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# gateways

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## It's Happening Here

*Public art lifts the  
Lynn community* p.48

Doing Good  
& Doing Well  
Blue Q  
p.20

+

**ImpactLABS:** Business Back Home p.62

**Crompton Collective:** A Vision Realized p.34

**Test Kitchens:** Recipe for Success p.70



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# FEATURES

ON THE  
COVER

## 48 LYNN'S MURALS

Artists transform city walls as part  
of a placemaking campaign

*words by*  
HANNAH CHANATRY  
*photos by*  
LLYR JOHANSEN

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ON THE COVER:  
Cedric "Vise" Douglas  
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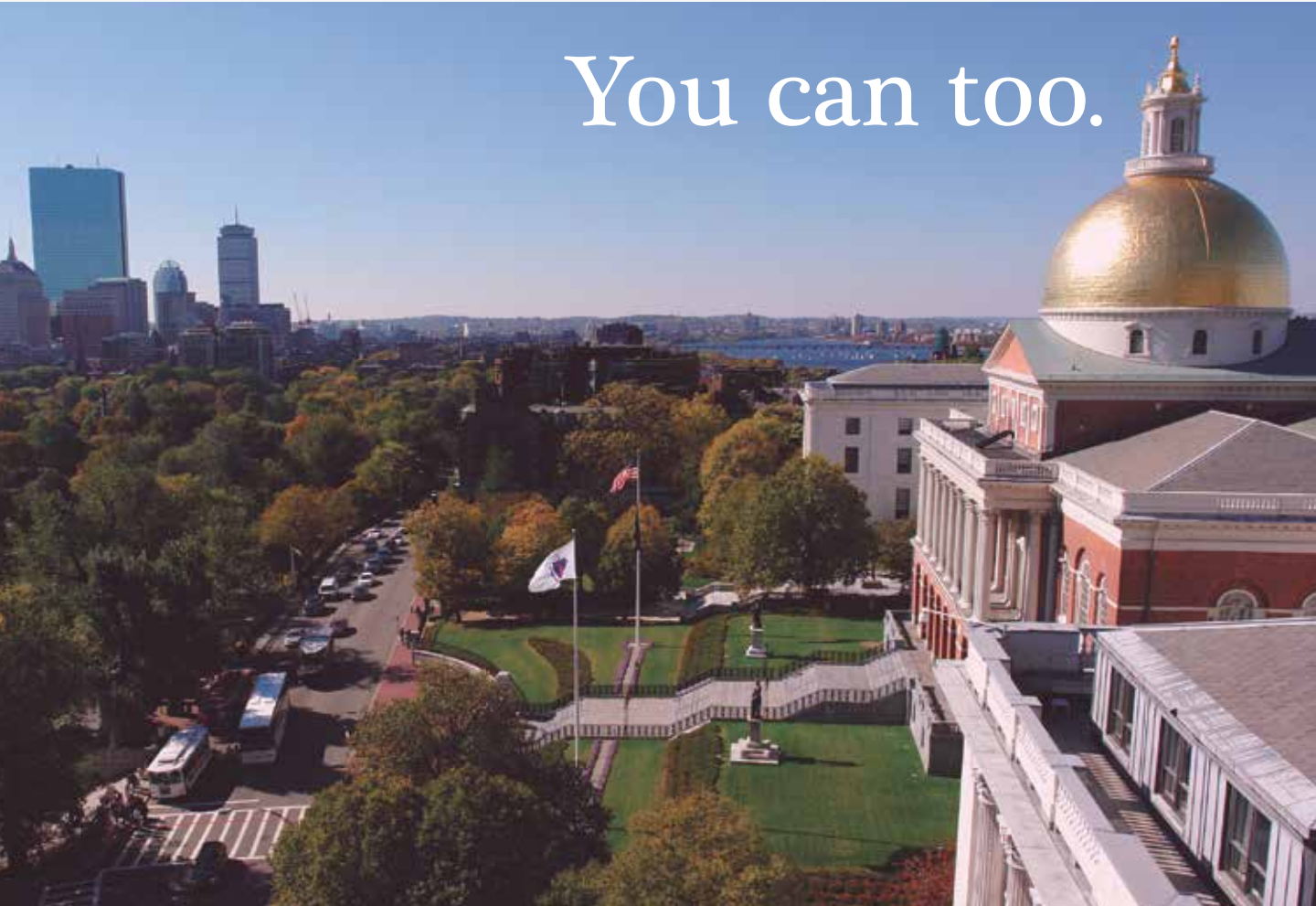
Catch the holiday spirit across the  
Commonwealth



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DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHT

# EDITOR'S NOTE



**T**HIS YEAR marks the tenth anniversary of the Gateway Cities movement. The story, as we tell it, begins with a study produced by John Schneider and a team of researchers, myself included, from the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC. Like most origin stories, this account is incomplete. The germ of the idea actually came from *CommonWealth*, the journalism arm of MassINC.

Crisscrossing the state on assignment, *CommonWealth* reporters often found themselves in urban centers. Whether it be Springfield or Worcester, Fall River or Lowell, Brockton or Pittsfield, they saw how decades of disinvestment and uneven economic growth had taken a heavy toll on places Bay Staters had long known as proud all-American cities. The early issues of *CommonWealth* cover this struggle — but the tone is often notably upbeat. Rather than laying down and accepting the decline that many experts foretold, these communities were standing up and fighting for a vibrant and prosperous future.

Fast-forward a decade and here we are with *Gateways*, a new publication devoted to telling the stories of these valiant leaders and the change they are forging through blood, sweat, tears, and boundless optimism.

This legion includes Chris Rezendes, founder of ImpactLABS in New Bedford. Chris grew up in Fall River, left for larger stages, took away what he could, and returned home to make good with his partners at a socially-responsible technology company. With similar ideals, the Nash brothers followed a path back to their hometown of Pittsfield to launch Blue Q, “producers of life-improving, joy-bringing products.”

Our premier issue also features roving entrepreneurs drawn to Gateway Cities simply because they saw opportunity. This camp includes Brooklyn-born chef Jared Forman (no relation), who came to Worcester to open deadhorse hill, and Al Wilson, the founder of Beyond Walls, an organization tapping into Lynn’s architectural and cultural heritage to produce breathtaking works of public art.

The Beyond Walls profile is just one of several examples of the prominent role artists are playing in the transformation of our Gateway Cities. Gloria Hall writes about the evolution of Art in the Park, describing how Worcester residents have rallied around the biennial installation to make each iteration stronger. We also have a piece from the Lowell-born poet Princess Moon, a testament to how cultural expression heals and unites.

Historic structures and a diverse cultural milieu are crucial ingredients, but leadership is ultimately most essential to Gateway City regeneration. This premier issue includes words of wisdom from Niki Tsongas, the retiring Congresswoman from Lowell who has made that iconic mill city’s comeback her life’s work; former Pittsfield Mayor James Ruberto, a major force in the birth of the Gateway Cities movement; and current Pittsfield Mayor Linda Tyer, who embodies the spirit of collaborative leadership Gateway Cities will need to forge ahead through turbulent times.

Conceived to celebrate an anniversary, this new product demonstrates that we are 10 years young. I hope these pages will imbue you with the collective energy of our Gateway Cities, reigniting the passion in those who have been with us since the beginning, and inspiring others to come onboard.

Ben Forman  
Editor, *Gateways*  
Research Director, MassINC  
Executive Director, The Gateway Cities Innovation Institute

# FROM THE PUBLISHER



**A**BOUT TEN years ago, MassINC began to focus on what we came to brand the Gateway Cities — regional economic hubs that had been traditional gateways to good wages and the American Dream for immigrants and others. The goal of our focus was to spark the economic revival of these communities. Our work with elected officials, community leaders and business people has begun to bear fruit, and exciting things are happening in these places.

We at MassINC are in the business of rigorous research and journalism— promotion is not our thing — but something happened on this 10-year journey: we have fallen in love with the Gateway Cities. And so, we are launching *Gateways* to bear witness to all that is happening here. *Gateways* will be a cheerleader for the Gateway Cities as places for people to live and thrive, places to raise children, places to start and operate a business, places to visit and explore, and places to be inspired.

We want you to be inspired by the stories in this pilot issue. Please share it with your neighbors and colleagues. We hope that you will be moved to help insure that our vision of *Gateways* as quarterly journal will be realized. Please support *Gateways* by advertising in or purchasing a subscription. For more information about advertising or subscribing please contact our Managing Editor, Maureen McNerney at 617-224-1625 or [mmcinerney@massinc.org](mailto:mmcinerney@massinc.org).

Like everything we do at MassINC, this publication is the product of a hardworking, talented team but one individual carried *Gateways* from start to finish. Maureen McNerney, MassINC's Public Affairs Associate, took on the role of *Gateways* managing editor bringing all of her sizable creativity, intelligence and passion to the project. Thank you to the entire team and to Maureen in particular.

Lauren Louison Grogan  
Publisher, *Gateways*  
Chief Operating Officer, MassINC

## About MassINC

MassINC, is a non-profit think tank founded in 1996. MassINC's non-partisan research is focused on promoting public policy that creates a ladder to the middle class. We are also the publisher of *CommonWealth* magazine and the parent of a for-profit subsidiary, The MassINC Polling Group. *CommonWealth* magazine is a quarterly print journal and a daily online news site. *CommonWealth's* long form journalism is dedicated to politics, ideas, and civic life in Massachusetts.

# gateways

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## LISA WONG

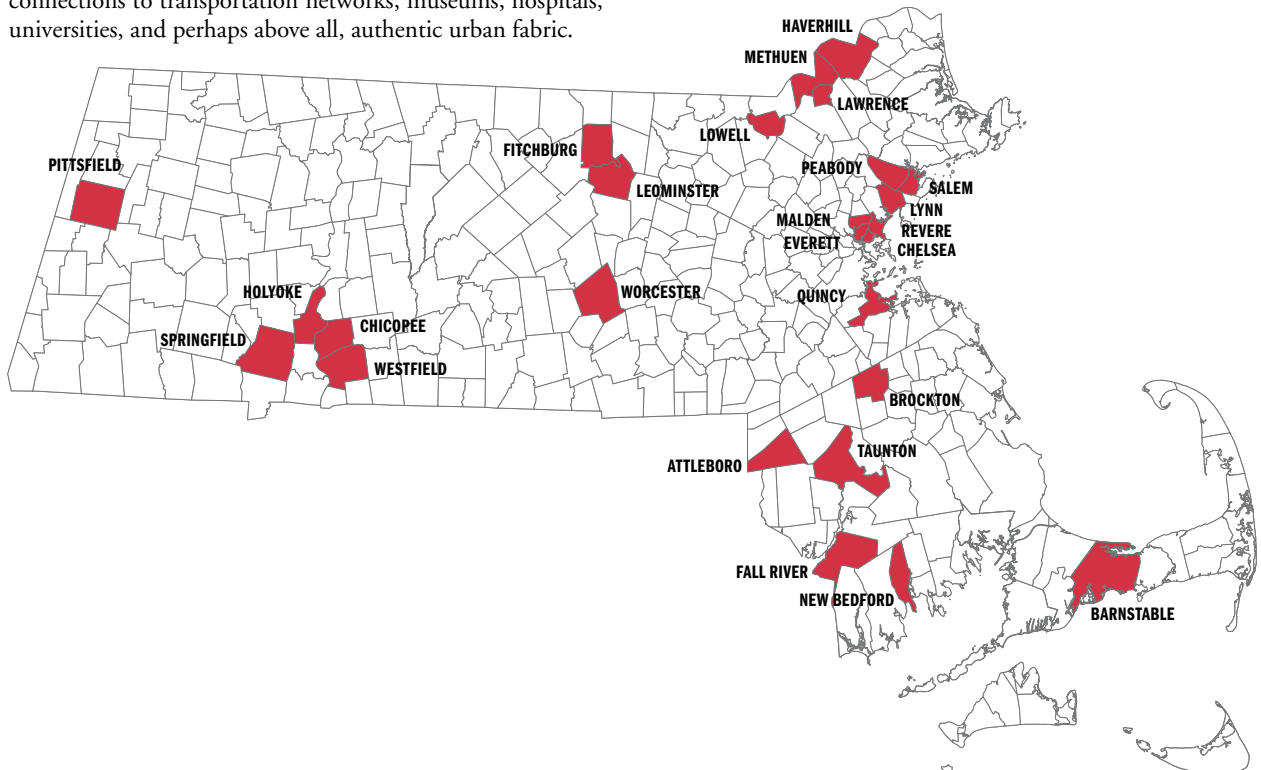
Lisa Wong is a senior fellow with the Governing Institute. She was the Mayor of Fitchburg from 2007 - 2015. Over the years, she has played a leading role helping Gateway City mayors and managers coalesce around a shared policy agenda. Her leadership was instrumental in the passage of Gateway Cities economic development legislation, and she has also been a major advocate for the Gateway Cities in education policy. Lisa also serves on MassINC's Board of Directors.

# WHAT'S A GATEWAY CITY?

## GLAD YOU ASKED!

Gateway Cities are midsize urban centers that anchor regional economies around the state. For generations, these communities were home to industry that offered residents good jobs and a “gateway” to the American Dream. While Gateway Cities face stubborn social and economic challenges, they retain many assets including historic architecture, strong connections to transportation networks, museums, hospitals, universities, and perhaps above all, authentic urban fabric.

The Legislature defines 26 Gateway Cities in the Commonwealth, which are Attleboro, Barnstable, Brockton, Chelsea, Chicopee, Everett, Fall River, Fitchburg, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Methuen, New Bedford, Peabody, Pittsfield, Quincy, Revere, Salem, Springfield, Taunton, Westfield, and Worcester.



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# PEOPLE

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Princess Moon performing at a poetry slam.

COURTESY PRINCESS MOON



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words by  
BEN FORMAN  
photos by  
LLYR JOHANSEN

# A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

*Pittsfield Mayor Linda Tyer and her predecessor,  
James Ruberto, on leading through turbulent times*



**E**XAMPLES OF community conflict sown by talking heads and internet trolls are all too common these days. Pittsfield could be a place where one might expect to find such division. Residents know firsthand what it means to see good manufacturing jobs disappear overnight, and they feel the loss of children flocking to big coastal cities for jobs. Newcomers of different races and ethnicities prevent more dramatic decline, but their arrival also introduces the possibility for tensions that often accompany such change.

Yet in Pittsfield, these challenges have pulled residents together rather than apart. A succession of civic leaders have shared a common vision for a more inclusive and prosperous city, and they've worked collaboratively to achieve it.

The city's entry in the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston's Working Cities Challenge is a notable example. The tag line for the award-winning initiative co-led by 29 partner organizations is, "All people in Pittsfield experience a safe, thriving, and just community." This project is just the most recent illustration. For years, Pittsfield has fought industrial change with a united front. Pittsfield Promise was one of the first community-wide early learning initiatives in the state, and 1Berkshire is a rare, truly regional economic development effort.

It's no wonder then that when the Gateway Cities movement took shape, Mayor James Ruberto, who served the city from 2004 to 2011, was one of the first to jump on board. While smaller and geographically remote, Pittsfield leaders played an outsized role in the early days of the Gateway Cities campaign. Pittsfield's current mayor, Linda Tyer, was quick to pick up the torch after taking office in 2016.

