

New Rochelle to fix Exit 16 off I-95

By Ken Valenti

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NEW ROCHELLE — The city wants a developer to reinvent a major entrance to the city: Exit 16 off Interstate 95 on the edge of downtown.

Mario Canteros, an architect serving as a liaison to the city for a group of property owners on the site, called the three acres between I-95 and the Metro-North railroad tracks, sliced by Garden Street, a key location.

"The city and the homeowners are hoping that this becomes the gateway into New Rochelle right off of 95," he said.

City development officials had invited developers to pitch ideas for the site, and received one proposal by the Friday afternoon deadline, city officials said. Joan McCallion, the city's deputy development commissioner, said a committee of development officials would begin reviewing the proposal, submitted by The

Maxdo Group, this week.

The site includes the Plastic Works building on Garden Street, the Chili Dog lunch counter on North Avenue and several other buildings, plus two city-owned parking areas. The tallest building is five stories high.

City officials are looking for buildings with multiple uses, emphasizing commercial space, in a project they call "Gateway TOD @ Garden Street."

TOD stands for "tran-

sit-oriented development," a reference to the site's proximity to the train station and bus depot across North Avenue.

Developers had the opportunity to ask to build more than current zoning allows, requesting that the more permissive rules for the North Avenue portion of the site, allowing buildings up to 24-stories high, be extended to the portion along I-95, according to the document the city sent to developers.

A tower could rise

higher through bonuses granted at the City Council's discretion for public benefits such as sustainable building. It could not exceed 500 feet, however, not including mechanical space such as elevator equipment.

Including the private properties in the project makes the site more attractive than trying to develop just the parking lots — an option the city has tried before, said Development Commissioner Michael Freimuth. He

said the relationship between the current owners and the developer would be worked out as plans move forward.

Stephen Coutsourakas, owner of Stina Provisions, a Sabrett hotdog wholesaler at 20 Garden St., said he hopes whoever takes over the blocks builds something that helps the city, and not simply something to make the developer rich.

"Because I don't think I'm going to get rich off the deal," he quipped.