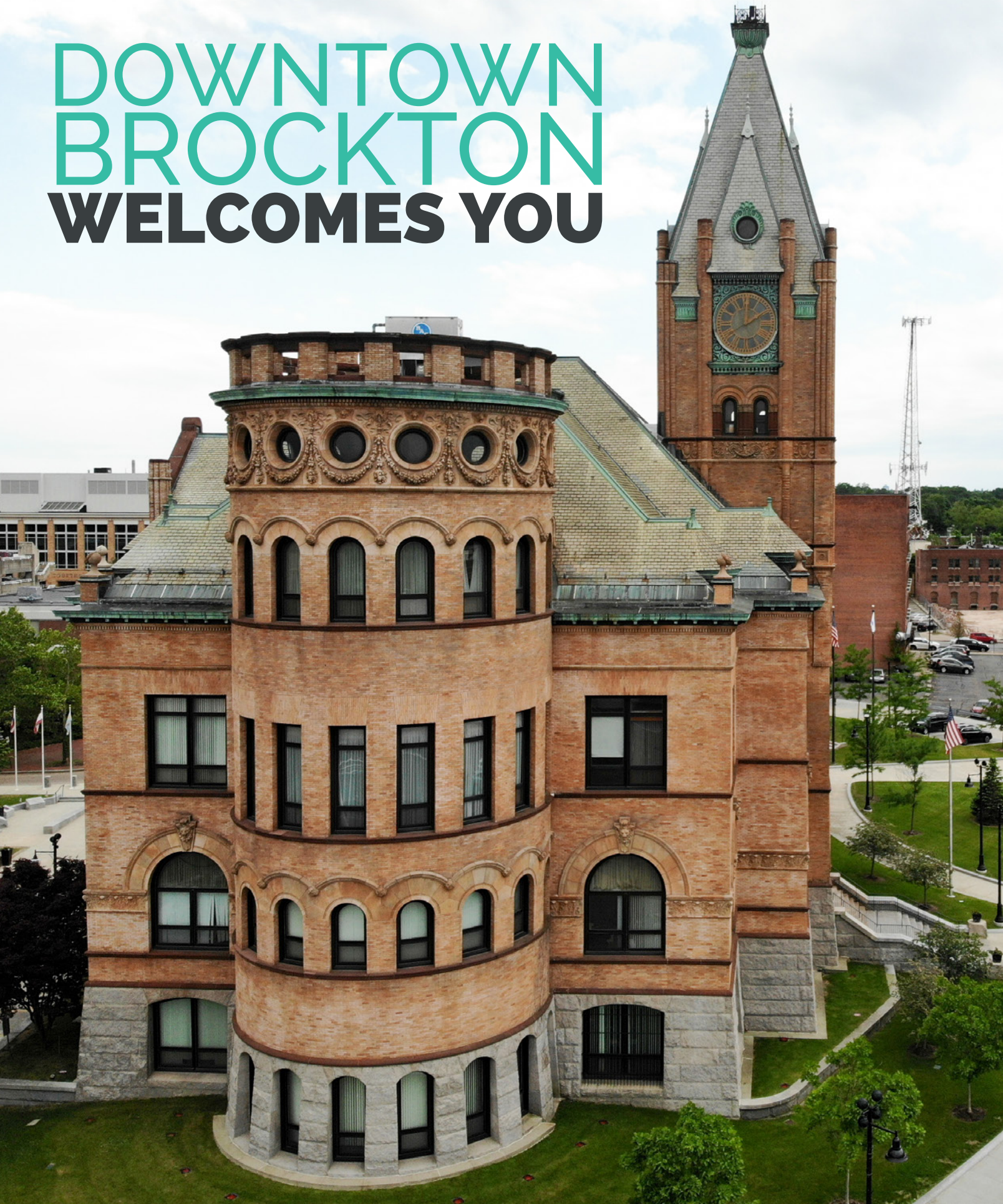


DOWNTOWN BROCKTON WELCOMES YOU



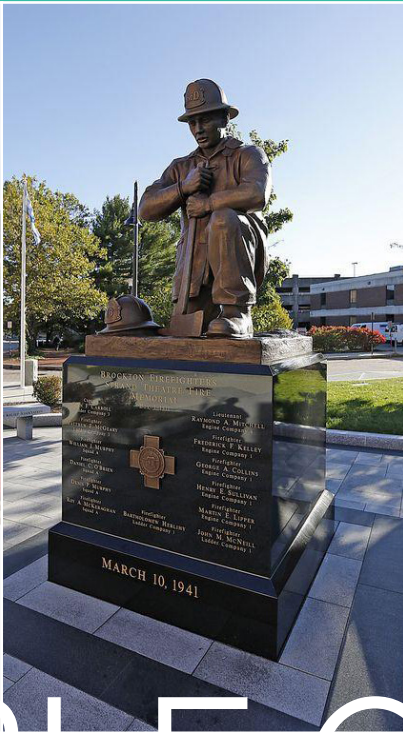


TABLE OF CONTENTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| I. Welcome to Brockton | IX. Keeping Brockton Healthy |
| II. A Conversation with Mayor Robert F. Sullivan | X. Keeping Brockton Healthy |
| III. Q&A with Rob May, Planning and Economic Development Director | XI. Arts & Education |
| IV. City Councilors Make Downtown a Priority | XII. City Hall |
| V. The Heart of the City | XIII. W.B. Mason: Brockton's Multi-Billion Dollar Home-Grown Business |
| VI. The Heart of the City | XIV. Bullish on Brockton: Ted Carman, President, Concord Square Planning & Development; and Brockton Executive Director Robert Jenkins |
| VII. Good Eatin' | XV. Looking to the Future |
| VIII. Good Eatin' | |

WELCOME TO BROCKTON

Welcome to a city built on shoe leather, where the old New England work ethic and 21st century innovation live side by side. Welcome to a city that gains its strength from social and economic diversity – a city where people from all over the world live, work, and play together, where small businesses and national companies are striving hand in hand to build a better future.

Brockton is a city with a rich sense of history and a bold sense of purpose, a city working toward a brighter tomorrow while honoring its storied past. Brockton is a place where art, athletics, and education are embraced and where opportunity is available to all. If you take advantage of everything this city has to offer, the possibilities are endless.

BROCKTON DOWNTOWN ACTION STRATEGY

“Our fundamental goal is to build a strong, diverse, attractive downtown that can reclaim its role as anchor of the city and the Metro South region.”

—The Department of Planning and Economic Development

The first step toward reaching that goal is the Brockton Downtown Action Strategy. Developed through public and private partnerships, residents and city officials worked together to craft the Action Strategy, the first phase in the Brockton Gateway Transformative Development Initiative (TDI).

By mapping out historical conditions, contemporary necessities, and dreams for the future, the plan identifies ways to attract new businesses, broaden the socioeconomic mix, and increase the vibrancy of downtown Brockton. Community

participation was critical both for creating new ideas and for incorporating the best concepts from previous revitalization efforts. More than 50 residents and business owners reviewed and contributed to the Brockton Downtown Strategy in September 2017, creating a vision that reflects our shared priorities.



CORE ACTION STRATEGIES

• Re-establishing the vibrancy of downtown

Community leaders are working hard to expand amenities to serve new and existing residents, employees, and visitors. A new pharmacy, a 414-space parking garage, and local maker space all opened in 2019. City Hall and the Brockton Redevelopment Authority have been negotiating the rehabilitation of existing buildings and construction of new ground-up, mixed-use, mixed-income residential buildings, all adding more residents and employees to enliven public spaces.

• Improve public safety

The new police bike and walking patrols put more officers on the street and within the realm of the general public. Advanced LED lighting has also provided better illumination for public spaces.

• Encourage downtown culture

The city is working with community partners like Brockton Arts at Enso Gallery, the Thomas P. Kennedy Public Library, Brockton Farmers Market, and Prova! to expand cultural offerings across downtown. Plans are underway to reinvent the former BAT Bus Terminal into Sycamore Grove, a public events space for music and special gatherings that support the burgeoning restaurant row between Joe Angelo's and the former Sweeney's (214 to 262 Main Street).

