

# **COURT SQUARE URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT**

*Springfield, Massachusetts*

## **Plan Amendment # 9**

City of Springfield  
Springfield Redevelopment Authority

October 2006

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## **COURT SQUARE URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT – AMENDMENT # 9**

**OCTOBER 30, 2006**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

On March 28, 2002, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) approved Amendment #8 as a major change to the City of Springfield's Court Square Urban Renewal Plan project (CSURP Amendment #8).

The overall goal of CSURP Amendment #8 was to contribute to the physical and economic revitalization of the city's downtown. Specifically, the plan changes were to support renovation and expansion of the Springfield Civic Center, including construction of a new convention center, and to support the redevelopment of one of Springfield's most striking historic properties, the former Court Square Hotel. Implementation of CSURP Amendment #8 is being funded by the City through a \$4.7 million urban renewal bond.

### **PLAN ACTIVITIES COMPLETED TO DATE**

Following the approval of CSURP Amendment #8 in 2002, the Springfield Redevelopment Authority (SRA) completed site assembly activities to support the expansion of the Springfield Civic Center arena and construction of a new convention center, with the resulting property being known as MassMutual Center. Site assembly activities included the acquisition of a commercial property at 1243 Main Street; relocation of three affected business occupants; demolition of a former office building and a deteriorating air walk that had connected the arena to a nearby parking garage; environmental remediation; and street discontinuances required to create a redevelopment site for the convention center project. The assembled site was conveyed to its current owner, the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority (MCCA).

Ground was broken on October 2003 and construction included approximately 147,000 square feet of new building for convention, exhibition and meeting space and the renovation of approximately 215,000 square feet of the previously existing facility. The MassMutual Center opened in October 2005.

CSURP Amendment #8 also contemplated the historic renovation of the vacant Court Square Hotel building into the Park Plaza Hotel, a 134-room boutique hotel. However, urban renewal activities to support the proposed restoration of the former hotel building were delayed by the original redeveloper for a combination of reasons. Property tax issues constituted one key reason,

but the predominant stumbling block for the project as envisioned was that the market simply was not right for another hotel.

Furthermore, the City acquired title to the Court Square building in May 2006 and this plan change is being undertaken primarily to support a revised strategy for the redevelopment of this property. The change includes permitted uses and development controls specific to the redevelopment of the former Court Square Hotel building that are intended to preserve its aesthetic and historic significance. The plan change also provided for a comprehensive strategy for streetscape improvements along the Main Street Corridor – a strategy aimed at creating a unified, attractive, friendly and inviting environment within Springfield’s downtown.

It should be noted that this plan change contains only limited modifications to the previously approved CSURP Amendment #8 as detailed below. All other provisions of the previously approved and adopted plan shall remain in effect.

### **PROPOSED PLAN CHANGES – AMENDMENT #9**

CSURP Amendment #9 seeks to advance the urban renewal activities contained in CSURP Amendment #8 and will not modify any of the previously approved CSURP objectives. CSURP Amendment #9 builds on the work of Amendment #8 by seeking to facilitate the redevelopment of the former Court Square hotel building, taking current ownership circumstances into account, and to support the now completed MassMutual Center and continuing downtown revitalization.

CSURP Amendment #9 includes additional property acquisitions and creation of disposition parcels, now necessary to advance the redevelopment of the former Court Square Hotel building. This plan change also includes public improvements and streetscape improvements along the Main Street Corridor in support of the project. The limited urban renewal plan changes to be implemented in connection with CSURP Amendment #9 are provided below and summarized in Table 1:

- Any reference to “Park Plaza Hotel” contained in the previously approved plan shall be stricken and replaced by “former Court Square Hotel building.”
- This amendment eliminates the Court Square Amendment #8 Activity Area, but not the activities or controls associated with it, unless modified herein.
- Four parcels in the previously approved plan will be added as properties “to be acquired.” All four parcels were part of the proposed Park Plaza Hotel project contemplated by CSURP #8. They include two properties now owned by the City of Springfield and two privately owned parcels:
  - **Acquisition Parcel 18C1**                      31 – 13 Elm Street (Owner – City of Springfield)
  - **Acquisition Parcel 18C2**                      north side (formerly 98) State Street (Owner - Court Square Hotel, LLC)

- **Acquisition Parcel 18C3** north side (formerly 100-102) State Street - (Owner – Monarch Enterprises, LLC)
- **Acquisition Parcel 18D** 3-7 Elm Street (Owner – City of Springfield)

A tax taking has been made by the City and a complaint has been filed in land court concerning Acquisition Parcel 18C2. The City-owned properties will be conveyed to the SRA for disposition and redevelopment as part of CSURP Amendment #9. These properties will be redeveloped consistent with the intent of that amendment, namely, “the restoration and preservation of the former Court Square Hotel building – a prominent downtown landmark.”

