



CHAMBER HOSTS  
OPEN HOUSE

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

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# Where do we go from here?

## City still ripe for more development

**W**orcester is not only the second largest city in New England, but also walks and talks that responsibility now.

Nowhere could you find this sense of community spirit more than during a recent panel discussion held last October at Holy Cross College sponsored by Bay State Savings Bank and the Telegram & Gazette. Discussion centered around the newspaper's award-winning "Remaking Worcester" nine-part editorial series focusing on downtown development. Moderated by the newspaper's Assistant Editor for Local News, Mark Conti, panelists included City Manager Edward Augustus, Jr., Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Timothy Murray, Worcester Business Development Corporation (WBDC) President & CEO Craig Blais, and Discover Central Mass Executive Director Stephanie Ramey.

### CitySquare: 2.0

In 1999, local architect Dan Benoit first proposed razing the failed Worcester Fashion Outlets mall (formerly known as the Worcester Center Galleria) and reopening Front Street. As the former mayor, Murray then pushed the brazen idea, though the first efforts at the \$500 million CitySquare project floundered for a few years until former Hanover Insurance CEO Frederick Eppinger stepped in. Three years later, Front Street rolled down to Union Station "like a red carpet," Conti said.

"I've been working in Worcester for many years. I remember a desolate downtown. In those days, a hulking wall landlocked the city's core," Conti said, citing his newspaper's series. "We wanted to know who was coming to Worcester, how much investment was private money, and what about public incentives such as tax breaks, and who were the movers and shakers."

Though the bulk of the CitySquare Project is now completed and occupied, Parcel F where the underground garage is located and Notre Dame Church property are two remaining areas of the downtown makeover still ripe for redevelopment. A previous negotiation with Roseland to redevelop the old church property

SEE REMAKING, PAGE A11

# Helping Their Neighbors



Harry Kokkinis, owner of Table Talk Pies, accepts the new Good Neighbor Award from Bishop Robert J. McManus. Second award recipient was Bill Isildakli, owner of the Broadway Restaurant (not pictured).

## Businessmen honored for feeding hungry

**C**atholic Charities recently awarded the first-of-its-kind Bishop Robert J. McManus Good Neighbor Award to both Bill Isildakli, owner of the Broadway Restaurant on Water Street, and Harry Kokkinis, owner of Table Talk Pies. The award is given to any person or entity that works with Catholic Charities in fulfilling their mission of working with those among us that are most in need.

"I was floored," Isildakli said. "I didn't expect it. I didn't do it for an award but because it should be done."

I was so happy to get it. I was honored and humbled. It humbled me because I was among some of the finest people around."

Catholic Charities Executive Director Timothy McMahon said that Isildakli and Kokkinis came to mind very quickly.

"It was kind of a no-brainer," he said. "With these two entities in particular, we could not do what we do without them. Because it's such an important thing we do, we thought it was important to acknowledge all they do for community and Catholic Charities. To honor them both in this first year was really fitting."

SEE CATHOLIC, PAGE B3





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SMALL BUSINESS

Maker movement strong in Worcester

When the predecessor of the Worcester Center for Crafts was founded in 1856, the idea of making things by hand wasn't a novelty. It was a necessity as the new industrial economy could not yet keep up with consumer demand.

Tinkers, tailors, potters, lace-makers - most everything used in a home was made by hand. Today, long since Worcester's mechanics were inventing machines to create mass production of items, there is a new demand for handmade objects and for the experience of making and the Worcester Center for Crafts along with other maker spaces in Worcester are opening the world of hand-craft to the 21st century creative.

100+ Classes in Glass, Ceramics, Metalsmithing and Photography

Want to learn to blow glass? Make beads for a unique necklace? Have a hankering for making your own ceramic ware or creating jewelry and metal implements? The Worcester Center for Crafts at 25 Sagamore Road offers over 100 different classes and workshops in the areas of glass, ceramics, metalsmithing, and photography that are open to the public. Family Craft Days engage the whole family in creating with clay, metal or glass. And the Gallery Store



represents over 500 American artists and their work.

A Communal Makers Space

Technocopia, a communal makers space located in the Printers Building (44 Portland Street in downtown Worcester) offers common work space, rental bays and a variety of tools for creatives to work with including a complete woodshop, classroom and computer lab, 3-D printer station, sewing station, digital fabrication and more. And every Thursday night,

Technocopia is open to the public for its Open Hacks and Crafts event.

Industrial Makers Space and Business Incubator

Located in an industrial building at 233 Stafford Street, the Worcshop (pronounced workshop) is the region's most comprehensive Industrial Makers Space and business incubator and specializes in such applications as welding, plasma cutting, sandblasting, ventilated painting, blacksmithing, casting and various other processes

that require lots of heat and pressure. They are leading the charge to revitalize Worcester as an entrepreneurial center for New England.

Together, the Worcester Center for Crafts, Technocopia and the Worcshop make it easy for the curious to experience the world of craft, of making, of inventing, of dreaming, of creating new handmade things that make life creative and exciting.

Article written by Honee Hess, executive director at the Worcester Center for Crafts.



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INSIDE THE CHAMBER

City tax rate needs to compete with other towns

WORCESTER – It’s the most wonderful time of the year! No, I am not talking about the holidays, I am talking about tax classification season!

It has been quite a year so far in the city of Worcester. Over the summer, the city announced the acquisition of the Boston Red Sox Triple-A affiliate from Pawtucket, RI. It announced the development of new hotels and retail space adjacent to the newly named “Polar Park”. MassDOT announced that Kelley Square would be recreated to make that “intersection” more assessible to residents and new incoming tourists. With all these great announcements, the City Council has been very quiet about the city’s dual tax rate and the surrounding communities who have made a concerted effort to reduce the tax gap between its commercial and residential tax rates or in Webster’s case, completely eliminating it altogether.

Every fall, the Worcester City Council debates the city’s tax rates and the last three years have increasingly pushed the burden onto commercial and industrial property owners. The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce has, and continues to argue, that reducing the gap between commercial/industrial tax rates and residential tax rates will lead to a fair and equitable tax system in the city. Moreover, it will continue to grow the commercial/industrial workforce and tax base.

Since 1984, the Worcester City Council has shifted a portion of the residential tax burden over to the commercial/industrial/personal property taxpayers. By doing so, it puts Worcester at a competitive disadvantage compared to surrounding



ALEX GUARDIOLA

communities. Worcester is still one of the few communities in Massachusetts that uses a dual tax rate system.

Just recently, the town of Auburn joined other surrounding communities in their dedication to narrowing the tax rate (on Nov. 13). Auburn followed suit with Fitchburg, who again, continuously and aggressively voted to move to a single tax rate on Oct. 25. Webster eliminated the dual tax rate and went to a single tax rate on Nov. 19. This leaves Worcester as the only local community who, instead of narrowing the tax gap, has increased it the past three years.

As we continue to see surrounding towns and cities help their businesses grow by moving to have both the businesses and residents shoulder the tax burden equally, Worcester has unfairly voted to increase it since 2015. This is bad economic development policy in a time when the city is seeing a resurgence of companies interested in making Worcester their future business home. This inequitable tax policy puts Worcester businesses at a disadvantage especially when surrounding communities have stood by their commitment to narrow the tax gap yearly to move to a single tax rate.

In particular, it adversely impacts the manufacturing sector and companies with lots of inventory. It is important to remember that these businesses pay twice, once on their commercial property and then again on their personal property (equipment and machinery). This “double-dip” hinders these companies from expanding its workforce as well as its business.

With the new regulations that will come with the “Grand Bargain” that was signed over the summer, businesses are bracing for the increase of the minimum wage from \$11 per hour to \$15 per hour over the next few years. Residents have argued

that they need a discounted tax rate to live in the city. Ironically, this discounted rate for residential taxpayers has caused an erosion to the commercial/industrial tax base, shifting part of the tax levy back onto the homeowners. Undoubtedly, a combination of both the wage increase and a failure to narrow the tax gap will ultimately result in businesses moving to a neighboring town who do not see a critical need to have a Worcester address.

Just over the bridge, Shrewsbury has again lowered its tax rate for the fifth consecutive year in a row. Anyone driving down the Route 9 corridor can see all the newly-developed commercial and mixed-used buildings that have materialized over the last few years in part because of the tax rate being almost three times lower than Worcester. This is a trend that we unfortunately feel will continue if we do not have the support of the City Council to make it viable to do business in Worcester.

Last year’s vote to reduce the CIP Factor was defeated by the City Council 6-4. Moe Bergman, Khrystian King, Konnie Lukes, Candy Mero-Carlson, Gary Rosen and George Russell all voted to raise the commercial tax rate and lower the residential tax rate.

We hope this year, with the help of the Worcester community and our City Council, we will be able to add more good news to the second largest city in New England that we are moving in the right direction to make a fair and equitable tax policy and continue our Economic Development here in Worcester.

Season’s Greetings!

- Alex Guardiola is Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy for the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.

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INSIDE THE CHAMBER

Chamber opens new headquarters

By Abigail Donovan

WORCESTER – On Friday, Oct. 19, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce held an open house inviting members to their new space located at 311 Main Street, Worcester. Guests toured the new space while enjoying hor’dourves and desserts from Struck Catering and The Queen’s Cups with refreshments donated by Wormtown Brewery and Atlas Distributors.

The open house included a short speaking program with Chamber President and CEO Tim Murray recognizing the contributions and support by members and staff involved in the move and rebranding of the organization. Guests also heard from Stephanie Ramey, executive director of Discover Central Mass, Ed Ross, from the Chamber’s preferred moving company Mark’s Moving, and Dave Glispin, owner of Sunshine Sign Company and manufacturer of the Chamber’s new signage.

