
Meeting Minutes

5-25-22

Redevelopment Agency

A Special Meeting of the **EAST HARTFORD REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY** was held in the Town Council Chamber at East Hartford Town hall, and virtually, via Microsoft Teams, on Wednesday, May 25, 2022.

1. Call to Order

Chair McCreery called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

Present:

Ellen McCreery, Chair
Gerry Maine, Vice Chair
Tony Matta
John Ryan

Absent:

None

Others in Attendance:

Michael P. Walsh, Mayor
Eileen Buckheit, Development Director

Goman & York team:

Mike Goman
Denise Robidoux
Don Poland

2. Silver Lane Revitalization Area Redevelopment Plan Presentation & Discussion

Ms. Buckheit introduced the redevelopment plan process and provided background on the events leading up to the plan's creation. Mayor Walsh gave a general overview of his vision for redevelopment on the Silver Lane corridor. Mr. Goman spoke about his firm and introduced Dr. Poland, who presented the draft plan.

Dr Poland explained that the plan was created with market conditions in mind. Public engagement from the prior meeting was incorporated. The plan seeks to address the mixed messages in the market based on the presence of both well-maintained and deteriorating properties. The plan lists top priorities for sites where deteriorating conditions need to be addressed or where there are opportunities for new development. It provides strategies to improve the area's image, improve market conditions, eliminate deteriorating conditions, and build capacity.

3. Questions & Answers

Douglas Francis, a local commercial broker, asked if businesses will be relocated. Dr. Poland said the state statute only requires relocation plans for residential tenants. He said lease agreements would apply for commercial tenants. The next question was if the Town already has developers in mind for the properties identified in the plan. Dr. Poland said the Town currently has a development partner for the Showcase Cinemas site but none for other properties. The priority of this plan is to address deteriorating conditions, and potential requests for proposals from developers could follow separately. Mr. Francis said his firm was interested to learn about the plans so they may try to identify developers who are a good fit to work on the priority properties.

The next question was about if there will be a plan showing future development along the entire corridor. Dr. Poland said that following the approval of the Redevelopment Plan, there would be a period of potential property acquisition, and then there might be proposals for specific parcels. Ms. Buckheit noted that the Milone & MacBroom study provided some conceptual plans for potential development. She said all proposals will go through the regular process of Planning & Zoning Commission approvals.

Town Council Chair Kehoe urged the report to consider a diversity of housing stock. Dr. Poland said there could be potential for single-family homes on some properties. Chair Kehoe asked why undeveloped properties are prioritized as development opportunities if they do not have blight. Dr. Poland said sites that are vacant as a result of demolition do qualify as deteriorating conditions, and undeveloped parcels are lower priority but still present an opportunity for consideration. Chair Kehoe asked for this to be more clear in the plan and that open space parcels not be listed as targets for town acquisition. Dr. Poland said language can be clarified. Chair Kehoe suggested removing the Pratt & Whitney Club fields from the list of priority properties.

Council member Harry Amadasun, Jr. spoke of his support for redevelopment in East Hartford and his appreciation that prior public comments had been incorporated into the plan. Ken Labbe of Signature Group Real Estate, an East Hartford native, introduced himself. He has been involved in large-scale redevelopments in California and Arizona. He is working with some interested parties for the Silver Lane corridor.

Another resident expressed concern over the potential of zone changes affecting residential areas. Dr. Poland stressed that the plan avoids residential areas as much as possible. He said recommended zone changes are specific to existing commercial zoning. Ms. Buckheit said that while properties fronting on Silver Lane are included in the plan area, it is not a priority to address residential properties. There was also a question about traffic. Ms. Buckheit said larger developments will require traffic studies, and traffic along the corridor remains much lower than it was during the height of the area's commercial activity. Residents will have the ability to comment on specific proposals at Planning & Zoning public hearings.

Town Council members Sebrina Wilson and Angie Parkinson thanked the team for their presentation and said they are looking forward to the plan coming before the Council.

4. Adjournment

Motion made by Mr. Ryan, seconded by Mr. Maine, approved 7:42 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Eileen Buckheit
Development Director

cc: Town Clerk
Development Department