

**SOUTH END REVITALIZATION COALITION MEETING**  
**JULY 30, 2009**

Ms. Joan Kagan welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the South End Community Meeting. She wanted to remind everyone to stay goal-oriented and positive minded. She introduced Mr. Scott Hanson of the Office of Planning and Economic Development for the City of Springfield.

Mr. Hanson presented the audience with a PowerPoint presentation of the accomplishments made in the South End neighborhood in the last few months. He explained Governor Deval Patrick has vested time and energy into the City of Springfield with the Communities Count Initiative. He explained the initiative includes five million dollars (\$5,000,000) of weatherization assistance over the next three (3) years, along with the designation of the city as a Gateway Cities Park Program City. The initiative also includes collaboration with youth programs such as ROCA and Youth Build.

Mr. Hanson went on to describe the neighborhood activities that have taken place such as the Emerson Wight Park Clean-Up and Community Service Event which included Big-Y, Square One, Americorps and the City of Springfield as partners for this community initiative.

Mr. Hanson also presented the audience with pictures of new developments in the South End. The Arlington Court Professional Business Complex which was an abandoned building turned into office space, includes two million dollars (\$2,000,000) in private investment along with the creation of thirty (30) jobs. The introduction of Starbucks to the City of Springfield in 2006 is a part of the new South End developments. The AST Headquarters and the Square One headquarters are two (2) businesses in the South End that under went renovations to the exterior of the properties. The Square One building also received a new roof and the AST headquarters paved a new parking lot.

Mr. Hanson went on to describe businesses coming into the South End such as the new Berkshire Bank Complex. He also mentioned the plans for a Hampton Inn which will be a six (6) story hotel with an estimated six million dollars (\$6,000,000) in private investments. The Dakin Animal Shelter is another new development Mr. Hanson discussed which had an anticipated open date of August 1, 2009.

Another big accomplishment of the South End is the introduction of gateway signs to the neighborhood. Mr. Hanson discussed the South End being the gateway into the city from the south and how vital it is that this is recognized. He reminded the audience that the South End was targeted for revitalization partly due to its position in the City of Springfield. The two (2) signs will be located at Columbus Circle, which will compliment the Main Street Improvements scheduled to begin soon. The other sign will be located at Mill Street and East Columbus Avenue with additional landscape improvements. Mr. Hanson went on to describe the Main Street Improvements and the current timeline for

them. He explained construction was anticipated for August of 2009 and would span through June of 2010 with three point seven millions dollars (\$3,700,000) in costs.

Ms. Kagan introduced Mr. Jerry Hayes of Hayes Development. She explained he would be discussing the Urban Renewal Plan.

Mr. Jerry Hayes addressed the audience with an additional PowerPoint presentation discussing Amendment Six (6) of the Urban Renewal Plan and the expansion of Emerson Wight Park. He began with some background information on the South End Revitalization Plan which was developed over two (2) years by the South End Revitalization Coalition and ULI and represents a broad neighborhood consensus. The plan includes a multi-pronged effort of many elements. Mr. Hayes described the elements as the Main Street Improvements, the expansion of Emerson Wight Park, the elimination of blight, alternatives for Marble Apartments, increased homeownership opportunities, decreased density and improvements to the Dwight Street Extension. The cost for these improvements is an estimated fifteen million dollars (\$15,000,000).

Mr. Hayes went on to discuss the Emerson Wight Park expansion, which is the focus of meeting. He described the existing conditions of the park which include limited access from Rutledge Street, Wendell Place and Marble Street with truck access from Marble Apartments. Mr. Hayes also explained drainage is a consistent problem of this park, as well as limited and old facilities and security issues. He explained the security issues are a major concern of the community.

Mr. Hayes went on to show pictures of the existing conditions of the park's playscape, pavilion and the water feature. The slides showed the existing park entrances including the Wendell Place entrance. He also showed pictures of the park from different angles including looking east and looking west.

