

**Beacon Transit Oriented Development Q&A**  
presented by the City Council, February 7, 2010

On December 10th the City Council held a meeting with the Main Street Corridor Committee and Beacon Deserves Better Committee. Also in attendance were City Administrator Meredith Robson, the City Planner David Stolman and County Planner John Clarke. The following questions were asked by the participants at that meeting. The answers are intended to be objective and factual. While there are some values implied the answers do not represent a position or a final opinion. The city council is open to input from all concerned citizens and groups before a vote on the Beacon Transit Oriented Development Zone will be held. The statements made in this paper are non-binding and represent the facts as they are known to be when this paper was written.

**1) What is the Beacon Transit Oriented Development**

Answer: The Potential Beacon Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) would be a 22 acre development located at the Beacon Metro-North rail station, approximately ½mile from Beacon's Main Street. While the TOD is still conceptual, requiring an MTA competitive solicitation and resultant developer interest, it is expected that this project would develop up to a maximum of 616 residential units and approximately 120,000 square feet of commercial space (of which 40% or 48,000 will be retail, personal service and/or restaurants). The fiscal impacts study commissioned by the City estimated that the residential units would be 1- and 2-bedroom rental apartments and/or for-sale condominiums, ranging in size from 1,150 to 1,350 square feet in size. The Potential TOD is expected to offer primarily market-rate, high-end residential product with ten percent workforce (affordable) housing<sup>1</sup>. The fiscal impact analysis estimated that market-rate rents would range from approximately \$1,400 to \$2,300 per month, and market-rate sale prices would range from approximately \$315,000 to \$405,000. These price points would be achievable due to the unique character of the development and are based on rent and sale prices that have occurred in other riverfront developments, including Peekskill and Haverstraw.

**2) Why is the MTA requiring a zoning change before any other development process?**

Answer: As there is a high degree of uncertainty in the current economic climate, it is best to have a realistic TOD offering supported by local zoning. The property is owned/controlled by the MTA; they are not the developer. The developer will be selected by the MTA based on responses to an RFP (request for proposals) which will be distributed broadly to attract the best possible developer. The MTA believes that if the City enacts TOD zoning before the RFP is issued, developers will know the parameters for their plans and will be more likely to receive local support. They have a firm belief that developers will respond to an RFP only with the zoning in place first. This is because there is a substantial cost for developers to respond to an RFP and some developers have said that they are unlikely to take the risk of responding to an RFP when the project parameters are unknown. One of the primary reasons that Beacon's Comprehensive Plan was developed was to recommend zoning changes for different parts of Beacon so that

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<sup>1</sup> Anticipated passage of the Beacon Affordable Housing Law in 2010

development could be restricted (in the case of residential neighborhoods) or encouraged (in the case of the waterfront, Fishkill Creek and Main Street Corridors), thereby saving time and money for both the City and potential developers.

**3) Proposed zoning law does not represent the Comprehensive Plan.**

Answer: The draft TOD zone ordinance is, in fact, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan in that it calls for mixed-use development that includes both residential and commercial development. Additionally the proposed TOD zone implements many of the primary land use recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan, including preservation of key viewsheds, inclusion of businesses that do not unduly compete with Main Street and green building standards. There are some differences in the details between the two but the current TOD zone is arguably better for Main Street and Beacon in general than what was originally recommended in the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is a guide for where and how the City's development should occur based on an overall vision developed for the City by Beacon's residents. This Plan, like all Comprehensive Plans, is then implemented through a series of zoning ordinances that are much more detailed and prescriptive than a "plan" is meant to be. As a guide the general concepts found in the Comprehensive Plan are honored. With each version of the draft zoning we are trying to respond to the additional public comments that have been offered since the Plan was adopted.

a) Without the proposed revisions, the original Comprehensive Plan would have more than doubled the amount of commercial space compared to Main Street's 400,000 square feet. The Comprehensive plan identifies .5 floor-area-ratio of commercial space. Based on the Metro North property of 22 acres, that represents 479,160 square ft, or 120% more than Main Street. Where as all draft proposed Transit Oriented Development Zone text since 7/23/09 has a floor-area-ration of .125 or 119,790. That represents 30% of Main Street. While the latest drafts differ from the Comprehensive Plan by reducing the amount of commercial space significantly it also improves on the original Comp Plan by limiting retail, personal services and restaurant space to 40% of the 119,790 or a maximum of 48,000 square ft or the equivalent of 13% of Main Street commercial space. It is also important to remember that the more commercial development the greater the traffic it will generate as compared to residential units

