

urban revitalization

development plan

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THE FITCHBURG DOWNTOWN URBAN REVITALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Revitalize Main Street



Create Jobs on Boulder Drive



Create Access to the Nashua River

The City of Fitchburg, acting by and through its Redevelopment Authority (hereinafter referred to as the "Authority"), in accordance with the powers conferred upon it by Chapter 121B of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, and in recognition of the need to remove certain decadent conditions located in the downtown section of the City, has caused this Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Plan (hereinafter referred to as the "Plan) to be prepared for the Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Area (hereinafter referred to as the "Area").

Vision

The Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Plan is designed to revitalize and stabilize the City's 224-acre, blighted and underutilized downtown area by creating a comprehensive strategy to promote redevelopment through limited public action and major incentives for private enterprise.

Implemented over a 20-year period, the Plan will create a vibrant Main Street servicing the surrounding neighborhoods and will provide a more prominent presence for Fitchburg State College that will assist in revitalizing Main Street. Direct efforts to make a safe and stable neighborhood made up of a diverse group of people, incomes, and occupations will build on the City's strong community atmosphere. A new Boulder Drive extending over the Nashua River and new industrial park at Sawyer Passway will offer new job opportunities that will support the transformation of Main Street into a vibrant destination. New amenities such as a river walk and pedestrian bridges over the Nashua River will draw residents, employees and tourists to the downtown area. By meeting the objectives of this Plan, the City believes it can change its image, attract private investment and become a more desirable place to live, work and visit.

Within the 224-Acre Area, the Plan proposes the acquisition of 54 acres, 68 parcels, 57 structures totaling 749,088 square feet, and creates an estimated 815 jobs and 96 new housing units. All proposed actions are planned for locations that the private sector is not likely to make the investment. As seen in the following sections of the Plan, all aspects of the Urban Renewal Plan are complete as required by M.G.L. Chapter 121B, section 1 and the required relocation plan, which is in compliance with M.G.L. 79A, will be submitted under a separate cover.

Eligibility

The catalyst for the Authority to begin work on the development of an Urban Renewal Plan in May of 1998 was the closing of the General Electric Plant and subsequent loss of 600 jobs. The need for such a plan was already apparent based on the high number of deficient and vacant buildings, the incompatible land uses, the obsolete street patters, the underutilized land and the failure of the City to attract private investment despite large amounts of publicly financed projects within the Area.

Located in the Montachusett region of north central Massachusetts, Fitchburg is approximately 28 square miles and has a population of just over 41,000. Fifty miles west of Boston and 25 miles north of Worcester, the city is a potential home for commuters in both of those metropolitan areas. The City is a unique mix of urban core and rural open space. The Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Area is unlike the rest of the City in that it has a dense urban area, an obstructed natural resource, intermodal facilities, and direct access to cultural, financial, educational, and governmental facilities.

Similar to other New England cities the last fifty years has seen numerous economic and social forces take their toll on Fitchburg. Though many attempts have been made to revitalize the once vibrant downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, the City has been unable to recover completely from the effects of changing industries and suburban sprawl. Once a regional shopping area, the downtown currently stands as a stark reminder of the effects of the automobile, strip mall, and suburban sprawl on many of the older New England mill cities.

The Area requires a mechanism to provide an overall strategy integrating solutions to these long standing conditions. The alternative, limited public action and sporadic private investment, has historically not worked. Projects such as the new fire headquarters, the new intermodal station, and the new Fitchburg State College Recreation Center, have done little to change the status of the Area. The investment in public dollars has failed to prove to private enterprise that this Area is a viable investment location. Therefore, this Plan seeks to coordinate all future public investments, and provide a framework for private investment, to accomplish the goals laid out in the project objectives (see Section 3. Project Objectives).

The City of Fitchburg has over the previous three decades, drafted numerous planning initiatives to address the conditions which make the 224 acre Area decadent substandard or blighted open. As articulated in the City's Master Plan, circumstances have existed in the Area that would not, by private enterprise alone and without either governmental subsidy or the exercise of governmental powers,

be made available for urban renewal. By performing the actions proposed in the Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Plan, the proposed land uses and building requirements in the Project Area will afford maximum opportunity to privately finance urban renewal consistent with the needs of the locality as a whole. The plan provides detailed costs (see Section 5. Finance) for all proposed actions (see Section 6. Public Improvements) in compliance with 760 CMR 12.00