• Promote diversity of community

Brockton's existing diversity will play a key role in the success of downtown. Helping

ethnic restaurants, boutiques, and food stores to locate downtown would highlight the city's many communities and create new downtown destinations.

• Actively welcoming small-business entrepreneurs

The Brockton Redevelopment Authority has created a new \$1.5 million Downtown Restaurant Infrastructure Loan Fund to support restaurant expansion, while the city is now offering rent rebates to business owners to lease vacant retail and upper-floor office space. The city has also recently been designated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a new Vacant Storefront Initiative to provide refundable tax credits for tenants who make capital improvements to previously unoccupied retail space.

• Improve connectivity

Petronelli Way is now open to two-way traffic to improve access to the new Mayor Carpenter Garage. Additionally, construction will begin in the spring of 2020 on a new street to connect Petronelli Way to Court Street. Finally, the city has completed a new Downtown Traffic Study and Plan that will move toward two-way traffic on Main Street, Warren Avenue, and Belmont Street to improve circulation, pedestrian and bike safety, and business visibility.

• Upgrade infrastructure

The city has been working with National Grid to upgrade their underground electrical services throughout downtown. Also, the city is exploring the construction of a municipal fiber optic network to bring cutting-edge telecommunications services to the curb.

• Actively marketing downtown

Brockton is making news in the Boston real estate and business trade publications for recently completed deals, our work with Federal Opportunity Zones, and increasing housing stock. A recent request for qualifications issued by the Brockton Redevelopment Authority has drawn interest from both New England and national developers for downtown projects. We are actively working with the Brockton Partnership and its members to keep the good news flowing and developing new marketing strategies. Even this Downtown Welcome Guide is an example of how we are promoting downtown Brockton.

In addition to the Downtown Action Strategy, the city also created an Urban Renewal District and District Improvement Financing (DIF) program. “These three tools are critical for advancing downtown redevelopment. The Strategy provides the vision, Urban Renewal gives us the authority to execute our plan, and the DIF helps pay for it,” said Director of Planning and Economic Development Rob May. “This plan is a living, breathing document that is actively being implemented, as evidenced by the recent completion of the Mayor Carpenter Garage and the ongoing work by the Brockton Redevelopment Authority to revitalize key properties like 93 Centre Street and entice private investment.”

For more information on the Brockton Downtown Action Strategy, visit: www.brockton.ma.us

Postcard courtesy of Boston Public Library via DigitalCommonwealth.org

A CONVERSATION WITH MAYOR ROBERT F. SULLIVAN



Mayor Robert F. Sullivan, 50, served on the Brockton City Council as a Councilor-At-Large for fourteen years, including five times as the Council President, before being elected the City's 50th Mayor last fall. Entering his first term as the City's chief executive, the continued redevelopment and growth of downtown Brockton is a core element of his vision for the City as a whole.

"We are having a really wonderful renaissance here in Brockton," said Sullivan. "And when we look at Brockton as a whole, Downtown is the epicenter. It is a special place. Through the collective efforts of Governor Baker, Lieutenant Governor Polito, our State delegation, the City Council, and our Planning and Economic Development Department, the interest and commitment is outstanding. The infrastructure is in place and we just have to continue to look for additional investment and real estate developers to come to Brockton."

Sullivan said he will draw upon the partnerships he developed during his City Council tenure, and from his past work at the Massachusetts State House, as he seeks out the best development opportunities for downtown and

throughout the City.

"I am working on a daily basis with the people here in City Hall. We are charged to benefit the lives of people who live and work in the City of Brockton," said the Mayor. "We are working in conjunction with the Brockton Redevelopment Authority, the City Council, the School Committee, and Director of Planning and Economic Development Rob May. Together, we have been able to develop different creative ideas and initiatives that have greatly benefited the City and will continue to do so in the years ahead."

Over the course of the next five years, Sullivan anticipates a wider variety of businesses coming to downtown, both large and small, and his administration will work to facilitate the arrival of new employers and support existing businesses.

"What I envision in Brockton is a thriving economic community with investment to help our tax base and, ultimately, everyone who lives and works in Brockton," he said. "I know the days of shoe manufacturing have diminished, but now we have different manufacturing, particularly food manufacturing. Concord Foods off West Chestnut Street is known throughout the country;

Cindy's Kitchen on the City's south-side is another recognized food brand."

Among the tools at Brockton's disposal is Chapter 40R, the Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Act. "When we adopted Chapter 40R, it was a true catalyst for beneficial investment in downtown," the Mayor said. "For example, we have had the approximately \$30 million Trinity Financial investment. In addition, using the Tax Incremental Financing initiative has helped maintain our businesses and has brought new ones to the City. We cannot forget that W.B. Mason's world headquarters is located here and Crown Uniform & Linen and T.F. Kinnealy & Company relocated here."

"Maintaining existing locally owned businesses is also critical," the Mayor said, "because they have anchored downtown and been key factors in helping combat the 'stubborn economic challenges' that were identified in the Gateway Cities Compact for Community and Economic Development.

"We are starting to see the mom and pop stores staying here and flourishing," he said. "Vicente's Supermarket did a natural expansion over to the corner of Warren Avenue, an investment of approximately \$3 million. And

there was the Brockton Neighborhood Health Center annex in conjunction with Vicente's expansion. We also have significant investment through creative financing such as the historic tax credit and the Gateway Cities initiative."

One of the major draws for large employers is the 10 GB fiber optic line that runs to Brockton and offers significant advantages in speed and bandwidth to potential business partners that deal with large volumes of digital information.

"If we could find a data center to take advantage of that fiber optic off-ramp into the community, the asset is there," said Sullivan. "People could save significant amounts of money by bringing their back office operations – i.e. customer service, call centers – down here. Our property is less expensive than Back Bay or downtown Boston, and we still have a high-quality workforce in the same catchment area as those locations."

As such businesses locate in the City, employees will follow as they realize the

advantages Brockton has to offer.

"We are having a lot of people coming to Brockton," said the Mayor. "It is 35 minutes to South Station on the train. People – young professionals, especially – are realizing that to live in Brockton makes sense compared to prices in Boston, Quincy, and Braintree. Although the City is not a coastal community, but I would argue without question we have the number one asset, which is the wonderful people in the City of Brockton."

In order to encourage those workers to follow their employers into Brockton, Sullivan said City Hall will focus on enhancing public safety and continuing to improve education. "Open relationships and dialogue are going to bring us to the next level. We need to have a safer, more inclusive, and dynamic City leveraging the wonderful diverse population that live and work in the City of Champions. Through our collaborative efforts we will enact systemic changes to benefit all within our community."

Brockton already has many strong suits, noted the Mayor.

"One of the biggest things to me, as the dad of three kids, is the school system. Brockton High School is one of the public largest high schools east of the Mississippi River and is recognized nationwide. People tell me they're moving to Brockton because of our dynamic schools," he said. "Market-rate and affordable housing is a plus as well, with the added benefit that downtown residents can walk right to the Commuter Rail depot and ride into South Station.

"We want to figure out from a strategic planning standpoint what is going to attract businesses, but also offer amenities and services to our residents," said Sullivan.

He also supports the ongoing effort to turn downtown into an "18-hour neighborhood," where people spend time not only during work but before and after, as well. That means offering a variety of destinations, from coffee shops to nightclubs, from supermarkets to pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly routes. His office is working in conjunction with Robert Jenkins, Executive Director of the Brockton Redevelopment Authority, on a HUD loan guarantee that will incentivize property owners to lease space to sit-down restaurants.

"The sky's the limit on what we can do in our downtown. We want to have new music venues, restaurants with cultural aspects. The beauty and diversity in Brockton must be shown and amplified," said Sullivan. "There's a lot in the queue and right now we're brainstorming to maximize our potential and the offerings."

Among the City's greatest strengths is its incredibly diverse mix of ethnic backgrounds and cultures, noted the Mayor. His own paternal grandparents came to Brockton from Ireland to work in the factories, and his wife's great-grandparents came from Italy to do the same.

