



# Collaborating to Transform

**F**or Massachusetts to continue its upward trajectory of job growth and innovation, Gateway Cities need help to resume the leading roles that they previously played in the Commonwealth's economy. With support from Governors Deval Patrick and Charlie Baker (who selected former Gateway City leader Jay Ash to serve as secretary of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development) and the Legislature (led by Gateway City Caucus co-chairs Senator Benjamin Downing and Representative Antonio Cabral), a new program called the Transformative Development Initiative will build on the prior work of MassDevelopment in Gateway Cities and the nascent strengths of Gateway Cities themselves by stimulating an improved quality of life for residents and spurring increased investments and economic activities.

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*Marty Jones is President and CEO of MassDevelopment. For more information on the Transformative Development Initiative, visit [massdevelopment.com/tdi](http://massdevelopment.com/tdi).*

While the name Transformative Development Initiative invokes sweeping change, MassDevelopment approaches transformative development more granularly by identifying and focusing on revitalizing districts within cities, building and strengthening local collaborative partnerships, and engaging communities to ensure that redevelopment benefits both residents and employees.

MassDevelopment, the Commonwealth's quasi-governmental finance and development agency, works with businesses, organizations and municipalities to eliminate blight while helping to create jobs and increase availability of affordable housing. TDI fits particularly well with the mission of MassDevelopment—namely, to work in areas needing economic growth by providing initial assistance that will leverage local assets to attract new residents and enterprises.

In taking on redevelopment projects, MassDevelopment has learned that while individual projects can make a big difference in communities, efforts concentrated

on planning the future of neighborhoods from the perspective of current and prospective residents and employers can reap exponential benefits. In Boston, Devens and Northampton, MassDevelopment has tackled surplus federal and state properties with environmental and economic challenges. Taking comprehensive approaches to re-envisioning a sick building, a closed military base, and a former state hospital, MassDevelopment has partnered with governmental officials and community groups to make former liabilities attractive to families, employers, workers and developers.

Redeveloping highly urban areas in Gateway Cities will likewise require focusing on interconnected projects that enhance the existing character of neighborhoods. To maximize the effectiveness of TDI, MassDevelopment is focusing its pilot program on providing enhanced real estate services and other economic development assistance to ten districts with great potential for redevelopment in Brockton, Haverhill, Holyoke,

*The water that once powered Holyoke's paper mills helped attract the Massachusetts Green High-Performance Computing Center, a joint venture among Boston University, Harvard University, MIT, Northeastern University, and UMass.*

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# Gateway Cities

BY MARTY JONES

Lynn, New Bedford, Peabody, Pittsfield, Revere, Springfield and Worcester. In addition, Everett and Malden will receive directed regional planning and implementation assistance to advance their districts' transformative development visions.

Understanding that an outsider cannot easily grasp the character of a community or apply a one-size-fits-all approach to urban renewal in unique neighborhoods—and recognizing the need for focused staff capacity within a city—MassDevelopment is complementing the TDI districts with TDI fellows, mid-career professionals who will put their experience in urban redevelopment and entrepreneurial passion to work in Haverhill, Lynn and Springfield for three years to understand the needs of their districts, build on localized planning efforts, and increase community capacity for revitalization. As the fellows begin work, all ten of the TDI Districts will sign memoranda of agreement with MassDevelopment regarding the initial assistance they will receive

through TDI, and MassDevelopment is scheduling spring kickoff meetings with each district.

To strengthen bonds within a Gateway City through its businesses and organizations, MassDevelopment is awarding collaborative workspace grants that provide for-profit and nonprofit entities with funds to start, sponsor and operate collaborative workspaces that promote innovation, creativity and interaction between and among tenants. Through this program, for which all Gateway Cities are eligible, collaborative workspaces can obtain matching grants for building improvements, fit-out, equipment, and the expansion or renovation of existing spaces. The first recipients of these awards include a partnership of the city of New Bedford, New Bedford Economic Development Council, and Groundworks Coworking Space to launch a 4,000-square-foot coworking space to bring economic activity to an underutilized building while strengthening ties between the residential and business districts of New Bedford; and

Gateway City Arts of Holyoke, which will enhance a program to help the local maker community transform ideas into prototypes, refine equipment and plan for expansion.

TDI will also make Placemaking grant awards of \$1,000 to \$10,000 for small-scale projects supportive of district visions to build community identity while supporting improvement of public spaces—such as pocket parks, pop-up stores, community gardens, and farmers markets.

The challenges Gateway Cities face require thoughtful, creative solutions. Fortunately, the leaders of these cities and their partners in the public and private sectors are rising to the occasion. The impressive dedication and resourcefulness MassDevelopment has encountered while working on economic development projects with Gateway City partners suggest that the full implementation of TDI will serve as a uniquely important tool to help these cities claim their full potential as vibrant economic and cultural hubs. 🌟