b) The Comprehensive Plan has a residential component of 20 units per acre or a total of 440 units, plus additional units through density bonuses. The draft TOD zone being considered today has 28 units per acre or 616 total units. While this also represents a change from the Comprehensive plan it too is realistic to make the point that the additional 176 units will provide an additional customer base for Main Street and the TOD commercial component. Also, from a traffic perspective residential use is less intensive than commercial. The traffic flow of vehicles from residential units is opposite the direction of MTA railroad commuter traffic. When people are coming in to the station in the AM, vehicular traffic generated from the residential units will be going out.

c) Comp Plan includes a recommendation for a 20% density bonus for affordable

housing and additional bonuses for structured parking to be built in Beacon. Both bonuses will apply in the TOD Zone. The MTA RFP will include a parking structure and by the end of 2010 the city will have in place an affordable work force housing law.

**4) Did the MTA have anything to do with the change in density from the Comprehensive Plan to the current TOD zone?**

Answer: Yes. In late 2007 and early 2008 the MTA solicited developer input to inform this process. Developers who responded to the MTA's Request for Expressions of Interest indicated that the density framework included in the Comprehensive Plan was not sufficient to allow a developer to get a reasonable return on the costs of building the TOD. The MTA reviewed the developers' concerns in light of the City's overall vision for the TOD and subsequently began discussions with the City administration to reduce the size of commercial space from 479,160 square ft (double the size of Main Street) to 120,000 sf. This represented a substantial improvement for the city and lowered the impact of potential traffic. We also discussed an increase of the residential unit count from at least 440 to a higher number and we jointly concluded that 616 units was a reasonable number. That too is believed to benefit the city because of the increased customer resource for Main Street and the TOD commercial space.

**5) The language of the TOD zone is not that of a real Transit Oriented Development and shouldn't the zone include Main Street?**

Answer:

a) Wikipedia defines a TOD as "A transit-oriented development (TOD) is a mixed-use residential or commercial area designed to maximize access to public transport, and often incorporates features to encourage transit ridership. A TOD neighborhood typically has a center with a train station, metro station, tram stop, or bus stop, surrounded by relatively high-density development with progressively lower-density development spreading outwards from the center."

The Wikipedia description strongly indicates that the Beacon TOD certainly fits the definition. First, it is a mixed-use residential and commercial area. By its nature of being adjacent to the Beacon MTA train station it maximizes access to public transportation and thereby encourages transit ridership. In addition section 11 of the zone describes the incorporation of vehicle, pedestrian, and accessways for bicycles. (a) Ample sidewalk widths, bike racks and secure facilities at the train station, pedestrian-scale lighting, benches, outdoor eating areas, and other forms of street activities. (b) Short blocks and connected sidewalk systems for multiple walking/biking routes. (e) Convenient connections to the shoreline, Greenway Trail system, and Main Street. Additionally the MTA will have in its Request for Proposal the requirement that the developer operate a shuttle bus from the waterfront to Main Street. As the council continues in its discussions other transportation connects are being considered.

b) The TOD zone should probably not be applied to the transition area between the Beacon TOD and Main Street because (1) the area is located outside the property

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directly adjacent to the train tracks and (2) the density proposed within the TOD is greater than that proposed for the transition area and is not considered suitable for this area. However the city recognizes it must consider this connection along with the TOD zone to ensure that the area will efficiently accommodate and connect seamlessly to the planned vehicular/bus/bicycle and pedestrian use in the transition zone. In fact, the City had previously commissioned a Transportation Linkages Study to investigate how best to address this issue. Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the city should eventually adopt a new zone or overlay requirements in this location that would enhance and encourage pedestrian/bicycle/bus transportation usage and add transitional housing to make the walk up Beekman Street less isolated and more appealing. Because the zoning overlay would cover land located outside the TOD and because it would require specific language reserved for this area only, the overlay area should not be included in the TOD zone. Discussions to create this new zone will begin at the city council level in February 2010.

c) We are honored to announce that to assist the city to (a) create the new zone area between the Beacon TOD and Main Street, (b) improve the center of Main Street as identified in the Comprehensive Plan and (c) recommend language in the TOD zone text, will be the Pace University Land Use Center headed by Professor John Nolan (see #14). Included in the project will be a class of students who are attending the Pace Land Use Law Center.

d) While one of the challenges is to overcome the elevation differences between the TOD and Main Street, this can be accomplished through a variety of options, including public transportation to carry people up the hill, sloping walkways and stairways and perhaps elevators where buildings in the TOD area are built adjacent to Beekman Street. It is important to note that much of the elevation challenge is reduced because of the higher street level that the TOD is built upon. Instead of coming out of a tunnel at the station, 20 feet below the platform, direct street access from a new station bridging the tracks will provide a dramatically shorter and more gradual walk to Beekman Street.