Mr. Hayes described the future plans for the park as they are currently. He explained the expansion of the park is a key part of the improvements. The vision for the park is to decrease its isolation, improve access to the park, decrease density around the park areas, enhance the facilities in the park and increase security by increasing visibility into the park. Mr. Hayes stated the vision will be accomplished through expanding the park by one point five (1.5) acres, which would make it eight point five (8.5) acres altogether. The removal of the homes that sit between the park and Marble Street is a method in which they will expand the park. Once the park is expanded the facilities will be upgraded. Mr. Hayes showed the current size of the park and what it will look like when it is expanded. He also showed slides of the homes they have planned for demolition.

Mr. Hayes wanted to stress the neighborhood ideas would influence the plan greatly in order of importance to them.

Mr. Hayes continued on with a timeline presented in the presentation. The South End Revitalization Coalition will begin the brainstorming process in the Fall of 2009, after the current meeting. The preliminary design would be next followed by Coalition review and

comment period in Winter of 2009 and 2010. The final design would follow the review and comment period. The preparation period would be next on the timeline, followed by the preparation of plans and specifications. Advertising of bids would follow the specifications. Construction would begin after the bids are placed and the grand opening is slated for Summer 2011.

Mr. Hayes explained Amendment Six (6) of the Urban Renewal Plan. He explained the Urban Renewal was a vehicle for the South End Revitalization. The purpose of this amendment is to assemble land for the expansion of Emerson Wight Park. The Springfield Redevelopment Authority is the conductor of the plan. Resources will be focused on highest short term priorities which include the park expansion and a timetable with approvals from different City Departments and implementation beginning in 2010.

Mr. Hayes followed this by stating the portions of the project that have not had a consensus met yet or funds are not available are the parts of the project that will remain on the backburner for the time being. The portions of the project he described were the Ashmun and Marble connector, the Dwight-Rutledge connector, and a timetable for these projects, which has not yet been established.

The PowerPoint presentation went on to showcase the homes that will be acquisitioned in the expansion of the park. Aerial photos of the properties were included, as were the ownership statuses of each property. The process of acquisition was also outlined in the presentation. The SRA will attempt to acquire the properties through negotiation by offering fair market value decided by an independent appraisal. Mr. Hayes explained eminent domain would be a last resort and if the homeowner is still unsatisfied they can appeal to Superior Court. A major part of acquisition is relocation. Mr. Hayes described the process of relocation making sure people are aware the SRA will send written notification and benefits will be offered to those displaced.

Mr. Hayes continued on to show the audience a timetable for the Urban Renewal Plan. He expressed the approval process was the portion that was lengthy. A review is given by the Planning Board and then approval from the City Council, SRA and State approvals follow in that order from September 2009 to December 2009. Implementation of the plan is scheduled for January 2010 with relocation notices following soon after. The acquisition is scheduled for mid-2010 and the demolition is to be complete by Fall of 2010.

Mr. Hayes reiterated that feedback from the community is key in the process of revitalization. He explained the input from the community meetings is really a vital part of the process and he gave the contact information for the project manager, Ms. Samalid Hogan. He went on to introduce Mr. Steve Mollica, the City's consultant for the acquisition process.

Mr. Steve Mollica of WD Schock Company, Inc. addressed the audience. He explained he aids government agencies to handle relocation during public acquisition programs. He stated he has done this job for twenty (20) years and worked with many displaced

families. He explained part of his job is making sure the property owners are offered a fair amount of money including relocation costs. He went on to tell an anecdote about the down side to his position. A gentleman working in a trench on a septic system told him his job was lousy.

