



devens communityupdate

winter 2010

To the Residents of Ayer, Devens, Harvard, and Shirley

All of us who reside and work in the Commonwealth know how lucky we are to live amid places that remind us of events that have shaped our nation's history. Devens is one of those places, and MassDevelopment seeks to respect this heritage even while fulfilling its mission to eliminate blight while creating jobs.

As the accompanying article in this Devens Community Update demonstrates, MassDevelopment is working to strike this careful balance in Devens while considering options to redevelop the aging but still important buildings of Vicksburg Square. Those of you who have visited the site know that time is taking its toll on these iconic structures. Paint is peeling, roofs are weathering with every storm, and our DPW staff work hard to keep ahead of damage caused by vandals. We must take great care to ensure that Vicksburg Square is redeveloped in a way that pays proper tribute to its past, is economically feasible, and supports economic growth regionally.

The experienced development teams that expressed interest in rehabilitating Vicksburg Square deem the buildings too skinny and inefficient for modern commercial space but appropriate for residential use. And the incubator space uses originally envisioned for the buildings are amply accommodated at 94 Jackson Road, which MassDevelopment owns and markets to small businesses and start-up companies. Also underscoring the limitations of the existing floor plates, staff met recently with representatives from UMass-Lowell to explore the University's interest in these buildings for research and development purposes, but determined that the buildings did not match the school's needs.

In my nearly six years of working at MassDevelopment, I have come to appreciate the active involvement of residents of Ayer, Devens, Harvard, and Shirley on issues related to Devens. Given that residential use at Vicksburg Square would require a zoning change that the neighboring communities would have to approve, I trust that I can count on an active and engaged citizenry once again as this process evolves. For more information on the proposals, visit www.devenscommunity.com.

MassDevelopment looks forward to working with all of you to make Devens and a revitalized Vicksburg Square an important part of the economy and community life of north central Massachusetts.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Culver
President & CEO

Vicksburg Square Update

Two Proposals for Rehabbing Historic Devens Complex under Review

A little more than eighty years ago, the U.S. Army broke ground for Vicksburg Square. Named to commemorate the famous Civil War battle and completed in 1940, Vicksburg Square is a group of four Georgian Revival buildings – Revere Hall, Knox Hall, Allen Hall, and Hale Hall. The complex is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

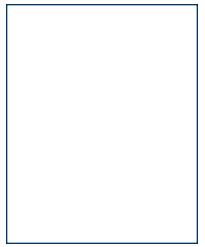
For the first time since Fort Devens closed, developers have expressed interest in rehabilitating the now empty but stately buildings of Vicksburg Square. While current economic circumstances would seem to work against the financial viability of this type of redevelopment, the timing actually appears ideal for economic, architectural, and historic reasons.

The most severe economic conditions since the birth of Vicksburg Square appear unlikely to cast a shadow on its redevelopment. Many economists favor building in times like these, because developers with good credit histories can benefit from diminished materials costs and enhanced access to available labor. Redeveloping empty buildings in the economic hub of north central Massachusetts clearly positions the region to capitalize on the inevitable rebound from the current economic slowdown as businesses seek once again to expand (*Continued on next page*)



A Community of MassDevelopment

33 Andrews Parkway, Devens, MA 01434



Developer Teams

Trinity Vicksburg Square Limited Partnership is a limited partnership affiliated with Trinity Financial, Inc., a Boston-based real estate development firm. Trinity Financial has completed or is currently developing more than \$1.3 billion of real estate projects, including more than 5,300 units of housing and 365,000 square feet of commercial space. Notable projects include the Hamilton Canal District in Lowell; Avenir, Mattapan Heights, Maverick Landing, Trinity Terrace, and The Carruth in Boston; and the Foundry in Newburyport. Trinity's team includes ICON Architects, Epsilon Associates, and Winn Residential.

CSM & Companies is a real estate development firm focused on redevelopment of under-valued adaptive reuse projects. Based in Acton and New Haven, Connecticut, the firm and its development partners have invested more than \$237 million in 42 properties with total project costs in excess of \$1 billion. Notable projects include 305 Dutton Street in Lowell, 175 Maple Street in Marlborough, Malden Mills, 900 Chapel Square in New Haven, and Kardon/Atlantic Terminal in Philadelphia. CSM's team includes The Architectural Team, Inc., Heritage Consulting, and Hart Development Associates.

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Vicksburg Square Update *Continued*

and workers look for attractive housing near their jobs.

In addition to the economic reasons, redevelopment would recognize and preserve the architectural significance of these buildings, which have and will continue to deteriorate.

Developers have expressed interest in converting this property for residential use, which is inconsistent with the Devens Reuse Plan. In June 2009, an attempt to amend the Reuse Plan to permit residences received support from the Joint Boards of Selectmen, the Town of Harvard, and the Town of Shirley, but did not pass in the Town of Ayer.

At that time, many in Ayer said that without a real proposal to review – including architectural plans – they could not support a zoning change. In response to these concerns, MassDevelopment issued a public Request for Expressions of Interest (“RFI”) to the real estate development community, with the understanding that the selected

development team will need to secure its own zoning changes based on the merits of its project. The RFI did not limit the range of uses that could be proposed.

On January 11, MassDevelopment staff and representatives of Ayer, Harvard, and Shirley (from the Vicksburg Square Subcommittee of the JBOS) interviewed members of two teams that had responded to the RFI by the November deadline:

CSM & Companies of Acton proposed a mixed-use project including 275 market rate and affordable rental units as well as 100,000 square feet of commercial uses on the ground floor of each building. CSM is the developer of 305 Dutton Street in Lowell and 175 Maple Street in Marlborough in addition to several other projects along the East Coast.

Trinity Vicksburg Square Limited Partnership of Boston proposed a mixed-income residential project of 246 units. Trinity Financial is the developer of the Hamilton Canal District in Lowell,

The Carruth in Dorchester, and Avenir in Boston in addition to numerous projects throughout New England.

Each interview lasted an hour and left time for questions and answers. The community representatives who participated in these sessions will also take part in site visits to previous projects developed by each team.

Over the next several weeks, MassDevelopment will continue to work with the Vicksburg Square Subcommittee of the JBOS and other stakeholders to select a preferred developer this spring. The selected developer will then begin an in-depth public outreach process to inform and build support among residents and elected officials for its proposal and any necessary zoning changes.

A symbol of unity and strength for four score years, a rejuvenated Vicksburg Square will help drive the local economy in the future while continuing to pay tribute to our nation's past.