"Brockton has always been a City of immigrants. That is what makes Brockton so special and unique. Now we have a new wave of immigrants trying to better their lives and to provide for the next generation, their kids," he said. "The people and cultures are a recipe for a winning environment, and Brockton is going to flourish under my administration. It is going to be a City recognized within the Commonwealth as a friendly, all-encompassing, welcoming community that is going to be a fun place to live and a fun place to work.

"If you are not familiar with Brockton, I invite you to visit Brockton," Mayor Sullivan said. "It is the City of Champions and its people are truly the champions."

III Q&A

WITH ROB MAY, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

How are things in Brockton's historic city center?

Things are going great in downtown Brockton. There is a lot of interest from the development community as we continue to promote our transit-oriented development sites. The Brockton Redevelopment Authority is actively vetting proposals for new mixed-use and market-rate residential deals. As you walk around downtown, you can hear the hammering and see the cranes as the city changes around you.

The Governor also announced another MassWorks grant for the City to streetscape and reconstruct Petronelli Way for two-way traffic and to construct a new road to connect Petronelli Way to Court Street. This is one of the first of projects we'll be working on to improve circulation downtown.

Update us on the projects started in 2019.

The new Mayor Bill Carpenter Garage was dedicated and a large mural was introduced to the community. Brockton Pharmacy opened its doors at 90 Main Street; this marks the first large retail tenant to locate downtown since our redevelopment efforts started. Construction is nearing completion at 47 W. Elm Street, which is the first from-the-ground-up market-rate residential development in decades. Demolition began at 226 Main Street as the old

Ganley Building makes way for a new, three-story state office building with a Massasoit Community College presence on the first floor. Boston Chicken opened at 95 Montello Street offering a wide selection of menu items. Brockton Arts took over management of the Enso Flats Gallery and is now hosting exhibitions of local artists and the Milton Art Museum will be relocating its collection to the space next door.

What's on tap for downtown Brockton in 2020?

The City is wrapping up the Downtown Transportation Study as we consider returning to two-way traffic on Main Street, Warren Avenue, and Belmont Street. Construction is scheduled to commence this year on the Anglum Building at 93 Centre Street. The historic rehabilitation of this nine-story former shoe factory will see its conversion to 55 new residential units. Sycamore on Main should be erected and enclosed before the winter weather sets in; this mixed-use building at 121 Main Street will include 45 units and 3,000 square feet of retail/restaurant space. And the Brockton Redevelopment Authority has inked a deal with a local developer to rehab 19 Main Street, the historic First Parish Building, for 21 residential units and ground floor commercial space.



What are downtown's strengths right now, and what is the city working to improve?

Our top selling point is that downtown is 35 minutes by train to South Station and all the high-wage jobs in Dewey Square and the Seaport District. A close runner-up is that Brockton continues to be a great housing value, and as we continue to add residential units the City offers more and more options to both our current residents and those who want to join our community.

Talk about downtown's and Brockton's potential.

Through our planning efforts and the Downtown Action Strategy and Urban Renewal Revitalization Action Plan, we've identified several sites we think we have potential for redevelopment. Some are vacant parking lots, some are underused buildings or uses that haven't achieved the full potential of those sites. We're collaborating with the Brockton Redevelopment Authority to work with existing property owners or to find new teams to develop these sites for residential, commercial, and mixed uses.

What does the business community need to know about downtown?

There has been a lot of investment down here already, close to \$150 million, and downtown Brockton is on the upswing. This is not only a great place to make an investment but it's a good place to open your new business, a good place to live. As we create this walkable, transit-oriented downtown, we really are recreating the historic fabric of the city and creating a neighborhood that provides housing, retail, dining, and employment opportunities.

When you have free time in the city, where do you like to spend it?

I like to spend time in my own backyard: I raise chickens and garden. Brockton allows us to have the experience of living in a city but still having space that we can do those kinds of things. Another activity I like to do is go to the Fuller Craft Museum on Oak Street; it is a nationally known and well-regarded museum of contemporary craft where they're constantly changing exhibitions and holding other events that bring people in from all over New England. There's lots of other events in Brockton, but there's also a great region around us, from Plymouth to Boston to Providence. I can get to all of these places in about an hour.

TV.

CITY COUNCILORS MAKE DOWNTOWN A PRIORITY

Midway into his sixth term, Councilor Thomas Monahan said downtown Brockton has remained a priority for him since he joined the City Council 10 years ago.

"I wanted to see downtown come back to what it was when I grew up: Active, foot traffic, vibrant," said the lifelong Brocktonian, whose family has been here since 1850. "I really see it starting to develop and I think it's going to be a vibrant place."

While there's still a way to go, Monahan is pleased with the uptick in investment downtown, especially the development of market-rate apartments and the completion of the Mayor Bill Carpenter Parking Garage.

"We've had people with disposable income moving into the downtown area," he said. "We have a development on West Elm Street with market-rate luxury apartments. We have 19 Main Street that's going to be developed into commercial and market-rate apartments. You can see that there's money to be spent downtown, so we want to bring up businesses down there."

Downtown Brockton has solid

assets to draw upon, Monahan said. Its existing building stock, for one, and the proximity of the Commuter Rail station to the city's center.

"People can come in from Boston, get an apartment, hop on a train – it's huge," he said.

Returning two-way traffic to streets like Main, Belmont, and Warren is also key, he said.

"We need a whole plan for that, to make it easier to get around town and more attractive to businesses," he said. "A nice traffic flow will be good to have down here. The parking garage was huge because it was holding back some people who wanted to come in, like restaurants. This is right downtown, a lot of parking."

"We throw a lot of ideas around with the developers who come in," Monahan said. "I really think we're on the verge of getting there."

Another indispensable asset is Brockton's great diversity, something that dates back to the city's earliest days.

"We are so diverse, you're seeing the cultures merging together," Monahan said. "I'm half Italian and half Irish. The Italians, the Irish, the Poles all came in early. Now we're seeing a transition to

Cape Verdeans, Haitians, Hispanics. They're feeling that it's their hometown now, and it's bringing everyone together."

Another Brockton native who is raising his family here, Councilor Jeffrey Thompson agrees that the city's core needs to be a place where people want to spend time, whether for working or playing or living.

"We're looking for a vibrant downtown," he said. "One in which residents of Brockton can come to have dinner and have entertainment, whether watching a game in a bar or listening to a concert in a green space."

The foundations for all this are there, he added, whether physical or cultural.

"We have some good areas for great spaces downtown. Restaurant-wise, something that's American fusion that blends in the different cultures of our city – Cape Verdean, Haitian, and so on," said Thompson.

The next step is to help developers

and entrepreneurs to take advantage of what's there.

"We need some areas downtown where a band can have a concert, food trucks can set up, people can congregate in a safe, upbeat area that is centrally located to the garages and where they can sit and enjoy themselves," he said.

Thompson recognizes that one of the things that's still needed in downtown is population density, which is why the current and planned residential construction is so vital to attracting commercial development.

"Brockton has a beautiful history as a shoe city, a sports city, and we can definitely market that and the historical nature of the architecture," said Thompson. "Across from City Hall is the building where Thomas Edison built the city's first electric generator. The Pleasant Street Fire Station has a light bulb that was changed by Edison and has not been touched since."

The 35-minute Commuter Rail trip into South Station is "almost invaluable to the city," according to Thompson, and everything possible should be done

to promote the proximity to Boston. "We should be trading on that issue," he said, along with the city's location at the terminus of a 110 GB fiber optic cable.

"We're about four to five years in to a 20-year plan," said Thompson. "We're on the move. We need a little patience and the involvement of the citizens."

"I think we are a city on the rise," he said. "We have great people in the city. I want people to remain in Brockton when they seek food and drink and culture. I don't want them to have to go to Boston when they want it."





