

South End Revitalization Coalition Meeting
Red Rose Pizzeria
1060 Main Street, Springfield, MA
Thursday, April 23, 2009
9:30 a.m.

Joan Kagan, Chief Executive Officer of Square One opened the meeting at 9:30 am.

Ms. Kagan gave an introduction, welcoming remarks and thanked Tony Caputo of Red Rose Pizzeria for hosting this meeting. She acknowledged Planning and Economic Development staff members Brian Connors, Scott Hanson and Samalid Hogan, consultants consisting of Robert Chihade of GLC, John Bechard and Jeff Fasser of Vanesse, Hangen and Brustlin (VHB), and Jerry and Maureen Hayes of Hayes Development Services.

Robert Chihade of GLC explained that most of the audience was familiar with Arthur Jemison of GLC from previous meetings but he would be facilitating the meetings for the summer. He gave a brief history of the foundation of this coalition from the Urban Land Institute (ULI) report of 2006-2007 to the specific plan for the South End. He stated that there have been eight meetings thus far of the coalition. Ms. Hogan corrected the number of meetings to a total of ten meetings to date. Mr. Chihade stated that this will be a community based plan upon completion.

Ms. Kagan reinforced the ground rule to remain solution focused. She added that we have the attention of the city's Office of Planning and Economic Development staff to look for grants for this plan.

John Bechard and Jeff Fasser of VHB presented a power point presentation with updates focusing on the area between Howard Street and Columbus Circle, which encompasses the South End neighborhood. Mr. Bechard explained that a condition survey was done. He also identified the project limits. The power point presentation included the Project Scope, Streetscape Examples and Sidewalk and Crosswalk Treatment Examples. He showed the intersections of Main and Fremont Streets, Main and Fremont Streets, Main and Montpelier Streets, and Main Street and Gardner Streets and the proposed improvements to each intersection. He said that the state completed improvements to Main and Broad Street/Wendall Place. This intersection will be looked at again for more efficiency, he added. The intersections of Main and Elmwood Streets to Columbus Circle were addressed as well. Mr. Bechard also identified the project schedule dates.

Jeff Fasser of VHB stated that they trying to build character into the neighborhood. He cited specifics to be rebuilt that include Main Street at Central and Fremont Streets. Mr. Fasser brought up the ideas of an arch over Main Street and bike racks. He asked if there would be any interest in either and suggestions for the location of the arch and placement of bike racks.

Ms. Hogan explained that the suggestion of bus shelters was brought up during a walking tour and there may be an interest in locating some along Main Street. Peter Gagliardi of the Housing Allowance Program (HAP) said it was talked about at a previous meeting and he would be interested in one in the area of his offices. Mr. Hanson stated that locations could be looked at as well as funding for them. Mr. Bechard explained that

there are different styles available with varying sizes and widths with a cost from \$7,000 to \$11 or \$12,000 depending on style.

Mr. Hanson spoke about “red signs” described as signs with a red background and asked if there was an interest in the idea. Mr. Bechard stated that he would be willing to look into them but explained that they are limited in what colors they use because they are technically a traffic regulation. He did add that there are about four colors and red has been eliminated in the next traffic manual but it has not been accepted for removal at this time. He did state that cities and towns do use the city seal or other types of logos on signs but they try to limit the size. Discussion by others in the audience addressed variations on colors of signs that could include the city seal to the cities and towns where they are used.

Lisa Androscia noted that in Rhode Island they have street signs that actually compliment the streetscape and look historic and include the city seal. She added that it also compliments the existing architecture and are very cosmetically appealing. Ms. Hayes noted that the town of Longmeadow recently installed larger street signs with a logo on the sign, which she felt were very easy to read. Mr. Bechard noted that they are also dictated on size of signs.

Ms. Androscia stated that this is the major gateway into the downtown and asked if there would be any “Welcome to the South End” signs. Mr. Hanson explained that the South End Citizens Council has been awarded resources through the Mayor’s office for signs.

He identified the two locations as Columbus Circle and Mill Street and East Columbus Avenue.

