

New hotel for Washington Square; ballpark property acquisitions to start

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First Bristol Corporation, which operates a Homewood Suites hotel on property at the left in this image of Washington Square, across from Union Station, is set to build a second hotel on the property to the right. *Worcester Magazine*

Worcester has entered into an agreement with the First Bristol Corporation, which owns the [Homewood Suites hotel at Washington Square](#), for another hotel along the roundabout.

A 110-room, \$22 million hotel is slated for an acre of space across Summer Street from Bristol's current hotel. The land was previously owned by the city and the company purchased it for \$400,000, of which \$100,000 will go to the Worcester Jobs Fund toward a goal of making 50 percent of the workforce at the hotel permanent Worcester residents. The hotel is expected to employ at least 50 people, according to a release from the city.

The hotel will be six stories tall, including a level of parking under the building. As the hotel is only partially designed, a full amenity package has not been made available, according to a news release. According to the city, First Bristol Corporation envisions a hotel similar to that of the Hilton Homewood Suites development, which they said has been "well received throughout the region."

The Worcester Redevelopment Authority, which manages Union Station and the land around it, approved the sale last week, issuing a terms of conveyance agreement to First Bristol.

James Karam, president of First Bristol Corporation, said he's pleased to move forward on a second Washington Square hotel.

"We believe the location being directly across the street from Union

Station and at the foot of Shrewsbury Street with an eclectic variety of restaurants and entertainment, as is the case with the Homewood Suites, is a great feature for our guests to enjoy within downtown Worcester," Karam said in a statement.

City Manager Ed Augustus Jr said the city's development strategy isn't only about land, but about "fostering meaningful relationships with developers.

"That is evident today in the partnership with Jim Karam and First Bristol Corporation," he said. "Their investment in Worcester and in building a second hotel property in Washington Square will boost the city's available room count, help attract more events and visitors and bring added vitality to the area."

A timeline for construction has not yet been made available.

First Bristol's first Washington Square hotel, the Homewood Suites, opened in July 2017. Similarly, company officials said at the time that Union Station and the restaurant scene on Shrewsbury Street were key draws for the hotel location.

WOOSOX PROPERTY

The WRA voted on Friday to take three of the properties necessary to move forward with the WooSox ballpark property. By unanimous vote, the board took 50 Washington St., 127 Washington St. and 134 Madison St.

While 50 Washington St. has reached an agreement, the other two properties have not. The pair declined city offers for the property. City Chief Development Officer Mike Traynor said the city is still in negotiations with the two remaining properties after offering what he called the high end of the appraised value.

"Neither party decided to say yes, to accept that total," Traynor said at the meeting. "We'll see what happens as we move forward."

Board member David Minasian asked whether there has been communication with the two that did not accept. One is represented by counsel, Traynor said, and they haven't closed the door on a possible sale.

"For now," he said, "we're just moving forward,"

If a sale is not reached, the city may use eminent domain to take the properties.

The sale comes as the project has fallen slightly behind schedule. According to the Worcester Business Journal, the contract between the city and the team stipulates the city must have the parcel of land together by April, and start demolition by June. Given two of the three properties have not yet agreed to city sale, the long and often fraught process of eminent domain is now pitted against a tight timeline to complete the project. The city hopes to have the ballpark built by 2021.

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