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Citizens Bank Foundation presents first Mass. Growing Communities recipients - \$125,000 to area nonprofits

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As part of its ongoing commitment to Massachusetts communities, the Citizens Bank Foundation presented the recipients of its first Growing Communities initiative. Recipients are being awarded \$125,000 in grants from the Citizens Bank Foundation to fund programming aimed at revitalizing sections of the Dorchester and East Boston neighborhoods in the city.

"The Growing Communities initiative aims to support and promote neighborhood-based programs that have a significant impact on communities across Massachusetts," said Jerry Sargent, president of Citizens Bank and RBS Citizens, Mass. "We believe these grants will help enhance the overall well-being of East Boston and Dorchester, support small businesses and spur additional investments in these communities."

Growing Communities is part of Citizens Helping Citizens Strengthen Communities, part of Citizens Bank's program to contribute to the economic vitality of its communities. The Growing Communities initiative is designed to promote and make investments in neighborhood revitalization based on the existing assets of a community. Projects were selected based on a competitive grant process in August.

* East Boston Main Streets (EBMS) is a public/private initiative of Boston Main Sts., which was established by mayor Menino. EBMS will utilize a \$50,000 Growing Communities grant to establish a Small Business Institute aimed at providing culturally appropriate training and assistance to small and micro businesses. This organization has been operating in East Boston since 1995 to create a business district by initiating private and public improvements, promoting commerce, and supporting efforts to improve the quality of life for all who live, work and do business in the area.

* Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corp. (DBEC), in partnership with CropCircle Kitchen, is being awarded \$30,000 toward transforming the former Pearl Meats factory (a 36,000 s/f 2 acre former meat processing plant) into the Bornstein & Pearl Food Production Small Business Incubator, a shared-use and multi-tenant food production facility. The goal of this \$13.5 million project stated most simply is to bring opportunities to an opportunity deprived area. This grant will support the recruitment of up to 25 small businesses to relocate to The Pearl, connect entrepreneurs to job training and community colleges and the creation of a shared website to promote businesses operating on-site.

* The Urban Farming Institute (UFI) will utilize a \$30,000 grant to support the recruitment of a new class of 15 participants (from Dorchester, Roxbury and Mattapan) for UFI's Training Institute, support the transition of 2-3 city parcels of land into a land trust, and the transformation of an additional acre of vacant space into farm land. UFI supports the development of urban farming - the growing of agricultural products for income - in Boston and other urban areas of Massachusetts for the purpose of addressing environmental, economic and social justice issues impacting low-income

communities of color. The organization directly advances people from underserved communities to become emerging key leaders in local food system production with the mission of providing urban farming training and to promote farm creation via a land trust and public education.

* Sportsmen's Tennis and Enrichment Center (STEC) will fund a wayfinding project with a \$15,000 grant. This grant will support a series of walkability audits to assess the distances from one place to another, create and place permanent wayfinding signage throughout Dorchester, and to increase awareness and use of available walking and biking routes throughout the community. STEC is a year-around, family and community centered organization offering tennis, academic and enrichment programs for K-12 aged youth, as well as a host of revenue-generating adult tennis programs.

"I thank the Citizens Bank Foundation for their shared commitment in creating growth and opportunity in our communities that will last for generations to come," said governor Deval Patrick.

"I want to thank Citizens Bank for these generous grants to East Boston Main Sts., Dorchester Bay EDC, Urban Farming Institute and Sportsman's Tennis and Enrichment Center," Menino said. "The Growing Communities Initiative will help these organizations continue their great work in building vibrant commercial districts in our neighborhoods."

Launched in Ohio in 2010, the Growing Communities program has been expanded to support projects in six states within the bank's footprint. Citizens is offering its first round of funding in Massachusetts under the program this year. In addition to grants, Citizens Bank will provide volunteer support to project organizers. The Citizens Bank Foundation will offer its next round of funding for the Growing Communities initiative in 2014.

Citizens Helping Citizens Strengthen Communities is part of the bank's broader Citizens Helping Citizens program addressing five key areas: hunger, housing, financial education, volunteerism and economic development.

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