Ms. Hayes asked if the South End had a logo. Ms. Hogan added that maybe as part of the design one could be developed. Angie Florian of the South End Neighborhood Council responded by saying they could use one that was used in the past that showed a brick pillar with a sign post and flowers but the council itself did not have one.

Mr. Chihade asked when in the process would street sign alternatives referred to and other things would be presented. Mr. Bechard explained neighborhood meetings help with input to make decisions but parameters need to be laid out. He said the bid for construction is the goal for the summer. He added that they are getting to the stage of making decisions on points addressed, which the city has raised during the past few weeks. He believed there is one to six weeks time before final decisions are made, but there are options on street signs and the idea of an arch that needs to be explored. He did say that they could be brought back to the May meeting so they can be presented and decisions made.

Mr. Chihade asked for clarification purposes that they were talking about the street signs at the corner mounted on a pole that is on the ground not the ones hung from ???

Mr. Bechard replied areas talked about are the brick post on all of their side street locations but not likely at the signalized locations, which he said would be about twenty.

Mr. Fasser brought the dialogue back to the issue an arch for the neighborhood. Ms. Androschia explained that in an area of Providence, RI there is welcome sign in a neighborhood that was created to give a feeling of connection to the community. Ms. Hogan and Mr. Fasser spoke about potential locations for a gateway sign.

Tony Caputo asked if proposed arch would be a walkover or ornamental. Mr. Fasser said the arch would be ornamental and explained the design. Also, he did ask whether the idea would be a good one and if so, where would be a good location for the arch.

Angie Florian of the South End Neighborhood Council explained that this idea had been talked about before. She added that the suggestion was to have it placed near the LaFiorentina Bakery and the church (Mt. Carmel). This location she stated would be the center of the neighborhood.

Mr. Fasser again addressed the idea of having bike racks and placement. He asked if this suggestion had any interest and asked for suggested locations. He also explained a type of bike rack that could be placed along the street so as not to have just one per block. Mr. Gagliardi replied that he believed bike racks would not be a bad idea and a suggestion for one in the area of his building would be a good idea. Mr. Bechard explained that bikes can be accommodated and addressed how the traffic signals come into play. Also, he stated that they very respectful of the businesses. Mr. Fasser stated that there are different styles available not just the ones most people tend to think of. Also, he said that bike racks can be moveable so they do not necessarily have to stay at one location. Ms.

Hogan passed stated that a photo was being passed around to show a type of style for bike racks. Mr. Chihade also identified a ring style that could be placed on each block. Elaine from the Department of Housing and Community Development, spoke of her experience working in the city of Somerville where placement of rings placed at the base of a pole along a corridor not every pole. Mr. Bechard said it would be tough to find one or two locations to place them.

A resident of the neighborhood spoke about the idea of bike racks. She said that it is interesting idea but the issue would be having the bikes stolen. She added that she a life long resident and willing to improve the city but noted that in all of these meetings the people addressing the issues are not from the area. She stated that sometimes people that live in other can take advantage of certain areas and wanted them to take that into consideration. She asked that parking for the apartment buildings in the South End be looked for and the possibility of having it on vacant lots. She also addressed the proposal of a road behind Richlieu Place and Adams Street, which she felt was not needed. She also spoke about a lawsuit that she had about building over natural springs in the area and identified the location by streets. She also noted the dumping on property in the area near Hillside Place that is continuing to be a problem. Ms. Hogan asked for the location/street and explained that a note of it would be made so that it could be addressed to by the appropriate agency.

Ed Maddaloni identified himself as a lifelong resident of the South End and addressed his concerns over the plans for the South End. His questions concerned the length of the sidewalks and the location of the proposed curbs for Union Street. Referring to the suggestion for bike racks and walking the area, he said that he did not walk around the neighborhood. He added that the people who represent the improvements are not from here and are not aware of the problems. He said he did want improvements and this would be a step in the right direction. Again, he cited his concerns over the sidewalks, enlarged curbs, and parking problems. He also identified the traffic problems on Main Street, East Columbus Avenue, school buses, as well as Dunkin' Donuts. Mr. Bechard used drawings highlighting the idea of sidewalk bump outs and its intent for the intersection and what is happening presently with traffic and parking and what the improvements would entail.

