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For Immediate Release November 19, 2009

## **Press Release**

# **Croton launches new options for Harmon business district.**

**Village Board adopts new “green tape” commercial zoning changes as part of comprehensive economic development strategy.**

*[ Croton on Hudson, NY, USA, November 19, 2009 ]*

As part of its comprehensive win/win economic development strategy, the Village of Croton-on-Hudson reached its first milestone in adopting amendments to its Harmon Business District Overlay Zone. The new zoning law is designed to improve the economics for commercial re-development, while simultaneously easing the village’s disproportionate residential tax burden.

The Harmon Business District is the primary gateway into the village and begins at the entrance to the busiest Metro North and Amtrak station in Westchester County. Despite its desirable location, the area has been in steady decline over the past five years and a number of the largest and most visible properties in the area now sit vacant.

On November 16, 2009, the Village’s Board of Trustees adopted new zoning options to encourage mixed-use buildings of no more than three stories tall within a 6 minute walk of the popular Croton-Harmon train station. The legislation, Local Law 4 of 2009, both expands the number of parcels included in the gateway overlay district in the Village’s Harmon business district and adds new incentives for all the gateway parcels to spur more commercial space at more affordable prices with potential office and living spaces on the second or third floors.

The zoning change amendments allow an additional story and doubling of the current floor area ratio (FAR) for mixed use development that meet certain design criteria such as front setbacks, height restrictions, enhanced landscaping, and aesthetic quality. The Harmon zoning options provide flexibility to those owners who want to invest in small commercial buildings by adding a second or third floor and more than one type of use, without requiring the previously mandatory special permit for mixed use.

Mixed use became the focus of the Harmon business district zoning changes after an analysis of the unmet demand for new commercial space revealed that existing lease spaces in the district

often did not meet the size, price, and configuration requirements for small office or service businesses that did want to move in. Economic analyses determined the district's current zoning allowed for little to no return on investment potential in creating the smaller, more affordable commercial spaces for which a demand does exist. Further analysis indicated that a residential component above shops or offices would supplement revenue requirements, diversify the potential income stream, and improve the return on investment for the property owners.

The Village will support the new Harmon business district zoning law with a proactive stakeholder outreach, a comprehensive marketing campaign, and a streamlining—a.k.a. “greentaping”—of the approval process for redevelopment proposals in the newly expanded district.

**Statements:**

Mayor Leo Wiegman: “The opposite of “red tape” is “green tape.” Allowing mixed use as of right is just one way we have ‘greentaped’ this district. Eliminating the special permit previously required for mixed use is a huge help to small property owners. This change alone saves owners tens of thousands of dollars in preliminary costs. We will also have an active greentape team that will work closely with Harmon owners who do want to take advantage of the new zoning options.”

The Economic Development Committee’s chair, local resident Kieran Murray: “The overarching premise kept foremost in mind is that any changes in Harmon be good for the entire Village, including residential taxpayers, commercial property owners, business owners and residents.”

Deputy Mayor and Village Trustee Ann Gallelli, who serves as liaison to the all-volunteer Economic Development Committee: “Beyond encouraging a more vibrant, attractive and pedestrian-friendly commercial area, the creation of high quality buildings will have a positive property tax influence benefiting all residents of the Village.”

Trustee Rick Olver: “Successful business districts increase the dollars that stay in the local economy. Our quality of life depends on revitalizing our commercial sector and creating attractive and vibrant commercial areas that people want to visit, so that we can shift more of our tax burden off the homeowner.”

**Background:**

In the early summer of 2007, a group of local residents with different professional backgrounds in property planning, development and village affairs began to meet. The members of the group shared a common concern about the number of “for rent” and “for sale” signs in the Harmon business district in the Village of Croton-on-Hudson, New York. The underlying question for the group was whether any proactive steps could be taken by the village to attract viable, new businesses to the district. The land in the district is primarily in private hands, with the exception of the Harmon Firehouse. Any incentives would have to combine the levers of the marketplace with those of the village. By the fall of 2007 after several formal and informal input meetings with business owners and neighbors, the committee had hammered out sufficient ideas to present to the Village Board of Trustees. This committee, the Croton Economic Development Committee, focused on what conditions might encourage or discourage a property owner from investing in a commercial lot in Harmon. In essence, Committee wanted to test the hypothesis that the existing zoning is “too restrictive.” Could the current code, amended in 2001, 2004, and 2005 by the village, be amended again to gain more flexibility for property owners and more benefits to the community?

