December 2, 2013

Joseph Manning, Township Administrator
Township of Maplewood
574 Valley Street
Maplewood, New Jersey 07040

Re: **Redevelopment of Maplewood Village Post Office Site (the "Redevelopment Site") Request for Proposals ("RFP")**

Dear Mr. Manning:

Following our productive conversations post-RFQ submission, we are excited to expand upon those ideas presented earlier this fall with the attached RFP response for the Redevelopment Site. L&M Garden State Associates LLC, together with our development partner, Wilder Balter Partners, Inc., believe that with the benefit of discussions had with the Town, we were able to refine our vision while reinforcing our ability, commitment, and creativity in planning and development with your team.

Based on the Redevelopment Plan goals and the RFP priorities, we extend a strategy to leverage the Site's locational assets, which will:

- **Create conditions conducive to varied uses aimed at optimizing economic impact**
- **Elevate residential opportunities in downtown in support of current and future commercial uses**
- **Integrate transit-oriented principles that build upon the proximity of the train station**
- **Implement meaningful and attractive design including green standards**

Development Vision and Site Strategy

Our site planning recognizes that there is so much right about Maplewood, that we prioritized (a) using existing assets, and (b) complementing the existing context. As stated in our RFQ, this focus has been integral to our architectural design decisions. Our approach to planning and integration of this development site into the downtown achieves three (3) major goals:

1) **Celebrate the transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly experience that defines downtown Maplewood**. By enhancing and extending the existing pedestrian walkway along the north side of the train tracks, our plan envisions a "pedestrian promenade" that links many of the key downtown destinations. It will maximize the use of existing assets and open space by establishing a seamless connection between downtown and Ricalton Square on the north end of the tracks and destinations on the south end of the tracks. The underpass itself serves as a "gateway" into downtown – and for many visitors this delivers first impression. Improved lighting, visibility and way-finding will make this underpass more inviting to visitors and residents alike. In addition, the underpass presents an excellent opportunity for public art that expresses the character of Maplewood. We like the concept there of a commissioned art piece or a community driven project designed and installed by residents.

2) **Enhance the existing retail fabric.** The success of this development hinges on its ability to maintain the current downtown character and foster the success of the thriving retail fabric. For this reason, our plan opens up key sight lines from the existing pedestrian underpass to allow unobstructed views of northern retail storefronts – including landmarks like the Maplewood Theatre marquee. Moreover, street level retail is inviting and highlights architectural character and scale of the downtown shops.

3) **Create a sense of arrival.** Downtown Maplewood is a destination. Unlike the neighboring towns, Maplewood's "main street" is not a major artery or through-road – it is a quaint, low-speed corridor whose character is unique in northern New Jersey. In fact, Maplewood Avenue serves as a public space for people to enjoy, with Ricalton Square and Maplewood Train Station at its center. By facing one of the "fronts" of the development onto the Square, our plan recognizes and engages this area as an active "town square". We envision a bustling space with commuters during the week and programmed with events on the weekends.

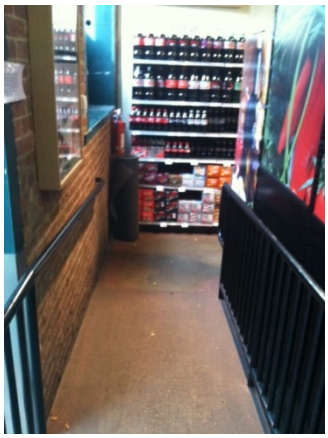
Importantly, our building design concept for this prominent infill location at the heart of Maplewood is similarly guided by the character of the village setting, which reinforces its location as a gateway into the town. The proposed building continues the tradition of late 19th and early 20th century vernacular structures found in downtown with a compatible architectural style; proposed building materials are predominantly a mix of brick and stone.

The ground floor of the building has a variety of storefronts with divided glass surrounded by masonry piers in brick or stone for continuity with the existing Maplewood Avenue street wall. The entry to the upper floors is clearly demarcated in a gracious building setback with a canopy above the entry. Upper story windows are vertical in proportion and double hung four over fours with stone and brick trim. While currently reflected in our site plans as compliant with the Redevelopment Plan, we maintain a strong preference that the street wall be three stories and the setback be applicable solely to the fourth floor, which is in line with other downtown building terms.