More than 100 people attended the open house. As guests walked into the new office, the reception area served as buffet area for vegetables, crackers, hummus and bite-sized desserts. The open flow of the office allowed for guests to easily network and share stories. Walking further into the office, the second reception area was the perfect spot for a make shift bar where guests could choose from various donated beverages including wine, beer, water or soft drinks. As guests grabbed drinks, they flowed further into the office, which is home to Discover Central Mass and the George F. Sybil H. Fuller Conference Room. The Chamber offices are also home to SCORE, a business management consultant service offered by the U.S. SBA, which offers free business advice out of the Chamber’s offices in the Richard B. Kennedy Conference Room.

The rebranding of the Worcester Chamber organization stretched far beyond its logos. Throughout the office, the walls are painted blue and gray, with accents of yellow in various signs to incorporate the organization’s new color scheme. On the walls are paintings of many famous Worcester landmarks such as City Hall and Coney Island that help capture the love that the Chamber has for the city of Worcester.

The Chamber thanks all those who attended and everyone who helped out to make the event a success. If you were not able to attend the Open House and would like to see our new space, please feel free to stop by anytime. We look forward to seeing you.



Above, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Timothy Murray addresses fellow colleagues, members and staff at the official grand opening of the new Chamber office at 311 Main St. Below center, Kate Sharry, chair of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce board of directors, greets visitors;



Above middle, Kate Sharry, chair of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce board of directors and VP of Arthur J. Gallagher & Company, talks with staff, members and guests pictured below at the office grand opening. Above left, Dave Glispin, owner of Sunshine Sign Company, also offers a few remarks. Above right, Ryan Matson speaks with Aislyn Bianchi from Discover Central Mass.



Left to right, Blain Marchand, senior VP of Middlesex Savings Bank, Linda Salem Pervier, Sr. Director of Membership Development & Finance at Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, and Kevin Dandrade, senior project manager at TEC, share a few laughs.



Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Timothy Murray, center, talks with members.



# Game Changers A

## *MassDevelopment paving way for crucial district deve*

WORCESTER – As the lunch keynote speaker at the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce annual Game Changers conference held inside Mechanics Hall on Oct. 19, Lauren Liss, president and CEO of MassDevelopment since 2017, dipped back in time to acknowledge her state agency’s now 20-year involvement in the city’s development progression, investing more than one billion dollars here during the past decade alone.

MassDevelopment is the state’s economic development and finance agency that works with businesses, nonprofits, financial institutions, and communities to stimulate economic growth across the Commonwealth. With one of five regional offices based in Worcester, MassDevelopment in FY 2018 partnered on about 380 projects generating more than \$4 billion in investments, creating almost 11,000 jobs and building or renovating 800 housing units state-wide.

In Worcester, MassDevelopment takes pride in

the recent bevy of ongoing developments, but also credits smaller past projects as essential stepping stones to today’s larger-scale construction. During her introduction, reference was made to the agency’s involvement in renovating 20 Franklin St. as a prime example of state and local partnership. MassDevelopment provided total financing of \$16,246,036 and \$4,246,036 in direct loans to New Garden Park Inc., an affiliate of the Worcester Business Development Corporation, for that project. WBDC used those funds to complete renovations to the former Worcester Telegram & Gazette building on Franklin and Federal streets in downtown Worcester. The 135,000-square-foot facility now houses Quinsigamond Community College’s new urban campus for its Allied Health Services and Workforce Training and Employment Programs, while also offering a business incubator, café, future black box theater, and professional office space.

Liss said long before the Pawtucket Red Sox move

announcement, MassDevelopment had already been hard at work in the Canal District. She mentioned her agency helping to finance cleanup of the property used to build the Railers’ Worcester Ice Center. More recently, MassDevelopment gave a \$1.8 million loan to developer Allen Fletcher to enable that district’s new Harding Green development, which will offer 48 units of new market rate housing, parking, and 17,000 square feet of ground floor retail space.

Financing by issuing bonds, loans or guarantees to help foster economic development in Worcester is not the only way MassDevelopment is making an impact in the city. An additional agency program titled the Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) is a place-based development program focusing on 26 downtown gateway cities in Massachusetts. The financing tool is designed to enhance local public-private engagement and community identity; stimulate an improved quality of life for local residents; and spur increased investment and economic activity.

## Ideas aired to improve, expand Union Station

WORCESTER – With the prospect of the state’s Cannabis Commission occupying the second floor of Union Station, local leaders are urging additional rehab of the almost vacant historical structure as a critical component to attracting more development around the intermodal transportation center.

Sponsored by Webster Five, a Union Station workshop was held as part of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce’s annual Game Changers business conference at Mechanics Hall in October. “It’s critical that we support that element of it,” said workshop Moderator Samantha McDonald, an attorney at Bowditch & Dewey.

In addition to the possibility of the Cannabis Commission presence, Vincent Pedone, chair of the Worcester Redevelopment Authority (WRA), which owns Union Station, alluded to another potential relocation of a restaurant now based at Union Plaza and additional suitors interested in space beside that potential eatery. Pedone added that he wants the facility to be “aspirational,” with the structure’s safety being the most important aspect. This past fall, crews were busy performing remediation work on mold and asbestos not removed during the previous renovation more than 20 years ago.

Additionally, Pedone said he worked with the City Council and City Manager to establish a new police sub-station that recently opened at Union Station and is receiving rave reviews from passengers who feel safer.

“That sub-station has done wonders in the opinions of people using the station inside,” Pedone said.

Current MBTA ridership to and from Union Station - one of the busiest of all lines in the state that was re-built 25 years ago using \$35 million in federal transportation funds and can’t realistically be sold or leased - has some startling statistics many don’t quite comprehend yet. Panelist Benjamin Forman, research director at MassINC, said:

- 70 percent have been riding Worcester to Boston trains less than five years
- 70 percent use the trains for work
- 70 percent arrive at Union Station in a car
- 60 percent departed the outgoing train at South Station

“The majority of new jobs in the last decade have been anchored around transit mainly because of housing developments,” said Forman. “Most of the housing in Massachusetts that is now produced is multi-family housing in cities.”

Pedone echoed those sentiments, adding that Worcester not only needs to make Union Station attractive for visitors here looking for a quick meal and drink, but also for the permanent younger and older dwellers of the new apartment developments now in place.

“We need to make it viable for the thousands of folks who go down to the Canal District and Shrewsbury Street on a Thursday, Friday or Saturday night,” Pedone said. “We want Union Station to be an alternative destination spot.”

The long-term vision for Union Station was varied among the panelists ranging with the recent possibility of interest expressed by a country and western dance restaurant developer or possibly a high

SEE UNION STATION, PAGE A8



Union Station panelists, from left to right, included Moderator Samantha McDonald, an attorney at Bowditch & Dewey, Discover Central Mass Executive Director Stephanie Ramey, Ben Forman, research director at MassINC., and Vincent Pedone, chair of the Worcester Redevelopment Authority.



At right, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Timothy Murray stands with award recipients, including Meghan Liddy, Andy Davis, Ava Collins, Madeleine and Robb Ahlquist, and Larry Curtis,



Above, Lauren Liss, CEO of MassDevelopment, luncheon keynote speaker.



Above, Kate Sharratt, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce board member, with members.



# Advance Innovation

## Developments

Along with new tools in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Transformative Development Fund, MassDevelopment uses existing agency finance products and real estate services, and coordinates with private and public-sector partners to encourage development activity by private landowners, enterprises, and investors.

Worcester's Theater District area, now encompassing Myrtle, Franklin, Foster and Front streets, Francis McGrath Boulevard and part of Main Street, was among the agency's first round of TDI awards that it designated, Liss said. The district now includes partners Hanover Theater and Conservatory for the Performing Arts (circa 2008), Worcester Business Development Corporation, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and many local businesses. The current plan calls for increasing the stock of market-rate and student housing

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Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Timothy Murray stands with award recipients, including Jan Yost of the Health Foundation of Central Mass., Meghan Liddy of Kelleher & Sadowsky, Ernie Floyd of Pride Productions, and Mike Myers of the Worcester Railers.



President and Development, was the speaker.



Chair of the Regional Chamber of Commerce, talks



## Leaders champion pad ready sites

WORCESTER – Craig Blais, president & CEO of Worcester Business Development Corp. (WBDC), points to MBI and its early life sciences vision, bio-manufacturing giant Gateway Park, and the future \$13.4 million redevelopment of the 140,000-square-foot former Worcester State Hospital property as shining examples of how pad ready sites actually foster future success.

“If the WBDC hadn’t forged the deal with WPI to get that parcel ready for development,” Blais said, “the developer would have had to acquire 13 acres of property from 10 different owners; determine how to run a new road through the middle of the site; fund a \$3.5 million cleanup of the property; build a new parking garage; and secure a city zoning change. It was for sale for years and no one showed up. There’s no way a private firm could come in and do that type of work.”

Blais, speaking before a Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce Game Changers panel sponsored by Webster Five and moderated by Auburn Town Manager Julie A. Jacobson, cited several large-scale projects in Worcester over the past 20 years that have greatly benefited from being pad ready for developers. He cited the sprawling \$250 million Saint Vincent Hospital downtown medical center - a 24-acre urban renewal area that took six years to cleanup, move a railroad and demolish many structures. “That is a great example of getting a parcel pad ready in order to make investment happen,” Blais said. He added that CitySquare initially required about \$90 million to tear down the old mall and add necessary infrastructure in order to create “subsidized” pad ready sites for Roseland, Unum, and AC Marriott along with parking.

