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Borough of Rutherford NJ

## From the desk of Mayor Frank Nunziato

There has recently been discussion that some Council members and myself are promoting “overdevelopment” in Rutherford. If you take away anything from this statement, please understand this: As a lifelong Rutherford resident who chose to raise my family in my hometown, I have no desire to “over” develop any aspect of Rutherford. But I also have no desire to watch my hometown become stagnant and inflexible as the world around it changes. I believe the addition of residents to the Downtown area would provide a much needed boost to our local economy and help preserve Rutherford’s status as a place to visit, dine and shop.

I acknowledge that the Borough has not always effectively communicated what is happening in town. Much of the first few months of my term as Mayor has been consumed by our municipal response to the pandemic. And the silver lining of that has been that I have learned more about messaging and communication and how it can be used to better serve Rutherford in the future. I will use what I’ve learned to continue to move Rutherford forward.

As Rutherford becomes an increasingly desirable place to live and work, the Borough should proactively take measures to guide sensible development. Increased demand will push property owners to seek to optimize the profitability of their investments. Development can happen slowly, over time, while property owners and builders retain the freedom to create a haphazard patchwork of properties that suit their own needs. Or, the Borough can acknowledge the inevitable changes that people will need in a twenty-first century Rutherford - such as increased rates and more foot traffic to bolster our Downtown. By using the tools we have, such as the designation of redevelopment zones that compel builders to enter into negotiations with the Borough regarding what they build, we can have a better say over the evolution of Rutherford. That doesn’t mean we have to change the essence of Rutherford, but we do have to remember that Park Ave was originally designed for horse and buggies, and has been awkwardly adapted for cars and delivery trucks. As a lifelong resident, I love the quaintness of our Downtown as much as anyone. But freezing it in time at the expense of adaptability is in no one’s best interest.

As I’ve publicly stated before, there are some things that I would not support, such as any multi-unit redevelopment on, or changing the character of, Lincoln Avenue or any other established, beautiful residential neighborhood. Furthermore, I would only support development within our designated Transit Village area.

[The Borough Administrator has compiled a list of projects on the Borough website that are currently in various stages of planning.](#)

This is the first of what I intend to be more information pushed out to help the public better understand municipal redevelopment processes.

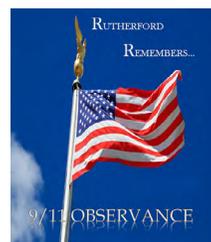
These projects are each a unique work in progress and individually subject to negotiation. In the instance of Agnew Place, allowance of “up to 6 stories” or “up to 8 stories” does not mean that those are the definitive numbers. They’re the maximum number of stories allowable to use as a basis for ensuing discussions about what the Borough would like to see included in the property, such as increased retail or parking.

Renderings you may have seen presented or circulating on social media should be considered a builder’s wish list, not a final draft approved by the Borough.

I have also been approached by many people who have a basic misunderstanding of what a PILOT means. It DOES NOT mean that the Borough receives no taxes. What a PILOT does is it directly gives the Borough 95% of the negotiated payment on the improvements by the property, as opposed to the 30% the Borough receives on traditional taxes once school and county taxes are deducted, the land is still taxed traditionally where the county and school get their statutory share. Most importantly, a negotiated PILOT payment is normally greater than the 30% the Borough would receive if the project was traditionally taxed.

It is our goal to promote smart development. If there is an impact on our schools, I would be willing to engage in a discussion with

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**September 11th Observance**  
The Borough will honor the memories of the six Rutherford residents whom we lost during the terror attacks of Sept. 11th, 2001 in a ceremony this Friday at 6:00 pm in Lincoln Park.

As discussed at the August 18th Mayor and Council meeting, the Borough would like to keep public attendance to a minimum due to COVID-19 concerns. The ceremony will be recorded and shared with the community via the Borough website, Facebook and Twitter accounts immediately following its conclusion. Attendees are requested to wear masks and practice social distancing.

## *From Mayor Nunziato Continued...*

the Board of Education regarding a possible financial agreement wherein the Borough would provide a portion of the PILOT payment to the Board of Education to help offset any costs related to public school children residing at a new development.

Additionally, there are certain realities that accompany responsible community planning. One of which is a legal obligation to provide a certain amount of affordable housing units as dictated by the Mount Laurel Doctrine and an agreement with the Fair Share Housing Center.

To avoid Builders' Remedy lawsuits and allow for responsible growth and redevelopment, the Borough engaged in a multi-year negotiation with the Fair Share Housing Center. FSHC is a non-profit organization that compels municipal cooperation and participation in affordable housing programs through advocacy and litigation.

