



Developers present downsized Lackawanna plan to township



Developers discussed a preliminary site plan for Lackawanna Plaza at the Township Development Review Committee Wednesday night.

LINDA MOSS/STAFF

By LINDA MOSS

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Developers on Wednesday night for the first time presented their downsized plans for Lackawanna Plaza to township zoning and planning officials, getting feedback on a preliminary site plan that will include a nearly 48,000-square-foot supermarket, office and retail space and 154 residential units.

Officials from Hampshire Cos. of Morristown brought renderings and their own experts to discuss the project at a meeting of the Township Development Review Committee. That body includes members of both the Township Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Adjustment, the planning board engineer and Municipal Planner Janice Talley.

Hampshire and Pinnacle Cos. of Montclair last year submitted a redevelopment plan for Lackawanna Plaza, entailing construction of a mixed-use project with a large supermarket, parking and 360 residential units at the site, which is on Bloomfield Avenue spanning Grove Street. The property is now home to a now-nearly vacant shopping center that includes the operating Pig & Prince Restaurant and a historic train station. It was the one-time home of a Pathmark, which closed two years ago.

That proposal drew opposition from residents, historic preservationists and town officials alike, and the two real estate firms finally abandoned that controversial redevelopment plan.

Instead, on Dec. 1 they submitted a traditional site plan, not a redevelopment, that cut back the mass and density of the original proposal. A supermarket will still anchor the west parcel, while a four-story multifamily dwelling will be built on the east parcel across on the other side of Grove Street, which is now a surface parking lot. The residential building will have an outdoor pool and a deck.



*The facade of a new grocery store as it would appear under a new plan submitted for Lackawanna Plaza.
LINDA MOSS/STAFF*

Todd Anderson, a principal and executive vice president of acquisitions at Hampshire, addressed the review committee at its meeting.

“It’s been a long and winding road that we’ve been going through with the Lackawanna Plaza project,” Anderson said. “I think we finally have gotten a project in front of you that addresses at this point a lot of the traffic concerns, the scale concerns, the historic-preservation concerns and takes as many of those things into consideration as possible to really kind of move this along.”

Based on feedback from the committee and other township officials, Anderson said the site plan can be revised.

Brian Stolar, president of Pinnacle Cos. of Montclair, Hampshire’s partner in the Lackawanna venture, had a prior engagement and could not attend the session.



Attorney Tom Trautner, left, Todd Anderson, a principal and executive vice president of acquisitions at Hampshire Cos., Kevin Webb, an engineer with Langan, and Chris Richter, a principal and vice president of development at Avison Young, discussed the revamped plans for Lackawanna Plaza on Wednesday night. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

In a written memo to the committee, Talley detailed Hampshire’s plans.

For the west parcel, the proposal is to:

- Demolish the retail stores along the southern end of the Lackawanna Plaza shopping center and adapt the remaining space to create a supermarket;
- Maintain 11,166 square feet of existing retail space in the historic train shed along Lackawanna Plaza;
- Maintain the existing 197-seat Pig & Prince in the historic train station waiting room;
- Retain the historic concrete stairs to Grove Street; and
- Relocate and rebuild the horse trough along the edge of Grove.

At the meeting the developer said that although the grocery store was originally planned to be 43,495 square feet, now a former laundromat's 4,168-square space — part of the shopping complex — will be added to the grocery store's footprint, bringing the total square footage to nearly 48,000, said Chris Richter, a principal and vice president of development for Avison Young in Morristown. That firm is the project manager for Lackawanna Plaza.

Hampshire and Pinnacle also seek to:

- Build a new bus stop shelter at the corner of Bloomfield Avenue and Lackawanna Plaza using the historic steel canopy from the station;
- Enlarge the size of the plaza at the corner by about 1,200 square feet;
- Expand the parking lot between the supermarket and Bloomfield Avenue to create a total of 226 parking spaces;
- Install a new wall along at the edge of the parking lot along Bloomfield Avenue and Grove Street, with a new monument sign at the corner of Bloomfield Avenue and Grove Street;
- Add a new two-way driveway to the expanded parking lot from Grove Street; and
- Create a covered pedestrian passageway between Lackawanna Plaza and the supermarket.



One rendering depicts a tunnel passage from the grocery store to the residential building. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

The plans for the east parcel are to:

- Demolish the dome at the entrance to the tunnel under Grove Street and build a new 154-unit apartment building with four stories of residential over a one-story garage;
- Have a total of 230 parking spaces, including 130 spaces in the underground garage, 84 surface parking spaces and 16 existing parking spaces;
- Maintain the existing 4,591-square-foot TD Bank along Bloomfield Avenue; and
- Reconfigure the entrance driveway from Grove Street.

The developers will need a number of variances from the township in order to proceed with their plans. One is permission to convert the 4,168 square feet of first-floor retail space to office space, according to Talley. Pinnacle and Hampshire will also need a variance to permit parking, 83 spaces, in the front yard along Bloomfield Avenue. The developers also want to provide 504 parking spaces at their project when 762 are required under township codes.



Pinnacle Cos. and Hampshire Cos. will build a new bus stop at Lackawanna Plaza using steel from the historic train station. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

Last year the developers said they were in talks with ShopRite about it coming to Lackawanna Plaza as a

tenant.

Hampshire and Pinnacle are also seeking to designate 10 percent of their affordable units to township residents, the developers' attorney, Tom Trautner said. A local ordinance mandates that at least 20 percent of the units to be affordable and marketed to the four-county Housing Region established by state statute, according to Talley's memo.

The developers are also offering to set aside another 10 percent of their units for as subsidized housing for township employees, Trautner said. That housing would have to be subsidized by the municipality if it chose to do so, according to Talley.

"Those township units would be market-rate units that the town would subsidize ... I don't know where that money would come from," she said.

Martin Schwartz, a planning board and review committee member, questioned the developers as to why it should receive an exception from the ordinance.

"The bottom line is you are requesting a reduction from the 20 percent to 10 percent ... What other community benefit are you proposing for the reduction?" he asked.

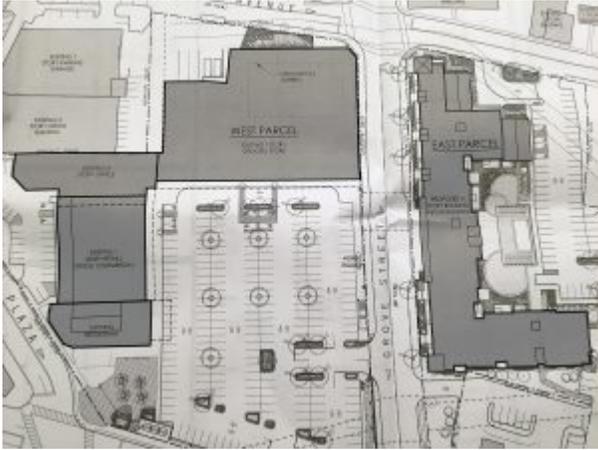
And William Scott, co-chairman of the Township Housing Commission, wanted details in writing about the developers' affordable-housing proposal.

Talley; Fourth Ward Councilwoman Renee Baskerville; Zoning Board of Adjustment Chairman William Harrison; Steve Rooney, a member of the planning board and the Montclair Historic Preservation Commission; and planning board engineer Thomas Watkinson had a variety of questions about the downsized Lackawanna plan on issues such as parking and traffic flow.

Hampshire said it will revise its site plan, and offer more details, at its next stop, which is the Montclair Historic Preservation Commission meeting Jan. 25. It is expected that the Lackawanna developers who have to appear before the preservation commission twice, in January, as well as its Feb. 15 meeting.