Meanwhile, properties that lack pad readiness often take many years to redevelop, such as the future Pawtucket Red Sox’s Polar Park situated on the former Wyman Gordon property. Blais said that deal requires a \$100 million bond because the site requires a lot of work to make it pad ready. The city’s commercial tax rate also plays a major role when developers make decisions as to where to locate, with Shrewsbury and Auburn offering very attractive rates. Being pad ready, Blais added, can make a difference when comparing those costs.

“The market is getting stronger so higher rates can be demanded from developers,” Blais said, citing the Saint Gobain property as a logical next property in need of re-purposing and environmental remediation. “We already have the water, sewer, road capacity and multi-directional rail spurs. Those are critical infrastructure to have that cities kill for to get pad ready sites into reuse,” Blais said.

Panelist Paul Morano of Menkiti Development – a former key planner in Worcester City Hall’s development office for 21 years – said his initial advice for any prospective developer is if they have called National Grid first about their estimated current and future power needs. Part of the reason for delays in hookups from National Grid is both the amount of development ongoing in the city since 2008 as well as National Grid trying to meet that demand to upgrade power. “To be pad ready, call National Grid as soon as possible,” Morano advised, adding that a solution to hook-up fees also needs to be ironed out soon. It’s no secret Worcester has high commercial rates, and Morano recommended developers take advantage of several residential or commercial tax relief programs available

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UNION STATION, FROM PAGE A6

tech arcade. Pedone said the WRA often struggles with future uses at the station and the bigger picture of how those tenants would fit into the larger development vision going on around Washington Square, home to the new 118-room Homewood Suites Hotel.

The conversion of the former Washington Square rotary into a smaller roundabout in recent years has dramatically transformed the area around Union Station by creating four parcels that are significant transit-oriented development opportunities. The roundabout connects Worcester's downtown, Shrewsbury Street, Canal District and Grafton Hill neighborhoods and also functions as a gateway to some of the city's most important developments including CitySquare, the Worcester Trial Court, Saint Vincent Hospital, DCU Arena and Convention Center and the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts. WRA is fostering this transit-oriented development in a way that is complementary to other major projects in the area. Pedone mentioned



better uniformity and reviews of lease structures as critical to success in the future.

"When it was last fully occupied, all the leases had expiration dates at different times," Pedone said, who credits Worcester Chamber President and CEO Timothy Murray, who strongly advocated for a daily commuter rail line to Worcester as a young city councilor, mayor, and then lieutenant governor. "The Authority has talked about having leases that are all co-terminus where you have the ability every five or 10 years to look at the station and figure out what is in the best interests of the station but also the surrounding community. Worcester is one of the most successful lines on the

commuter system."

McDonald asked her panel to detail best practices to get riders inside the station and using the businesses there instead of just parking and walking directly to the train platform.

Fellow panelist Stephanie Ramey, executive director of Discover Central Mass, said it starts with the little things like someone offering a basic coffee and groceries shops or kiosks, with businesses that are up-to-date with technology and can accept credit cards. She added that developing ways to steer people to and through the station using wayfinding methods are also needed.

"It's all about the foot traffic," said Ben Forman, research director at MassINC., adding that carrying a monthly commuter rail pass is "like leasing a Mercedes", acknowledging the need for more economically viable ridership fees for low to moderate workers. "If you look at Worcester now, there are a lot of commercial spaces and jobs, but not a lot of residential space."

Potential economic incentives to

offset an empty building that needs to run on lean dollars to attract long-term mixed-use tenants runs the gamut from TIFFs and DIFs to historical grants.

Peter Stanton, publisher of the Worcester Business Journal, stood up during the audience participation portion of the session, making the case for the city to establish even more "connective tissue" between Union Station and abutting neighborhoods. "Twenty-five years ago, I was a member of the Union Station Alliance, which were advocates of restoration. Union Station is a total 80,000 square feet, only 20,000 of which is leasable. Short of getting the Apple Store, there is not sufficient retail activity that can happen there unless the building is surrounded at a very small and close scale with lots of other development. The question isn't the station in isolation being successful or not. Walkability is not there yet. We need smaller scale development. You plan your country by the acre and your city by the foot."

MASSDEVELOPMENT, FROM PAGE A7

in the district; attracting private and institutional investment from educational and cultural institutions; improving a pedestrian networking of alleys and shared streets; creating more public parking; and increasing nighttime recreational activity affecting 27 properties abutting the 12-acre CitySquare project area.

"Hanover Theatre has more than doubled its projected 90,000 patrons

per year," said Liss. "They are a true game changer and catalyst for the entire district."

Liss added that purchasing and making façade improvements to 526 Main Street, a distressed two-story building, is another promising Theater District project under the agency's TDI Equity Investment Program. Former city development office planner Paul Morano's new job at real estate firm, Menkiti Group, plans to now buy that building from MassDevelopment for future retail and arts amenities.

A second district was also recently formed by MassDevelopment, the Main South District, aimed at making it a more walkable and vibrant neighborhood, including Clark University, the Main South Community Development Center, and YMCA of Central Mass.

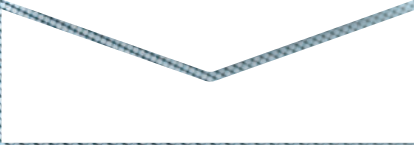
Liss concluded her remarks by encouraging businesses and planners to explore the state's Commonwealth Places program, which is a collaborative initiative from MassDevelopment and the civic crowdfunding platform

Patronicity. Liss said Commonwealth Places provides a funding mechanism to advance community-driven placemaking projects in downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts throughout Massachusetts. The program seeks to engage and mobilize community members to make individual contributions through a crowdfunding platform with the incentive of a dollar-for-dollar funding match of up to \$50,000 from MassDevelopment if the crowdfunding goal is reached within 60 days.

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PAD READY, FROM PAGE A7

“At South Worcester Industrial Park, the City Council did a very good job with [creating] a pre-approved exemption schedule so that developers understood (costs) going in based on the amount of square footage they were going to develop as well as the number of jobs created and retained. It was a much smoother process.”

Even with an unpredictable historic tax credit program allocated by the state every few months, much of Worcester’s downtown existing office and retail stock is already renovated. Morano said most remaining older structures often don’t qualify for historic tax credits. He mentioned an ongoing project at 401 Main St. where crews recently took the metal panels off the circa 1890 structure’s facade, revealing “beautiful” and historic architectural features beneath with 11,280-square-feet of usable office/retail space. However, that former Shack’s building is not on the historic register. “The city really needs to start thinking about historic districts downtown,” said Morano, urging landlords and city planners to convert first floor office space into retail to really help sell the downtown as an 18-hour destination. “We can get historic tax credits for all these standalone buildings. It’s tough to rent space when it’s just an eyesore.... or the window blinds come down at 5:30 p.m.”

The current Business Improvement District proposal for the downtown theater district is yet another development tool Morano said the city should advance with even more veracity. To expand available pad

ready sites, he believes the city needs to have efficient wayfinding signage, quick snow removal, quality sidewalk renovation, and improved streetscapes.

Panelist and GFI Partners President Steven Goodman, who did the near impossible by redeveloping the blighted former U.S. Steel factory at 150 Blackstone River Road into a massive new 615,600-square-foot distribution center now filled with thriving tenants, spoke to the importance of continuing that blueprint for success along the entire Route 20 corridor.

“Worcester was always a place where you could find value for good, cheap, functional space,” said Goodman, cautioning that the market has drastically changed in recent years mainly due to little availability of parcels able to host large scale new developments or redevelopments that offer tens of thousands of square feet. He said the city-approved Tax Increment Financing deal to help propel 150 Blackstone was awarded after half the lease for Goodman’s development had already been negotiated, proving the notion of demand far exceeds supply for manufacturing and warehouse buildings right now in Worcester. He said it builds the case for championing more pad ready sites. “If you can find sites that will support structures, you’ll be making very good choices,” said Goodman. “They also bring a tremendous value to the community in terms of jobs, tax base and construction.”

Panelist James Umphrey, principal of Kelleher & Sadowski, used to broker Goodman’s former U.S. Steel property for 25 years. He said that 600,000-square-foot property serves

as a fitting example of re-tooling older manufacturing buildings now at near foreclosure rates and why they are disappearing quickly from the market. “You have to look at real estate in different segments. It depends what tenants and end users are looking for in a city from a pad ready perspective,” Umphrey said. “If you look at warehouse distribution, those types of developers are looking for

affordability, public utilities, and access to highways.” In comparison, Umphrey cited WuXi Biologics, a Hong-Kong based pharmaceutical manufacturer looking to build a \$60 million 100,000-square-foot building in Worcester, which requires a site that is pad ready to build on, properly zoned, offers tax advantages and grants, staffing talent, and solid pre-existing utility infrastructure.

# Insurance Commish speaks before Presidents' Council

WORCESTER - On Tuesday, Dec. 4, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce held its Presidents' Council Meeting sponsored by Marsh & McLennan. This meeting invited local business executives from companies such as The Hanover Insurance Group and Clark University to discuss current issues pending before the Division of Insurance and how they may impact businesses. Gary Anderson, the Massachusetts Commissioner of Insurance, was the guest speaker.

The commissioner described insurance as “intimate” due to the fact that it impacts the public at some point in different ways. Within the 1,700 insurance companies he oversees, there are 20,000 inquiries each year. Anderson spoke to the group about working with carriers to navigate through tricky issues such as the September Merrimack Valley gas explosions, which he thought insurance agencies responded to well. Anderson also spoke about the more collaborative approach that insurance agencies are taking to obtain new clients, stating that “millennials are more likely to purchase packages online, rather than through an agent.”

