

Annual Report – 2007

This report highlights the activities of the Gardner Redevelopment Authority (GRA) during calendar year 2007 (January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2007).

GRA Membership

The members of the GRA are:

Edward L. Lepkowski, Chairman
Ronald F. Cormier, Vice Chairman
James D. Murphy, Treasurer
Cleo E. Monette, Clerk
G. Albert Anderson, State Appointed Member
Robert L. Hubbard, Executive Director

Summit Industrial Park

The Summit Industrial Park opened in late 1998 and is home to six companies employing approximately 250 people. The Park consists of approximately 125 acres of land, of which approximately five lots (36 acres) remain available for sale and development. The park is zoned Industrial I for light industrial and commercial uses. The Park is considered a prime location for businesses in Gardner. Two of the existing companies approached the GRA about expansion plans and discussions continue.

East Gardner Industrial Park

The East Gardner Industrial Park opened in 1967 and is home to ten companies employing over 300 people. The park is built-out.

g4b (Gardner for Business)

The GRA renewed the contract with j4b (Just for Business) for another year. There is a link on the City's website - Business Assistance Website for the City of Gardner - sponsored by the GRA. This link to j4b provides information on all federal, state and local finance programs available to help businesses either currently in the Gardner area or interested in locating here.

To date 2,632 visits have been made to the Gardner for Business website with 118 unique registered visitors using the site's search capability to find information on loans and grants, venture capital, and tax credits.

Grow Gardner Fund

The Grow Gardner Fund is a loan program which the GRA offers in partnership with the National Development Council's Grow America Fund. The GRA offers these loans to eligible small businesses in Gardner in amounts ranging from \$25,000 to \$1 million.

In 2006 the GRA, through the Grow Gardner Fund, awarded a Small Business Administration (SBA) guaranteed loan to the Gardner Ale House. The funds were used

to purchase brewery equipment as well as other necessary supplies for the business. In September 2007, the Gardner Ale House celebrated the first anniversary of their opening. The brewery and brew-pub have scheduled many special events during the first year of operation to encourage people to come to the downtown area to eat and to shop at other downtown businesses.

Greater Gardner Community Development Corporation

In January the GRA conveyed the old Carbone building at 246-248 Central Street to the Community Development Corporation. The CDC received a grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development to assist with the purchase the building and to complete renovations related to the three affordable housing units. When all renovations are complete, this building will be a permanent office for the CDC and will provide rental income from the affordable housing units located on the second floor. The CDC is a nonprofit agency serving low and moderate income residents and local business people through six different programs – first-time home buyer education, affordable housing, micro-business assistance, the homework center at Olde English Village, job readiness and the cyber café.

Renovations on the building have taken longer than anticipated due to unforeseen structural problems. Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School students have done a great deal of the required work as a community service project. The CDC expects to occupy the building in early 2008.

The GRA is still under obligation to settle the relocation costs of the former tenant of the bar business which was located at 246-248 Central Street. No agreement has been reached and the case is before a State arbitrator.

Urban Renewal

RKG Associates and BSC Group/Terra Sphere were awarded the contract for the Urban Renewal Market Study and Conceptual Revitalization Plan for the Rear Main Street Corridor. They commenced work in April 2007 and arranged a meeting with the Steering Committee and held a Public Forum in May. Surveys of business and property owners were conducted as well as interviews with Gardner businesses and institutions.

Another Public Forum was held in July to update participants on project progress as well as to present and obtain feedback relative to development options. After reviewing and discussing the development options, the participants favored development option two which offers a more aggressive development program.

RKG presented the completed Gardner Urban Revitalization Study in October.

Mount Wachusett Community College 2007 Business Plan Competition

The GRA supported the MWCC 3rd Annual Business Plan Competition. The GRA pledged \$1,500 in the Incubating Sponsor Level to a winner who was a Gardner resident or owner of a business located in Gardner. Unfortunately, there was no winner in this category.

Memberships

Massachusetts Economic Development Council	(MEDC)
Northeastern Economic Developers Association	(NEDA)
International Economic Development Council	(IEDC)
Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors	(MAPD)
American Planning Association	(APA)
Greater Gardner Community Development Corporation	(CDC)
Massachusetts Federation of Planning and Appeals Boards, Inc.	
Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce	
Gardner Square Two, Inc.	

R. Hubbard served as President and Treasurer of the MEDC in 2007. The MEDC is a professional association of economic development practitioners (www.massedc.org).

Other

R. Hubbard, Executive Director, attended and reported on the following:

- APA Annual Conference, Philadelphia
- IEDC Annual Meeting, Washington, DC
- MEDC Meetings
 - Westborough, Brockton, and Boston
- MAPD – 2007 Annual Conference
- NEDA Annual Conference, Atlantic City
- Economic Impact Awards, Boston
- NEDA/MEDC Joint Meeting, Worcester
- Urban Renewal Planning Committee Meetings, Gardner

GRA members attended civic events hosted by the Chamber of Commerce, CDC, and Gardner Square Two. The GRA supported Professional Development for staff members at several of the above conferences, and also supported Professional Development for members of the City of Gardner Planning Board.

GARDNER REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Edward L. Lepkowski, Chairman

Robert L. Hubbard, Executive Director