The site plan will then go to the planning board.

"It's a good start," Schwartz said of the revised downsized Lackawanna plan. "It's a very good start."



Developers downsize controversial Lackawanna Plaza project



Developers have filed plans to keep a grocery store at the west parcel of Lackawanna Plaza, where Pathmark once was, and to construct a multifamily building on the other side of Grove Street, where there is now a surface parking lot. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

By LINDA MOSS

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Following fierce opposition from residents and historic preservationists, developers have dramatically downsized their plans for Lackawanna Plaza, in terms of mass, density and residential units.

The site plan submitted last Friday, Dec. 1, for the property on Bloomfield Avenue, which straddles Grove Street, includes a grocery store at the former location of Pathmark, on the west side of the parcel.

The plan also puts a four-story multifamily building, with 154 units and an outdoor deck and pool, on the east parcel, behind the TD Bank. It will have a parking garage beneath it as well as surface parking. There is currently a parking lot on that plot.

“I think it will be a great ratable for the town and as I understand , too, there is a lot of preserving the historic elements there and in some cases enhancing the historic elements,” Township Mayor Robert Jackson said. “Cross my fingers, but I think it kind of gets closer to what people were hankering for there, which is a good thing.”

With the application for site plan and variances, the developers have decided to proceed and develop the Lackawanna Plaza property under the site’s existing zoning, rather than redevelop it under a controversial redevelopment plan that would supersede existing zoning.

The site plan now will have to go before the Township Development Review Committee, which includes two Planning Board members, one Zoning Board of Adjustment member, Township Planner Janice Talley and the planning board engineer. The next step after that is for it to be reviewed by the Township Historic Preservation Commission, with it then finally ending at the Montclair Planning Board for approval.

The corporations listed on the application, which was filed with the Township Planning Department and still needs review and approval, are HP Lackawanna Office LLC and Lackawanna SPE LLC. That entity is majority-owned by Hampshire Cos. of Morristown.

Hampshire had partnered with Montclair's Pinnacle Cos. to redevelop the Lackawanna Plaza site, which now houses the Pig & Prince Restaurant, as well as a mostly vacant shopping center, a historic train station and several small office buildings. But the preliminary proposal the developers brought to the township caused an outcry.

The proposal, which was echoed in a draft redevelopment plan for Lackawanna Plaza, called for a mixed-use development anchored on the west parcel by a large supermarket with apartments and parking above it, as well as having retail space. The east parcel was also slated to have residential units and parking. In total, 360 apartments were proposed by the developers.

But during meetings at the [Township Council](#) and Planning Board, residents and preservationists voiced their objections to the redevelopment proposal. The Montclair historic commission said that the proposed west parcel building was so massive that it would dwarf and hide the historic train station and result in the destruction of historic elements of the site. Residents worried that the project would also create traffic problems.



Developers submitted a rendering of the exterior of the multifamily building that they have proposed for the east parcel of Lackawanna Plaza on Grove Street. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

With the site plan submitted last week, it appears the developers are following the existing footprint on Lackawanna Plaza's west parcel.

Fourth Ward residents have been clamoring for a replacement for the Pathmark, which closed in November 2015. Some community activists have claimed that this area of the township has become [a virtual food desert](#), with few healthy and affordable options for those in that end of town.

Earlier in the year a Pinnacle official confirmed that it was in talks with ShopRite about coming to Lackawanna Plaza as an anchor tenant. It's not clear what the status of those negotiations is now.

The development of Lackawanna Plaza has had many twists this year. Trying to move the project along, [Jackson took over stewardship](#) of it and the council commissioned a redevelopment plan for the site.

But the [draft of the redevelopment plan essentially mirrored](#) what Pinnacle and Hampshire had proposed, with

its mass and density, drawing criticism. The [planning board evaluated and panned the redevelopment plan](#), offering 19 recommendations for changes.



The proposed residential building at Lackawanna Plaza has a pool, barbecue area and terrace. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

The council's Economic Development Committee then reviewed the planning board's suggestions and recommended that the council go along with many of them. Jackson then sent the redevelopment plan back to the planning board, which is where things stood until the new site-plan application. Now a redevelopment plan isn't necessary.

Pinnacle President Brian Stolar and Todd Andersen, a Hampshire principal and executive vice president of acquisitions for the firm, couldn't be reached for comment.

But Jackson said that he expects the revised plan to be well-received by residents, and that it is "much more in line" with what the community wanted. The developers are looking to bring in a quality grocery store for residents, according to the mayor.

"It'll be a great ratable for the town," Jackson said.

The project is in the Fourth Ward and its councilwoman, Renee Baskerville, couldn't be reached for comment.

The residential building would have 12 studio units, 14 micro units, 74 one-bedroom units and 54 two-bedrooms.

Talley said that the municipality is awaiting a number of additional documents from the developers, including a traffic study.

Kathleen Bennett, chair of the historic commission, said that her group would have "to keep on top" of the new proposal because it is only a preliminary plan

"The residents of Montclair realize what a wealth of architectural history we have here within the town, residential and commercial and municipal buildings," Bennett said. "I think they're really adamantly opposed to seeing it destroyed."

James Cotter was one of a number of residents of Cloverfield Place, near Lackawanna Plaza, who had voiced opposition to the original 360-unit proposal for the site.

"The most important considerations for the residents who live in the shadow of Lackawanna was density and traffic, both of which will hopefully be mitigated by downsizing the footprint of the apartments," Cotter said.

"That said, the developers are missing a rare opportunity to create a landmark property. This new plan does not add green space to our downtown and does not make use of the tremendous historical assets of the site. I

hope the end result does not reflect the terrible design elements of other recent buildings, such as Valley and Bloom.”



Montclair coalition tackles food-access issue



Susan Kosinski, left, assistant store manager of customer service for the Brookdale ShopRite in Bloomfield and Toni Metsopulos, a department manager there, spoke to Montclair seniors about online grocery shopping at Edgemont Memorial Park on Monday. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

By LINDA MOSS

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Coming up on the second anniversary of the Pathmark at Lackawanna Plaza closing, a coalition of Montclair organizations is exploring ways to help local senior citizens, as well as others impacted by the supermarket's demise, get access to food.

The group, which met last week, is looking to proactively get the word out about new food options, like the Crane Park Market, as well as inform residents about the larger assortment of grocery items at places like the CVS on Claremont Avenue and the Shell gas station on Bloomfield Avenue.

The group also seeks to promote the township's senior-bus service, which stops at the Acme on Valley Road and the Brookdale ShopRite in Bloomfield. Other initiatives include adding more community gardens, with one potential location being Nishuane Park; setting up pop-up stores; instructing seniors how to purchase groceries online; and finding financial assistance to offset the cost of ordering food and other goods online.

William Scott, chairman of the housing committee of the Montclair NAACP branch, is helping to organize the effort to find interim methods for residents — particularly the elderly and the disabled — to buy groceries until

a new supermarket is built to replace the Pathmark, which closed in November 2015.

A large grocery store will be built at Lackawanna Plaza as part of a proposed redevelopment plan that is under review by the Township Council. But it will be several years until that supermarket — envisioned as an anchor for the mixed-use project — is built. Developers have talked to ShopRite as a possible tenant.

The participants in last week's meeting, held at the Montclair Neighborhood Development Corp. office on Bloomfield Avenue, included Scott and Al Pelham, president of the Montclair NAACP; Israel Cronk, executive director of the Montclair Center Business Improvement District; Katie York, director of township senior services/Lifelong Montclair; Deirdre Malloy, property and compliance manager for Homes of Montclair Ecumenical Corp., or HOME Corp; and Harold Simon, executive director of the National Housing Institute, which is based in Montclair.