We sat down with the two leaders to get their perspective on what it takes to get a community to coalesce in turbulent times and how Gateway Cities work together to advance shared interests. What follows is an edited transcript of the conversation.

**GATEWAYS: Mayor Ruberto, can you speak to how the Gateway Cities movement that we know today got off the ground a decade ago?**

**JAMES RUBERTO:** Eddie Lambert, who was the mayor of Fall River, was collaborating with John Schneider, who was then at MassINC, on the concept of Gateway Cities. Eddie took the project very seriously, and he was really the spark plug that got us enthused.

At the outset, we were like a little motorboat. We were trying to see how we could turn things around or how our ideas might, when we worked together, create some legislative activity. It quickly resulted in some new grant programs. Linda can show you our Common now, which is really a focal point of the community. It got its start through Gateway Cities funding.

More important than even the early funding is the fact that it provided us an opening to join together. It was a means to talk about our needs and have serious

conversations about how we address the issues that join us all.

**GATEWAYS:** Back then, you were a mayor working on a two-year term. That's not much time to pass legislation and actually see it play out. How did you decide it would be worth the effort to join up with other cities on legislative advocacy?

**JR:** In a two-year office, if you want to see ultimate progress, your leadership style has to show that you are willing to take risks and that you are willing to establish priorities that you truly believe in. And you have to work hard to insure that those priorities get followed.

As an example, Mayor Tyer has established a priority to make Tyler Street an improved portion of this community. Tyler Street has suffered

from neglect for a number of years, and it is only through her leadership that vision will ever become reality.

Whether it is a two-year term or a four-year term, you have to stick to your guns. You create values; you then work off those values to say, this is how we are going to make this community better. Time does not influence that part of leading. If the people don't like it, then they toss you out, and they damn near tossed me out!

**GATEWAYS:** We are now in a time with so much division. Many communities are divided as to how they will solve the very real challenges that they face. But it seems like that's not so much the case in Pittsfield.

**LINDA TYER:** Right, and just to speak to that, the history of Pittsfield is so deep, as it relates to General Electric's legacy here. General Electric dominated our economy, and generations of families benefitted from their presence here. When they left, Pittsfield lost its identity. For a long time, 20 years, there was this group depression. Pittsfield didn't know how to identify itself or what its future was going to look like.

Mayor Ruberto was elected in 2004. I came on the city council that same year, so I had the privilege of working with Mayor Ruberto at a pivotal moment. It was a moment in time when our city said, yes, we have this legacy with GE, we recognize it, and now we are going to start designing our future. Mayor Ruberto led that in an amazing way, with the enthusiasm that was necessary to bring along an entire community into believing that we could be as awesome as we were in our GE hey-



Pittsfield's Fourth of July parade progresses from South Street to North Street.



(at left) At a Downtown Pittsfield Farmers Market food tent, market sponsor Jeff Bellows of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, chef Anna Gersheson, and Pittsfield Mayor Linda Tyer sample a winter vegetable salad.

(below) NEA Chairman Jane Chu touring the studios and exhibition at the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts.



day. We could have a future that is bright and brilliant, and that is part of the lesson I learned during the time when Mayor Ruberto was leading our city. It is also what I want to carry on in a way that is unique to where our situation is now—where we are today and where we imagine ourselves in the future.

**JR:** As time continues to pass, more and more people are feeling engaged in the community of Pittsfield. When I took office, there was a loss of hope in the future of this city. There was a hard-core group of people who felt negative about everything from General Electric to the sun that shines above us. They harbored that and carried that. As time is passing, I sense that there is less and less of that. I think the mayor is describing this community as it is today.

Linda is very good at celebrating small successes. Small success, or making it a great day for Pittsfield, is critical for people to recognize. It is forward-looking and it is positive. She has done an excellent job in fostering that.

---

**GATEWAYS: Retaining young talent and making sure that everyone contributes to the civic leadership in a city that is becoming more diverse are challenges that all the Gateway Cities are facing. Can you talk about how Pittsfield does that?**

**JR:** This is one of Mayor Tyer's biggest accomplishments in the short time that she has been mayor. When I left office, one of my regrets was that I didn't do enough to make sure that city government's composition reflected the demographics of residents. Mayor Tyer has worked tirelessly for two years to make certain that all of the people of Pittsfield know that they are represented, and that all of the people of Pittsfield have an equal opportunity to become an employee of the city.

**LT:** I really appreciate Mayor Ruberto recognizing that, because it really is a core value of mine. I have lived all over the world, and I know how important cultural diversity is to a community. I have seen, in addition to our growing cultural diversity, which is going to be key to our future, emerging young professionals and an interesting momentum from the young people in our city. They believe this is a place where they can live happily and find opportunities for work. They are engaged in community life; they want to serve on boards and commissions. In some ways, their participation has been organic, but it also has to be nurtured and fostered.

When I'm looking for someone to serve on a board or commission, I go to the 40 Under Forty\* alumni or I go to the class list of the Berkshire leadership program. I'm looking for those young professionals that I can recruit to become a part of this organization, so that we strengthen the relationship between community life and

the role that government plays in that. It has been a wonderful experiment that is really starting to show some results.

I feel that this is Pittsfield's great moment. We have turned the corner from when people were feeling hopeless. As Mayor Ruberto said, there was a grip on the idea that we are not going to believe in any opportunities, and a group depression just prevailed. That does not exist anymore. I think that is why this moment is so crucial for our future. This idea that we celebrate and nurture cultural diversity and that we engage with our younger generation, while still taking care of the day-to-day business of running a city is so important to strengthening the fabric of that belief.

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**GATEWAYS: Thinking about the future, what should the priorities be for the Gateway Cities legislative agenda?**

**LT:** I think that one of the things that you'll find in all of the Gateway Cities is this challenge that we have with declining housing stock. It is specifically

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*\*Berkshire Community College, in partnership with 1Berkshire and The Berkshire Eagle, launched the Berkshire County 40 Under Forty awards to recognize outstanding young professionals excelling in their industries through their leadership roles.*

(clockwise from below) North Street in Pittsfield is open for pedestrian traffic during 3rd Thursdays. Umbrella installation during the Tyler Street Better Block event. Mayor Tyer with former Mayor Ruberto.



related to the fact that our cities are older. In Pittsfield, over 60 percent of our housing stock was built before 1950. Without the proper efforts to maintain that housing stock, it is difficult to keep our neighborhoods stable. It has had a direct impact on our fiscal challenges here in the city. We have reached our levy ceiling because values across the city have been stagnant. The lack of quality housing also makes it difficult for young professionals to find a place where they want to live.

It is a big challenge because local government doesn't have the resources for housing initiatives. This is why our TDI [Transformative Development Initiative] is so important.

We also need home improvement programs so that we can fix houses before they get to the point where we have to tear them down. New England housing stock has great character, features, old porches, and interiors, but it can be hard to repair and restore.

I have had many conversations with various state agencies about these issues. There hasn't been much momentum around it yet, but it's really the next great opportunity for how to improve the quality of life for residents of this city or future residents of this city.

**JR:** And that's a forward-looking approach that the Mayor is taking. When we talk about people engaging and believing that this city, despite its challenges, has a future, it is because we consistently look to the future and say this is what we have to continue to fight for. She keeps trying to push that door open a little bit because once it gets a gap, it will pop. 🚪

Live Proud to rely on one another,  
because together always was, always  
will be, a better way. Live Giving  
because offering all you have makes  
life deep beyond measure. Live Reliant  
because while you can achieve  
alone, true happiness comes from  
interdependence. Live Accepting  
because everyone has the ability  
to make a meaningful contribution.  
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a poem by  
PRINCESS MOON  
forward by  
LISA WONG

# A First-Generation Perspective

INTRODUCING POET AND LOWELL NATIVE PRINCESS MOON



**“A**T A YOUNG AGE, we are all taught the act of disappearing” writes Princess Moon. It’s impossible to envision Princess Moon as invisible. Standing on stages across New England, her soft but steady voice takes us decades into the past, to cultures both foreign and familiar, and we cannot help but be drawn in.


Princess Moon wants to empower people to “break their silence, to find the strength within themselves to share their stories, and to grow as human beings, because that’s what we all are after all: human.” As a poet, teaching artist, and community organizer, she is empowered and empowering others.

Refugees have settled in Gateway Cities for decades. The Cambodian genocide that killed a quarter of the country’s population drove her parents to Lowell, which became home to the nation’s second largest Cambodian-American population. The stories of survival and strength that refugees bring also come with trauma and pain.

Art is one of the most powerful ways to tell the stories of immigrants and refugees in Massachusetts. And we need those stories to be told. As an urban leader in today’s political environment, facilitating conversations about the important role that immigrants play is daunting yet urgent.

Artists provide depth, understanding, and healing that transcend our politics. Their contribution brings cultural vibrancy and economic strength, showcasing the complexity and diversity that paint our country’s landscape.

Princess Moon’s poetry is deeply influenced by her personal history and cultural heritage. We are grateful that she not only works on her craft, but that she multiplies it in so many ways. Her commitment to community work is inspiring, whether she is doing an artist teaching residency at the Boston Teachers Union School, or challenging stereotypes at Asian American Millennials Unite’s “Not Your Model Minority” event.

Princess Moon recently published her book of poetry, *The Genocide’s Love Baby Learns to Sing*. You can find more information about her work and her journey at [www.princessmoon.xyz](http://www.princessmoon.xyz). 

## dance, dance, dance

my parents met in the dark while  
    escaping the genocide.  
they relied on the reflection of the pale moon  
    against their skin for guidance.  
dad said that mom was glowing like an angel.

in the Cambodian culture,  
an apsara is a goddess of earth and water.  
they are heavenly dancers.  
I've learned about them to know what it means  
    to be Cambodian.

I've read somewhere that  
apsaras are often the wives of musicians.  
I do not know if this is true,  
but it makes a lot of sense to me.

back in the day,  
dad used to be quite the charmer.  
before the PTSD kicked in,  
he was a ghostwriter for the Cambodian music label,  
The Golden Butterfly.

if you listen closely to all the albums,  
you'll know exactly which songs are about mom.  
she learned how to dance in a refugee camp  
    in Thailand.  
she's never stopped practicing.

it's been twenty years now  
that dad's been gone,  
but you can still hear his voice ringing in the hallway.  
a scratched vinyl on a broken record player,  
all your favorite cassette tapes

    stretched apart  
and thrown into the wood stove.  
I catch my mom dancing in the kitchen.  
she says,

*the acoustics here are the best.*

dad is a distant choke gargling in the sink.  
I watch her move for him.  
her wings  
draped in gold  
and heavy with  
the curse.

we are both in constant battles with our bodies.  
mom tells me to stop dancing  
in fear that I will become  
my mother's daughter:  
a lover of men who leave after teaching us  
    how to move for them.  
she says,

*marry someone with the music not stitched into their skin.  
or you'll just end up like me.  
a sad snake returning home  
to its charmer.*



words by  
MAUREEN McINERNEY  
photos by  
LLYR JOHANSEN

Doing Good  
&  
Doing Well



## THAT LITTLE BIT OF EXTRA THINKING

Blue Q products are fun, irreverent, and a portion of the sales contribute to non-profits all over the world

**T**HE FOLKS at Blue Q just want you to be happy.

There's always a certain practicality with the products they sell. Who doesn't need socks, bags, gum, or hand sanitizer? But then they pose an unexpected question: Why use lip balm when you could use Lip Shit? There is "Wash Away Your Sins" liquid hand soap. Socks that say, "This meeting is bullshit." Breath sprays that make you "Look and Feel Canadian Instantly."

### STUFF DONE WELL

Fun and irreverent: that's the essence of a Blue Q item. Blue Q describes themselves as proud designers and manufacturers of life-improving, joy-bringing products since 1988.

Originally based in Boston, the Nash brothers, Seth and Mitch, moved their operation to their hometown of Pittsfield, Massachusetts after just six years. If you see a Blue Q product in a store in North America, it was shipped out of Pittsfield.

The Nash brothers were a little worried about losing the urban edge that the product depends on when they moved, but the brothers were soon aware of the "embarrassing options of cool art and culture" in the Berkshires.

Pittsfield is the urban center of Berkshire County. Manufacturing dominated the city's economy for over a century, from textile and paper mills to General Electric. The Blue Q offices are nestled in a building that has been

in the Nash family for decades. The old player-piano factory at Hawthorne Mills was purchased by their grandfather in the early 1950s. It embodies all the beauty of old industry, at least since the brothers removed layers of paint that had covered the red brick and tore up shag carpets to reveal the original hardwoods. Light pours into both floors of the offices onto a maze of desks, workspaces, and product displays.

It is here that the creative team cooks up their next big ideas for products and artwork. Blue Q currently has nearly 450 items — adding about 150 new items each year and discontinuing roughly the same number.

"Things stay fresh, and stores expect to see new stuff all the time," says



The first floor of the main office space in what was once a player piano factory.

Seth Nash, one of the brothers who co-founded Blue Q. “We have kind of a crazy mix of products, but to us it makes total sense.”

The team is constantly on the hunt for items that have stayed the same for too long. Oven mitts and hand towels are two of their newest products.

“Most oven mitts are plaid or have some ducks on it — that’s as exotic as it gets,” Seth explains.

“We wanted to make some really cute oven mitts that are a little more snarky, and no one was doing it. And so we’ve been super successful just because it stands out from all the other oven mitts out there.

“Some of the more conservative kitchen stores won’t touch it, but as the line gets larger there will be more G-rated stuff for them to buy into without feeling... troubled.”

Ninety-five percent of the business is wholesale to retail stores — about 1,500 in North America — but Blue Q’s socks

are sold in as many as 5,000 stores. The company strikes a balance between creating products that are so cool that customers have to have them and keeping prices accessible. Nothing made by Blue Q is intended to retail for above \$15.

“Because then everything is a spontaneous gift,” says Mitch Nash.

Alan Soloman, owner of the Hudson Square Pharmacy in New York City, sells Blue Q bags and socks, as well as the new oven mitts and dish towels. He says the product sells very well because they are attractive and the humor resonates with his customers. He also says that he can count on his sales rep at Blue Q to reach out and spend time with him to introduce the newest products at least twice a year.

The products have a certain way of jumping off of the shelf while maintaining a quality that the brothers describe as intimate. That intimacy comes through in small ways, like the illustrated scenes on the reverse side of the

products, a small nod to the customer.

As Mitch says, “That little bit of extra thinking is what makes something Blue Q.”

## STUFF DOING GOOD

At every available opportunity, the Nash brothers decide to make their business about more than just selling goods.

In their larger product categories, they work with organizations to bring social benefit to their success. It started about 12 years ago with their tote bags, which are made out of 95 percent recycled materials. One percent of the sales of those bags still supports The Nature Conservancy, an organization working to protect lands and waters in 72 countries.

“It made sense,” Mitch explained. “We’re not just here to make cool stuff. We’re very much about the community. We want to be nice.”

The brothers then decided to add

the benefit to other products. One percent of the profit from socks supports the humanitarian efforts of Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières or MSF); for the oven mitts, proceeds go to hunger relief.

This nuance of their business model is not something intended to be self-promoting. In fact, the text that describes the charitable donation is printed perpendicular to the other product information on the tag. Blue Q will be giving Doctors Without Borders over \$100,000 in 2017.

