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Property of the Month: Westfield Redevelopment Authority issues Request for Interest for 1.6 acres downtown

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Elm Street site - Westfield, MA

Westfield, MA The City of Westfield is at the foothills to the Berkshires in Western Massachusetts. Supported by industry, including manufacturing, healthcare, education and retail, the city of 42,000, which celebrated its 350th anniversary this year, is experiencing a rebirth of its downtown. Specifically, the Westfield Redevelopment Authority has issued a Request for Interest seeking private developers to construct a ground-up urban mixed-use project on a 1.6 acre site with 250 feet of frontage on the city's primary downtown thoroughfare.

"The Westfield value proposition lies in our engaged citizenry, high marks as a safe community, our vibrant state university of 6,000 students, and an affordable cost of doing business, including utility rates well below state averages. We've invested over \$100 million along the Elm St. corridor in the past decade and are committed to providing modern infrastructure to complement our historic downtown buildings." - mayor Brian Sullivan

Predevelopment planners have proposed that the site could accommodate anywhere from 50,000 s/f to 70,000 s/f of development up to four stories. Water, sewer, natural gas lines, and gigabit-fiber have been stubbed at the site. Over \$2 million worth of site assemblage and predevelopment work

is complete, including brownfields cleanup. Just two miles from the Mass. Turnpike (I-90 – Exit 3), four miles to Westfield Barnes Regional Airport and nine miles from downtown Springfield, this site offers high visibility with over 18,000 vehicle trips per day.

With significant investment in public utility infrastructure in the last four years and some catalytic private projects, Westfield's downtown is trending upward because it is home to a diverse and healthy cluster of businesses, non-profits and residences.

The Elm St. Urban Renewal project was set in motion by funding secured from the Federal Transit Administration and the Mass. Department of Transportation to construct the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority's Olver Transit Pavilion, which serves as the transfer hub for Westfield's two transit lines, the B23 which connects Westfield with Holyoke and the R10 connecting the city with Springfield's Union Station.

The 1.6 acres available for development is in the CORE Zone which is intended to accommodate high intensity business uses appropriate for downtown locations and to set design standards commensuration with this special area of the city. Additionally, the site is located within a Qualified Opportunity Zone.

Westfield has aggressively focused on the redevelopment or repurposing of properties in its downtown for retail, office space and livability with great success. Local businesses and developers have embraced our rich history, our sense of community and our access to the quality of life offered in Western Massachusetts. In June 2019, Myers Information Systems, a multimedia and broadcast management firm, relocated its operations to a building it purchased on Elm St. Directly across Elm St., a local developer has purchased a former furniture store with the intention of redeveloping the historic property.

"The WRA has laid out multiple development scenarios that we have commissioned over the last four years. While these are great scenarios, we are hopeful that a developer will submit their own ideas for this wonderful property. Our goal now is to ensure that the site is developed to complement our downtown, create job opportunities for our residents and grow our inventory of sustainable buildings in our community." - Kathleen Witalisz, chairwoman of the Westfield Redevelopment Authority

Within a quarter mile of this development site is the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail, the terminus for a popular 30-plus mile bike path that extends south to New Haven and the Long Island Sound. The trail connects the city's commercial district with its outlying neighborhoods, making it popular with families and avid cyclists.

Within one-mile radius of the site is Baystate Noble Hospital, Westfield City Hall, Amelia Park, and the Westfield Athenaeum. Elm St. is home to the headquarters of Westfield Gas & Electric Department and Westfield Bank along with a growing list of technology companies and professional

services. Additionally, many offices, retail and restaurant establishments, parking and residential living complete the downtown.

An Urban Renewal Plan, which was ratified by the city and the Mass. Department of Housing & Community Development, identifies the site as appropriate for ground floor retail and restaurant space and commercial space, housing, or a combination of the two on the upper floors.

It is anticipated responsive developers will identify public and alternative funding sources not listed in this RFP. The WRA and city encourages the development team to detail in its proposal potential public funding sources, if necessary, and the WRA and city expect to assist the successful respondent in securing such resources.

Pioneer Valley Transit Authority's Olver Transit Pavilion - Westfield, MA

A local partnership has worked to market Westfield to both regional and national investors through its GoWestfield branding effort. The GoWestfield.com website highlights the livability of Westfield and the workforce available in the area.

For additional information on Westfield and this development opportunity, please contact either Peter Miller, director of community development at (413) 572-6246 or Tammy Tefft, chief procurement officer, at (413) 572-6254, or by email at t.tefft@cityofwestfield.org.