At the session attendees discussed both short- and long-term solutions in terms of making food available to those impacted by Pathmark's closing, according to Scott.

BABY STEPS

"We had a lot on the table," he said. "Overall it was a positive meeting. We know there is a lot of work to be done moving forward, but we have to take this in steps, baby steps maybe, to really get a better handle on the long-term solution. ... And we've got to put as many options on the table as we can to address the issue short-term."

Fourth Ward Councilwoman Renée Baskerville was also invited to the meeting, where she gave participants an update on a report that the council's Economic Development Committee gave last week to the Township Planning Board on the proposed Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment plan, according to Scott. Baskerville is a member of the EDC.

Scott's agenda last week included a mission statement saying that community groups, representing a cross section of the township, were being called together "to create a coalition who will work on a solution to aid the residents who have been affected by the closure of the Pathmark supermarket," and adding, "by building this coalition of organizations we will work on addressing this major problem in our community."



William Scott, chairman of the housing committee of the Montclair branch of the NAACP, attended a session on ShopRite's online-shopping service on Monday at the Edgemont Memorial Park senior center. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

Scott said that at the meeting the organizations agreed to pool their resources in order to collect data, information that is either already available or could be solicited, so they will have accurate information about the Montclair community's shopping needs and habits.

"Something that really came out as very important is we need to acquire more data, data that indicates how

residents are being affected by the closure of the Pathmark supermarket, and what might be some of their concerns or needs moving forward,” Scott said. “I think that it’s critical because we can say what we need, but we need to make sure it’s based on some facts.”

Several attendees said that they had such data, and would be providing it, according to Scott. York is helping out by sharing a U.S. Department of Agriculture food-access map for Montclair, and said she has a public-health intern from Montclair State University who will be compiling an inventory of food providers within a quarter mile, a half mile and one mile of Lackawanna Plaza.

York added that the township is also trying to get funding to develop a food-access map with the Center for Research and Evaluation on Education and Human Services at MSU.

“We’re trying to get that information to see if the perception matches the reality,” York said. “But either way, even if they don’t match, the perception is what people’s reality is.”

The coalition also aims to step up the distribution of information about services, such as township buses and online shopping, as a means to get groceries.

SPREADING THE WORD

“We’re going to do a better job getting the information out,” Scott said. “But obviously the short-term solutions will never replace a supermarket. We’re trying our best to address the needs and give people the opportunity to acquire food in many different ways. I don’t think we’ve heard of anyone starving to death in their apartment. ... There are positive things being done and people aren’t just being left out there to fend for themselves, specifically the seniors and people with disabilities.”

The township senior center at Edgemont Memorial Park on Monday held a training session, for senior citizens and volunteers who assist seniors, on how to use the ShopRite From Home online ordering system. About a dozen people, including Scott, attended the session, which was given by Susan Kosinski, assistant store manager of customer service for the Brookdale ShopRite; Toni Metsopoulos, a department manager there; and Andrew Catala, assistant store manager of customer service for the Newark ShopRite.

The trio demonstrated step-by-step how to set up an account and order groceries, and answered inquiries about the process. Asked about the price to use the service, Metsopoulos said it was \$10 per order, with an additional \$5.95 delivery fee. There is also the option of picking up online-ordered groceries at the store, eliminating the delivery fee.

“There is a cost associated with that [online grocery shopping], but it’s a minimal cost, and we addressed that, too,” Scott said. “There might be individuals out there who can’t afford the cost to have the delivery, but there is the opportunity to find funding or donations from some of the local groups.”



Susan Kosinski, assistant store manager of customer service for the Brookdale ShopRite, left, Toni Metsopoulos, a department manager there; and Andrew Catala, assistant store manager of customer service for the Newark ShopRite, offer a lesson in online grocery shopping at the

The coalition will be checking to see if groups such as the NAACP, local clergy associations, the Montclair Rotary Club and the Montclair African-American Heritage Foundation would be willing to offset the cost of the online deliveries, according to Scott. And he also pointed out there are more online options for food shopping than just ShopRite, such as Peapod, that people need to be made aware of.

York said that residents at some senior housing communities are combining their grocery orders so they can share the added fees when they buy food online, reducing their individual cost.

The township is also partnering with two nonprofits, Jewish Family Service of MetroWest New Jersey and Care at Home NJ, that help homebound seniors by either picking up their groceries for them or helping them to shop online at home, York said.

Since the Pathmark shut its doors there are new food options, but people need to be informed about them, Scott said. For example, the BID started a farmers' market at Crane Park, which is also now the site of a community garden. Residents also need to be informed that the Claremont CVS and the Shell station have expanded their food offerings, Scott said, although it is clear they still can't supply the array of items such as fresh vegetables and meat that a traditional grocery store can.

York added that she is promoting the mobile farm stands throughout town.

POP-UP MARKETS

Last week's meeting attendees also discussed creating pop-up markets at various locations to sell food, said Scott, "but that hasn't been fleshed out that well."

Scott said that he has also asked the Montclair Civil Rights Commission to participate in the coalition.

"The issue of a lack of a supermarket has been discussed at prior Civil Rights Commission meetings," said Joseph Kavesh, the commission's chair. "The Civil Rights Commission shares the concerns expressed by many residents with respect to the current lack of a supermarket at Lackawanna Plaza. Some have referred to this as a 'food desert.' While I do not personally agree with that particular characterization, it is inarguable that food access is a basic fundamental right."

Kavesh added that the commission is reaching out to "the relevant developers," who are Pinnacle Cos. of Montclair and Hampshire Cos. of Morristown, "and will work with other residents and stakeholders, including Mr. Scott's coalition, as warranted and where appropriate."



Council committee calls for downsizing of Lackawanna Plaza plan



Third Ward Councilman Sean Spiller, at the podium, goes over recommendations for Lackawanna Plaza's redevelopment at Monday's Township Planning Board meeting. He is a member of the Township Council's Economic Development Committee, along with Fourth Ward Councilwoman Renée Baskerville, left at table, and Deputy Mayor Robin Schlager.

LINDA MOSS/STAFF

By LINDA MOSS

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Agreeing with many major recommendations made by planners and historic preservationists, a special Township Council committee on Monday night said that the proposed Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment plan should be downsized — to just 280 dwelling units from 350, with a smaller footprint — and that the site's historic elements be preserved.

The three members of the council's Economic Development Committee — Deputy Mayor Robin Schlager, who also sits on the board, Fourth Ward Councilwoman Renée Baskerville and Third Ward Councilman Sean Spiller — did a presentation on their proposed revisions to the redevelopment proposal at the Township Planning Board's meeting.

The committee addressed, one by one, the 19 recommendations — suggested amendments — that the board had made regarding the draft redevelopment plan. The committee said it was on board with about a dozen of the recommendations, but did reject the remainder.

"Thank you, in particular, for the thought and care that you brought to your review of the initial draft of this important redevelopment plan," Baskerville told the board.

"We'd like to make sure that you know that we respect all the work that you do," she said. "Accordingly, we've taken your comments seriously. Many of the comments that you shared with us are comments that we

previously expressed, and we're very happy to incorporate those as well as to revise and revisit some of the recommendations that you shared with us ... I believe that you'll find that we embraced many of the recommendations."

Now the amended redevelopment plan will go to the full council, and the local governing body will decide if it wants to implement the revisions that the EDC has suggested, Baskerville said.

