

**HARTFORD REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

**SPECIAL MEETING / PUBLIC HEARING**

**DOWNTOWN NORTH PROJECT**

**OCTOBER 16, 2008  
PLAZA LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM  
260 CONSTITUTION PLAZA  
5:00 P.M.**

**AGENDA**

**I. Roll Call**

CHAIRMAN CASARES: Good evening, everyone. Welcome to the special meeting of the Hartford Redevelopment Agency to receive public input regarding the proposed redevelopment plan for the Downtown North Project. Mr. McGovern, would you like to introduce our presenters today?

MR. MCGOVERN: I'd be happy to. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With us this evening we have Phil Michalowski from HMA Planning Consultants. We have reached the point where we have a draft plan that's been posted online. This is the statutorily required public hearing. We've asked Phil to give a presentation on the plan, the bounded area, goals of the plan; much of the same information you've received. And then we'll have an opportunity for members of the public to speak and provide their feedback to the agency regarding the presentation and the plan. I should note before Phil starts there are copies of the plan available.

CHAIRMAN CASARES: There's also a sign-in sheet if you are going to speak tonight.

MR. MCGOVERN: The plan is also available online at the development services website, as well as the other plans that are running concurrently with the approval process. With that I'd like to turn it over to Phil who will present on the Downtown North plan.

**(Roll call was not taken. The following Commissioners were present: Chairman Casares, Commissioner Lopez-Hernandez, Commissioner Arena, Commissioner Leonard-Woods, Commissioner Sierra, and Commissioner Bonafonte.)**

**II. Projects in Planning**

**A. Public Hearing - Downtown North Project**

1. Presentation by Herral-Michalowski Associates Regarding the Proposed Plan for the Downtown North Redevelopment Project Area.

MR. MICHALOWSKI: Thank you very much. What we are looking at tonight is the redevelopment plan for the Downtown North redevelopment area. First thing that I'll do is to describe the project area so everyone knows where we're talking about; the substantial area to the north of downtown. The southerly boundary is made up essentially of Interstate 84 to the Connecticut River, through Riverside Park, crossing I-91 to the railroad right of way to the north of the project area, down Winthrop Street, Ely Street, High Street, back to Interstate 84. The area consists of 123.1 acres. It's a substantial land area. Within that area are 81 properties. 15 1/2 percent of those properties are vacant. And in addition, there are substantial areas used for surface parking. Within that area there are 30 principal structures. So that is a small amount of structures in an area adjacent to a downtown. The aerial photo you can see the relationship to downtown and the density of buildings relative to the proposed project area. 23 percent of the principal structures are either deficient or seriously deteriorated. There was a separate report prepared for blight analysis of the area for purposes of documenting the conditions for the determination by the redevelopment agency of deteriorated and deteriorating as required under the state statutes. Those tests were met for this area.

The purpose of the redevelopment plan essentially is to provide the tool to carry out planning concepts that have been discussed for quite sometime in Hartford as enshrined in the Hartford 2010 plan, and more recently in the Urban Land Institute planning analysis done for this area and the general downtown district. The city is pursuing a redevelopment plan as an activity of last resort. An area adjacent to the heart of a major city's central business district should be utilized to a greater extent than this area is. And the redevelopment plan represents a public intervention of last resort in order to stimulate private investment and activity within the area. So it has that as the overarching goal. That is why this is being pursued.

The physical goal, the land use goal of the project is to pursue the creation of a revitalized area as a mixed-use urban district. And I'll describe that a little bit more in a second. One of the chief goals, of course, is to remove blighted and obsolescent structures. Some of the greatest eyesores in downtown Hartford are sitting right on Main Street, and observed by literally tens of thousands of people everyday, and diminishing the image of the city to passersby on 84 and the substantial workforce that exists within downtown Hartford. Let's look at the area in a little more detail because it's sizeable and has a number of sub-areas that are recognized in the plan.

First of all, the area we have identified in green is sub-area 1. And we've labeled it the Ann Street historic corridor. The objective for this area is historic preservation,

community/pedestrian oriented development. This abuts the new public safety complex which is a substantial investment for the City of Hartford, and will act as an anchor to this edge of the project area. So in essence there's a substantial historic quality of that area that the plan recognizes as needing to be preserved out into the future. That's the objective for that area.

The largest area, the area where the greatest change is proposed is the sub-area 2, Trumbull/Main Village area bisected by Main Street. It's primarily parking lots at this point, many of which are in city ownership already. This is the area described in previous studies to be a mixed use urban village to create an area of fringe downtown offices, residences, retail neighborhood to the north of the central business district to provide a transition, if you would, between the intensity of downtown and the neighborhoods to the north.

Then sub-area 3 is in our purple color. It represents -- It's called the Downtown North Technical Campus. Rensselaer is there, and the data center. We are looking for continued research and development and technology use in that area.

The largest area is that portion adjacent to I-91 and the river, the Market Street corridor. That's looked at for service, commercial uses, additional hospitality. It provides the relief to development in the downtown. It's seen as uses that would support the more intense uses in the downtown area. A substantial portion, particularly to the north, is open land at this point and provides breathing room.

