

Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development

Monthly Report: August-September 2016

Respectfully submitted by Alan S. Manorian, Director of Community & Economic Development

1. **1934 Ayer Fire Station RFP:** The deadline for proposal submissions for the acquisition/redevelopment of the Historic Central Fire Station was Friday, September 16th at 1:00PM. The Town of Ayer received one (1) proposal submission by a local developer in the amount of \$1,000. This sole proposal submission did not meet several of the prescribed requirements contained in the RFP. The Request For Proposal document issued by the Town of Ayer was well composed, formulated and formatted; it received from the regional building/development community many expressions of acclaim and complements for its quality & content. However, it is clear that this RFP issued on August 10th proved to be ineffective at attracting interest and proposals for the property. The issuance of the RFP in the late summer (vacation) season was not optimal however, it proved to be of value in that it resulted in many beneficial conversations, discussions and communications between Ayer's Office of Community & Economic Dev. and the regional building/development/design community. It proved to be a worthwhile "test of market interest & direction". The bottom line is this historic building, like the vast majority of historic buildings, presents and number of (unknown's) including but not limited to environmental contamination, structural, code compliance, and potentially unmanageable costs. The modest size of the building (modest and slow cash return on significant upfront redevelopment investment), combined with its advanced state of deterioration, and the unfortunate and awkward additions built onto the building through the decades, all combine to make this a project that requires a select and unique prospective owner/developer; connecting with such a prospective owner/developer will require a lengthy, more creative and highly-determined process going forward. The Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development is able and ready to rise to this worthy challenge. We will reissue an enhanced RFP, and we will deploy more creative and direct tactics and methods in achieving the desired results. The enhanced RFP and enhanced Approach will be launched the week of September 26th.
2. **Industrial Attraction, Retention & Partnership:** Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development conducted business visitations to Catagnia-Spagna, Nasoya (Vitasoy), Silpro, Optometrics, Grady Research; we have visitations scheduled for Capacitec, Creative Materials, and Splash within the next couple of weeks. On September 28th we will be participating in the Ayer Industrial Park Industrial/Manufacturing Community "Human Resource Group" in order to foster and establish strong working relations and communications with Ayer's Industrial/Manufacturing Community. Dir. of Community &

Economic Development has conducted site walks, map surveys, infrastructure analysis, and photographic documentation of Ayer's Industrial Parks and Industrial Zoned Corridors & Parcels in preparation for discussions and planning for (over-due) improvements to our Industrial Parks & Industrial/Manufacturing Corridors.

3. **Formation of Gateway Corridor Incremental Improvement Groups:** Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development will be formulating and advancing the establishment of the following Gateway Corridor Improvement Groups:
 - The Fitchburg Rd. Corridor Incremental Improvement Group
 - The West Main St. Corridor Incremental Improvement Group
 - The Park St. Corridor Incremental Improvement Group
4. **Proposed Company Relocation from Ayer:** The Ayer Office of Community & Economic Development was contacted by Mika Brewer, Real Estate Dir. of the Devens Enterprise Commission (as per the "Non-Compete Contract" Protocol) informing us that a company located in Ayer has contacted Devens expressing interest in available sites in Devens. The company requires acquisition (not leasing) 3-5 acres of land and proposes to construct a new approximately 25,000 sq. ft. building housing both corporate offices and manufacturing plant. The Ayer OCED has made contact with several property owners in Ayer inquiring as to the status, disposition and interest in considering their property site (2-5 acres) for possible acquisition by the Ayer company. Thus far we have not identified a viable site that meets the Ayer's company's requirements and specifications. We will stay in close communication with Ayer company officials and Mika Brewer of Devens as the process advances.
5. **Citizen Planner/Master Plan Engagement:** The Ayer OCED formulated, scheduled, promoted and conducted two (2) exceptionally successful Downtown Ayer "WALK-PLAN" Design Tours. Both Citizen Planner Tours, one along the Park St. Corridor and the other in the Downtown Ayer Residential Neighborhood (Washington St., Cambridge St., Highland St., Nashua St., etc.). Each Tour brought together 35+ Ayer Citizens who enthusiastically and insightfully walked these districts with an eye for Urban Space Design, Development Patterns, Connectivity, Land-Use, Site Plan Design, and much more.
6. **Resolution of Pleasant Street School Historic Preservation Restriction:** Ayer OECD conducted presentation at the 9/14 Ayer Historic Commission in order to secure an official vote supporting the conversion of the "Perpetual Preservation Restriction" to a "Term Preservation Restriction" that can be subordinated to the Ayer Housing Authority HUD 202 Loan on the property deed. The vote of the Ayer Historical Commission was unanimous. The "Term Preservation Restriction" will be presented at the October Ayer Town Meeting for a vote.

7. **Pleasant Street (CDBG Funded) Reconstruction:** The project continues progressing with no significant delays and one minor change order. Ayer OCED continues its active participation in bi-weekly Construction Progress Meetings with Public Works & Project Contractors.
8. **CDBG Residential Rehabilitation Program:** The Community Development office has successfully qualified two homes for the CDBG rehab program. We are now going through the review and bidding process. The Pleasant Street Infrastructure project is moving along with the sewer completed and the work on the water line has begun. We are finishing the 2nd of 4 years in the Drug Court grant as of Sept. 29th. The Contract for year three has been drafted and is being reviewed.
9. **Site Location Assistance of New Small Company to Ayer:** Ayer OCED was contacted by a small material fabrication company currently based in Acton. They seek a possible new location in the Town of Ayer. Ayer OCED met with the company owners at Ayer Town Hall to discuss prospective locational requirements and specifications. We located one substantially viable location and put the two parties in communication with each other. We are currently identifying two more possible locations in Ayer in order to encourage the re-location of this company in the Town of Ayer.
10. **Town of Ayer Master Plan:** Ayer OCED is engaged in the formation of the Economic Development Work Group & the Housing Work Group. These two groups will be involved in launching Phase I of the comprehensive municipal Master Plan Process. The Ayer OCED is also in the process of organizing, directing and conducting Ayer's 1st "Pecha-Kucha" Night Event as part of Phase I of the Master Plan Process.
11. **Prospective 190-194 West Main Street Redevelopment:** Ayer OCED proposed, organized, scheduled and conducted (on 9/20) a "Developer & Town Dept. Conceptual Plan Development Roundtable Group" with A.J. Bergin and officials representing the Police, Fire, Public Works, Building Inspection/Code Enforcement, Community & Economic Development, as well as Planning Board & Zoning Board official/administrator.
12. **Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce Relationship:** Dir. of Ayer OCED participated in the NVCOC "BIG (Business Improvement Group)" meeting on 9/9 at the Chamber Offices in Shirley. Ayer OCED participated in the NVCOC "Breakfast With The Boss" Program at the Hilton Garden Inn at Devens on 9/14 which highlighted Mike Szelest and the Ayer Shop & Save success story.
13. **Fitchburg Rd. Corridor Incremental Improvement:** Ayer OCED contacted and scheduled a meeting with Paul Di Geronimo & Laura O'Kane of Geronimo Properties to discuss the formulation of the Fitchburg Rd. Corridor Incremental Improvement Group and to dialogue on Mr. Geronimo's future plans for his Fitchburg Rd. property holdings, and the prospective attraction of a national retail service business to Ayer.