Mr. Mollica went on to explain it can be very tricky but they try to make the best of it. He stated notification is given way in advance. He explained no moving will take place until the home owner has received a package stating their eligibility for relocation assistance and payments. Under state law a home owner has one hundred and twenty days (120) from initial notification of eligibility to the required time to move. He stated more often than not the process extends well beyond the four (4) months required by state law. Mr. Mollica went on to explain there are a number of benefits that are available for anyone eligible. All of the moving costs incurred are completely covered. A number of advisory services will aid in the relocation process in terms of where to relocate. He stated under state statute no one is required to move until they have been offered at least one (1) suitable location to relocate to. He explained that it is a continuing process between himself and the people chosen for this program to identify locations that are suitable for the displaced. Another significant benefit that is given through the program is rental assistance if the rent is increased and if you are an owner occupant you will receive supplemental funds to aid in the purchase of a new home. Mr. Mollica stated as the process forges on it is beneficial to the individuals that will be affected by this acquisition to speak with him after the meeting to clarify any questions or issues they may have. He stated he is available to speak with anyone. He explained before any relocation packages can be developed or administered, a relocation plan must be developed through the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. The plan will identify with the whole process that is involved with relocation. Mr. Mollica stated that is an explanation of the program in a nutshell. He explained it is intended to make the transition as easy as possible and to aid people in relocation as much as possible, hopefully placing them in a better position then they were in. He asked for any feedback or questions.

Mr. Jerry Hayes explained Mr. Mollica will be available after the meeting to discuss particulars with people the program will directly affect. He stated there is information on the program in both English and Spanish. He went on to explain the proposed timeline for the South End Revitalization Project. He stated they have presented the preliminary plan and they are looking forward to the discussion about it. They will take the feedback from the community and re-present the plan with any changes that have been made in hopes of endorsement at that time. He explained once they have the endorsement of the community, the approval process begins. He stated the plan must be approved by the Planning Board, City Council, SRA and the state, which will hopefully be completed by the end of 2009. In 2010 the relocation process will begin along with the demolition of the properties slated for Fall of 2010. The Parks and Recreation Department will have plans for the park at this time and they will begin construction. Mr. Hayes reminded the community members that feedback is an important part of the overall process and will result in a better outcome. He stated with feedback will aid in applying Amendment 6 in the Urban Renewal Plan for the South End neighborhood and will help in the

development of the park in a way that fits the neighborhood concerns and desires. There will be another opportunity in August to discuss the plans and give additional feedback. Mr. Hayes explained Samalid Hogan is the project manager and will answer any questions any community member may have. She will distribute her business cards. The presentation was complete and the question and answer period began.

A resident stated once the homes on Marble Street are removed there will be a large opening to the park area. She asked if cars will be allowed to go through this way.

Mr. Hayes stated there will be no cars driving through the opened area. He explained it will simply be a pedestrian walk through. He stated he does not know if there will be one (1) gate as an entrance to the park or if there will be several gates for entrance to the park.

The resident suggested several gates as a way of keeping people from driving into the park area.

Mr. Hayes stated that is part of the planning process.

Ms. Hogan stated notes are being taken and the Parks Department will receive the comments as well.

A resident asked how visitors with cars will be accommodated.

Mr. Hayes explained that is part of the planning process as well.

Mr. Mike Tully of the Park Department stated it will be a long process for the Emerson Wight Park but they are in the beginning stages of the process.

The resident asked if the land was being acquired from the land owners for parking.

Mr. Tully explained it will be a while before they know something that specific. He stated concerns should be held until they are further along in the process.

The resident stated it is a relevant concern for accommodating visitors to the park.

Mr. Hayes stated he believes that if the park is new and improved and expanded more people will want to visit the park and will need to be accommodated.

The resident stated the purpose of the expansion is to attract visitors.

Mr. Hayes stated the concern lies with the traffic. He stated the neighborhood does not want extra congestion when the expansion takes place. He stated the resident is suggesting off street parking for the park.

The resident wanted to be sure the homes being acquired are for the park expansion and not for parking.

Mr. Hayes assured him this was correct.

Mr. Tully explained while working with Capital Asset Management the allowed uses of the space was discussed. He stated they are working on a preliminary study on the drainage of the park so he does not want to begin in depth discussion on the park when the allowed uses are not decided yet. He stated the Parks Department is glad to hear concerns and ideas but they cannot say it will be parking, a soccer field or a baseball field yet.

Mr. Hayes asked if there were any more questions about the park.

A resident explained there are drainage problems with the park due to the water source being underground natural springs. She explained the problem spanned from Ashmun to Adams Streets. She explained it is really bad when it rains but even when it isn't raining it causes problems.