- Existing 3,110-foot walk from elevation -10 to 135 = 4.7% average grade
- Proposed 2,485-foot walk from elevation 37 to 135 = 3.9% average grade
- The distance is two football fields shorter, less steep, and active frontages that will promote pedestrian interest and security.

e) Also note that the traffic study conducted by the city indicates that with improvements the connecting roads have the capacity to handle the increased use. (see #19). Most of the vehicular residents of the TOD will be driving in a reverse pattern relative to people driving to the station. Much of the traffic generated by the commercial component of the TOD will occur during the day or weekends when commuting traffic is at a minimum.

**6) Will retail on Main Street benefit and are there ways to safeguard Main Street business?**

Answer: Main Street retail should benefit by the increased customer base expected to be 1,186 additional individuals living in Beacon and their guests and tourists/visitors coming from Metro North trains. In fact, the TOD may generate new and untapped Main Street customers from the tourist attraction that the

TOD will represent. Experts have concluded the amount of retail space at the TOD is not sufficient to keep residents, tourists and visitors there alone. Main Street has a much larger retail scope and capacity and historic character. There are safeguards that the additional retail shops at the TOD will not have an adverse impact to Beacon and Main Street. Unlike the Newburgh waterfront business district which is exclusively retail in nature, the Beacon TOD will be largely residential, thus increasing the number of people who live in Beacon and shop in its stores.

a) It is helpful to put the retail/restaurant portion of the TOD into its proper perspective vis-a-vis Main Street. As per the draft TOD zone dated 11/13/09 the expansion of a retail center that might compete with Main Street retail has been considerably reduced. There can be no more than 40% or 48,000 sq. ft. of the 120,000 square feet allocated to retail/restaurants/personal services. That translates into a maximum of 12% of Beacon's 400,000 sq. ft on Main Street. The maximum size of any single space unit has been reduced from 10,000 sq. ft. to 5,000 sq. ft. to prevent large scale national chains in the district. The result is a maximum of only 10 retail units at 5,000 sq. ft. There can be only 20 units at 2,500 sq. ft.

b) The construction can be phased in and cause a gradual change. The fiscal impacts study assumed that the timetable for the TOD construction would be three evenly divided phases. The first phase of 15,000 square feet of retail/restaurant/personal services represents between approximately 3-6 units which would not be open until 2015. Additional phases of equal size are expected to be completed in 2019 and 2023. Each phase of the project design will need to be approved by the Planning Board and will be subject to SEQRA review. This phasing is a good thing for Beacon, as it will allow us to view the project in light of the environmental and economic conditions that exist at those time periods.

c) In addition further safeguards include the requirement of a market study in the TOD zone that will include Main Street. The study will be used by the city council to determine if the character of Main Street and Beacon will be positively or negatively impacted. Then the city will have at its disposal the right to approve, or approve with modifications or disapprove the development's retail plans at multiple stages in the process. There will be many stages for review but the most significant are the preliminary development plan review stage, the critical SEQRA review and the final site plan approval stage. All steps would interpret the impact to the character of Beacon and Main Street.

d) Lastly but importantly, if City-enacted TOD supportive zoning is in place, the MTA will issue an RFP that will include a requirement that the successful developer provide a transportation shuttle. This will not only help connect the TOD to Main Street but it will also assist to bring the 70,000 visitors to DIA to Main Street, something the city has been trying to accomplish for years<sup>2</sup>.

**7) Is there a timeline when the city council will vote on the TOD zone?**

Answer: No, the Mayor is not establishing a timeline when the vote will take place. He will be basing the vote on when there is council satisfaction that all reasonable issues have been explored and the public has been informed to the fullest extent possible.