"And they're really stoked about it," Mitch says. "But it's not a marketing strategy for us. We're just trying to make a better product that does more things for more people."

Thomas Kurmann, Director of Development for MSF, has seen the impact of the donations.

"In 2016, over 80,000 severely malnourished children were admitted to our inpatient feeding programs in countries such as Nigeria, Yemen, and the Democratic Republic of Congo," he said. "Thanks to the contributions of donors such as Blue Q, MSF can continue to provide this care in the years to come."

This relationship does require that MSF approve every design from which profits are donated. Seth explained that they have embraced just about all the quirkiness that Blue Q has dished out, so long as it does not promote drug or alcohol use, or a negative body image.

"They're ok with the word motherfucker so long as it's being used to empower, Seth said. "We aren't calling anyone a motherfucker, but we say motherfucking girl power, and it's one of our best sellers."

For the folks at Blue Q, giving back is just what they do, and donations are just the beginning.

The Nash family owns both their multi-tenant office space at Hawthorne Mills as well as their multi-tenant distribution center. A few years back, the brothers were looking for another way



**1% of the sale of socks supports Doctors Without Borders**



**1% of the sale of bags go to The Nature Conservancy**



**1% of the sale of oven mitts go to hunger relief programs throughout the world**

**"We're not just here to make cool stuff. We're very much about the community. We want to be nice."**

(clockwise) Katie and Mitch discuss new product development. The raised gardens and picnic table area bask in the sunlight. Sheep keep the grass low around the solar panels.



to give back a few years ago — this time to the grid. In 2012, using Solar Renewable Energy Certificate (SREC) program subsidies, they installed solar panels adjacent to their distribution center. The system is designed to produce enough energy on an average day to meet 75 percent of the building's energy needs.

Creativity abounds in everything this family touches, and that includes lawn maintenance. When it came time to cut the grass underneath and around the new solar panels, the brothers were horrified at the several-day long process using a gas lawnmower.

Luckily, the quandary came up in conversation with a local friend, who also happened to be a landscape architect redesigning the side entrance to the warehouse. Jon Piasecki, owner of Golden Bough landscape architects, raises animals to feed his family and friends. Jon offered to let a few dozen of his sheep summer under the solar panels and maintain the grass.

The sheep happen to be perfect for the job. Goats are often used for a similar purpose, but can't be used in an electrical area. Soay sheep are a desirable,



small, fairly wild breed. Significantly, they are touted as one of the top-tasting lambs in the UK. And so, the sheep who keep the grass short under Blue Q's solar panels wind up on the dinner tables of some of the most knowledgeable chefs in the region.

Jon's customers are largely English ex-pats and local marketplaces such as Red Apple Butchers in downtown Pittsfield. He has also successfully bred a variety of Soay known as Skew-Bald, with an extremely rare white head.

The folks at Blue Q couldn't be happier to have them on the team.

### "THE BAND"

They paint jokes down the hallways of their offices, throw wild holiday parties, and celebrate both successes and failures. The employees at Blue Q function as a family, one in which teamwork and creativity thrive.

The Nash brothers have tried to create an environment that is uniquely self-aware and adaptive. To achieve this,



they maintain a pretty horizontal power structure, where suggestions from all levels are taken seriously.

Blue Q employs the “Lean” or “Toyota” Method. This refers to the attempt to optimize every individual process to save time, energy, or just because it feels right. Groups of employees create teams and review their processes constantly. According to Mitch, this structure encourages everyone to be involved and gives employees a louder voice than before.

This ongoing effort started with a workforce development grant from the Patrick Administration in 2013. The \$50,000 grant was enough to bring in an expert for quarterly, week-long workshops to evaluate and make changes to different parts of their process.

“You end up moving things around, taking things apart,” Seth says.

One of the more recent changes effects small shipping orders. Up until August, a team member would grab a shipping box at the beginning of the assembly line, walk down the line grabbing the items for the order, and then package them at the end.

“When they got to the end the guy would think, ‘There’s no way all this

crap is fitting in this box.’ So now they put all the boxes at the end,” Seth describes. It helps for employees to first see the collection of products and then decide which box is most appropriately sized for the shipment.

“I know it sounds super logical and ridiculous,” he continued. “No meeting, it didn’t require a lot of discussion, and they may find for some weird reason it doesn’t work; but they’re doing this small, insignificant thing thousands of times a day.”

And the improvements are not just to the physical processes; the customer service teams are also encouraged to think about how their process can be more lean. Teams who are otherwise not jazzed about numbers end up high-fiving over Excel sheets by the end of the week.

Teams are making changes every day, Seth says. “It made everyone responsible for making this place better, and that has been unbelievably empowering.”

This empowerment is one reason Blue Q has experienced extremely low turnover in their staff.

“Everyone here is happy to hang out with one another after work,” Seth says.

“That’s not always the case at a lot of companies. Corporate culture is really important to us, and we spend a lot of time making sure that everyone has a job that they enjoy doing and they feel like they are making a contribution.”

In total, Blue Q employs around 60 folks between their office and operations facilities. Since arriving in Pittsfield, the brothers have maintained a partnership with Berkshire County Arc (BCArc), through which they are able to hire individuals with disabilities to work at the company.

“It gives us this wonderful diversity,” Mitch says.

BCArc is a nonprofit human service agency offering a wide range of services to individuals with disabilities across Berkshire County. Around 1993, BCArc wanted to move away from their facility-based operation and introduce individuals with disabilities into integrated work environments, on site with other employees. The transition was accomplished with the help of willing employers, and Blue Q was one of the first to extend a welcoming hand.

“They really sought us out when they first moved here, and through that entire time they’ve been wonderful,” says Rick Hawes, Director of Employment Services at BCArc.

The employees are responsible for small packaging that requires a human touch to ensure quality. The Lip Shit page on their retail site proudly touts, “Expertly assembled by individuals with and without disabilities working together.”

When they are not working, they are outside tending to the gardens adjacent to the solar panels, feeding the sheep, or taking art or music lessons. Seth makes pesto with the employees using ingredients grown on site.

“Whenever Mitch gets an idea for something that would be fun to do, we do it,” says Jen Miller, who has been a site supervisor for BCArc at Blue Q for 22 years. Those ideas include trips to museums, bowling alleys, and the Berkshire Mountain Bakery to learn how to make bread.

Their work is celebrated by everyone at the company, and their drawings





(clockwise from opposite) A wall decorated with company phrases and artwork. The sculptural gate to the warehouse building. A stack of dish towels is counted before shipping. Workers filling orders in the warehouse.

are featured everywhere from shipping boxes to the walls of the center. The Nash brothers recognize that everyone at the company has different skill sets and comes from a different walk of life, and every unique skill is elevated and capitalized on.

## THE COMMUNITY

Seth and Mitch are now well-known figures in the region. When they moved back home, they were initially driven to cultural institutions to re-establish themselves in the community. They figured, correctly, that donating time was the best way to get involved.

Both Seth and Mitch now sit on boards of local museums and schools. Mitch and Caitlin Nash recently co-chaired the Jacob's Pillow Anniversary Gala. They are often taking the Blue Q staff to events and performances to engage with the creative economy in the Berkshires.

Having roots in the area gives the family a perspective on the decline of the city and the region in recent decades. Seth says the biggest problem with this area is young people having enough job opportunities outside of the service industry.

**INFO**  
Blue Q  
103 Hawthorne Ave.  
Pittsfield  
blueq.com

The redesign of their warehouse entrance pays tribute to the city's history. An archway of materials from demolished buildings in Pittsfield has been erected by their friend Jon (the same Jon who owns the sheep). It is a nod to the old industry in Pittsfield; the found materials and objects are recycled and reimagined, topped with a steel beam that came from their dad's old building.

Seth seems hopeful, saying the revitalization of the region "is happening, but slowly," and the Nash family is doing their part to make it happen. Other tenants of their distribution building include Shire City Herbs and LymphedIVAs, and the folks at Blue Q were quick to speak to their success.

Perhaps more importantly, though, the brothers care about people. When it came time for a truck driver at the distribution facility to retire, Blue Q wanted to send him off on a high note. The driv-


er, a man named Dick who was in his 70's, never expected the entire staff to put on "I [heart] Dick" shirts and throw an "I [heart] Dick" party. But that's just what they do.

**"... you have to care about more than making something that's cool. You have to care about making a place that is important, that actually matters."**

When an employee, famous for giving hugs around the office, was diagnosed with cancer and unable to continue working, the staff visited her with posters, food, and decorations to let her know that she was loved. One by one, they each gave her a big hug.

"To keep this business healthy for this long, you have to care about more than making something that's

cool. You have to care about making a place that is important, that actually matters," Mitch says.

"It's debatable whether or not this oven mitt is good or bad, but what's not debatable is this whole way of trying to make a place where it happens." 



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# PLACES

**MAKERSPACES 30 • DINE 33 • COLLECTIVE 34**  
**24 HOURS 40 • PARK 42 • MILL 44**



PHOTO BY LLYR JOHANSEN

A display at Crompton  
Collective in Worcester.



# New Hubs of the Innovation Economy

HIVES OF CREATIVE ACTIVITY, MAKERSPACES AND CO-WORKING SPACES ARE THRIVING

words by  
HELENA FRUSCIO ALTMAN

**A**CROSS THE Commonwealth, inventors, artists, and entrepreneurs use makerspaces, co-working spaces, and incubators to execute on their latest ideas. There are over 75 of these communal workspaces in Massachusetts' Gateway Cities, and that number is growing. These are the access points and convening spots of the innovation economy outside of Boston.

As you enter Groundwork!, a co-working space in New Bedford, you are struck by the soaring ceilings and the sketches decorating the walls. The space seems like an extension of New Bedford's now-vibrant downtown. That vibrancy extends to the buzz of activity

in the room, as artists and entrepreneurs share ideas and support each other.

Beyond a daily workspace, Groundwork! is also an epicenter for New Bedford's entrepreneurship and creative community. They host the regional chapter of Entrepreneurship for All, a start-up accelerator that supports businesses in the early phases of development and launch. Groundwork! members are a mix of business owners, artists, and designers, and the space is a hub of activity for the community of innovators and creatives in New Bedford.

The founders, local artist Dena Haden and digital marketer Sarah Athanas, see their own collaboration and creativity reflected in the space.



The open work area at Groundwork! during a typical day (left) easily converts to a gathering space for an art opening (below). The doors at LowellMakes (bottom).



“At Groundwork! we have software engineers, shoe designers, data scientists, non-profits, and others all working under the same roof. This leads to some really interesting conversations at the kitchen counter,” Sarah explains. “You don’t have to spend much time here to get the sense that people are really pulling for each other and for New Bedford.”

Drive 90 miles north to the Lowell Makes workshop, and you will find that founder John Noto has taken a different approach. Lowell Makes is broken down into separate spaces that nearly 100 members rent for personal projects, making everything from furniture to costumes. As you descend the staircase into the basement workshop, you leave behind a classroom, conference room, and retail shop and enter the world of organized chaos that is an active maker community, where ideas are literally being hammered out, sculpted, and printed in 3D.

In Worcester, Technocopia is fueled by robotics graduates from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, artists groups,

and STEM education specialists. Located on an upper floor in the Davis Printer’s Building, looking over the streets of Worcester and its burgeoning restaurant scene. The space houses a digital fabrication shop, a metal shop, and a woodshop; the collection of tools includes a largescale laser cutter, CNC router for cutting intricate designs, a vinyl cutter, and multiple 3D printers that are all buzzing in the background.

The din of this high tech equipment is often drowned out by the voices of children excited by hands-on learning at their youth STEM education program hosted by Technocopia through a partnership with Worcester Think Tank. Technocopia uses the makerspace to provide youth programming in science, technology, and the arts side by side with the inspiring work of the WPI graduates.

On the second story of an old mill building in Holyoke, you will find Brick Coworkshop. Concrete artists, glass workers, and painters are scattered throughout the space, taking up most

of the floor of the building. The mill building allows them to create large-scale pieces, and the artists who work here say that being around other working artists is a creative inspiration.

Founders Mike Stone and Aaron Cantrell converged on Holyoke due to a





## Makerspaces provide the physical and cognitive room for new enterprises and passions to take root.

right-place-right-time confluence of 10 artists, designers, and fabricators. “We all had connections to the area in some way,” Mike explains. “And the wealth of physical space that Holyoke offers was an appealing draw. Once we began to settle in, we learned more about the social, cultural, and artistic activity already ongoing in the city, which only increased our conviction to share what we do with our neighbors.”

Traveling the Commonwealth, it is clear that people, particularly millennials, want to live in cities that allow them to pursue their ventures in digital innovation, arts, electronics, or any other number of creative careers. Makerspaces provide the physical and cognitive room for new enterprises and passions to take root. The sheer scale and availability of space in the Gateway cities is a boon in itself – we have massive, inexpensive buildings ready to

be given a second life as collaborative workspaces.

This is the reasoning behind the creation of the Collaborative Workspace Program, a single point of entry for community-based organizations, located in both Gateway Cities and non-Gateways, seeking funding to advance locally-based innovation and entrepreneurship. The first round of Collaborative Workspace Program grants awarded more than \$950,000 in grant funding to 23 organizations: 10 fit-out grants to develop and expand shared workspaces, including innovation centers, incubators, artist spaces, collaborative kitchens, and co-work

spaces; and seed grants to fund planning efforts and build the capacity of 13 additional collaborative workspaces. This year, the second round for \$2.1 million will again be used to support collaborative spaces across the state.

Our Gateway Cities have adapted the blank slate of a flexible, shared workspace to fit their community’s needs. As we consider how innovation is important to the economic future of our state, it is not only important to focus on “where” but also “what” and “who.” What does innovation look like as part of our communities across the state? How do individuals from all backgrounds participate in our world-leading innovation economy?

We believe that these collaborative maker spaces are part of the answer. 📍

### INFO

**Groundwork!**  
newbedfordcoworking.com  
**LowellMakes**  
lowellmakes.com



words by  
JOSHUA GEE  
photos by  
BRIAN SAMUELS

dine:

# deadhorse hill

**WORCESTER**, the second-largest city in New England, wasn't really known for food. It had local mainstays on Shrewsbury Street, but nothing that stood out. When Brooklyn-born chef Jared Forman, who worked in some of the best restaurants in Manhattan and Boston, opened deadhorse hill (lack of capitalization intentional) in April 2016, people noticed.

It's a year in, and the first thing you'll pick up on is how excited everyone is. Laughter echoes off high ceilings and reclaimed wood. Staff, decked out in Worcester t-shirts, (sadly, none saying "Paris of the '80s"), still seem giddy with opening night excitement.

When you visit for yourself, kick off your night by appreciating the bar program run by co-owner Sean Woods. The cocktail list rotates, but few can beat the **dePalma**, a mixture of Montenegro, green Chartreuse, and an unnamed secret ingredient. It's herbal, sharp, and chocolatey. The beers are lesser-known local brews from Central Mass, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. The servers aren't wine experts, so ask for wine director Julia Auger. She's put together a deep wine list, full of classics and more interesting choices. She has great taste in Rieslings.