By the summer of 2008, the Committee made initial recommendations to the Village Board. In mid-2009, the Village Board began the environmental review process to examine whether these zoning modifications could become local law. That review process included public outreach as well as wide dissemination of all the relevant prior studies, such as the more than 25 documents available at [http://www.crotononhudson-ny.gov/public\\_documents/crotonhudsonny\\_webdocs/seqra](http://www.crotononhudson-ny.gov/public_documents/crotonhudsonny_webdocs/seqra).

Specifically, the examination of zoning options focused on ideas that might boost the overall synergies of local business areas, enhance pedestrian experience, confine parking impacts to the business district, and create high quality building stock to increase property tax revenues permanently. The Village Board has charged the Committee to analyze the other business districts in Croton and has earmarked funds to undertake such studies. In addition, the Village Board and Committee are committed to a marketing effort to promote awareness of the new zoning options in Harmon.

For details, visit [www.crotononhudson-ny.gov](http://www.crotononhudson-ny.gov)

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Enclosures (3): Executive Summary of the Harmon zoning options and Map of the parcels and Aerial photo of district.

## **Executive Summary: Croton's Harmon Business District Zoning Options**

These 16 code conditions form a set of interlocking, mutually reinforcing guidelines to stimulate better development in the Village's Harmon business district, as adopted 16 November 2009.

### **Shift Mixed Occupancy Use to Permitted as of right Use in the Gateway Overlay Zone**

*The goal is lowering the barriers to entry for development that comply with all of the pedestrian-friendly neighborhood shopping district requirements below.*

1. Remove the requirement for a special use permit for parcel developments that meet ALL of the requirements below.
2. New retail uses in C-2 zone in gateway district shall not require special permit as part of mixed use.

### **Geographic Scope for the Zoning Changes:**

*The goal is simultaneously unifying the code for similar parcels while introducing as simple an update to the code adoption as possible.*

3. Expand the existing Gateway Overlay Zone to include all the parcels facing South Riverside from Croton Point Avenue to approximately 200 ft past Oneida. (See Appendix 2 for a map of parcels).

