

City of Worcester, Massachusetts

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City Manager

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Worcester Redevelopment Authority



WORCESTER REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Thursday, May 5, 2016

5:30 P.M.

DCU Center

Worcester, MA 01608

Public Hearing M.G.L. C 121B: Housing and Urban Renewal 760 CMR 12.00 Urban Renewal Regulations for the purposes of discussing the proposed Downtown Worcester Urban Revitalization Plan.

Worcester Redevelopment Authority Board

Vincent A. Pedone, Chair
Steven Rothschild, Vice Chair
David Minasian

Chair Pedone opened the meeting by stating that the Worcester Redevelopment Authority (WRA) is holding a Public Hearing for the purposes of discussing the development of a proposed urban renewal plan for the proposed Downtown Worcester Urban Revitalization Plan. Mr. Pedone introduced WRA Board Members, David Minasian and Steven Rothschild. He then advised the attendees that the meeting was an official meeting of the WRA and that it was being recorded but not televised so that it could be considered as part of the official public record for urban renewal plan purposes. Chair Pedone advised that the meeting would include a presentation from staff and The BSC Group, the consultant working with the WRA on the plan. Chair Pedone continued saying the purpose of the public hearing is to receive testimony from those impacted or having an interest in the urban renewal zone. He said there would be a presentation, and after the presentation comments would be heard and questions would be answered. Chair Pedone stated that the plan has a number of years in the making and the City Council authorized the City Manager for furnish Five Hundred Thousand for the development of the plan. The WRA utilized the bid process in 2014 and hired BSC Group to assist the City of Worcester Economic Development Office and the WRA in pulling this plan together. Chair Pedone stated that following the State process of an urban renewal plan at Citizens' Advisory Committee was formed who was headed by John Brissette, Chair and Jill Dagilis, Vice-Chair who headed the committee of fifteen members who are residents/stakeholders within the urban renewal area. The Committee met for eight months and solicited responses from those within the area. The Committee held 10 meetings, an Economic Meeting to review the Wyman Gordon Area as well as a public hearing on February 26, 2016. The Committee requested of the WRA to

Worcester Redevelopment Authority

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expand the area to cover the Wyman Gordon property as well as the end of Southbridge Street. The WRA embraced the requests and they were included in the current plan. The plan presented today is a culmination of the work of the CAC, WRA, and the recommendations that this Board will have for the City Council. At the end of the meeting we will be taking a vote to move the plan forward; however this vote is not the end of the process with recognition of testimony and input from this meeting is valuable and appreciated and one more step in the process of the plan being sent to the City Council. A WRA meeting will be held on May 13, 2016 who we can then discuss the topics raised at this public forum and decide if we want to make any additional changes to this plan. Chair Pedone reviewed the ground rules for the public hearing to include limiting comments to three minutes, if you have written testimony please submit to the WRA Board, respect the opinion of those speaking and under the Board members have a right to ask questions and redirect.

Chair Pedone introduced call Mayor Joseph Petty – thanked the Chair, Board, Advisory Committee, for making the plan happen, hard work of Michael Traynor and the Economic Development office; important plan being presented in the downtown area with already a ½ million dollar investment of work currently underway. This plan will keep the momentum going with the visions of former Mayor Murray who took the wall down and another step in the process to make Worcester better. I look forward to the input of the plan; we have a great crowd of people interested in this great revitalization plan for downtown.

Chair Pedone introduced Timothy Murray, President of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce who acknowledged Mayor Petty. I would like to thank Michael Traynor and Heather Gould for working on this plan with the WRA Board and CAC members a group of fifteen members from in and around the target zone, thank you and thank the City Manager and the City Council for putting together and a process that was fair and open and produced a viable and economic plan and the intent is to tie into all the other development, CitySquare, Loft Apartments, DCU, Union Station, the new hotel at Washington Square and all the other growth and this plan will tie everything together, open process and making recommendations to the City Council and to make revisions, if needed in the future.

