

GARDNER REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

115 Pleasant Street, Room 201

Gardner, MA 01440

Phone: 978-630-4011

Fax: 978-632-1905

Annual Report – 2006

This report highlights the activities of the Gardner Redevelopment Authority (GRA) during calendar year 2006 (January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2006).

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 was developed in 1997/98 by the GRA. The Park consists of approximately 125 acres of land, of which approximately 36 acres remain available for sale and development. The park is zoned Industrial I for light industrial and commercial uses. Six manufacturing facilities, ranging in size from 12,000 to 67,000 sq. ft., have been completed and are fully operational. The lots were appraised in 2005 and the asking prices are current with market values. There was interest from realtors and business owners in 2006 on this prime location for businesses in Gardner.

Integrity Molding purchased the building at 246 Suffolk Lane from GHS Integrated Systems. Integrity makes molds and the majority of their work is for Advanced Cable Ties, one of the first companies to build in the Park.

Web Site – GRA and City of Gardner

The GRA maintained the website for the City of Gardner through June 30, 2006. The City approved a funding request in the annual budget and assumed maintenance on July 1, 2006. Weekly updates keep the website current and useful. To date, there have been over 56,000 visits to the website.

Eby Commercial Realty plans to build an assisted living facility in Gardner. It will be a private facility and will pay City taxes. Eby used the City's website to gather information relevant to their site selection process.

g4b (Gardner for Business)

The GRA renewed the contract with j4b (Just for Business). There is a link on the City's website - Business Assistance Website 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.

During 2006, approximately 1,600 visits were made to the Gardner for Business website. Ninety-three visitors registered and used the site's search capability to find information on loans and grants, venture capital, and tax credits.

Grow Gardner Fund

The Gardner Ale House opened for business in the summer of 2006. Through the Grow Gardner Fund, the business was awarded a Small Business Administration (SBA) guaranteed loan. The brewery and brew-pub took the place of a closed restaurant and is helping to revitalize the downtown Gardner area.

Greater Gardner Community Development Corporation

In February the GRA purchased the old Carbone building at 246-248 Central Street on behalf of the Community Development Corporation. The CDC had applied for state grants to purchase and renovate the building. The GRA stepped in to preserve the building for the CDC and allow time to get the grants in place. When renovations are complete, this building will be a permanent office for the CDC and will provide rental income from the affordable housing apartments located on the second floor of the building. 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.

The date for conveying the property to the CDC is scheduled for January 12, 2007.

Urban Renewal

The Urban Renewal Plan Citizens Steering Committee met several times in 2006. R. Hubbard prepared a Scope of Services for the Housing Market Study in conjunction with developing an Urban Renewal Plan for downtown Gardner and a Scope of Services for preparing conceptual plans and design guidelines for Rear Main Street and The Gateway.

In November, an RFP for the Urban Renewal area Market Study was advertised. The \$75,000 needed for this project was in an earmark fund that was vetoed by Governor Romney. It is anticipated that newly elected Governor Patrick will overturn the veto when he takes office and all the funds will be restored. The RFP's will be accepted and interviews will be conducted in January 2007.

Financial Audits

Venning & Jacques, PC, have provided audits of the financial position of the GRA for several years. This year, for the first time, in accordance with Chapter 11, Section 12, of the Massachusetts General Laws, the office of A. Joseph DeNucci, Auditor of the Commonwealth, conducted a review of certain activities for the period July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005. Based on the review, nothing came to their attention to indicate that the financial statements for the period were not fairly presented.

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)
Massachusetts Federation of Planning and Appeals Boards, Inc.	
Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce	
Greater Gardner Community Development Corporation	(CDC)
Gardner Square Two, Inc.	

In his first year as President of the MEDC, R. Hubbard updated the MEDC website (www.massedc.org) and organized meetings at the State House, in Gardner and Lawrence, and at UMass Amherst. The MEDC is a professional association of economic development practioners.

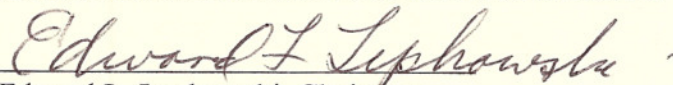
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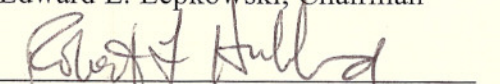
R. Hubbard, Executive Director, attended and reported on the following:

- EPA Conference, Boston
- MEDC Meetings
 - State House, Boston
 - e-tools, Lawrence
 - Ale House, Gardner
 - Annual Meeting, UMass Amherst
- MAPD – 2006 Annual Conference
- Smart Growth Conference, Worcester
- Revitalization of Small Massachusetts Cities, Holy Cross College, Worcester
- NEDA – Annual Conference, New Hampshire
- Urban Renewal Planning Committee, Gardner

GRA members attended civic events hosted by the Chamber of Commerce, CDC, and Gardner Square Two, and also attended a meeting of the MEDC. 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.

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