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## **Question of the Month: What are some redevelopment opportunities that can be found in Suffield Town Center?**

November 03, 2011 - Front Section

Suffield is a community of approximately 14,000. It has a picturesque Main St. and attractive country setting. The town has invested \$2 million over the last several years in streetscape and sidewalk improvements in the Town Center. Private sector activity has included the redevelopment of a gas station site into a very attractive two-story brick office building, construction of a Bright Horizons daycare center, and construction of a 20,000 s/f office building. Also, an 11,000 s/f office building was recently approved and construction should begin shortly. Over 100 businesses call Suffield Town Center home. The prestigious Suffield Academy, a private secondary school, has continued to invest millions in capital improvements in the last several years.

The town of Suffield is soliciting expressions of interests from firms for the redevelopment of a 3.43 acre parcel which includes the vacant Bridge Street School. The property is rectangular shaped with 510 ft of frontage on Bridge Street. The topography is relatively flat with some elevation change between the school and the adjacent field. The site is within easy access to I-91 via the 190 Bridge to Enfield. The neighborhood is mixed commercial and residential. The Suffield Village Shops are adjacent to the site which includes restaurants, professional offices, and Suffield's one grocery store, Highland Park Market. The property is also adjacent to Brandywine condominium complex. Across the street is private and public senior housing facilities and Suffield's Senior Center.

The Bridge Street School was built in 1924 and is in generally good condition. The first floor has 12,173 s/f of finished area including a large open area which was used as a cafeteria. There is an additional 1,564 s/f of finished area in the east end of the basement

The property is located entirely within the Town Center Village District and the purpose of this district is to allow for integrated commercial development which meets the shopping and service needs of the entire town and encourages a diversity and mix of uses while preserving and enhancing the distinctive character, landscape, pedestrian nature, and historic structures within the District. The TCVD Zone allows for reduced setbacks, increased lot coverage and 3 stories maximum height.

Parties with interesting and competitive ideas for the property's reuse are encouraged to respond to this Request for Expressions of Interest with a due date of November 18th. Submission of an Expression of Interest will not be a prerequisite for submitting a final proposal when the Town proceeds into a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. The Town will not consider the information submitted through the RFEI to be binding on the respondent or the town. The purpose of the RFEI is to gauge the interest in the building/property and identify the market for a potential RFP. The historic qualities, unique location, and development potential for the Bridge Street School property create an attractive prospect for an innovative development firm or private enterprise.

The town will welcome proposals that will utilize a portion of the site or the site in its entirety. The town has a preference for proposals that include the renovation of the Bridge Street School but will

also review proposals that include its demolition and redevelopment of the entire site.

The town will entertain proposals that include a long-term lease of the property, a ground-lease, or acquisition of the parcel.

The town is committed to facilitating redevelopment of the Bridge Street School property and will cooperate with the chosen development team to the greatest extent possible. However, redevelopment schemes should not place disproportionate requirements on municipal resources.

Suffield is a quaint town with a rural heritage. The goals for the Town Center are to create a dynamic, pedestrian-friendly and attractive business district. The town worked diligently to develop the Town Center Village District regulations to guide future construction. The site layout, design and mix of the Bridge Street School redevelopment will be of great interest and importance to our local boards and commissions. We hope to work cooperatively with a developer in order to create a project that will make financial sense, as well as, fit the character of our community.

Patrick McMahon is director of economic development for the town of Suffield, Conn.

Contact Patrick McMahon, director of economic development, for more information on this RFEI process by calling 860-668-3849 or e-mailing [pmcmahon@suffieldtownhall.com](mailto:pmcmahon@suffieldtownhall.com).