Start with small plates (\$11-20). Forman reimagines **hoedeopbap**, a Korean raw fish dish, as poke. It is funky with chogochujang and pea-sized slices of green bean that pop with vegetal brightness. By the time you read this, it probably won't be on the menu anymore. But it will be on the menu at simjang, the deadhorse team's upcoming Korean-American restaurant (they really don't like capital letters). **"Pom-pous brassicas"** disappoint. A bed of hummus struggles to keep broccoli and cauliflower from being too dry. Instead, get the **spaetzle with seasonal vegetables**. You'll want the **fried chicken thighs**, but consider coming back on the weekend and ordering them off the brunch menu, where they are paired with waffles.

Large plates (\$25-34) lean toward seafood. **Mussels**, perfected during Forman's time at Watertown's Strip-T's, followed him here and are so loved they can never leave the menu. A dish of **swordfish with kimchi**, lobster mayo, and tempura-fried mushrooms has a bit too much going on. Still, the juiciness and flavor of the fish shines through. Order a side of **pickles**.

For pure spectacle, you can't beat the **whole fried fish**, served crisp with the head and tail intact. Grilled



lemon, bright piccata sauce of capers and garlic, and spicy arugula balance the lushness of the fish and breading. As you pick through bones for morsels you may have missed, servers whisk them away. The bones quickly return, fried aggressively, with a side of pure Thai fish sauce. **Fried fish bones** have an odd texture: Imagine potato chips crossed with a comb. A bit unsettling? Sure. But surprisingly addictive.

For \$110 you can get a **"centerpiece" ribeye** (serves 2-3). I don't know who looks at a menu this interesting and opts for a giant steak, but I'm sure it's good. The family-style tasting menu (\$85 per person) is ideal for groups, though I'd get it on a date.

Among desserts, the standout is the rotating list of **house-made ice creams**. I wish they would bring back the cheese plate they used to have, even if no one except me orders cheese for dessert.

**INFO**  
**deadhorse hill**  
281 Main St.  
Worcester  
774.4207107  
deadhorsehill.com



deadhorse hill fits into a category of a New American restaurant close to becoming a stereotype in Boston and New York (the beer, at one point, came in mason jars). While the type is ubiquitous, deadhorse hill is more welcoming and ambitious than most. It's not just an example of the trend; it's the platonic ideal. A pretty good ambassador for Worcester. **D**



Amy Chase in the retail space she founded called Crompton Collective, in Worcester.

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*words by*  
ASHIRA MORRIS  
*photos by*  
LLYR JOHANSEN

# Homespun Success

A WORCESTER NATIVE'S PASSION IGNITES CANAL DISTRICT REVIVAL



**W**HEN AMY CHASE was going to school for interior design in Worcester, she would drive by the old Crompton Loom Works every day on her way to school. The historic brick mill building was in disrepair, its windows boarded up, but she felt drawn to it.

Ten years ago, she drove by the Canal District building and saw that the boards had been removed.

"Oh my God," she thought. "It's even more beautiful than I remember."

She stopped, pulled over, and went inside. She was walking around ("being nosy") and taking in the empty space when she ran into the landlord, Dino Lorusso. He told her that he envisioned a cafe, an antique store, and other small shops in the space.

"That's amazing," Chase said. "What can I do to help?"

"Who are you?" Lorusso asked.

"I live nearby," Chase replied. "And I just love this building."

Her love for the building now comes through in the Crompton Collective, a boutique market curated by Chase on the first floor of the Crompton build-



ing. Half the space is filled by antique booths, which feel like miniature stores themselves, each decorated in the vendor's style. The other half is stocked with handmade goods created by local artisans.

You are drawn into the space before you enter. A glance through the open doors shows the sparkle of a sequined clutch, the smooth wood of an antique drafting table. Although the space is filled with clothes and furniture and jewelry and coffee mugs, there is no overwhelming feeling of clutter. If you don't love one display, you can move on to the next. Because the Collective is stocked by a variety of different vendors, it's a patchwork of styles, materials, and colors.

However, the Crompton Collective has become more than just a place to buy a cute card or a hat.

"I have a hard time explaining what it is, but we're so much more than a store," Chase, who was born and raised in Worcester, said. "We're a gathering place, a community center, a museum with stuff you can buy."

The space, which initially felt too big for her to fill, is now not big enough

to accommodate everyone who wants to sell with her. When she first started, she called up friends to be her first vendors. Now, she has a waiting list of 570 people who want to sell their goods at the Crompton Collective.

As the Collective gained success, Chase continued to expand its scope. She opened the White Room, an event space adjacent to the Collective that has hosted weddings for Worcester high school sweethearts and a campaign stop for Hillary Clinton alike. She helped the Canal District Business Association start a farmers market. Earlier this year, she opened a second shop in nearby Hudson, Massachusetts.

On an average Saturday, the farmers market is bustling outside the Crompton building. People wander into the Crompton Collective from the market or after picking up a coffee from the BirchTree Bread Company the floor above.

Amy's dad, who was also born and raised in Worcester, has appointed himself the store's weekend greeter and farmers market helper. He has made himself a nametag with the farmers market logo (designed by one of Chase's



vendors) and his name, Ralph, in all capital letters. He spends his Saturday morning helping the farmers unload their produce, but he remembers when the Canal District wasn't full of fresh greens and young families.

"This area had been on a steady decline since the '70s," he said. "When they built I-290, it separated the city, like putting a highway through a farm. It changed the culture."

His daughter's work is helping shift the area in a positive direction. Because it's more than just a store, the Crompton Collective has become an anchor to the



**“We’re a gathering place,  
a community center,  
a museum with  
stuff you can buy.”**

neighborhood. Ralph has seen shoppers become newlyweds in the White Room. Local politicians and nonprofits use the space for community events.

The city of Worcester has noticed, too. Chase was recognized on the Worcester Business Journal’s 40 Under Forty list and as Retailer of the Year by the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. In 2015, Worcester Magazine named the Crompton Collective best gift shop and the White Room best wedding venue.

“She treats former President Clinton the same way she treats the homeless

man down the street,” Ralph said. “I think that fairness is part of what makes her so successful.”

Although her success now feels inevitable, it is the product of Chase’s hard work — who, in turn, is a product of the hard-working city of Worcester.

Except for a brief stint in Boston running a company that organized clothing swap parties, Chase has lived in Worcester her whole life. She sold the company in 2012 and returned to her hometown.

Her initial plan to take a year off failed after a month. She was itching to

start another business. She went back to the landlord, Lorusso, who offered her the first floor space. She started installing lights on July 26 and informed him she would open on September 1.

She was in the Crompton building 18 hours a day, painting the walls, arranging the space, building shelving.

“That’s just the way I always was,” she says matter-of-factly. “My parents are really hard workers, and I think that’s probably where I get it from. We like to keep busy, we like to work, we’re very hands on.”

The building also has a history of

INFO

**Crompton Collective**  
138 Green St.  
Worcester  
508.753.7303  
cromptoncollective.com



hard work. The Crompton Loom Works building is a block-long brick complex that was built in 1860, making it one of the oldest surviving industrial sites in Worcester. It was established by George Crompton, whose father, William, had invented the power loom, which drove Worcester's textile industry. Crompton and his successors produced fabrics from the building until 1915.

A century later, when Chase first opened the Crompton Collective, she felt alone as a young business owner, but that has recently changed. She can now rattle off a list of stores – the people that own the bakery, the people that are opening all the restaurants, the girl that opened the cupcake shop, and another that opened the hair salon – that are all run by people her age.

“We’re all from the same generation,” she said, “and we’ve latched on to each other. We’re going to be friends, we’re going to help each other, we’re going to succeed, we’re going to do this.”

For Laura Dimmick and her husband, who moved to Worcester two years ago, the Crompton building is part of their weekend routine. They have bought a bookshelf, pine-scented candles, and countless gifts.

“We always take our out-of-town guests here,” she said. “It’s a prime place to spend a day.”

Chase and the Crompton Collective have helped make the Canal District a destination, and she is confident that the momentum will continue.

“I think Worcester is filled with a lot of young, talented people who want to do something awesome and want to change the city,” she said. “It’s a great time for Worcester.”



words by  
MAUREEN McINERNEY  
photos by  
LLYR JOHANSEN

# 24 HOURS IN PITTSFIELD

**PACK YOUR BAGS** for a good time in the hub of the Berkshires. We scouted the city of Pittsfield and its surrounding areas, touching on some of the many places to eat, drink, stay and be entertained. There are many things to do and see for visitors of all ages.

## WHERE TO STAY

**HOTEL ON NORTH** is the place for comfortable accommodations while experiencing the charm of the historic city of Pittsfield. The hotel embraces the antiquity of the old Besse-Clarke building; the menswear and sporting goods emporium was an exemplification of the industrial, active character of the city. The folks at Hotel on North went about the restoration to honor that history. Architectural features such as brick walls, tin ceilings, and obstructive columns are embraced and complimented through thoughtful design, while keeping a commitment to providing comfort for visitors. Each of the 45 rooms is unique in both floorplan and amenities. The collection of furnishings blend modern convenience and historic charm. The hotel opened its doors in 2015 and established itself as a go-to for the region, surviving the long stabilization period that independently owned hotels face. The hotel now serves as a sort of “living room” of the city, offering lodging, food, and entertainment.

Most weekend rates start under \$200/night.  
297 North St., Pittsfield  
[hotelonnorth.com](http://hotelonnorth.com)

## WHERE TO EAT

You will quickly notice that many places in Pittsfield emphasize their relationship with the community. From the chefs using fresh, local ingredients to the work of local artists featured on the walls of many North Street establishments, restaurants are not just feeding you; they are welcoming you to the city.

Start at **DOTTIE'S COFFEE LOUNGE** for a breakfast sandwich served on a homemade cheddar scallion biscuit alongside a classic coffee drink done well. Check out their calendar to see who is playing at “Domingo Brunch,” or bring your laptop and get your emails out of the way early on their free wifi. Dottie's is more than just a coffee shop – it is a gathering place.

444 North St., Pittsfield  
[dottiescoffee lounge.com](http://dottiescoffee lounge.com)





**METHUSELAH BAR AND LOUNGE** is a self-described “parallel universe where all the world’s problems are solved through belly laughs, love, edible and quaffable works of art.” This lounge features a small stage for live music, low couches and tables to help you relax while enjoying Cheesy Morsels or Piggy Parts. Perhaps more importantly, Methuselah boasts whiskeys from around the world on their menu. Enjoy one straight up, or perhaps a signature cocktail or one of 16 craft beers on tap.  
391 North St., Pittsfield  
methubar.com

If you prefer a shorter walk back to your room after dinner and drinks, **EAT ON NORTH** (owned and operated by the Hotel folks) features a larger space than most others along North Street, great for chatting at the bar or grabbing a more private table for your party. The American fare is prepared by executive chef Ron Reda, former supervisor of the White House kitchen during the Clinton Administration. Eat on North boasts the region’s first raw oyster bar, but also serves new variations of the ever-accessible chicken wings, cheeseburgers, and flatbreads. They feature theatre menu selections to get you off to your show at Barrington Stage Company on time.

297 North St., Pittsfield  
hotelonnorth.com/eat-drink/  
eat



## WHAT TO DO

Check the calendar for what band is playing on Saturday afternoon at **BALDERDASH CELLARS**. Balderdash is open for tastings each Saturday and Sunday from 1 - 5:00 p.m. Tastings are \$8 per person and include seven wines. If you have a group of 12 or more, book a private tasting to hear even more about their offerings from the winemaker.

502 East St., Pittsfield  
413.464.4629 (call for private tastings)  
balderdashcellars.com

A night at the theatre is perfected by **BARRINGTON STAGE COMPANY**, bringing both new productions and reimagined classics to theatre-goers in the Berkshires. Their 2018 season will include the world premiere of *The Royal Family of Broadway*, loosely based on the Barrymore family, as well as the beloved *West Side Story*.

122 North St., Pittsfield  
413.236.8888  
barringtonstageco.org

If you are in town during the week, catch a show at the **COLONIAL THEATRE**, specifically in their Comedy Garage on Thursday nights. With tickets going for just \$5, you will enjoy sets from the next generation of great comedians. (That ticket also gets you a \$5 drink at Methuselah)

111 South St., Pittsfield  
413.997.4444  
www.berkshiretheatregroup.org



**THE BERKSHIRE MUSEUM** is currently featuring an exhibition entitled *Morgan Bulkeley: Nature Culture Clash*. The paintings and sculptures by Bulkeley, a Berkshire native, are curated by Geoffrey Young, of the Geoffrey Young Gallery in Great Barrington, and will be on display through Feb. 4.

39 South St. (Route 7)  
berkshiremuseum.org





If you prefer the great outdoors, Pittsfield offers a short drive to dozens of hiking, biking, and skiing destinations. **PLEASANT VALLEY WILDLIFE SANCTUARY** in nearby Lenox is a great option for hikers of any experience, including an accessible All Persons Trail. The sanctuary also boasts an active beaver colony, so keep an eye out for dams. **PITTSFIELD STATE FOREST** offers 1,100 acres and 30 miles of trails whether you prefer to hike, mountain bike, or go horseback riding.

**Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary**  
472 West Mountain Road, Lenox  
[www.massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley](http://www.massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley)

**Pittsfield State Forest**  
1041 Cascade St., Pittsfield  
[www.mass.gov/locations/pittsfield-state-forest](http://www.mass.gov/locations/pittsfield-state-forest)

## BUY LOCAL

Before you leave, pick up some locally produced goods for your friends and family:

The folks at Shire City Herbals took a German grandmother's recipe and turned it into **FIRE CIDER**. Made with all raw, organic, health-promoting ingredients, the result is "potent and energizing." Fire Cider can be served simply as a tonic, mixed into a cocktail for extra kick, or baked into your next desert. Available at several Pittsfield locations including Dottie's Coffee Lounge and Methuselah Bar and Lounge.

Shop online at [firecider.com](http://firecider.com)

Annie Selke has been producing fun and beautiful home textiles since she started **PINE CONE HILL** in 1994. Your access to the nationally-recognized, locally-based company is their outlet. Add Pine Cone Hill bedding, curtains, or table linens to your collection — perhaps something in Greylock Navy? 125 Pecks Rd, Pittsfield  
413.629.2319  
[annieselke.com/c/pineconehill](http://annieselke.com/c/pineconehill)



If you didn't already stop by **BALDER-DASH CELLARS**, you can pick up their latest vintages at several shops around Pittsfield.

502 East St., Pittsfield  
[balderdashcellars.com](http://balderdashcellars.com)



words by  
GLORIA D. HALL

photos by  
JULIA ROSE KARPICZ

# Public Art in a Worcester Park

WHAT STARTED AS A DREAM BECAME A BIENNIAL EXHIBITION THAT ATTRACTS THOUSANDS

**I** **TOOK A** leap of faith when I suggested placing large-scale sculptures throughout Worcester to my fellow members of the Worcester Arts Council in 2005. I landed on my feet. By 2008, the idea had evolved into Art in the Park, Worcester, an exhibition of large-scale sculptures in historic Elm Park. What was once a dream is now fully realized, appreciated by all who encounter it.

Today, Art in the Park, Worcester continues to build on the assets that make Worcester a wonderful place to live: a central location, art and history museums, green spaces, a stable population of economically and ethnically diverse people, improving schools, 10 colleges and universities, beautiful historic buildings, and affordable single-family homes. This award-winning destination event enhances the quality of life for Worcester residents and draws visitors to our city from across the Commonwealth and the region.

