



Public Body: Greenfield Redevelopment Authority
Date: December 9, 2020 @ 4:00 p.m.
Remote meeting Via WebEx

Members present

Adam Provost
Nancy Hawkins
Charlene Golonka
Jean Wall
Bill Mason

Members absent

None

Also present:

MJ Adams – Director, Community & Economic Development Department
Lindsay Rowe – Community Development Administrator, Community & Economic Development Dept.
Robin Fordham – Grant Program Assistant, Community & Economic Development Dept.
Roxann Wedegartner – Mayor of Greenfield

Peg Barringer – FinePoint Associates
Christine Madore – MassDevelopment

Linda McInerney – Chair, Friends of the First National Bank
John Lunt – Friends of the First National Bank

Anita Fritz – The Recorder

Mr. Provost called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Roll call

Adam Provost – present
Bill Mason – present
Charlene Golonka – present
Nancy Hawkins – present
Jean Wall – present

Approval of Minutes:



Motion to table minutes until end of meeting

Approved 5-0

First National Bank (FNB)

Adams provided an introduction to FNB presentation, to review findings by FinePoint Associates on the feasibility of the concept of the FNB as a flexible cultural arts space. Thus far MassDevelopment has provided support to obtain a structural analysis, market analysis, and feasibility study. After the FinePoint presentation, MassDevelopment's Christine Madore will direct a conversation on going forward with the information in hand.

FinePoint presentation

Berringer provided background on the FNB project to date, noting that the concept emerged from the City's masterplan, which cited FNB as economic development strategy as arts flexspace. Building was acquired by GRA, and MassDevelopment has assisted with exploring potential (architectural, market analysis and feasibility study). Response to user survey has provided valuable insights and information.

Berringer summarized the findings of the market Analysis and feasibility study, with a reminder that some work was done prior to COVID.

The FNB, an art deco building in the heart of Greenfield, has much potential, however renovation cost estimate is quite high, just to get ground floor done. Restoring the façade along estimated at 1.7 million. Plus that building is located by garage, but challenges with loading access.

FinePoint looked at seven similar facilities. Key findings, none operate self-sufficiently – dependent on grant/donation funding. Median staff 2.5, median days active 95 (weekends primarily). Helpful comparisons for understanding for facility and organizational structure.

Noted how a 501(c)3 mission is more of community function than for-profit; showcases original work, new talent, educational programming.

Supply – distinguishing features of proposed FNB are that use is for outside arts groups and outside (comparable facilities are primarily for owner use), and open floor plan (as opposed to fixed seating/auditorium), with a size 75-199.



Looked at seven comparable facilities within 30 minutes, 8 within 40 minutes.

Forty percent surveyed said had difficulty finding users for space. About 1/3 said no difficulty currently, but experienced lean years, and takes 5 years to get established.

Demand – looked at attendees, space users (artists, arts orgs), and Greenfield residents. Trade area: 30 minutes, 125k people, spending \$5-8 million a year on admission fees. Area boasts higher attendance, but lower spending for population.

For arts organizations, interviewed a sample, and surveyed larger group. Of 11 interviewed, three entities initially identified as likely frequent users responded as “not interested” in use of FNB.

Survey sample of space users (37 responses): 22 indicated would rent at FNB if cost modest. Most are non-profits or individual artists. Thirty-five percent reported difficulty finding space, but majority did not express difficulty, satisfied with current options.

Resident (over 600 respondents) 63% supported concept, 69% agreed it would contribute to quality of life. Three top choices of offerings: music, culinary, theater.

Revenue projections – estimate \$140-150k to operate per year (with modest staffing). Revenue (rent average # of days, concession sales, \$1 per ticket facility fee) – estimate \$40-43k a year in revenue. Would require \$106k fundraising a year to make up difference. FNB could cover 28% through earned revenue; comps ranged from 25-70 %, (median 55% covered with earned revenue).

Conclusions:

Goals – hub, arts, historic reuse, vacancy, customers to downtown. Cultural performance arts facility would achieve these goals.

Cost of redevelopment is high.

Operation would require annual fundraising in addition to earned revenue. Would not be a revenue neutral space (which was highly desirable initial goal).

FNB as cultural facility could negatively affect Hawks & Reed; could fit different niche and entertainment style, but would be customer overlap. Significant cultural space users currently rent from Hawks & Reed.

DISCUSSION

Part 1



Peg Berringer/FinePoint Associates

Mayor – could some space be used for municipal offices?

MJ – seismic issue, technical issues in terms of structural issues of building.

