



TOWN of
THOMPSON

MILL SITES REDEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**MILL SITES REDEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING**

Thompson Public Library/Community Center – Room 2

Wednesday, May 23, 2018
6:00 PM

***929 Riverside Drive (aka The River Mill)
Update on Mill Redevelopment***

MINUTES

PRESENT: J. Blanchette, Chairman
S. Lewis, Vice-Chairman
B. Davis
J. Hall
N. O'Leary

ALSO PRESENT: K. Beausoleil, First Selectman, M. A. Chinatti, Director of Planning & Development, W. Bugden, CME Associates, Inc., J. Gumpert, Camden Management Partners, members of the public (sign-in sheet attached to filed copy of these minutes)

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING:

a. J. Blanchette, Chairman, MSRAC: Introduction/Statement of Meeting Purpose

J. Blanchette called the meeting to order at 6:05PM. She welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the order of the agenda. J. Blanchette, following completion of the Kooris video, provided a brief history of events which preceded this meeting. She also informed attendees that the Town had recently applied for a \$200,000 DECD BAR (Brownfield Area-Wide Revitalization Program) Grant and detailed the tasks requested in that application.

J. Blanchette thanked officials from DEEP, DECD, SHPO, CTHP and elected officials for their continued support of the project and stated they would have an opportunity to speak, should they so choose, under Agenda Item (d).



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She then introduced David Kooris, DECD Deputy Commissioner, who appeared via video provided by Binu Chandy, DECD.

She then introduced J. Gumpert.

b. John Gumpert, Camden Partners: Update on Status of Project

Mr. Gumpert reviewed how he got involved in the project and briefly touched on his experience with such projects. As part of that outline, he discussed his redevelopment of the Loray Mill in Gastonia, NC. He stated he is looking for state-of-the-art amenities/amenities area(s) that are not available anywhere else; he stated all those things are coming together with this project. He discussed the make-up of the project and the amenities that will be offered once completed. He stated beginning construction is approximately a 2-year process and he's a few months into it at this time.

He stated the initial market study was very positive, and that the study has since been updated due to a request from his lender. He stated that updated study also came back extremely positive.

He noted the project has really taken off from a design standpoint, and he talked about the river-walk and falls, noting that these natural amenities are not often available. He then discussed the May 23, 2018 updated conceptual drawings (copy attached to the filed copy of these minutes). He did note that the plans presented tonight are not by any means the final design and that plans would change going forward as ideas/input are provided. He noted the design is intended to bring members of the community into the project and that there can never be enough activities going on.

He noted the initial environmental studies have come back, and then briefly discussed his experience with these matters, noting that redevelopment of historic mill buildings/complexes usually always have environmental issues of varying degrees that need to be addressed, and that he is accustomed to dealing with these issues.

c. Wayne Bugden, CME Associates, Inc. – Brownfields - Importance of Revitalizing Historic Mill Sites

W. Bugden spoke briefly about the brownfield work and updated everyone on status of that work to date.



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d. Public Officials – Comments

Wes Haynes, CT Trust for Historic Preservation (CTHP), stated the Trust is a partner with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and that Renee Triebert and Caroline Sloat, also of CTHP, are here as well. He stated that, if anyone has heard him speak before, this building remains one of the best historic industrial buildings in the state, noting that it ranks in the top 5 out of 1400 buildings detailed in Ms. Triebert's recently completed inventory of above-ground industrial places that could be considered historic buildings. He stated he/CTHP has gone through the building and that it is in great condition, and that Mr. Gumpert's commitment to the project thus far is admirable. He endorsed again that this is a really great opportunity for the Town and CTHP is happy to work with the Town to get this project off the ground.

e. Public - Comments/Questions

S. Chen, DECD, asked if consideration was given to parking/proximity to the river/possible flooding, to which Mr. Gumpert responded that issue was looked at when he was last here. He stated that, though to his knowledge it has never flooded, a flood study would be done.