The Worcester Arts Council had four main priorities at the start of the project: increase the visibility of the Council, promote Worcester as a place where the arts and culture thrive, increase the quality of life of city residents by providing open access to art, and support artists, specifically sculptors. As a Council determining which projects would receive grant funds, we took great care to educate Worcester residents about

public art and the proposed project. Admittedly, it was not immediately clear to everyone why investing in art was good for the city.

Public art has the power to energize our public spaces and stimulate both memory and imagination. Art can transform the places where we live, work, and play into welcoming spaces that invite pause and interaction. Art in the Park, Worcester does this and more.

After a successful launch and some experiential years, the event is now a biennial exhibition drawing thousands of visitors to historic Elm Park. I lead the event planning committee, which has grown into its own entity independent from the Worcester Arts Council. Unlike the first exhibition, which was funded solely by a local cultural arts grant, we now typically receive 6 percent of our funding from the Council and the remainder from individuals, fees, private foundations, and corporations. In addition, the contribution of time and talent by volunteers and our many collaborative partners — City of Worcester, private non-profit cultural organizations and human service agencies, private large equipment contractors, photographers, public and private schools, neighborhood groups, and local colleges — is vital to the presentation of the exhibition.



This type of project impacts all members of the Worcester community. Youth from nine Worcester Public Schools have experienced the process of design, submission, selection, creation, and installation of sculpture in the Art in the Park exhibition. Young refugees from African countries have created poetry that incorporates nature, public art, and familiar memory.


The benefits and advantages of presenting Art in the Park flow back and forth, from the park to the visitor and vice versa. Elm Park was and remains the perfect site to present Art in the Park. The historic cultural landscape is conducive to presenting sculptures. It is in continuous use by individuals young and old, and by families with children across the economic and ethnic spectrum. The year-to-year presentation in the park has broadened community interest in its physical condition, leading to an extensive restoration and renovation of the park.

The success of the 2017 event reinforced the importance of collaboration, paying attention to the scale and design of the existing cultural landscape, considering the essence of place and memory, and including a mixture of local public artist with attachment to the city as well as national and regional artists.

The theme of the 2017 exhibition was “Interludes,” and the exhibit featured a broad range of sculptural voices and interpretations that evoked memories of play and other leisure-time activities. The exhibit drew crowds who expressed desire for the pieces to remain in the park, praised the exhibit, and gave additional donations. The community pride in 2017 was especially validating given the setbacks faced by the exhibition in previous years.

In 1793, Abbe Gregorie coined the word vandalism in his “Report on Inscriptions in Public Monuments” to denote the destruction during the French Revolution by revolutionaries of monuments, books, art, anything related to aristocracy. He argued that these public works belong to all of France, and as such, should not be destroyed.

In 2015, there was unprecedented vandalism, beginning on the eve of the exhibition kickoff. It was a hard blow to the spirit of both artists and residents. However, the community resolved to work together to ensure this did not happen again. During the 2017 exhibit, Art in the Park received a record number of messages from individuals when they believed that a work had been disturbed, demonstrating that the community’s sense of ownership and attachment to the installations has grown over time.

Art in the Park, Worcester has introduced audiences — traditional and non-traditional — to the works of regional and national public artists in a variety of settings. At the same time, it has introduced public artists and public art professionals to Worcester as a thriving community. The exhibit has motivated local artists to expand their skill sets, provided networking opportunities that give artists access to markets outside of Worcester, and gives residents another reason to be proud of their community. 

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[www.masshousing.com](http://www.masshousing.com)



words by  
MAUREEN McINERNEY  
photos by  
LLYR JOHANSEN

# THE REAWAKENING OF MILL NO. 5

*The textile mill turned collaborative  
retail space is a shopper's destination  
in Lowell*

**M**ill No. 5 in Lowell welcomes visitors with the creak of hardwood floors that rest underneath a streetscape of small businesses. The fourth floor of the textile mill, built in 1873, has been reawakened as a gathering place where shoppers can have authentic experiences with unique products.

All shops are open Thursday and Friday from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m., Saturday from 12 p.m. until 8 p.m., and Sunday from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. Most shops have additional hours.

#### INFO

**Mill No. 5**  
250 Jackson St #402  
Lowell  
978.656.1828  
millno5.com



**Mill City Cheesemongers**  
978.501.3142  
Wed-Sat: 12 - 8 p.m.  
Sun: 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
millcitycheese.com



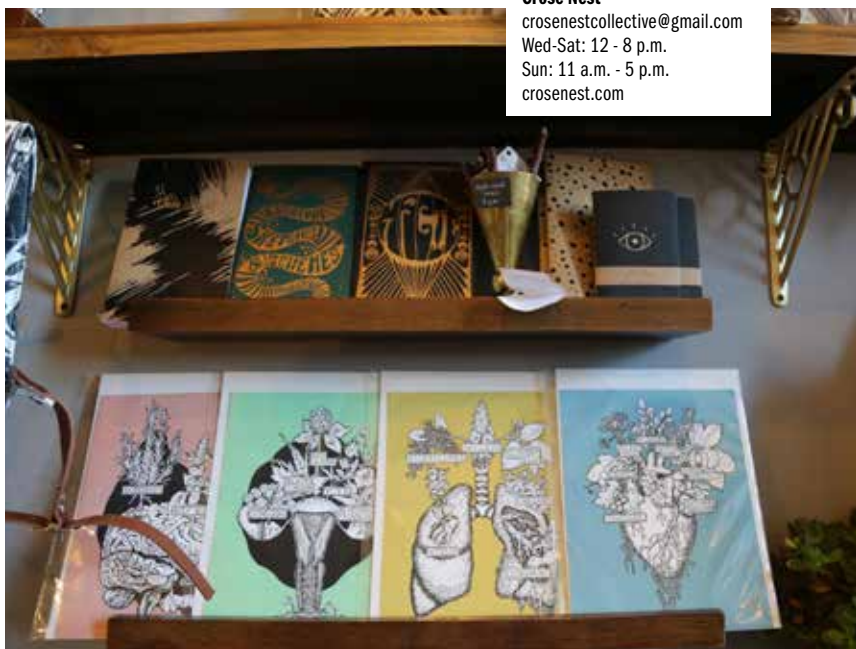
### Mill City Cheesemongers

A commitment to supporting small-scale, sustainable agriculture and small businesses across New England has given rise to this market where customers can find unique flavors and reinterpretations of condiments, confections, and specialty foods. And of course, there are also the artisan cheeses.



**American Stonecraft** is an art studio based in Lowell that uses fresh harvested rocks from working farms to create coasters, food slabs, dinner plates, and trivets. Each individual product is labeled with the farm from which the stone was gathered and the artisan that crafted the piece.

978.254.7625  
americanstonecraft.com



**Crose Nest**  
crosenestcollective@gmail.com  
Wed-Sat: 12 - 8 p.m.  
Sun: 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
crosenest.com

## Crose Nest

At Crose Nest's Botanical Pharmacopoeia, customers are empowered to create herbal teas, bath soaks, face masks, and other herbal blends in-store, with staff support and recipe books to browse. They also retail many goods and gifts, including handmade greeting cards, artwork, mugs, succulents, and jewelry.



**Red Antler Apothecary**  
978.726.7749  
Wed: 12 - 8 p.m.  
Thur-Fri: 5 - 8 p.m.  
Sat: 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.  
Sun: 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
redantlerapothecary.com



## Red Antler Apothecary

The folks at Red Antler proudly craft soaps and other household products in small batches using natural ingredients and old-world recipes. Soap can be cut in store to your desired size, and each variety is more interesting than the last.



# LAWRENCE PARTNERSHIP

IDEAS | INVESTMENT | ACTION

**The Lawrence Partnership is a proud partner of MassINC and its continued commitment to Gateway Cities.**

**Congratulations to the Revolving Test Kitchen as a recipient of a Gateway Cities Innovation Award.** This food-based incubator is just one great example of the **IDEAS, ACTIONS and INVESTMENTS** that are present in Lawrence today.

**LAWRENCEPARTNERSHIP.ORG**  
RSVP for our Annual Meeting, Dec. 5



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Massachusetts Community Colleges

**MASSCC.ORG**

# IT'S HAPPENING HERE

*Public art lifts the Lynn community*





FONKi's mural at  
18 Munroe Street

words  
HANNAH CHANATRY  
photos  
LLYR JOHANSEN

As we're led on a tour  
of downtown Lynn, a local  
driver slows, sticking his  
head out his truck window  
to call out to our group.  
'Hey Al, they look great!'

Al Wilson, bearded and a bit disheveled, grins and stretches out a hand in gratitude.

"Thanks, brother!"

The driver is referencing the looming murals in front of us, in various stages of completion. They are the flagship project of Beyond Walls, Wilson's creative placemaking initiative in Lynn, Massachusetts. The truck driver is one of many to stop him on the street offering excitement and congratulations.

"This makes me so proud to be from here!" exclaims Diana Vasquez, a mentoring coordinator at La Vida Scholars Americorps in Lynn. Flanked by two friends, she gazes wide-eyed at a white washed wall, where Angurria is perched atop a car-sized hydraulic lift. Angurria, an artist from the Dominican Republic, is spray-painting huge swaths of color that will eventually form a woman's face.

Angurria's mural is one of 15 clustered downtown, designed to be seen from both street level and the city's raised MBTA rail. The content ranges from people and words to traditional styles of graffiti, and they flow from one to the next, as if in procession through the streets.

Beyond Walls is tackling placemaking on a massive scale. In addition to the murals, there are in-progress initiatives

to light the MBTA underpass with colored LEDs, place a collection of vintage neon signs along the sidewalks, and put a GE jet engine sculpture installation in a to-be-determined location.

Public art is notoriously difficult. Even when attempted, it is not always successful. But Beyond Walls' key move was to involve the community from the start and make Lynn's citizens central to the development, planning, and execution.

"Beyond Walls did well by having community conversations and business conversations," says E. San San Wong, Director of Arts and Creativity at the Barr Foundation. "It engenders a sense of ownership — people feel a relationship [to the project] already."

In Lynn, creative placemaking — the intentional use of the arts in place-based community development — is being used to address economic, safety and perception issues. Lynn is a former industrial city. In the 1800s Lynn was considered the shoe capital of the world with over 200 shoe factories, and General Electric, which still employs Lynn residents, has been in the city since before World War I — the first American made jet-engine was made here, and so were some of the fuel cells for the Gemini spacecraft.

But like many former industrial



Al Wilson, executive director of Beyond Walls, stands in front of two murals and Lynn's public garden.

giants, Lynn was hit with economic decline, increased homelessness and an increased presence of social services. The current poverty rate in Lynn is 21 percent.

The resulting negative perception has been persistent. However, the city's urban structure and commercial downtown made it a prime candidate for MassDevelopment's Transformative Development Initiative (TDI).

The TDI program uses targeted investments and partnerships spearheaded by fellows on the ground to revitalize Gateway City communities. Joe Mulligan III, one of the inaugural TDI fellows, has been in Lynn since 2016.

"80 percent of my time is spent in Lynn," says Mulligan, who likens the match up of fellows and their respective cities to speed dating. He came to the



NS/CB's mural at 33 Central Street emerges from Lynn's skyline.

## Transformative Development

MassDevelopment is the Commonwealth's economic development and finance authority, a quasi-public organization working to stimulate business and drive economic growth.

MassDevelopment implemented the Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) pursuant to C. 289 Acts of 2014, legislation promoting economic growth across the Commonwealth. MassINC's relentless research and commitment to transformative development strategy, put forth in a 2013 white paper, was instrumental to the legislation's adoption.

The TDI program uses targeted investments in compact, strategically located areas within the Gateway Cities to increase local public/private engagement, spur economic activity, and promote and improve an overall quality of life. Twenty-six Gateway Cities were eligible for the 3-year pilot program; 10 were selected, including Lynn.

program with a background in architecture and matched with Lynn in part because of its substantial urban structure. "I'm always trying to meet [people], understand [the community], and get a sense of living in the downtown area."

MassDevelopment had already conducted community meetings and designed action strategies for Lynn, which were then used as the groundwork for Wilson's project. Capitalizing on that foundation and collaborating with Mulligan, Wilson hosted more meetings to determine Beyond Walls' trajectory. Though he already had public art in mind, he wanted to ensure whatever they created actually met the community's needs.

"It feels really great that Al spread a net to include the whole community," says Carly McLain, executive council for the Lynn Housing Authority and member of the Beyond Walls committee. "I love it here, and it's nice to see other people join in that enthusiasm."

The feedback prioritized a handful of issues — safety near the MBTA underpass, development of local business, and engagement of the sidewalk space to increase downtown's walkability.

"It was clearly the mission of Beyond Walls to improve the lives of the people who live and work here now, and attract a change to the narrative of Lynn," says Wilson.

Those issues directed the four prongs of Beyond Walls: LED lighting in the underpass, neon signs on the sidewalk, a historic sculpture installation and the banner project, 15 public murals painted by international and local artists.

Funding is a major obstacle to public art of any kind. In Lynn, the housing authority's nonprofit arm served as Wilson's fiscal agent. This gave him access to a multitude of grant applications, including the Commonwealth Places Program. The rollout of this partnership connected Wilson to the first member of his team, Amanda Hill.



Georgia Hill, 85 Munroe Street



Don Rinx, 129 Munroe St/515 Washington Street (backside)



Marka27, 31 Exchange Street



Cey Adams, 65 Munroe Street



Angurria, 516 Washington Street



Bruce Orr and Good to Go, 129 Munroe Street/515 Washington Street

**"I WAS** looking for someone [to] help with the operational side of things," says Wilson. They had connected once before through RAW Artworks, a Lynn-based nonprofit using art therapy to reach at-risk youth. Hill joined the project as a volunteer associate director, eventually leaving her role at RAW Artworks to dedicate herself to Beyond Walls full time.

Next to join was Pedro Soto.

"Pedro is a fantastic young guy who immediately bought into the project," says Wilson.

Soto is a Lynn resident with a background in urban planning and project management. "I felt really excited about offering my skills and experience to a project right in my backyard," says Soto.

Soto, of Puerto Rican descent, is also a Spanish speaker, making him essential to successfully communicating the Beyond Walls mission to the one-third of downtown Lynn that is Hispanic.

In addition to Lynn's residents, Beyond Walls received support from local and state government figures. Through the MassDevelopment partnership, state senator Tom McGee and

state representatives Daniel Cahill and Brendan Crighton sent letters detailing their support.

"The arts have become an important part of the economy in the downtown, says Representative Daniel Cahill in a statement. "The support of the community has been tremendous and I truly believe that this is a great step forward as we continue to revitalize the downtown area."

The final Beyond Walls volunteer committee totaled 24 people: Hill, Soto and 21 residents and business owners, with Wilson as Executive Director. It specifically included members that represented the breadth of diversity in downtown Lynn.

"I wanted [the community] to see we had a representative from the various cultural groups and institutions here."

Cultural representation was also translated through the art, as Wilson emphasized a selection of not only diverse artists, but also artists whose subject matter features people of color.

"Many of the murals are representations of the various ethnic groups that call downtown Lynn home," says Soto. "I felt that this project would serve as a source of empowerment for little boys and girls that identify as minorities."

That emphasis on representation drew Soto to the project.

"This is a community of color," says Wilson. "This downtown is a majority minority area, and it should feature art that is reflective of that community."