LM – lots of space in basement

JL – enough space for offices in basement, but not sure if cost effective.

CG – reminder that three users that said no had issues at time of survey have had issues that have impacted them recently. To make feasible, must get more creative. Look at broader picture, need something different than what's already being offered.

Mayor – support idea of looking at project more creatively.

PB – in terms of city offices, part of cost of arts facility is staffing to operate. Some entities have incorporated space like this under recreation dept, rather than separate non-profit.

JL – redevelopment money at issue. Until/unless you can fund rehabilitation, use conversation not as pertinent.

PB – Worth discussion given costs of renovation, could you keep historic façade, and rebuild interior?

JL – Historic preservation entities primarily concerned with façade. First floor is interior dramatic, but may not be feasible to maintain.

Mayor – recently completed Division of Local Mandates survey, which has expressed interest in spending more in Western MA.

Part 2

Christine Madore/MassDevelopment

CM – encourage a shift in thinking, less on the particular use of FNB, more on the real estate asset. Preserving the façade a possibility. Thinking of threats the building is facing, what do you see could happen within next year or so?

JL – Structural failure, small or large. Roof is primary areas of concern, not weather tight. Concern for roof and building's architectural integrity.

AP – We are looking at same issues that have come up in year's past. What funding is there to preserve what exists, so we could then turn around and possibly offer to private sector?



CM – There are other redevelopment pathways. If security is imminent, preserve integrity of building taken as first step. Are there other development opportunities or partnerships that have not yet been tapped into?

JW – Housing downtown (condos), offer more high-end than what's currently available – fix façade and build housing behind.

JL – Public/private partnership not explored much so far. If so, might not make sense to spend significantly to secure building (since developer might want to tear down).

CM – Confirming that GRA is in agreement on pursuing resources to secure building. Up to GRA to define development goals through RFP process. If preference for condos, offices, etc., you can put message in RFP. Could also start with RFQ for development teams to take on project like this. GRA can initiate process. Need to clarify goals in light of survey results. Goals ties to asset/building itself, others community goals. Do want particular use, or just fill vacancy? What could potentially go in building, how could GRA drive that process?

NH – condos, not sure in agreement. Think that would be tough, with covid impact. Securing building a good first step.

CM – Helpful to be open minded about private sector uses that are desirable to community.

AP – Conversation has come full circle. What opportunities are available from state that would help make good decision for the building? Any funding that would be appropriate and could obtain?

CM – One program announcing soon coming from MassDevelopment. Can look into other resources for securing the building. Ways to move forward. One option: more gradual process to return building to active use (small steps), could bring more attention to building to attract donors/investors. Second option: City makes better package for investors to find a way to attract private investment. Are there other development opportunities to add to package to allow developer to make profit?

MJ – FNB evolved out of Sustainable Greenfield planning, saw need/desire for vibrant downtown. Helped Hawks & Reed emerge, concept responded to. Now have emerging and energetic performance component in downtown.

CM – Good to rely on other communities with similar projects to get best practices. Role of GRA is to create right environment to move forward. Could take several more years.

PB – Are there examples of similar situation to softly get ideas from private sector (without issuing RFP)?



CM – taking gradual steps to put something temporary or seasonal in building. For example, Holyoke’s vacant armory, hollow shell, looking to do farmer’s market. Finding way to bring life/activity to building could move forward with more ideas. A way to show the space, generate buzz. Requires costs of getting building up to code compliance for temporary or permanent occupancy.

MJ – Take some time to think about next directions, work with MassDevelopment into new year.

End of FinePoint presentation

I-91 Industrial Park Expansion Update

Adams provided an update, given challenges of site, scaling back, looking to create lot w/200k sq. ft building; one lot division off end of Butternut, currently in conversation with owner. Hoping by late Dec/early Jan have better sense if anything can be accomplished.

AP – who did City reach out to determine what demand is out there?

MJ – Specifically, WestMass Development, Jeff Daley. Site has challenges/constraints with wetlands and ledge.

AP – Other constraints. Only Verizon DSL available. No natural gas available.

MJ – There is demand for warehousing space, because of location.

JW – worth pursuing as warehousing is very important right now, and will continue to be for a few years.

CG – Feel like there may be opportunities for more manufacturing coming in the future. Anything GRA can do to get land ready is a good thing.

Approval of Minutes:

June 2, 2020 minutes – Ms. Wall moved to accept the minutes. Ms. Golonka seconded. Minutes approved 5-0.

Other Business

None

Adjournment

Wall moved that the meeting be adjourned, and Golonka seconded the motion. The vote to adjourn was 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 5:34 p.m.