"But I'm hopeful that with your assistance, we've set the Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment plan on an excellent course, one that seeks to have an appropriately scaled development ... duly respectful of the historic features and duly respectful of the neighbors who live in closest proximity ... as well as the businesses that currently exist there," she said.

The Pig & Prince restaurant is the one vibrant business open at Lackawanna Plaza now.

The EDC agreed that the mixed-use redevelopment proposed for Lackawanna Plaza, which was originally to have included 350 residential units, was too dense and should be scaled back to a maximum of 280, and that the project's footprint is too big and there needs to be more open space, Baskerville told the board during her part of the presentation.



The Township Council Economic Development Committee agreed that Lackawanna Station's historic features need to be saved. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

She didn't explain how the EDC derived the 280 figure, and neither she, Schlager or Spiller responded to an email asking have they chose that number.

The committee also agreed with the board that historic elements of the site, home to a landmark train terminal, should be preserved, including its waiting room and terminal shed, according to Schlager.

Kathleen Bennett, chair of the Montclair Historic Preservation Commission, attended Monday's meeting. The HPC made suggestions about Lackawanna Plaza that the board incorporated into its recommendations to the council. Bennett said that she was "relieved and pleased to hear" that the EDC wanted he site's historic structures and features preserved.

As for the reduction of the units to 280, Bennett said, "I think the density is still a problem."

The EDC gave a thumbs-down to a number of the board's recommendations, including one that mandated that existing sight lines to all historic features and structures at Lackawanna Plaza be preserved. The EDC said sight lines should be kept for some, but not all, historic features, Baskerville told the board.

In addition, the committee rejected the board's recommendation that a maximum square footage be established for the supermarket planned for Lackawanna Plaza, which would replace the Pathmark that closed there in November 2015, Schlager said during her part of the EDC presentation.

“The EDC disagrees because this creates an unnecessary limit on potential supermarkets,” the committee said in a memo to the board.

There have been talks with ShopRite to come in as the new anchor grocery store.



At Monday's Township Planning Board meeting Fourth Ward Councilwoman Renee Baskerville explained that her committee wanted brick removed from the front of Lackawanna Plaza. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

In an unusual move, earlier this year the council took control of the creation of the Lackawanna redevelopment plan from the planning board, which usually oversees such matters. The council, however, asked for feedback from the board on the draft plan.

In July [the board roundly condemned](#) the controversial redevelopment plan, saying that it was inconsistent with the Township's Master Plan. Mayor Robert Jackson then charged the EDC with studying the board's 19 recommendations regarding the 92-page plan that the council commissioned from consultant Phillips Preiss Grygiel LLC of Hoboken.

Once the redevelopment plan was submitted on June 1, critics claim, it essentially mirrored what developers Pinnacle Cos. of Montclair and Hampshire Cos. of Morristown had offered up for the site, a former shopping center, on Bloomfield Avenue.

During her part of Monday's EDC presentation, Baskerville said that the bricked-up train platform sheds, now home to a Popeyes fast-food restaurant, should be opened up with storefronts facing the main plaza and parking lots.

The EDC agreed that the redevelopment needed larger setbacks along Glenridge and Bloomfield avenues, according to Schlager. The committee's redevelopment-plan revisions include requiring a 10-foot setback from a drainage easement that runs along Glenridge Avenue, and a minimum 15-foot-sidewalk width between the building and curb on Grove Street.



The Economic Development Committee's presentation included a slide about increasing setbacks at the Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

While the EDC agreed with the board that a traffic study needs to be done to determine the impact of the redevelopment, it disagreed on the parameters, according to Spiller. The committee will recommend that the Lackawanna traffic study include Bloomfield and Glenridge avenues and the intersections with Cloverhill Place, Grove Street and Greenwood Avenue; the Bullock School driveway; Lackawanna Plaza and Gates Avenue; and North Willow Street.

The EDC turned down the board's recommendation that the redevelopment plan leave open an option for the

grocery store to be constructed on the site's eastern parcel, which now has a parking lot and a TD Bank, Schlager explained.



The Township Council's Economic Development Committee has different plans for a traffic study than the one proposed by the Planning Board. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

"The EDC disagrees because allowing the supermarket to be built on the east parcel will negatively impact the neighborhood by bringing the noise and truck traffic associated with the supermarket directly adjacent to residential homes," the committee said in its memo.

The board had also recommended that the redevelopment plan have a provision for affordable housing and that consideration be given to include workforce housing that gives local residents a preference.

"That [affordable housing] would be part of a redevelopment agreement, and not part of this plan," Spiller told the board.

Finally, in its 19th recommendation the board suggested that the council refer the Lackawanna redevelopment plan back to the board for its evaluation.

But the EDC said that the decision to refer the plan back to the board "is the province of the governing body, which will render a decision on this matter at the appropriate time."

Said Spiller, "We didn't want to recommend to our colleagues how they would be voting on that issue."

After the EDC completed its presentation, Board Chair John Wynn said, "While not 100 percent in agreement with us ... they really have agreed to the ones [recommendations] that take this project in the direction that the Planning Board thinks it needs to be going."

James Cotter, a Cloverhill Place resident who was at the board meeting, said that he was "cautiously optimistic that the council will heed the recommendations of the EDC and the Planning Board, both of which are in general consensus about the deeply flawed, first version of the Lackawanna plan."

He added, "I'm pleased that the EDC recognized the need to respect both the historic elements of the site and the need to protect the surrounding neighborhoods. Ultimately, we'd like to see the number of residential units reduced to something closer to 200 units."



Who's who on the Montclair Planning Board



From left, Planning Board members Carmel Loughman, Vice Chair Keith Brodock, Carole Willis and Craig Brandon listened intently at a meeting this summer. DEBORAH ANN TRIPOLDI/STAFF

By LINDA MOSS

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The Township Planning Board has had two hot potatoes — a pair of major, and controversial, redevelopment projects — on its agenda this year, putting its actions in the spotlight in recent months.

In July, the board told the Township Council that a proposed redevelopment plan for Lackawanna Plaza, the site of a historic train station, is inconsistent with the municipality's master plan. The board then made nearly two dozen recommendations regarding the redevelopment, criticizing its mass and density and its failure to incorporate the landmark train terminal into its design.

And in August the board approved the site plan for the Seymour Street redevelopment, a mixed-use project adjacent to the Wellmont Theater that includes 200 residential units, retail, office and parking.

"This has been a very busy year for the planning board. ... We had a lot of activity," Township Planner Janice Talley said at the board's meeting earlier this week.

The board's power rests in its responsibilities, which Talley said include reviewing development applications for site plans and subdivisions, preparing and adopting a township master plan, and making recommendations to the council on zoning ordinances involving land use and on redevelopment plans.

At this time Montclair is bursting with commercial real estate projects, and there is an ongoing debate among residents over whether the municipality is being over-developed.

The Township Mayor, in this case Robert Jackson, either sits on the board or designates someone to take his

place. On this board that appointee is Martin Schwartz. A council member, currently Deputy Mayor Robin Schlager, also has a seat on the board, as does a township staff member, currently Craig Brandon, the municipal supervisor of Solid Waste Services.

Any resident interested in serving on the board must first fill out a volunteer-interest form, which the council evaluates to choose new board members when positions are available, Talley said. Such new members begin their terms as alternates, in order to become familiar with the board's workings, and they are required to attend a five-hour training session, according to Talley. Carmel Loughman is now a first alternate and Tim Barr is a second alternate. As alternates, they vote on an application when a full board member is not able to vote.

