



## Township of Cranford - North Avenue East Redevelopment Area

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Township of Cranford seeks to encourage Downtown Revitalization and Re-investment and continue the progress in meeting the goals set out in the Township's Master Plan, the Downtown Vision Plan and 2018 Strategic Plan. In addition, redevelopment of certain properties in the Downtown and elsewhere provide the Township the opportunity to meet its Affordable Housing obligations.

#### **What is the North Avenue E area under consideration?**

The Area that was studied for possible redevelopment runs from Parking Lot 1 on N. Union Avenue, Springfield Avenue to North Avenue E up to and including the former MDTV building.



#### **Why now? Is this related to affordable housing?**

The North Avenue Redevelopment was included in the Township's [December 2018 Housing Plan Element and Fair Share Plan](#). Our current [affordable housing settlement with Fair Share Housing Center](#) requires that the Township retain this area in our Fair Share Plan, and to redevelop the site.

Notwithstanding the role this area has to play in our affordable housing plan, the Township believes redevelopment of this stretch of the North Avenue corridor is important to meet the goals of the

Township's Master Plan, the Downtown Vision Plan, Transit Village designation and the 2018 Downtown Strategic Plan.

### **What is the process?**

On February 11, 2020, the Township directed the Planning Board (PB) to conduct a study to determine if the properties met the criteria in the Local Redevelopment & Housing Law (LRHL). A presentation of that Study was made at a public hearing to the PB on August 19, 2020 and the Board voted to recommend the Township Committee consider designating this as "An Area in Need of Redevelopment with Condemnation". The Township will consider that recommendation at its September 8, 2020 Official Meeting.

### **What comes next?**

The next step is for the Township to prepare a plan for how it would like the area to be redeveloped; this is called the Redevelopment Plan. The Redevelopment Plan will be subject to resident input at public hearings of the Township Committee and Planning Board before adoption.

In the Redevelopment Plan, the Township will outline its goals for the redevelopment. We expect this to include retaining or expanding municipal parking and improving the public space for community events such as the tree lighting, street fairs and special events. We also expect the Redevelopment Plan to call for new commercial space; improving the area's walkability and connection to other areas of the downtown, and developing affordable housing.

The Township may take an interim step by issuing a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) for any developer who may have interest in the possible redevelopment of the Block 193 properties. This interim step would be completed before the adoption of a Redevelopment Plan to allow for developers in the business of redevelopment to provide the Township and residents with concept plans to evaluate the actual development potential of the site. The RFEI process will be undertaken by the Township with input from the residents of Cranford. The developers will respond to the RFEI with a conceptual plan that provides the Township with a visual impression of the proposed development along with a detailed breakout of the proposed uses, including but not limited to, their square footage, number of parking spaces and number and mix of residential units. The concept plan will also include a narrative explanation of the envisioned buildout, project budget and proforma with accompanying assumptions, the community benefits, as well as the market and zoning assumptions made to support the feasibility and proposed scale of the development.

### **How important is the Redevelopment Plan?**

The Redevelopment Plan is an important legal document that outlines how the Township wants to redevelop the properties and is specific about building designs and materials, bulk standards, permitted uses, parking, inclusion and design of public spaces and more. Once adopted, the Redevelopment Plan can only be amended after the public process of examination by the Planning Board and by Township ordinance.

### **Did Township officials speak with the property owners in this area?**

Yes. Prior to starting the Redevelopment Study, Township officials spoke repeatedly to all property owners in the affected area to discuss the process, timing, and their concerns. In addition, the property owners received advanced notice of every step of the process.

It is important to note that redevelopment of this Area is cited in the Township's Master Plan since at least December 2018, when the Township adopted the [current Housing Element and Fair Share Plan](#). The Area has also been mentioned in numerous vision and strategic plans, public surveys and studies done by the Downtown Management Corporation since 1998.

### **Why the Redevelopment Option?**

The Redevelopment designation and required Redevelopment Plan gives the Township greater control to ensure the site, an important gateway into the business district, is developed in a cohesive manner that

reflects Cranford history and standards and to avoid haphazard, piece meal development or no improvements at all.

Redevelopment and Rehabilitation are a planning strategy or tool available to municipalities to encourage improvements and investments in areas that are showing signs of decline or disinvestment. It permits the municipality to adopt uses and standards. This strategy can also be effective as part of a more comprehensive planning approach that helps to create a "Sense of Place".

**Isn't this just about building affordable housing units and getting new ratables?**

No. The Township does have an affordable housing obligation that is an important component in this area and other sites being considered for development. However, redevelopment of this area is also about sound planning and an opportunity to preserve the traditional "Main Street" and downtown revitalization principles of good design and uses and a more comprehensive approach to pedestrian, parking and traffic improvements.

The Township hopes to redevelop the North Avenue Area to keep and retain features the community already loves - an area to gather as a community for a variety of purposes - while improving the North Avenue corridor and putting underutilized properties like the MDTV building back into productive use.

**Are property owners compensated?**

Yes. Neither the Township nor developer can just "take" a property.

After the Township approves the Redevelopment Plan, the Township will designate a developer to redevelop the area consistent with the Redevelopment Plan (this is often done through an RFP process). It will be the designated developer's responsibility in the first instance to purchase the property from the property owners. In addition, any businesses displaced by the redevelopment will be eligible to receive relocation compensation for the cost and burden of having to move their business.

**What happens to the businesses?**

The LRHL requires the Redevelopment Plan include a plan for the temporary and permanent relocation of businesses.

**How can I get updates about the North Avenue E and other areas being considered for Redevelopment?**

For regular updates sign up for the Township's weekly newsletter on the Township website [www.cranfordnj.org](http://www.cranfordnj.org)