Chair Pedone introduced City Manager Edward Augustus who echoed Mayor Petty and the appreciation of the work the WRA Board, CAC members on their time and effort, all of these groups are volunteers committing a significant amount of time trying to work with us on our open and transparent process, one that leaves our downtown Worcester as well as our City as a whole better plan. I really appreciate all the work and specifically acknowledge Michael Traynor, Heather Gould and all the Economic Staff's time and effort invested along with our volunteers. City Manager Augustus explained the plan about economic development in the core of downtown; a month before becoming City Manager working at Holy Cross, took two finalists for the Athletic Director position here for a couple of days to visits the City on a tour of Worcester and to give them sense of what the City is like. Mr. Augustus toured the different neighborhoods and then downtown and one of the folks happened to be someone who grew up in Worcester, moved away and hadn't come back for twenty years, it was like taking Rip Van Winkle on a tour of downtown Worcester and seeing the City thru that person's eyes, who hadn't seen a thing about the City and driving by Union Station that had a roof on and a vibrant place and asking where the mall went and what happened and some of us living here don't fully appreciate the scale of changes going on in the last twenty years but certainly the last ten years viewing from the eyes of someone who hasn't been here in twenty years is transformation but many of us who spend a lot of time day in and day out and dealing with developers and dealing with the resources, time and effort, and overall renaissance of downtown Worcester. Eminent domain is scary and will not be the first goal of the plan, it will be last resort. The City of Worcester is a big investor with many projects to include the Worcester Common/Oval, Streets, Sidewalks, investment in our Library, investments in our roadways, Hanover Theatre and Fred Eppinger who has been Worcester's secret weapon. I look forward to working together and collaboration to take Worcester to the next level. Thank you.

Chair Pedone introduced Representative Mary Keefe – thanked you for accommodating myself and Representative Donahue who were unable to meet last week, it is important to be here ourselves; excited to hear the comments, there is a PTSD in terms of history, sense of loss and I'd like to think of what is heard, downtown renewal giving to neighborhoods and hearing about the open process where and when people can have more input and less destructive and more about renovation and investment. Chair Pedone two points the whole phrase of urban renewal, its scary and the Authority has gone out of its way to make sure what we are doing is public; this plan has been to the Economic Development Subcommittee; as Chair of the WRA at least four times over the course of the last eighteen months to update and secondly, a good example and are glad we are doing this here with beautiful windows overlooking an incredibly successful downtown and the former urban renewal plan across the street with St. Vincent's Hospital and the spinoff that the has created.

Chair Pedone introduced Michael Traynor, Chief Development Officer for the city and Chief Executive Officer of the WRA, will bring up the consultant BSC Group who has worked with the Economic Development Office, members of the Board, CAC, who will present a PowerPoint and run through the plan overview, then turn the meeting to Heather Gould, Assistant Chief Development Officer who will describe the projects currently underway. Mr. Traynor explained to be a stronger, more vibrant downtown - This is our goal. A strong downtown will significantly benefit the city and the region. A vibrant downtown offers business opportunities, jobs, housing, entertainment, and a healthy local economy. Why Urban Revitalization? Urban Revitalization as a Strategy: Urban Revitalization is a strategic approach to addressing properties where private enterprise alone is not sufficient; where the private sector has failed to invest in a property and that property, as well as the surrounding properties, has suffered. Transformative Development - Transformative Development Properties that have traditionally seen a lack of investment. Brownfields that have been vacant for 20+ years. Upper floors of buildings that have remained vacant for 20+ years. Buildings without updated infrastructure and/or accessibility concerns; lack of investment by property owners over time. Obsolete buildings that the private sector is not willing to invest in to redevelop. Public Infrastructure Investment - Strategically using public funds as a catalyst for private investment. Improving the public realm through wayfinding, streetscape, parking, pedestrian connections, green/open space, and bicycle paths. Financial Benefits of Urban Revitalization - Med City Example: 1993 Assessed Value: \$9,204,500 Taxes: \$277,331.59 2016 Assessed Value (Real Estate/Personal Property): \$148,687,400 Taxes: \$5,052,397.85 M.G.L. Chapter 121B, Urban Renewal Governed by M.G.L. Chapter 121B, as well as 760 Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR) 12.00, with oversight provided by the Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) There are 26 active/recent Urban Renewal projects approved within the Commonwealth. Of these 26, 18 are in Gateway Cities. Worcester has 1 active Urban Renewal project - Union Station Urban Revitalization Plan.

