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## **Brockton working as a team and the community, to make the city's comeback the best it can be - by Michael Gallerani**

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Michael Gallerani,  
Brockton 21st Century Corp.

In Brockton as the comeback continues, we are always looking to other success stories for inspiration and guidance. Why reinvent something if another has done well with a concept? The ideas may not always translate well, but in most cases the essence of the thoughts can be adapted to the situation at hand, so as to create an environment that may not look and feel like another, but surely offers a unique sense of place and a positive progress that can be built on.

For example, Portsmouth, N.H. covers a large area, but gives users a sense that it is cozy and carefree. The streets wind around to give shoppers a small town feel while providing locally owned boutiques, bakeries, cafes, fine dining, theatre, entertainment and social collisions.

Bricktown in Oklahoma City, OK is another "downtown" that is a model for others. Known as Oklahoma's first warehouse and distribution district, the area now boasts a baseball stadium (L.A. Dodgers minor league affiliate), revitalized canal system with water taxis, and a nearby concert and sports arena. Today Bricktown is a thriving urban entertainment district, with more than two dozen restaurants, retail shops, family friendly attractions, museums and galleries.

In Pulaski, Tenn. the downtown is like an old friend. The leadership is working hard to bring their downtown back through the combined effort of the city and the community. They are bringing back their Main St. through a mix of special events, festivals, and a sense of southern good feelings.

Each of these examples offers something to the thoughtful planning of a downtown such as Brockton's. By offering nostalgia in the way the streets, sidewalks and streetscape appear it piques people's attention. It also hastens the efforts to shift the perception of the city by outside investors and potential residents and business owners. It is about how you feel when you walkdown the streets.

The sense of history is important as well. Brockton was at one time the shoe maker for the country. The shoe industry was a vital piece of Brockton's nineteenth and twentieth century story. Thousands

of people crafted shoes and spent their paychecks in the downtown. Many buildings that once were the home to manufacturing concerns still stand. Today those buildings are becoming mixed use properties that offer market rate residences to young and old alike. Downtown Brockton is a thirty minute train ride from Boston's South Station, and just a few minutes more from Cambridge. Our historic sense of place is not unlike Bricktown. How we celebrate that history while opening the district to new ideas and uses will define Brockton for generations to come.

That brings the conversation to Portsmouth. Portsmouth offers residents and visitors a great experience. Brockton is striving to accomplish the same. Like Portsmouth we see the need to offer a social life that centers on dining, micro and nano-breweries, concert and entertainment venues and public spaces that are comfortable, safe and that encourage meet-ups. In Brockton where several hundred new residential units have been built over the past few years, we are seeing plans for hundreds more emerging from the drawing board. The new units along with the recently built and the older neighborhoods will create vibrancy where people will want to experience downtown.

Opportunity is everywhere in Brockton. Beyond our downtown efforts we are in the midst of a master planning process that is taking a fresh look at all the neighborhoods of the city, and even considering the creation of new ones. We have older buildings that are ready for a new look and new purpose. We have leadership that is committed to the future of a thriving and robust downtown and commercial areas.

It is a great time to take a new look at Brockton. We invite you to share your ideas and let us explore ways with you that can make them a reality. The Brockton planning team includes B21, the City, Brockton Redevelopment Authority, the Brockton Main Streets Initiative, and MassDevelopment's Transformative Development Initiative. We are working as a team and with the community, the businesses and institutions to make Brockton's comeback the best it can be to join others in being a model.

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

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