Conforms to a Local Survey

Many of the conditions that exist in the Area have been identified in previous plans. City administrations and non-profit organizations have exhaustively studied the Area and identified many of the solutions called for in the Plan. Specifically, the Area and is deficiencies were specifically identified in September 1998 in the *Fitchburg Master Plan: Vision 2020* ¹(the "Master Plan" - see Appendix F) prepared by the Fitchburg Office of the Planning Coordinator with the assistance of the Vision 2020 Advisory Committee, a committee comprised of Fitchburg residents and businesses. The Master Plan called for, among other objectives, the need to "eliminate blight, address problems of housing deterioration and abandonment, and increase the role of housing in downtown revitalization." ¹

Similarly, in May 1999, Mt. Auburn Associates prepared a plan for the City of Fitchburg entitled *Fitchburg: Positioned for the 21st Century*² (the "Mt. Auburn Study" - see Appendix G). The plan recommended that the City of Fitchburg, in seeking to address areas of continuous economic blight, should "use existing urban renewal laws to assist in the revitalization efforts." ² The Mt. Auburn Study went on to recommend that the City "make use of an urban renewal plan to coordinate efforts and resources." ³

Along with the Master Plan and the Mt. Auburn Study, the Saratoga Associates prepared a report in 1993 entitled *Lower Main Street Area Revitalization* which discussed specifically the need to "examine the patterns and under lying causes of current land use patterns that are resulting undesirable results, such as abandoned or deteriorated buildings, vacant lots, and stressful density levels." The Saratoga Plan also detailed how the city of Fitchburg had, as early as the 1960's, in a report titled *The Neighborhood Improvement Plan:* 1975, deemed the Area in such decay that it recommended the City "develop and implement an urban renewal program." 5

Fitchburg Advisory Committee, 1998, "Fitchburg Master Plan: Vision 2020" p44

² Mt. Auburn Associates, 1993, Fitchburg: Positioned for the 21st Century, p 35

³ Saratoga Associates, 1993, "Lower Main Street Revitalization: City of Fitchburg, P2

Many of the citywide changes and improvements called for in the various plans have been initiated and implemented. Unfortunately, direct public investment within the specific Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Area has not accomplished the goals of spurring private investment within the Area or the removal of the blighting conditions indicated in the Master Plan.

Revitalizing Main Street

The proximity of Main Street to the River, Boulder Drive, and the City's oldest neighborhoods makes it an accessible destination for the residents and employees. Unfortunately, Main Street has been unable to attract retailers who act as a retail draw for the surrounding neighborhoods and businesses. There is a significant need for bringing people to Main Street so as to offer some chance for Main Street businesses to thrive. By increasing the number of people who frequent the Area, the likelihood of restaurants, shops and other services moving in to capitalize on the new activity will increase. Although Main Street will never be the regional retail draw it once was, the Plan seeks to transform the Street into a neighborhood retail center.

The Plan seeks to attract people to Main Street by the following initiatives: (1) change the current zoning to give property owners the right to convert vacant office space into residential units, thus increasing the amount of people in the downtown at all times; (2) offer \$5,000 a unit grant to any owner who will convert upper level office space to residential use; (3) offer parking in the City's new garages to residents on Main Street, thereby maximizing the public investment in the garages; (4) draw Fitchburg State College closer to Main Street so that the students and faculty can contribute to the revitalization of Main Street; (5) create jobs around Main Street to provide viable patrons for Main Street businesses; (6) open up the River in select locations close to Main Street to attract people to the Area and provide a resource for surrounding residents and employees; and (7) redesign Main Street for two-way traffic, slowing traffic, easing congestion and making it a more pedestrian friendly street. With these seven initiatives, it is very likely that Main Street can become a place where people want to live, shop, and recreate.

Job Creation

Job Creation is one of the major goals of the Plan. The loss of 600 jobs at the General Electric Plant was a devastating blow to the economic health of the City and especially the Downtown Area. The Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Plan will seek to create 815 new jobs and retain approximately 125 existing

jobs forced to relocate under the Plan. Two locations will serve as the primary job creation areas. Each area will contribute to the revitalization of Main Street and the Downtown Area by offering ancillary activities, which will spill over onto Main Street. The areas will consist of (1) Boulder Drive and (2) Sawyer Passway, which are both industrial areas lying within walking distance of Main Street.

Boulder Drive, where the General Electric Plant is located, lies between the Nashua River and Main Street. The Plan seeks to recreate Boulder into a more desirable location for businesses to locate by making significant improvements such as changing the street from one way to two way, constructing a bridge over the Nashua River to connect Boulder to Broad Street and opening that area up for further development possibilities, new sidewalks, new lighting, and new landscaping.

Sawyer Passway is a confirmed contaminated site on the southeast corner of the Area. By acquiring this site and completing the necessary remediation, this underutilized property will serve as a prime industrial park creating jobs in the Downtown Area. The site will require a permanent roadway easement to provide a route for trucks exiting the site. The proposed river walk will provide an attractive draw to future employers who wish to locate to Sawyer Passway and its proximity to lower Main Street will assist in revitalizing the Area.