Jerry Hayes explained they will note the source of water supply when construction of the park is underway.

Mr. Rico Daniele, a South End business owner, addressed the audience. He explained he dreams of using the park again for baseball. He stated the left field can resemble the green monster at Fenway Park. He explained people will come to the park to attempt to hit balls over the monster. Mr. Daniele stated it will be an excellent attraction for the park. He also expressed interest in bocce ball courts and a basketball court with lights that shut down around 9pm. The key is that the surrounding areas know that there is a ball field in Springfield with a replica of the green monster. He stated the park is part of the heart of the South End neighborhood and he would love to see it alive again. He has been in the South End his whole life and he would love to see it be the vibrant neighborhood it once was. He stated it will pit Yankee fans against Red Sox fans and will be fun. Mr. Daniele went on to express ideas about the future of the park.

Mr. Daniele went on to explain an issue he has with the South End neighborhood and its treatment. He stated from Marble to Adams Streets there are boarded up businesses and this does not reflect well on the community. He stated the boards on these businesses need to be removed within three to six (3-6) months if no business has utilized the space. Chase Cleaners has been boarded up for fourteen (14) years and that is not right. The Code Enforcement Department should be more active in controlling the boarding of these businesses. He also went on to express his feelings on another portion of the South End Revitalization project. He stated he understands there is no money for the connector portion of the project but he believes the streets have been that way for fifty (50) years, so they should be left that way.

Mr. Daniele stated if we work together the project will be more successful. The attraction of the green monster is insurmountable and it will make people want to play at our park in Springfield's South End.

Mr. Hayes thanked Mr. Daniele for all his brainstorming and ideas to aid in the planning process.

Mr. Mike Tully stated there will be another meeting held to discuss the future of the park. He explained it will be a lengthy and involved process with the community. He stated the preliminary study is still being done and once it is complete they will know what the space can be used for.

A resident of Marble Street asked how the park will aid in safety and security issues of the South End neighborhood.

Mr. Jerry Hayes explained the park will be opened up so that security is increased. He stated if people can be seen doing bad things they are less likely to do it. He explained people will be allowed to see clearly into the park.

A resident stated this would lessen the criminal activity in the park area.

Mr. Hanson explained once Marble Street is opened up, the properties on the north side of Marble Street will be enhanced simply because the park will be brand new. People will invest more in the neighborhood when they see the parks transformation.

A resident asked two questions. He asked if it is possible that lighting can be added or expanded in the park area. He also asked when the funds are spent for these projects how funding will be generated to keep the park clean.

Mr. Mike Tully stated lighting is definitely part of the plan for Emerson Wight Park. That will be one of the main priorities during the design phase of the park because security is a major issue. He went on to explain maintenance will be done by the Parks and Recreation Department of the city. The Department will have a full maintenance schedule. The money for the maintenance for this park will not be an issue.

A resident asked if there will be someone on site to maintain the park as like with some of the other parks. He stated he wants to make sure the park will be maintained and not just left especially since all this money is being invested.

Mr. Tully stated the park will be maintained on an hourly basis. He went on to explain he cannot say someone will be there twenty-four (24) hours a day but the park will be inspected and maintained fairly often.

A resident stated at the previous community meeting someone spoke about doing something with the lot across from Dunkin Donuts. She asked what the plans were for this property.

Mr. Tully stated that the former Gemini site was discussed at the last meeting of the coalition. He stated it is undecided what the future of this parcel is at the moment but they have been getting community input to see what will work best on this lot. He stated criminal activity is a concern so they plan to leave it as it is.

The resident also stated more trash cans should be added to the park. When games are played there, people leave trash all over the park.

A resident stated there is hay growing on the Gemini site. She explained her building next door was vandalized because the trees and grass are creating hiding spots. She stated the window was broken and some money was stolen. She stated it is due to overgrowth in that area. It has been a long time since they have heard grass will be placed and maintained on this site and she would like to know when that is going to occur.

Mr. Mike Tully stated the Parks and Recreation Department is working with the Planning Department on this site.