One member asked, “What is the concern with property tragedy claims in the state of Massachusetts and could it affect consumer rates?” Anderson responded that “although these claims are not very popular in our area, we saw several claims during the ice dam of 2015. There is a recognition that it may effect consumer rates if we see these tragedies continue to happen.”

For more information on the Presidents’ Council meetings, please visit [www.worcesterchamber.org](http://www.worcesterchamber.org).

## BIZ BRIEFS

### Chamber member news now on TV and radio

WORCESTER - Stay up to date with the latest news and events from fellow Chamber members by tuning into the Chamber Exchange hosted by Tim Murray on Charter TV3 channel 193, presented by Worcester Regional Airport.

Chamber Exchange is designed to enhance awareness of the Central Mass Region by showcasing businesses and emerging sectors of the local economy. Each episode includes interviews with selected members, sponsors and business leaders. The show also provides a forum for discussion of economic development, public policy and other topical issues that matter to Chamber members.

Chamber members on the show are able to reach a huge audience with 185,000 viewers in Central Massachusetts.

Make sure you tune in Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 2:30 p.m. to catch the latest episode. You can also catch all of our archived shows via The Chamber Exchange’s YouTube page.

From the bank vault, The Voice of Business goes live every Wednesday on Unity Radio, 102.9 and also live streaming on [worcestermag.com](http://worcestermag.com) at 1 p.m. Nicholas Trotto from the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and Steve Cully from Discover Central Massachusetts host the show and feature a wide variety of guests.

Each Wednesday hear a different voice from the Worcester business and tourism community as they discuss the changing landscape of the city. If you would like to appear, advertise, or sponsor The Voice of Business, contact Nicholas Trotto at 508-753-2924 ext. 232.

### Women’s leadership conference set for April 11

WORCESTER - The largest women’s leadership conference in Central Massachusetts, bringing together the most forward thinking female leaders, has been scheduled and plans are being made to celebrate a decade of supporting women in business. The Worcester Chamber’s 10th Annual Worcester Women’s Leadership Conference is scheduled to be held Thursday, April 11, 2019 at the DCU Center Arena and Convention Center.

This conference is an opportunity for women to build their careers and share their experiences with other women. Each year the venue is sold out with 750 women attendees, along with 70 exhibitors and five engaging workshop speakers.

Workshop proposals are being accepted. Registration is available for individuals or for up to a table of 10. The cost is \$195 for Chamber members, and \$250 for non-members.

Tablesponsors (for a table of 10 reserved seating) are \$2,500 for members, \$3,500 for non-members. Other sponsorship opportunities from \$3,000 to \$20,000 are also available. By sponsoring this event, you will strengthen your networking circle and business relationships, attract new customers, and reward your employees. Exhibiting opportunities are available: corporate at \$600 for Chamber members, \$800 for non-members; non-profit at \$400 for Chamber members, \$500 for non-members; sole proprietor at \$200 for Chamber members, \$250 for non-members. For more information, visit [worcesterwomenleadership.com](http://worcesterwomenleadership.com) or contact Karen Pelletier at [kpelletier@worcesterchamber.org](mailto:kpelletier@worcesterchamber.org).



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From left to right, Telegram & Gazette Assistant Editor for Local News Mark Conti, Worcester Regional Chamber President and CEO Timothy Murray, Worcester Business Development Corporation CEO Craig Blais, Discover Central Mass. Executive Director Stephanie Ramey, and Worcester City Manager Edward Augustus, Jr.

REMAKING, FROM PAGE A1

is currently on hold until the structure is taken down. What’s known as Parcel F offers an existing 2,000,000-square-foot building that could be revamped into offices. Augustus said the one word that defines everything downtown right now is density. “We are trying to have people work downtown, live downtown, and go to school downtown,” Augustus said. “People go to the different entertainment venues. There is that 18-hour day now.”

Murray added that when the state infrastructure money first came in for the CitySquare project, it also targeted reinforcing the footings of the garage to accommodate the office building. He used an analogy to the South Worcester Industrial Park, which was able to secure Brownfields remediation funding when Augustus was still a state senator as the incubus to create that development. “It took some time to find the right developer because there were some folks who wanted to deviate from its intended use as manufacturing,” Murray said, lauding Table Talk Pie’s recent expansion there. “That’s a lesson we have to learn not only for the CitySquare parcels, but for other sites around the city.”

Blais said that the city can never go wrong with having two “pad ready” sites available for lease downtown (see related sidebar on Page A7). And those early efforts and the major development that followed influenced the decision by the Pawtucket Red Sox to relocate here in 2021.

Key moment in Pawsox decision

In several in-depth pre-relocation conversations with Worcester leaders, Pawtucket Red Sox CEO Larry Lucchino perceived the city’s Achilles heel in bringing his team to Worcester as being its difficulty to attract corporate support and sponsors. “Lucchino explained that he had a very successful corporate sponsorship situation in Rhode Island – one of the best in the entire Triple A International League – and that was going to be a major factor in their decision,” Murray noted, adding that a working group of city leaders led by attorney Michael Angelini was immediately convened. “We were asked to come up with a starting nine of sponsorships at a pretty significant financial level over multiple years,” Murray said. “The collective push back was if we’re able to do it, it’s then time for you to make a decision. Within 10 days, various businesses and organizations stepped up.”

Augustus underscored the

importance of that initial support in the negotiation process, adding that in Pawtucket, the team drew from a diverse state-wide business base whereas in Worcester, its corporate attraction would be more limited to the city and surrounding Central Massachusetts’ communities. “We wanted to take that competitor or that worry right off the table,” Augustus said. “Our (negotiating) team was amazing. They went out there and got very high commitments in a very tight time frame. They exceeded the cap of 21 sponsors at the founder level. That was critically important.”

Blais added that the WBDC he leads was on the receiving end of one of those sponsorship solicitation phone calls. “When the City Manager contacted the WBDC, we immediately assembled the board and asked a pretty big ask for a non-profit to be one of the founding sponsors of the team,” Blais said. “I got a unanimous endorsement from the board immediately within that 10-day period. Everyone wants to know who’s in and it is that collaborative spirit that makes those things happen.”

What’s the next large development area for Worcester?

The city clearly has a strong and vibrant bio-technology corridor in place and on the way. WBDC has acquired the final 44 acres of the former Worcester State Hospital property off Belmont Street. Working closely with the City Administration and Gov. Baker-Polito Administration, the WBDC took advantage of a core tenant in the state’s Open for Business initiative, which prioritizes the conversion of unequalized state property assets into productive new developments. The plan calls for more bio-technology labs and offices. Blais pointed to the success of UMass Medical School’s Medicine Science Park as a key inspiration for this decision as is WPI’s Gateway Park.

“We are going to create pad ready sites for bio-manufacturing companies,” Blais said, adding that the first anchor tenant – one of the largest China-based bio-manufacturing firms in the world – is now in negotiations with WBDC to locate a 100,000-square-foot facility on the former state hospital property.

Augustus envisions Route 20 in Worcester as “the last frontier” in major development areas. He called the highway a gold mine in terms of soon offering sewage tie-ins, enhanced water mains, and its existing confluence of road networks. The state also plans to install new sidewalk sections along pedestrian friendly

portions of Route 20. “That highway has a lot of potential as you have a lot of underutilized parcels,” Augustus said. “We have bulk storage along Route 20 that could be used for warehouses and manufacturing that would love to have that proximity to road networks that would not impact neighborhoods. The city and state are investing in that corridor and really setting the stage.”

Making the city a destination

Discover Central Mass Executive Director Stephanie Ramey said her team constantly works with planners to bring in more meetings and conventions. She points to many new and older venues and properties in the city that clearly are making the city a destination and also its diverse neighborhoods are now being targeted.

“Visitors want to find something exceptional; they want to find that secret place. When you look at all the different cultural and arts offerings going on in each neighborhood, I think it is important to start better defining those things,” Ramey said. “I see our city as eclectic, diverse, and artistic that people are drawn to explore.”

Where is the city in 5-10 years?

With a now thriving downtown, growing Canal District about to become even busier with the Worcester Red Sox move, and popular Shrewsbury Street restaurant mecca surrounded by 12 colleges and universities, it’s hard to imagine what else could unfold here on that scale. Ramey said Worcester has great potential to connect all dots

now, such as from the future Polar Park on Water Street over to Coney Island, with new small businesses. “I live in Webster Square,” Ramey added, “where there are some great restaurants starting to move in.”

Augustus, who grew up in the city along with Murray and Ramey, said a strong sense of optimism is the guiding spirit right now that will drive its future. “Dollars, people and investors are attracted to optimism,” Augustus said. “It’s up to us to keep it going.”

Blais added that the city needs to make itself an affordable, urban experience for young people, noting that it is very expensive to live, work and play in and around Boston. He noted the following recent developments that were all ongoing during the downtown CitySquare project mall demolition and redevelopment, and mostly involved partnerships:

- \$42 million re-make of Telegram & Gazette building and Quinsigamond Community College downtown campus
- \$100 million Gateway Park project with WPI
- \$31 million Hanover Theatre renovation with support from colleges
- \$28 million 332 Main Street project

Murray added that along with the major development has been a transformational change in the attitudes among city residents, businesses and those that visit here. “The negative naysayers often dominated the political discourse, but now we can do more than one big project at a time,” Murray said.

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EDUCATION - B SECTION

Leaders address long waiting list at WTHS

Alliance advances industry need for workforce growth and better training

WORCESTER – The number one concern of local businesses, according to Worcester Chamber research, is a lack of workforce.

"It's critical that we continue to look for ways to create and grow our skilled workforce in Worcester and Central Mass," said Karen Pelletier, Worcester Regional Chamber vice president of operations and director of education and workforce development. "Employers will move here, grow here and stay here if they have access to talent needed at all levels."

