

Emerson extends redevelopment map

By **ANDREW WYRICH**
STAFF WRITER

EMERSON – The borough has issued another request for proposals for redeveloping a large portion of its central business district along Kinderkamack Road.

The new request encompasses more properties than previous RFPs and suggests that the borough would allow for larger developments in the 1.9-acre area.



LAMATINA

The new RFP includes nine tax lots that hug Kinderkamack Road from Linwood Avenue to Locust Avenue – except for two properties that have already been redeveloped by individual owners.

An attempt last year to find options to redevelop that area included only five parcels of land near the northwest intersection of Linwood Avenue and Kinderkamack Road.

In September, the borough rejected a proposal from a Paramus-based developer who wanted to build a four-story building on the parcels near the intersection. After borough officials raised reservations about that proposal, including objections to the building's proximity to Kinderkamack Road, the borough expanded the RFP to give potential developers more options, Mayor Lou Lamatina said.

"We realized we needed to expand the area," Lamatina said. "Hopefully this gets us off the ground."

Before releasing the new RFP, borough officials spoke with several developers to get suggestions for how to put together a request that would generate more bids. The request that was issued in September yielded only one proposal.

Issues a revised request for proposals

In addition, the borough created a mockup of what officials would like to see built in the new 9-acre area. The mockup includes two buildings – one on Kinderkamack Road that is three stories tall, and a four-story structure that would sit behind an existing building – and a parking garage. The borough would like commercial stores to occupy the ground floor of the buildings, with residential units above.

In addition, any developer the borough selects would need to have a plan that would limit "any disturbance" to current businesses that operate in the area, according to the RFP.

Feb. 23 deadline

The Borough Council voted 4-2 last week to circulate the RFP. Councilwoman Danielle DiPaola said she voted

against the proposal because it states that the use of eminent domain was listed as a possibility.

The borough set a deadline of Feb. 23 for developers to submit proposals. After that, bidders will be invited to answer questions at a council meeting. The council will then vote on one plan, which would allow the developer to begin attempting to acquire the properties – which include an electronic cigarette store, a barber shop, a nail salon, a liquor store and the borough's ambulance building.

The plan to redevelop Emerson's downtown dates back to 2006, when the council designated nearly 20 acres along Kinderkamack Road as an "area of redevelopment," encouraging the building of two- or three-story buildings along that corridor.

The Borough Council voted 4-2 last week to circulate the request for proposals.

If a developer responds with a proposal that includes a building of more than three stories, it would need to be presented to the borough's Land Use Board, which could revise and readopt the council's redevelopment plan.

"Once this gets done, people will see it and say that it looks great, the sky didn't fall, our taxes are stabilizing and Times Square didn't come to downtown," Lamatina said. "In the short term, however, I don't envision other RFPs going out until we see how this one goes."

Email: wyrich@northjersey.com
Twitter: @AndrewWyrich