

James M. Rutala Associates, LLC

Memorandum

Date: March 17, 2025
To: Ventnor City Planning Board
From: Jim Rutala, Rutala Associates
Re: Consistency Determination - Ventnor Professional Campus Redevelopment Plan

This purpose of this memorandum is to determine if the Ventnor Professional Campus Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the Ventnor City Master Plan of 1988, Reexamination Reports of 2006 and 2016, and with County and State Plan guidelines.

We have conducted a thorough review of the Ventnor Professional Campus Redevelopment Plan, considering its conformity with existing policies, community goals, and the overall vision for economic and community development within Ventnor City, as stated in the planning documents in effect for the city.

As stated in New Jersey Statute 40A:12A-7:

- a. No redevelopment project shall be undertaken or carried out, except in accordance with a redevelopment plan adopted by ordinance of the municipal governing body, upon its finding that the specifically delineated project area is located in an area in need of redevelopment or in an area in need of rehabilitation, or in both, according to criteria set forth in section 5 or section 14 of P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-5 or 40A:12A-14), as appropriate. The redevelopment plan shall include an outline for the planning, development, redevelopment, or rehabilitation of the project area sufficient to indicate:
 1. Its relationship to definite local objectives as to appropriate land uses, density of population, improved traffic and public transportation, public utilities, recreational and community facilities, and other public improvements.
 2. Proposed land uses and building requirements in the project area.
 3. Adequate provision for the temporary and permanent relocation, as necessary, of residents in the project area, including an estimate of the extent to which decent, safe, and sanitary dwelling units affordable to displaced residents will be available to them in the existing local housing market.
 4. An identification of any property within the redevelopment area which is proposed to be acquired in accordance with the redevelopment plan.
 5. Any significant relationship of the redevelopment plan to (a) the master plans of contiguous municipalities, (b) the master plan of the county in which the municipality is located, and (c) the State Development and Redevelopment

Plan adopted pursuant to the "State Planning Act," P.L. 1985, c.398 (C.52:18A-196 et al.).

- b. A redevelopment plan may include the provision of affordable housing in accordance with the "Fair Housing Act," P.L. 1985, c.222 (C.52:27D-301 et al.) and the housing element of the municipal master plan.
- c. The redevelopment plan shall describe its relationship to pertinent municipal development regulations as defined in the "Municipal Land Use Law," P.L. 1975, c.291 (C.40:55D-1 et seq.). The redevelopment plan shall supersede applicable provisions of the development regulations of the municipality or constitute an overlay zoning district within the redevelopment area. When the redevelopment plan supersedes any provision of the development regulations, the ordinance adopting the redevelopment plan shall contain an explicit amendment to the zoning district map included in the zoning ordinance. The zoning district map, as amended, shall indicate the redevelopment area to which the redevelopment plan applies. Notwithstanding the provisions of the "Municipal Land Use Law," P.L. 1975, c.291 (C.40:55D-1 et seq.) or of other law, no notice beyond that required for adoption of ordinances by the municipality shall be required for the hearing on or adoption of the redevelopment plan or subsequent amendments thereof.
- d. All provisions of the redevelopment plan shall be either substantially consistent with the municipal master plan or designed to effectuate the master plan, but the municipal governing body may adopt a redevelopment plan which is inconsistent with or not designed to effectuate the master plan by affirmative vote of a majority of its full authorized membership with the reasons for so acting set forth in the redevelopment plan.
- e. Prior to the adoption of a redevelopment plan or revision or amendment thereto, the planning board shall transmit to the governing body, within 45 days after referral, a report containing its recommendation concerning the redevelopment plan. This report shall include an identification of any provisions in the proposed redevelopment plan which are inconsistent with the master plan, recommendations concerning these inconsistencies, and any other matters as the board deems appropriate. The governing body, when considering the adoption of a redevelopment plan or revision or amendment thereof, shall review the report of the planning board and may approve, disapprove, or change any recommendation by a vote of a majority of its full authorized membership and shall record in its minutes the reasons for not following the recommendations. Failure of the planning board to transmit its report within the required 45 days shall relieve the governing body from the requirements of this subsection with regard to the pertinent proposed redevelopment plan or revision or amendment thereof. Nothing in this subsection shall diminish the

applicability of the provisions of subsection d. of this section with respect to any redevelopment plan or revision or amendment thereof.

- f. The governing body of a municipality may direct the planning board to prepare a redevelopment plan or an amendment or revision to a redevelopment plan for a designated redevelopment area. After completing the redevelopment plan, the planning board shall transmit the proposed plan to the governing body for its adoption. The governing body, when considering the proposed plan, may amend or revise any portion of the proposed redevelopment plan by an affirmative vote of the majority of its full authorized membership and shall record in its minutes the reasons for each amendment or revision. When a redevelopment plan or amendment to a redevelopment plan is referred to the governing body by the planning board under this subsection, the governing body shall be relieved of the referral requirements of subsection e. of this section.