Worcester Technical High School is now sending most of its graduates to college. Pelletier said that while this is positive news in some ways, college isn't always the right path for everyone, and there is now a gap in training students to enter directly to the trades.

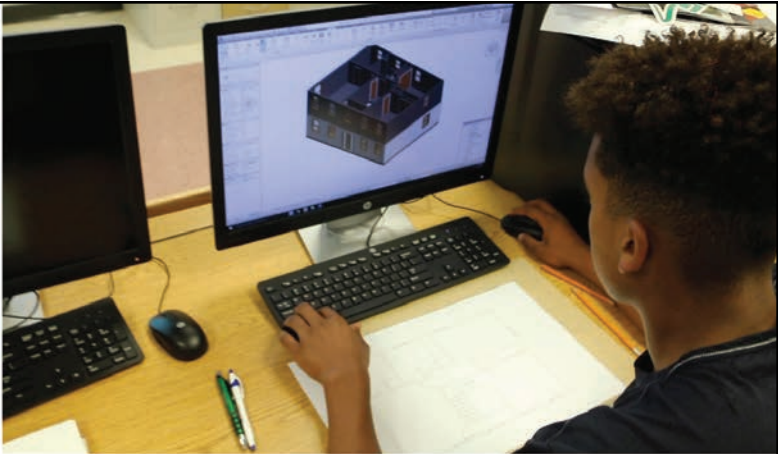
"We should be looking to our secondary schools as a training ground for college and career readiness," Pelletier said.

Another part of the problem is that students interested in vocational education don't always have the opportunities to enter the programs. In fact, only one in five Massachusetts high school students is enrolled in a vocational technical program and approximately 3,200 students are wait-listed each year. These students, especially those from low-income families who are denied access to career technical education, are often destined for low-wage jobs that do not provide a family sustaining income.

"There are many jobs which are good paying, and do not require a college degree, but do require some sort of industry credential," Pelletier said.

That's where the Alliance for Vocational Technical Education (AVTE) comes in. The AVTE, a broad-based association of diverse partners from across Massachusetts, was established to build on the successes achieved by vocational technical education during the past several years. It is a coalition of business groups, comprehensive and vocational high school administrators, and community groups formed to engage decision-makers in the Baker Administration and the Legislature to work with the Chamber in advancing vocational education in Massachusetts. The mission of the AVTE is to increase access to high quality vocational education for middle and high school students in the Commonwealth.

The AVTE believes that every young person should have access to these Career Technical Education (CTE) programs, facilities and equipment, and that career technical education students should reflect the socioeconomic diversity of the Commonwealth, as well as satisfy the immediate and long-term needs of Massachusetts employers. Evidence and research indicate that CTE programs deliver tremendous value statewide to students, families, communities, and employers. High quality CTE is a comprehensive, rigorous and engaging education characterized by intensive work-based learning experiences, resulting in



college and career placements to meet the business community's needs and labor market demands.

Data also shows graduates of CTE programs secure high-wage jobs, possess strong academic, technical and professional skills, are well prepared for further training in skilled occupations and careers, and enroll in and graduate from 2- and 4-year post-secondary schools. High quality CTE programs offer an in-depth array of career development activities, including work-based learning; business and community partnerships; and student organizations with a CTE focus.

Because the AVTE believes access to high quality CTE is vital to close persistent achievement gaps and improve the life outcomes of every child in the Commonwealth, it has outlined five areas of focus for advancing their mission. The AVTE has devoted considerable time examining in the past two and a half years access and equity issues so that high quality CTE programs are inclusive, ensuring that all young people in a given community, regardless of their differences and abilities, are able to access and flourish in CTE programs and beyond. They've also focused on consolidating standards relating to state-of-the-art facilities,

equipment, and high-quality staffing, recognizing that CTE cannot exist without adequate facilities and highly qualified, knowledgeable teachers and staff.

They are creating a standards-based integrated curriculum combining contextual learning with rigorous academic expectations, as they believe a curriculum that emphasizes both the cognitive and psychomotor domains clearly articulates what students should know and be able to do, is critical to teaching and learning. Finally, they are tracking the effectiveness of a program's ability to develop a student's readiness for careers through exploratory or career awareness; work-based learning; business and community partnerships; and organizations with a CTE focus.

In addition, the Chamber itself is partnering with Worcester Public Schools (WPS) to provide programs that increase access to vocational training both afternoons and at night at WTHS and during the day at the other comprehensive high schools.

For example, the Innovation Pathways program, which started in November, allows 60 students from Burncoat and Doherty to attend WTHS two days/week for two years for technical training in four pathways.

In addition, after several years of dormancy, WPS has hired a Director of the Night Life program, which will start at WTHS in Spring 2019 with vocational and technical training as well as enrichment courses for the community. The Chamber and WPS also partnered up to offer a Summer Manufacturing Program to activate Worcester Technical HS during summer/off hours to increase access for the community, in 2018 and had significant results.

Worcester Technical High School (WTHS) Chapter 74 programs include diesel technology, culinary arts and early education and care at South High Community School; allied health – health assisting and business technology at North High School; and engineering at Doherty Memorial High School. Worcester Tech offers advanced manufacturing, allied health – health assisting, automotive collision, automotive technology, biotechnology, carpentry, cosmetology, culinary arts, drafting, early education and care, electrical, electromechanical – robotics, graphic arts, HVAC/R, ISSN, marketing and finance, painting and design, plumbing, veterinary assisting, web development and welding.

Worcester Public Schools Chapter 74 Programs

Worcester Technical High School

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Allied Health – Health Assisting
- Automotive Collision
- Automotive Technology
- Biotechnology
- Carpentry
- Cosmetology
- Culinary Arts
- Drafting
- Early Education and Care
- Electrical
- Electromechanical – Robotics
- Graphic Arts
- HVAC/R
- ISSN
- Marketing and Finance
- Painting and Design

- Plumbing and Welding
- Veterinary Assisting
- Web Development

South High Community School

- Diesel Technology
- Culinary Arts
- Early Education and Care

North High School

- Allied Health – Health Assisting
- Business Technology
- \*Criminal Justice (non Chapter 74 – intend to apply 2019/2020)

Doherty Memorial High School

- Engineering



# JOBS MATTER

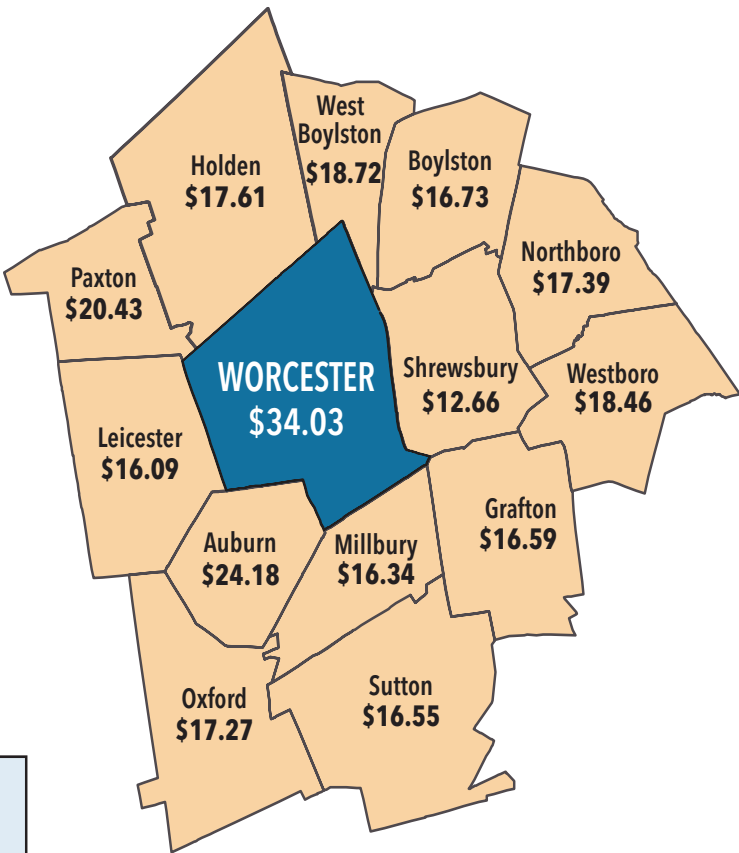
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CATHOLIC, FROM PAGE A1

The duo is responsible for providing more than 4,000 “Bishop’s Dinners” for those in need on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Table Talk Pies donates pies to the dinners and Isildakli prepares the meals. Table Talk has been involved for nearly 20 years, and Isildakli said he started making dinners in the mid-1970s when a nun by the name of Sister Victoria had asked him to help her facilitate some dinners for people in need.

“It grew every year,” Isildakli said. “It’s a big responsibility.” McMahon said it has become a tradition for many families to volunteer. “It has a longstanding history because many people have brought their children to go and pass out the dinners, and they have brought their children,” he said.

Isildakli said he gets his “marching orders” and orders his turkeys and solicits donations, although he purchases some of the food himself. He said while some food prep starts in advance, it really begins at about 2:30 a.m. on the actual holiday. He said they have experimented over the years and found what works.

“It came to a point where we all now know what we are doing,” he said. “We have developed a well-greased machine.”

In addition to the meals, Isildakli also provides coffee and Danishes for the volunteers packing and delivering the meals.

McMahon said the meals are typically delivered to folks that are elderly, disabled or homebound, but that they will deliver a dinner to anyone who needs one. The list of names is compiled from a network of sources such as human service agencies, local non-profit organizations and elder homecare organizations.

