

**CITY OF NORWALK  
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
MAY 5, 2011**

ATTENDANCE: Douglas Hempstead, Chair; Andrew Conroy, Carvin Hilliard (6:40 pm),  
Clyde Mount, Kelly Straniti, John Tobin.

STAFF: Thomas Hamilton, Director of Finance;  
Norwalk Redevelopment Agency: Tim Sheehan, Michael Moore

OTHERS:

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Hempstead called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**A. Washington Village Redevelopment Project  
Review Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and  
Draft Option Agreement with the Norwalk Housing Authority  
for City-held Day Street Properties as part of Washington  
Village Choice Neighborhood Application to HUD**

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Choice Neighborhoods Program

Ms. Candice Mayer, Norwalk Housing Authority presented an overview of the Choice Neighborhoods Program and a draft of the memorandum of understanding. Mr. Moore provided an overview and presented the following summary:

## **SUMMARY**

The Norwalk Housing Authority (NHA) has received a \$250,000 *Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant* from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to undertake the steps necessary to plan for the redevelopment of the Washington Village Public Housing site located on Water Street in South Norwalk. Following the conclusion of this planning process the NHA will pursue funding from HUD's *Choice Neighborhoods* or *HOPE VI Programs* in order to implement this project. The early redevelopment scenarios for the Washington Village site incorporate the City-held parcels at 13 and 20 Day Street. The NHA is requesting the City convey these properties to the NHA upon the execution of an implementation grant contract. The NHA has developed a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that suggests their terms for this conveyance. At the May 5, 2011 meeting of the Planning Committee, the NHA wishes to review and discuss the terms of the proposed MOU. Following this discussion, and with the Planning Committee's consent, the NHA will work with the City's Corporation Counsel to finalize the details of the MOU and an Option Agreement for the transfer of the Day Street sites. The NHA will then bring the MOU and Option Agreement back for final NHA and Council review and approval.

## **BACKGROUND**

As described by HUD, the *Choice Neighborhoods* initiative was created in order to transform distressed neighborhoods and public housing projects into viable and sustainable mixed-income neighborhoods by linking housing improvements with appropriate services, schools, public assets, transportation, and access to jobs. With the award of a *Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant* the NHA may now pursue public input regarding the proposed Washington Village redevelopment while also exploring the land use plan and financial structure for such a project. At the conclusion of this step, the NHA will apply for an award of *Choice Neighborhoods* or *HOPE VI Program* funding to support the implementation (hereafter, Implementation Grant) of the proposed project.

In 2008, prior to the inception of the *Choice Neighborhoods* initiative, the NHA procured the services of the EJP Consulting Group, LLC in order to explore whether the Washington Village Public Housing site represents a viable candidate for the receipt of HOPE VI funding. Through this process EJP explored opportunities for using HOPE VI funds to redevelop Washington Village and the surrounding neighborhood. EJP's findings were presented to the Planning Committee at its September 2009 meeting. EJP's findings called for the incorporation of the City-held Day Street sites into the redevelopment scenario for the Washington Village site. These properties will allow for the expansion of the project beyond the current Washington Village site and allow for the revitalization of a substantial portion of the neighborhood between Hanford Place and Concord Street. Further, the incorporation of the Day Street sites the NHA and EJP believes will enhance the quality of future applications for funding.

## **ACTION REQUESTED:**

The Norwalk Housing Authority wishes to review the terms of the Draft Memorandum of Understanding and Draft Option Agreement with the City of Norwalk for the transfer of the City-held Day Street properties as part of the Washington Village Choice Neighborhood, or HOPE VI, application to HUD.

RE: TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN DRAFT  
REVIEW OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

DATE: APRIL 19, 2010

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The consultant team led by The Cecil Group has completed the stakeholder meetings and community conversations in preparation for the drafting of the final Master Plan document. In summary, the project area is defined by a) a large area targeted for improved pedestrian improvements and better access to the South Norwalk train station and b) a focus area immediately around the station targeted for proactive change. The recommended approach cites development opportunities within this target area that includes City-owned parcels and joint development opportunities that leverage private investment.

Within the pedestrian improvement area, the Plan recommends improved pedestrian and bicycle networks, defined area “gateways” and enhanced connections to the core area. Within the targeted core area, the Plan cites five primary development concepts: the Webster Street Block, the Waterfront, the Monroe Street corridor, the South Norwalk Railroad Station eastbound and Washington Village.

The *Webster Street block* development concept seeks to create a strong Martin Luther King Boulevard frontage through the development of four or five story townhouses; a two level parking deck structure to serve the existing uses and new development; improved public open space; and enhanced pedestrian access to the Station. The intent of this concept is to encourage private investment in new housing construction and in the improvement of existing buildings to activate leasing while minimizing the burden of financing structured parking.

The *Waterfront* development concept seeks to create a market driven four or five story multi-family residential development creating a strong Water Street streetscape with convenient accessibility to the South Norwalk station while maintaining public access and water-related uses. The intent of this concept is to take advantage of the proximate waterfront and railroad station to expand the South Norwalk residential population but the success of this concept will require substantial improvement to the Monroe Street Corridor and in all likelihood a major change in the Washington Village property.

The *Monroe Street Corridor* development concept seeks to establish Monroe Street/Hanford Place as the primary east/west access within the TOD core area through the establishment of strong building frontages along the Street, assembling the block interior for parking and utilization of the City-owned Day Street properties for infill development along the Corridor. The intent of this development concept is to maximize the potential of private investment to improve residential options for the existing as well as new populations, improve the pedestrian access to the South Norwalk Station and to unlock the potential of the waterfront development.

