



## REPORT OF MEETING

**Date and Time: Thursday, April 21, 2016, 9:00 AM**

**Location: Parker Memorial Community Center, 2621 Main Street, Hartford**

**Subject: Urban Design Working Group #4**

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### 1. Meeting Location

The meeting was held in the community room of the Parker Memorial Community Center.

### 2. Presentation / Discussion

Mitch Glass, of Goody Clancy, welcomed the new attendees to the discussion. He then began the discussion with an overview of the last meeting, held on February 25, 2016.

He discussed the latest designs for the potential East Coast Greenway through the corridor. He described different concepts. Concept A is a cantilevered path over the highway. A possible benefit of this concept is that it can block the view of the highway from the surrounding neighborhoods. Concept B is similar to Concept A, though it would not be cantilevered over the highway. Concept C would be at-grade and not include a Flower Street connection. M. Glass showed and discussed renderings of each concept.

Bob Painter stated that one asset of New York's High Line Park is its openings at regular intervals, which allow the user access to spectacular views. Others around the table agreed.

Mike Zaleski asked how long this section of the East Coast Greenway would be. M. Glass responded that it would be about 2,000 feet long between Broad and Sigourney Streets. It's about one mile between Bushnell Park and the intersection of Sisson Avenue and West Boulevard.

Mark McGovern referenced the renderings in the presentation and asked if trees of the size shown are possible. M. Glass answered that trees of that size are possible depending upon the structure. Rich Armstrong added that there are trees that size on the Riverfront Plaza. There was additional discussion on how the trees are maintained / kept alive.

M. Glass next presented slides on potential development. He showed aerial views of the highway with various deck configurations. He highlighted which properties may be taken as part of each alternative. He added that it will be hard to predict what the demand will be for the development. M. Glass continued on to show a series of street view visualizations, many of which are from or around Union Station.

M. McGovern stated that the rendering view east towards downtown, near the trident, appears flat, or less hilly than it truly is. Tim Ryan added that the slope is 6-7 percent in this area. M. Glass added that there is some great potential because of this slope for views to the Capitol and downtown.

Jennifer Cassidy questioned what types of development could be built in the potentially available land in the vicinity of West Boulevard and Hawthorn Street. M. Glass answered that mixed use development at the scale of existing neighborhoods, with townhouses or walk-up apartment buildings and ground level uses such as convenience stores, dry cleaners, etc. would be ideal in these areas.

Patricia Williams asked why the ArtSpace building will not be affected by the highway reconstruction, but other apartment buildings will be taken. T. Ryan answered that the project engineers have looked at many alternatives to avoid impacts and would like to smooth out the very dangerous curve in the eastern portion of the corridor, near High Street. Doing this impacts some apartment buildings, but ArtSpace is not one of them. P. Williams stated that she is concerned that local populations will be displaced and never return to the area because of a lack of comparable living space. She suggested interdepartmental cooperation at the federal level. Deborah Howes added that the Department of Housing and Urban Development is a cooperating agency in this study and is aware that there will be some impacts to residential properties in many of the alternatives.

An attendee questioned the alignment of the East Coast Greenway outside of the project area. Casey Hardin answered that the Greenway is currently on-street throughout a significant portion of Hartford, though the goal is to get it off-road as much as possible. He noted that outside of Hartford it connects to the Charter Oak Greenway and the Farmington Canal Trail.

B. Painter stated that he does not see a reason to save the rail viaduct itself near Bushnell Park, but the wall may have historic value. D. Stahnke answered that it is possible to keep or repurpose portions of the wall.

J. Cassidy commented that the highway currently feels like it is right in the Asylum Hill neighborhood, and losing the Capitol View Apartments may exacerbate that feeling. M. Glass

answered that the cap can help alleviate this feeling. Nick Mandler stated that the 3-D model has been updated to show this and proceeded to show the group the model in this area.

M. McGovern stated that the commercial area must be planned in concert with the train station redevelopment. He added that it has been a long time since private commercial development has been built in Hartford. He cautioned building a park, even temporarily, because it can easily become protected and unable to be developed. Can open land, or a temporary unnamed park, be a private facility that is leased to Amtrak until development becomes feasible? M. Glass agreed that the project team has homework to do to develop some potential strategies in this area.

B. Painter discussed One City One Plan and noted that as the City of Hartford becomes involved in the project, they can have a great impact on how land is developed.

J. Cassidy asked how many residential units will be displaced. D. Stahnke answered that over 300 units may be displaced in various buildings. He added that the team has met with all but one of the owners of the potentially impacted buildings. P. Williams commented that the owners are actually less affected because they are paid the value of the property. The residents are the people who are most likely to be negatively impacted.

There was considerable discussion about the area around Laurel Street and Hartford Public High School. P. Williams stated that the school has limited land available to meet its needs, and it leases parking from Aetna. M. Glass added that the team has considered that the school might also benefit from additional ball fields.

B. Painter asked about the Sisson Avenue area and how it could be different in the future. N. Mandler showed the 3-D model for the current highway and some of the potential build alternatives. There was additional discussion on the impacts of connecting Hawthorne Street to West Boulevard. J. Cassidy stated that cutting up the Hawthorn site prematurely could make it less attractive for future development. M. Glass stated that the existing parcel along Hawthorn Street could work as one large development parcel or as two smaller parcels depending on the projected use. N. Mandler stated that a through connection of West Boulevard to Hawthorn does not carry significantly more traffic than having two separate intersections (one for West Boulevard and one for Hawthorn) into Forest Street. D. Stahnke noted that we also need to consider our impacts to Knox Farms to the east of the highway.

B. Painter asked about the potential changes to CT *fastrak*. D. Stahnke described the possibility of moving the Sigourney Street Station farther to the west to allow for an underground tunnel for CTfastrak to be built under the rail tracks and under the highway, daylighting at the new Bushnell Park West Boulevard.

B. Painter questioned how relocating the I-84 / I-91 interchange could affect construction of our project. D. Stahnke answered that the I-84 northern re-alignment alternative would extend along the railroad tracks and would have little impact on the I-84 Hartford Project.

### **3. Next Steps**

M. Glass stated that the next meeting will be in June 2016 and that the team is in the process of establishing monthly meetings with the City to focus on urban design issues.