McMahon, who came on as executive director at Catholic Charities two years ago, said he was able to participate in the program for the first time last year to deliver meals.

“Boy I’ll tell you it’s so much more than a dinner to a lot of folks,” he said. “I may be the only smiling face or face they see all day. You stay and talk to them. It’s more than a meal, it’s a friendly face on a holiday that they are able to celebrate.”

McMahon said everyone involved benefits. “I don’t think most people think about anyone being alone on a holiday,” he said. “They can’t imagine anyone is having that experience. But when they hear about what we are doing, and it really hits home for people, and sort of expands what the holiday season means. It’s very touching, and it impacts the community when they know that within the community there is that level of commitment.”



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HOUSING

Worcester Chamber study begins with EDCC

WORCESTER – The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with its partners in the Economic Development Coordinating Council (EDCC), began a city-wide housing study on Nov. 12 with Dr. Mahesh Ramachandran and his team at Smart Growth Economics in Cambridge. The City of Worcester has not commissioned a housing study since a 2012 study by RKG Consultants and I2 Development Consulting, Inc.

The housing study will be conducted in three phases. The first phase will consist of an economist assessment of Worcester, a regional demographic forecast, and a comparative study of best practices in housing and economic development in cities throughout the country. The second phase will contain an update of the 2012 studies specifically utilizing a life-stage analysis and surveying of Worcester employers. The third phase of the study will feature an

analysis of housing market and trends in property sales data, followed by an econometric analysis of amenities and disamenities affecting the Worcester housing market.

The local, state, and national economy has recovered significantly since 2010, and Worcester’s population and housing needs have changed accordingly. Worcester is home to a unique housing market with its historic triple-deckers surrounding all of the Worcester neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the historical housing stock in Worcester is also costly to maintain and upgrade, with 74.5 percent of the housing stock constructed before 1970.

According to the Census Bureau, in 2017 there were 72,067 occupied housing units in Worcester in 2017, 44,056 or 61.1% of these were renter occupied. Median rent in 2017 was \$1,019, up 15.8 percent since the 2010 mark of \$880. Worcester’s population has also increased within this time period to 185,685, up 2.4 percent from a population of 181,264 in 2010. The vacancy rate in Worcester for homeowners in 2017 was 1.9 percent and for renters 4.3 percent.

As there is an increase in demand within the Central Massachusetts housing market from population inflows as people get priced out of other housing markets, Worcester is suffering from a housing shortage needed to support its businesses and residents.


Downtown Worcester is an example of the EDCC’s collaboration, experiencing extraordinary development with over

1,000 units of housing developed or in development plans which will significantly expand the rental and ownership markets city-wide.

“The Chamber, with input from our partners from the EDCC (City of Worcester, Worcester Business Development Corporation, and Massachusetts Biomedical Initiatives) is taking the lead on this housing study with Smart Growth Economics. The EDCC unanimously agrees that the data obtained, along with the life stages strategy, will help to set the course for the city over many years,” said Timothy P. Murray, the Chamber’s President and CEO. With the momentum underway in the city, the study will provide data to the EDCC to help the team understand where additional opportunities exist such as in affordable housing and condominium and new housing construction both in the rental and ownership market.

According to Murray, “We recognize we need a variety of housing options at different price points if we are going to meet the needs of our residents and business community as Worcester and Central Massachusetts continues to grow.”

- Dr. Ramachandran is no newcomer to Worcester, having earned his Ph.D. in economics from Clark University and brings a talented team, with previous experience delivering data-driven products for complex policy decisions, to the project.



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DIVERSITY

How to access Hispanic markets

WORCESTER – One in every four children born today in the United States is Latino, with 91 million Hispanics projected by 2040 – a 24 percent growth.

Eduardo Crespo, CEO of Hispanic Market Solution, revealed a bevy of those startling statistics along with best practices for businesses looking to tap into or enter this market for employment and sales during a special workshop presented by the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce in October

“There’s been a 72 percent increase in Hispanic consumer spending over the last 10 years and 33 percent of all Hispanics are below the age of 18,” Crespo said.

The exponential growth of Hispanics also has an enormous impact upon workforce management trends and office culture. Crespo said the growth of Employee Resource Groups (ERG) - employees who join together in their workplace based on shared characteristics or life experiences - across the country in recent years is proof. “It has been proven that people that come from a particular background who are given the chance to interact within their groups, it improves productivity.”

One of the first best practices to review when assessing Hispanic markets is brand awareness. “Does your brand stand for mediocrity or does it aim for excellence?” Crespo said. “Just because a particular Latino happens to speak Spanish doesn’t make them a PR person or good communicator.”

He used Amazon as an example

of gauging how your own company or department handles customer experience, adding that Amazon aims to provide clients with top notch service during and after every transaction. Having a fuller understanding of what your organization knows and its core values before trying to sell to one particular group. Tapping internal assessment tools to assess a particular brand is essential before entering or expanding into any market.

“Attracting Latinos to do business with you doesn’t only mean selling to them,” Crespo said. “Unless and until you really know what it is that you’re about, hold on. Don’t sell yet.”

Crespo mentioned a past client of his that was a large credit union in Massachusetts that required fundamental core changes in better managing diversity. He started as their consultant by advising them to not only look at the future but also what their competitors are currently doing such as how they are communicating, what are their price points and sales counts, and do the market research.

“Ask, see, realize, visit,” Crespo advised.

*Crespo’s bio highlights over 20 years of US Hispanic marketing, advertising, PR. He is passionate about increasing awareness about this market and providing strategic direction, precise solutions and creating compelling campaigns. In addition to offering consulting services and executive workshops, Eduardo can be booked as a speaker at your next event.*



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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

China trip an eye opener to economic super powers

In early October, I flew the 6 a.m. JetBlue flight out of Worcester to John F. Kennedy Airport (JFK) in New York City. The plane landed in New York in under an hour. While at JFK, I took out my IPAD and along with my cell phone worked for much of the day. At 3 p.m., I began the short process of boarding a plane to Beijing, China, where I would join a small group of Chamber of Commerce leaders who I would accompany on an inspection tour of China. The inspection tour was a visit to explore whether our respective Chambers of Commerce would be interested in hosting a group tour at a later date. These tours are facilitated by Citslinc, International, which works closely with Chambers across the United States and Canada. After a very smooth flight (12 1/2 hours), we landed in Beijing, China at approximately 8 p.m. where we were greeted by our hosts and tour guides. We quickly boarded our tour bus and were off to a beautiful hotel where we would prepare for a full day of meetings and sightseeing visits the following day. The trip from Worcester to Beijing reinforced that from Worcester Regional Airport people can travel from Worcester to virtually anywhere in the world. These flight options will grow next summer when Delta adds daily flights to Detroit. This will give Worcester daily connections to major hubs in New York City, Philadelphia, Orlando and Detroit.

While it is very difficult to read a newspaper or online news or turn on the TV or listen to the radio and not hear about trade tariff disputes between the

United States and China or the military tensions in the South China Sea, it is a reality that the two nations represent the two largest economies in the world. In this regard, while it is important to address legitimate issues of trade inequities, industrial espionage and free and open access to international shipping lanes and fly zones, it is imperative that leaders between the two countries strive to find common ground and trade balances as a stable world order is key to the growth of both nations.

One of the means for us to do so is to have government, business, and citizens of both countries learn about the history and cultures of each other's societies. China is one of the earliest civilizations known to mankind with dynastic monarchies ruling the country for centuries before modern day China took form, post-World War II and led by the Chinese Communist Party. Our trip allowed us to visit many of these historic locations and with our knowledgeable tour guides, gain an understanding of how many of these ancient sites and traditions influence modern China to this current day. These locations include the Temple of Heaven, the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, the Ming Tombs. We also visited the Capitol city of Beijing, as well as Shanghai, Suzhou, and Hangzhou. Please see our Page B9 House Ad in this Chamber Exchange Newspaper edition to learn more about the planned itinerary for the 2019 trip to China from Oct. 5-13. The trip is

open to both Chamber members and non-members.

As previously mentioned, trade between our two countries is significant. China is the United States' third largest trading partner. China, with a population of approximately 1.415 billion people sent 19 percent of all their exports to the United States in 2017, which was valued at \$431.7 billion. During that same year the United States, with an approximate population of 326.766 million, sent 8.4 percent of all U.S. exports to China which was valued at approximately \$130.4 billion. The United States' top trading partner is Canada, with a population of about 37 million people. The United States sends 18.3 percent of its exports valued at \$282.5 billion to Canada. The United States second largest trading partner is Mexico, where the United States sends 15.7 percent of all its exports valued at \$243 billion. Mexico's population is about 130.759 million.

According to the world economic forum in Switzerland, by 2030, China will be the most popular tourist country in the world. They will surpass both the United States and France in this regard. Currently, tourism represents about 11 percent of China's GDP and employs 28.3 million people. Our visit underscored this growing trend, in that the Chinese government recognizes that their rich history and growing economy serve dual purposes in bringing visitors to China. Our trip reinforced the effort that the Chinese have undertaken

to grow their tourism industry. This includes major investments in transportation infrastructure such as new airports, the largest investment in high-speed rail in the world that link all corners of China together, as well as scores of new roads and bridges. Witnessing these massive investments in transportation, makes clear the need for the United States to do the same if we are going to stay competitive in a growing world economy that includes a modern China. The Chinese government recognizes that a modern transportation infrastructure goes hand and hand with building and maintaining a strong economy. Moreover, as Chinese history demonstrates through things such as the Great Wall, the Chinese have always been willing to undertake large infrastructure projects for the betterment of their nation. Overall, the trip was an excellent experience that gave great insight into China's history, modern day economy and business climate, transportation investments and perspective of the Chinese people in a new modern China. As a fellow world super power, the more that we as Americans can understand this perspective, the better able we will be to navigate the challenges that will invariably arise between our two nations, and continue to maintain U.S. economic, diplomatic, and military leadership in world affairs. To learn more about this trip offering, contact Alex Guardiola at [aguardiola@worcesterchamber.org](mailto:aguardiola@worcesterchamber.org).

