



Urban Renewal: An Owner's Manual

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Urban Renewal

- ◆ M.G.L. c. 121B – Enabling Legislation
- ◆ 760 CMR 12.00 - Implementation Regulations

Urban Renewal: An Overview

- ◆ **What:** A strategy to redevelop substandard, decadent and blighted open areas
- ◆ **Why:** To create an environment that supports private investment and promotes sound growth
- ◆ **When:** As a last resort when redevelopment can't be accomplished by regulatory powers of municipality or by private sector alone
- ◆ **How:** Urban renewal planning; public actions; exemption from c. 30B procurement; land use restrictions
- ◆ **Who:** Redevelopment authorities acting as community's developer and operating outside of government control; can do what a municipality is not able to do

Urban Renewal: What?

◆ Different from other development tools

- Redevelopment Authority
- Comprehensive planning
- Mandated citizen participation
- Public actions to leverage private investment
- Land use restrictions
- Land acquisition, including eminent domain
- Land disposition for private redevelopment
- Exemption from c. 30B procurement requirements
- Protection of municipality's taxing authority

Urban Renewal: Why?

◆ Remove obstacles to redevelopment

- Unwilling sellers
- Absentee owners
- Tax delinquent properties
- Brownfield sites
- Abandoned or underutilized properties
- Inadequate and obsolete infrastructure
- Site assembly issues
- Incompatible land uses
- Historical preservation
- Others

Urban Renewal: When?

- ◆ When other less aggressive plans and initiatives are unsuccessful
- ◆ Revitalization can't be accomplished by private sector alone or with existing municipal regulatory powers
- ◆ Need for land assembly for private or public development
- ◆ As last resort after exhausting all other tools

Urban Renewal: How?

- ◆ Create/reactivate urban renewal entity
 - Redevelopment Authority
- ◆ Identify problems and challenges
 - Within a geographical target area
 - Designated as urban renewal area
- ◆ Foster stakeholder participation
 - Create Citizen Advisory Committee
 - Achieve local buy-in/consensus

Urban Renewal: How?

- ◆ Prepare urban renewal plan
 - Document disinvestment, underutilization & blight
 - ◆ Obstacles to private investment & redevelopment
 - Present goals and vision for future
 - Design remediation/implementation strategy
 - ◆ Public actions to support private investment
 - ◆ Land use restrictions
 - ◆ Timeline
 - Develop budget & funding plan
 - Approve plan locally
 - Submit to DHCD for approval

Urban Renewal: How?

◆ Urban renewal plan

- Documents public purpose that allows eminent domain takings and other public actions
- Used as blueprint to guide future redevelopment & development of private and public properties
 - ◆ Active through different political cycles
 - ◆ Provides certainty to developers
- Exempts real estate transactions from c. 30B procurement requirements

Urban Renewal: What?

- ◆ Residential
- ◆ Commercial
- ◆ Industrial
- ◆ Business
- ◆ Recreation and open space
- ◆ Medical
- ◆ Educational
- ◆ Others

Urban Renewal: Who?

Redevelopment Authority

- ◆ Quasi-public, independent body, corporate & politic
 - Not a political subdivision of city/town or state
 - Operates outside of direct control of CEO
- ◆ Acts as community's "developer"
 - Able to centralize community & economic development activities
 - Allows for stronger control over development activities
- ◆ Outside of municipality's taxing authority

Redevelopment Authority: How?

◆ 5 member board

- 4 appointed in cities
- 4 elected in towns
- One appointed by state

◆ Staffing

- Independent board and staff
- Independent board but staffed by city/town

◆ Work in partnership with city/town

Redevelopment Authority: How?

◆ Funding

- Federal and state grants
- State and local appropriation
- Revenue from land sales and rents
- Bonds
- Loans
- Private contributions

Redevelopment Authority: What?

- ◆ Prepare & implement urban renewal plans
- ◆ Establish rehabilitation & design standards
- ◆ Acquire land, including eminent domain
- ◆ Demolish and rehabilitate substandard structures
- ◆ Undertake site preparation & environmental remediation
- ◆ Assemble & dispose of land for private development
- ◆ Engage in real estate development and commercial revitalization
- ◆ Relocate displaced businesses & residents
- ◆ Issue bonds & borrow money
- ◆ Receive grants, loans & gifts
- ◆ Manage property

Urban Renewal: Key Questions

- ◆ Is it based on an overall plan/vision?
- ◆ Is there meaningful citizen participation?
- ◆ Has a public purpose been documented?
- ◆ Do the boundaries make sense?
- ◆ Do benefits outweigh costs?
- ◆ Is there political consensus?
- ◆ Are projects feasible/viable without it?

Approved Urban Renewal Plans

- ◆ Attleboro: Industrial/Business Park Urban Revitalization and Development Plan - 2003
- ◆ Attleboro: Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Plan – 2007
- ◆ Chelsea: Everett Avenue Urban Revitalization and Development Plan - 1999
- ◆ Fall River: Municipal Airport Urban Renewal Plan/Commerce Park - 1997
- ◆ Fall River: Kerr Mill Revitalization and Development Plan – 2000
- ◆ Fitchburg: Downtown Revitalization and Development Plan - 2001
- ◆ Gardner: Downtown Urban Renewal Plan – 2011
- ◆ Gardner: Mill Street Corridor Urban Renewal Plan – 2013
- ◆ Greenfield: Bank Row Urban Renewal Plan – 2007
- ◆ Holyoke: Connect.Construct.Ceate. - Center City Revitalization Plan – 2013
- ◆ Lowell: Acre Urban Revitalization and Development Project - 2000
- ◆ Lowell: Ayer's City Industrial Park Urban Revitalization and Development Project – 2014
- ◆ Lowell: Jackson-Appleton-Middlesex Revitalization and Development Project - 2000

Recent Approved Urban Renewal Projects

- ◆ Quincy: Quincy Center District Urban Revitalization & Development Plan – 2007
- ◆ Somerville: Assembly Square Revitalization and Development Project – 1980
 - 2002 amendment for redesign as mixed-use TOD project
- ◆ Somerville: Union Square Revitalization Plan – 2012
- ◆ Southbridge: Downtown Urban Revitalization Project – 2012
- ◆ Springfield: Smith & Wesson Industrial Park Urban Renewal Plan – 2005
- ◆ Springfield: Indian Orchard Business Park Urban Renewal Plan – 2009
- ◆ Springfield: Court Square Urban Renewal Plan– 1974
 - 2001 amendment for Union Square intermodal transportation facility; hotel, community center, and parking garage
 - 2002 amendment for renovation and expansion of Civic Center
 - 2006 amendment to revitalize downtown (e.g., historical preservation and streetscape improvements)
- ◆ Westfield: Elm Street Urban Renewal Plan – 2013



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