There is a vacancy now on the township board, because Vice Chair Jason DeSalvo stepped down earlier this year for personal reasons. At its meeting Monday night the board elected Keith Brodock as its new vice chair, replacing DeSalvo.

Here is the roster of board members.



John Wynn

Wynn, chair of the planning board, is senior counsel at LG Electronics USA Inc., the consumer electronics giant in Englewood Cliffs. As such, he is responsible for a full range of legal business issues including "contract preparation and negotiation, operational issues, collection and claim issues, regulatory matters and corporate policies and procedures," according to his LinkedIn profile.

He has also been in private practice as a lawyer and spent 20 years at Pathmark Stores Inc., as associate general counsel. Wynn has mentioned that experience in discussions about the supermarket proposed as part of the redevelopment of Lackawanna Plaza. At Pathmark Wynn's duties included handling discrimination issues; conducting and supervising investigations and responding to administrative charges before the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Department of Labor and other state and municipal agencies, concerning associate and customer claims; negotiated and reviewed contracts; and managed litigation.

Wynn graduated from Johns Hopkins University and then went to New York Law School.



Keith Brodock

Brodock, a professional engineer and project manager, this week was named vice chair of the board, where he serves as the Township Environmental Commission's representative.

Brodock is a brownfield risk manager and a design and construction engineer at Integral Consulting Inc. A brownfield is an industrial or commercial site that may have environmental contamination. He is also president of Integral Engineering P.C., with responsibilities that include the investigation of areas in need of

remediation and cost estimates for such projects.

Brodock, a graduate of Clarkson University in Potsdam, New York, has overseen projects around the country, and consulted on the “regulatory climate, technical interpretations and risk mitigation measures for contaminated properties,” according to his LinkedIn profile.



Craig Brandon

Brandon is supervisor of solid waste services for Montclair, and has worked for the township for more than 37 years. He graduated from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.



Timothy Barr

Barr is the second alternate planning board member. He is currently executive vice president at the Calvary Fund at Calvary Hospital in the Bronx. Prior to that Barr was a vice president at St. Joseph’s Healthcare System in Paterson and director of development at Thirteen/WNET, as well as having stints at Pace University and Fordham Law School.

Barr is a former member and vice chair of the Township Board of Education, and ran for the Township Council in 2012. He holds a bachelor’s degree and a master of arts degree from Fordham University.



Tony Ianuale

Ianuale is chief operating officer and chief financial officer of Dresdner Robin, a land-use consultancy that provides engineering, planning, landscape architecture, survey and environmental services. Prior to joining Jersey City-based Dresdner Robin, Ianuale managed teams responsible for real estate development. He served as senior vice president of Apartment Investment and Management Co., where he ran development operations.

Prior to that Ianuale ran similar groups that sourced and developed investment-grade large-scale multifamily, office, retail, hotel and mixed-use projects in positions he held at AvalonBay Communities Inc., Lincoln Property Co., Druker Co. of Boston and Jones Lang LaSalle. Ianuale started his business career in finance at Exxon Corp.

He has a bachelor’s in mechanical engineering from the University of Virginia, an MBA from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College and holds a chartered financial analyst designation. He is a third-generation Montclair resident, and has previously volunteered as a Montclair Parking Authority board member.



Carmel Loughman

A first alternate member of the board, Loughman spent her career as a risk manager for such major corporations as the cosmetics giant L'Oreal USA, the pharmaceutical firms Merck and Schering-Plough, and the mining company Asarco Inc. She has expertise in corporate risk analysis, contract crafting, insurance procurement, litigation management, and risk funding. Loughman has an MBA in finance from New York University.



Stephen Rooney

An experienced architect, Rooney is the Montclair Historic Preservation Commission's representative on the planning board, and at one time chaired the commission. He works for Haider Engineering, and is currently the office engineer on a project in Brooklyn that is replacing 150-year-old water lines under Flatbush Avenue, sprucing up the landscape along that thoroughfare in Park Slope.

Rooney is a registered architect in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

During his career he has worked on projects including a mixed-used building in Hoboken, Maxwell Place; Amsterdam at Harborside, which is the largest continuing care retirement community on Long Island; several high-rises in midtown Manhattan; parks in Brooklyn and Manhattan; schools in the Bronx, Lakewood and Elizabeth; and Barney's New York.

He is a past president of the Newark and suburban region for the American Institute of Architects New Jersey, both a region and a chapter of the AIA.

Rooney has a bachelor of environmental design degree and a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Kansas.



Robin Schlager

Schlager, who recently took on the role of deputy mayor on the Township Council, is associate director of development for the Metropolitan YMCAs of the Oranges. That is the association of the East Orange, Wayne, West Essex, Maplewood/South Orange, Sussex County and Fairview Lake Camp YMCAs. Prior to that, Schlager was associate director of the Montclair Fund for Educational Excellence, and before that she worked for John Scher/Metropolitan Entertainment.



Martin Schwartz

Schwartz is Township Mayor Robert Jackson's designee to the planning board. He owns Textured Home-Urbane Construction, a design/build restoration and contracting firm. Schwartz's company undertakes renovations of single-family homes, condos/co-op apartments, vacation and commercial properties throughout the tri-state area. Textured Home also builds "new construction and additions that mirror the timeless quality of earlier architectural styles while updating to modern family living," according to LinkedIn.

A former broadcast and print journalist, Fortune 100 corporate communications and political consultant, Schwartz is a summa cum laude graduate of the State University of New York at Buffalo and attended New York University's graduate film and television program.



Carole Willis

Willis, a third-generation Montclair resident, is a retired Kean University education professor. She served three terms on the Township Board of Education, and is the former vice president of the New Jersey School Board Association. Willis is also a former member of the Township Zoning Board of Adjustment.

She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Arizona in Tucson, and her Master's degree and PhD from the University of Wisconsin at Madison.



Council eyes changes to Lackawanna Plaza

redevelopment plan



Fourth Ward Councilwoman Renée Baskerville said that the Economic Development Committee is discussing changes to a controversial redevelopment plan for Lackawanna Plaza. She talked about the plan at Tuesday's Township Council meeting, saying that no decisions have been made on it yet. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

By LINDA MOSS

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Members of the Township Council tasked with studying a redevelopment plan for Lackawanna Plaza are looking to amend it, based in part on recommendations from local planning officials and historic preservationists.

At Tuesday night's council meeting, Fourth Ward Councilwoman Renee Baskerville said that the local governing body's Economic Development Committee is discussing, but still vetting, changes such as reducing the number of apartments, 350 units proposed now for Lackawanna Plaza, and mandating a smaller footprint for the supermarket slated for the site.

Baskerville, Deputy Mayor Robin Schlager and Third Ward Councilman Sean Spiller are all part of the EDC, which Mayor Robert Jackson asked to evaluate the controversial redevelopment plan that was submitted for Lackawanna Plaza June 1. Baskerville said the goal is to have council action on the plan in early September.

At its meeting, the council spent two hours listening to comments from residents, most of them disgruntled citizens unhappy with what they consider over-development in the township. Those residents brought up the mixed-use developments — which each have substantial residential components — slated for both Lackawanna Plaza and Seymour Street, adjacent to the Wellmont Theater.

The EDC has met to start studying the Lackawanna draft redevelopment plan, and has reviewed the recommendations that the Township Planning Board and the Montclair Historic Preservation Commission made regarding it, according to Baskerville.

The EDC “took to heart a lot of what they were saying, a lot of what was being shared there as well as the comments that we’re hearing here,” Baskerville said.

The EDC wants to “correspond with the planning board to share our amendments and some thoughts that we have,” according to Baskerville.