- Two additional disposition parcels will be created - 18C and 18D - as a result of this plan change. Disposition Parcel 18C will include the former Court Square Hotel building located at 31-13 Elm Street (Acquisition Parcel 18C1) along with the two small privately-owned parcels (Acquisition Parcels 18C2 and 18C3). Disposition Parcel 18D will include the adjacent City-owned two-story property at 3 – 7 Elm Street. Furthermore, the existing Disposition Parcel 18B may be combined with Disposition Parcel 18C to facilitate redevelopment activities at a future date.
- The permitted uses and development controls for Disposition Parcel 18B contained in CSURP Amendment #8 are hereby deleted. Inserted in their place are the permitted uses and controls provided below. This change is made to ensure consistency with the overall redevelopment project and contemplates the combining of Disposition Parcel 18B with 18C.
- The following modified maps are included as part of CSURP Amendment #9:
  - **CSURP Amendment #9 - Boundary Map.** Figures 6a and 6b in the previously approved plan are hereby deleted and Figure 6 is inserted in their place. There is no change to the urban renewal project area boundary.
  - **CSURP Amendment #9 - Disposition Parcels.** See Figure 7. This figure illustrates the parcels that will be created for disposition by CSURP Amendment #9, 18C and 18D.
  - **CSURP Amendment #9 - Parcels To Be Acquired.** See Figure 10. Four additional properties are shown as “to be acquired.” They include: 31-13 Elm Street (now City-owned); a tax-delinquent 2,358-square-foot parcel on the north side of State Street (formerly 98); and a 2,738-square-foot parcel also on the north side of State Street (formerly 100-102); and 3-7 Elm Street (now City-owned).
  - **CSURP Amendment #9 - Spot Clearance/Buildings To Be Rehabilitated.** See Figure 11. The former Court Square Hotel building located at 31-13 Elm Street and the adjacent building at 3-7 Elm Street are shown as properties to be rehabilitated.
  - **CSURP Amendment #9 - Proposed Land Use.** See Figure 12. This figure illustrates permitted land uses for Disposition Parcels 18B, 18C and 18D.

- **CSURP Amendment #9 - Project Improvements.** See Figure 14. The project improvement area has been expanded to include all of Main Street, from Frank B. Murray Street to Union Street.
- Permitted uses and development controls have been added for Disposition Parcels 18B, 18C and 18D as provided below:

**Permitted Uses – Disposition Parcels 18B, 18C and 18D:**

Hotel  
 Office  
 Residential  
 Retail, excluding adult retail  
 Restaurant  
 Personal and business services

**Development Controls – Disposition Parcels 18B, 18C and 18D:**

- City of Springfield Zoning Ordinance – Business C.
- Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation - These standards (36 CFR 68) shall apply to any work done to the **exterior** of existing buildings. These standards are provided in the previously approved CSURP Amendment #8.
- Downtown Master Plan Design Guidelines - All development proposals shall be consistent with the General Guidelines and Signage Guidelines contained in the urban-design guidelines for Area B of the 2001 Downtown Master Plan, to the extent that they are not in conflict with development controls provided herein. These design guidelines are contained in the previously approved CSURP Amendment #8.
- Street Level Uses - A primary objective of this plan change is to restore important structures and to create a livelier downtown through a pedestrian-oriented streetscape with visually interesting storefronts, a critical mass of shopping and pedestrian activities and an attractive and inviting streetscape. Therefore, non-retail uses will be permitted on the street-level floor of the building(s) only if the Springfield Redevelopment Authority is reasonably satisfied that the non-retail uses provide services to the public that promote pedestrian activity and that the non-retail uses do not occupy more than 50 percent of the total ground-floor area of the building(s).
- Storefronts - The most important functions of a storefront are identification and visual and physical access to the goods and services inside. Street level storefronts provide business owners with the opportunity to display their goods and services. An attractive window contributes to the vitality of the streetscape. The transparency of the display windows gives the pedestrian visual access to goods and services located within the building. Therefore, display windows should be inviting to pedestrians. Windows should be clear glass. No opaque, reflective, metallic finishes and tinted window materials are permitted. No filling in or covering up storefront windows is permitted.



- **Financial Plan.** Implementation of the changes described in CSURP Amendment #9 will be funded by the City of Springfield through a \$4.7 million urban renewal bond passed as part of CSURP Amendment #8. A revised project budget is provided in Table 2.
- **Affected Redevelopers.** The project activities contemplated by this plan change (Amendment #9), with the exception of the public improvements, are limited to the area bounded by Main Street on the east, State Street on the south, Elm Street on the north and Court House Walk on the west. Pursuant to 760 CMR 12.03, a major plan change requires that "affected redeveloper(s)" be notified of the plan change and be given an opportunity to comment on it, and that any such comments be considered. There are presently no "redevelopers" within the area affected by this Amendment #9, and therefore there are no "affected redevelopers."

**TABLE 1. COURT SQUARE URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT AMENDMENT #9  
SUMMARY OF PROPOSED PLAN CHANGES**

PLAN ELEMENT	PROPOSED CHANGE
<b>Project Area</b>	No change to urban renewal project area boundary
<b>Activity Area</b>	Eliminates the Court Square Amendment #8 Activity Area, but not the activities or controls associated with it, unless modified herein.
<b>Acquisition</b>	Four additional properties to be acquired: Parcel 18C1 - 31-13 Elm Street Parcel 18C2 - 2,358-square-foot-parcel - north side State Street Parcel 18C3 - 2,738-square-foot parcel - north side State Street Parcel 18D - 3-7 Elm Street
<b>Relocation</b>	No change
<b>Spot Clearance</b>	No change
<b>Spot Clearance/ Buildings To Be Rehabilitated</b>	Two additional buildings to be rehabilitated: 31-13 Elm Street 3-7 Elm Street
<b>Zone Changes</b>	No change
<b>Streets To Be Discontinued</b>	No change
<b>Disposition Parcels and Development Controls</b>	Creates two disposition parcels and modifies development controls: Parcel 18C - redevelopment of 31-13 Elm Street, 2,358-SF parcel on the north side of State Street, and the 2,738-SF parcel on the north side of State Street. Parcel 18D - redevelopment of 3-7 Elm Street. Modifies development controls for Parcel 18B to ensure better consistency with Parcel 18C.
<b>Proposed Project Improvements</b>	Expands project improvement area to facilitate Main Street enhancement program from Union Station railroad overpass south to Union Street.