- Timothy Murray is president and CEO of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.



TIMOTHY MURRAY



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INDUSTRY FOCUS

Krafts announce major expansion at Rand-Whitney

WORCESTER – On Sept. 12, long-time Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce member Rand-Whitney cut the ribbon on a new 45,000-square-foot expansion of its manufacturing facility on Rand Whitney Way, formerly known as Agrand Street, located in the Quinsigamond Village neighborhood of Worcester.

This expansion brings the company's total operation to 225,000 square feet at the 22-acre site that Rand-Whitney has occupied since 1965. The \$ 15 million expansion will allow the company to modernize its equipment to better service the demands of an expanding customer base. Rand-Whitney specializes in creating customized packaging for a wide array of companies.

The R and-Whitney G roup h istory d ates b ack t o 1857. The Dodge Paper Box was acquired by Whitney Box in 1938, Jacob Hiatt was the company's president at the time. The new entity was renamed Rand-Whitney, and Jacob Hiatt remained the president. Jacob Hiatt and his daughter Myra Hiatt Kraft were very active in the Worcester community, and very generous with various Worcester based initiatives, centered around education and youth development. The Worcester Public School's Jacob Hiatt Magnet Elementary School, is named in his honor for his contribution to strengthening public education in Worcester.

The company was purchased by Hiatt's son-in-law, Robert Kraft in 1968, and is now part of the Kraft Group. The Kraft Group includes the New England Patriots football team and the New England Revolution soccer team. Robert Kraft and his sons, Jonathan and Dan, attended and spoke at the ribbon cutting. In their remarks, both Robert and Jonathan Kraft acknowledged the family's connection with the city of Worcester and the economic development of the city. "Worcester is a great place to be."



The Kraft Family, Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito, Rand-Whitney President and CEO Nick Smith, Rand-Whitney CFO Chris Harrigan, and local leaders gather along with some of the company's longest working employees to cut the ribbon.

said, "Rand-Whitney has had a great partnership for the past 50 years with the city of Worcester. This investment will set the table for the next 50 years. We are excited about the future."

The facility in the Quinsigamond Village Section of Worcester employs approximately 200 people. Some of these employees are the second or third generation in their families to work at Rand-Whitney, and a number have worked for the company for more than 40 years. During the ceremony, both Robert Kraft and his son, Dan, described their time working at the Worcester facility. City Manager Edward Augustus, Jr., Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito, Chamber President Timothy P. Murray and a number of elected officials attended the ribbon-cutting event.

The Chamber thanked Rand-Whitney for the many contributions it makes to the city and region and applauded the company's commitment to Worcester and the expansion that is continuing its long-standing investment here.

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START-UPS

Q&A: Where are the innovators now?

WORCESTER - Startup Worcester, the Chamber's yearlong incubator program for the region's entrepreneurs is in its fourth cohort and will be five years old next year. Startup Worcester is a program originally created to recruit, retain, and incubate startups and the entrepreneurs out of the nine Worcester area colleges and university, but has since opened up to larger applicant pools. To date, Startup Worcester has had 42 startups participate in the program, with yearly cohorts growing in size. Startup Worcester participants have a history of successfully targeting industry gaps and creating innovative alternatives. Startup Worcester is a partnership of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, The Venture Forum, and Worcester CleanTech Incubator to launch and to provide support as well as space for the region's young entrepreneurs. There is no charge for applications or winners. Each StartUp Worcester membership awarded is valued at over \$1,500 (Chamber, WCTI shared office and The Venture Forum memberships), but the access to resources, mentors, network and publicity are invaluable to help companies get to the next level. Thank you to this year's lead sponsors - Commerce Bank, Iandoli Desai & Cronin P.C. and supporting sponsors - The Better Business Bureau, S&G Business Consultants, and ten24 Digital Solutions for supporting our region's startups and recognizing that entrepreneurship is a key for growing the community. In preparation for the five-year anniversary, the Chamber Exchange decided to check in on some of the most successful startups of the past and see where they are now.

HydroGlyde Coatings, LLC: Dr. Stacy Chin

It has been over 50 years since the last technological advance was made with latex condoms. HydroGlyde coated condoms bring a self-lubricating patent-pending product to the market that increases user satisfaction and has a decreased risk of breakage. Better lubrication

can lead to more consistent and correct use of condoms, ultimately minimizing the risk of STI transmission and unwanted pregnancy. Having already received a \$100,000 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, secured Phase II SBIR from the NIH media attention from national outlets including NBC and Fast Company, HydroGlyde Coatings is quickly growing its presence nationally. **HydroGlyde Coatings Short Term Goals:** "Continuing to create better manufacturing processes due to the difficulty of manufacturing medical devices and then creating a market study". **Relationship to Startup Worcester:** "SW was a great resource to help entrepreneurs grow and ask questions to help with all aspects of developing a business, all while providing a supportive network and opportunities to engage with leaders and mentors in the area."

**Kinetic Batteries: Dr. Aaron Birt**

Kinetic Batteries aims to challenge 30 years of battery manufacturing stagnation through its scalable additive manufacturing technology for Li-Ion batteries. Dr. Birt and his team are hoping to revolutionize the battery industry by reducing pack-level costs by more than 40 percent, consuming 81 percent less energy, and reduce the manufacturing carbon footprint by 15 percent. Dr. Birt launched Kinetic Batteries with the help of a \$40,000 grant from the Massachusetts Technology Transfer Center and has since grown the company through a successful machine learning project with laser producer IPG Photonics. Dr. Birt has been no stranger to media attention, having been named to Forbes 30 Under 30 Class of 2018 for Advanced Manufacturing. Dr. Birt is joined by a talented team with backgrounds in engineering and battery technology. **Where is Kinetic Batteries Now?** What are your short term goals?: "Kinetic Batteries is under a MassCEC Catalyst Program to complete optimization of our new electrode manufacturing technology. Once we achieve

this, our goal is to grow the company and scale the technology starting next year." - Aaron Birt **What are some challenges you foresee in your growth?:** "The battery industry is extremely competitive and the technology itself has to be painstakingly validated as the batteries we want to build will be in critical electronic systems." **What do you look for when hiring employees?:** "We look for people who have strong critical knowledge in our core technical areas with a desire to use that knowledge to make an impact." **Relationship with Startup Worcester?:** "Startup Worcester taught us how passionate Worcester is about entrepreneurship, and how to connect with other experts and entrepreneurs in the city to leverage one another in order to get things done. Worcester is our home and we look forward to building and growing our organization here."

**Slydde: Peter Levin**

Slydde was an entrepreneurship outlet for Mr. Levin to tackle the frustrating, disorganized queues that develop when ordering an item in a traditional ordering setting. Levin created an app with the help of a team of UMass Amherst students that served as a mobile-ordering platform that streamlined the payment process and made purchasing a more convenient process. Slydde was featured in several news outlets and received positive feedback during several market testing pilots. **Where are you now?:** "Chief Technology Officer at Muse Paint Bar based in New York City, New York. Slydde was acquired by Hooch, Inc a technology company operating within event promotion end exclusive dining experience backed by Warner Music Group, Rosario Dawson, Shaun White, and more at the end of 2016." **Relationship to Startup Worcester:** "Being a Startup Worcester "winner" at the time served as a strong signal to customers. Having free office space through the SW

SEE START-UPS, PAGE B9



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Megan Shea, Doherty Memorial High, Dose of Fiber Arts  
Susanne Logan, Elm Park Community, Hands On, Minds On: Nature  
Erin McMahon, Lake View, Opera Meets Lake View School  
Lauren Racca & Jill Samia, May Street, The Magic of Science  
Kerry Monaco, Midland Street, Creating a Living Classroom Museum  
Josephine Robertson, Sullivan Middle, The Choices You Make  
Johanna Spears, Woodland Academy, Mixed Media: Soundscapes & Test  
Kim Marshall, Woodland Academy, Visual Thinking Strategies  
Patricia Padilla, Woodland Academy, Get Fit at Woodland Academy  
Alana Juneau, Worcester Arts Magnet, A World of Color  
Alana Juneau, Worcester Arts Magnet, Taking Art to the Next Level  
Anne Marie Morrissey, Worcester East Middle, Sowing Seeds  
**Awards totaled more than \$ 6,000. In addition, WEDF is awarding \$ 1000 to Burncoat High School for the school's athletics fund in honor of Unum for its Valedictorian Sponsorship of the Distinguished Alumni and Friends of the Worcester Public Schools event.**

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- Funded equipment and materials and supplies for technology and all academic areas.

The Worcester Public Schools serves 25,000 students; WEDF's outreach involves more than 92% of those students. The majority of the students (59.5%) are economically disadvantaged and are not able to pay fees for athletics, SAT's, field trips, educational supplies and uniforms. WEDF's priority is to allow all students access to those resources. Your support will help make certain that all students can access the resources that guarantee a well-rounded, high-quality public education in our community.

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# START-UPS

## START-UPS, FROM PAGE B8

membership was a nice perk. Instead of investing in physical space, we could focus our expenses on product and sales”.

