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In Brockton, ideas turning into realities are shaping one of the great community comeback stories

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In Brockton it is the transformation of many ideas into realities that are shaping one of the great community comeback stories of this century. At the core of the story is the unfolding renaissance, a renaissance that under the guidance of mayor Bill Carpenter and his team is bringing a lifestyle change to this one-time industrial city, a lifestyle where health and well-being are valued, a place where people feel and are safe, and a place where all ages and generations enjoy their city, its neighborhoods, amenities, and convenient access to education, shops, dining and job opportunities.

The revitalization plan is based on a Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) that will enhance local public-private engagement and community identity, stimulate an improved quality of life for local residents, and spur increased investment and economic activity. The development is designed to align with the interest of the broader neighborhood districts, while stressing the importance of living, working and playing within the community. The result will be a multiuse community with residential, commercial, retail, and public realm features including public spaces such as the all-new City Hall Plaza.

Designed with health and wellness integrated into the plan, downtown Brockton integrates the concept of a sustainable lifestyle with enjoyable amenities and convenient access to a vibrant shops, dining, and businesses. The recently opened Vincente's Supermarket is a great example of a healthy lifestyle business. Vincente's repurposed a long abandoned supermarket building in the heart of the downtown by joining with the Brockton Neighborhood Health Center as a partner in the development. By co-occupying the site, the Barbosa Family (owners of Vincente's) and the Health Center were able to offer an alliance that will address the health and well-being of local residents by introducing healthy food choice programs, and the importance of nutrition in every-day lives.

The weekly Farmers' Market (at City Hall Plaza) and new downtown restaurants and coffee shops are thriving daily living destinations that also lend themselves well to the concept of a healthy lifestyle Main St. As the Main Sts. revival continues the addition of cultural arts and entertainment events and venues will be welcomed. Gallery space is a planned feature of the Enterprise Block project of Trinity Financial that is reaching phase I completion. Brockton Arts conducts a variety of events including the annual the Brockton Arts Festival that brings together local and regional artists in a Main St. exhibit. The Brockton Symphony Orchestra is considered one of the finest orchestras in the Greater Boston area and is recognized as one of the leading community symphony orchestras in Massachusetts.

Each of these daily living destinations form connections to surrounding neighborhoods. Not only does the development promote "healthy living" as a strategy but serves as a catalyst to spur

economic and community development. Brockton as a city is moving toward once again becoming the regional center of commerce and activity, with destination entertainment, education centers, restaurants, services and retail that when combined with its industrial and commercial mix will bring a new vibrancy not only to the city of Brockton but to the surrounding communities as well

Around the city companies such as Superior Bakery, Cape Cod Pizza, Concord Foods, Boston Fresh, T.F. Kinnealey, Uno Foods, Cindy's Kitchen, Spence & Company, Brockton Beef & Provision, F B Washburn Candy and others have made this once "Shoe City" into the new "Food City." All though the city there are new companies that have realized what older companies have known all along, that Brockton is an outstanding strategic location that offers a solid workforce, and a great place to do business.

Where there was once crime, fear and disinvestment there is now a new spirit of enthusiasm that has resulted in new market-rate housing. Where there were once abandoned buildings there are now new companies employing local residents. Where there was once a city on the decline, there is now a city where people are looking forward to what is next, and the chance to enjoy the city and all it has to offer.

Michael Gallerani is executive director at Brockton 21st Century Corp., Brockton, Mass. In Downtown Brockton Shown (from left) are: Mayor Bill Carpenter, Sandra Martin, Jack Martin and representative Michael Brady.

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