



Rockland PLUS

CONSIDERING THE ENVIRONMENT DURING PLANNING: SEQRA ASSESSMENT

Every development plan must be reviewed as part of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) process. As you plan your project consider how to minimize any environmental impact.

Before you review this document be sure to look at the ppt/pdf of “Our Project” so you can see what is in the project plan. Remember as you complete this document it should be based possible “impacts” to the community from the project. In a true SEQRA process, if there were issues that arose with a proposed development plan they would be submitted by community members or ‘affected parties’. For this activity you will be looking at the project from the community perspective. Be sure to relook at the SEQRA section of the website: <http://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/edu/plus/SEQRA.html>

Topic	Issues to consider in the development of your project (note not every item below will relate to your project plan.)	Will your planning address listed concerns?	Explain how your development plans will address this issue, and if need be mitigate/make changes that will reduce any negative impacts.
<p>Built Infrastructure: building density & heights</p> <p>5 Cs of Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Community Character *Compatibility *Conservation *Capacity *Consistency 	<p>• <i>Design concerns – Consider as you plan if any building you propose will be the right height and density for the area? (Will proposed buildings block the view for existing residents?). Remember the 5 Cs of Planning from the website and consider them as you plan.</i></p> <p>The existing mall design is a massive cement block design, too large a structure in its footprint and height and not designed to blend with the community character, conservation or any of the 5 Cs of Planning. The height is overwhelming, unattractive and an eyesore.</p> <p>While the centralizing of shopping can be a good plan, two big issues with the mall are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Current design of this mall requires everyone to drive to it 2) Stores are chain stores competing with/forcing out local business 	<p>YES as best we can.</p>	<p>The infrastructure for this space currently exists, but our design would adjust the exterior of the building to minimize its visual and environmental impact. Some adjustments to the architectural designs on the building exterior and increased plantings around the entire property would minimize its big boxy look and feel and improve drainage, minimizing flooding as best as is possible with this low lying site which will still have a large impervious footprint.</p> <p>The building density has some good features but requires bringing people to the space without causing traffic congestion- so we focused on improved transit to the mall with walkways, bikepaths and a shuttle making this single destination multiuse facility a positive addition to the community. We also propose that during the holiday shopping season a regular shuttle be put in place to help with the significant increase in traffic.</p>

Topic	Issues to consider in the development of your project (note not every item below will relate to your project plan.)	Will your planning address listed concerns?	Explain how your development plans will address this issue, and if need be mitigate/make changes that will reduce any negative impacts.
Historic Preservation	<p>• <i>Think of Community Character - plan to match existing landscaping and architectural features and retain the same feel and sense. What about preserve historic markers or structures?</i></p> <p>The existing structure does not blend with the Area or incorporate the adjacent historic graveyard.</p>	YES	<p>Our redesign will improve the blending of this building into the community. We use greenscaping (landscaping and park land) to bring back more of a match to the surrounding space. We will also add more variety to the exterior of the building to help it to look more like the older Rockland community.</p> <p>There is a historic graveyard fenced off by the parking structure of the mall, which we will integrate into the exterior land use of the mall. It will remain separated as a historic site, but we will improve signage and connect it so it flows with the open land uses of the center.</p>
Population Density	<p><i>Will an influx of people to your target area impact the neighboring people and uses? How can you minimize the impact of your plan?</i></p> <p>Contains a significant number of stores designed to bring people in from throughout the region – not a community shopping mall. The majority of these are chain stores, not local businesses.</p> <p>The location, close to the thruway, helps with access and traffic issues, although residents in West Nyack along Rte. 59 are impacted by the constant traffic.</p>	YES as best we can.	<p>Our plan would reduce the number of shops, especially the number of chain stores, yet leaving a few of the big name stores to provide some anchors for sales. Local business would be encouraged to participate as part of the overall design, and by adding walkability, bikeability and park and recreation space outdoors we would make it more a community destination. Adding housing on the top floor would reduce the huge volume of stores competing against local community stores, alleviate sprawl, and assist in providing housing for a range of needs and budgets.</p>
Affordable Housing	<p>• <i>If housing is part of your plan can it include affordability? Can you plan for a mix of types and costs (single family, condos, apartments)? Is housing paired with other uses (such as commercial)?</i></p> <p>There is a lack of affordable and entry level housing in the Rockland area for people on a fixed and rising income.</p>	YES	<p>Housing is a part of our plan - we have allocated 15% of the housing units being added to be affordable housing with a strong focus on seniors in order to bring them closer to centralized shopping and support.</p>