**8) Is there a timetable from council zoning approval to the completion of the project?**

Answer: Given the conceptual nature of this potential project, it is difficult to predict with any certainty when it would be complete and occupied. In addition, economic conditions would strongly influence when developers would choose to begin construction and bring this product to market. The fiscal impact analysis assumed that a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the development site would be issued in the first quarter of 2010 after the TOD zoning was adopted; that timetable is no longer accurate. Following the selection of a developer, the project would undergo review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). To account for the time necessary to complete the SEQRA process, issue a statement of findings, obtain permits, and allow for contingencies, it is assumed that the earliest the potential TOD would start construction is in the first quarter of 2013.

The study assumed that there would be three phases of construction, with each bringing approximately 1/3 of the residential units and 1/3 of the commercial, community facility, and parking space online. This analysis assumed that the majority of the units in the first phase would be rental units, as the developer establishes a residential market at the site; the second phase would be mainly for-sale units, and the third phase would be an even mix of rental and for-sale units. The first phase could conceivably open in 2015 and be fully occupied by 2018. The second and third phases would likely follow with openings in 2019 and 2023, respectively, and full occupancy in 2022 and 2026, respectively.

**9) When will the MTA meet with Beacon Community Organizations:**

MTA Metro-North has lead a multi-stakeholder planning process to get tot his point, including numerous public input forums to frame the TOD concept under discussion .The MTA stated to the Mayor on December 15th that they believe it is now time for the city to act on the zoning text, as we all recognize that local support is essential to the success of a TOD solicitation. The way that the City can demonstrate support for the TOD concept is by adopting zppropriate zoning. MTA/Metro North are happy to serve as a resource, but do not wish to interfere with the local zoning/decision making process now underway by the City. Their position is to discuss with the Mayor and the

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<sup>2</sup> To be described in a separate TOD side contract.

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Administration team the status of the TOD zone and to answer questions. They have been a responsible partner with the city. Indeed, in the past five years they have participated in numerous public meetings, including more than ten council meetings (see question #13) and town hall meetings in 2009, numerous waterfront committee meetings in 2008, numerous Comprehensive Planning meetings in 2006/2007, and also presented their vision for a Beacon TOD and received public comments at several visionary community meetings in 2006.

### **10) Is there an economic benefit from the TOD to Beacon?**

Answer: Yes, there are significant economic benefits to the residential and commercial taxpayers of Beacon in the form of property taxes, increased sales tax revenue and commercial property value. The city commissioned an independent fiscal impact study to determine the net revenues that can be generated by the TOD and five other large scale potential developments. The study was conducted by AKRF, Inc in which projected costs to provide services were deducted from projected revenues for developments. In general costs were determined by interviews conducted with the city administrator, city department heads, the Superintendent of the Beacon Schools System and a thorough line-by-line examination of the city's budget. The revenues of the six potential projects were determined through interviews with the developers and by analyzing the potential assessed values of the types of residential and commercial units planned. The conclusion of the report is that the TOD will yield net property tax revenues for the city of \$779,790 annually. It is useful to understand that based on our current typical tax levy, every \$68,000 of revenue is equal to an approximately 1% reduction compared to the previous year, so \$779,790 equals a benefit of between 11-12%. In addition the net revenue to the Beacon School District is approximately 2 million dollars and includes the addition of approximately 70 students. While the number of school age children appears low, it is typical of the population that lives in TOD developments, a fact carefully studied by AKRF team. With school taxes representing the larger portion of a homeowner's tax bill, the financial benefits of the Beacon TOD are even greater. The following is taken from the AKRF study released December 14th 2009.

**This table represents the fiscal benefits to the City of Beacon**

**Table ES-6**  
**Summary of Net Fiscal Impact of Development Projects**  
**Annual, upon Project Completion**

Project Name	City of Beacon	Beacon CSD
Potential Metro-North TOD	\$779,790	\$1,993,131
Edgewater	\$228,806	\$572,295
Beacon Glen	\$69,045	\$161,321
Beacon Mills	\$16,017	\$66,323
555 South Avenue	\$187,832	\$458,392
Long Dock Hotel and Conference Center	\$641,224	\$1,309,912
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,922,713</b>	<b>\$4,614,448</b>