Adapting to the current subgrade conditions of the USPS facility, we anticipate providing – per the RFP - up to 10,000 square foot cellar space with up to 5,000 square feet of back of house space. We believe that, after conferring with Kings, these specifications are reasonably responsive to what Kings seeks. Further, we are working with Whole Foods in New Orleans and Newark, as well as opening what may be among the largest supermarkets in Williamsburg at 11 Broadway (for more information, see http://urbanmarketwilliamsburg.com/)

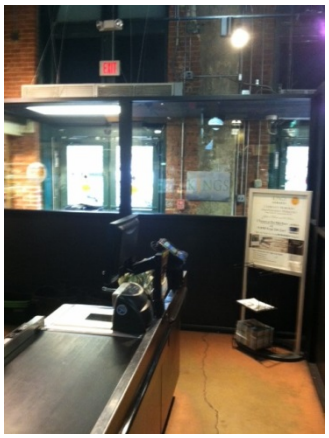
In considering this site plan updated from our RFQ response, we did visit other King's stores to get additional detail on its existing models. One site, in particular, provides a ready precedent: at the 14th and Hudson Street site in Hoboken, the arrangement is similar. Access will be provided via a ramp (see Hoboken – images 1.1 and 1.2 below taken on site to determine a viable design precedent for Kings) following a prominent chamfered entry on Maplewood Avenue (and a second entry at the back of the building so that carts may egress at grade, 1.3). This highly essential element of the building, which faces Village Coffee, sets the building back and creates a plaza ideal for outdoor seating and a nicely scaled soft edge.

We believe that the conversion of existing below grade space embodies a sustainable attitude to providing a relocation for Kings while honoring the Redevelopment Plan's aim to employ retail uses at the ground floor level. At grade parking is also anticipated for residential tenants and public use, and we intend to establish a pedestrian/bicycle connection along the southern edge of the site at a width of 10' (see site plan/circulation diagram).



1.1 Top of Ramp facing ground level

1.2 Bottom of ramp facing entrance



1.3 Second access point

Thus, our preliminary layout (see section sketch) for the site assumes a five-level, four-story structure: a cellar retail space, ground floor retail suitable for several boutique retail users, and three stories of residential that accommodate a mix of 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom units, some with access to balcony terraces. Per Maplewood expectations, 10% of the apartments will be affordable.

We continue to favor a plan that does not impose non-contextual parking structures within its boundaries. As we suggested in our RFQ interview, we are open to a variety of parking solutions, which might include a payment in lieu of parking structure, which would enable the Town to enhance existing parking resources. As mentioned, this model worked to some success in other communities where we have worked. Specifically, we used a similar structure for the 49 North Broadway/Warburton Lofts project in Yonkers, where a payment in lieu helped provide for an offsite structure, improving the City's

long term infrastructure for parking in one location and enhancing architecture for our residential developments. In the alternative, we understand precedent exists for permits to provide parking to residents. One shortcoming is that this option may justify rental discounts, thereby hampering the financials of this development. We believe the ultimate resolution will rely on a flexibility to accommodate the demands on the site for parking while preserving the walkability that makes Maplewood a pedestrian friendly transit village.

Given the RFP's criteria, the Development Team will follow sustainable design principles in the building and site design of this development, which include reduced energy and water use, use of sustainable, renewable and locally-produced materials, improved indoor air quality, and others to improve community and environmental health while enhancing the environmental and economic performance of the building. As stated in the Redevelopment Plan, the project will meet LEED Certification as determined by the US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or an equivalent. Numerous projects by L&M and Wilder Balter are either certified or in the process of certification. Many other projects achieve an environmental/sustainability rating system that is equal to or above the standards of LEED certification, and our design team possesses the qualifications and breadth of experience to meet these requirements with ease.

Our design adds richness, character, scale, and vitality to the village setting and its very pedestrian friendly environment. Our goal is to reinforce the village's role as a place that combines shopping, working, civic life and living in a textured, distinctive environment; together with the Town, we hope to have the opportunity to execute a mixed use development that well serves the Town's interest.