More information about Builders' Remedies can be found on the Borough website.

Affordable housing obligations are not unique to Rutherford. Municipalities that have failed to comply with FSHC agreements routinely lose in NJ courts when challenged by developers seeking to build affordable housing on their own terms.

Rutherford's FSHC agreement can be found on the Borough's website in its entirety.

In the next few years, Rutherford will be gaining access to 1.2 miles of County Park on its northern border. 1.2 miles of abandoned railway that residents have never been able to properly utilize will soon become part of the recreational fabric of the town. So, while it's possible that new structures will be built, so will a public greenspace. Sensible change requires balance and I believe the future of Rutherford will be built on such balance.

However you feel about redevelopment, I just ask that you pay attention to the details and facts of each project and follow its own unique progress. I understand that this topic is worth debating and I encourage residents to attend Mayor and Council meetings to better understand the redevelopment process. But good debate must take place using facts. Misinformation undermines the systems put in place that have guided the development of this town for over a century.

Please know that I would never do anything to hurt the town I grew up in and chose to raise my family in - but that I do envision a Rutherford that builds upon it's wonderful history while adapting for the future.

## **Councilwoman Maria Begg-Roberson**

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### **Support our Local Businesses**

Rutherford has a beautiful downtown with highly engaged business owners. Councilwoman McGowan and I spent a Friday afternoon visiting local businesses to learn about their needs during this challenging time. Our businesses have found such creative ways to stay open while meeting residents needs despite the difficulty of the pandemic. Some of our business owners are Rutherford residents who have been deeply invested in our town for many years. Let's continue to use our money and influence to support Rutherford's local economy. Some ways to support our businesses are by enjoying outdoor dining and ordering takeout, buying gift cards from local stores and restaurants, tipping servers generously, and promoting positive experiences on your social media.

### **Anti-Idling Resolution**

A resolution was passed on August 18th supporting anti-idling measures and idle free zones. The Rutherford Green Team led the way in promoting these measures and bringing this resolution to the Mayor and Council. Did you know that leaving your car running for more than 10 minutes uses the amount of fuel that you would use driving for five miles? 25% of children in New Jersey are asthmatic. Simple actions like shutting your engine off when you are not driving, will make such a difference to the environment. Thank you to the Green team for continuing to make our borough more environmentally friendly!

## **More Council Reports on the following page**



**Youth Fall Sports Registration  
Open until Friday, 9/11**



**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!  
FALL 2020 SPORTS**

- FREE RUTGERS CERTIFICATION CLASSES
- HELP US PROVIDE SAFE PLAY!
- FREE CDC CONCUSSION SAFETY TRAINING!

## Councilwoman Stephanie McGowan

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### Access for All South Bergen County Zoom Forum

Several South Bergen County Access for All committees participated in a Zoom forum meeting on Thursday, August 27, 2020. The meeting featured the New Jersey Ombudsman for Intellectual and Physical Disabilities, Mr. Paul Aronsohn and Bergen County Commissioner Tracey Zur. The meeting was hosted and moderated by Hasbrouck Heights Councilman Chris Hillman and Rutherford Councilwoman Stephanie McGowan.

The meeting addressed the challenges faced in our communities specific to the uniquely-abled. Mr. Aronsohn provided critical information for residents and committee members on how to assist families in advocating for services, and Commissioner Zur discussed funding and program support from Bergen County for many of our causes. The Access for All Rutherford committee was able to highlight the rededication of Kidspot as an accessible play and meeting space, as well as, the committee's commitment to encourage businesses to be handicapped accessible and the need for supportive housing during development discussions.

Because of the success of this forum, Councilman Hillman and Councilwoman McGowan will host a series of monthly meetings that will address topics such as Supportive Housing and Transition Planning in October and November. Members of our community can contact Ombudsman Aronsohn at paul.aronsohn@treas.nj.gov with questions or if assistance is needed. Information regarding how to join these future zoom forums' will be made available on our Borough website by the Access for All Rutherford committee.



**DINING OUT  
RUTHERFORD**

**Wednesdays & Thursdays!**  
*Rain dates will be announced as necessary*

**5-10pm**

**Through September!**

Here is something you can do while you are home to help our community!

**EVERYONE COUNTS!**

**It's anonymous!  
It's safe!**

**What it means for you:**

- More state and federal aid
- More school aid
- Better chances of securing grant money
- More representation in Congress

**Everyone needs to be counted!**

**Deadline Sept. 30th!**