

A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

Westborough State Hospital

Westborough, MA



June 17, 2014



**Urban Land
Institute**

Boston/New England



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Executive Summary

Under the direction of the Urban Land Institute's Boston/New England District Council, the Westborough Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) convened in Westborough, Massachusetts on June 17, 2014 bringing together stakeholders, community leaders, and a panel of planning, design, and development professionals for a day-long session focused on identifying the issues, constraints, and opportunities presented by the Westborough Hospital Site. The report that follows, which summarizes the TAP recommendations, is comprised of four chapters.

Chapter 1: ULI and the TAP Process gives an overview of the Urban Land Institute's Boston/New England District Council and its Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) and provides a detailed list of participants in the Westborough TAP including city officials, stakeholders, and the panel of land use professionals.

Chapter 2: Background and Assignment gives background information about the Westborough Hospital site as well as current conditions of the site and buildings. It also provides an overview of the city's agreement with the Massachusetts Department of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance. This chapter also reviews the town of Westborough's objectives for the TAP, as stated in its initial application, which were to obtain recommendations on marketing and developing the site, exploring planning and design issues and providing some cost/benefit analysis of various development plans.

Chapter 3: Observations and Findings presents the panel's insights about the Westborough Hospital's positive attributes (including the location, scenic Lake Chauncy, the historic nature of the site, the current recreational amenities) and the principal challenges (including the lack of direct access from the site to nearby highways, the state of deterioration of the buildings on site, the location of the Allen Hall Youth Detention Facility and the water and sewer infrastructure, which is not compatible with the rest of the town).

Finally, **Chapter 4: Planning Considerations** presents the guiding principles which shaped the panel's work, and short- and long-term recommendations in the areas of pre-development considerations, potential uses and funding sources for the site's redevelopment.



ULI and the TAP Process

a. Urban Land Institute (ULI)

The Urban Land Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the Institute now has over 30,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land-use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service, including developers, architects, planners, lawyers, bankers, and economic development professionals, among others.

As the pre-eminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local, national, and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places.

The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and to help sustain and create thriving communities.

The Boston/New England District Council serves the six New England states and has over 1,100 members.

b. Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)

The ULI Boston/New England Real Estate Advisory Committee convenes Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) at the request of public officials and local stakeholders of communities and nonprofit organizations facing complex land-use challenges who benefit from planning and development professionals providing pro bono recommendations. At the TAP, a group of diverse professionals specially assembled with expertise in the issues posed, spends one day visiting and analyzing existing conditions, identifying specific planning and development issues, and formulating realistic and actionable recommendations to move initiatives forward in a way consistent with the applicant's goals and objectives

c. MassDevelopment Support

Recognizing the alignment between the ULI Boston/New England Technical Assistance Panel program and MassDevelopment's mission to



Panelists at the shoreline of Lake Chauncy



Panelists at the planning charrette.

support sustainable redevelopment across the Commonwealth, the two organizations have partnered to support TAPs in towns and cities throughout the Commonwealth. The Westborough TAP was the eleventh sponsored by MassDevelopment to date.

d. Panel Members

ULI Boston/New England convened a panel of volunteers whose members represent a range of the disciplines associated with the planning and development challenges presented by the Westborough State Hospital Site.

Disciplines represented include architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning and design and development.

Members were selected with the intent of convening an array of professional expertise relevant to the Town of Westborough’s objectives for this TAP. The panelists were:

- Larry Spang, Principal, Arrowstreet
- Beth Murphy, Vice President of Real Estate Development, MassDevelopment

- Matt Mrva, Landscape Architect, Bohler Engineering
- Randy Watterson, President, TDC, Inc.
- Colin O’Hearn, Project Manager, TDC, Inc
- Mike Nowicki, Stantec

Jim Robbins, Westborough Town Planner and Jim Malloy, Westborough Town Manager, served as the primary contacts for ULI Boston/England for the town.

Michelle Landers of ULI Boston/New England provided organizational and technical support in preparation for and during the TAP event.

e. Stakeholders

The TAP benefited from the participation of a diverse group of stakeholders — policy makers, town staff, business owners, and town officials — who met with the panel and shared information, ideas, and opinions on a range of issues affecting the Westborough State Hospital. Stakeholders at the session included:

- Hazel Nourse, Westborough Historical Commission
- Mark Silverberg, Open Space Commission



Panelists tour the Administration Building.



