

**TOWN OF MANCHESTER  
GENERAL MANAGER'S OFFICE**

**TO:** Members of the Board and Public

**FROM:** Scott Shanley, General Manager

**DATE:** August 25, 2009

**RE:** Redevelopment Plan  
Bond Referendum Question

During the Board's previous discussions on the Redevelopment Plan and referendum question Board members and members of the public have asked questions or raised issues on specific aspects of the redevelopment area or the proposed referendum. I would like to address six that have been raised repeatedly by speakers at several meetings so that legitimate differences of opinion are not lost due to inaccuracies.

**Are we giving the Redevelopment Agency a "blank check" and control over the \$8 million?**

No. The bond being considered is a general obligation bond that can only be approved by the voters after the Board places the question on the ballot. The Bond resolution in Section 1 in the next to last sentence states "*The Board of Directors shall approve the specific undertaking to be implemented with the appropriation herein authorized and may delegate the implementation to the Redevelopment Agency or other Town agency or department*". (emphasis added) The Board of Directors has authority over use of funds.

**What specifically would the money be used for?**

The money would be used to most effectively, in the judgment of the Board of Directors in consultation with the Redevelopment Agency, accomplish the vision of the Redevelopment Plan. That vision is to replace a vacant, blighted and underperforming commercial area with a vibrant, attractive mixed-use district. This redeveloped Broad Street would have housing, parks, civic uses, retail, entertainment, and office and services uses. It would be attractive, compact, environmentally sustainable and pedestrian and transit oriented. The funds must be used solely as is consistent with the resolution considered by the voters.

The funds may be best described as a "line of credit" available to the Board and Agency to take actions to accomplish this goal as the business opportunities arise. The possible uses of these funds, if they are provided to the Board by the voters, are, in part, enumerated in the bond question resolution. They are:

- Environmental assessments or remediation.
- Street, walkway, infrastructure improvements.

- Financing the Town's share of agreements entered into with developers to achieve the purposes of the Plan.
- The extension of Center Springs Park to Broad Street.
- A trail or greenway along Bigelow Brook.
- Property acquisition.
- Expenses for appraisals, testing, consultants, title insurance, preparation of development or project plans, and legal expenses.
- Demolition or environmental remediation.

The Redevelopment Agency, only with the approval of the Board of Directors, could use the funds for any of the Phase I activities. Encouraging the removal of blighted buildings and the redevelopment of blighted properties are the priorities of the Plan. However, if those things can be achieved without spending any, or all, of the money that is the Agency's preference.

If in the judgment of the Board of Directors and the Agency the money is not necessary for acquisition or to assist some redevelopment project consistent with the Plan, the funds may be used towards the Broad Street Streetscape improvement Plan, or possible park or greenway improvements, or the reservation of land for civic uses.

The Agency's intent is to use this flexibility, with Board approval, to drive the best bargain and get the most leverage out of these funds.

**What about the environmental or subsurface conditions on these properties, such as the old landfill or contamination from previous operations?**

There is no dispute that at one time some Manchester residents dumped material on the land along Broad Street, and that there were streams and wetlands that were either filled or relocated.

There is also evidence that this condition can be overcome with proper engineering, design and construction techniques. Here are some examples of how the Broad Street property has been suitable for development:

Vacant Parkade

The currently vacant Parkade site was built in the late 1960's and the buildings and parking lot have been structurally sound, even considering their extended vacancy, over the past 40 years.

In January 2007 the engineering firm of Haley & Aldrich, under contract to the engineer who prepared and filed plans to the Planning and Zoning Commission (on file in the Planning Department) for a proposed big box retailer for the Parkade site, prepared a geotechnical engineering report. There were 62 test borings taken, ranging in depth from 12 to 52 feet, across the site.

These borings revealed clean fill material, primarily sands and gravels, and natural glacial sand and gravel deposits below the parking lot asphalt and the concrete floors of the buildings. No contaminated soils were identified. It appears that whatever dump material was present when the Manchester Parkade was built was removed and replaced with fill material before the buildings were constructed.

Economy Oil Change was built in the same vicinity in 1980.

Rockville Savings Bank was built in the same vicinity in 1989.

American Eagle Credit Union was built on the former post office site adjacent to the Parkade in 2000.

The Board and Agency would establish whether there are any subsurface problems on a property-by-property basis. They also will need to know the title history of the properties that hold the most interest. The Agency believes they will not know the answers unless the property owner provides them or allows entry onto that property. The position of the Agency is that property owners are much more likely to cooperate with information if they have some significant financial resources available to be a promising business partner of some kind.

### **When will the Plan be approved?**

The Agency made informal presentations of the proposed Plan at the June 23<sup>rd</sup> Economic Summit, a workshop held with property owners and business owners on Broad Street on June 25<sup>th</sup> and a workshop with Town Boards and Commissions on June 29<sup>th</sup>. The plan was subsequently posted on the Town's website. The Agency is in the process of following the formal adoption process required by the Connecticut General Statutes. The Planning and Zoning Commission found the Plan to be consistent with the Town Plan of Conservation and Development at its August 12, 2009 meeting. The Manchester Housing Authority approved the Redevelopment Plan at its August 12, 2009 meeting.

A public hearing on the Plan itself is scheduled for Thursday, September 3, 2009. After this hearing the Agency will meet to review the testimony, to make its findings on the Plan as required by the Statutes, and approve a Plan. Subsequent to the Agency's approval, the Plan will be submitted to the Board of Directors for its approval.

The Agency meeting for approval of the Plan is tentatively scheduled for September 10, 2009. The Board of Directors can hold a special meeting after the Agency approves the Plan or can act at its regular October meeting.

### **Why not wait until the Plan is adopted to vote on a question?**

The Board can act on a referendum question whenever it chooses given proper public notice. There is no timeframe. If, however, the Board wishes to have the question on the November ballot, it must, by law, provide the question to the State by a date certain in early September which is sooner than a final vote on the plan can be taken even though the actual referendum would not be until November.

**How much will this cost me as a taxpayer?**

Estimated taxes paid on \$8 Million bond in peak year based on 20 year bonds

Median home value	75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	90 <sup>th</sup> Percentile
\$137,600	\$173,200	\$211,200
\$23	\$29	\$36