



Mayor's Development Forum
October 9, 2008
Room 335 - 5:30 to 7:30 P.M.

NORWICHTOWN MALL DEVELOPMENT NOTES

The Mayor's Forum began with the introduction of the panelists by moderator NCDC Executive Director Bob Mills. Mayor Ben Lathrop welcomed everyone and advised the Code of Conduct and Procedures for the forum. The panelist outlined their expertise in the following manner.

Jeff Blodgett, VP of Research – CT Economic Resource Center – Based on the Baltic Mills Feasibility study, Norwich's economic structure unlike other areas, more unique. Close to Sub Base, Pfizer, 2 casinos – one advantage is only area of job growth in the State. Cost of living is less stringent. Global crisis slower rate of growth when we fall out of the economic downturn and retail will take a hit as well. Concerned with competitiveness in this area and should consider a mixed-use development.

John Markowicz – Executive Director – Southeastern CT Enterprise Region – What businesses are looking for is simple – to make money. Norwich and New London has the smallest suburban & rural growth percentage. The highest population in poverty remains in Norwich & New London. The medium housing income in Norwich is \$46,907 compared to \$61,000 statewide. Retail sales - average daily traffic flow and market potential is a disincentive for potential retail clients to move to Norwich.

John Bolduc – Executive VP, Eastern Assoc of Realtors – Real Estate is a supply & demand industry. Supply – Norwichtown Mall has no signage – quality of inventory – huge restrictions floodplain issue which impedes government funding and financing. Demand – Medium priced home \$150,000 large demand for making Norwich more attractive for growth. Norwichtown Mall has no exposure, not listed on commercial websites, which would be filtered by the MLS system and realtors. Large anchor stores like the Xmas Tree Shops need outside entrances and need to be near an interstate to even consider moving in. Recommends a mixed use of the Mall.

Peter Davis – Norwich Director of Planning – Advised two options – 1. Tear down the mall.
2. Renovate a part of the 16.8-acre site. The site would have to be elevated to a flood plain level of 81 ft to flood proof the entire building. Compensatory storage is an issue. Edans & Avant, the Mall owners will be in attendance at a future forum to inform the public how they are marketing and the status of the Mall at that time.

Ellen Lind – Publisher Norwich Bulletin – Recommended to think “outside the box” utilize the river in a positive way and/or expand or redesign the existing buildings for retail, office space or some other mixed use.

Andy Messier – Chairman of the GNACC – Suggested adaptive reuse and rehab with the changing initiative from retailers or food anchor stores to the nature now is mixed use. Suggestions; commercial office space, medical offices and ancillary services,

segregate the buildings and put courtyard with outside amenities or free standing buildings.

Rick Kramer – Executive Director Rose City Renaissance/Main St. Program – suggested retail stores similar to what was in the Mall, hairdresser, restaurant, boutiques, gift shop, etc. Capture loss retail sales opportunities.

The floor was then opened up for public input. The following is some of the suggestions from the floor for consideration.

Public input/comment

1. Historic Village Center
2. Use the River as an Asset (Leads to Indian Leap)
3. Rail Road Could be Viewed as an Asset
4. Consider Full Traffic Impact (New London Tpk., Town St., Rt-2)
5. Possible Recreation Uses
6. Indoor Golf and Tennis
7. Should be a Destination
8. Add a Story in Height
9. Add Housing in the Mix
10. Consider Light Industry
11. Develop it as a Business Incubator
12. Needs to Have Exterior Entrances
13. Don't Give Up on Retail
14. Women's Clothing
15. Book Store
16. Movie Theater
17. Costco
18. Use it as an Educational Resource for the Community
19. City Needs a Strategic Retail Plan
20. City Should Look Into Regulations That Hinder Development
21. Owner Should List Property With Realtor
22. Owner Should Have "For Lease" Signage on Property
23. Owner Should Improve Visibility of Site From Rt-2
24. Owner Should Provide Incentives to Tenants