Panelists examine the condition of the Administration Building.

- Scott Shumway, Open Space Preservation Committee
- Andy Konigsberg, Conservation Commission
- Earl Storey, Westborough Department of Public Works
- Alan Grady, Westborough Department of Recreation
- Don Burns, Chair, Westborough Conservation Land Trust
- Lester Hensely, Chair, Westborough Planning Board

f. TAP Process

The Westborough TAP was held on June 17, 2014 at the Westborough Department of Public Works conference room. In the morning, Jim Robbins, Town Planner, and Jim Malloy, Town Manager welcomed the panelists, then led a bus tour of the State Hospital and the surrounding area.

The tour began at the Westborough DPW facility on Oak Street, panelists then toured the State Hospital property in a vehicle and on foot. After viewing the waterfront area and soccer fields, the group toured the inside of the Administration Building and the Daniels Office Building. After an hour at the State Hospital site, the panel toured downtown Westborough and the surrounding area before returning to the DPW conference room.

After the tour, the ULI panel interviewed a series of stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the relevant issues, dynamics, and opportunities surrounding the Westborough State Hospital Site. The panelists then engaged in an intensive charrette to develop recommendations addressing some of the critical issues associated with the acquisition and redevelopment of the Westborough State Hospital. The TAP concluded with a presentation to the Board

of Selectmen and members of the community at a public meeting that evening at Westborough High School.

The presentation is available electronically at the ULI Boston/New England website <http://boston.uli.org>.



Panelists at the Daniels Office Building.

Background & Assignment

a. Westborough State Hospital Property

HISTORY

The Westborough State Hospital was established in 1884 as a working farm for the treatment of the mentally ill. The site was originally controlled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and one point, the site encompassed nearly 600 acres, though the current hospital site is approximately 120 acres. The current hospital site is comprised of 95 developable acres containing 23 buildings listed on the historic register.

LOCATION

The site is situated on scenic Chauncy Lake and Lyman Street in northern Westborough on the Northborough border. The site is three miles west of the intersection of Route 9 and Interstate 495. In addition to the buildings and surface parking lots, the Town of Westborough maintains several soccer fields for the town's youth. There is also a public dock and boat launch on the west side of the lake. The site is adjacent to 600 acres of open space with an extensive trail system.

Immediately adjacent to the western edge of the site lies the Allen Hall, a facility for male juvenile offenders ages 16-20. Run by the Department of Youth Services, this building and outdoor recreation area of the facility, which is surrounded by a razor wire topped fence, is visible from the soccer fields and most of site. This site is bordered by a large expanse of federally controlled open space, which extends around the western shore of Chauncey Lake.

The eastern edge of the site is adjacent to two state-run facilities: the Rotenberg School which provides education, therapy and counseling to girls who have suffered from significant traumatic incidents, or involvement with the justice system, and a building run by the Department of Developmental Services. These facilities are on the immediate edge of property,

but front on Lyman Street rather than Hospital Road. Just beyond these buildings, to the east, is a vast expanse of state and federally controlled open space containing wetlands and a trail system.

The northern edge of the site is located on the border of Northborough. A small portion of the original hospital site is located in Northborough.

CONDITIONS

The State Hospital was decommissioned in 2010, as mental health services were consolidated to Worcester; the buildings onsite have remained vacant and boarded up since then.

The buildings on-site include the former Administration Building, small cottages used to house patients up to the 1960s, the caretakers house, along with office buildings, a laundry facility and other building used in the care of treating and housing patients. The buildings are in varying states of disrepair and have deteriorated significantly since 2010.

The only one of these buildings with historical and architectural significance is the Administration Building, located on Hospital Road. There is a strong desire to preserve this building, though only the original section of the building is considered worth salvaging. The building is in poor condition with a leaking roof, broken windows and serious interior deterioration. The cost of renovating this building may be a barrier for redevelopment.

Some of the other buildings on site are in better condition, but they have no significant historical character and their design and layout will likely not be suitable for reuse.

b. Recent Activity

For the past several years, the Town of Westborough

has leased land from the Commonwealth for use as recreational soccer fields. The fields are in frequent use by the recreation department. The waterfront in the southeast portion of the site is used as a access point for recreational boating, kayaking and fishing, as well as an annual triathlon.