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this Redevelopment Plan is to revitalize and redevelop a significant site along Ventnor Avenue, encompassing 2.305 acres and nearly an entire city block. The site currently consists of two large two-story brick buildings, formerly used as the Ventnor Avenue School and Troy Avenue School, surface parking, and landscaped areas. Designated an area in need of redevelopment in 2023, the site presents a prime opportunity for mixed-use development for both commercial and residential uses.

The Plan envisions adaptive reuse of the historic school structure alongside new development, providing diverse housing opportunities, modernized commercial spaces, and improved amenities for the public. This approach aligns with the city's broader goals of preserving its historical character, promoting economic growth, and enhancing infrastructure. Through careful site planning and design flexibility, the Plan ensures efficient land use while fostering a vibrant, mixed-use community.

The former Ventnor Avenue school building will undergo an analysis to determine the feasibility for its redevelopment and improvement. In addition to commercial uses, this building may potentially be suited for new residential units. The building may also include a first-level expansion of commercial uses to bring those uses closer to Ventnor Avenue, including new opportunities for a variety of uses with cafés and al-fresco dining, which have recently increased in popularity throughout the city. The potential for the future reuse and repurposing of this part of the property is built into the plan to meet with changing market conditions.

The remaining portions of the property away from Ventnor Avenue are better suited for residential uses, which are compatible with existing residential uses lining the opposite sides of Troy, New Haven, and Winchester Avenues. A potential site plan layout, depicting 36 new

residential units with an interior roadway, has been included in the Redevelopment Plan. Recently the city is trending toward townhome development on other properties in or near the business district, which would be a very appropriate and reasonable application for this specific property.

Parking will need to be provided for the new residential units. Such parking may be provided beneath the units as well as in open driveways in front of each unit, meeting or exceeding RSIS requirements.

Any proposed internal streets shall be developed with details and materials to meet Ventnor City requirements subject to the City Engineer's review and approval.

Landscaping of all open areas is a requirement of the Redevelopment Plan. Landscaping is to include lawn areas, tree plantings, foundation and other plantings, along with ground cover in planting beds.

Beautification of the property and project is paramount to the redevelopment. This beautification will be not only in the building façades and array on the site, but it further comes from the landscape elements to be designed throughout the entire property, maximizing green space to the greatest extent feasible.

PLAN EVALUATION

VENTNOR CITY MASTER PLAN & REEXAMINATION REPORTS

The Ventnor City Master Plan Reexamination Report was created in 1988. The following are among the objectives identified by the plan:

- Development regulations shall protect and preserve existing stable residential neighborhoods.
- Existing commercial businesses will be supported and new businesses examined for their community contributions.
- Land development decisions must be considerate of available infrastructure.

The 2006 Reexamination includes these expanded objectives:

- The image of Ventnor City as a family-oriented beach and resort community with its own special identity must be maintained.
- Development regulations shall protect and preserve existing stable residential neighborhoods.
- The continuation of commercial business areas will be encouraged and new types of businesses examined for their potential community contribution.

The 2016 Reexamination includes these expanded objectives:

- Encourage redevelopment that supports economic growth and revitalization of underutilized properties.
- Promote a mix of residential and commercial uses to create vibrant, walkable neighborhoods.
- Preserve and adaptively reuse historic structures to maintain community character.
- Enhance infrastructure and public amenities to support new development.
- Provide diverse housing opportunities that meet the needs of current and future residents.

Evaluation:

We find that the Ventnor Professional Campus Redevelopment Plan supports these objectives by proposing mixed-use development that enhances commercial activity along Ventnor Avenue while introducing modern residential opportunities. The plan emphasizes preserving the historical character of existing structures and improving infrastructure. The Plan's vision for revitalizing the former school buildings into a professional campus with residential and commercial uses complements Ventnor's identity and aligns with the city's goal of supporting economic growth through new business opportunities while maintaining a balanced, family-friendly community.

ATLANTIC COUNTY & NEW JERSEY STATE PLANS

Atlantic County's current Master Plan was created in 2018 and includes the following objectives:

- Support efforts to revitalize neighborhoods and rehabilitate older housing stock.
- Promote a mix of housing types to support the demands of a changing population.
- Promote quality growth and development in areas where capital facilities are available.

Ventnor City is located within Metropolitan Planning Area (PA1) of New Jersey's 2001 State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) as well as within a Coastal Area Facilities Review Act (CAFRA) Urban Center, regions which are targeted for development. The SDRP states a goal of revitalizing the state's urban areas through housing investment and capitalizing on existing assets.

Evaluation:

We find that the Ventnor Professional Campus Redevelopment Plan is in alignment with Atlantic County's Master Plan and with New Jersey's State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

By transforming this under-utilized parcel, the Ventnor Professional Campus Redevelopment is centrally aligned with the goal of revitalizing neighborhoods. The plan will contribute to the diversity and overall supply of the housing stock available in Ventnor City, and it will contribute to quality growth and development through mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development which expands the city's economic base by drawing on existing capital resources.

CONCLUSION

Based on this evaluation, we find that the Ventnor Professional Campus Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Ventnor City Master Plan of 1988, the 2006 and 2016 Reexamination Reports, and the broader goals of the Atlantic County and New Jersey State Plans. We recommend to the Ventnor City Planning Board find this Plan consistent with the city's long-term vision for its development goals.