She reassured residents that council will not be “fast-track” finalizing the redevelopment plan, and EDC is looking to have the council take some action on it in early September.

The EDC is still “in the amending stages,” with no decisions made yet, Baskerville said.

The planning board offered more than a dozen recommendations regarding the proposed Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment plan, most aimed at preserving the historic elements at the landmark train station, and reducing the mass and density of the project. It is being developed by Pinnacle Cos. of Montclair and Hampshire Cos. of Morristown.

Baskerville and at-Large Councilman Bob Russo assured the meeting attendees that the council was seriously studying the plan, after the council was accused of being too lax and letting local developers get whatever they want in terms of development.

During the meeting a parade of residents went to the podium to complain about the burst of commercial development in the municipality, and their worries that new residents will strain the town’s infrastructure, school system and roads.

James Einloth asked the council whether any financial analysis had been done to determine how much tax revenue that proposed Lackawanna Plaza project would generate.

Jackson said no, since it was premature and there details of the redevelopment plan were still being ironed out. Einloth expressed surprise that there was no such analysis this far along in planning for the project.

“I have no doubt that the Lackawanna redevelopment plan is going to provide more tax revenue to this town as opposed to an empty lot,” he said. “The question is how much is it going to provide relative to other plans or other alternatives ... Many people in this town would be interested in the financial implications of an alternative plan.”

The council also fielded questions about the effect on local roads that newcomers at the 350 apartments at Lackawanna and the proposed 200 residential units at Seymour Street. Jackson said he didn’t see any issue, noting that in the 1950s the township had 45,000 residents, versus about 38,000 now, and roads held up.

“What was the wear and tear then [in the 1950s]?” the mayor asked.

Resident Marshall Sampson responded, saying that today family’s and residents own more cars than they did decades ago, so there are more vehicles on the road.

Tracy Breslin also addressed the council about the pending development in the township.

“Unanimously, everyone I talk to, and I talk to a lot of people, are horrified by what these buildings look like,” she said. “They are not worthy of this town, they are not architecturally of high quality ... when you walk down the street and look at these buildings, you literally don’t know where they came from ... We deserve more. We deserve better.”

Breslin also complained about what she claimed was a lack of transparency in the redevelopment process for Lackawanna Plaza, but Baskerville said that there were still a lot of decisions and options being discussed

regarding the plan.



Historic commission readies recommendations on Lackawanna Plaza



LINDA MOSS/STAFF

The Montclair Historic Preservation Commission met on Thursday to draft its recommendations regarding the proposed redevelopment plan for Lackawanna Plaza. The members are, from left, Caroline Kane Levy, David Greenbaum, Jason Hyndman, chair Kathleen Bennett, and Stephen Rooney.

by **LINDA MOSS**

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During a four-hour meeting, the Montclair Historic Preservation Commission on Thursday night began hammering out recommendations for the Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment plan, aiming to force developers to preserve the heritage and incorporate the “DNA” of the landmark train station into the project.

In painstaking detail, the commission discussed changes it wants made in the first draft of the redevelopment plan, which critics claim that as written will dwarf the station and permit developers to destroy some of the site’s historic elements, such as its former train sheds. The plan now calls for a minimum 40,000-square-foot supermarket, 350 apartments, retail space, parking and open space at the Bloomfield Avenue site, two parcels that span Grove Street.

At the meeting Carmel Loughman, a Township Planning Board member, implored the commission to carefully pore over the redevelopment plan and tighten its wording so that Pinnacle Cos. of Montclair and Hampshire Cos. of Morristown don’t have any leeway to eliminate any of the station’s historic elements.

"I view you guys as the guardians of this historic building. ... I feel like you need to be firmer, in my view," Loughman said after hearing some of the commission's suggestions.

Time is of the essence for the commission, because it needs to provide its input to the Township Planning Board before that body's meeting on Monday. That's because the Township Council fast-tracked the creation of the Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment plan, taking on oversight of the plan's creation from the planning board.

The council wants the planning board's recommendations on the proposed redevelopment plan, drafted by Phillips Preiss Grygiel LLC, in time for the governing body's July meeting.

Commissioner David Greenbaum said that the planning board's redevelopment subcommittee had recently met and found the proposed Lackawanna plan wanting. That subcommittee includes members of the HPC, the planning board and the council's economic development committee.

The subcommittee looked to successful re-adaptive uses of historic sites, such as Fanueil Hall in Boston and the High Line in Manhattan, as models for Lackawanna Plaza's future, according to Greenbaum.

"I think that's the important thing, leveraging the train station both in its structural form and the idea of a train station, in the design DNA of the new development," he said, rather than just envisioning Lackawanna Plaza as a mixed-use commercial property.

The subcommittee also discussed that if the developer was not able "to comply with this particular vision for the property, that perhaps it may be best if the town encourage another developer to take a crack at it who would be more respectful and mindful of the value of this historic asset in our community," according to Greenbaum.

The commission's recommendations try to put teeth in the redevelopment plan's language, so there's no wiggle room or ambiguity that will permit destruction of the station's historic assets.

For example, currently the redevelopment plan says "preservation and adaptive reuse of historic features and structures on the site is recommended to the extent possible." The commission is recommending that the word "recommended" be changed to "required."

The commission also wants the plan to leave open the option of the project's supermarket, which will replace a closed Pathmark, being built on the site's east parcel, now a surface parking lot, "so as to provide maximum flexibility for preservation of the Lackawanna train shed."

The proposed redevelopment plan only describes the train stations as being listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Commission Chair Kathleen Bennett talked about the importance of the plan listing all the station's bona fides, including the fact that it is listed in the state's Register of Historic Places and its designation as a key building in Montclair Center Historic District.

The commission also wants more clarity in the redevelopment plan regarding TD Bank, which is not part of the

redevelopment site even though it adjoins it.

“What happens if TD Bank decides that location is not viable?” commissioner Jason Hyndman said.

The commission also wants working changes on the redevelopment plans so that the station’s existing masonry piers and steel and concrete canopies will be preserved.

And in another language tweak, the commission wants the redevelopment plan to say that the view to the station’s former waiting room, now home to Pig & Prince restaurant, “shall be maintained,” rather than “should be maintained to the greatest extent possible.”

In addition to Loughman’s remarks, the commission heard criticism of and suggestions regarding the redevelopment plan from two additional residents, Michael Peinovich and Frank Rubacky.

Peinovich, who lives on Cloverhill Place, said that the redevelopment will bring traffic to his tiny street and will threaten the very culturally diverse Pine Street neighborhood. Lackawanna Plaza is in the Fourth Ward, represented by Councilwoman Renée Baskerville, and some of its residents have been clamoring for a supermarket to finally replace Pathmark, which closed in November 2015.

“Renée has been seduced by the fact that there’s going to be a supermarket [as part of the Lackawanna redevelopment],” Peinovich told the commission.

Cloverhill Place, which runs north and south between Claremont Avenue and Glenridge Avenue, has a neighborhood group that is working with a new organization in town, Vision Montclair, to fight several redevelopments, including Lackawanna Plaza. Cloverhill residents are going to suggest to township officials that either their street dead-end at Glenridge Avenue or be made into a one-way street so it doesn’t get traffic from redeveloped Lackawanna Plaza, Peinovich said.

The commission was asked to weigh in on the redevelopment plan by its member and representative on the planning board, Stephen Rooney.

“I felt we needed to get into it right now,” he said.

Hyndman volunteered to put together the commission’s recommendations, incorporating the suggestions of Loughman and the two other residents, over the weekend so it’s ready to be sent to the planning board in time for its meeting on Monday.