The remainder of the site is currently under control of the Division of Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), which is currently providing security for the entire property. In 2012, Westborough and DCAMM entered into a Town-Commonwealth Partnership Model and a Purchase and Sale Agreement for the property's transfer to the town. The property will be transferred to the Town with no restrictions and the Town and the Commonwealth will share 50% of any revenue generated from development on the site.

The Town of Northborough is currently under separate negotiations with DCAMM regarding the disposition of that portion of the site

c. Objectives

The Town of Westborough requested the panel to consider the following key issues related to the transfer of the hospital property and future development on the site:

- Marketing and Developing the Site - including zoning and use recommendations, viability of current structures on site, and the impact of Allen Hall on development scenarios;
- Planning and Design Issues - including planning for various recreational uses and the impact of development potential on Northborough's portion of the site; and
- A Cost Benefit Analysis of the various recommendations - including the market feasibility of reuse options, the potential impact of development on the tax base and potential funding sources for redevelopment of the site.



The Administration Building



Scenic Chauncy Lake

Observations & Findings

a. Site Attributes

The panel felt that the State Hospital site presented both a unique opportunity and a real challenge. The site has many attributes, most obviously, its location on Chauncy Lake and the surrounding protected open space. The site is also relatively large and could theoretically support a robust redevelopment plan, should the Town wish to pursue one. The site has excellent view corridors to the lake and is situated in an area with large tracts of conservation land.

While the property does not have direct access to Interstates 495 or 90, it is a short drive from busy Route 9 and only a few miles from downtown Westborough. There is access to the MBTA commuter rail station only five miles from the site.

In addition to the recreational opportunities available on the site itself, Westborough is rich in amenities such as a public beach, a public golf course, tennis courts, a very well regarded school system and a picturesque New England town center.

The site is currently used by a variety of residents for activities such as soccer, fishing, canoeing, kayaking and walking. Based on our stakeholder interviews, many residents have a strong connection to the site.

In recent years, Westborough has seen successful developments such as Westborough Village, a community of town houses that sell in mid \$400,000 range. According to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Westborough is expected to experience growth in both jobs and residents. There is growth in population ages 25-34 and 55-79, which means increased demand for apartments, condominiums and small single family homes.

Assuming the deal with DCAMM is completed as expected, the town will control the full 195 acres of developable land. This puts the town in a good position as it plans for the future of this parcel. There is political will to engage in a planning effort for a long-term asset for the community. The is also a

strong sense of community engagement. In addition to the stakeholders who were interviewed for the TAP, approximately 80 residents participated in a planning charrette in April of 2014. There was also a large audience at the public presentation of the TAP, which shows that this site is important to many residents.

b. Challenges

While there are many positive attributes to the study site, there are also significant challenges to redevelopment.

The bucolic lake-front setting means there may be some wetland issues on the south side of the property. The road that lies immediately adjacent to the lake, is very close to the shore and may be difficult to upgrade if more intensive uses are identified for the beach area at the southern tip of the property.

While the location is not a tremendous distance from the highway, the lack of direct access limits the options for building a corporate campus or even retail



Interior of the Daniels Office Building

uses, which are concentrated on nearby Route 9.

While reuse of some of the buildings is possible, the vast majority of the buildings are in a severe state of deterioration. Saving any of the buildings would come at tremendous cost and it is unlikely that renovation of the existing buildings would be more attractive to a potential developer than a clean site. The deteriorated condition of the buildings also poses a risk of liability when the town takes over the property from DCAMM, which currently provides full-time security for the site.

The deteriorated state of these buildings also makes a phased development much more difficult. In a phased development, any use that brings people to the site will be difficult to sell if it is surrounded by decaying abandoned buildings.

The Allen Hall youth detention facility, located immediately adjacent to the property also poses redevelopment challenges. While there are long-term plans to relocate the facility, in the meantime, the site is unlikely to attract investors. While the facility seems secure, the razor wire around the yard projects an image that the site may be dangerous. Receiving a commitment from the state that the facility has a relocation plan would aid in redevelopment efforts.

Currently the site is served by the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA), rather than town water and is not compatible with the town sewer system. This infrastructure issue would need be addressed for any development beyond passive recreation.



Interior of the Administration Building

Planning Considerations

Site

The Town of Westborough has a unique opportunity to develop part of this property, while maintaining its lake-front character. The panel felt strongly that development should be confined to the northern end of the property. This would provide excellent views from any development to the water, while maintaining public access to the lake and nearby recreational opportunities.

