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N.H. development partners honored with 2017 Robert S. Bowditch Economic Development Award

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Worcester, MA On May 16, XSS Hotels Managing Partners Leo Xarras and Mark Stebbins were honored with the 2017 Robert S. Bowditch Economic Development Award by the Worcester Business Development Corp. (WBDC). The award was presented to them for their impact on Worcester's economic development over the last 20 years. Leo Xarras, who is also the chairman of Colwen Hotel Management of Portsmouth, N.H. and Mark Stebbins - CEO and chairman of PROCON in Manchester, N.H. accepted the award at Worcester's CitySquare Plaza.

The heavily attended ceremony was officiated by WBDC chair John Merrill and president and CEO Craig Blais. Mayor Joseph Petty was present along with numerous city business leaders, officials, and well-wishers. As Blais presented the award, he cited the two decades of economic impact made by XSS Hotels in their city. "Leo and Mark are not just your typical developers. They are both huge supporters of the communities in which they do business."

Blais described how their development of hotels, support of the community and influence on other businesses is a key factor in the ongoing development of the Greater Worcester area. Today, Gateway Park is an acclaimed academic and engineering and technology hub, but 22 years ago it was a parcel of contaminated land. Before passage of the Massachusetts Brownfields Act of 1998, XSS Hotels decided to take a chance on the contaminated site.

In partnership with the Central Mass Economic Development Authority, they built the 134-room Courtyard by Marriott Hotel, which launched the development of Gateway Park. The success of the Gateway Park led to XSS Hotels constructing additional hotels to include the Residence Inn by Marriott on Plantation St. and the Hilton Hampton Inn and Suites on Prescott St. And, in 2016 they began work on the 168-room AC Hotel by Marriott that is currently under construction at 125 Front St. across from CitySquare. The boutique hotel is expected to open in early 2018.

In a brief acceptance speech, Stebbins said, "We have been incredibly impressed with the support that Worcester has given us on every project that we have taken on here." He went on to express his appreciation for the business partners whose behind-the-scenes efforts and financial support have made it possible. Stebbins said that approximately 80% of their hotels are staffed by Worcester residents and concluded his acceptance with gratitude for their work.

"They are amazing; they really care about what they do and work hard to make the hotels a success."

The prestigious award is given annually in the memory of Robert Bowditch a founding member of the WBDC. The recipients are selected each year based on Bowditch's expectation for success in economic development.

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