



TESTIMONY BY MAYOR MARCIA LECLERC, TOWN OF EAST HARTFORD

March 6, 2015

H.B. Bill No. 5980 AN ACT EXTENDING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY.

Senator Osten, Representative Miller and the members of the Planning and Development Committee...

Good morning. My name is Marcia Leclerc and I am the Mayor of East Hartford. I am before you today to encourage your support of House Bill 5980, An Act Extending the Boundaries of the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA).

East Hartford has had a seat on the CRDA Board of Directors for many years due to the presence of the UConn Rentschler Field Stadium in East Hartford, which is managed by the Authority. While on the Board, I have worked collaboratively with and supported the City of Hartford on many downtown development projects. I am here today to support an expansion of the CRDA territory to encompass several of East Hartford's priority development sites as well as a major and significant portion of our riverfront. These development sites include Founders Plaza, Commerce Center, our downtown area, the former Showcase Cinemas, Rentschler Field, and the Goodwin College area.

East Hartford is a first-ring suburb, which is almost entirely built-out, with less than four acres of raw land for development, making our town ripe for redevelopment. The exception being the 400-acres of vacant land at Rentschler Field that is owned by United Technologies. As the cost to run our town continue to rise, without a corresponding increase in the grand list or Pilot funding, we face increasing pressures and difficult decisions. No one likes to raise taxes on our businesses and residents. I understand there are many proposals in this legislative session which address the burdensome nature of our local real property based tax structure. In the meantime, however, it is imperative that the town continually work to create opportunities for redevelopment.

The proposed CRDA boundaries and the identified priority sites for development are supported by the Town's updated Plan of Conservation and Development which was adopted in June 2014. The Plan contains chapters dedicated to several special study areas, which signify areas of opportunities for new planning, growth, and development, or in our case redevelopment. These areas correspond with the identified expanded CRDA boundaries. In each instance, we have identified projects which we feel can be implemented in order to foster new opportunities.

In January 2015, the CRDA Board of Directors unanimously voted in favor of the boundary expansion into East Hartford in recognition of both the regional nature of the Agency, and the significant role we play as a continuous entity to the City of Hartford, with our shared land banks along the Connecticut River which is the backdrop to significant state investment at Adrian's Landing. A great illustration of

our interconnectedness can be seen with the Founders Bridge which has a walkway that is heavily used by employees, residents, and visitors on both sides of the River. This bridge can connect more than the walkers – it should be providing a connection to vibrant neighborhoods with offices, retail, restaurants, and housing.

By way of example, East Hartford's Founders Plaza area currently houses office, hotel and residential space. While the office space has a very high occupancy rate, the original development was completed several decades ago and is surrounded by vast parking lots which can be better utilized with denser development. We are hopeful that the CRDA expansion into this area will bring new opportunities for further development consistent with our long-term vision for this neighborhood as well as the other redevelopment sites we have identified.

I have attached a map of the CRDA Board approved expansion area in East Hartford. We have also submitted substitute language which clarifies these boundaries.

Suggested Technical Amendment to boundaries.

**AN ACT EXTENDING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

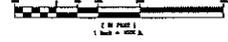
That chapter 588x of the general statutes be amended to extend the boundaries of the Capital Region Development Authority into (1) the area bounded by ~~Pitkin Street to the north, Jayce Street to the east and East River Drive to the west and south~~ Cedar Street and Burnside Avenue to the north, Forbes Street to the east, East River Drive to the west and Brewer Street to the south, and (2) the area known as Rentschler Field.

I urge your support of this legislation and I thank you for your time today.

TOWN OF EAST HARTFORD



GRAPHIC SCALE



POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITE

CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
(CRDA)  
EAST HARTFORD EXPANSION  
WORKING MAP 1/8/15

BASE MAP SOURCE: DATA, GEOMETRIC LAYERS WERE PROVIDED BY THE METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION. DATA, GEOMETRIC LAYERS WERE PROVIDED BY THE TOWN OF EAST HARTFORD DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT.  
THE DATA REPRESENTED ON THIS MAP IS INTENDED TO BE USED FOR GENERAL PLANNING AND POLICY PURPOSES AND SHALL NOT BE A SUBSTITUTE FOR ANY OTHER ADDITIONAL FIELD RESEARCH AND OBSERVATION. SEE SECTION 106 OF THE ZONING REGULATION.

PREPARED BY THE TOWN OF EAST HARTFORD ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT