



Adam Baacke  
Assistant City Manager/Director

Anne Barton  
Deputy Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bernard F. Lynch, City Manager

FROM: Adam Baacke, Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

SUBJECT: **MOTION OF 10/06/09 BY COUNCILOR BRODERICK**  
REQUEST THE MANAGER/DPD REPORT ON IDEAS/SUGGESTIONS FROM  
LOWELL PLAN BREAKFAST

The Lowell Plan's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Breakfast included an engaging and provocative keynote address by Urban Planner Jeff Speck. Mr. Speck's presentation was enthusiastically received by attendees at the event generating much discussion of the various observations and advice he offered to the City and its business community. It is often beneficial to hear such candid commentary on the character, development, and opportunities that Lowell has to offer from a well-informed outside perspective.

Lowell's leaders should be justifiably proud of his general observations that Lowell is a beautiful, well-planned, and compelling City with significant evidence of an ongoing successful revitalization. His presentation acknowledged many things that Lowell has "done right" in recent years from the significant expansion of the Downtown residential population and the quality restaurants and retailers they've helped attract and support, to the presence of major educational partners Downtown in Middlesex Community College, Lowell High School, and most recently UMass Lowell's Inn and Conference Center. He commended the City on the Hamilton Canal District vision and Master Plan. He complimented the general spirit of public private partnership that has driven so much of Lowell's recent development activity.

While suggestions like the idea of purchasing the canal system and its power generation components from Enel would likely prove impractical or unrealistic, the majority of his thoughts and proposals are worthy of considerable further exploration and consideration. He strongly endorsed the proposed expansion of the Lowell National Historical Park's trolley into a public transit system. He encouraged development on infill sites throughout the Downtown, especially around the Tsongas Arena and on various underutilized parcels. He recommended continued investment in the canalway network and finding other opportunities to better engage the canal system with activity and make them more urban in their design. He encouraged the calming of streets to make them more pedestrian friendly, noting that the quality of the pedestrian experience is a much more critical factor to the success of an urban downtown than the movement of traffic through the downtown. He also strongly challenged the current absence of a downtown hotel and encouraged all parties to collaborate on the development of one or more downtown hotels to replace the Doubletree.

He was careful to note that his specific suggestions, including those listed above and others, were the product of only a week of meetings and personal observations on his part. He cautioned that there will likely be reasons some of his ideas may prove challenging with additional information and perspective while other new ideas may emerge with additional study.

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For these reasons as well as the generally positive reception that his presentation received, his most important recommendation may have been that the Lowell Plan finance and partner with the City to produce a "Lowell Plan Plan." This document would be similar to the Hamilton Canal District Master Plan, both in the broad stakeholder participation in its creation and in the specificity of its proposals. It would be intended to outline and illustrate specific physical improvements that should be made in the Downtown area to further enhance its ongoing revitalization. Specific recommendations would include streetscape and other infrastructure improvements as well as specific sites to encourage the development of new infill buildings.

The Lowell Plan and the Division of Planning and Development are committed to undertaking this planning project, which will be financed by the Lowell Plan. The Lowell Plan is in the process of negotiating with Mr. Speck to lead this process, which we hope to be able to begin in the coming months. We look forward to working with Members of the Lowell City Council as well as other community leaders to help shape this document.

AB/ns

10/16/2009

cc: Jim Cook, Executive Director - Lowell Plan  
George Proakis, Planning and Permitting Director