THE HEART OF THE CITY

BROCKTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Founded in North Bridgewater with a collection of 600 books in 1867, the Brockton Public Library today is a temple of learning in downtown Brockton. Its 1913 building was built with a donation from industrialist Andrew Carnegie, secured by Brockton Mayor William H. Clifford in 1910, and is built of brick, limestone, marble, and oak. Awash in natural light, adorned with a mural commissioned by Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration, and updated in a 2003 renovation, the Main Library offers a vast array of services to the downtown community, including a MakerSpace for creative projects.

For more information visit: www.brocktonpubliclibrary.org.

BROCKTON TRIAL COURT

Housing 13 courtrooms and covering more than 140,000 square feet, the Brockton Trial Court building is a hub of local and regional legal activities. Home to district and housing courts as well as juvenile, probate, and family courts, this \$41 million capital improvement project was completed in 1999.

For more information, visit www.mass.gov/locations/brockton-district-court

BROCKTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

From early childhood programs to K-12 to adult learning centers, Brockton Public Schools serves more than 16,000 students. And with more than 50 languages spoken across its campuses, Brockton's schools find strength in diversity. The school system strives to create dynamic academic environments, coupled with a vigorous and exciting athletic program, to give the next generation every opportunity to succeed.

For more information, including the latest events and updates, visit: www.brocktonpublicschools.org.



VT THE HEART OF THE CITY



MERIAN BROTHERS

For seven decades and three generations, the Merian family has been dressing people for their most special occasions from locations in downtown Brockton, beginning with Alyce Reizian's Bridal Shop and continuing today with Merian Brothers formal wear on Main Street.

"My mother [Alyce] and grandmother started the bridal shop in 1951," recounted John Merian. "My brother Paul and I both grew up downtown. We love downtown."

That love affair started after their grandparents had emigrated from Greece and Armenia and found work in the shoe and textile industries in Brockton. Once the bridal shop was established and successful, Merian said the family sought other opportunities in the city center. They purchased their current building at 137 Main St. in 1979 and renovated it into the largest bridal store east of the Mississippi River, a lavish destination with a white marble façade and a garden setting.

"They really wanted to make a statement," he said. "And I guess that's why my brother and I took the role on – we really felt that's what we want, we feel comfortable and at home here."

Now specializing in menswear, Merian Brothers remains bullish on downtown and the ongoing revitalization of downtown.

"We belonged in Brockton and wanted to commit to the city's resurgence," Merian said.

For more information, visit www.merianbrothers.com.

VICENTE'S SUPERMARKET

What began as a humble convenience store opened by Manuel Vicente in 1994 has grown into a vibrant downtown supermarket and a family-owned business committed to its neighborhood.

Managed by Manuel Vicente's son Jason Barbosa, Vicente's Supermarket opened its Pleasant Street location in 2015.

"It used to be a supermarket that was

vacant for 30 years," Barbosa said. "We knew we would be a perfect fit because we knew we represent the community and it would support us."

Before the store opened, the area had been categorized as a "food desert" by the federal government because of lack of options to find fresh, healthy foods. Now residents not only have access to fresh produce and other groceries, but Vicente's partnered with Brockton Neighborhood Health Clinic to open a location next to the store, with services that include joint programming around healthy eating.

Barbosa is a staunch believer in downtown Brockton and knows what he'd tell anyone considering bringing their business there.

"I'd say it's an untapped location," he said. "It's convenient, it's dense, it's in the heart of the city."

For more information, visit www.vicentessupermarket.com.

IRVING'S HOME CENTER

Located at Main and Court streets, Irving's Home Center has been a fixture of downtown Brockton for decades, the place to go whether your home improvement project is as small as a new faucet or as large as building an addition.

"The biggest plus, I think, that's kept us here for 40-plus

years is the access to our location from all parts of the city, and even branching out to towns like Easton and Stoughton and other towns that touch Brockton," said Michelle Sena. "Also, we take up the whole corner, so we're very visible."

In addition to managing the office at Irving's, Michelle Sena is part of the owning family – her father-in-law Richard bought the business in 1974, and her husband David is a co-owner. The store was actually across the intersection at the time the Senas bought it, but when it came time to grow their business, instead of relocating elsewhere they opted to stay put in downtown.

"Because we're in the center of town, we get all types of people," she said, noting their customers range from homeowners to landlords to contractors. "We get to know our community and get to be a good corporate neighbor."

For more information, visit www.irvingshomecenter.com.



VIII GOOD EATIN'



■ JJ'S CAFFE

610 N. Main St.

Chef Justino "J.J." Fernandez first came to this country from his native Cape Verde as a 23-year-old in 1978, settled in Brockton in 1982, and worked his way from a hotel dishwasher to executive chef of the Boston Park Plaza Hotel. Today he'll serve you an amazing Cape Verdean-influenced dishes right here in Brockton.

Take his shrimp cakes benedict: The fresh taste of the sea is prominent but doesn't overwhelm the gentle hollandaise or the perfectly poached egg. His salmon and snapper are always seasoned the way he learned growing up in the Caribbean. And there are stew-based dishes that harken back to the long-simmering pots where a little bit of everything was tossed in.

You might have to wait for a table at JJ's – they don't accept reservations or offer takeout – but you won't be alone; they've seated more than 100,000 diners over the past six years. The menu is a single page of his customers' seasonal favorites, augmented by two or three specials that rotate based upon what ingredients he is getting in and what Fernandez is feeling inspired to cook.

"When people come in here and tell you how they feel about the food, when they thank you," he says, "that makes me happy."

■ SUPREME HOUSE OF PIZZA

376 Centre Street

Sometimes you need a real sub. One where they toast the entire roll in a pizza oven, to give it a crunchy texture that makes every bite extra-satisfying. The Italian sausage is hearty and the red sauce has that unmistakable homemade taste. Throw on cheese and whatever toppings you care to add and you've got a serious nosh. Cash only!

■ THAI FOOD THEORY

104 Torrey Street

Start with the tum yum soup, vegetables in a soothing coconut broth that yet carries a spicy tingle. The Thai rolls are beautifully crisp and golden, filled with a flavorful mélange of chicken, black mushrooms, taro, and more. But it's the main courses that will leave you swooning. The panang curry is notably spicy – the chile oils used in Thai cooking are exceptionally efficient at delivering heat all around your mouth without searing any one part of it – and is packed with vegetables, including zucchini, carrot, peppers, beans, and baby corn. It is a dish that encourages eating slowly, because every element is worth savoring.



■ FLAVA JAMAICA

21 Torrey Street

Tucked into a small space with fewer than a dozen tables, Flava Jamaica is low-key at first glance. But the aromas coming from the big, open kitchen will fire your stomach's imagination, as will the menu filled with Caribbean dishes. You can have ackee and saltfish, the Jamaican national dish featuring the national fruit (ackee, brought to the island from western Africa by Captain William Bligh) and salted cod. The curried goat is tender and flavorful with a just-spicy-enough sauce. Or try the jerk pork, or fish tea, or manish water, or chicken feet, or... well, just go ahead and try everything.

■ ELVERA'S CAFÉ

132 Main Street

The sign on the wall proclaims, "My blood type is coffee" and the menu proposes to fill you with caffeine and whatever else you need to get you going in the morning. Each element of the bacon, egg, and cheese sandwich comes out of the kitchen perfectly: Soft and warm eggs, properly melted cheese, crispy bacon, and a flaky croissant. Lunch more your thing? Soups and salads, quiches and (feeling decadent?) carrot cake and other pastries await you. And, of course, caffeine in all its forms, from straight-up java, to espressos and chais, to featured blends like a toasted almond mocha.



VIII GOOD EATIN'



STONEBRIDGE CAFÉ 1285 Belmont Street

Step into Stonebridge late on a Saturday morning and you'll find the breakfast rush is still hopping, with a crowd waiting for seats, people coming and going with takeout, and lively conversation everywhere. These are all the best possible signs for a breakfast place because they mean it's where people want to be for their eggs or pancakes or hash or what-have-you. And speaking of, we'll have the Stonebridge Skillet, which offers up a bunch of everything – eggs, meats, vegetables, potatoes – in quantities to challenge the most dedicated breakfaster.

