

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: 200 WINTERGREEN AVENUE, Authorization for Acceptance of property known as the Sgt. George D. Libby United States Army Reserve Center as per regulations under the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) of 1990 (Chief Administrative Officer).

REPORT: 1451-09

ADVICE: Approval

BACKGROUND

In accord with the Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) of 1990, the Chief Administrative Officer requests that the Board of Aldermen authorize Mayor DeStefano to accept the property at 200 Wintergreen Avenue, the former Sgt. George D. Libby United States Army Reserve Center from the US Department of Defense. The site is approximately six acres on the west side of Wintergreen Avenue immediately north of the Southern Connecticut State University Campus.

In July 2008, the City of New Haven Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA) requested recognition by the US Office of Economic Adjustment, as the planning entity, to create a redevelopment plan for the George D. Libby Army Reserve Center located on 200 Wintergreen Avenue in New Haven. In August 2008, the LRA was formally recognized, and included: Chief Administrative Officer Robert Smuts, Economic Development Administrator Kelly Murphy, Transportation Director Michael Piscitelli, City Plan Director Karyn Gilvarg and the President of the Board of Aldermen (or their designees). In April of 2009 Nan Bartow, an area resident, and Gary Spinner then the Hill Health Center COO and Chairman of New Haven's Plan to End Chronic Homelessness were added to the LRA. Alderman Darnell Goldson and neighborhood resident Whitney Jenkins were added shortly thereafter.

The LRA was tasked with determining the best use for this federal surplus property. To attain this goal, the LRA publicly advertised a notice of interests (NOI) for development of the Wintergreen Avenue site, in accordance with federal requirements. The LRA had technical help from the OEA (Office of Economic Adjustment) within the Department of Defense, as well as consultants BPP& Associates

The LRA evaluated two NOI responses; one from Columbus House (with other service providers) for supportive housing and one from New Haven Police Department Training Academy. Over the course of several meetings the proposals were reviewed and evaluated by the LRA with their consultant's help. Columbus House recently submitted a letter withdrawing their proposal; as they are working with the City on an alternate site for their proposed facility. On April 12, 2011, a public hearing, within the community, was held at Katherine Brennan School, 200 Wilmot Rd. New Haven 06515 at 6:00 PM, for presentation, discussion and comments on the proposed Draft Redevelopment Plan for George D. Libby Army Reserve Center.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The BRAC procedures are required by the federal government when disposing of military properties. While 200 Wintergreen Avenue was a relatively small property the full procedure was required and followed. Part of the BRAC Act requires outreach to homeless service agencies and allows for HUD review to ensure that facilities are considered for homeless facilities. The site is located in an RM-2 zone at the northern edge of the SCSU campus and is abutted by a cemetery to the west and West Rock Ridge State Park to the south (Wintergreen Brook). The site is level at Wintergreen Avenue and has some steep slopes down to the watercourse. Police stations and schools are both permitted uses in the zone.

The discussions with Columbus House proposal led to an alternate site for provision of supportive housing units, leaving the Police Department as the sole remaining proposal. The facility has been used for offices, has several garages and outside grounds and will adapt well to renovation as a Police Department Training Facility (current facility is located on Sherman Parkway.) The Police Department has further agreed that they will not have an outdoor firing range at the facility, as that has been a source of concern with the current location, due to noise and environmental concerns about lead from ammunition.

ADVICE

The Commission finds that the Local Redevelopment Authority has followed proper procedures to solicit reuse proposals and conduct an inclusive community discussion in their planning process for redevelopment of the Sergeant George D. Libby Reserve Center at 200 Wintergreen Avenue and recommends that the Board of Aldermen accept the property as a public benefit conveyance to be used by the City for its Police training facility.

ADOPTED: April 20, 2011
Edward Mattison
Chair

ATTEST: 
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA
Executive Director