Mr. Chihade added that he is aware that is parking where the bump outs will be and people are trying to get into the lane to take a turn then they run into a vehicle that is parked legally or illegally, which then turns into a traffic jam at the intersection. He explained this will help people stay in the travel lanes and improve the flow of traffic.

Mr. Maddaloni addressed the issue of traffic lanes and described the traffic flow coming from Columbus Avenue to the intersection with Main Street and how congested it becomes. Mr. Bechard explained the traffic flow and stated there are not two traffic lanes. He said that people create what Mr. Maddaloni thinks of as two lanes by going around a vehicle. Mr. Caputo added that people are doing even it is illegal and by doing so it alleviates traffic. Mr. Bechard added that there have been 39 accidents at that

location over the last three years as result of what has been described today. Ms. Hogan added in reference to the traffic patterns what they want people to do and see what is available in the South End restaurants, shops, etc. Also, she noted that traffic flow is something that is an issue that would be addressed with the new bump outs.

Mr. Maddaloni asked for the width of sidewalks and noted that this intersection is a crucial corner. He also stated that he is not in favor of bump outs which he feels it would narrow the intersection. He added traffic enforcement and restricting parking 20 feet from the corners without the bump outs should be enforced. Mr. Chihade suggested as an option a turn lane. Mr. Bechard stated that a detailed traffic with three options would be suggested to the city. He said a scenario in which a portion of the street turned into two lanes would only result in a loss of only a few parking spaces. He also addressed traffic flow and timing sensors in the pavement. Mr. Bechard added that making it safer for pedestrians is also part of the project. He said by adding lanes it would become more of a traffic project than community enhancement. They are trying to have a balance with tradeoffs on pedestrian traffic and businesses. Putting in required lanes would impact parking and it would not be safe for pedestrians, he added.

Mr. Bechard addressed questions regarding the definition of two lanes of travel. He explained that it one lane in either direction not two lanes on each side of the street. Also, he addressed a question from Ms. Florian about the closing of the driveway to Dunkin' Donuts from Main Street to which Mr. Bechard replied that it will not be blocked off due to the fact that if vehicles wanted to enter Dunkin' Donuts they would

have to take a left off Main Street onto Central Street. He explained that taking a left off Central would be difficult due to vehicle back up from the traffic signal. Ms. Florian identified traffic backups from the light at Broad Street to Gardner Street and as well as from school bus stops and city bus stops. Mr. Bechard replied that he is aware of the traffic problems and a balance has to be found in safety and efficiency and parking and pedestrians.

Mr. Gagliardi said his experiences come from both as a driver and as a pedestrian. He said as a pedestrian he sees the ideas as a good thing. Also, as a person with a business in the South End he sees the saving of parking spaces versus having a real second lane is useful. He did asked what will be the outcome of traffic once State Street renovations are completed. He added that he uses Union Street as a way to get up the hill bypassing the present construction on State Street but once it is done he asked whether there will be any change in the equation. Mr. Bechard stated that parking along lower State Street is illegal and signal efficiency will be synchronized due to the large volume of traffic on State Street. Mr. Gagliardi noted that the volume of traffic on Union Street is significant with people going and coming from work during the day and using it as way to get to East Columbus Avenue. A resident of the South End said there is the Zanetti and Milton Bradley Schools adding to the traffic which also needs to be taken into consideration along with the school buses.

Ms. Kagan said that all of these issues are important and they need to be look at the trade-offs and it has to do with how we envision the South End. She added that time is a

concern since the meeting was to end at 11:00 am and is aware that there are more questions to be addressed.

