

PROCESS TO SELECT SITES FOR PARP

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The Property Assessment and Re-use Planning Project (PARP) will assess 50 to 60 “distressed” properties within the plan area. These properties are defined as those which are abandoned, vacant, substantially underutilized, blighted, and/or in the foreclosure process. The over-arching principle was to identify key properties in the core Downtown area that would have the biggest impact in fostering the revitalization of Spencer Center.

Preliminary Site List

As part of its FY13 CDBG application, Spencer performed a limited preliminary survey and reconnaissance of the PARP plan area to identify properties that are vacant, abandoned and/or in foreclosure status, using data from local departments (assessor, fire, and building) and the town's 2008 Downtown Revitalization Plan as sources. This limited assessment identified over 100 potentially distressed properties. Most of these properties are residential, but a substantial portion are mixed-use, commercial/retail, or industrial. The PARP project committee worked with the consultant team to narrow this preliminary site list down to 50-60 sites to be evaluated in depth.

Development of Revised List

The list of properties from the initial grant application was first reviewed to select an initial list of 29 properties through discussions with Town Officials (Health Director, Building Inspector, and Town Planner) as well as input from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. This initial list included properties with known building code and/or health regulation issues, or properties appeared to be in poor condition based on visual observation.

Over the summer, the PARP Project Committee met and expanded the list of properties, reviewing site photographs, assessors’ information, parking availability, and information gathered by the project consultant team. In addition, the Town Administrator and Director of Utilities & Facilities visited the study area in August to review all properties and make suggested additions and deletions. At a PARP Committee meeting on 9/11/2014, the list of properties was finalized.

General Selection Criteria

Throughout the selection process, the following general considerations were used to select properties:

- Prioritize abandoned, dilapidated, or underutilized buildings (identified through direct observation, listed in 2008 study as in poor condition, or marked by Fire Department as non-entry buildings)
- Include Town-owned properties that are vacant or underutilized
- Focus on downtown Spencer portion of the study area
- Include Main Street parcels, with intent to encourage redevelopment and improvements in coordination with the Main Street Reconstruction Project that will involve new roadway, sidewalk, pedestrian, bike, and transit improvements.
- Concentrate on properties that relate to other planned Town roadway improvements (e.g. Mechanic Street, Chestnut Street, Water Street, High Street, Main Street)
- Include properties with potential for improvement with future Housing Rehabilitation Program funds