The Historic Preservation Commission will later draft a formal resolution with its recommendations to give to the council.



Lackawanna developers debut website, Facebook page



Screenshot of Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment website.

By LINDA MOSS
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Facing community opposition to their proposal, the developers of Lackawanna Plaza have launched a website and Facebook page outlining their plans “to revitalize” the site, which includes a historic train station and nearly vacant shopping center.

Pinnacle Cos. of Montclair and Hampshire Cos. of Morristown issued a press release Thursday about the new site, www.lackawannaplaza.com, and page, www.facebook.com/LackawannaPlaza.

The site “offers community members a new resource to learn more about the vision consistent with the objectives outlined in the Draft Lackawanna Plaza Redevelopment Plan, which was prepared at the direction of Montclair Township’s Master Plan,” according to the press release.

The Facebook page aims “to keep residents informed of updates and ways to show support for the dynamic new vision,” the release said.

“The developers expect that area residents will visit the new project website to learn more and connect on Facebook to support the transformation of what currently exists as a barrier in the eastern end of Montclair Center into an attractive, inviting center of activity that facilitates the economic and social benefits of sustainable growth,” according to the press release.

The site says that the Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment “will breathe new life into the Lackawanna Station shopping center and its adjoining parcels,” with “a new mix of uses, including residential and supermarket

space to add vibrancy and connectivity to the area, while respecting the historic character of the original Lackawanna station terminal building.”

It also describes the proposal, which includes 350 residential units with a roughly 65,000-square-foot supermarket,” which will replace the Pathmark that closed in November 2015.

The press release on the new website was put out by [Public Strategy Group Inc.](#), a Boston-based public relations firm “specializing in issue advocacy and land use entitlement campaigns,” according to its website. The firm’s clients include Comcast Corp., The Home Depot, Lowe’s, Walmart, Publix and AvalonBay Communities Inc.

The redevelopment plan has met opposition from residents who fear it will dwarf the historic train station, now occupied by the Pig & Prince restaurant, at the site. Opponents of the proposal also claim it has too much bulk and residential density for that part of Bloomfield Avenue, and that it will create traffic congestion.

The Township Planning Board is holding a meeting on Monday on the first draft of the site’s redevelopment plan, but it has said that it will not permit public comment at that session. The Township Council has asked the board for its recommendations on the redevelopment plan, and the planning board — on the agenda for its Monday meeting — says that the council will be the forum for public comment.

“Please note that the discussion is limited to the Planning Board and there will be no public discussion of the plan,” the board’s June 26 agenda says. “Public comment will be provided at the public hearing which will be scheduled by the Township Council.”

The Lackawanna Plaza website has a form and letter message in support of the redevelopment that people can fill out, which will then be forwarded to Montclair Mayor Robert Jackson, as well as the council and planning board, according to the site.

“As a resident of Montclair Township, I urge your strong support for the Lackawanna Plaza Redevelopment proposal,” the form says. “This proposal will enliven the eastern end of Montclair Center by creating a vibrant mix of new uses within a walk-able community to provide housing variety and a convenient, affordable supermarket that area residents need ... I respectfully urge your strong support to help this high-quality redevelopment proposal move forward to enhance the community for years to come.”

The Lackawanna Plaza website notes that “over two years of planning meetings and community input have informed the evolution of the Draft Lackawanna Plaza Redevelopment Plan, which recommends specific objectives to support revitalization of this area.”

According to the website, “This redevelopment enhances an underutilized property in a key location by fulfilling competing objectives of preserving important historic elements while introducing residential uses, two acre open space public plaza, pedestrian connectivity and a new supermarket to replace the vacant Pathmark supermarket. Most importantly, the plan synthesizes the township’s connection to its historic past and vibrancy with a new center of activity to ensure these elements resonate for generations to come.”



Planning board sounds off on council, rejects Seymour traffic study



LINDA MOSS/STAFF

Traffic engineer John Harter, left, and attorney Thomas Trautner Jr. were at Monday's Township Planning Board meeting on behalf of Pinnacle Cos. and Brookfield Properties.

By LINDA MOSS

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The Montclair Planning Board on Monday night sounded off over the Township Council taking control of one major redevelopment project in town, and sent a traffic-impact study on a second project slated for Bloomfield Avenue back to the drawing board.

At a nearly five-hour-long meeting, outgoing Vice Chairman Jason DeSalvo and several of his fellow board members criticized the council for “fast-tracking” creation of a redevelopment plan for Lackawanna Plaza. That controversial mixed-use development is slated for the site of the shopping center that used to house a Pathmark, which is also home to a historic train station, at Bloomfield Avenue and Grove Street.

DeSalvo described the council's action as a "joke," which if mishandled threatened to "bollix" traffic on Bloomfield Avenue.

In other action, the board also told the developer of the Seymour Street redevelopment, a mixed-use project with two buildings slated for the site adjacent to the Wellmont Theater, to revise and come up with additional data for its traffic-impact study for that site. According to testimony Tuesday, the project will increase traffic on Bloomfield Avenue and surrounding streets such as Roosevelt Place and South Fullerton Avenue.

The board wants information on the impact of the traffic created by the project - which includes 200 apartments, retail space, and a 7-story parking garage with office space - on Sundays and when the Wellmont holds an event, information that hadn't been collected in the report presented Monday by traffic engineer John Harter. Harter did the study for Seymour Street's developers, Pinnacle Cos. of Montclair and Brookfield Properties of Manhattan.

The board also asked Harter for what Chair John Wynn described as a "Plan B" if a major traffic-improvement project that Essex County has planned for intersections along Bloomfield Avenue never gets executed. Harter's traffic study assumes that the changes that the county wants to make will in fact happen. But the county is depending on a federal grant of \$4 million to \$5 million to do the work, and its application hasn't been approved yet.

"What I'm not seeing is a Plan B, because everyone is relying on something that you don't have control over," Wynn said.



LINDA MOSS/STAFF

Aerial view of the Seymour Street redevelopment site.

Monday's meeting was a hearing on the site plan for the Seymour Street redevelopment, which was continued until July 17. But one resident brought up the Lackawanna Plaza project, proposed by Pinnacle and Hampshire Cos. of Morristown, during the public-comment portion of the session.

William Scott suggested that the board take a comprehensive look at the various projects in development in the township when it considered applications, not consider them piecemeal and in isolation. Scott also recommended that the board move some projects along more quickly, such as Lackawanna Plaza, which will bring a supermarket to replace the Pathmark that the Fourth Ward has been lacking since November 2015.

But DeSalvo quickly interjected, pointing out that the council had recently opted to take over the drafting of a redevelopment plan for Lackawanna Plaza, to speed up the process, and then have the board just review it within a tight timeframe.

The process the council has chosen means that there will be little study or public discussion of the Lackawanna plan, compared to the many hearings and public input the board would have held before drafting a redevelopment plan, according to DeSalvo.

“What I can say is the public cannot have its cake and eat it,” he said. “If you want the exhaustive process that we’re going through here [on Seymour Street], with numerous opportunities for public input, for thoughtful discussion, to hear all points – you cannot do that in 30 days through a referral process by the town council. That’s a joke.”

Wynn said that under the usual process, the planning board would have carefully vetted the Lackawanna redevelopment plan before it went to the council.

DeSalvo told Scott, “You want a grocery store and you want it fast, that’s fine, but you don’t get to discuss the nuances of traffic, you don’t get to discuss which tree goes where, how much open space there is. You get your grocery store fast, and if it bollixes up Bloomfield Avenue, well you got your grocery store, fast.”