Topic	Issues to consider in the development of your project (note not every item below will relate to your project plan.)	Will your planning address listed concerns?	Explain how your development plans will address this issue, and if need be mitigate/make changes that will reduce any negative impacts.
Transportation - Walkable Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How can you plan so you don't add more traffic to the local roads than they can handle?</i> • <i>Can public transit be part of the plan?</i> • <i>Focus on safety and walkability for all ages.</i> <p>The existing mall has introduced transportation issues in this area already, as it is most accessible by car. There is a distinct lack of bike and walking access – Route 59 is a traffic highway.</p>	YES	<p>Transportation is already an issue, both to and at the mall, especially during cold weather and the holidays. A major piece of this project is working with the County to provide walkability to this site. We will encourage walkways and bikeways to help with alleviating daily traffic, including pushing for a pedestrian friendly walkway the full extent of Route 59. Additionally we plan to partner with Steps to a Healthier Rockland to encourage regular walks to the mall with a social piece built into the program. We plan to establish a shuttle service from western Nyack, and the length of Rte. 59 to minimize traffic and parking needs. We will work with the County to develop a prototype monorail transit from Nyack to Ramapo & designate Park & Ride areas with links to the Bus Rapid Transit.</p>
Water Usage: Groundwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is there adequate water available for this use?</i> • <i>Have you planned to manage/limit the water usage?</i> <p>The space has already been accounted for in the County water usage, although the switch to residential for 1/4 of the space might increase that water usage requirement.</p>	YES	<p>The residential units would be built with low flow toilets, & shower heads, faucet aerators which mix water with air to cut down on water usage (each saves ~280 gal/month), and instant water heating – each will minimize water usage within the units. We will also explore the use of grey-water reuse for the unit toilets. We have the opportunity to be a leader in water reuse and conservation and we have built into our plans this approach.</p>
Runoff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Have you considered permeable surfaces (rain gardens, limited asphalt, built swales¹ to collect water before it runs off)</i> <p>Area has huge drainage issues – the exterior is currently a massive parking lot in need of planted areas to absorb water, and swales and other landscape features for water collection and retention</p>	YES	<p>We are reducing the amount of asphalt and adding planted beds in the parking areas to retain water. Adding curb cuts also helps absorb run off. Adding changes in elevation to the flat parking area with swales and berms will help slow the water. Adding a drainage bed into the landscape design will allow water to move into the land. Adding rain gardens to the plan will help hold water on the property reducing flooding, and adding plants on the roof will also absorb water currently sheeting off into the parking areas.</p>

¹ A **swale** is a low section of land built into a landscaped area that is designed to collect, slow and hold water. The goal is to stop water from ‘sheeting’ too quickly causing excessive runoff. The term can refer to a natural landscape feature or one that is created.

Topic	Issues to consider in the development of your project (note not every item below will relate to your project plan.)	Will your planning address listed concerns?	Explain how your development plans will address this issue, and if need be mitigate/make changes that will reduce any negative impacts.
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Have you looked at prior use of the site? Are there concerns about contamination that might limit plans for reuse of the site?</i> <p>The prior use did include some toxic activities – old landfills.</p>	YES	The old landfill left toxic soils behind. Much of this was just paved over and so any reduction in the parking lot pavement will expose some of this potentially toxic material. Careful assessments must be done as the asphalt is being removed to determine if the soil beneath is contaminated. Some of the soil may need to be removed and new soil brought into the area. Since outdoor recreation is included as a key aspect of the design it is essential that clean up be complete.
Plant Use & Animal Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Should the project include parkland? If so how much space should be included, and should it be recreational or open space?</i> • <i>Can you protect existing open areas?</i> • <i>Can you protect existing plants and animals (especially native or threatened)</i> <p>Parkland in the existing space is currently a ferris wheel within the mall! The surrounding land is primarily a parking lot. There is no threat to existing native or endangered flora or fauna.</p>	YES as best we can.	The proposed project is a vast improvement over the existing condition. While there is nothing left to protect in terms of parkland, our proposal would add some outdoor greenspace, and park and recreation space and we envision adding some plants indoors as well, through hydroponic vegetables, and where there is natural light, some large planter trees and shrubs.
Pollutants – Air, Light, Noise?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How can you plan to reduce air quality impacts? Impacts from lighting to neighboring homes, or wildlife? Increase noise levels?</i> <p>The existing mall attracts a large number of vehicles that give off emissions. Concentrated lighting is a source of light pollution.</p>	YES	<p>The new design will provide preferential parking to hybrid vehicles, and through adding walkways, bikeways and the monorail we are encouraging alternative methods of travel to the mall.</p> <p>New uses would not cause any additional light or noise to the existing community. We will change some of the outdoor lighting to use LED and Induction lighting to improve energy efficiency - continuing to provide a safe environment is a key focus and these lights meet all the requirements.</p>

Topic	Issues to consider in the development of your project (note not every item below will relate to your project plan.)	Will your planning address listed concerns?	Explain how your development plans will address this issue, and if need be mitigate/make changes that will reduce any negative impacts.
Energy Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Think of how you can minimize the overall demand for energy in the region?</i> • <i>Can you generate renewable energy onsite?</i> <p>There is intense use of electricity both within the stores and the common areas of the existing Mall.</p>	YES	We are looking at LEED planning tools, and propose to use passive solar through windows and skylights in the 4 th floor residential units. We will use all energy STAR appliances in the units as well to reduce energy consumption. All the inside lighting will be compact florescent (CFL) and LED lighting.
Sewage treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How will you deal with sewage that is generated? Is there capacity or a plan for the added waste or can it be treated onsite?</i> <p>A small amount of additional sewage might be generated from the housing included on the fourth floor.</p>	NO	<p>There is no plan to treat sewage onsite as this would be too costly, but the project is not expected to generate enough addition sewage to cause a problem for overall capacity in Rockland County.</p> <p>The topic of how Counties and townships handle sewage with treatment, separation of solids and liquids, and return of the treated wastewater to streams and rivers is one that is under discussion at all levels of government. This is a large topic that will certainly be reviewed carefully as a topic in sustainable planning.</p>
Other Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What else might be a community or neighborhood impact? Consider environmental, social or economic?</i> <p>Job Loss from reduction in commercial spaces?</p>	POSSIBLY	With the reduction in commercial space there is the concern there would be lost jobs for the community, however with an increase in locally owned business we feel that many of the sales and management jobs that would be lost would be lower end jobs. With the diversity of new uses involved in the outside space, the transit plans the farmer's market space, and added community services it is believed we will offset any losses in the job market.