McMENAMY SEAFOOD 810 Belmont Street

It looks the part of a Massachusetts family seafood place: Weathered and worn, like it's been there for generations. The shrimp roll has so much shrimp, they don't even bother putting them in the roll and instead just pile 'em atop the fries. They are beautiful, perfectly battered, crispy, and firm; you don't need to be told they were caught fresh that very day. But if that still isn't fresh enough for you, there are tanks of live crabs and lobsters waiting for you to take them home.

TOMMY DOYLE'S AT SIDELINES 235 E. Ashland Street

Classic Brockton and a classic pub rolled into one, Tommy Doyle's is both hospitable and homey. The menu carries on this fine balance with homemade cod cakes, lobster casserole, and baked scallops proving its New England bona fides. Try the baked haddock, served up in a white wine and butter sauce that will make your tastebuds dance (and your cardiologist blanch). Of course, if you want a steak or a burger or meatloaf, they're not going to let you down – this is a real pub, after all, and they have all the pub standards nailed down. Throw in live bands on the weekends and you've got a destination for every day of the week.



TUTTO BENE 1050 Pearl Street

Like many good Italian adventures, this one starts with cheese: As a young law student, Tutto Bene founder Benjamin Albanese worked in a cheese shop. From there he went on to practice law, as well as ravioli-making, and eventually he branched out into other pastas and, finally, an Italian restaurant in his hometown that draws equally upon traditions of home cooking and fine dining.

Back to that ravioli: These little pockets of goodness are perfectly tender and filled nigh to bursting with

any number of delicious, seasonal contents: cheese, lobster, meats, spinach – the butternut ravioli are particularly delectable, creamy soft inside with a rich flavor and subtle seasonings. You can even get them frozen to take home and cook yourself.

Seafood is also prominent on the menu, and Aulanese gets it fresh from the pier. Likewise, their fresh fruits and vegetables come from a local producer and they source meat from local butchers.

Tutto Bene is Italian for “it's all good” and that's what Albanese wants to deliver: Perfect plates of traditional

Italian food, made from scratch and made to order for every single guest.

LISA'S SWEET TOOTH 245 Main Street

Tucked away in a narrow little shop on the corner of Main and Belmont, this micro bakery turns out treats with macro flavors. Portuguese-style truffles packed with chocolate richness. Tiny little éclairs that are full of flavor. Red velvet drops or crispy, many-layered palmiers. Definitely file Lisa's under “good things come from small storefronts.”

IX KEEPING BROCKTON HEALTHY

BROCKTON PHARMACY

Pharmacist Fred Alamba grew up in Brockton, and when it came time to start his own business the decision to locate it downtown was the natural one, with the amount of foot traffic, new apartments under construction, and the proximity to the Brockton Neighborhood Health Center.

“I’ve lived here my entire life,” says Alamba. “It just made sense to me. It was the best decision for me.”

The city also helped make the decision easy with a smooth permitting process and quick answers to his questions, and programs like the Downtown Redevelopment Authority’s reimbursement for his signage expenses. The Downtown Action Strategy plan also informed his decision.

“I saw the plan and thought this was something I want to be part of,” he says. “That was definitely a factor.”

Now he’s building relationships with his customers and looking toward the future. With ongoing redevelopment of commercial space and an emphasis on bringing people to the city’s center, Alamba said he felt this was the place to grow his business and have an impact on his community.

For more information, visit brocktonpharmacy.com.

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

When he arrived five years ago to head up the Boys & Girls Club in Brockton, president and CEO Derek Heim saw tremendous potential. Today, after merging with the neighboring Taunton club in 2019 to become the Boys & Girls Club of Metro South, he’s seen a lot of that potential realized – but even more on the horizon.

“We serve a little over 5,000 kids annually, four to five hundred a day at our two buildings,” says Heim. “But our biggest challenge as an organization is that we are physically out of space. We have a waitlist for kids to get in ... over 300.”

With a history of strong partnership with the city and a foundation of public support, Heim sees 2020 as a year of growth for the club. There are plans to raise capital for a new building downtown to house programs for younger kids, with the existing building being dedicated to its teen programming. In the meantime, the club will continue to focus on the mission it’s carried out in Brockton since 1990.

“We pride ourselves for a staff well-equipped to help kids who walk through our doors with the challenges of the city,” Heim says. “We’re thrilled to be a player in Brockton and part of a renaissance in Brockton. We’re seeing change... it’s an exciting time for us to be part of that, walking alongside the city.”

For more information, visit www.bgcmetrosouth.org.



OLD COLONY YMCA

With a charter that dates to the YMCA of North Bridgewater in 1887, downtown Brockton’s Old Colony Y has deep roots in the city and beyond.

“Our Y has grown as a result of mergers with smaller Ys and entities,” says Vincent Marturano, the president of Old Colony Y. “Today we’re a family of Ys serving a good hunk of Plymouth and Bristol counties.”

Overseeing dozens of locations and programs throughout the region, the Y serves about 140,000 people a year, from infants to nonagenarians, says Marturano, who’s been with the organization 37 years. Of those, 75,000 are paid members, and three-quarters are below the age of 18.

“We’re very focused on youth,” he says. “Our community commitment is no one is turned away for the inability to pay.”

According to Marturano, the Old Colony Y sees anywhere from 8,000 to 10,000 member visits per month to its downtown location, people who come for its fitness facilities, programs, and child care. “This YMCA is an absolute gem of health and fitness,” he says.

It has also grown along with downtown. When he arrived in 1992, Marturano says the Y was “about the sole thing remaining.” Today, he says, the reinvestment by the city and private sector has revitalized the neighborhood, and the Y’s continued commitment has made it an essential part of the mix.

“We’re in the communities,” he says. “The community center, the programs – the Y brings it to them every day.”

For more information, visit www.oldcoloniymca.org.



KEEPING BROCKTON HEALTHY

BROCKTON FARMERS MARKET

The Brockton Farmer's Market will kick off its 10th year the week after the Fourth of July holiday – provided the early growing season has cooperated, said market manager Jon Van Kuiken – and run through the end of October.

“Overall last year we had seven vendors selling produce and one beekeeper selling honey,” Van Kuiken said. “We’d been trying for five years to get a beekeeper. Another vendor recommended he try our market and he was so happy, he’s coming back again.”

Open to any growers in New England, most of the participating vendors are relatively local to Brockton. They include not only farmers selling produce, but Brockton-based Jordan Brothers Seafood taking orders for fish, and Sarah’s Tasty Treats, a vegan and gluten-free bakery. There was also a vendor selling handmade soap, and someone selling hot food.

Located at City Hall Plaza, the market is open every Friday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. during its season. In addition to providing space, the city also helps with the entertainment budget. Another major sponsor is Good Samaritan Medical Center, which gives farmers market vouchers to the Neighborhood Health Center to pass out to their clients to promote healthy eating. The vendors also accept WIC and senior vouchers.

The market offers a tent for

community organizations and nonprofits that offer services to people in Brockton, Van Kuiken said, and they coordinate with summer food service programs so kids can come and have lunch and participate in activities.

Van Kuiken said the market is always interested in hearing from farmers, vendors, and community organizations that would like to join them.

For more information, visit www.brocktonfarmersmarket.com.

NAACP CULTURAL CROPS GARDEN

Founded by the Brockton Area Branch NAACP with funding from the Brockton Cultural Council, the Cultural Crops Garden is located on Goddard Road behind Champion High School. It has 13 raised planting beds, each with a different crop in it and interpretive signage that explains the cultural origins of the food being grown and how it’s often used for cooking.

But it’s more than just a garden, said branch treasurer Pat Monteith. It’s a permanent project that is part of the NAACP’s efforts to unite the community and celebrate its cultural heritages.

The site is maintained by a combination of students and nearby residents.

“There’s two teachers working with a group of about a dozen students who help to do weeding and watering and



things,” said Monteith. “There’s a city housing complex across the street and several residents come across and help maintain the garden when the students are out of school.”

From the start, Monteith said, people from across the community were eager to take part in the project, from the mayor’s office to local colleges to the garden club and the schools. The food grown there goes to a number of different places, she said.

