

Woburn Square Revitalization Plan

Massachusetts Ready Resource Fund Application

SUMMARY

Installing the new period streetlight at the Busy Bend.



Introduction: The Woburn Redevelopment Authority, acting on behalf of the City of Woburn, is preparing a final application for funding to the Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), Ready Resource Fund (RRF). The CDBG Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); the Small Cities component is administered within Massachusetts by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the counterpart of HUD at the state level. It is to DHCD that the final application will be submitted by the Mayor.

The CDBG Ready Resource Fund is an economic development component of the CDBG program. The majority of the proposed request, approximately \$320,000, will fund the installation of new traditional streetlighting

throughout the Woburn Square Revitalization Area. In addition, approximately \$30,000 will be requested to establish a Small Business Technical Assistance Fund. A preliminary application, referred to as the Application Information Form, was submitted in April, 2001. On May 24, 2001, the Mayor received official notification that the City was invited to submit a full application. The deadline for the application is September 24, 2001.

Background: In June, 2000, the Mayor and City Council approved the Woburn Square Revitalization Plan, as the City's blueprint for the improvement of downtown Woburn. The culmination of a two-year cooperative effort of the Woburn Redevelopment Authority and the Com-

mittee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn, the Plan proposes a program of revitalization activities which include new traditional lighting and other streetscape improvements, financial and technical assistance to merchants and property owners, parking system improvements, new zoning proposals, and a marketing strategy and program for promoting Woburn Square as a good place to shop and conduct business.

Since the adoption of the plan, the City of Woburn, the WRA, and the Downtown Revitalization Committee have taken steps to implement the Plan's proposed actions. As a pilot effort, the proposed streetscape program was installed along the Busy Bend, the downtown block between Montvale Avenue and Walnut Street. This work, including new lighting, sidewalk treatment, curb extensions, benches and tree

plantings will be completed in the Fall with the final installation of street furnishings, and plantings. A part of this effort is a new Memorial Streetclock, to be located in front of the new plaza/

accessway at 365 Main Street. Construction plans for the new plaza have been completed, and turned over to the City of Woburn Department of Public Works, for budgeting and construction, as specified in the Plan.

On July 3, 2001, Mass. DHCD announced the award of a \$432,000 grant from the CDBG Housing Development Support Program. This grant was prepared by the WRA and submitted by the Mayor in order to underwrite the cost of the Pilgrim Building Redevelopment Project. Woburn developer Sean P. Coakley purchased the building in October, 2000, with assistance from the WRA. With the help of the HDSP grant and private financing from Central Bank, Mr. Coakley will be undertaking a complete renovation of the building, including the restoration of the historic façade, and the construction of four new affordable one bedroom rental units on the upper floors.

The Pilgrim Building is identified by the Woburn Square Revitalization Plan as one of the most seriously blighting influences in the downtown. Nearly destroyed by fire and abandoned in the mid-80s, the property stands as a negative symbol of Woburn Square's economic potential. It's successful renovation will likewise send a clear signal that Woburn's traditional downtown is beginning an economic renaissance.

Using its remaining urban renewal funds, the WRA has also implemented the Woburn Square Storefront Improvement Program, which provides architectural design and finan-



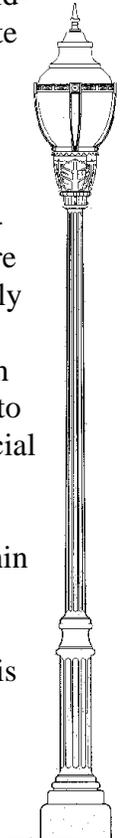
cial assistance to property owners for façade renovations. Façade designs have been completed for three properties, and the WRA is now assisting property owners in obtaining bid prices from general contractors. Work has been substantially com-

pleted on one property, the Thai Rice Restaurant, located at 383 Main Street, and construction will begin shortly on two additional façades, at 406 Main Street and 389-393 Main Street.

The preliminary design plans for the Magazine Hill Park and Ride Facility were completed in January, 2001, and are currently being reviewed. Access to the existing Walnut Street Municipal Parking Lot will be greatly improved, with the anticipated construction of the Plaza/Accessway. In addition, another Park and Ride Facility is being considered for a City and MBTA owned site located to the rear of 275 Main Street, at the south end of Woburn Square.