C. Langlois asked, as the first phase of the development would be residential, what would bring people to the development, to which Mr. Gumpert responded that the first phase would consist of 180 residential market-rate units and fully-developed amenities. He stated all parking would be installed as part of Phase I and a pathway to the trails. He stated the second phase will consist of another "bank" of residential units and possibly the public events center and brew pub, etc.

R. Rooney asked if Mr. Gumpert would face any competition, are any other mills in the area doing this. Mr. Gumpert responded, saying he has done a number of these projects and he relies heavily on his marketing people/marketing studies to support such development. He stated many people have done projects like this and it has been proven that people are willing to drive 30 miles, choosing to live in a "cool space" that is highly amenitized, with great highway access.

R. Waldron spoke briefly about the recently completed Branding Plan, noting that she Chairs the Branding Implementation Committee, and stated that that Committee should probably get some input from Mr. Gumpert/some visionary



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ideas so the Committee could try to match implementation as opposed to going in a totally different direction, which Mr. Gumpert indicated he agrees with.

C. Obert, Branding Implementation Committee, noted that a 2-way dialogue should begin/continue, noting Mr. Gumpert has plans for the River Mill development, that the Loray Mill Lofts looks good, and asked if there are currently any opportunities for the Committee/etc. to suggest other possible uses. Mr. Gumpert responded, stating that there are absolutely opportunities, noting getting community input is the purpose of these meetings.

T. Penn-Gesek asked whether, as the first phase is all residential, and then a brew pub/etc., it would be logical to have that commercial included as part of the first phase, to which Mr. Gumpert stated, based on his experience with his past developments, it works the other way around. He stated that, should the commercial be included in the beginning phase(s), it could not be sustained and, therefore, would not succeed.

B. Loffredo asked if there is an estimated timeline re first occupancy/project completion, to which Mr. Gumpert responded he anticipates to start construction of Phase I in two years, that Phase I will take approximately 14 months to build and occupancy will be phased in. He stated that, at that point, the market will dictate how fast work will continue through the other phases. He noted it's a very safe, very conservative, project. He stated he would try to improve on the estimated first occupancy timeframe, but the environmental and tax credits, etc., may impact that. He continued, noting that the Branding is exciting because the Town is paying attention to it. He stated, with the Loray project, the City came in and is building a park three blocks from the development, which has enhanced the neighborhood. He stated the City has since bought 16 acres and will be creating an entertainment district, which includes a smaller mill he (Gumpert) has been asked to develop.

B. Davis asked if local contractors would be hired/does Mr. Gumpert have regular contractors he uses for all of his developments/etc., to which Mr. Gumpert responded that he uses 3rd-party contractors to build, and that he is very involved with the subcontractors. He stated he uses a large number of local contractors. He (Gumpert) noted that one of his partners owns a custom-cabinet manufacturing company, but that he would be surprised if he didn't use local contractors for the majority of the work, and that he does not put his projects out to bid very often/that contractor(s) are selected primarily based on the negotiation process.



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V. Iamartino asked if Mr. Gumpert planned on using any of the historic components in the building, to which Mr. Gumpert responded that the Loray project had extra space "all over the place" and that a museum was created in some of that space. He noted that the University of North Carolina became involved, mapped out the area, and created an interactive exhibit. He stated that creation of the Loray museum was spearheaded by the local community, and that such an amenity would ideally suit this development were there that same local involvement/commitment.

V. Iamartino asked, if Mr. Gumpert were looking for historic tax credits, whether there were "time limits" on them, to which Mr. Gumpert responded he does not know if there are time limits, but he is aware some changes in legislation have occurred and that he would have to investigate that. W. Haynes, CTHP, provided information re historic tax credits, and stated that the reservations for the tax credits do expire, but that it is possible to get an extension/reapply.