**11) Why was the term view shed replaced by views and view corridors?**

Answer: The terms ‘viewshed’ and ‘view’ are used interchangeably in Beacon’s adopted Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), which identified the important city views to be protected (viewshed was used 3 times and view was used 30 times). The view from Beekman Street and River Street is the only one of the 13 identified views in the LWRP that will likely change with the TOD. Compared to now, the view from Beekman Street and River Street will be changed from a broader view between the MTA police building and adjacent trees to a landscaped view corridor looking down the street through the central square of the TOD. It is however important to understand that the views from Beekman Street include parking lots in the foreground and are completely lacking in any pedestrian amenity that facilitates stopping to enjoy the view. The TOD concept incorporates a quarter mile long promenade that is over 25 feet above the tracks and extends over the train station canopy to provide a panoramic view of the river that is not available from any existing public location. River Street currently has a limited view of the water. While buildings will figure prominently in the view from River Street looking west towards the river, the TOD will have connecting pathways to the new street grid leading to the retail shops, the promenade and the green station square.

**12) Has the city held public meetings regarding the TOD ? Was an effort made to inform the public and has the public been given a chance to speak?**

Answer: Yes, in fact the following is a list of meetings that consisted of presentations, a legal public hearing, council workshops, and council meetings where TOD related information was presented. At every city council meeting the public has an opportunity for public comment about the TOD. The council conducted a special town hall meeting focusing on the TOD. All of the council meetings listed below were televised and available on the city’s website. The two special meetings for the waterfront and the TOD were repeatedly broadcast on the television and are available on the website. The Beacon Free Press has had several front page articles on the TOD and the Mayor has written several informative articles in the editorial section. The 2009 TOD related meetings include:

- March 10th Council Meeting - Comprehensive Planning Zoning Changes
- April 20th Council Meeting -Waterfront Development Presentation
- April 30th Ad Hoc Committees – Submitted Report Regarding TOD and Other Waterfront Developments
- May 3rd Town Hall Meeting – Transit Oriented Development
- June 29th Workshop -Transit Oriented Development (T.O.D.) David Stolman – Discussion
- June 15th Council Meeting -Resolution of Support Authorizing Submission of a Smart Growth Grant Program Application for an RFP for a Transit Oriented Development
- July 27th Council Meeting -First Reading: Proposed Local Law Creating A Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Zoning District and Rezoning Certain

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Properties To This New District. Set Public Hearing for TUESDAY, September 8, 2009

- August 3rd Council Meeting - **PRESENTATIONS:**
- August 27th Workshop - Received Referral for Local Law for a Transit Oriented Development District from John Clarke
- August 31st Workshop - **UPDATES:** Transit Oriented Development Consider a Proposed Local Law to Create a Transit Oriented Development Zoning District and Rezone Certain Properties to This New District. Received Reports from the County and from City of Beacon Planning Board
- September 8th Council Meeting - Public Hearing Consider a Proposed Local Law to Create a Transit Oriented Development Zoning District and Rezone Certain Properties to This New District
- September 14th Workshop - Discussion Transit Oriented Development
- September 28th Workshop - Discussions Transit Oriented Development
- October 26th Workshop - **UPDATE:** Transit Oriented Development
- December 7th Council Meeting -Main Street Corridor Committee Report on the Transit Oriented Development
- December 9th Council Meeting - Received Recommendations from Planning Board Regarding TOD
- December 10th Town Hall Meeting - TOD

**13) Did the city ask the MTA for approval before zoning changes were made? Isn't it true that the MTA has been calling the shots to the city? Have we given up our bargaining position? Who is negotiating for the city? Is the MTA's first priority their own interests or the interest of the city?**

Answer:

a) The TOD zone has been created by a joint process between the MTA and the city. The MTA has certainly not been calling the shots. Since the MTA is interested in developing TOD's in Poughkeepsie, Wingdale and other places and is a public entity, it simply doesn't make sense for them to create a public relations image in Beacon by not working together as a partner with the city. In fact, they have many years of resource commitment and being a good partner with the City in a positive TOD process.

b) MTA has over time invested over \$20m in continued capital funds for station, parking and access improvements. They are committed partners to the city and sensitive to any insure or need brought to their attention. Our discussions with the MTA have been very successful. Substantial agreements were made to the city during the course of several meetings with the MTA through the efforts of Mayor Steve Gold, Administrator Meredith Robson, City Planner David Stolman, County Planner John Clarke, and occasionally County Planning Commissioner Roger Ackley and a cooperative team of MTA representatives including Randall Fleischer, Linda Corcoran, Mark Mannix, Greg Sylvester, Vahak Khajekian and Deborah Howes.

