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Hicksville Downtown Zoning Code Town of Oyster Bay December 8, 2020

Almost eleven years ago, the Hicksville community came together to develop a vision for revitalization. Through public visioning meetings and the dedication of the revitalization committee, a direction was set for the reimagining of the area of downtown Hicksville close to Broadway and the train station. Vision co-chaired this revitalization committee. These initial efforts led to Hicksville being awarded the \$10 million DRI grant in 2017, a major upgrade to the train station and Nassau County developing a Complete Streets plan for the area. This rezoning will codify the changes the community has been working toward into a document that will shape its future development.

Vision is pleased to see that the zoning code and accompanying design guidelines are designed to encourage a walkable mixed use and human scale of development in an area that has long been dominated by parking lots and traffic. It requires a sidewalk realm that is comfortable and attractive and encourages those in the area to walk between destinations. Unlike many codes, it is not a one size fits all, but rather it is tailored to the conditions and context of the different roads and areas within the downtown zone.

Zoning Code

Vision has some minor constructive criticism of the code, but overall the code is a big step forward for the Hicksville community. These suggestions are not to imply that the code is faulty, but only to improve it further.

The inclusion of minimum unit sizes, townhouse widths, storefront widths, lot sizes and lot widths make affordability more difficult to achieve and reduce the diversity of options to potential residents and shopkeepers. Allowing smaller units and smaller building sizes creates a greater variety to choose from and a more organic form of development. Additionally, these minimums raise the bar of entry for smaller, possibly more local developers that may want to build more incrementally scaled projects. Rather than a minimum unit size or width, in certain situations perhaps an average can be used instead to allow for a range of sizes, for people with different needs and budgets. While a minimum lot size may serve to protect smaller historic structures from demolition and redevelopment, other methods are available to achieve that goal.

Vision would also encourage a requirement for a range of affordability above the requirements of the Long Island Workforce Housing Act. Due to high land costs and a long entitlement process, the market tends to only produce high end, luxury units unless required otherwise. Requiring a minimum of 20% of units to be affordable to those making less than 120% of AMI can ensure that there are residences for people at a variety of income levels.

The parking requirements are a bit high for a location with high access to transit, but understandable given history of parking issues in the area. To promote a more efficient use of available parking changing a minimum of one reserved spot per unit to a maximum of one reserved spot per unit while maintaining the overall parking count can ensure that spots don't sit empty when not needed and remove the incentive for multiple car ownership per household.

Design guidelines

Overall the design guidelines do a good job of describing the elements of making an environment that is interesting and attractive to those in it. The examples provided are good suggestions for appropriate architecture and design elements within a downtown area.

In the section about scale and massing it is understood that it is not desirable to have long, uninterrupted and monotonous facades. However, too much variety for the sake of variety can lead to chaotic facades that are jarring and distracting. Rather than requiring a minimum amount of variety, the architectural elements should be arranged to form a unified whole that is harmonious with the surrounding buildings. Interest does not have to come in the form of shifting wall planes and a variety of rooflines, but can also be in classic proportions and smaller, human scale details on the elements themselves. While difficult to codify, the goals should be to achieve unity and grace, human scale and at least the appearance of a durable long lasting building.

Overall Vision strongly supports this new zoning code and design guidelines and is happy to see progress being made in the Hicksville community. We hope that this code will aid in the transformation of downtown Hicksville into an attractive and vibrant destination.

Vision Long Island advances more livable, economically sustainable, and environmentally responsible growth on Long Island through Smart Growth. Smart Growth focuses on infill, re-development, and open space preservation. It supports mixed-use, mixed-income communities that are convenient, attractive, pedestrian-friendly, and that make affordable housing and public transportation desirable and realistic.

Over the past 20 years Vision has counseled downtown Villages and Towns, and has been a resource for the County, State, and Federal governments, as well as the business and civic community on downtown revitalization, planning and infrastructure.

Vision has made over 2400 presentations, performed over 25 community visionings and advanced over 100 public and private planning projects towards implementing the goals of Smart Growth. Over 13,000 units of transit oriented development have been approved in our local municipalities with the support of Vision Long Island.