

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: ORDER OF THE BOARD OF ALDERS approving an extension and amendment of the lease and funding agreement for the Union Station Transportation Center and related improvements by and among the State of Connecticut, Department of Transportation, the City of New Haven, and the New Haven Parking Authority. (Economic Development Administrator)

REPORT: 1529-17

ADVICE: Approval

BACKGROUND

Union Station is a National Register (1975) listed historic building designed by Cass Gilbert and built 1918-1919. Closed in the 1960's & 70's and functionally replaced by an underground corridor; the station was saved by preservationists, the City, the Parking Authority, and the federally funded Northeast Corridor Improvement Project. It was restored 1980-85 and reopened for its original purpose – a railroad station and grand and dignified entry to the City. Since 1980 it has been managed by the New Haven Parking Authority as are the adjacent surface parking lot and garage to the north of the station.

Anticipating the June 30, 2017 end date of the current lease; over the last decade the City has on three separate occasions transmitted and discussed well thought out plans to reinvigorate the station and environs with the State Department of Transportation. The Department has chosen to reject or ignore those plans and more recently proposed to build a second garage and take over management of the station upon completion of the garage.

The City has worked with our state legislative delegation to convey ownership of the garage to the City so that it can continue to be locally managed and maintained. While the conveyance is debated and awaits a vote, the City needs to ensure that the Parking Authority remains as manager of the station so that the convenience of the traveling public is not disrupted. The State, the City, and the Authority have discussed a number of options for the future long-term ownership, operation and management of the Station, including the creation of a transit oriented development involving a long-term extension of the Original Agreement or a new long-term lease and/or management agreement or such other structure as might be mutually acceptable to all three parties and such discussions are ongoing, but will not be concluded prior to the Expiration Date.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Union Station is owned by the State of Connecticut, and has been managed by the New Haven Parking Authority since 1980. The Order before the Board would extend the lease, set to expire shortly, continuing local management of the facility and continuing discussions with the State concerning future improvement and management of this historic building and supporting facilities.

ADVICE

The Commission finds the Order in the best interest of the City as it will continue the local management of the Station and Parking Garage and Lot by the New Haven Parking Authority. Local management provides the best opportunity for truly Transit Oriented Development and inclusion in implementation in the surrounding neighborhood plan – the Hill to Downtown Plan. The Commission therefore finds the Order is in the best interest of the City and recommends approval.

ADOPTED: April 20, 2017
Edward Mattison
Chair

ATTEST: 
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA
Executive Director