



TESTIMONY BY MAYOR MARCIA LECLERC, TOWN OF EAST HARTFORD

February 19, 2016

H.B. Bill No. 5184 AN ACT EXTENDING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CAPITAL CITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT.

Senator Osten, Representative Miller and the members of the Planning and Development Committee.

Good morning. My name is Marcia Leclerc and I am the Mayor of East Hartford. I am before you today to encourage your support of House Bill 5184, An Act Extending the Boundaries of the Capital City Economic Development District, currently known as the Capital Region Development Authority.

East Hartford has had a seat on the CRDA Board of Directors since its reconstitution in 2012, due to the presence of the UConn Rentschler Field Stadium in East Hartford, which is managed by the Capital Regional Development Authority. While on the Board, I have worked collaboratively with and supported the City of Hartford on all CRDA downtown development projects. I am here today to support an expansion of the CRDA territory to encompass several of East Hartford's priority development sites as well as a major and significant portion of our riverfront. These development sites include Founders Plaza, Commerce Center, our downtown area, the commercial corridor of Silver Lane, Rentschler Field, and the Goodwin College area.

East Hartford is a first-ring suburb, which is almost entirely built-out, with less than four percent of raw land for development, making our town ripe for redevelopment. The one exception is the 400-acres of vacant land at Rentschler Field that is owned by United Technologies Corp. As the cost to run our town continues to rise, without a corresponding increase in the grand list or Pilot funding, we face increasing pressures and difficult decisions. This is why it is imperative that East Hartford continually works to create opportunities for redevelopment. Our success as a first-ring suburb further supports the success of our Capital City by strengthening the core business zones with expanded opportunity.

The proposed CRDA boundaries and the identified priority sites for development are supported by the Town's updated Plan of Conservation and Development which was adopted in June 2014. The Plan contains chapters dedicated to several special study areas, which signify areas of opportunities for new planning, growth, and development, and redevelopment. These areas correspond with the identified expanded CRDA boundaries. In each instance, we have identified projects which we feel can be implemented in order to foster new opportunities.

In January 2015 and 2014 respectively, the CRDA Board of Directors unanimously favored the boundary expansion into East Hartford and recognized both the regional nature of the Agency, and the significant role we play as a continuous entity to the City of Hartford, with our shared land banks along the Connecticut River which is the backdrop to significant state investment at Adrian's Landing. A great

illustration of our interconnectedness can be seen with the Founders Bridge which has a walkway that is heavily used by employees, residents, and visitors on both sides of the River. This bridge can connect more than the walkers – it should be providing a connection to vibrant neighborhoods with offices, retail, restaurants, and housing.

By way of example, East Hartford's Founders Plaza area currently houses office, hotel and residential space. While the office space has a very high occupancy rate, the original development was completed several decades ago and is surrounded by vast parking lots which can be better utilized with denser development. We are hopeful that the CRDA expansion into this area will bring new opportunities for further development consistent with our long-term vision for this neighborhood as well as the other redevelopment sites we have identified, and the city of Hartford.

I have attached a map of the CRDA Board approved expansion area in East Hartford. I am in full support of the proposed legislation before you and encourage your vote in support of it.

Thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ma", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right. The signature is set against a light beige rectangular background.

Marcia A. Leclerc
Mayor
Town of East Hartford