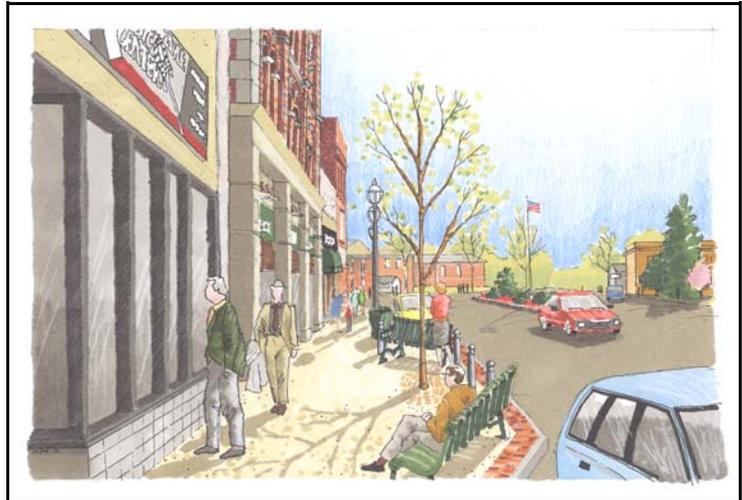
Finally, the zoning amendments proposed by the Revitalization Plan were adopted by the City Council with only minor revisions in February, 2001. These included an amendment which allows for multiple residential units to be located above first floor commercial uses within the downtown business district, making possible the reconstruction of the residential units within the Pilgrim Building.

Ready Resource Fund: The RRF is a dedicated economic development component of the Massachusetts CDBG Small Cities Program. The maximum grant is generally limited



to \$400,000, and applications are accepted on an ongoing basis, based on funding availability. The WRA proposes to fund two activities under the RRF: 1) the installation of new traditional streetlighting throughout the designated Revitalization Area, and 2) the creation of a small business technical assistance fund. A total of \$400,000 will be requested.

Streetlighting: The City of Woburn DPW, working with the Downtown Revitalization Committee, has already begun the new streetscape program in downtown Woburn on a pilot basis, along the block between Montvale Avenue and Walnut Street, known as the Busy Bend. The traditional streetlight fixture, selected under the Busy Bend Design Study, is the Washington Postlight Series manufactured by Holophane Outdoor Architectural Lighting, Inc. The pole is a cast iron, Hamilton Series 12 foot pole from the same manufacturer. Since the installation of new lighting requires the excavation of a 24 inch wide trench along the sidewalk edge for the installation of electrical conduit, the streetscape program uses the op-



portunity to install a 24 inch decorative brick sidewalk trim once the trench is back-filled.

As part of the planning for the RRF application, the WRA retained the services of the engineering firm of Fay, Spoffard and Thorndike to complete a lighting illumination report to determine the number, location, and luminance required to provide an acceptable level of illumination in throughout the Woburn Square Revitalization Area. Using accepted industry standards, FST estimated that 84 additional streetlights, spaced approximately 60 feet apart, will be required to provide both the overall level of lighting, and a satisfactory uniformity of lighting, throughout the remainder of the Woburn Square Revitalization Area. This estimated cost of the new streetlighting is approximately \$370,000.

New curb extensions, though part of the Busy Bend pilot streetscape design and construction, are not proposed under this grant. Once the Busy Bend is fully complete, and the aesthetic and functional contribution of the “bump-outs” can be fully gauged, a public meeting and private discussions with downtown merchants, property owners, and public officials will be held, to determine if additional curb extensions within other blocks are warranted. At that point, additional design and funding efforts will be undertaken to complete the necessary work.



Technical Assistance Fund: The WRA is also requesting under the RRF grant the sum of \$30,000, to establish a small business technical assistance fund, to provide specific case by case technical assistance to new and expanding businesses in Woburn Square which meet the definition and criteria as a small business “microenterprise,” as promulgated by the Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant program. Under the guidelines of that program, a microenterprise is a business with five or fewer employees- including the proprietor. The proprietor must meet the CDBG definition of “low and moderate income.”

The WRA will not be retaining additional staff to offer technical assistance. Instead, the fund will be used to retain on a one time basis professional or technical experts as ad hoc consultants to provide case specific assistance tailored to each business. The expert in question may be an accountant, business planner, architect, advertising/marketing agency, or other professional or technical person or firm whose specialty is required for the needs of the particular microenterprise business. A ceiling of \$5,000 in the cost of assistance per business will be applied.

Committee to Revitalize Downtown Woburn

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