The *South Norwalk Railroad eastbound station* development concept seeks to create a development partnership with adjacent property owners to provide mixed use development; a parking structure to accommodate existing on-site parking, modest additional commuter parking and parking for the new development; and to improve station circulation for pick up/drop off, bus and taxi stands. The intent of this development concept is to work with existing property owners to maximize the potential of the entire block for private investment as well as public use. This development concept is the most likely to launch transit oriented development in South Norwalk and leverage increased private investment in the core area.

The *Washington Village* development concept seeks to partner with the Housing Authority to redevelop the site in concert with City-owned Day Street properties to create scattered site affordable units in mixed income projects. The intent of this development concept is to encourage a mix of market rate, affordable and low income housing at a higher volume and density than currently exists; to offer improved housing options for existing Housing Authority clients, existing South Norwalk residents and new residential populations; to improve the Water Street neighborhood; and to increase development potential along Water Street.

The resources that are immediately available to begin the TOD Master Plan implementation strategy are as follows: a Federal HUD Sustainable Communities grant \$186,117 and a DECD TOD grant \$500,000. Potential resources might include as well: a 2011 Capital Budget request of \$300,000 and a Community Development Block Grant request of \$476,000. In addition the Housing Authority has submitted a Federal Choice Neighborhoods planning grant request.

The purpose of this development concept review is to request comments and approval from the Planning Committee of the concepts prior to advancing the Master Plan to completion and Council review.

**ACTION REQUESTED: Approval of the Transit Oriented Development Master Plan for South Norwalk Railroad Station Neighborhood five development concepts for the Webster Street Block, the Waterfront, Monroe Street Corridor, the South Norwalk Railroad Station eastbound, Washington Village as presented in February 15, 2011 draft**

**RE: CONNECTIVITY REPORT**

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The Agency has been working on a “Connectivity” initiative. This initiative grew out of a concern in the community that, while planning proceeded for downtown’s major development projects, insufficient attention was being given to the interstitial areas between the projects, or to the question of how the different projects would ultimately connect to each other and their surrounding neighborhoods.

With part of a capital budget allocation for “Connectivity,” the Agency began a Connectivity Master Plan. Last year, the plan produced an “existing conditions” report and sponsored a well-attended community workshop where some 60 Norwalk citizens generated ideas to better connect the corridor via strategies ranging from wayfinding signage and heritage tourism, to transit enhancements, pedestrian improvements, and better bicycling options. In January, the report of that workshop was completed. Late this month at a public information session, the various strategies that had been getting explored were prioritized for purposes of further focus and eventual implementation.

At your upcoming meeting, the Agency will present the Planning Committee with a report on the Connectivity enterprise to-date and get your feedback in advance of moving into the plan’s next stages. If members are interested in advance information, reports, meeting minutes, and other material about the project, all are available online at [www.connectnorwalk.com](http://www.connectnorwalk.com) .

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Sheehan stated that there were several corrections and he submitted written changes to be made into the minutes, as follows:

**D. Schedule Public Hearing on the Neighborhood Assistance Act program for the June Meeting**

**\*\*MR. TOBIN MOVED TO SCHEDULE A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE ACT PROGRAM FOR MAY 25, 2011 AT 7:00 P.M.**

**\*\* MR. CONROY MOTIONED TO TABLE THE MINUTES FROM THE APRIL, 2011 MEETING, PENDING REVIEW OF CORRECTIONS AS SUBMITTED BY MR. SHEEHAN.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## Economic Development Updates

POKO: Mr. Sheehan stated that there has been an extension requested on the March 14 deadline; Mr. Hempstead asked why, and Mr. Sheehan replied that there was no indication as to the reason for this extension. He added that he does know that all of the complex financing is not in place, and Mr. Hempstead stated that he would prefer to only approve a 90 or 180 day extension—in other words, keep the leash short to be sure it is a real deal. Mr. Sheehan stated that there should be performance measures for the developer, and Mr. Hempstead stated that he wants to see proof of intent with a letter from the state agency or from the financial supporter. Mr. Sheehan stated that according to the LDA a letter from the agency has been provided to Corporation Counsel. He closed by saying he will have this on the agenda for the next meeting.

SELIGSON: Mr. Sheehan stated that he would like delay any action on this project until May due to the number of items on the Committee's plate in April with the CDBG process and Capital Budget.

95-7: Mr. Sheehan stated that there is no change with the bank status, and as discussed last month they are working on providing a timeline of expectations and project status.

West Avenue: Mr. Sheehan stated that the City has decided not to open North Water Street, which he refers to as Reed Street. He stated that the lights are installed but are still not on, and according to Mike Yozak, the circuit boxes are on order. He added that DPW has claimed that it is a Deering issue and not the DPW, but regardless, he feels that this is a huge safety issue.

He explained that the center divider is not clearly marked, and if someone who is unfamiliar turns off the I-95 exit, they could easily end up in that lane straddling the divider. He added that he does not understand why this has happened, and is hoping that DPW addresses this issue immediately.

## NEW BUSINESS

## OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Hempstead called for a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing an update of real estate negotiations.

- \*\* MR. CONROY MOTIONED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING AN UPDATE OF THE REAL ESTATE NEGOTIATIONS**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting went into Executive Session at 9:50 p.m. and was reconvened into public session at 10:30 p.m. There were no votes or actions taken.

ADJOURNMENT

**\*\* MS. STRANITI MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Marilyn Knox, Telesco Secretarial Services