



WORCESTER WINS PAWSOX WITH NEW STADIUM COMPLEX

City goes deep to woo PawSox with stadium complex, transform area with retail, residential

Jordan Graham Saturday, August 18, 2018



The Woo Sox are coming to New England’s second largest city in an economic grand slam that will include a 10,000-seat stadium, new apartments, two hotels, retail space and easy access to the big-league team via the Mass Pike.

The Red Sox and Worcester city officials announced the major league move yesterday, with the AAA affiliate set to jettison its home in Pawtucket by 2021.

“The addition of the Worcester Red Sox ballpark will bring thousands of people downtown every night,” said Candy Mero-Carlson, a Worcester city councilor who represents the neighborhood where the stadium will be built. “This plan takes existing, under-utilized parcels and will turn them into economic drivers.”

The deal came together after years of what started as a one-sided courtship, with the city continually pitching the idea.

“When he called three years ago to start this process with Tim Murray and Ed Augustus, I said no thank you, I said no thank you we are committed to Rhode Island,” said Larry Lucchino, chairman of the Pawtucket Red Sox. “You, nonetheless, persisted.”

Construction will begin on the city-owned ballpark large enough to fit 10,000 fans next year, officials said, and will be ready to open in 2021. The move comes after years of back and forth with Pawtucket and Rhode Island officials after the team said they could not longer stay in McCoy Stadium, their home since 1970. They will play the next two seasons at McCoy until construction is finished in Worcester.

The park, to be called Polar Park and sponsored by soda and seltzer maker Polar Beverages, will host at least 125 events each year, including



From left Mayor Joseph Petty, Chairman of the Pawtucket Red Sox Larry Luchino, Worcester City Manager Edward Augustus and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito hold a rendering of the ball park to be built to accommodate the Red Sox AAA team.



road races and concerts along with baseball games. The stadium will be the centerpiece of a larger redevelopment in the area that will include 225 apartments, two hotels and retail space.

Worcester officials said they will borrow the money to build the stadium, and repay the loans using the new taxes

from the area and roughly \$34 million in rent and equity from the club. City officials said the club will not receive any tax breaks. Worcester will lease the stadium to the team for 30 years.

Massachusetts will also contribute \$35 million over as long as three years to help fund the housing and a new 350-500 space parking garage.

“This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. I think everyone on the team recognized this was one not to let go,” said Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito. “For the residents who live in Worcester and this area, the new residents that will come and call Worcester home, this truly creates opportunity.”

Among those working on behalf of Worcester was Andrew Zimbalist, a professor at Smith College and a noted opponent of many taxpayer-funded stadium deals. But, he said, the overall impact the stadium and redevelopment will bring should make it worthwhile for Worcester.

“There’s all sorts of stuff in every deal, and usually a stadium by itself that has traditional financing, those deals don’t work out economically for cities,” he said. “A lot of things are different. This is not a stadium deal by itself, this is a development project that includes over \$90 million of private financing.”