**LAUNCHING** Beyond Walls required the collective efforts of the team, but the driving force is Al Wilson. Wilson exudes captivating charisma. He engages strangers with the friendliness of an old and close friend, often interrupting his own narrative to draw attention to a particularly striking mural.

It's a quality that has served him well, allowing him to float comfortably between the community, the artists at work, and among business leaders in

the boardroom in relentless pursuit of funding. Wilson appeared in person for every appeal for donations or grants over \$1,000, meeting with local banks and credit unions as well as individual businesses.

"In Lynn, the business leaders are optimistic," he says. He would meet one-on-one with the decision makers of the companies, discussing their business, their connection to Lynn, and finally asking for their support at a specific monetary level.

Every meeting, even those that didn't result in funding, built a valuable relationship. Wilson stresses that the key strategy was to end the week with more meetings on the schedule than when he started.

"You always have to be selling and keep a robust pipeline," he says. "Don't be discouraged by the no."

In all, Wilson held approximately 50 of these meetings.

He persuaded other organizations to contribute not only funding, but also in-kind labor. The International Union of Painters and Allied Trades DC 35 and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 103 both provided physical support: the painters supplied the primer and prepared the walls for the artists, and the electrical workers plan to lend their expertise to the installation of the neon and underpass lighting.

Special events also contributed to the fundraising effort. Beyond Walls hosted a meet-the-team event at the Lynn Museum, attracting over 200 people, and the Blue Ox, a local restaurant, hosted an evening with a specialty cocktail, the proceeds of the drink going to Beyond Walls.

Boardrooms and business meetings are nothing new for Wilson, who came to Lynn from the private sector. Working for a Chicago-based start up, he opened the company's Boston office in 2014 and moved to the North Shore. His morning commute took him through Lynn and re-oriented him

### Commonwealth Places

The Commonwealth Places Program is a MassDevelopment and Patronicity partnership helping local residents crowdfund support for place-based community projects. MassDevelopment backs successful proposals with a 1:1 matching grant of all crowdsourced funds up to \$50,000. To receive the grant, projects must reach their proposed target within 60 days.

The majority of funding for Beyond Walls came from smaller donations to the Patronicity campaign. They surpassed their goal of the maximum \$50,000 within 16 days.

"Al took it beyond expectations," says Joe Mulligan, the TDI Fellow in Lynn. "The Commonwealth Places Program gave him the launch he needed."



Temp & Reim, 173 Oxford Street

to the city — he grew up in Walpole, Massachusetts and spent his childhood on the soccer pitch playing against teams from Lynn.

After two years, the company needed him to close a number of offices and relocate to Chicago. Instead, Wilson walked away.

“I didn’t want to go through laying people off, I’d done that several times over. To be honest, I was burnt out,” he says. “I was left feeling empty. I made money, and that was a good run, but what did we really do at the end of it? What change or impact did we have on people’s lives?”

Staying on the North Shore, Wilson shifted his focus, prioritizing the pursuit of community impact.

Wilson’s inspiration for Beyond Walls came from a trip to Wynwood Walls, a Miami industrial zone warehouse district turned street art destination. It began in 2009, spearheaded by the late Tony Goldman, with six warehouse walls, and has since expanded to include over 80,000 feet of walls, unfurling into the surrounding neighborhood.

“I thought, what a cool story,” says Wilson. “It’s a really vibrant community, with tons of commerce on the street

level — this guy takes asphalt with some broken down warehouses and he says in five years I’ll have this cultural Mecca, despite the fact that we’re inland, away from the hotspots. You’d think this guy was crazy, but it happened.”

**SELECTING** the artists for the Beyond Walls murals was an arduous process — street art is a world-renowned art form with distinctive styles and genres, and the committee approved the best. They also required that those artists be representative of the cultural diversity in Lynn, looking specifically for artists who were themselves part of those cultural groups.

After releasing an open call for proposals, Wilson and the committee accepted 50 applications from both domestic and international artists and made a number of direct requests for work. They finalized a list of 15 artists whom they considered to be at the top of their field.

One artist is Cey Adams, a distinguished Brooklyn-based graffiti artist and industry giant, famous for his work as the founding creative director of Def Jam Recordings.

“He did the cover for LL Cool J,

he was there when they discovered the Beastie Boys, Mary J. Blige,” says Wilson. Adams also created album covers and advertising campaigns for Run DMC, Public Enemy, Notorious B.I.G., and Maroon 5.

“He’s got the best stories,” adds Wilson.

Adams also exhibits and lectures in major New York art institutions, including MoMa, the Brooklyn Museum, and New York University. Despite his celebrity status, in Lynn he was as much a part of the team as anyone. He responded to the open application and stayed in the Salem State University dorms alongside the other artists while painting.

Some artists were brought in on direct appeals, like Temp, who was a high priority get due to his local ties. Temp grew up in Lynn, and was a prolific street artist in the 1980s, putting work on many of the surfaces now being used in Beyond Walls. Known for distinctive abstract lettering — his talent also extends into traditional forms of sketching and painting — Temp’s work became so well known in the street art community that Lynn claimed its own identifiable style. Beyond Walls artist Caleb Neelon, based in Cambridge, subsequently doc-

## Inspiration

While working through ideas for Beyond Walls, Wilson also looked at placemaking locally and overseas.

Worcester has implemented a number of cultural development and public art programs. The Public Art Working Group, a subset of the Worcester Cultural Coalition, commissions large-scale public art, including a 2014 mural by Beyond Walls artist Caleb Neelon. The working group also supported the 2016 Make Art Everywhere campaign, which provides opportunities for local artists to contribute to permanent and temporary public art installations, helping to identify Worcester as a creative city.

In London, Futurecity founder Mark Davy works to implement arts and culture strategies into primarily property-based development. Futurecity creates placemaking strategies for singular projects, navigates partnerships with local cultural institutions, and works with international artists and designers to commission major public art and architecture installations, both temporary and permanent. Their portfolio includes Richard Wilson's Slipstream, an internationally acclaimed sculpture installation in Heathrow Terminal 2, Mark Wallinger's White Horse, a 50-meter installation in Ebbsfleet Garden City and Glass Mill, a multi-colored building façade in Lewisham, London.

umented "Lynn-style," in the "History of American Graffiti."

"This is my home, so [Beyond Walls] is super special for me," says Temp. "They did it right. It puts some smiles on people's faces, brightening the city. Downtown came to life."

Temp's mural is a partnership with Relm, another local Lynn artist who Temp mentored in the 1990s. The painting has elements to appeal to both younger and older generations of their hometown. The foundation is built from graffiti style lettering, and it features a jet plane in homage to Lynn's industrial roots — the city plated a major role in aviation development, and GE built the first American-made jet engine in Lynn.



Temp, a Lynn native, works from a hydraulic lift to paint his mural (opposite)



FONKi takes a break to talk with a bystander

Cedric "Vise" Douglas and Julez Roth, 114-120 Monroe Street



**DESPITE** the expressed interest, there were significant challenges that could have stalled or even stopped the project. For one, the subjective nature of art can make public installation difficult.

"The challenge with art is what emotional response it evokes is based on the individual," says Wilson. "And when you have condo associations, or building owners who have been here for some time [and] get stuck in the what-if scenarios, it's a challenge."

The building being used for Temp's mural, for example, nearly wasn't an option. The building owners were hesitant, so Wilson brought them to the Beyond Walls office to show them the plan for their wall.

The husband didn't like the sketch. His wife did.

"Inside I'm double fist-pumping because I know that's the decision maker right there!" says Wilson, laughing.

"And ultimately, the husband is coming to the site three times a day. He's taking photos and is so excited," he

continues. "Doing public work, you're going to have doubters and critics. I think what's been really interesting is to see as the art's gone up, those parties have really started to embrace it in a big way."

The logistical challenges were also significant, and made up a large part of the committee's efforts.

While searching for artists, the team had to ensure they had the proper canvases — the walls themselves. They identified 62 walls, then Wilson began working various channels to pin down the final 15 plus back-up agreements.

These couldn't be just any walls. The spaces needed to be visible from multiple vantage points and work in conjunction with one another. They also needed to be appropriate for each artist's style. Marka27, for example, a Mexican artist, only does extremely large-scale work — his canvas needed to be one of the tallest buildings in Lynn.

The committee itself formed smaller groups based on skill sets. The legal

committee, or No Fun Committee as they became known, handled all legal components. This included wall agreements with building owners, insurance, licensing of the murals to the artists and a promise to keep the murals up and intact for one year.

"The building owners, who own the walls, they're the unsung heroes," says Wilson. "They had to believe in it, agree to it and put up a piece knowing that if [it] wasn't collectively viewed as positive, they'd get the wrath."

Even with building agreements in place, space caused more complications. Each artist uses a car-sized, motorized hydraulic lift with an extendable arm that often takes up space in parking lots. In the case of Temp's wall, on top of access agreements and insurance, they needed residential approval to take over parking spaces and to let the adjacent building, which shares the lot, know of what they were doing.

"There are a lot of boxes to check," says Wilson.



Team Rekloos: Brian Life, Brand Rockwell & Raodee, 69 Exchange Street



## WHERE TO FIND THE MURALS IN LYNN

**Angurria** *Dominican Republic*  
516 Washington Street

**Bruce Orr and Good To Go (RAW)** *Lynn*  
129 Munroe St/515 Washington Street

**Caleb Neelon** *Boston*  
33 Munroe Street

**Cedric 'Vise' Douglas and Julez Roth** *Boston*  
114-120 Munroe Street

**Cey Adams** *New York City*  
65 Munroe Street

**David Zayas** *Puerto Rico*  
65 Munroe Street

**Don Rimx** *Miami*  
129 Munroe Street/515 Washington  
Street back side

**FONKi** *Montreal*  
18 Munroe Street

**Georgia Hill** *Australia*  
85 Munroe Street

**Marka27** *New York*  
31 Exchange Street

**Miss Zukie & JPO** *New York City and Connecticut*  
16 City Hall Square

**NS/CB (Nicole Salgar and Chuck Berrett)**  
*Florida/New York*  
33 Central Street

**Tallboy (Chris Coulon) and Brian Denahy**  
*Lynn/North Shore*  
31 Spring Street

**Team Rekloos: Brian Life, Brand Rock-  
well, and Raodee** *Boston*  
69 Exchange Street

**Temp & Relm** *Lynn/North Carolina*  
173 Oxford Street

Lynn residents and visitors  
attend a festival celebrating  
the finished murals.





David Zayas, 65 Munroe Street

Personal challenges abound as well, stemming from how much of himself Wilson has thrown into the project. He has committed to this as a full-time occupation and he does not make any money doing so. More than anything though, he fought against self-doubt.

"On any given day, I have literally every emotion you can have as a human," says Wilson.

"The hardest part is the stuff that comes into your head when you're falling asleep at night. You're doing something people don't quite understand, and yet publically, you have to have a persona of no doubt."

Al took a moment to reflect.

"I had a career, and I had a lot of parties that were looking to what I was doing next," he says. "They have a trajectory, and you're stepping away from that. I had business mentors that I think...I don't know if they could get it."

But then there are the moments that assure him of his choice. Wilson tells the story of finding a couple in front of FONKI's mural, a beautiful rendering of a Latina woman against a brick wall. The couple had been high school sweethearts in Lynn — now married, they lived in New Hampshire, but had come back to Lynn to see the mural festival.

When Wilson came across them, they were crying.

"They just never thought something like that was going to happen in Lynn," he says.

This is a common refrain, and one of the critiques of some public art: it is so often put in places that don't necessarily need it.

"Why do we have to only put public art in places that are already proud," asks Kate Chertavian of Kate Chertavian Fine Art. "The idea that just because you live in a community that's outside the mainstream means you don't have an eye for beauty? I find that rather offensive."

"Put great, meaningful and relevant art in communities that are underserved

and it changes the conversation. It reverses the conversation of cities."

"[Beyond Walls] is wonderful in the walls they chose — some of them appear to be in conversation in one another," Wong, from the Barr Foundation, says. "The execution and mastery of work, and the stories they're telling of community — it makes you rethink where it is you're standing."

**CREATIVE** placemaking has both quantifiable economic benefits, and the less easily quantified but equally important impact of vitality and human presence. In Lynn, even before the murals were complete, both forms were evident.

Local businesses increased traffic during the week of painting, and some have sustained that growth. The White Rose Coffee Shop, which added an extra business day during painting, has since reported an increase of three times their prior rate of weekend commerce. They've hired two additional staff members to handle the uptick in business.

In late 2017, Beyond Walls will release a full report on the economic impact of the project.

"I think the tide has risen for all parties," says Wilson.

Michael Mageary, Lynn's Chief of Police, has also noticed changes in the look and feel of the city's downtown.

"I can definitely see improvement," he says. "I was walking in uniform, and I noticed the cleanliness around — there's positive impact here."

"Beyond Walls has done an amazing job of highlighting Lynn's proud and diverse community," says State Representative Brendan Crighton in a statement. "These murals in Lynn's growing public art scene beautify our neighborhoods, inspire our youth and attract thousands of visitors."

Wilson, the team and the artists involved are happy to see the positive impact ripple through the community.

"This project has been a great source of pride for folks who call Lynn home," says Soto.

"It's bigger than the artists and this moment," explains artist Marka27, whose mural features a young child of color. "You're thinking about the 10-year-old who will grow up with this. It's long-term."

Angurria has already noticed this with his mural.

"The child saw it, came back with mom and dad," says Angurria in a mix of English and Spanish. "They said, 'Look here Mom, it's Grandma!'"

"Everyone says thank you," he adds. "I'm happy. I'm proud."

"It's the little moments," says Wilson. "Finding that couple in front of the piece, getting people to celebrate, finding the people who were really against it are suddenly [on board] — I think the highest praise you can get is when all parties are collectively taking responsibility for it."

With the murals done, Beyond Walls is not finished. They've now moved into the final design and approval stages for the underpass lights and are preparing to install the neon signage. The team is also looking to file paperwork in 2018 to become a fiscally independent entity.

When everything is complete, Wilson is looking forward to tackling even more creative placemaking. He plans to do so while staying local and bringing his work into other equally deserving communities.

"I'd like to stay in the space," says Wilson. "I'd like to stay in Lynn, continue doing work [here], but I've got some visions for the other Gateway Cities. Ultimately what we're doing [is], we're putting art on walls, and we're putting lights up in areas that are currently dark. We've got this." 📍

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proudly supports MassINC's fifth annual Gateway Cities Innovation Institute's Awards! We join in thanking and congratulating all of the award recipients and we commit to continuing our support of all immigrants and refugees who come to our city and our commonwealth seeking nothing but a chance at a better life and the opportunity to contribute to our community.



## MassINC GATEWAY CITIES INNOVATION INSTITUTE FIFTH ANNUAL AWARDS

### Congratulations to our 2017 Innovation Award Recipients

Beyond Walls

Art in the Park, Worcester

The Lowell Waterways Vitality Initiative

The Revolving Test Kitchen

Fitchburg Pride

The Fuller Craft Museum and  
The Greater Brockton Young Professionals

Main Street Hospitality

Nueva Esperanza Inc.

### Congratulations to our 2017 Champion Award Recipients

The Honorable Niki Tsongas

Robert F. Rivers

John Schneider

# POSSIBILITIES

IMPACTLABS 62 • WATERWAYS 68 • TEST KITCHENS 70 • EVENTS 76



An employee stands at  
a computer desk  
looking out a window

Chris Rezendes,  
Managing Director at  
ImpactLABS,  
with his dog.

