

Mr. Lee Garrity, City Manager
City of Winston-Salem
P.O. Box 2511
Winston-Salem, NC 27102

Request for Action to Obtain Title to Plaza Apartments

For more than three years, residents of the Boston-Thurmond neighborhood, along with community partners, have been involved in a foundational planning effort called Our Boston Thurmond, in which residents have outlined their vision of a thriving neighborhood that is connected to the economic activity and development surrounding it, with strong schools, improved housing, access to job opportunities, and a variety of community amenities.

That planning has led to Winston-Salem – and the Boston-Thurmond neighborhood – being under final consideration as one of the next cities in the Purpose Built Communities national network, a proven model that disrupts the cycle of poverty by transforming communities so that people can reach their full potential. Within a clearly defined neighborhood, local leaders and their partners develop quality, mixed-income housing; create a cradle-to-college education pipeline; and provide community wellness programs and facilities.

Winston-Salem would join 17 other cities across the country, including Charlotte, Raleigh and Spartanburg, S.C., in the Purpose Built network, in which extensive technical assistance and consultation are provided free of charge, based on the successful transformation of the East Lake neighborhood in Atlanta. This would be a long-term affiliation (a minimum of 10 years) with one of the most recognized community development organizations in the country.

Aligning with national initiatives like Purpose Built Communities and others was one of the recommendations of the recent report from the Mayor's Thought Force on Poverty.

Coordinating and supporting the work of various partners in Boston-Thurmond is the Boston-Thurmond Innovation Network, a separate 501 (c) 3, whose purpose is to ensure that residents are engaged in all stages, that mutually established goals are met, that sustainable funding streams of public and private resources are identified, and that a long-term commitment to excellence and achievement is maintained.

Central to this effort is the development of mixed-income housing, which in Boston-Thurmond would include high-quality multi-family rental, new and renovated single-family homes, and renovations for existing homeowners. Affordability and access are guaranteed by setting a cap on market-rate rental units and by establishing guidelines that ensure that residents of Boston-Thurmond are given priority for both housing and schools within the education pipeline.

Plaza Apartments and the area surrounding it are key to the housing redevelopment that is essential for the transformation of the lower part of the Boston-Thurmond neighborhood, in close proximity to both Cook Literacy Model School and the new Paisley IB Magnet-Lowrance Middle School, a \$40 million investment now under construction.

Partnerships are being developed with school leaders and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County schools that would ensure that neighborhood children benefit from significant investment in their educational outcomes. An early childhood learning center, targeted for neighborhood residents, would be the start of the education pipeline, and an essential part of the neighborhood plan.

As the city moves toward potential network affiliation, it is important that various aspects of the overall strategy be endorsed through action by key partners.

As part of the city's commitment to this significant revitalization effort, it is requested that action be taken by the City Council to begin the transfer of title and site control of Plaza Apartments to the BTIN Plaza LLC, which is in the process of being established for this purpose. The request is for a letter of intent to be executed by Jan. 31, 2018, for transfer of the title by no later than June 2019 under terms to be negotiated between the partners.

Meanwhile, by the end of March 2018, a more detailed plan for all components of the Boston-Thurmond revitalization plan, developed with significant input from residents and key community partners, would be submitted to the city for review and comment. The housing redevelopment would be phased in over a five-year period.

The strength of the Purpose Built connection is really three-fold: First is a highly adaptive model that meets the needs of local communities and driven by local control. We would anticipate the city being a key player in the continued planning and implementation of long-term strategies in Boston-Thurmond.

Next is the amount of resident input at all stages of the process. Extensive planning sessions have already occurred and will continue to take place throughout the design and implementation of all aspects of the work. Coordination with existing city redevelopment plans will be a significant part as well.

Finally, the Purpose Built approach puts residents in charge of their long-term future, rather than letting market forces alone take hold. In that sense, it is the best means of addressing typical concerns about gentrification for neighborhoods on the edge of economic development. The focus is on ensuring that residents themselves benefit from market forces, and actually define them in a way that has a lasting, positive impact.

We appreciate consideration by the city to this request, which we feel is in the best interest of all in the Boston-Thurmond neighborhood, and surrounding areas.

Respectfully submitted,



Sylvia Oberle

Executive Director, Boston-Thurmond Innovation Network

Cc: Derwick Paige
D. Ritchie Brooks

About Boston-Thurmond Innovation Network

The Boston-Thurmond Innovation Network is a non-profit organization, whose sole purpose is to ensure a successful community revitalization within the Purpose Built Communities network. Under the Purpose Built approach, the local entity is termed the "Community Quarterback," and is dedicated to working closely with neighborhood residents to engage their expertise and address their needs and concerns. The Community Quarterback must also build strong partnerships with public and private stakeholders and investors including local housing authorities and school boards, developers, non-profits, philanthropic individuals and organizations, and elected officials.

Following the approach in several other network communities, the Boston-Thurmond Innovation Network is being incubated by an existing organization to provide in-kind and other administrative support and to maintain efficiency of operation. In this case, Wake Forest University is incubating the organization in its initial phase, while maintaining its separate 501 (c) 3 status.

Members of the initial board are:

Dr. Nathan Hatch, Wake Forest University, chair

Robert Johnson, BB&T, vice-chair

Paula McCoy, Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods, secretary

Lilicia Bailey, Wake Forest Health, treasurer

Joe Crocker, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust

Don Flow, Flow Automotive

Maurice "Mo" Green, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

Dr. Thomas Koontz, retired surgeon

Scott Wierman, Winston-Salem Foundation

Initial staff:

Sylvia Oberle, executive director