K. Beausoleil noted, regarding the conceptual plans provided/timeframe estimated, there are things that will be going on in the mill in the interim and it will not be sitting dormant. He stated Mr. Gumpert has hired a leasing agent and has been active in keeping the property occupied; he also noted that Mr. Gumpert has hired a new property manager.

In response to S. Chen's question re will there be a Phase III or IV, Mr. Gumpert stated he believes the project to be a three or four phase project, once you get enough synergy going. He stated that Phase IV would probably be 915 Riverside Drive, but that he has no plans for that at this time.

B. Wilson asked about unit sizes, to which Mr. Gumpert responded they would probably average 1,000 sf/unit, and that lofts may be included in the development as well, which could potentially add to the square footage.

K. Beausoleil stated that, with Mr. Gumpert's experience doing some of the other projects, Thompson has become very, very pro-active with development/planning/etc., noting that it is a 2-way street. He stated The Town welcomes any suggestions because this will all feed off of each other, and hopefully development of the 630 site will happen soon and everything can be tied together.

J. Blanchette stated tasks outlined in the BAR grant, should funding be approved, would play perfectly into that. She stated that, though we don't know yet whether we will be awarded the requested funds, the grant does require a 20% cash



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match, and that Mr. Gumpert has agreed to contribute that match. This comment was met with much audience applause.

T. Penn-Gesek asked an approximate ratio of residential-to-commercial, to which Mr. Gumpert responded approximately 80% residential, but that is not cast in stone.

In response to a question by B. Davis re the number of units in Loray, Mr. Gumpert stated that development has 300 units.

C. Langlois asked how community members could submit their ideas/suggestions, to which M. A. Chinatti responded that ideas/suggestions could be brought to or emailed to Town Hall and they will be forwarded to Mr. Gumpert.

W. Hamblen stated that the North Carolina development looks good, but stated his opinion that rents are historically high for developments like this. He then asked what the price ranges would be for the River Mill development, to which Mr. Gumpert stated approximately \$1.15/sf, or between \$900 - \$1400/month.

B. Davis and J. Hall stated that is market rate.

W. Hamblen suggested trying to improve internet/broadband reception/speed in the area, noting that the towers could potentially hold 4g-5g on them.

S. Chen noted that the development would be perfect for the Connecticut Education Network. M. A. Chinatti stated it serves the High School and that she has received a quote from Wendy Rego, CEN, re bringing it to this end of town.

P. Lange, re Mr. Gumpert's statement that Loray had trouble filling its commercial space, asked how that space was allocated/separated. Mr. Gumpert stated the space was not very well laid out, that it was located in the main building, and if it were in a separate building that might've yielded a better result.

J. Blanchette thanked everyone for coming, and stated she wanted to thank M. A. Chinatti, who is moving on in her career, and that she wanted to publicly thank Chinatti for all her hard work on mill redevelopment, that she has been instrumental in grant writing, powerpoint presentations, reaching out to State agencies, coordinating and recording the MSRAC meetings, baking for these meetings, and many other things.

J. Blanchette then introduced Senator M. Flexer.



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Senator M. Flexer stated it is great to hear about the movement forward, to see that the community really supports this effort and she is really pleased that it is part of a larger plan for Thompson. She thanked the Town for its leadership on this and stated she thinks it is a really exciting time for Thompson and stated, as Thompson's State Senator, that she stands ready to make sure whatever is needed from State agencies or assistance getting grants or whatever is necessary to help make this vision possible as long as the community continues to support this she will do whatever she can and she is glad to be a part of it. She also stated she thinks it's a huge loss to see M. A. Chinatti go, that she (Chinatti) has just been a tremendous advocate for this community and has put Thompson at the forefront of many exciting things like this initiative, and she (Chinatti) will be missed a great deal.

3. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, J. Blanchette adjourned the meeting at 7:20PM and invited everyone to help themselves to refreshments..

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Ann Chinatti
Director of Planning & Development