“We hope to sell some of it at the farmers market to raise money to put back into the project,” said Monteith. “And we end up giving a lot of it to students and people who put it together. And we have an annual harvest celebration where a lot of people come from the whole community, and we allow people to take the food home to do some cooking.”

For more information, visit naacp-brocktonbranch.org.

ARTS & EDUCATION



PROVA!

When life gives you empty buildings and vacant lots, why not put them to good use? Like a pop-up food festival, an arts event, or a big party for the people in downtown Brockton.

“Prova’ means ‘proof,’ and we are hoping to prove to developers what is possible in downtown Brockton,” says

Emily Hall, president and director of PROVA!, the city’s nonprofit community space initiative. “We want to prove to developers that a restaurant can come and be successful, that the community can have a safe, comfortable space.”

The inaugural PROVA! pop-up was held in July 2018, and through its first two seasons the city saw around 50 nights of activity, says Hall. And the proof of the concept was in the turnout: Attendance ran between 100 and 150 people per night, with between 75 and 100 present at any given time. The city has the third season lined up for this year, she says, and is planning to up the ante again.

“We’ve done a lot of music events but we’re working to make it more about the arts in general,” says Hall. “The ideas come partially from the community—our Facebook page is very active, we put out an application for vendors to apply. We’re always going to be looking to increase and diversify the culture and arts and entertainment.”

The city is always glad to hear from property owners who have a space they can use, and feels like PROVA! is a testament to what Brockton is made of. And most of all, it’s to showcase the potential of these downtown sites and encourage developers and businesses to find new uses for them – even if that means that, one day, there aren’t any empty lots or vacant buildings for Hall to temporarily repurpose.

“PROVA’s goal is to put itself out of business,” she says.



THE GALLERY AT ENSO FLATS

The best gallery space in town, according to Arnie Danileson, is the Gallery at Enso Flats. And given that he and his wife founded Brockton Arts and have headed up major fundraisers in the city, he’s in a position to know.

Originally set aside for resident artists, today the gallery – which is managed by Daneilson – is open to anyone in the city.

“It’s a different kind of space, but we use the space to grow the arts,” he says. “We have given endless people permission to come out and play and show off in public.”

The purpose of the city’s arts initiative, as embodied in the Gallery at Enso Flats as well as the display at the BAT station, is that he will stage a show, bring in art and hang it, and turn those private spaces into an interface with the public they serve.

A multi-functional space located near the commuter rail station, the gallery also hosts events and educational endeavors. It wrapped up 2019 with an exhibit by Haitian-born Brockton painter Youveline Joseph. And Danielson understands that the gallery will serve as an introduction to the arts for many people who aren’t used to seeing original works hanging in such profusion. He hopes they find it illuminating.

“The art is sacred,” says Danileson, “and everyone knows it.”

For current exhibits and classes visit www.ensogallery.org.

BROCKTON ARTS

When you distill Lucia Cerci’s philosophy for the Brockton Arts program to its essence, it is as simple as it is sensible: “We give them a place to play.”

Operating out of the Stacy Adams Cultural Arts Building at 33 Dover Street, Brockton Arts offers space, classes, and programs to meet a broad spectrum of artistic wants and needs to the city’s people: Art classes, poetry workshops, spoken word events, music, readings, studios, and display space through its headquarters at Gallery 33. And Cerci says that’s crucial for a city like Brockton.

“It’s important because such a diverse group, such a large, creative community, needs a space like this,” she says. “We can provide space, equipment, materials, and connect people. If we don’t have it, we can help find someone who does.”

Founded a decade ago by Arnie Danielson and his wife, Cerci says Brockton Arts “bootstrapped itself” into existence and is now ready to level up. It’s stepping up fundraising efforts and partnering with other organization, like the Haitian Artists Assembly of Massachusetts, which teaches youth how to express themselves through the arts. Cerci is excited to have connected with Brockton’s krumping community, practitioners of a highly aggressive, energetic style of dance. And she hopes to revive the poetry slams Brockton Arts used to host.

“We’re doing well, but we want to create more programs,” she says. “We

want to bring more gallery space to non-artists – the most important thing we offer to the community is a place to go. We’re helping make Brockton a destination place.”

For more information visit www.brocktonarts.org.



PUBLIC ART

Salana Powers is a Brockton native and an artist whose medium is usually the human body: She currently works for Tiger Shark Tattoo in Abington. But when a friend sent her information about the contest to design art for the new downtown parking garage scrim, Powers decided give it a shot.

It was a good call: Her design with lettering by her coworker Andy Vicente, titled “City of Brockton,” was chosen as the winner.

“It probably took 20 to 30 hours to finish the whole piece,” says Powers. “It was kind of a progressive design – we sat down, worked together, bounced ideas back and forth.”

Her final design drew upon concepts that spoke to her of Brockton: City Hall, a boxing glove, paintbrushes, a spade, a microphone, a scroll, and the American

Sign Language hand sign for love.

“I wanted to diversify it as much as I could,” she says of the array of images. “I like representing all people.”

And she wanted to let the viewers interpret the meanings for themselves. The spade, for instance, could represent gardening but also the ongoing construction downtown. The scroll could be a diploma, or a certificate from a work program, or something else entirely. The boxing glove can represent the city’s heritage in the sport or athletics in a broader sense, just as the microphone and paint brushes could reference the high school’s arts program or creative endeavors as a whole.

And love, well ... that’s for love, be it of the city or of the people in your life.

“I don’t know how to describe the feeling, to be honest,” Powers says of having her design selected. “Seeing my art this big and this public is a new experience, but the fact it’s in downtown Brockton kind of feels full circle. It feels really nice.”

FULLER CRAFT MUSEUM

This museum celebrates the craft of functional art, from colonial-era tools and quilts to contemporary DIY culture, photography, and painting. The Fuller engages a broad spectrum of the arts community with events and exhibitions on topics like “craftivism” and the Brockton Youth Creates Biennial.

Fuller Craft Museum is also involved in Downtown Brockton’s beautification and outreach initiatives.

For current exhibits, events, and more, visit: www.fullercraft.org

STACY ADAMS CULTURAL ARTS BUILDING

These fully modernized artist studios and event spaces are home to a broad range of visual and performing artists, small businesses, and creative enterprises, from dance classes and music events to the annual Downtown Brockton Arts & Music Festival.

BRIDGWATER STATE UNIVERSITY

With its main campus just outside of Brockton, each year Bridgewater State University is an important partner with the city. Every seventh grader in Brockton Public Schools attends BSU’s Watershed Access Lab, and the K-12 students have access to STEM programs in partnership with BSU, such as the CityLab, EarthView, Engage in Math, Green Lab, the Observatory, and the Math Kangaroo Olympiad.

Educators in Brockton Schools also benefit from the work of Bridgewater State University. In addition to ongoing professional development, the future teachers studying at Bridgewater work with the instructors and students at

the Gilmore School as part of a long and fruitful partnership between those institutions.

The city also benefits from the interns BSU provides in many departments. Its criminal justice program students have worked in area law enforcement agencies; its social work department engages with area hospitals and community agencies like Old Colony Elder Services. And the university’s community service department engages its students in various nonprofit organizations around Brockton.

The partnership between Brockton and Bridgewater continues to grow, most recently with the BSU@BHS initiative, where an office has been established at Brockton High School so Bridgewater State University staff members can serve as a resource to students and teachers there.

With 2,500 students graduating from its undergraduate and graduate programs every year, Bridgewater State University is a major resource for the city and people of Brockton.

For more information, visit www.bridgew.edu.

MASSASOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

With campuses in Brockton, Canton, and Middleborough, this community college follows a decades-long mission of low-tuition, state-supported education. It also offers the STEM starter academy for graduating high schools seniors looking to study the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

For more information, visit www.massasoit.edu

STONEHILL COLLEGE

This stately Catholic college is based in nearby North Easton. An accredited institution, it houses most students on campus and offers a wide array of classes in the sciences, business administration, and liberal arts. Students are also eligible for study abroad opportunities and internships. Many Stonehill graduates pursue advanced or professional degrees.

