



News

LYNN POISED FOR OPPORTUNITY

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ITEM PHOTO BY OWEN O'ROURKE

Craig Seymour from RKG Associates answers questions at the Lynn Business partnership meeting.

By THOMAS GRILLO

LYNN — When it comes to real estate development, the city has lots of potential but faces huge obstacles.

That's the finding of a new study which details the strengths and weaknesses of Lynn's housing market and assesses the chances for much-needed apartment construction citywide.

The survey comes more than a year after U.S. Rep. **Seth Moulton** (D-Mass) and Republican Gov. **Charlie Baker** formed the **Lynn Economic Advancement and Development (LEAD) Team** to cut through bureaucracy and jump start construction. Since its inception the group, that includes Secretary of Housing and Economic Development **Jay Ash**, Transportation Secretary **Stephanie Pollack** and Environmental Secretary **Matthew Beaton**, has been unable to attract a single new developer to build housing on the waterside of the Lynnway.

“We talked to many large developers and what we heard was they are building in places like **Chelsea, Revere** and **Everett** because they can get \$3.50 to \$4 per square foot in rent,” said **Judi Barrett**, the study’s project manager at **RKG Associates Inc.** in **Boston**. “They would have to see those kind of rents in Lynn because it’s high risk for them to come here.”

Craig Seymour, RKG’s principal, acknowledged the \$80 million project at the former Beacon Chevrolet site that is expected to break ground on the Lynnway this year could be a game changer. The waterfront development promises to deliver 348 apartments with rents expected to be in the \$2,000 range. If they can fill the units at those prices, it could see others willing to invest in Lynn.

“Developers will come to Lynn once they see the first guy make an 8 percent return,” he said. “Then, they’ll come in and ask if there’s another site available.”

Lynn takes stand against violence



PHOTO BY PAULA MULLER Michael Victoriano of Lynn talks about cleaning up the playgrounds so children have safe places to go. By GAYLA CAWLEY LYNN — After six weekend shootings left five people shot, one fatally, and one woman caught in the crossfire who narrowly avoided being hit by a bullet that went through the ... Continue reading →



“**Lynn Housing Study**” was unveiled on Wednesday at a meeting of the Lynn Business Partnership, whose mission is to improve the city’s economic vitality and quality of life. The 132-page survey cost the city’s **Economic Development & Industrial Corp.** (EDIC) \$60,000.

Among the major issues facing the city include:

- While many industrial cities have experienced dramatic growth in home values, this has not yet happened in Lynn.
- Lynn has failed to attract outside investment in luxury housing while it is flourishing in nearby cities.
- Officials must consider ways to encourage more types of affordable housing with tools such as inclusionary zoning that require some low-cost units when any new market rate projects are built.
- The city’s homeownership rate is under 50 percent and any housing plan to help the city prosper must focus on policy, planning, organization and capacity-building.

Seymour said one of the biggest challenges facing Lynn is its image. The phrase “Lynn Lynn, city of Sin, You never go out the way you came in,” makes changing people’s perception about the city more difficult, he said, not unlike “Slummerville” before Somerville was transformed with the Red, Orange and Green MBTA lines.

“An image is a very hard thing to change,” he said. “That branding unfortunately has contributed to one of the most persistent messages about the city’s image.”

Still, Lynn has its strengths. The study praised the efforts of the city and the **Lynn Housing Authority & Neighborhood Development** (LHAND) in partnership with its affiliate, the **Neighborhood Development Associates**. Together, they have turned abandoned or distressed properties into apartments and condominiums. The survey credited EDIC for hiring **Watertown**-based **Sasaki Associates** to create a master plan for the waterfront.

Among the recommendations include:

- Improve the city’s planning, regulatory and zoning functions by creating a planning office led by a professional planner to institute permitting that is transparent, clear, streamlined and fair.
- The city needs to reorganize the zoning ordinance to eliminate unclear or inconsistent provisions and update it to be consistent with the state’s zoning act, case law and institute best practices.
- Preserve the city’s affordability to families at all income levels.
- Build on the city’s cultural diversity and help residents be good stewards of their neighborhoods.
- Make neighborhoods pleasant places to live.
- Improve the city’s older housing stock.

One of other challenges facing the city is the lack of citywide or neighborhood organizations that can spur development, Barrett said.

“Every city I can think of in my 30 years in this field that has turned around a difficult situation has been on the ground with neighborhood activists,” she said.

Peggy Phelps, LHAND’s director of planning and development, said the study is an important ingredient to move the city forward.

“We don’t just commission studies and toss them on the shelf,” she said. “We try to use them as a tool to break it down and see where we should go from here.”

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