# Part of a Bigger Picture

*In New Bedford, ImpactLABS is accelerating the deployment of leading edge digital technology and IoT for small and mid-sized companies around the country*

**I**N 2015, Chris Rezendes and his partners decided to open the digital research and investment firm ImpactLABS in New Bedford because “it was a good fit.”

The 47-year-old Fall River native had spent years commuting from the South Coast to IT hotspots across the country in search of investment opportunities, and his wife, Gina — also of Fall River — wanted more stability for their young children near their Portuguese grandparents. His brother Jon, an Army Ranger writing to Chris from Afghanistan, further pressed the case for investing at home.

Meanwhile, as Chris was spending the majority of his time traveling, New Bedford’s political leadership had achieved a level of stability that allowed them to build out an economic development strategy rooted in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and fisheries. Chris recognized two key characteristics of these sectors. The first is that they were future-oriented, under conditions of climate change. The second was that they are populated by small and midsize firms overlooked by Silicon Valley. The

way Chris saw it, these smaller firms were now ripe for next stage digital innovation, as were the small and midsize cities investors had abandoned for a handful of urban tech powerhouses.

A 1991 Harvard College graduate, Chris amassed a wealth of knowledge, contacts, and cash riding the early commercialization of the Internet in the 1990s. Starting out at a prestigious management consulting firm in Denver, he has worked on tech transfer and manufacturing strategies with the Department of Defense, DARPA, the Department of Homeland Security, and top flight OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers) producing IT hardware and software critical to their supply chains.

After all that, he landed back home in New Bedford, looking to serve the interests of farmers, fishermen, and the city’s refurbished port and South End innovation district. Chris and his staff, most of whom are from the South Coast and mainly from Greater New Bedford, are committed to their hometown. To that end, they believe that marrying

next stage innovation — the Internet of Things (IoT) — to traditional local industries will produce jobs along with profit for both users and Impact Lab sponsors.

ImpactLABS is housed in the late-19th-century Standard-Times building in downtown New Bedford. More specifically, they are located in the capacious former linotype composing room, which spans the entire fourth floor. Chris and his 11-person staff operate in an office that has the open, transparent feel of a collaborative workplace, ensconced in the substantial, ornamented, decidedly walled-off Victorian architecture of the older industrial city. It is a perfectly ironic re-imagining of the space — and the setting for the kind of breakthroughs the historic city is poised for.

ImpactLABS is a no-fee commercial accelerator that live-pilots IoT products pitched by start-ups from across the globe. According to Chris, IoT involves “instrumenting” objects with sensors

for data gathering and transmission so that machines and infrastructure can talk amongst themselves. Although Chris says that big IoT applications such as self-driving cars “have their place,” he is interested in the technology’s capacity to “redisaggregate” the market, by which he means to break up and distribute its value more broadly.

After the Internet passed from an infrastructure of dedicated in-house servers, networks, and desktop computers to one of cloud computing, served by massive data storage banks and distant services, Chris explains, Silicon Valley lost sight of “ground truth.” In their excessive pursuit of aimless “solutionism,” as he puts it, they thought nothing of, say, drilling into San Francisco’s streets to install experimental parking sensors. And this solutionism had bred a political culture that accepted such “unpragmatic applications” uncritically.

“In the real world,” he says, “you don’t want to cut into your pavement,” just to see if something works. Meanwhile, the industry had consoli-

Tech guy, Dan Mahoney. The ImpactLABS occupies the old Standard-Times building in downtown New Bedford.



dated and monetized ownership of the digital revolution's most valuable commodity: people's data.

In New Bedford, IoT technology holds the promise of sharing the digital wealth with practical working people, who value stability and fairness over the disruption and convenience of digital mobility. To reassure their target users, Chris shortened his company's name to ImpactLABS, removing the "hack-neyed" IoT moniker six months ago.

At this point, anticipated "users" are fisheries, farms, and wind energy operations that, in the nature of their work, are in the business of managing risk. Food Security Lead Liz Wiley, for example, is working with cranberry farms, wineries, and other growers who are field-testing groundwater monitoring through sensors and instrumentation to better plan for shifts in water supply. She is also working in aquaculture, helping equip both small fishing enterprises and large commercial fisheries with the means to monitor fish stocks, water quality, current movements, and catch limits.

ImpactLABS has tools in place for measuring the delicate air quality found in high-tunnel hoop houses used by small farmers during the winter, and is preparing to "instrument" the anticipated Cape Wind infrastructure, for which New Bedford will likely serve as the staging area, to capture climate, wind current, and wave data. All that data will not only help these predominantly small businesspeople pursue their operations with efficiency and precision, it will also help policymakers better manage the epic risks associated with climate change.

**C**hris Rezendes is tall, intense, articulate, and warm, given to oracular statements inflected with Silicon Valley-speak.

"Resilience is a killer app!" he exclaims. It is "the reason why," meaning that an ethic of resilience restores purposeful direction to a storm of digital innovation that has grown haphazardly disruptive for its own sake.

Wires and parts of a project. Chris talks while his dog vies for attention.





Jonathan Rezendes works at his standing desk with a view.

Chris spells out the seven principles of resilience that guide his collaborative. Anything ImpactLABS invests in must be secure, stable, scalable, agile, professional, sustainable, and, perhaps above all, equitable—committed to joint, cross-class “community identity” and its historical grounding in “nature.”

So how does ImpactLABS’ business model work? How does it serve the interests of working people? And why is New Bedford a good test bed for its scalable ambitions?

As Engineering Lead Dan Mahoney, a tech lifer who began programming in the 1960s, explains, since the cost of hardware and software has dropped, innovation can come from anywhere; ImpactLABS is working across the globe and especially closely with a cluster of startups in Iceland.

“This has less to do with Boston than with Brasilia,” says Chris, referring

not only to the origins of the startups ImpactLABS supports, but also to the company’s target markets in the developing world. As a city where one in seven children is food insecure, he says, New Bedford serves as “an archetype for redeveloping struggling countries’ markets from within an advanced economy.”

Chris and his wife have contributed 25 percent of the cost for ImpactLABS’ free early-stage piloting, while titans such as GE, Dell, Analog Devices, and PTC foot the rest of the bill. In return, investors gain deep, exclusive knowledge of an emerging technology, and expect to reap big profits from selling and servicing the products that go into full commercial development.

After decades of technological displacement and, more recently, the dizzying threat of social media-driven

disruption, small and midsize business owners also stand to gain from ImpactLABS' ground truth innovations—and New Bedford can preserve jobs. IoT can help these operations more efficiently manage risk and thus yield profit. Moreover, their smaller size and product diversity protects them from job-gutting robotics—which requires large-scale production and services to gain return on costly robotics investment. Compared with, say, large commodity growers, Chris points out, small and midsize farmers “can’t Amazon food production because their product is not homogeneous.”

ImpactLABS also anticipates opening another big revenue stream for these smaller-scale businesses by helping them sell their data. Many of these owners are already tech savvy. Liz notes that the cranberry growers she works with, for example, know that they are sitting on a pile of valuable data, but they don’t know what to do with it.


ImpactLABS will help these and other businesses refine their data collection with new tools and, importantly, find markets for their data. These markets, such as climate science research programs, meteorological and hydrological monitoring systems, coastal research enterprises such as the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute strewn along the South Coast, insurance companies, and banks, work in conformity with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. Rather than handing off that proprietary digital gold to Dell and other Big Data infrastructure companies, Impact Lab’s model makes it possible for smaller businesses to own it themselves, cash it in, and reinvest it to expand their operations and hire more workers.

Anticipating that need, and with Chris seated on the regional Workforce Investment Board, ImpactLABS is beginning to work with local schools such as Bristol Agricultural High School, Bristol Community College, and UMass Dartmouth to re-skill the local workforce in IoT management. While cities with big innovation economies concentrate on attracting college-educated “talent” and the firms that hire them, New Bedford networks are quietly working with ImpactLABS to nurture the brains atop the city’s big shoulders to enhance the work it’s always done.

By looking to distribute and decentralize data collection while improving traditional smaller businesses and the skills of the workers they employ, ImpactLABS takes the equity component of resilience seriously. In the process, it could be drawing up a model of sustainable economic development

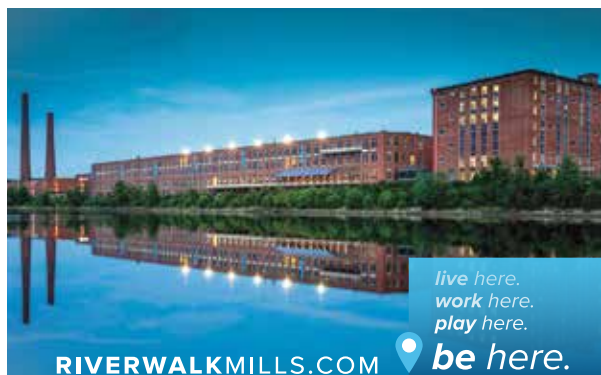
transferable not only to developing countries, but also to smaller post-industrial metros struggling to remake their production-based economies across the United States.

“With its ethic of winner-take-all, survival of the fittest, the tech world has misread Darwin,” Chris observes. “To be successful, you need to listen to the vernacular.” As a

South Coast native who knows both the region’s troubles and potential, he believes the local economy can reach new heights with the non-disruptive improvements offered by IoT. 

#### ► INFO

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words by  
MAUREEN McINERNEY  
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# VITAL WATERWAYS

*A transformation in Lowell*

**T**HE LOWELL Waterways Vitality Initiative is a collaborative effort to enhance Lowell's remarkable waterways with lighting, accessibility improvements, and new retailers. The idea was conceived through a series of listening sessions hosted by the Lowell Heritage Partnership under the leadership of Paul Marion, the former President of the Lowell Heritage Partnership, and

Fred Faust, the current Vice-President.

For decades, this group has led the campaign to preserve Lowell's canals and historic buildings. Lowell's waterways, including over five miles of canals, are integral to the manufacturing legacy and character of the city. For nearly two centuries, canals generated power for the mills that put Lowell on the map. The canal area was recog-

nized as the Lowell State Heritage Park in 1975, and soon after as the Lowell National Historical Park in 1978. Over the past 40 years, more than \$1 billion dollars has been invested in preservation projects. But James Ostis, President of the Lowell Heritage Partnership, says these spaces are still not as vibrant as they could be.

"The Lucy Larcom Park is right in the center of our city; it's actually a very prominent place, but people didn't think of it as a public park. They would walk by and not notice it," Ostis says. Since the city invested over \$100,000 in that space, primarily for lighting, the park immediately began to attract more events, such as WinterFest and the Lowell Farmer's Market.

The scope of the Waterways Vitality Initiative is ambitious — twice the size of the WaterFire lightings in Providence, Rhode Island. It involves four canals and two bridges that span




## INFO

**Lowell Heritage Partnership**  
Lowell  
[lowellheritagepartnership.org](http://lowellheritagepartnership.org)



the Merrimack River. Soloman Office, a design firm specializing in placemaking and public art, produced the Action Plan in February 2017 in collaboration with the Lowell Heritage Partnership and the City of Lowell.

To build support for the funding required to achieve the full vision, the team is hosting events to engage the community and demonstrate the potential. To date, they have raised over \$1 million for the project.

“The canals have been an integral part of Lowell’s history since the founding of the city, and they’re always kind of reinventing themselves,” says Ostis. Now, they are also the answer to the question, “What’s next?” for Lowell. 

**Vitality.** vi·tal·i·ty /vītalədē/ noun: the state of being strong and active; energy.





# Testing the Waters

TEST KITCHENS PROVIDE ASPIRING RESTAURANTEURS A SOLID FOUNDATION BEFORE THEY TAKE THE PLUNGE

---

*words by*  
LINDA ENERSON

**J**UST BEFORE noon, customers start flowing into CocoRay's in downtown Lawrence. Located in a satellite campus of Northern Essex Community College, the restaurant is frequented by many of the college's faculty, staff, and students, all looking for the tacos and bowls of steaming rice and beans they have come to love: Mexican dishes simmering with the spices of Puerto Rico.

Ray Gonzalez stands behind the register, while a staff member calls out orders to his mother, Coco, who shares the name of his business.

"She's the one who preps and cooks," he says. "She's the one behind all the flavors here."

Gonzalez is the first restaurateur in the Revolving Test Kitchen, a restaurant incubator that helps promising entrepreneurs get off the ground in an industry known for sinking them.

The idea is to give people with relatively little experience but lots of raw talent the space to test their recipes, hone their skills, and build a customer base so they can successfully launch their own business nearby, stimulating economic development.

While there are a number of culinary incubators around the state, restaurant incubators are a newer concept. There are only three of these projects in different stages of development in Massachusetts, all of them in Gateway Cities. Worcester also has an established restaurant incubator in the DCU Center, the city's arena and convention center complex. Brockton has studied the concept and is taking initial steps toward the development of a future incubator.

#### A private-public partnership in Lawrence

Ironically, the space designed to help restaurateurs get off the ground in Lawrence started out as a restaurant that didn't. A few years back, when Northern Essex Community College

developed a satellite campus downtown, Sal Lupoli, the pizzeria owner turned developer, built a restaurant space in one of the buildings, hoping to spur economic development downtown. The restaurant never took off, but Lupoli and other community leaders shared a commitment to helping restaurants flourish downtown. His company donated the entire 350,000 square foot built-out space to be used as a restaurant incubator. The Revolving Test Kitchen (RTK) is a private-public partnership of the Lupoli Companies, the Lawrence Partnership, the community college, and the city.

Since RTK opened late last year, Lupoli has continued to be involved in the project, donating his own time to mentor Gonzalez, and his staff to help market CocoRay's.

"I remember what it was like to struggle and search for valuable and necessary resources," said Lupoli who started his first pizzeria in 1990. "Young entrepreneurs face a number of hardships when launching their business. If you want to build a community, you need to work with and support the small entrepreneur."

The Lawrence Partnership provides technical assistance around business planning and management. The college also provides technical assistance and administers the leasing agreement. Gonzalez is expected to operate his own business out of the space, and he pays a monthly fee for the space as security, which will be paid back to him when he leaves.

Lawrence Partnership Director Derek Mitchell says that the success of



(opposite) The Revolving Test Kitchen in Lawrence is where CocoRay's began. (above) Coco Gonzales prepares a dish at her part-namesake startup restaurant.



the project hinges on finding the right applicant who can remain successful after several months to a year in the incubator.

"There are plenty of people out there with recipes and talent, but they may not be ready yet," Mitchell said.

Before setting up shop in the incubator last year, Gonzalez had already gained solid experience running a food truck in Lawrence. He launched the business several years earlier with a Mexican-based menu that drew heavily on his mother's recipes from her native Puerto Rico. The business gained a loyal customer base, and he was ready to expand.

As Gonzalez looked around at rental spaces in downtown Lawrence, there were few with the necessary build-out that he could afford.

"Nothing caught my eye," he said. "I thought I would just go back to running the food truck."

At that critical moment, Mitchell's staff approached him to see if he wanted to apply to be the first restaurant in the incubator.

"It was a winning lottery ticket," Gonzalez said. "I could use a fully built-out kitchen, a kitchen that was very high-end, high tech, a really next level kitchen — rent free."

