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# Worcester to sell former Lincoln Square Boys Club



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WORCESTER - WinnDevelopment Co. is moving forward with plans to acquire and historically renovate the former Lincoln Square Boys Club building, which has been vacant for roughly a decade.

The company said it has engaged in negotiations with Summit Academy, its board of directors and its executive director, Daniel Dimezza, to occupy the renovated building.

Summit Academy is considered a premier education and wellness provider in Worcester, serving the needs and developing opportunities for youth and young adults diagnosed with high-functioning autism.

The academy's move to the former Boys Club building, located at 16 Salisbury St., will enable it to expand its programming for middle and high school students and also begin a new chapter with programming for 24-hour support and on-site living/dorm-style living for college-bound young adults attending area colleges.

Summit Academy has already entered into agreements with colleges and universities for that unique service and support and is in conversations with many others, according to officials with WinnDevelopment and WinnCompanies.

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Under the terms of conveyance for the property, WinnDevelopment will pay \$300,000 for the property, which is owned by the city. That amount is based on a fair market appraisal of the property.

According to Gilbert Winn, chief executive officer of WinnCompanies, and Lawrence H. Curtis, president of WinnDevelopment, the company plans to close on the purchase of the property by December and begin its reconstruction during the first quarter of next year.

Summit Academy has requested delivery of the complete renovation and revitalization of the building by the summer of 2020.

“Much lies ahead for us over these next three to four months,” Mr. Winn and Mr. Curtis wrote in a letter to City Manager Edward M. Augustus Jr. “We are engaged with Cutler (Associates) of Worcester due to their industry specialty of design/build. They are working feverishly with their bench of consultants to identify all the challenges and solutions, to design/engineer, etc. - all to historic preservation standards.

“We expect these efforts, to include detailed structural reviews and corrective action plans, to be completed by mid- to late-November,” they added. “These scopes will then result in final lease terms and conditions - and lease execution - with our tenant, Summit Academy, by December 2018.”

The former Lincoln Square Boys Club building, which opened in 1930, was part of the former Worcester Vocational High School complex situated north of Lincoln Square. The building became vacant more than nine years ago when the city opened the new Worcester Technical High School near Green Hill Park.

Since then, the city has made several efforts to attract developers for the former vocational school building. In 2015, the city entered into an agreement with Winn that gave it exclusive developer status for the potential acquisition and redevelopment of the property.

Winn said the project calls for the historic renovation and revitalization of the former Boys Club building. The company credited the partnership it forged with the city, Summit Academy, Preservation Worcester and others for making it possible.

Preservation Worcester is a limited partner on the project and through the group's efforts and stewardship it has applied and secured Massachusetts Historic Tax credits worth millions of dollars to help underwrite the cost of the venture.

"We are very grateful to their board, their executive director, Deborah Packard, and PW staff for their willingness to take this task on," the company said.

Mr. Winn and Mr. Curtis said a professional review and analysis done of the property has found that the building's core and shell are "significantly compromised" and in dire need of permanent, correction actions. They said all those actions would be done to historic preservation standards.

The review found that the building's floor plates, stairwells, windows and accesses and egresses and grounds are configured and dimensioned in such a manner that is conducive to having only a single tenant.

They said those realities dramatically narrowed the company's potential tenants and users and caused the need for additional time and resources to find a niche occupant.

According to preliminary plans, about half of the building's 48,000 square feet of space would be used by Summit Academy for its middle and high school programming.

The other 24,000 square feet would be dedicated to living, learning and support services for the young adults attending area colleges and universities.

There will be about 42-45 dorm beds, along with resident assistants on each floor.

In their letter to Mr. Augustus, Mr. Winn and Mr. Curtis said they were grateful to Michael E. Traynor, the city's chief development officer, for his "hands on" approach to making this next step possible.

They said they were also grateful to Mark Fuller and the Fuller Foundation for his keen interest in the project, and for the tactical support they received from Timothy P. Murray, president and chief executive officer of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"With your support and constant engagement, we will, fingers crossed, save this beautiful, iconic building at Lincoln Square, revitalize it to historic preservation standards, maintain its educational and youth centered mission, allow an amazing not-for-profit to expand its mission and services, and reactivate this core of Lincoln Square," they wrote to Mr. Augustus.