### Petricore Games: Ryan Canuel

Petricore is a game, website and app development company focused on mobile devices. Petricore offers a wide range of digital services from software development to game development and even interactive museum programming. Petricore has developed five games to date, with Mind the Arrow named as top 60 games in the Apple Store and received over 200,000 downloads. Petricore has also worked with a variety of clients on projects including a series of interactive kiosks to explore the history and information of the American Battle Monument Commission Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery in France. Exhibits allowed visitors to search through a Cemetery of 14,000+ Burials, view interviews of family members of soldiers, access interactive photos that change from during the war to modern day, and flip through a digital registry of gold star mothers. Petricore has grown since its participation in the inaugural Startup Worcester program in 2015, managing several work contracts and has grown to a team of nine employees and interns. Canuel was chosen as Worcester Business Journal Class of 2018: 40 Under 40.

**Where is Petricore now?:** “Since forming in 2015, we’ve done over a million dollars in sales, and this year accounted for almost 45 percent of that. We hired our first full-time developer that wasn’t a part of the founding team, and we’ve continued to grow our base of clients.” – Ryan Canuel

**What are some short/medium term goals you have created for your company?:** “As we move forward in the short term, we plan on continuing to diversify our customer base and grow the capabilities of the business. In the medium/long term we’re working on our latest game, which is planned to release in 2020 and we’re actively pursuing funding for that project.”

**What are some challenges you foresee in your growth?:** “Our consulting work and our product work currently occur side-by-side, which can be quite challenging. The client work always takes priority and can pull development resources off our product development. As we move forward, we’ll need to figure out ways to effectively work on that. We also always struggle with making sure our work load in consistent enough to warrant hiring vs. contracting. This year has been quite busy, and we’re now trying to pinpoint what next year will look like before we look at hiring any additional talent.”

**What do you look for when hiring employees?:** “You definitely need to be willing to wear many hats given our smaller size. Our developers sometimes manage our clients, or help me plan a budget, so people need to be willing to help on multiple fronts. We’re always looking at how people fit into our culture, and also people’s ability to work out problems on their own before looking for help. Lastly, you’ve got to love games!”

**Relationship to Startup Worcester?:** “Start-up Worcester provided us the resources we needed early on to help us get to where we are today. The press that Start-up Worcester helped us attract was crucial in legitimizing us as a business in the eyes of our early customers, and introduced us to many people in Worcester. Lastly, connections that I made via start-up Worcester continue to this day, including the lawyer and account we use both being folks I met via the program. Starting out the gates as a new company, with the supporting network of the Chamber behind us, was essential in helping push us forward as a business.”

### WooRides: Shahbaz Soofi

WooRides first entered Startup Worcester in 2017 with the novel idea of creating a transportation option that is zero-carbon emission – pedicab services. WooRides is one of the unique Startup Worcester companies that is participating in its second year of Startup Worcester! WooRides is a worker-owned cooperative startup company. At WooRides, workers are not only employees but have a stake in business strategy and decision making as well. WooRides successfully operated in 2017 to provide transportation services for events in Worcester and to the city’s nightlife. Today, they have expanded their pedicab services to a retail storefront at 22 Portland Street in Worcester where they will offer bicycles for sale, bicycle maintenance, and host community events targeting Worcester’s youth in partnerships with other Worcester organizations.

**Where is WooRides Now?:** “We are still basking in our success from taking on and paying six youth to help build our business in a variety of ways, including setting up our shop, printing and applying decals for our windows, managing and learning about social media marketing, bike mechanic work, and organizing a collaborative block party and trick bicycle competition with 508 Bike Life. The block party was a huge hit. Special shout out to Worcester Community Action Council; if it weren’t for them and their awesome spring/summer youth employment program, we would not have been able to pay the youth for their labor.”

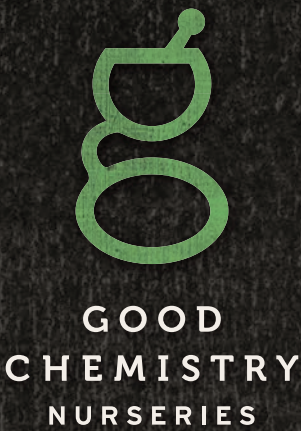
**What are some short-medium term goals for WooRides?:** “Right now, WooRides is going through some significant planning and organizing to launch some new services this spring. Short term goals include building out our new retail store on 22 Portland Street, across from The Grid apartments, and getting bikes cleaned and ready for sale. Medium term goals include getting corporate sponsors and small businesses to advertise and market with WooRides via our street team promotion and digital promotion (social media & online) services so that we can offer free rides at community events and celebrations. We hope that local businesses, big and small, will be able to see that simply providing fun, family friendly activities will not go unnoticed in our community and that their support will be reciprocated.”

**What are some challenges you foresee in your growth?:** “Like many startups, one of the biggest challenges is scaling up at an appropriate rate. We don’t want to get too ahead of ourselves, but we also do not want to lag behind. Part of what keeps us on this balancing act is the limited startup capital we have: we need to be as efficient as possible with every dollar.”

**What do you look for when hiring employees?:** “As WooRides is a worker-owned cooperative, we encourage folks to apply who are team players, have a strong sense of emotional awareness, are committed to the mission of alternative transportation for all, and understand that the rewards of building a new business are not always immediately tangible. We value folks who are community-oriented, vested in positively impacting Worcester, and who find meaning in work that will hopefully have long-term impact. While WooRides is not currently seeking new employees, we will be in the foreseeable future”

**Relationship with Startup Worcester:** “Startup Worcester was instrumental to get our name to the forefront of city officials and businesses, especially in the downtown area. Additionally, Startup Worcester granted WooRides access to Worcester CleanTech Incubator (WCTI), which gave us access to not only office space, but a mentor and a myriad of network and professional development programs.”

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**Day 2 | 10/6 - Beijing** ■ Arrive in Beijing, the Capital of China and meet your local tour guide at the airport. Transfer to the hotel.

**Day 3 | 10/7 - Beijing** ■ Visit to the Temple of Heaven, outside views of the 2008 Beijing Olympic venues, walk the 4,000-mile long and 2,000 year old Great Wall, see a jade factory, and a Ming tomb.

**Day 4 | 10/8 - Beijing** ■ Sightseeing at Tian An Men Square, the Forbidden City, the Pearl Market, and the Summer Palace. Enjoy a Roast Peking Duck dinner.

**Day 5 | 10/9 - Beijing/Shanghai/Suzhou** ■ Fly to Shanghai, visit the West Garden Temple blending garden art and temple art harmoniously.

**Day 6 | 10/10 - Suzhou/Hangzhou** ■ Morning visit to Suzhou silk factory, tour with the centuries old Lingering Garden. followed by a visit to the National Embroidery Institute.

**Day 7 | 10/11 - Hangzhou/Shanghai** ■ Boat ride on West Lake with relaxing stopover at jewel-like pagodas followed by a visit to the Longjing Green Tea Plantation.

**Day 8 | 10/12 - Shanghai** ■ Visit to the Shanghai Silk Rug Factory followed by an afternoon at the Yu Garden, a maze of marvelous pavilions, ponds, rocky works and over arching trees and free time at the old town bazaar.

**Day 9 | 10/13** ■ Return to Boston arriving the same day

Visit our website: [WorcesterChamber.org](http://WorcesterChamber.org) or contact

Alex Guardiola, trip coordinator at  
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# SBA loans top \$753M

WORCESTER - At the 2018 SBA Massachusetts Annual Meeting held at Worcester State University, Robert H. Nelson, District Director of SBA's Massachusetts District Office shared the 2018 Annual Report results with over 200 attendees.

The partnership of Massachusetts' based Certified Development Corporations (CDC) and banks, credit unions (Third Party Lenders) delivered the SBA loan programs to 2,498 small business owners for 2018.

"One hundred and seventy seven active SBA lenders in our Massachusetts network are supporting job creation and economic growth in our local communities every day," said Robert Nelson. "Together this fiscal year, 8,058 jobs were created and 9,047 jobs were retained in the Commonwealth in a collective effort to build a vibrant and vigorous economy. We thank all of our partners and friends for working with the SBA to ensure equitable capital access."

The \$753 million in approved loans are composed of three SBA Lending Programs: SBA 504 Loans totaling \$402 million (ranking # 5 nationwide); 7a Loans totaling \$349 million (ranking #6 nationwide); and SBA Microloans totaling \$2 million (ranking #3 nationwide). The smallest loan was \$3,000 while the largest was \$5 million.

How can your small business benefit by using these SBA Loan Programs? Ask the Worcester Business Development Corporation, your local CDC about the SBA 504 Loan Program.

The WBDC is a private, non-profit business organization with a public purpose mission to serve as an innovative and leading force in the economic development of the City of Worcester and

the region, resulting in job creation and tax base expansion.

The WBDC has been a CDC since 1981 and works in conjunction with conventional financial institutions to provide commercial real estate financing to small business owners that would otherwise have less access to high-quality financial resources in the Worcester County area.

The WBDC administers the SBA 504 Loans, which can be used to acquire land, buildings or equipment, or for renovations and business upgrades. From application to funding, they will assist with the process and assure the small business owner that their best interests are served. In turn, this strengthens local businesses by helping them become property owners and fostering neighborhood revitalization and long-term community growth.

Their role as a CDC is more than financial. The WBDC is home to experts who have vast knowledge of the local economy and business environment, as well as resources that are available to business owners. In addition to loan funds, they provide guidance and invaluable information to the small business owner.

WBDC is a Certified Development Corporation which provides commercial real estate financing to small business owners via the SBA 504 Loan Program. Nearly 200 small businesses have benefited from this financing, resulting in the creation of an estimated 1,000-plus jobs in the Worcester County community.

*For more information, contact Joyce Stewart, Executive Director of SBA for Worcester Business Development Corporation (WBDC).*

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