Gonzalez also gained skills crucial to running the back end of the restaurant business.

"A food truck business is mostly cash," said Mitchell. "Ray had one periodic employee. He did inventory and purchasing once a week. Now, his doors are open 10 hours a day, five days a week. He has four to five staff mem-



(above) Composing orders on CocoRay's line. (right) A meal ready to go.

bers. His bookkeeping, inventory, and development of new food products are all much more complex now.”

Ready to strike out on his own, Gonzalez says he is actively seeking a new site. This time, he says, he is more confident he can make the transition.

“I learned how to write my own business plan, and if the numbers are alright, the Partnership will help me get my first loan and get my first place,” he said. “It’s a pretty awesome deal.”

### Worcester’s DCU Center helps budding restaurateurs

Candy Murphy, who operates the eatery, Figs and Pigs, is the first inhabitant of Worcester’s restaurant incubator. Like Gonzalez, she has also built a loyal customer base and is ready to

At Figs and Pigs in Worcester, (below) an assortment of menu options, and (bottom) the open space for diners.





(above) The Figs and Pigs counter.  
(opposite) Tacos with chips and beer are a popular combination.

“My son-in-law likes to say this is like starting a restaurant on training wheels”

graduate to her own restaurant.

Unlike Gonzalez, jumping into the restaurant business is a second career for Murphy. After 20 years of climbing the corporate ladder to a vice presidency at Staples, Murphy decided it was time for a change.

“I wanted to do something that was more expressive of who I am, and I wanted to be a nicer person,” Murphy said. “My friends at work said, ‘but Candy, you’re nice now’, and I’d say, ‘Hmm, no — if I can reduce a grown man with four children to tears in my office, I’m not nice yet.’”

Murphy took a buyout from the company, downsized her home, and enrolled in culinary school alongside her daughter. She began developing her own menu of fresh American-style food “cooked with love” as the manager of a restaurant on the Cape.

After that experience, Murphy wanted to open her own restaurant and started scoping out properties in downtown Worcester. She soon discovered there are relatively few units equipped for a

restaurant, and building out a property would require a six-figure capital investment she didn’t have.

“It takes two to three years of financial statements before people are even bankable,” said Sandy Dunn, manager of SMG properties, a private company that manages DCU Center operations for the city. “Candy has a lot of talent, and she had some restaurant experience, but the incubator gave her a chance to prove her concept.”

The Worcester model works a little differently than Lawrence’s RTK. As an inhabitant of incubator, Pigs and Figs operates as a profit center of the DCU Center’s arena, which is owned by the city but managed by SMG. Several years ago, city leaders took advantage of a state law that allows the city to use occupancy and meals taxes from businesses around the DCU Center for building improvements. They remodeled part of the arena to house a restaurant incubator, serving the DCU Center as well the local economy.

Pigs and Figs serves their fresh,

American fare such as sandwiches, burgers, and crab cakes during arena events. The eatery helps the DCU connect to the surrounding downtown community by serving breakfast and lunch.

As a profit center of the arena, Murphy receives a salary, and all of her expenses and revenue are part of that budget. The structure gives Murphy the financial freedom to focus on menu development, building a brand, testing their concept, and developing a customer base. Dunn says that restaurateurs graduating from the incubator can choose to either stay in the DCU space and begin paying rent, or leave, taking their menu, website, and customers with them, with the hopes they will relocate to another downtown location.

Murphy has chosen to leave. Like Gonzalez, she is currently looking for a more permanent home for her restaurant, but credits her ability to do so to her experience at the incubator.

“My son-in-law likes to say this is like starting a restaurant on training

wheels,” she said. “Landlords aren’t so willing to take a risk on someone new, but when I say I have this experience and these customers, they listen now.”

### **Brockton builds an incubator and community – one step at a time**

City officials in Brockton became interested in restaurant incubators as a means to revitalize a downtown area in desperate need of foot traffic and places to eat. Rob May, the city’s director of planning and economic development, says that while the city once had a booming center, now only a handful of restaurants are open for lunch.

“A lot of people come in to work for the day and they don’t leave their offices until 5 o’clock,” he says.

Funded by a \$50,000 Mass Urban Agenda grant, Brockton commissioned a feasibility study concluding there was significant unmet demand for

restaurants downtown, but not enough to justify the \$3,000,000 investment in an incubator.

The study found that the higher table turnover for dinner meals would help make restaurants more profitable, but foot traffic is even lighter after 5 p.m.

“We first need to change the way people think about downtown Brockton by offering food and entertainment activities,” May said. Music festivals, artist-in-residency programs are the sort of catalysts needed to attract visitors and funders and encourage food trucks and pop-up retail operations.

May sees these smaller steps leading to the investment in a restaurant incubator in several years. City officials envision a food court design with shared kitchen and storage, allowing a number of restaurants to be incubated at the same time.

According to May, this design will not only maximize the number of restaurants eventually opening downtown, but also build a sense of community. Food is one of the best ways to break down cultural barriers and get people eating and talking together, he says.

Right now, May says there are restaurants catering to ethnic tastes in Brockton, but people who don’t share the cultural backgrounds avoid them because the food is unfamiliar.

“If they’re serving Haitian food in one area and Cape Verdean food in another, you can try a little bit of each,” he said.

This allows people to take small steps in getting to know different styles of food, an experience he says is vital to supporting the development of a vibrant downtown with a rich diversity of restaurants serving food from many different cultural origins. 9

#### **INFO**

**Revolving Test Kitchen**  
420 Common St.  
Lawrence  
978.725.6000  
[revolvingtestkitchen.org](http://revolvingtestkitchen.org)  
**Figs and Pigs**  
50 Foster St.  
Worcester  
508.929.0701  
[figsandpigs-kitchen.com](http://figsandpigs-kitchen.com)



# EVENTS

## Get in the Spirit

WITH HOLIDAYS APPROACHING, KEEP IN MIND THESE GREAT EVENTS ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH



### Holiday Festival of Crafts

**November 24-26**

*Worcester Center for Crafts  
25 Sagamore Rd., Worcester  
[worchester.edu/Holiday-Festival](http://worchester.edu/Holiday-Festival)*

- The Worcester Center for Crafts is transformed into a European-style holiday marketplace, featuring over 60 fine craft artists.

### Four Centuries of Christmas Tours

**November 24-December 31**

*The House of the Seven Gables  
115 Derby St., Salem  
[7gables.org](http://7gables.org)*

- Professional guides will lead you through the mansion, adorned with holiday decorations, and share the history of four centuries of Christmas in New England. ①

### Thanksgiving on the Farm

**November 24**

*Hancock Shaker Village, 1843 West  
Housatonic St., Pittsfield  
[hancockshakervillage.org](http://hancockshakervillage.org)*

- Hancock Shaker Village opens its doors to the community for holiday-themed activities including hiking and skiing the farm trails, 19th century building tours, and a market of local hand-crafted goods and foods.

### City of Lights 2017

**November 25**

*Downtown Lowell*

- Featuring live performances, holiday shopping, photos with Santa, and the Annual Hot Chocolate Competition.





### Salem Holiday Happenings

**November 25-January 1**

*Downtown Salem*  
[saalem.org](http://saalem.org)

- Festival highlights include Historic Salem, Inc.'s annual Christmas in Salem Historic House Tour and Santa's arrival atop the Hawthorne Hotel.

### Navy Christmas

**December 4**

*Battleship Cove*  
 5 Water St., Fall River

- Experience 1940s holiday ambiance, and enjoy a three-course meal recreated from the battleship's original Christmas menu featuring turkey and all the fixings in the Wardroom aboard the Battleship.

### The Nutcracker

**December 9-22**

*The Colonial Theatre*  
 111 South St., Pittsfield  
[berkshiretheatregroup.org](http://berkshiretheatregroup.org)

- The Albany Berkshire Ballet presents the holiday classic The Nutcracker. **3**

### New Bedford Preservation Society's 26th Annual Holiday House Tour

**December 9-10**

*Wamsutta Club*  
 427 County St., New Bedford  
[nbpreservationociety.org](http://nbpreservationociety.org)

- Visitors experience a variety of architecture and interiors, all beautifully decorated for the season. **2**

### Holiday Open Studios

**December 15-16**

*Island Street Studios*  
 50 Island St., Lawrence

- Studio artists will open their doors to show their process and answer questions. There will be guest vendors, a Gallery of the Month, and musical guests across both days.



**Have an event that should be featured in Gateways?**

Let us know!

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# WITH REINVENTION COMES OPPORTUNITY

*Gateway Cities need a coherent federal urban policy*

**T**WO CENTURIES ago, a revolution took place directly outside my office in Lowell. Titans of industry joined forward-thinkers, women ahead of their time, and immigrants from around the world to form an innovation hub that propelled the region and the country into a new age. Lowell's legacy of reinvention remains a hallmark of the city to this day and is echoed in the transformative stories of Gateway Cities across the Commonwealth.

Lowell was established as a planned industrial city on the banks of the Merrimack and Concord rivers at the dawn of America's Industrial Revolution, but, like so many Gateway Cities, suffered a period of decline following the collapse of the New England textile industry in the early 20th century.

But in the late 1970s, Lowell entered a period of renewal and renaissance due to an active, coordinated effort by federal, local, public, and private stakeholders. It reinvented itself as a livable and resilient city that embraces diversity and fosters innovative approaches to urban challenges.

A city created by immigrants from Ireland, Greece, Portugal, and French-speaking Canada, Lowell remains strongly rooted in its immigrant history. It is now home to the second-largest Cambodian American population in

the country with many recent arrivals from Latin American, Africa, India, and the Middle East.

The extraordinary transformation of Lowell began when the Lowell National Historical Park was established within the city's core in 1978, the first urban national park of its kind in the United States. The park has been instrumental in preserving and protecting the historic landscape of the city and connects the city's industrial heritage to its cultural and ethnic diversity. Public investment in the park has sparked unparalleled private growth in the redevelopment of Lowell's historic district. And the civic energy generated by the national park helped Lowell's arts and cultural community flourish.

The principles behind the formation of the national park in Lowell — a relatively small but well-targeted infusion of federal funds matched with a comprehensive, integrated urban strategy — should serve as the foundation for a national urban policy.

Gateway Cities face unique economic and urban challenges and cannot address all the challenges of the 21st century without a coordinated partnership with the federal government.

Gateway Cities were particularly hard hit by the most recent economic downturn and are still working to make a full recovery. They can be burdened with overextended and underfunded transportation systems and persistent

poverty. Some have environmental challenges left over from their days as industrial centers, and many are dealing with aging infrastructure. For historic cities, the lack of a coherent federal commitment to urban areas has encouraged sprawl, putting neighborhood historical landscapes under threat.

An impactful urban policy to help realize the potential of Gateway Cities and ensure their future prosperity cannot be narrowly limited to any one of these needs. A broad range of national issues including tax policy, healthcare, education, immigration, and energy efficiency have a significant and interconnected impact on our urban centers. Without a comprehensive approach, we fail to utilize the insights that the urban experience can provide for the nation as a whole.

Gateway Cities are economic engines, and their well-being is key to the prosperity and well-being of all Americans. They provide a critical and underutilized perspective on our nation's health. Gateway Cities generate wealth and economic development for entire regions; provide the foundation for an educated workforce that can be targeted to regional industries; serve as the home to pilot programs and public incubators for economic, technological, and artistic innovation; offer solutions to climate change and sustainable de-



velopment; improve the health of our communities; and act as gateways for goods and knowledge. Furthermore, Gateway Cities in particular are centers of our nation's cultural activities and a repository of architectural and historic riches. They represent the diversity and strength of our country.

Small and mid-size cities in particular have grown increasingly attractive to employers and employees alike thanks to their ability to respond quickly to the needs of the surrounding region, and to entice and help cultivate new and growing industries. One of the reasons they can respond quickly is their focus on education, which allows for targeted curriculum, research, and job training that in turn, feeds nearby industry. For example, institutions like the University

of Massachusetts Lowell, Middlesex Community College, Northern Essex Community College in Lawrence, and Fitchburg State University have made significant investments and as a result, play an invaluable role in their communities.

These cities can also offer a lower cost of living to recent graduates and lower cost of doing business to startups and entrepreneurs. In cities like Lawrence and Lowell, developers are repurposing old mill buildings into beautiful, modern housing and business spaces that are attracting residents and cutting-edge companies alike. Haverhill and New Bedford are reembracing their waterfronts, which went neglected for too long, in order to offer more attractive options to city residents, employers, and tourists. Fitchburg is leveraging

the Fitchburg Art Museum to cultivate artist colonies. Elsewhere, we are seeing inventive and imaginative undertakings like hybrid art gallery/restaurants, mobile farmers markets, and innovation hubs.

And, at a time when some of our freedoms, rights, and national values are being put to the test, we again see Gateway City communities responding with progressive solutions. Lynn is prioritizing immigrant entrepreneurship, while Lawrence and Chelsea have stood side by side with metropolitan giants like Chicago, Philadelphia, and San Francisco to oppose new federal policies that seek to drive a wedge between law enforcement and immigrant communities.

A comprehensive, integrated approach to addressing the needs of Gateway Cities must be the cornerstone of an effective federal urban policy. Through a shared commitment to development, and a common vision for the future, residents, businesses, and creative community leaders are working together to invest in Gateway Cities and make real the reinvention we know is possible across the Commonwealth. These remarkable cities of immigrants and industry need a strong federal partner to ensure they can continue to realize their full promise. ☪

# POSTSCRIPT



The deadhorse hill crew (from left) Julia Auger, co-owner Bert LaValley, Sean Woods, Jared Forman

## Wait for it...

### ► INFO

**simjang**  
72 Shrewsbury St.  
Worcester  
774.420.7107  
Find them on Facebook



The deadhorse hill team in Worcester is opening simjang, a Korean-American restaurant, this fall. We asked chef Jared Forman a few questions about it.

#### **GATEWAYS: Why Korean food?**

**Jared Forman:** Eating at a Korean restaurant in NYC or LA is all about fun, community, and family. We want to bring those aspects to simjang. It's going to be a place you go to have an amazing and different experience, not just a place for great food...like a crazy party that anyone's invited to attend.

#### **GATEWAYS: Besides your restaurants, where should someone visiting Worcester go eat?**

**JF:** Volturmo is one of our go-to places, either for a couple of pizzas or a full Italian meal. Kummerspeck is delicious, staffed by some very talented people. Pomir Grill and Red Pepper are my favorite ethnic spots. For the sweet stuff, The Queen's Cups and Wooberry are great.

#### **GATEWAYS: What is the best thing about the Worcester food scene?**

**JF:** Our expectation levels are our own. We can do whatever we want and not worry about a particular food critic or being forced to buy inferior products because crazy high rent is eating up our budget. We buy incredible local milk and eggs, the best chocolate, local produce and meats, and we can afford to serve them at reasonable prices. We cook to make our guests and ourselves happy. 🍴

# The way to grow for Gateway Cities



**Beyond Walls Mural Festival, Lynn MA**

MassDevelopment's Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) drives public-private collaboration, strategic place-based focus, and community involvement in Gateway Cities to enable catalytic urban development and economic growth. Since the initiative launched in 2014, we have invested more than \$7 million in 10 TDI Districts and provided technical assistance and real estate resources for programs that leverage local engagement and ongoing investment.

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