Mr. Jerry Hayes explained it is a good idea to get someone onto the site to do basic maintenance while the larger details of the future of the property are worked out.

Ms. Samalid Hogan of the Office of Planning and Economic Development explained she has been in contact with Capital Asset Management and they plan to tackle that project this fall while the Main Street improvements begin.

Mr. Jerry Hayes asked that people be respectful and speak one at a time.

Mr. Rico Daniele stated that there are about forty-three (43) parks in the city and they need Patrick Sullivan and the leaders to put people in the park. He stated they should create activities for the children and if there are employees there the park will remain nice. He stated two (2) people should be working in the parks at all times. Forest Park is not the only park with children in the neighborhood. All parks should have activities for the children of the neighborhood. He explained communication is going to be key in the process of creating a neighborhood friendly and safe facility.

Mr. John Judge of the Office of Planning & Economic Development addressed the audience. He wanted to address the concerns for the Gemini site. He stated they spoke with the engineers working on this property on details such as where the sprinkler system would be located. The maintenance of the property will include a sprinkler system that costs about nineteen thousand dollars (\$19,000). He explained they plan to get Americorp and some of the area college students to come to the Emerson Wight Park and do activities and things like that. He stated it is important that the youth be involved in positive things in the city and they want to use this opportunity to accomplish some of that.



Mr. Jerry Hayes stated he believes the residents concerns are more immediate. He stated he believes someone should go out to the site and clean it up while the details of what to do with the parcel are being sorted out.

Ms. Joan Kagan stated a timeframe is needed on the Gemini site. She stated once the Emerson Wight Park is functional Americorp and other community based organizations will like to be involved and do activities with the neighborhood.

Mr. Jerry Hayes stated there was some concern on the maintenance of the park. He stated he expects that the Park and Recreational Department will maintain it and will set up activities for the community. He stated the park must be looked at as a neighborhood asset and everyone has to share in the responsibility for the park. If there is suspect activity going on in the park, the residents must take upon themselves to call the police. He stated you cannot expect all the responsibility to be on the Parks Department or the Police Department. The responsibility for this park will be shared with the residents as well.

A resident stated there has been talk about cameras downtown. She asked if there will be cameras placed on buildings in the South End neighborhood. She was curious about the area between Main Street and the Emerson Wight Park.

Mr. Hayes stated they are noting this and will place it on the list of things to be discussed.

A resident stated it would be a good idea to place a police sub-station in the South End area or in the park. He stated this should be placed on the list and this would protect the interest of many people while addressing many of the concerns.

Mr. Jerry Hayes stated the next South End Community meeting will be held in August. He stated he wants everyone to think of more ideas for the next meeting.

Ms. Kagan thanked Mr. Joe Kasternak for the arrangement of the site and refreshments. She stated the discussion was interesting and the comments were noted. She stated she wants to elaborate on what Mr. Daniele stated about communication. She stated communication is key and it is great that input is being given. All the comments and concerns are being taken in to consideration while the planning phase of the revitalization is underway. The features of the park are a major concern and Ms. Kagan stated she wants all to be considering these things before the next community meeting. The issues will be addressed.

A resident stated there is money for the park and for the infrastructure of the neighborhood and he wanted to know if there was any money available for the rehabilitation of homes.

Mr. Hayes stated they are working down a menu of initiatives and one of the things being worked on is the Neighborhood Stabilization Plan, including the rehabilitation of homes, new construction on vacant sites and the demolition of dilapidated buildings. He stated

they are ready to go and the next step is a conversation with the neighborhood. He believes September they will be ready.

Ms. Kagan stated they have been putting things together in timetable format. At the next community meeting a timetable for the Gemini site will be presented.

Mr. Hayes stated it is a million dollar program, which is not a lot but it will be a good program.

A resident asked if this was the money for the demolition of properties.

Mr. Hayes stated the money will be used for blight, rehab and new construction.

A resident asked if the amount of rehab money will be based on income.

Mr. Hayes explained this is a detail that has not yet been worked out.

Ms. Kagan asked if there were any more questions or comments. With none heard, she closed the meeting and thanked all for their attendance.