Heather Gould, Chief of Staff for the city's Executive Office of Economic Development presented information on the Theatre District Master Plan, explaining its significance as the basis for the development of the URP. Ms. Gould explained that the Theatre District Master Plan is a 30 acre area that encompasses the Hanover Theater and immediate blocks surrounding the Worcester Common and City Hall; that the goal is to create a district identity, drive growth, and spur private investment by leveraging public improvements (streetscape) with the outcome of activating the street life throughout the District; that the vision is an active, mixed-use 18 hour district to attract residents, particularly young professionals/empty nesters, businesses, and visitors to the Downtown. Ms. Gould continued her presentation, explaining the action agenda of the Theatre District Master Plan and reviewing the primary development opportunities within the proposed plan area.

Mr. Traynor turned the meeting over to Jef Fasser, BSC Group. Mr. Fasser stated he is working with Mary Ellen Radanovic and Russ Burke on the development of the urban renewal plan. Mr. Fasser provided an introduction about urban renewal, stating that it is no longer mass clearing of large blocks of land. He explained that the State has a number of urban renewal plans in different communities, and they typically go in and target properties that are vacant and underperforming, working with property owners and providing assistance to properties. Mr. Fasser explained the benefits of an urban renewal plan, stating that it defines actions to take place at a certain cost in a certain time to move an area forward from an economic development perspective. An URP sets forth a vision for an area and is a tool to attract private investment in the area while allowing the redevelopment authority to act like a private developer to negotiate with private property owners. An URP will also outline public investments that may be made in an area. Mr. Fasser reviewed the boundary of the Urban Revitalization Plan, the targeted development areas; the CitySquare DIF area showing the Public – Approximately \$90M for Demolition of Mall, Site Preparation, Construction of Street Network and Construction of Underground Public Parking Garage - Private – Approximately \$300 million between CitySquare and Mercantile Center projects. Theatre District/TDI: Spearheaded by MassDevelopment, in partnership with the City, WBDC, and the Hanover Theatre, the aim of the TDI is to make the Theatre District known as a bustling hub of cultural activity and entertainment within the downtown that will leverage additional anchors in institutional, residential, and commercial growth to create a mixed-use neighborhood for residents and visitors alike to live, work, and play. Theatre District Master Plan: Partnership between the City and Worcester Business Development Corporation. The primary goal of the Theatre District Master Plan is to create a district and sense of place within Downtown Worcester, and to identify buildings and sites that provide the primary transformation opportunities for institutional, housing, entertainment/cultural uses, and the infrastructure improvements needed to support those uses. Development Opportunities; 12 & 22 Front St. #1 & 2; 17 Pleasant St. #3; 66 Franklin St., Paris Cinema #4; 517-521 Main St. #5 & 6; Denholm Building, 484 Main St. #7; 518 Main St. #8; 538 Main St. #9; 35 Portland St. #10; McGrath Parking Lot at Salem St. #11; Wyman Gordon Parcels at Gold St. #12 -15; Wyman Gordon Parcels at Gold St. #12 -15; Wyman Gordon Parcels - 115 Madison St. #16; 149 Washington St. #17; Wyman Gordon Lamartine & Lodi St. #18 -19; Wyman Gordon Parcels Between Lodi & Langdon St. #20; Wyman Gordon Parcels Between Langdon & Lunelle St. #21; Wyman Gordon 328 Southbridge St #25 on Parcels Lamartine near Sargent St. #22; 300 Southbridge St. #23; 4 Quinsigamond Ave. #24; 346 Southbridge St. #26; review of development opportunities; public realm improvements; master plan and Financial Plan Total Project Value: Approximately \$104 Million Estimated Funding Required: •Roughly \$82 Million •Through Life of Plan •20 Years Combination of local, state and federal funding sources as well as income from sale or lease of properties.