Board member Martin Schwartz also commented on the “fast-track” route the council had taken.

“And if you don’t like the way it [the Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment] looks, you feel there’s too much volume, it destroys a historic site, tough,” he said.

Carmel Loughman, another board member, told Scott, “You’re making some very good points, but the council is where you should address them.”

During the portion of the meeting devoted to the traffic study for Seymour Street, Harter said the new development will increase traffic by 3 1/2 percent on Bloomfield Avenue, and that the residential component of the project would generate 100 vehicular trips an hour, minus 12 trips to reflect residents who use public transportation, on weekday mornings.

The development will alleviate some traffic issues, he said. For example, the part of Seymour Street in front of the Wellmont will be permanently closed to create a public plaza, instead of just being closed part-time when the theater has an event, providing “predictability” for drivers, according to Harter.

He also said that as part of the improvements that the county is planning it will install a crosswalk and traffic light at the intersection of Seymour Street and Bloomfield Avenue, a dangerous section of the street for pedestrians to navigate now.

The county’s other planned improvements, if it gets the federal grant it is seeking, include creating a left turn lane, with a left-turn signal, on South and North Willow streets where they intersect with Bloomfield Avenue, according to Gordon Meth, a traffic consultant for the county who also testified Tuesday. That area currently has a high incidence of traffic accidents, he said.

Data shows that in peak hours when the Seymour Street project is built traffic on Roosevelt Place will increase from 80 cars an hour to about 150 vehicles, according to Meth, which raised concerns from DeSalvo.

“I just want to make sure that we’re not turning this into what is right now a residential street into a commercial street,” DeSalvo said, adding that the original goal of permitting dense development in just certain areas of town “was to not negatively impact the residential nature of Montclair.”

The county is also considering removing the traffic light on the corner of Glenridge and Bloomfield avenues, permitting only right turns at that corner, Harter and Meth told the board.

South Fullerton will be one of the development's three access points, prompting concern from board members and residents who spoke up at the meeting. They said that traffic on that road by the entrance to the Crescent Deck already gets backed up as vehicles try to cross Bloomfield Avenue, and that it would be exacerbated by additional vehicles coming from the Seymour Street development.

Meth said that putting "don't-block-the-box" striping in that part of South Fullerton could help address the problem.

Ultimately, Meth told the board, even if the county doesn't get the federal funds for the Bloomfield Avenue improvements, the traffic study and its recommendations would still be acceptable with "just a few modifications."



Residents blast Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment plan



Officials from two real estate firms explained their vision for the redevelopment of Lackawanna Plaza at Tuesday's Council meeting, disclosing that they were close to reaching a deal with ShopRite as an anchor tenant. Jon Hanson, chairman of Hampshire Cos. of Morristown, left, Todd Anderson, a principal and executive vice president of acquisitions at Hampshire, and Brian Stolar, president of Pinnacle Cos. of Montclair, were at the meeting.

DEBORAH ANN TRIPOLDI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

By LINDA MOSS

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Nearly three dozen residents on Tuesday night patiently lined up to criticize the proposed redevelopment plan for Lackawanna Plaza, complaining to the Township Council about the project's residential component, sheer mass and potential to detract from the historic train station at the site.

At the council meeting, more than three hours was dedicated to the future of Lackawanna Plaza, the session kicking off with a presentation by the developers — Pinnacle Cos. of Montclair and Hampshire Cos. of Morristown — on their vision for the redevelopment of the shopping center that once housed a Pathmark.

Officials from those real estate firms later heard residents give a litany of complaints about the proposed mixed-use redevelopment: its density of 350-residential units, the four-story height of its two buildings, its parking garages for 540 cars, the traffic problems it may create and how it will impact the site's more-than-a-hundred-year-old historic train station, potentially threatening some of its architectural features.

"Don't let it go down on your watch," Kathleen Bennett, chair of the Montclair Historic Preservation Commission, said to the council. "This is your legacy."

At the meeting Mayor Robert Jackson fielded questions from a resident and two Township Planning Board members — Carmel Loughman and Martin Schwartz — [about the local governing body's decision](#) to fast-track the redevelopment process by taking on oversight of the completion of a redevelopment plan for the property on Bloomfield Avenue.

Jackson denied that the council had "dismissed" the Planning Board, which usually is the entity that closely shepherds the redevelopment-plan process. The governing body is just setting "basic parameters" for the plan — a grocery store and some residential — "to move forward with some level of direction," according to the mayor.

"To suggest in any way that this is somehow some usurpation of the Planning Board purview is simply patently wrong," Jackson told Schwartz. "We're giving you a very broad berth here to make comments and recommendations."

The mayor also said that the council will be seeking feedback from the board on the redevelopment plan, adding that the board will also have to grant site plan approval for the final project. And both the council and board will hold public hearings on the redevelopment, according to Jackson.

Todd Anderson, a principal and executive vice president of acquisitions at Hampshire, and Pinnacle President Brian Stolar both addressed the council. Jon Hanson, chairman of Hampshire and a longtime adviser to Gov. Chris Christie, also attended the meeting. Stolar said that the redevelopment will provide "substantial annual" payment-in-lieu-of-taxes contributions to the township.

Fourth Ward residents have been clamoring for a supermarket since Lackawanna Plaza's Pathmark closed in November 2015, following the bankruptcy filing of its parent A&P. The developers initially were looking to replace the path with an A&P Fresh, but that plan fell through after the bankruptcy, Stolar said.

And even after A&P's demise, Hampshire still saw an opportunity at Lackawanna to bring in a large

supermarket to anchor the redevelopment, according to Anderson.

“We’re in discussions with ShopRite,” Anderson said. “We’re actually pursuing and close to terms with them.”

But grocery chains like ShopRite are looking for up to 65,000 square feet, larger than the old Pathmark’s 48,000 square feet, and need a lot of parking space available, according to Anderson. To meet that requirement, the developers will have to build a parking garage and offset the cost of building that garage with the residential units, he said.

The Lackawanna Plaza supermarket will be 65,000 square feet, or 1 ½ acres, architect Dean Marchetto told the council. There will be three floors of apartments above the first-floor supermarket, as well as residential units in a four-story building on the east side of Grove Street.

Many residents complained about the redevelopment’s proposed apartments, saying the township is being overdeveloped with massive projects and is losing its charm.

William Scott pointed out that there will be 1,080 residential units in developments that have been completed or approved on Bloomfield Avenue.

“The need for a supermarket cannot trump, no pun intended, the need for a sensible, historically accurate development that does not overwhelm the residents and the residential character (of Montclair),” said James Cotter, a resident of Cloverhill Place.

Councilman-at-Large Bob Russo, Fourth Ward activist Daniel Cruz and Israel Cronk, executive director of the Montclair Center Business Improvement District, all suggested that the developers consider permitting a temporary food market until a new grocery store is built.

Cronk said that for five months he has been trying, to no avail, to get permission from the developers to bring a temporary farmers’ market to Lackawanna. Under questioning by Russo, Anderson said that Hampshire will consider the suggestions, but pointed out that it does raise issues such as liability if there’s temporary use of the property.

The council has instructed consultant Phillips Preiss Grygiel LLC to complete a draft of the redevelopment plan by May 31, and on Tuesday passed a resolution asking the Planning Board to review that draft at its June 26 meeting and then make suggestions regarding it.

Jackson stressed that the council hasn’t made any decisions yet on the redevelopment.

“This is just a conceptual rendering,” said Fourth Ward Councilwoman Renée Baskerville, who has hosted a number of meetings on the redevelopment.