In order to achieve the town's goal of increasing the tax base by attracting development to the site, the panel recommends consolidating and rezoning the site as soon as it is acquired from DCAMM. The town should also consider pre-development work including demolition. Demolition of most or all of the buildings on site may be necessary to attract developers who will not want to invest in a property that is surrounded by deteriorating structures. Removal of these buildings will also make the site more pleasant to recreational users prior to development. This would also alleviate costs related to maintaining, securing and insuring these buildings.

Potential Uses

The panel created a development scheme that would incorporate a mix of uses to present an idea of what some development would look like on the site. This would likely be a phased development that begins with the town clearing the site.

The scenario outlined would preserve large amounts of green space of public use, along with retaining the soccer fields at the shore of Lake Chauncy and adding a new field, potentially for cricket, adjacent to the current fields. There is a parcel along the edge of the lake identified for use by the recreation department. This site could support a community recreation center with a small snack bar to support walkers, fishermen, kayakers, soccer and cricket

players. Taking into account the recreational uses on site, the panel is also proposing the addition of some small structures along the beach for overnight visitors. These could be small seasonal shacks or other low impact buildings that the town could rent to visitors.

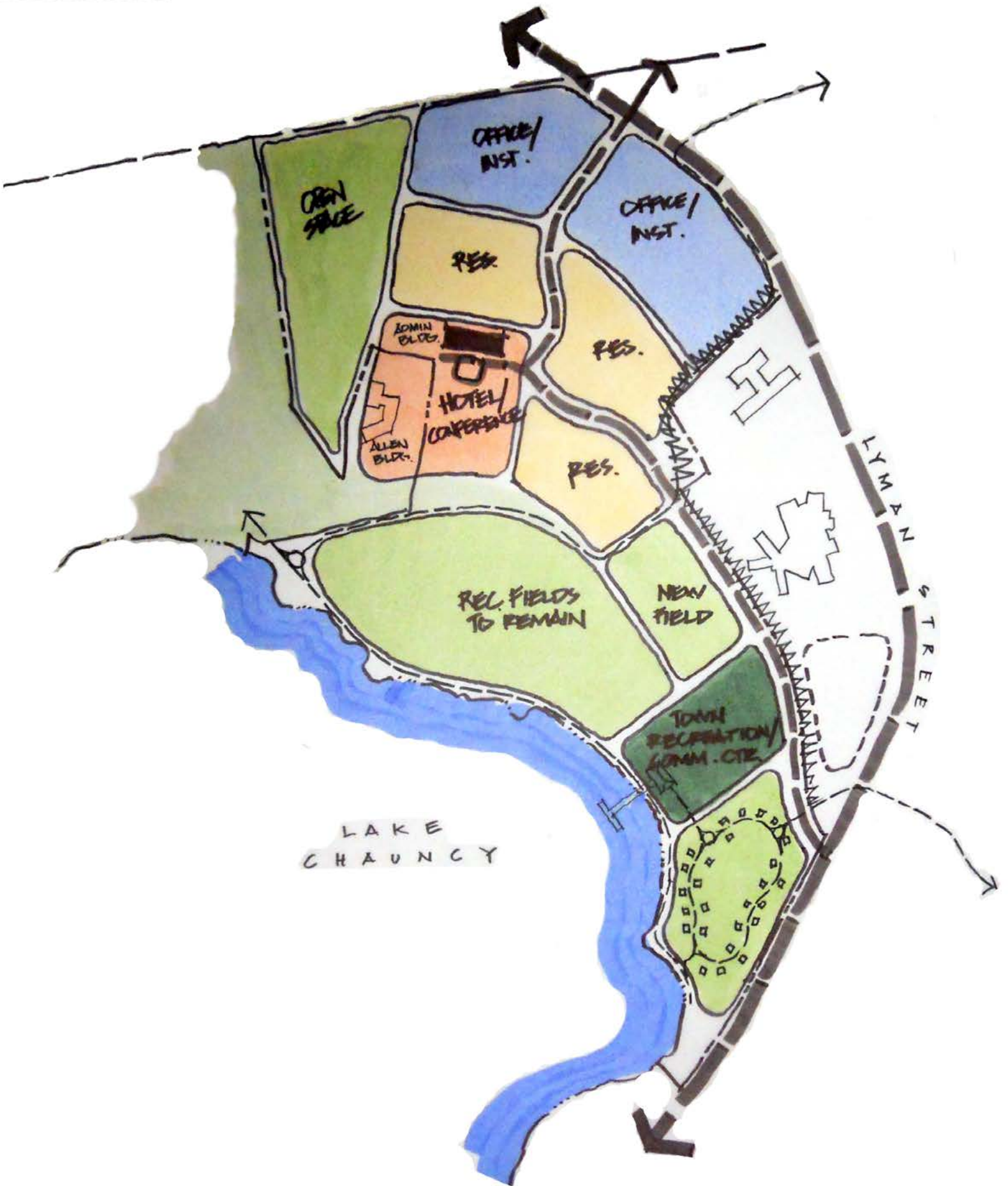
The open space on site could connect the current abutting conservation areas and provide access to a continuous network of trails in the area.