### **The Following Conditions Apply ONLY to Mixed Occupancy Uses in the Gateway Overlay Zone:**

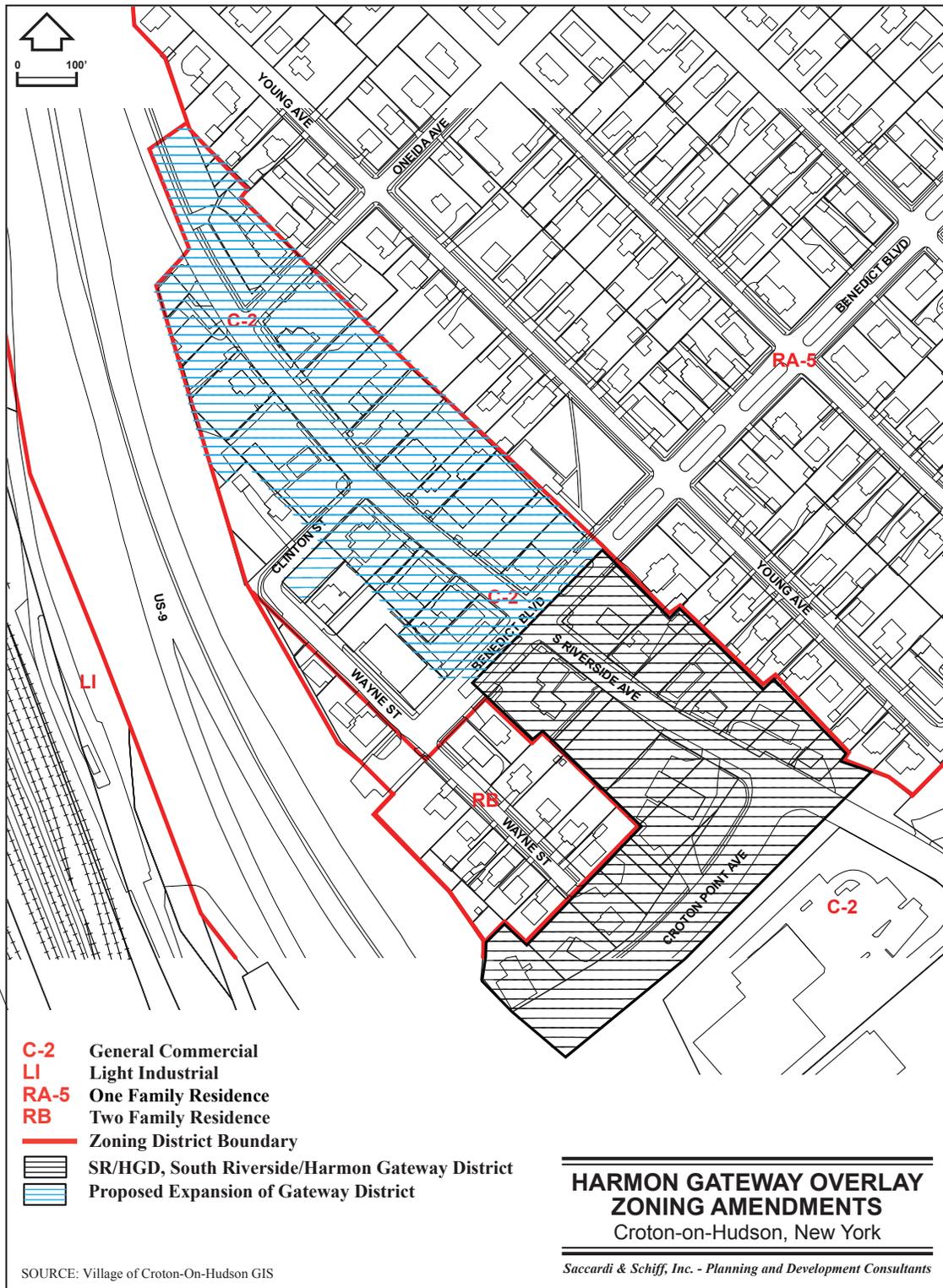
*The goal is a coordinated, flexible set of use parameters that work well in conjunction with each other, while protecting the village from negative impacts.*