Mr. Caputo explained that opposition over the bump outs expressed at the last meeting and coming to this meeting the bump outs are still present. Since there was opposition to the bump outs at that meeting he thought diagrams would be without them but he did not see the voices heard at the last meeting reflected in these designs. He added that he was not stating that they may not be a good idea. Mr. Chihade suggested that it be drawn up and presented as described and illustrated how it does not work. He said it would show both alternatives. Mr. Maddaloni added that he did want to see just Union and Main Streets but down to Broad Street and Marble Streets because they have problems. He cited a housing project at Union and Main Streets with cars and no available parking as an issue that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Chihade stated that the goal was to present all the projects with an update and a request to extend meeting a little longer. He explained all the Master Plan projects listed and gave an update on each project from Main Street, Dwight Street Extension, Hollywood section, Ashmun and Marble Street connections. Ms. Hogan noted that she had no updates on this section but did say that the parking issue would be addressed in the Hollywood section. Mr. Chihade said that parking and traffic are issues that come up at all neighborhood meetings he has attended over the years. He did say that improvements for Emerson Wight Park would be looked at as well. Ms. Hogan added

that the Park Department is hiring a park designer with the hope it will help in the plans for the South End park.

Ms. Kagan announced that Emerson Wight Park will have a clean-up day on Saturday, April 25th for those interested in participating. A resident asked if empty lots would be included to which Ms. Kagan replied that the clean-up was only for the park.

Mr. Chihade stated that the Park Department is hiring a consultant to determine an interim use for the Gemini site. Ms. Hogan that the area is between Central and Morris Streets but there is nothing concrete at the moment but looking to what can be done with the lot in the meantime they would like to see it kept clean by having it seeded for grass.

A resident addressed the Northern Heights town homes and the need for parking for the residents. Her question was whether parking would be an option to use half of the lot for parking by the tenants. She added that there is some parking for the residents behind the buildings. Mr. Chihade said it was a good proposal and at a future meeting the Park Department they will be able to state what the property could be used for until it is redeveloped. Ms. Hogan stated that they are not at the point where a determination use for the property has been decided but some market and retail analysis for the area has been done and looking at residential needs as well.

Mr. Chihade stated Miller Development is in discussion with the city and the current owners for the rehabilitation of the Arlington Court site. He also explained that in order

to implement these projects, permits and plans need to be in place and one is an update to the existing South End Urban Renewal Plan. Hayes Development is working on it, he said.

Ms. Hogan introduced Maureen and Jerry Hayes of Hayes Development who have hired through the Gateway Plus Action Grant. She also identified Elaine W of the state office of ? who was present to observe this meeting.

Mr. Hayes introduced himself and stated that Hayes Development has been hired by the Springfield Redevelopment Authority (SRA) to prepare an amendment to the South End Urban Renewal Plan, which would be Amendment #6. He explained that the purpose of the amendment is to be able to implement a couple of projects that are on the South End action agenda. He presented an overview with key issues that need to be resolved and a timetable for the issues to be implemented. Mr. Hayes stated that he would be touring the South End with Angie Florian of the South End Neighborhood Council to get her input to incorporate it and then develop an urban plan amendment that will be ready for the process to move forward. He added that it would have to be approved by the Planning Board, City Council and the SRA Board before being sent to the state. Mr. Hayes said the state has 120 days in which to review and approve and believes it can be done within the time frame he cited and completed by 2010.

A resident addressed Mr. Hayes about her parent's property on Richlieu Place and whether they would be bought out to satisfy a proposed roadway. Mr. Hayes explained

that he did not which property she was referring to but was willing to speak with her after the meeting to address her concerns.

Ms. Florian noted that public meeting dates were brought and questioned whether they would be happening in the next month. Mr. Hayes replied that would not be happening and explained that a process would take place before meetings with the public would happen.

Ms. Kagan noted that time is a concern for many and their schedules and understands there is a lot of information from these meetings that result in work to be reconciled after each meeting. With that Ms. Kagan announced that the next meeting is at 6:00 p.m. on May 21st at Mt. Carmel Academy.

Ms. Hogan acknowledged Hal King from the Springfield Parking Authority who was present at today's meeting and heard the concerns and would work on some of the issues brought up at this meeting.

Mr. Chihade urged those in attendance to please sign the attendance sheet if they had not already done so.

Meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.