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Brockton is putting emphasis on good planning, development, coordination and communication

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Brockton 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. The Brockton comeback story is more than cosmetic, and it is not a here and there proposition, it is fundamental. Gone are the days when Brockton made do without a planning staff, or when economic development was not a high priority.

Every part of the city is being looked at and treated with the respect of visioning and planning. The Downtown is the subject of a Transformative Development Initiative (TDI). TDI are defined by M.G.L. Chapter 23A as "redevelopment on a scale and character capable of catalyzing significant follow-on private investment, leading over time to transformation of an entire downtown or urban neighborhood, and consistent with local plans." In partnership with Brockton 21st Century Corp., MassDevelopment, and Trinity Financial the city is working with Stantec and A.J. Jennings (both consultants) to gain input from community groups, businesses and residents through a series of brainstorming and idea sharing sessions. The goal is to transform the downtown area to a walkable, transit oriented destination with housing options for all income levels, as well as shops, restaurants, art galleries, and attractive public and private open spaces.

Beyond the TDI the Downtown is a component of the Brockton 21st Century Corp. initiated Brockton Main Streets Program (BMSP). BMSP will establish strong partnerships with neighborhood businesses and property owners to effectuate the physical change (façade improvements, signage, etc.) provide training and technical assistance to businesses and their employees, and mobilize local resources and talent. The city has voted to institute District Improvement Financing (DIF) for the Downtown area. The DIF will allow the city to acquire land, construct or reconstruct improvements (such as buildings, roads, and parks); incur indebtedness and pledge tax increments and other project revenues for repayment of these debts. DIF also allows for public/private development partnerships.

Brockton's oldest neighborhood, Campello, is also the subject of the BMSP initiative. The vision for Campello is to link the Main St. with the neighborhoods, public parks, and MBTA rail depot to form a robust community of people, buildings, businesses, and spaces. The Program will use the National Main Streets Program approach to craft the blueprint. In addition the City Office of Planning and Economic Development has designated the Campello area as a Study Area, and the Brockton Redevelopment Authority has initiated a façade improvement program to assist property owners with their individual streetscape improvements.

Beyond Main St. the city is looking at a number of areas, including that in and around Good Samaritan Hospital for its growth potential as a health care cluster area, the Westgate Mall and abutting properties for their potential growth and development, and an all-new entertainment district, which will consider the area in and around the site of the proposed casino resort and including the

Campanelli Stadium (baseball) and Shaw's Conference Center, as well as the Rte. 123 corridor for the build-out potential that can translate into the creation of an emerging visitor industry in the community.

Clearly Brockton is putting an emphasis on good planning, development, coordination and communication. The professional planning work team includes the city planning and economic development director, the Brockton Redevelopment Authority executive director, MetroSouth Chamber of Commerce president, the Brockton 21st Century Corp. executive director, and the Main Streets program manager.

The efforts of the planning work team are evident all around the city. The new investments in the Main St. corridor and by companies relocating to and or expanding in industrial areas have created new job opportunities, reestablishing Brockton as one of Massachusetts business hubs. Brockton was once widely known as "Shoe City", due to the number of shoe manufacturers that were located in the city from the mid 1800s through the mid 20th Century. Today there are a growing number of food companies in Brockton that manufacture everything from salad dressing to banana bread mix and that process fresh produce, meats, and fish for restaurants and supermarkets. There are also companies that produce high end mill work, mattresses, and metal fabrications. All have taken advantage of the ready, able and willing work force, competitive site pricing, tax incentives, and the availability of water, accessibility, and easy connections to the major consumer markets on the East Coast.

Brockton has a variety of commercial and industrial buildings and spaces available. Among those are former mill buildings, recent industrial facilities, shopping and office (professional) centers, traditional Main St. buildings, and former municipal structures. Brockton 21st Century Corp. (B21) works closely with State and regional agencies to bring prospective and established (Brockton) businesses access to workforce training, financing, technical assistance, and tax incentives. B21 can help site planners, decision makers, entrepreneurs, and Realtors find the right place for their business, whether it is a start-up or a long-established organization that employs hundreds.

Michael Gallerani is the executive director of the Brockton 21st Century Corp., Brockton, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540