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Senator Pacheco: Taunton's newest economic driver is the new court facilities

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For well over 50 years, discussions took place on the need for new court facilities in Taunton. I first learned about the need for this project in the late 1970's and my initial involvement began in the mid-1980's while I served as the chief administrative assistant to the mayor of Taunton.

I continued my interest in the project as an elected member of the House of Representatives in 1989. After nearly a decade, plans for a new court complex became a reality when, as state senator, I offered an amendment to the 1995 Capital Bond bill that was adopted by the Massachusetts State Senate. Subsequent to this initial authorization, in April of 1996, language was added to a supplemental budget that provided eminent domain powers to the Division of Capital Planning and Operations (DCPO), (now known as the Division of Capital Assets Management). This language allowed for design/build construction, authorized DCPO to enter into necessary agreements with designated entities, and included language for project labor agreements. In July of 1996, the bill was enacted and laid before the governor for his approval. The governor vetoed the project labor agreement language, which was overridden by the legislature on July 31st, 1996.

The years immediately following the passage of the legislation were plagued with a variety of obstacles including numerous project modifications, two economic downturns, location changes, ADA concerns and a project freeze from governor Romney. Eventually it was governor Patrick's leadership and final approval of this legislatively lead project that resulted in a new Trial Court in downtown Taunton.

The completion and official grand opening of the new Trial Court facility this fall will not only help facilitate justice in southeastern Massachusetts, but will provide tremendous economic development opportunities for the region. Taunton has already begun to see a surge of entrepreneurs and new development in the downtown area. New restaurants and businesses are helping to improve the local dynamics. Proposed projects such as a Community College campus, a revived City Hall, a potential expansion of the housing market as well as possible reuses of key development properties will lead to the new growth and development needed to revitalize the downtown. In addition, significant opportunities for further development will emerge should the rail to Southeastern Massachusetts include a station downtown. Leers Weinzapfel Associates Architects is the architect for the project.

The existing businesses along with the potential projects make for an exciting future for downtown; however all the new development and future opportunities wouldn't have been possible without the new Trial Court.

Marc Pacheco is state senator, Taunton, Mass.

Project Team Includes:

Architect: Leers Weinzapfel Associates Architects

Construction Manager: Daniel O'Connell's Sons

Downtown Real Estate and Revitalization: Taunton BID

Concrete: S&F Concrete

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