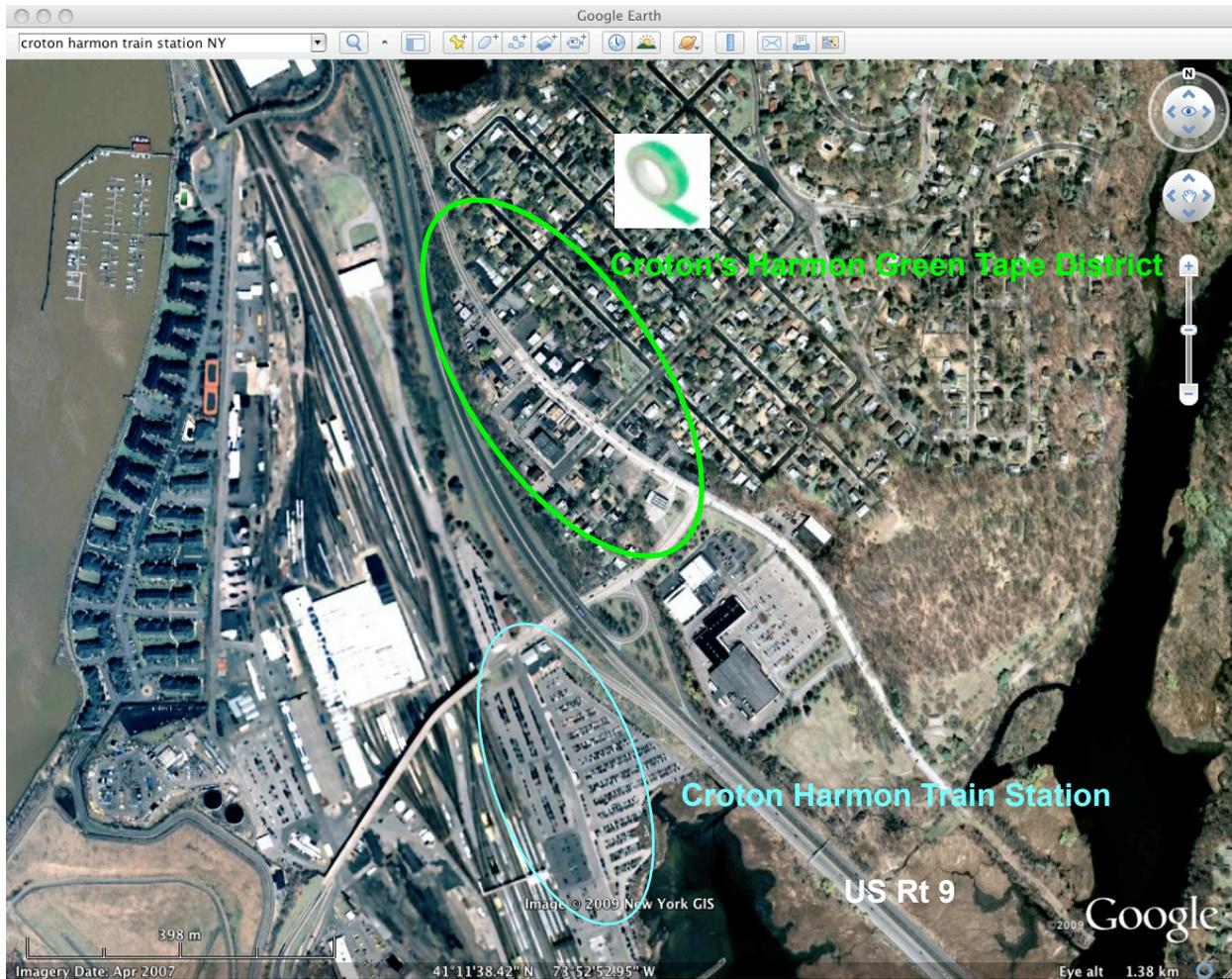
4. Increase maximum allowable Floor to Area (FAR) from current values to a uniform 0.8 value.
5. Permit only residential use on the third floor (within the roof line) in mixed use buildings.
6. Permit a second floor be either residential or non-residential in use.
7. Leave the maximum building height in current code at 35 feet.
8. Require mixed use building to comply with the following parking minimums: 1 space per residential unit plus 1 additional space for each bedroom in excess of 1; plus same parking requirements as existing code for non-residential space.
9. Require that a minimum of 50% of 1st floor be commercial and that the commercial space must face the street.

### **Design Standards to Maximize Visual Appeal and Pedestrian Experience:**

*The goal is to maximize visibility for first floor commercial tenants, with 60% glass area as a well-established minimum, and for the district to be read by passers by as retail oriented.*

10. Establish a maximum setback from curb (or lot line) 15 to 20 feet: New buildings will be nearer to the curb, while allowing for ample sidewalk width for pedestrians, plantings and sidewalk cafe arrangements.
11. Require that corner lots shall be deemed to have two fronts for setback and facade purposes.  
*The goal is no fewer than 15 feet of depth between the building and the curb and no more than 20 feet.*
12. Require all new street level space fronting on the sidewalk to have at least 60% of their facades covered by glass.
13. Planning Board may waive side yard setback requirements providing there is otherwise adequate access to parking areas.
14. Pre-existing buildings proposed for mixed use may not utilize 0.8 FAR or add third story occupancy unless otherwise area compliant and have 10-20 feet front yard.
15. Mixed use buildings shall be subject to additional design guidelines as adopted by Village Board.
16. Front setback requirements will encourage parking in the rear of buildings.





For GoogleEarth kmz file of this district: [click here](#)