

GARDNER REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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Annual Report – 2013

This report highlights the activities of the Gardner Redevelopment Authority (GRA) during calendar year 2013.

The GRA was established in 1965 under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 121B for the purpose of engaging in urban renewal projects or other work authorized under 121B and that is in the public interest. The GRA has been an ally with the City in matters ranging from implementing portions of the Downtown and Mill Street Corridor Urban Renewal Plans to the management of the Summit Industrial Park.

In June of 2013 the GRA Board of Directors hired Trevor Beauregard as the new Executive Director, to replace the long-time Executive Director, Robert Hubbard, following his retirement.

GRA Membership

The members of the GRA are:

Ronald F. Cormier, Chairman
Paul G. Tassone, Vice Chairman, State Appointed Member
Cleo E. Monette, Treasurer
Neil W. Janssens, Assistant Treasurer
Timothy J. Horrigan, Clerk
Trevor M. Beauregard, Executive Director

Economic Development Coordinator

The GRA renewed grant funding to the City of Gardner to cover part of the salary of the Economic Development Coordinator, Joshua Cormier. Mr. Cormier was hired in June of 2013 to continue to provide a single point of contact for business support services including the Economic Development website - www.grow.gardner-ma.gov and to manage projects supporting job retention and creation through business retention and attraction efforts, and expansion of the City's tax base.

City of Gardner Economic Development Plan

The GRA is partnering with the City of Gardner to update the City's Economic Development Plan, last updated in June of 2004. It is expected that both parties will share the cost of this update, which should begin in the second quarter of 2014.

Wind Turbine / Solar PV

The GRA continues to investigate the feasibility of erecting a wind turbine at the end of Suffolk Lane in the Summit Industrial Park. The Mass Department of Public Health recently released a study that indicates there are no health concerns related to wind turbines. However, there is a need to be cognizant of potential impact relating to the acoustics generated by wind turbines. To this end, the GRA received a \$15,000 grant from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Technology Center (MassCEC) in September 2012 to conduct an acoustic study. The Study was completed in April of 2013 and identified no negative impacts associated with the project. The GRA continues to work with a consultant to develop and analyze financial models to determine project feasibility. Grant funding opportunities are also being researched.

Mill Street Corridor

The Mill Street Corridor Urban Renewal Plan (MSCURP) was approved by the GRA in August 2012. The Plan was approved by the Gardner Planning Board in September and the City Council in October. The final Plan was submitted to the Department of Housing and Community Development in December 2012 and received approval in January of 2013. The overall goal of the Plan is to create a framework for the redevelopment of the Mill Street Corridor currently dominated by derelict mill buildings and contaminated, blighted open areas. The Plan is available at www.gardner-ma.gov/Pages/GardnerMA_CommDev/draftmillurp.pdf.

In October of 2013 the GRA entered into a lease agreement with BCC SEA QALIB II, LLC, to construct a 1 MW solar array on property identified for this purpose within the MSCURP. The project is currently under construction.

The City Council granted approval for Mayor Hawke to convey the former Garbose Metal Company property located at 155 Mill Street to the GRA pursuant to MGL Chapter 121B, Section 23 (a). Site control will allow the GRA to proceed with mitigation of contaminated soils and groundwater at the property. In November of 2012, MassDevelopment awarded the GRA a grant in the amount of \$500,000 to assist with the clean-up. In April of 2013 the GRA entered into a \$247,200 contract with Tighe & Bond, Inc., an environmental consulting firm, to begin cleanup planning at the site. Cleanup planning continued through 2013. The GRA continues to actively market this property for redevelopment purposes. Total cost of the clean-up is estimated between \$1.5 and \$2 million.

140 South Main Street

The City Council granted approval for Mayor Hawke to convey 140 South Main Street to the GRA pursuant to MGL Chapter 121B, Section 23 (a). Site control will allow the GRA to proceed with mitigation of contaminated soils and groundwater at the property. In March of 2013 the GRA utilized Gardner Brownfield Revolving Loan fund to develop a marketing and cleanup plan for this property. In September of 2013 MassDevelopment awarded a \$201,500 Brownfield Grant to the GRA, and in November of 2013 the GRA

was awarded a \$158,500 cleanup grant from the Gardner Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund to initiate site cleanup to be conducted in 2014.

Grow Gardner Fund (GGF)

The GGF's outstanding loan to the Gardner Ale House is current and the brew pub/restaurant continues to do well in its downtown location. The Ale House also continues to contribute to downtown revitalization and hosted several community events during the year.

Downtown Urban Renewal Plan

The new Police Station project is underway. The City acquired all four properties needed to accommodate the new station and all tenants have been relocated. Construction for the new police station began in August of 2013.

Heywood Wakefield IV, a 55-unit affordable rental housing development received approval for its financing in September of 2013. The project is seeking additional tax credits to complete project financing in order to begin construction. The City has allocated \$100,000 in Block Grant funding as a local match for this project.

Summit Industrial Park

Park tenants have long complained about inadequate internet service from Verizon. Comcast and the GRA made arrangements for Comcast to use an existing underground conduit system that previously accommodated the City's fire alarm system (which is now wireless) to install fiber optic cables throughout Park. The Comcast fiber optic system is now live in March of 2013. This communications upgrade has provided existing businesses in the Park with faster, more reliable internet service, and will assist with marketing vacant lots.

Johnny Appleseed Publication

The GRA continued to pay for advertisements in the Johnny Appleseed Publication promoting Gardner as a great place to live, work, shop and recreate. The magazine is published in the spring and fall, and lists the many seasonal activities taking place in North Worcester County communities located along Route 2.

Memberships

- Massachusetts Economic Development Council
- Northeastern Economic Developers Association
- Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors
- American Planning Association
- Greater Gardner Community Development Corporation
- Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce
- Gardner Square Two, Inc.

Trevor Beauregard continued to serve as 2nd Vice President of the MEDC (Massachusetts Economic Development Council), and Joshua Cormier is a member. The MEDC is an association of economic development professionals in Massachusetts.

The GRA's efforts on behalf of the City of Gardner would not have been possible without support from Mayor Mark Hawke; Joshua Cormier, Economic Development Coordinator; Christine Fucile, Administrative Coordinator; Jennifer Dymek, Assistant Director; Cindy Delaney, Financial Manager; and Robert Hankinson, City Engineer.

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Ronald F. Cormier, Chairman

Trevor M. Beauregard, Executive Director