For more information, visit www.stonehill.edu.



CITY HALL

Bob Martin may have retired from the City of Brockton more than a decade ago, but he just can’t keep away from City Hall. “I love history of all sorts and treasure the fact we have such a unique City Hall,” says Martin, who held the position of the city’s human services director (among other roles) and is now the official unofficial City Hall historian and tour guide.

Designed by local architect Wesley Lyng Minor and constructed between 1892 and 1894, having a Brockton City Hall was not a universally embraced idea at first. In fact, says Martin, “The wonder of City Hall is that it was ever even built.” In the late 1800s, he explains, there was a strong socialistic, anti-government feeling in Brockton. The city had to hold several referendums before the public could be convinced to go forward with the plan. The cost to construct the building was \$350,000 ... but the city had overlooked the fact they also owed Minor for his work.

“They forgot to add on the fees for the architect, \$18,000,” Martin says. “The complete cost of the building was \$368,000, a huge cost back then.”

Built at a time when Brockton was and industrial powerhouse, City Hall was intended to be a monument to prosperity. Drawing on Romanesque and Baroque architectural styles with Victorian themes, Minor designed a building that’s 148 feet tall at its peak, with a crow’s nest that was



once used to watch for fires around the city. In fact, says Martin, on a clear day you could see all the way to West Wareham from the crow’s nest, and the view from the clock tower is also spectacular.

But the views from the inside are likely the ones that will stick with you, Martin insists. Foremost among these: The embellishments of the Hall of Flags, and the gallery of paintings that were created specifically for City Hall.

The paintings by Richard Holland and Mortimer Lamb depict images from the Civil War, which was still fresh in the memory when City Hall was built. Their subjects range from depictions of the goddesses War and Peace, to the 12th Regiment of the Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry—led by Col. Fletcher Webster who was from the Brockton area—at Antietam, to a cavalry charge where one rifleman seems to be taking aim at you wherever you stand in the room.

“The 24-karat gold-plated papier-mache in the Hall of Flags... you don’t

find that stuff anymore,” he adds. “And the \$368,000 accumulated cost [of City Hall] was huge back then, but the value of one of the paintings is double that, when we had it appraised a few years ago.”

Brockton City Hall was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976; in 2015 an outdoor amphitheater was added on the site as a place to hold farmers markets, concerts, and ceremonies honoring veterans and dignitaries. Now 125 years old, Martin believes that it’s one of the oldest – if not the oldest – working city halls in Massachusetts. And having traveled the state extensively during his years working for the city and as an officer of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, he feels confident that it is also the most impressive.

“There’s a number comparable in age, but nothing has the grandeur or majesty of Brockton City Hall,” Martin says. “I have been an advocate of maintaining that facility in perpetuity ... as a monument to Plymouth County and Brockton.”

XXIII

W.B. MASON: BROCKTON'S MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR HOME-GROWN BUSINESS



When CEO and co-owner Leo Meehan first arrived at W.B. Mason 45 years ago, it had already called downtown Brockton its home since 1898.

“The company is obviously deeply embedded in the city of Brockton,” said Meehan. “In the beginning we were founded here, but in the end it’s because we like it here.”

Meehan’s tenure in the Brockton headquarters has been marked by tremendous growth at W.B. Mason, which is now the nation’s third-largest (and the world’s fourth-largest) office supply company.

“When I came, our sales were less than \$950,000. Today they’re \$2 billion,” he said.

The headquarters is in a trio of historic buildings it’s occupied for decades, and the company had renovated them in 1981. But as the company entered the 21st century a decision had to be made: With such tremendous growth, should W.B. Mason stay in Brockton?

“When we were talking about moving, we said, ‘If we were going to move, let’s first discuss what we don’t like about where we are,’” Meehan recalled. “And nobody could come up with a reason! We’ve gone from from \$900,000 in sales to a billion-five in the same building. It was a no-brainer to stay. Everyone wanted to stay and the city wanted us to say.”

Thus in 2015, W.B. Mason undertook another renovation of its buildings, to turn them into a headquarters that will carry them through their next billion-dollar sales benchmark.

“In that renovation we went to the state and federal government, because we thought the best way to do it was to restore the buildings,” Meehan said.

W.B. Mason qualified for tax incentives to restore the buildings’ exteriors to their historic appearances. Meanwhile, the interiors were updated to reflect a modern working environment with ample natural light, not to mention many contents of W.B. Mason’s own catalog.

“We’re the fifth-largest office furniture dealer in the country, but we didn’t want to have a standard office,” said Meehan. “The company started as a small, family-owned business; we wanted the building to be almost like a big house that we all work in.”

And that’s the feeling you get when you take a tour of the headquarters. No two floors have the same layout or appearance, and the buildings – the foundations of which aren’t all on the same level – are connected with gently sloping ramps.

“It has a degree of comfortability that people always like,” Meehan said. “If you talk to people who work in the building, they love it.”

And it doesn’t hurt that there’s plenty of convenient parking, as well, something W.B. Mason worked out with the city during the renovation. They also collaborated with the city on their needs for electrical service and other infrastructure.

“That’s the other piece: The city, for us, is so easy to work with,” Meehan said. “When we have an issue of any kind we go talk to the city council, to the mayor, and we get it addressed. They’ve been just great – I’m talking for decades, but even



more so for the last 10 to 15 years when we’ve grown really big.”

With almost 350 employees on-site and 4,000 throughout the company’s operations, W.B. Mason can’t be called a typical downtown business. But Meehan said his employees’ wants and needs are much the same as anyone else: A safe neighborhood, a quiet work environment, convenient commutes. Brockton ticks all those boxes.

“When you look at it from our perspective, it’s extremely affordable,” he said. “For people who don’t want to commute to Boston but who want to work in a big company, they love it. We have very low turnover. It’s easy to get to, the parking is inexpensive, the town is extremely reasonable expense-wise to work in.”

Proximity to the railroad was one reason the company prospered early in Brockton, and today the nearby MBTA Commuter Rail remains a huge benefit: The headquarters is a two-minute walk from the depot, which offers a straight shot to Boston for either employees who want to commute in from the city or those who work out of the company’s office there.

“It’s an amazing place to work,” he said of downtown Brockton. “The only time the traffic can be bad at all is trying to drive out to 24 during rush hour. If it takes you 40 minutes to get home, it takes you 40 minutes every night – it doesn’t change.

“We’re happy there, and we’re going to be there a long time,” said Meehan. “It’s a great success story for the city, but we’re happy it happened to us.”



BULLISH ON BROCKTON

TED CARMAN

PRESIDENT, CONCORD SQUARE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

added. “They have a very good regional bus station that’s located right at the train station. And additionally, they’ve historically had a very good school system. So all of that makes it possible to finance things.

“The third thing that is important: The train station means that downtown Brockton is 35 minutes away from South Station in Boston. So essentially, it’s easier to get to South Station from Brockton than where I live in Jamaica Plain in Boston. It takes less time.”

The strengths don’t stop there, either. There’s the city’s urban renewal plan, which Carman sees Brockton taking steps “every single week” to move forward. The new parking garage with 400 spaces for workers in the daytime and residents overnight. The connector road from Petronelli Way to Franklin and Court streets, to provide better access to said garage while opening up two new lots for development.

“All in all, it’s a real opportunity,” said Carman. “The prospects for 10 years from now are bright, in the sense that if seven hundred or a thousand units are built downtown, it’ll be a different place, and the discrepancy between downtown and suburban areas will be less. That means the rents in downtown now would be very good investments over time, as the rents get higher.”

Concord Square has two buildings it is currently developing in Brockton: 93 Centre Street, which is slated for 44 market rate apartments and 11 affordable units (at 80% of the median rent), which should be under construction by late

spring; and 28 Petronelli Way, purchased from the city at auction last year and slated for 18 apartments in a structure that’s chock full of history.

“The Petronelli building has the initials of the St. Patrick’s Total Abstinence Society on it,” Carman said. “It was built initially as a community hall to promote temperance in the 1890s and early 1900s.”