Some of the agreements are as follows:

- i) Modifications as identified in four versions of the TOD zone: 7/22/09, 9/1/09,

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9/24/09, 11/13/09. The city is currently working on a fifth version.

- ii) The agreement to include in the eventual Request for Proposals the requirement that the developer provide a shuttle from the waterfront up throughout Main Street. This was clearly a request made by Main Street business owners.
- iii) The city will appoint team of three individuals who will review the design portfolios of the developers that respond to the RFP. Their purpose is to represent Beacon's design interest and make a recommendation to the MTA for their selection of the right developer. This was an outgrowth of listening to public sentiment that we want a world class TOD design.
- iv) A pre-design public meeting to listen to ideas and suggestions including accepting design concepts made by the public.
- v) A post-design public meeting to gain public feedback.

c) The idea that the MTA was the first to introduce a mixed use residential and commercial development to the waterfront is historically inaccurate. The city has a history of development and waterfront design concepts before the MTA presented their zoning requests. It is helpful to remember that the historic composition of the waterfront going back to the village of Fishkill Landing was a commercial and residential mix leading right up to the waterfront. It extended its reach up the entire half mile to Main Street. In the recent past the city envisioned a development on the waterfront prior to the MTA's interest in a TOD. The city established a Waterfront Development District on Long Dock that included building heights of up to six stories. Note that the reason the current TOD zone has six stories is to vary the heights of each building. The MTA has expressed its recommendations for the TOD zone based on its experience to create a successful project. However, the draft TOD zoning text was not based on MTA language, but was patterned after the existing Waterfront Development District in the Beacon zoning law. Lastly the Comprehensive Plan was drafted by a Comprehensive Plan Committee comprised of over twenty Beacon residents from 2006-2007 (not the MTA). They envisioned a TOD with building heights of up to five stories and a mixture of commercial and residential units.

### **14) Should an independent entity evaluate the TOD zone and review its environmental requirements?**

Answer: Yes, this was done. County Planner John Clarke and County Commissioner Roger Akeley have been reviewing the plan since its conception and have offered many helpful suggestions. Also of great significance is that The Mayor, City Administrator and City Planner met with Professor John R. Nolon. Having Professor Nolon's critical review of the TOD zone and conceptual support for the TOD zoning text as it exists today, offers the city the highest level of professional independent analysis. He has agreed to meet with the city council and the public at a meeting to be announced. Professor Nolon's credentials include: Professor of Law at Pace University School of

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Law where he teaches property, land use, and the lawyer's role in green development and is Counsel to the Law School's Land Use Law Center and Real Estate Law Institute. He also a visiting Professor at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Professor Nolon has served as a consultant to President Carter's Council on Development Choices for the 1980's, President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development, New York Governor George Pataki's Transition Team, and Governor Elliot Spitzer's Transition Team.

Professor Nolan has read the latest version of the TOD zone and along with a team of associates has given his general support to its content. They have made several helpful recommendations that will be incorporated in the next TOD zone draft. These recommendations include:

- a) The inclusion of the marketing study requirement by the developer to encompass Main Street impacts to be written in the TOD zone.
- b) Require the developer to submit a pre-application plan with a marketing study at that stage so the city can troubleshoot issues early.
- c) Require the developer to hold SEQRA scoping sessions with stakeholders and the public. This will give input into the process before the environmental review stage.
- d) Include in the zoning text the condition that the developer provide a transportation link to Main Street as a condition of the Special Use Permit.
- e) Create a zoning overlay in the section between the waterfront and Main Street to facilitate pedestrian use, bicycle use and other forms of transportation.
- f) Rewrite part of the zone text to bring together into one section the TOD community impacts, design and environmental standards. Include as principles Main Street viability, views and the prevention of community adverse impacts.
- g) In addition he will be meeting with City Planner David Stolman over the next few weeks to enhance the sustainable and green building requirements for the TOD zone.

The city will continue to seek out other independent sources of analysis of the TOD zone.