And the last area is in the blue. And that is the new magnet school at Barnard-Brown. The city is committed to developing Capital Prep Magnet School. Again, a substantial investment on Main Street that will provide an anchor and significant activity, new development located there to reinforce the northern edge of the project area.

That's kind of the overall planning of the project area. Now, if I can shift to project activities this map describes the acquisition proposals within the plan. Plan basically proposes to acquire just three properties within this large area; 1161-1179 Main Street, what had been the former state department of community affairs back in the 70s. I attended many meetings there over the years. And obviously, it's a seriously deteriorated structure.

Two properties which are vacant; 273 Windsor Street and 271 Windsor Street. They are back to back parcels which Rensselaer has control over and were supposed to be used for parking.

The areas in blue identify already city owned parcels. So this whole area here is a significant parcel already in city ownership. And the plan looks to combining these and making development opportunities out of those sites.

A major part of many redevelopment plans are the road and utility systems. In the instance of this project area those needs were addressed in earlier times and previous redevelopment attempts at this area. So the infrastructure is in place to support the level of development anticipated. So there is no need to do any significant upgrades. The changes to infrastructure will be a product of proposals for new development that are proposed in the future. So the plan does not propose to undertake any infrastructure components.

The land use controls specifically that will guide development are defined in the plan. And they primarily will utilize the existing zoning. The plan has been structured to provide flexibility in terms of future uses. So there's a range of uses that have been identified within the zoning regulations, and a structure put in place that has worked pretty well for the city in the recent past. So the plan is going to utilize those as the structure going forward for development proposals.

Now, the plan proposes to basically create three disposition parcels, parcels for sale within the area. The balance of the project area will be under the framework of the land use controls, and owners will be encouraged to invest further. But the plan will not pursue any additional acquisition. So the disposition are these three parcels basically bracketing Main Street and Trumbull Street. Those are the areas focused for the mixed use urban village concept to abut the downtown area and takes advantage of sites that have primarily been in the city's ownership for a long time. This represents a little over 9 acres of land which is significant in a central city location.

There has long been established a request for proposal process the redevelopment agency has used for many years. It's well defined. And that will be the mechanism to go out and solicit investor interest in this area.

That quickly summarizes, Mr. Chairman, what is contained in the redevelopment plan.

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Chairman, for the record Roger O'Brien, director of planning. I just want to make one thing clear for the record. As many of you know, in the last few weeks the city council in recognition of the first female mayor of Hartford designated Ann Street as Ann Uccello Street. So when Mr. Michalowski was

referring to Ann Street -- It was only dedicated within the last couple of weeks, the official dedication. Just for the record I wanted to make sure that was clear.

MR. MICHALOWSKI: One additional point I forgot to make. On this past Tuesday evening the planning and zoning commission held a public hearing on this redevelopment plan for purposes of finding consistency with the city's plan of conservation and development. And they found it was in conformance. So that step which is a requirement of the statute has been met as of Tuesday evening.

CHAIRMAN CASARES: Thank you. From our list here those who have signed up to speak, Tomas Nenortas.

MR. NENORTAS: Tomas Nenortas on behalf of Connecticut Landmarks. They own the Isham-Terry House on High Street. There are serious concerns about visitation to the house museum because of several deteriorated vacant buildings. What we would ask to include the Hotel Keney (phonetic) at 269 High Street, as well as the commercial property on the corner of Albany and High which would provide parking to make the Hotel Keney building eligible for rehabilitation. The current plans for the public safety complex are taking that parking for their parking. Also, in terms of the whole block what the trident committee is considering, cutting it right through the trident doesn't make much sense. If you could include the Firestone Park as well as Tunnel Park that would help the work of the trident committee. There was a question about New Ross Park, why that was cut off and not included over the highway.

CHAIRMAN CASARES: This is an opportunity for public comment, and we'll take your comments into consideration. Next on the list is Edward Czaczkes.

MR. CZACZKES: Listening to the presentation the plan for redevelopment is very impressive. As the speaker did say -- I'm getting on in years, and I remember for a long time many of the blighted buildings being there. Changing that outlook and that portion of the city would be a remarkably good thing for the city of Hartford.

CHAIRMAN CASARES: This is the sign-in sheet. There were no names on the speakers list. Would anyone here like to make public comment? Okay, motion to close the hearing is in order. Is there one?

COMMISSIONER LOPEZ-HERNANDEZ: So moved.

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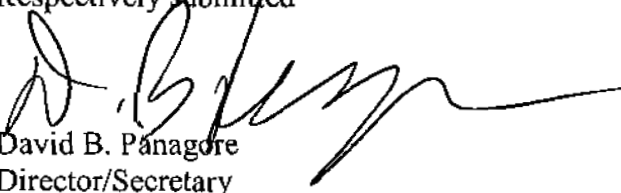
COMMISSIONER LEONARD-WOODS: Second.

CHAIRMAN CASARES: All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions?

**The motion to close the public hearing was approved 6-0.**

**The hearing was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.**

Respectively submitted

  
David B. Panagore  
Director/Secretary