OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
RAVI S. BHALLA MAYOR
CITY HALL
HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY

MEMORANDUM

To: Hoboken City Council Members
From: Mayor Ravi S. Bhalla
Date: January 11, 2019
Re: SW Redevelopment Plan

Dear City Council Members,

I recently learned about a project to be proposed by Academy Bus in the Southwest Redevelopment Area that would include a new District middle school while requiring major changes to the existing Southwest Redevelopment Plan (the "Academy Proposal").

It is my understanding that some councilmembers were involved (or at least consulted) in the crafting of the proposal. I have since received several inquiries from residents of Southwest Hoboken who are rightfully concerned that the proposed dramatic increase in building heights and residential density would be harmful to their neighborhood and make the already existing traffic problem worse.

This correspondence is to make clear my strong continued support for the existing Southwest Redevelopment Plan that was unanimously adopted by the City Council in 2017, and my opposition to any proposal that would materially alter the planning vision incorporated in that Plan.

As you know, former Mayor Dawn Zimmer's administration and the City Council adopted the Southwest Redevelopment Plan over the course of several years of careful planning. This was done in an open and transparent process, with several community meetings, surveys, meetings with property owners, and in consultation with the City Council subcommittee on the Southwest Redevelopment Plan. The plan that was passed unanimously was a result of substantial collaboration between Mayor Zimmer's administration and the City Council, and incorporated substantial resident feedback.

As you may remember, one of the most frequent items of feedback from residents was the request for limited residential density. Residents of the Southwest (and throughout the City) are

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rightfully concerned about overdevelopment that poses a threat to our quality of life and to the charm and character of our City. In addition, particularly in the Southwest which is the southern gateway into and out of our City, traffic is an enormous problem. With these concerns in mind, the Plan that was adopted provides for residential density additions consistent with the density levels in most of the other residential neighborhoods of our City, while also keeping the Plan financially feasible for property owners.

To be clear – I remain 100% supportive of the scale of residential density permitted in the existing Southwest Redevelopment Plan, and I will not consider any developer proposals inconsistent with the Plan's scale and vision.

As you all know, it is the Administration's role in our form of government to negotiate redevelopment agreements, and no proposal can move forward without the support of the Administration. It is inappropriate and counterproductive for Council Members to consult and work with property owners and developers on proposed projects without the Administration's knowledge or involvement. In addition, any project that would involve material changes to the approved plan would require consideration in a thorough, open, transparent public process.

For all the above reasons, the Academy Proposal (which includes massive increases in density on the Academy property – 439 units versus the 192 units -19 affordable permitted under the current plan) is a non-starter for me.

Southwest Park expansion

The City is continuing to evaluate options to expand the current Southwest Park to include Block 10. I remain committed to transforming this currently vacant into a park, doubling the size of the current Southwest Park. It is my hope that we can acquire this land via direct acquisition that does not place an undue financial burden on the City of Hoboken. As a reminder, Block 10 (the additional acre of land for a potential Southwest Park expansion) was not included in the Southwest Redevelopment Plan. We are continuing to explore direct acquisition and consider it the preferred course of action, but if a development agreement could be struck based on a fair value, I would consider an amendment to the Southwest Redevelopment Plan that would incorporate the build out of the Southwest Park.

Aside from the Southwest Park buildout, I would not be supportive of any other changes to the current Southwest Redevelopment Plan that would present added residential density. As elected officials, our decisions must be based on the best interests of our residents, not the bottom line of property owners and developers.

Southwest Traffic

In 2017, I joined my colleagues on the Council expressing support for the Southwest Traffic Circulation Plan introduced by former Mayor Zimmer. While many of these changes were implemented, and the traffic situation has somewhat improved, more improvements could be achieved if the plan was fully implemented. One important change that I am asking you to support

is the recommendation by the City Engineer to change Paterson Plank Road to a one way westbound Street, which the engineer recommends will result in further improvements to traffic. This is a County road, so I am asking for the Council's consideration of a resolution asking the County to consider this important change.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions or concerns.

Very truly yours,

Ravi S. Bhalla
Mayor