The Town and stakeholders both expressed interest in creating office space on the site. The panel did not see evidence of a strong demand for a considerable amount of new office space in Westborough. The lack of direct access to the highways and Route 9 makes the possibility of a large corporate campus on the site unlikely, but the panel felt that the site could support incubator or office space located at the northern border of the property along Lyman Street. This scenario includes two buildings on 12 acres for a total of 100,000-150,000 square feet. This could also serve as light industrial or maker space, though it would be difficult to find a developer to build for that use.

The panel agreed that housing would likely be the highest and best use for this property, because of attributes of the site and the surrounding open space. The Town of Westborough is reluctant to add more housing so as not to put pressure on the school system. Recent developments have brought more children to the school system than anticipated during the approval process. Additional housing could create a problem if it attracted mostly families, which would be likely given the highly rated school system. Stakeholders gave various opinions about restricted housing such as senior housing or artists' lofts.

The panel's scenario includes 13 acres of residential development, in the form of condominiums or town houses rather than single-family homes. These residential units would be located just south of the office space and would abut the fields to the south.

Several stakeholders mentioned the desire for a



high-end hotel with small conference facilities in Westborough. The panel felt that this would be the most challenging aspect of the scenario and would not be possible until Allen Hall is relocated and the town takes ownership of the site. The scenario includes a small hotel encompassing seven acres with 40-60 rooms. The hotel would be situated just north of the soccer fields with a scenic view of the lake, where the Administration Building currently sits. The panel left the possibility of preserving some or all of the building or demolishing it and creating an entirely new structure.

Each of these new structures would need to include parking for their users. Parking for the recreational users would also need to be included.

This scenario includes a realignment of Hospital Road and some of the interior roads on the site. There would also be some landscaping to buffer the edge of the property from the institutional uses located along Lyman Street.

Recommendations

The panel's first recommendation is to work with DCAMM to renegotiate the terms of the transfer of property. Other state property transfers have included funds for demolition or pre-development work. The panel estimates the cost of clearing the site to be approximately \$6 million. Any additional funds from DCAMM would free up those funds for other town priorities. The town should also seek a firm commitment from the state regarding the relocation of Allen Hall. As long as that facility remains on site, it is likely to hamper revenue generating development.

The town should create a pre-development budget for the hospital site which would include demolition, security, insurance, masterplanning. Initial estimates would put this figure in the \$6 m- \$10 m range. Streamlining a permitting and approval process should be part of the masterplanning for the site. A

streamlined process will aid in attracting developers to the site. A stronger collaboration with the Town of Northborough is also recommended.

If the town chooses not to pursue demolition of the existing buildings, there should be some investment made to properly "mothball" any buildings deemed worthy of saving. The town must also set aside some funds to secure the buildings.

The panel would also urge the town to consider a deeper analysis on the costs and benefits of housing. Based on figures supplied by the town, the per pupil cost in Westborough is approximately \$14,000, this should be taken into account and weighed against any potential tax revenue from housing. If education costs preclude any residential development that would attract families, the town could consider restricting the housing on the site to be senior only or live/work space.

The panel's final recommendation is to explore grants or other funding sources related to the infrastructure and development costs associated with the site. While many state grants are tied to job creation, which would be minimal in the panel's development scenario, there may be other funding tools available, such as the MassWorks Infrastructure Program or the Infrastructure Investment Incentive Program (I-Cubed).