### **15) Why is the city so adamant about going forward with the TOD?**

#### **Answer:**

a) The city is not adamant about the TOD. The council is attempting to determine if it will benefit Beacon in the long run. To accomplish this goal the council has and will continue to improve the zoning text until it represents the optimum potential. We have listened to the public and are currently working on our fifth version. The council will vote on the TOD zone when we are confident that all

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suggestions have been considered fully.

b) We are not adamant but there are many pluses that the TOD may represent. It has the potential of making Beacon an even better destination for tourists, more interesting for residents to enjoy, it will very likely strengthen Main Street's customer traffic and it will add approximately \$750,000 of revenue to the city's tax base. Remember, the existing development in our prime waterfront area is large, inactive and unattractive surface parking, which contributes almost nothing to city taxes or to the local businesses on Main Street.

c) Beacon's TOD is widely acknowledged to be an environmentally positive development. TOD's are encouraged by green planning experts throughout the world. Scenic Hudson, Patterns for Progress and other leading land trust organizations fully support Beacon's TOD. Here are some of the reasons:

i) It is the solution to residential sprawl and the destruction of the pastoral character of the Hudson River valley. The New York State Smart Growth Cabinet has called TOD "probably the most pure and sustainable manifestation of Smart Growth."

ii) The nature of building adjacent to a rail station strongly increases walkability and railroad use, as opposed to vehicular travel. This is a fundamental concept for green growth and planning for the reduction of pollution and greenhouse gases.

iii) Multistory buildings alone are more fuel efficient than would be 616 single family homes on any given size lot. Single family home dwellers typically have more school-age children, and use significantly more fuel for vehicles and to heat their homes.

### **16) Why are there no residential units planned for the north parking lot?**

Answer: It is possible to build residential units on the north side of the property, and developers may propose to use that area for residential development. Since the MTA is not the developer the TOD zone leaves open the possibility of building on all parts of the MTA's property including the northern portion. Existing conceptual drawings prepared by the County are nothing more than a potential representation of what a developer might design. These concept drawings show the center of focus as the southern section where Beekman Street flows into the development centered on the harbor, Ferry Dock, and Railroad Station and closer to Long Dock and Dia. The northern section, which is a dead-end area with no bridge access to the river, is envisioned as ground level parking.

### **17) Will climate change flooding present a problem in the future for the TOD?**

Answer: No, we don't think it will because the development is on the eastern side of the tracks and the elevation of the track level is above any potential waterline caused by global warming.

**18) Will the MTA pay for traffic mitigation measures caused by the TOD?**

Answer: The MTA is the property owner, not the developer. The city will require large developers on the waterfront to contribute financially to any traffic mitigations required for proper traffic control going to 9D and north to the intersection of Interstate 84.

**19) The TOD will cause traffic problems to an already bad situation**

The answer to this question is found in the traffic study prepared by Frederick P. Clark in January 2009. The city council requested that a comprehensive and independent traffic study be conducted and paid for by the three major potential developers of the waterfront. Note that an individual traffic studies will be required by the Planning Board in the specific site plan process for each project. The report states “The results of the analysis indicate that with these improvements in place and levels of development, as described in this report, area roads can accommodate this level of development over a period of time”.

**RECOMMENDED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS**

Waterfront Redevelopment Traffic Management Study, Beacon, New York  
by FREDERICK P. CLARK ASSOCIATES, INC. David H. Stolman, AICP, PP

The following describes the recommended mitigation to accommodate redevelopment of the Waterfront area and includes New York State Route 9D, the Interchange with Interstate 84, Beekman Street and access to the Beacon Train Station.

Based on the results of analyses, which include the potential redevelopment and impacts related to the TOD, Edgewater and Long Dock properties located along the Hudson River, the mitigation plan was developed to accommodate increases in traffic to mitigate the potential impacts. This analysis includes the potential impact related to the construction of 400 commuter parking spaces at the Beacon Train Station.

1.

Route 9D – Results of the analyses for the development of the Waterfront area, generally between Route 9D and the Hudson River identify the following mitigation will be necessary:

a. Route 9D at Interstate 84 Interchange – Needed mitigation at the intersections on Route 9D at Interstate 84 include the following:

- Revise the traffic signal timing plan for both signalized intersections;
- On the westbound off-ramp convert the right turn movement to a channelized free movement (YIELD sign controlled) condition;
- On the eastbound off-ramp convert the right turn movement to a

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channelized free movement (YIELD sign controlled) condition;

b. Route 9D, between Interstate 84 Ramps and Talbot Avenue – Maintain the existing pavement markings and lane operation as currently exist.

c. Route 9D at Verplanck Avenue – It will be necessary to provide two northbound travel lanes at this intersection. It will require the modification of existing pavement markings to convert the center lane dual left turn lane to a northbound through lane. This can be accomplished within the existing street width, except that roadway widening will be necessary along the easterly side of Route 9D on the approach to Verplanck Avenue and north of Verplanck Avenue to the vicinity of Talbot Avenue. This road widening will require approximately 12 additional feet of pavement along the easterly side of Route 9D both north and south of Verplanck Avenue and a reduced pavement width to accommodate the taper of this widening to the vicinity of Talbot Avenue. Available right-of-way maps indicate that most of this widening can be accommodated within the existing right-of-way of Route 9D, except for a limited area between Verplanck Avenue and Talbot Avenue. As part of the modification to the pavement markings and roadway widening noted the traffic signal timing plan will need to be revised and upgraded to accommodate the additional northbound travel lanes

d. Route 9D at Beekman Street/West Church Street – To improve traffic flow at this intersection and to match the improvements noted above for Route 9D north of this intersection the Beekman Street eastbound approach to the signalized intersection will require widening to provide a double left turn movement and maintain the center lane to also accommodate the through movement to West Church Street and a separate right turn lane for movements to Route 9D southbound. As part of these modifications the southbound approach of Route 9D should maintain the left turn pocket, one through lane and provide a new southbound right turn lane, which would be channelized and controlled with a YIELD sign to provide direct access to Beekman Street. As part of these physical modifications to the intersection it will be necessary to revise the traffic signal timing plan. The westbound approach on West Church Street and the northbound approach on Route 9D at this intersection will remain unchanged.

### 2. Beekman Street Area

a. Beekman Street, west of Route 9D – This section of Beekman Street will require the removal of on-street parking along the southerly side generally in the vicinity of the rear of the Municipal Building. This will be necessary for a distance of a few hundred feet to accommodate the additional travel lane from east of West Main Street to the signalized intersection with Route 9D.

## Beacon TOD Q&A

b. Beekman Street at West Main Street – To accommodate development of the TOD area and the Edgewood development it may be necessary, if warranted, to install a semi-actuated traffic signal at this intersection.

c. Beekman Street at Beacon Train Station New Access Drive – As part of the development of the TOD and the development of a new access drive to the Train Station area and the development surrounding the Train Station a STOP sign control on the new driveway will be necessary and if warranted the installation of a semi-actuated traffic signal.

d. Beekman Street at Red Flynn Drive – To accommodate the development of the Long Dock area this existing intersection requires the maintaining of a STOP sign control on the Red Flynn Drive eastbound approach to Beekman Street and consideration in the future, if warranted, to install a semi-actuated traffic signal.

3. Route 9D at Main Street/Municipal Plaza Drive – It will be necessary to revise the traffic signal timing plan at this intersection to be coordinated with the Beekman Street traffic signal control.

### **20) Why not do nothing at all?**

Answer: Basically it all will come down to this question. The MTA has the legal authority to build parking spaces without needing municipal approval. They have determined that 400 additional spaces are required at the Beacon Station and stated they will proceed to build them with or without the Beacon TOD. Would it be better to have a large parking structure at the station with 400 additional parking spaces which has no beneficial impact to the city, ....OR... permit the MTA to develop in full cooperation with the city a well designed \$290 million dollar transit oriented development that will; be an environmentally positive green development; add to Beacon a new residential and commercial waterfront center, connect to Main Street, include approximately 20 retail shops and provide over 1,200 new residents (customers for TOD shops and Main Street); increase our city's yearly net property tax revenue by a huge \$780,000, significantly increase the Beacon School District's net revenue by nearly \$2,000,000 and raise county and city's sales tax revenues; create approximately 1,500 construction jobs, 530 permanent jobs, and 600 indirect jobs; lure tourist to Beacon and connect them to Main Street via a developer sponsored shuttle bus; design a ½ mile pedestrian friendly walk between the TOD and Main Street, and lastly provide an interesting new place for Beacon residents to enjoy a new waterfront neighborhood and a quarter mile promenade overlooking the Hudson River? <sup>3</sup>

- End -

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<sup>3</sup> Based on the AKRF report: Costs were determined by interviews conducted with the city administrator, city department heads (police, fire, highway, water, sewer), the Superintendent of the Beacon Schools System and a thorough line-by-line examination of the city's budget. Revenues determined through interviews with the MTA with the help of the city's assessor. See [cityofbeacon.org](http://cityofbeacon.org) as the "cost of services study" in the city reports and documents section.