Chair John Brissette, Vice Chair Jill Dagilis – thanked City Manager and Board and reviewed the accomplishments of the CAC established in 2014 holding ten meetings and including an Economic Development forum at Crompton Collective regarding the addition of the Wyman Gordon property to the URP; a public hearing was held regarding the plan and the open process the Committee followed. Ms. Dagilis also reiterated that he is a condo owner in the Denholm building and looks forward to the redevelopment of the area

Frank Carroll – Congratulations City Manager this is a good change; the foresight of Tim Murray of connecting the downtown. I thoroughly support the WRA and the Economic Development team for their thoughtful process and the plans that went through the process of the WRA CAC of which I was a member and that Fred Eppinger showed the way of which to incorporate private enterprises and using public money; and please fix up your buildings; you have an obligation. Timothy Murray – President Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce – thanks WRA Board for time, effort and deliberating and engaging the public the Mayor and the City Council and you will be reassured and continue this evening that every property the Frank

Carroll exactly how they should be in the area and district a collaborative effort that worked on Shrewsbury Street, the Canal District, and the private and public focus on mixed use with walkability, strategic, thoughtful, knowledgeable projects, engaging and rehabilitating historic structures and along with utilizing TIF, HDIF, DIF. Troy Siebels – we are the Theater District valued at 38 million from families, charitable constructions, successful and wholly support the plan. Thank you for the concepts and specifics; the plan may not go far enough and concur that taking by eminent domain will be the last resort and to see if there are other areas in the Theater District that might be added. Chair Pedone – do you think that there are other properties that should be included in the plan. Mr. Siebel’s – I think that there should have been the 500 block, Denholm ground floor wrapping onto Main Street. Deborah Packard – Chair, Library Board – follow up to Try question is this a static plan or can buildings be added over time? Chair Pedone – latest plan over a one and ½ year plan – there is a process to move forward to the City Council and then to the Planning Board, we have had all the other authorized meetings, we are open to review comments; once it is accepted and approved; nothing set in stone. Deborah Packard speaking on behalf of Preservation Worcester whose goal is to preserve historic structures and realize not every building can be save; but empty buildings and demolishing there are two historical theaters in the downtown area. Chair Pedone – last thing is to demolish buildings and not put anything in its place. Ms. Packard will this process the demolition delay ordinance; Mr. Traynor yes the demolition delay ordinance will be followed. Ms. Packard is concerned about the Olympia Theater. Ms. Packard – Chair of Library Board – excited about opening our front door, very concerned about losing parking for patrons – main priority about the. Robert Thomas former WRA Board Member, new COO or the new Centro Inc., would like to see Main Street to Madison Street Hammond Street to Southbridge Street added to the plan. Joe Donovan – VP of MG2 – reviewed the properties they own on Franklin Street, Portland Street, the new retail being developed and the reuse of the Paris Cinema once it is demolished and the popup retail space that will take its place. Geoffrey Dickinson, Worcester Public Library – would like to keep the success of the renovated library but cannot lose any parking spaces. Jack Donahue former WRA Board member – this is a great plan; we need to think outside the box and work with assistance from the State; the scope is appropriate. Rob Branca area real estate developer with property in the district. Mr. Branca states he has tried to make some deals in the area and has had obstacles - properties overpriced, for sale but not really for sale except in a windfall. If there is public incentive for private enterprises, we may be able to solve that problem. The property owner could get what the property owner needs and the area could get developed. Mr. Branca also suggests looking at the area just beyond the URP boundary – where Mass College of Pharmacy has invested and look at getting some of that activity back into the district. Sam Etre – Corvette Auto Body Shop – never notified about plan; does not want to have to move this business; Chair Pedone said that were concerns in the area. Mr. Etre will follow up with his comments and concerns. Tom Dederian – US Track & Field – would like to see the Reggie Lewis Center in Boston be replicated in the City on the Wyman-Gordon Property. Philip Palmieri – pleased to see the presentation, a solid plan in favor without using eminent domain, major problems; glad to see the Wyman Gordon property included, not pleased with the demise of the two Churches – Mt. Carmel and Notre Dame. Water Henritze – member of Union Station Alliance – very successful effort, great idea not pleased with the Miss Worcester Diner included – wants every effort to work with those affected in this area. Jerry Powers, Karen Valentine Goins; Nicholas Kanaracus; Steve Laska; Robert Dio, Suzanne Williams, collectively spoke about the plan as a whole a wonderful job – are glad that the WRA included the Wyman Gordon property in the URP – need to keep the job going with attending to Main Street – there is a huge void that needs to be addressed in the North Main Street area. Karen Goins speaking of Bike Worcester – with Mass DOT to further define the terms to assist with planning going forward. Craig Blais – commend the City of Worcester and the WRA for taking a leadership role for putting together a very bold ambitious plan for the City, very excited to be involved in redeveloping of the City along with Jane Jacobs being a part of this redevelopment that is