The original design also had a theater on the upper floors, as well as a balcony. Much later, in the 1980s, it was the home of Petronelli Gym, where world middleweight champion boxer “Marvelous” Marvin Hagler trained.

Carman sees continued strong leadership on development with the election of Mayor Robert Sullivan, and expects a continued good working relationship with the City Council and the Department of Planning and Economic Development. The picture for the region, he said, is promising.

“We have a dramatic shortage of housing in the Boston region as a whole,” he said, “and that means there’s essentially an unlimited demand for market-rate housing in downtown Brockton. Every housing unit that gets built in downtown Brockton will help take pressure off housing prices in Boston because people will gravitate to new, high-quality housing. It’s important to see Brockton contributing to the greater Boston economy in a positive way.

“I actually think Brockton is one of the best opportunities in Massachusetts, in terms of the potential,” Carman said. “Yep, we’re committed.”

BROCKTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

ROBERT JENKINS

What keeps you enthusiastic about redevelopment in Brockton?

This community, Brockton, has such a diversity of people from all over, it’s really amazing. But I also think the diversity is what makes Brockton, Brockton.

Entrepreneurial spirit is one of those things. First- and second-generation immigrants to this country, and particularly to Brockton, always have a big hunger for opportunity, mostly because they’ve been deprived of opportunity elsewhere.

I like helping people and I like talking to people. That’s what kind of drives me and keeps me going.

What changes are on the near horizon for Brockton?

I see a lot of development going on: Cranes, new construction, rehab. Those changes are in Brockton’s near future and I think its foreseeable future, as well. Other changes I see are to the demographics — more people who look like me are moving into the community, there’s definitely a rise in income levels in the city.

I know people think about gentrification, but that’s happening in any gateway city in Massachusetts, I think. Economic gentrification not for the sake of development but because there’s such a scarcity of housing. Here, affordable housing and economic development are taking root in the city.

What do you see as Brockton’s strengths for developers, businesses, and residents?

The city happens to be uniquely situated between Providence and Boston, and the Commuter Rail and BAT are positives. Another thing that’s exciting is we’re getting high-speed fiber optics and extending it down Main Street. That alone is an incentive for back office tech developments — that’s something you’d like to get on the South Shore.

What are some of the amenities we already have?

Restaurants. Boston Fried Chicken, Peruvian Place, Joe Angelo’s, Only One Jamaican — all these are homegrown, mom-and-pop shops. These are downtown but they’re scattered, and as the density of people increases, you’ll find them.

The other positive things you’ve got to mention include W.B. Mason’s world headquarters right downtown. We also have an excellent health care service with the Neighborhood Health Center, which serves the metro Brockton region. HarborOne Bank, which is on Legion Parkway in what used to be their old headquarters and is inside the Urban Revitalization District.

Also, programs for first-time homebuyers, like the lead paint abatement program. Those kinds of things excite me, to be quite honest.

How is the Urban Revitalization District helping Brockton?

It was created by the state in 2016. The parking garage is part of that. Sycamore and Main, the development going up, is part of that. 75 Commercial is part of that, and the new construction at 47 West Elm Street is part.

We have a number of others in the pipeline, bigger projects: Montello Street, Legion Parkway. We did a request for proposals last October where we got 17 from developers. We have seven to eight midsize to large developers that want to do business in Brockton. It’s fantastic, and it’s a lot of work.

What is Brockton’s role in the Boston and Providence metro areas?

I think our role is catching the overflow. People can’t afford to live in Boston, so they try to go to Quincy but they can’t afford Quincy. Then they see Brockton. It’s 35 minutes from Boston by train. We’ve



always had a certain amount of affordable housing, and right now what’s driving the engine of southeastern Massachusetts is market-rate housing and the lack of it.

What are the biggest challenges for redevelopment downtown? The biggest strengths?

Making the best use of limited space. We have a number of buildings we can use and reuse and retrofit; there’s not a lot of vacant land, per se, so you’re looking at taking down some buildings and putting up new structures.

The advantage, however, is you pretty much get an A+ building and get to remake your city — more amenities for walking downtown, for urban city pocket parks, a more up-to-date parking and traffic plan. Another strength is how you can get in and out of the city easily. It’s exciting, too, to know you’re at the ground level to create so many more viable amenities.

Aside from your job, which you’re on the record about loving, what’s your favorite activity in downtown Brockton?

I’d have to say the metamorphosis of downtown, the change. You can almost feel there’s an economic vibrancy. This summer I saw more people downtown that were professionals than I’ve seen since I came here in 2009. That was good to see.

I think the more we’re into it and can stay with this momentum, we’re going to see a lot more changes and a lot more metamorphosis. To be honest, I think some people might be afraid of it, but it’s the best thing for a gateway city like Brockton.

XV LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



Brockton's roots are deep, stretching back to 1821 when it gained its independence as the town of North Bridgewater, which would in 1881 take on the name the city goes by today. Over the intervening 200 years, the city and its people set the tone for which Brockton is known today: A hard-working City of Champions, one that has continually adapted as the times and technology have dramatically changed the economies that have underpinned its growth.

Today the city is positioned to take advantage of its strengths to meet the demands of a fast-moving economic environment through City Hall leadership that is committed to smart planning and growth-oriented policies, as well as commitment to a walkable, livable downtown core with the amenities and conveniences that residents want in an urban neighborhood.

The city is continuing to take advantage of the many elements that make it attractive to businesses. Because of its ideal location within the greater Boston metropolitan area, as well as the whole of New England, the city provides unparalleled access to markets and established transportation corridors for existing and new businesses and industries. Already the home to a large

and diverse workforce, the city is working with its local educational institutions, such as Bridgewater State University and Stonehill College, to ensure those workers have the skills employers need.

There is continued investment into modern infrastructure and utilities to support commercial and industrial operations of all sizes. The city already has a water supply unequaled in the metro area, and the city's electrical service is double-fed by National Grid. The planned commercial park on the former CSX site on Mass. 28 will be served not only by the city's water, sewer, and electrical service, but a 100-gigabyte fiber optic line, making it an ideal location for a data center or off-site back office operations for regional corporations with high-capacity data transfer needs.

"It's the first mile," said Planning and Economic Development Director Rob May. "If you need fiber, you would rather be on top of it. The closer you are to the source, the more bandwidth and capacity you have. By being here and doing your back-office work or anything creative where you need that capacity, speed, and bandwidth, it makes sense to be right at the spigot as opposed to the end of the hose."

Brockton's business ecosystem has produced more than half a dozen different



commercial clusters: Food production, life sciences, electronics, education, medicine, residential development, and minority-owned and small businesses. The city's economic development planning takes into account the needs of all these sectors and will provide the support needed for businesses of any size to establish in or relocate to Brockton, and to grow once there.

The city's Downtown Brockton Action Strategy, created with support from MassDevelopment, is a living document that has kickstarted the revitalization of the city's urban core through planning best practices and long-range vision. It focuses on the needs of both businesses and residents in order to enhance the vibrancy of the neighborhood, encouraging both

commercial and residential development as well as amenities like walkability, restaurants, and public events. Proof of this strategy's effectiveness is the presence of several new market-rate residential buildings that are either under construction or in the final planning stages.

The opening of the new parking garage, dedicated to the late Mayor Bill Carpenter, and the upcoming wayfinding signage program will also improve the ability of residents and visitors to move around downtown with ease. The city's focus on downtown mobility continues as it studies returning two-way traffic to Main Street, Petronelli Way, Warren Avenue, and Belmont Street.

When he took office in January, Mayor Robert Sullivan brought not only

14 years as a City Council member with him, but a lifetime as a Brocktonian. He knows that a healthy and growing downtown core is a key component of a healthy and growing city and says his policies will focus on ensuring continued revitalization.

"I want to enhance the potential of our structures that are downtown," said Sullivan. "What I want to do is work with my City Council colleagues, work with Planning and Economic Development Director Rob May, work with the Brockton Redevelopment Authority, and work with business associations to foster belief in a better Brockton and to reach our mission statement, which is to maximize the downtown growth and spread it throughout the city of Brockton."

