices. Objective #3 states “Continue efforts to enhance the downtown business district by encouraging business and appropriate non-residential mixed-use development along Washington Avenue and along the downtown business district”. They are proposing a mixed-use building that will activate the downtown of S. Washington Avenue with the retail on the first floor and residential on the second floor. Objective #4 states “Develop a program to identify the

development potential of remaining underdeveloped and/or vacant parcels and provide through the zoning ordinance for development and redevelopment options on a scale consistent with the borough's pattern of development". There are a number of buildings in the area of S. Washington Avenue where there are multi-family residentials similar in height to what is being proposed. Circulation - Objective #3 is "provide for adequate parking and on-site loading facilities for future development and redevelopment". Ms. Knight stated this plan is proposing 45 units with 61 parking spaces. Ms. Knight stated all three floors will be the same. There will be 8 two-bedroom apartments on the second and third floor, 9 two bedrooms on the first residential floor, 5 one bedrooms on the second and third floors, and 6 one bedrooms on the second and third floor, and 1 three bedroom apartment. The three bedroom is for the Affordable Housing. The apartments will be rentals. Ms. Knight explained 9 of the 45 units will be Affordable Housing units. There will be a breakdown of the income levels into moderate and low income and percent for the 9 units. The first floor will be parking and a small, commercial space about 1,000 sq. ft. There will also be trash receptacles, electrical and maintenance rooms on the first floor.

Board member Acosta inquired if the developer can apply for hardship.

Ms. Knight stated they are deed restricted for 30 years. The owner of the property has been involved by coming to the borough and meeting with the economic developer. He's been working with them and the borough as the plan was being created.

Board member Dimaren inquired if there are two lots.

Ms. Knight stated it looks like two lots, but it is just one lot. It looks like a house and a retail building, but are connected. There's been a long vacancy because of the odd way the building was built.

Board member Nunez inquired about the location of the mechanicals for the building and if it will be approximately higher than the 50 ft.

Ms. Knight stated they can go 10 ft. higher, but need the HVAC and generators to be screened and set back so they are not seen. They will be on the roof top with parapits. The only thing that will be higher is the screening that will be permitted to go higher. It won't be the bulk façade as it will be set back. She stated within the design guidelines, there are requirements of articulations.

Board member Dimaren requested clarification on the building being moved back 10 ft. He inquired if there will be a fence and if the cars will be looping around in this area.

Ms. Knight stated the rear yard is 15 ft., where previously 25 ft. was permitted, which is a 10 ft. difference. The soccer field is close. There already is a fence. Ms. Knight stated yes, that's where the loop will be.

Mr. Nunez inquired if a fire truck can get inside the parking garage and to the rear of the premises.

Ms. Knight stated when an architecture does the design of the building, it is something that is considered. It is also a requirement of the borough code.

Councilman Lodato inquired if stories or height was designated when the council designated this property as an area in need of development. He inquired where the conceptual drawing comes from. He inquired if the developer proposed it. He inquired if the property owner is requesting four stories. He inquired, in her opinion, what is an acceptable height for Washington Avenue.

Ms. Knight stated the area in need of redevelopment study is just using the criteria set forth by the state and seeing if it meets the criteria. Height is designated in the redevelopment plan. The architect designed the conceptual plan. Yes, it was submitted by the developer. The property owner has left that up to the economic development subcommittee. There have been a number of meetings where they went back and forth regarding the height before settling on 4 stories. It has been the standard with other developments in Bergenfield. Ms. Knight stated 4 stories is acceptable because you can have adequate parking on the first floor and enough residential. Parking and height are the two driving forces of how large a building can be. If you are able to have enough parking spaces, it helps with the unit count.

Mr. Acosta inquired if they considered widening the road.

Ms. Knight stated since it is a county road, they have to apply to the county. The setback for the building is further back and the requirement will be further back than what is currently permitted for the borough. The county has intentions of widening the road in the future. Currently, the minimum front yard requirement is 15 ft. and the redevelopment plan will require 20 ft. There's already a curb cut for the bus and that is another intention to move back so it stays in line with the curb cut.

Board member Joseph inquired why there isn't parking requirements for the commercial space.

Ms. Knight stated the commercial space will probably be a small shop where you can walk to or park on the street and get in and get out within 15 minutes. It's not intended to be a restaurant, where you would sit for a long period of time.

Board member Acosta inquired if there was a study of the area done and if there is a drawing.

Ms. Knight stated a real drawing will be the final piece. This is just creating zoning, but changes what is has been existing and what hasn't created any development with the intention of utilizing the property.

Councilman Lodato stated his problem is when the applicant comes before the Board with the final plan, he will state everything was already approved, i.e. 4 stories, 61 parking spaces, retail space on first floor. He stated they are giving the applicant the hardest variance to get, D height variance. He voted in favor of the area in need of development knowing there was no height or density variance incorporated, but here they are giving the owner and developer exactly what they want.

Mr. Joseph inquired if the roof top will be accessible by the public.

Ms. Knight stated it would just be the HVAC on the roof top. There wouldn't be any amenity.

Mr. Nunez inquired if there will be any amenities. He inquired if there will be visitor parking.

Ms. Knight stated there will be a gym or a community room, not large enough for a pool. The design does not have designated parking for visitors. Ms. Knight stated if the Board members have comments tonight, they are permitted to give them to the governing body with recommendations. In addition, this is a master plan consistency review to ensure it is consistent with the master plan.

Mr. Joseph inquired if there will be EV parking. He inquired if a traffic study will be done as it is near the school.

Ms. Knight stated there are EV spaces and it is a state requirement. The redevelopment plan does not require a traffic study. It can be suggested to the Mayor and Council to be incorporated within the redevelopment plan.

Councilman Lodato stated it is written "mut provide traffic report". He stated his objection is to the height.

Ms. Knight stated they will have to submit a traffic circulation plan that will show the trucks moving within the parking lot. She stated when a building is designed, there are fire and subcode requirements. If they have to go higher on the first floor, then the rest of the floors will have lower ceiling heights.

Approve Redevelopment Plan for 150 S. Washington Avenue as Presented

Motion By: Board member Abenoja

Second By: Board member Joseph

1 aye. 5 nays.

MOTION TO ADJOURN MEETING

Motion By: Board member Dimaren

Second By: Board member Joseph

All present, voting in favor. None opposed.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Hilda Tavitian, Clerk
Planning Board