starting her second security. The progress used with the CAC to seek public input and learning from prior years in the 1960s, Med City, reflect back on 23 years ago. We need to continue the development of the Theater District, the redevelopment of 20 Franklin Street, CitySquare, North Main Street – we need to take advantage of being a Gateway City. The plan does not go far enough it needs to include Allen Court and the condition of the 500 Main block that backs up the property at Allen Court. Councilor Toomey – thank you for bring this forward – the library parking lot is a concern to us and we need to make sure the small business community is involved; please with the overall concept, its touchable and real and will develop new opportunities, synergy and evolve in a property way. Linda Cavaioli-Executive Director YWCA – member of the WRA CAC invested interest in the development of the plan whose property is within and that the YWCA houses 48 residents nightly and any further plans for the Library and parking lot need to be discussed before being taken. Bob Dio, Nick Karanus; Steve Laska, Susan Williams are all supportive of the plan in developing the Wyman Gordon site developing the property to field and track along the same lines as the Reggie Lewis Center in Boston. Lorraine Laurie – Chair Green Island CDC – waiting for some to happen with the Wyman Gordon property wished the Walmart ended up there as opposed to on Route 146. Menkitti – vibrant plan, glad to be part of it. William Belcher – 22 Front Street – tenant of Midtown Mall, brick is falling at 38 Front Street – there are problems with the area but do not harm the small businesses. Ben Martilla – Trustee of 300 Southbridge Street not happy with the plan, nor eminent domain was never notified about the plan only heard about meeting through Worcester Magazine; the area is fully occupied, taxes are paid. Randy Feldman we need a bigger vision for this plan. Paul Cooney motions in place since 2004 – 12 years in the making possibly missed opportunities. Liz Mullaney – would like Crown Hill included – lower parking garage on Pleasant Street needs to be removed has been vacant for years. Jo Hart will have submit my questions waited too long to speak; plan should have been brought forth earlier. Chair Pedone reviewed the meetings that have taken place over the course of eighteen months.

Mr. Rothschild offered the following motion:

Whereas, the Worcester Redevelopment Authority determined that an urban renewal project should be undertaken in the city pursuant to M.G.L. c.121B and established a Citizens Advisory Committee for the purposes of providing public participation in the creation of a Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan;

Whereas, the Worcester Redevelopment Authority authorized the preparation of a Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan;

Now Therefore, Be it Voted, that Worcester Redevelopment Authority does hereby accept and approve the Urban Renewal Plan entitled “Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan, Worcester, Massachusetts,” dated April 2016, prepared by BSC Group (the “Plan”), for the proposed Downtown Urban Revitalization Area, consisting of 118.4 acres, as presented at its special meeting held on May 5, 2016.

And Be it Voted Further, that the Worcester Redevelopment Authority, based upon the evidence set forth in the Plan and its own knowledge of the area, finds that the Downtown Urban Revitalization Area, as shown on the Plan, to be a decadent area and a blighted open area as those terms are defined in M.G.L. c.121B, §1.

And Be it Voted Further, that the Worcester Redevelopment Authority hereby authorizes its chair to file a certified copy of the Plan along with the minutes of this meeting and to refer the Plan, as approved, to the Executive Office of the City

Manager for further submittal to the City Council and Planning Board in accordance with M.G.L. c.121B, §48.

Mr. Minasian seconded the motion and it was voted 3-0 on a voice vote.

Chair Pedone entertained a motion to adjourn the WRA meeting; Mr. Minasian motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Rothschild.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael E. Traynor, Esq.
Chief Executive Officer