Fitchburg State College

Fitchburg State College is a significant institution in the City of Fitchburg. Unfortunately, for many years the relationship between the College and the City has not focused on mutual interests. The College, seeing the downtown area as a potential liability in attracting students, laid out a strategy of expansion away from the downtown. For many years, the City viewed the College and its students as a liability to the surrounding neighborhood, contributing to the transient and unstable nature of the downtown neighborhood. The relationship between the City and the College had not dealt with the problems facing the College and the adjacent residential neighborhood. In recent years the College and the City have worked hard to address their mutual interests, culminating with the City agreeing to assist the College in efforts to move any new expansion or construction in the direction of the downtown. The construction of a new recreation center on North Street is a shining example of the new relationship.

The Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Plan seeks to embrace this strategy and work to create a way in which the College can play a more prevalent role in the life of the City. By using the College in the strategy to revitalize the Area, the Plan is working to refashion the City as a viable college town where people will want to live, work and study. Hoping to further such cooperation, the Plan seeks to construct a new science and technology building, which will facilitate the College's movement down North Street to Main Street. In the future, the City would like to see the expansion of college related buildings along the North Street corridor leading to a revitalized downtown.

By setting a direction for college expansion in the future, the Plan is providing a sense of stability for the surrounding neighborhood. To emphasize this point, the Plan will create an institutional zone on North Street from Pearl Street down to Main Street. By changing the City's zoning to reflect the strategy of bringing the College to Main Street, stabilization of the neighborhood will occur by showing potential investors the Area will not suffer haphazard institutional expansion.

In order to achieve the economic boost the college will provide the Downtown Area, the college faculty and students will need access to additional parking space. The need for additional parking for the College will open the possibility for a shared use by MBTA commuters and Fitchburg State students and faculty to use the Intermodal Garage. Both uses will eliminate much of the student and employee parking in the neighborhood.

Housing Strategy

The City of Fitchburg is committed to enhancing the neighborhood in a variety of ways and this Plan exhibits that commitment. The strategy is to (1) improve the quality of housing in the Area; (2) maintain the current residents by creating new home ownership opportunities; (3) assist the Fitchburg State College faculty and staff purchase homes in the neighborhood; (4) knit the neighborhood into the downtown Area; (5) take advantage of the intermodal station to attract potential commuters to Boston; and (6) create housing opportunities for artists.

The housing strategy will be implemented in two phases - a 5-year phase and a 10-year phase. (see Section 2. E ligibility) The City is committed to beginning strict enforcement of the zoning requirements by the creation of a "strike force." This strike force will be composed of representatives from Code Enforcement, the Planning Department and the Redevelopment Authority, and will work to protect the long-term soundness and affordability of the Area's housing stock.

The strategy calls for 49 existing housing units to be lost through acquisition, and a minimum of 96 new units to be constructed. Phase I will occur during the first five years of the Plan and will include the implementation of new housing and existing housing programs to stabilize the neighborhood. Emphasis will be placed on working with existing units and residents to insure current residents benefit from all public actions taken on the neighborhoods behalf. Since 46 units will be removed because of acquisitions, Phase II, which will include new construction, will occur concurrently. Phase II will occur over 10 years and will consist of 96 units to be constructed, focusing on the expansion of residents in the Main Street Area. Because the new housing will be primarily market rate, the strategy is not driven by a high degree of public action but is instead driven by building a framework of incentives to improve the housing market in the Area.

A variety of programs will be utilized in order to accomplish the housing strategy of the Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Plan, including the Federal Community Development Block Grant Program, the Home Owner Rehabilitation Program, the Housing Ownership Opportunity Program (HOOP) for first time homeowners, the Project Rejuvenate for Rental Housing Program for rental property owners, the Demolition of Abandoned and Unsafe Structures Program, and The College Neighborhood Restoration Initiative, which offers college credit hours to first time home buyers and owner occupants who make exterior improvements to their home.

Other aspects of the housing strategy include changing Fitchburg's Chapter 181 Zoning Ordinance to: a) allow for residential use on Main Street, b) allow construction of single family units on vacant lots previously too small for construction, and c) allow for the creation of an institutional zone along North Street to Main Street. This institutional zone will encourage Fitchburg State College to expand its campus within this zone to protect the character of the adjacent residential neighborhood.

The Plan calls for the creation of three new incentive programs for:
a) market rate housing on Main Street (the Main Street Housing Program), b) assistance to faculty members of Fitchburg State College to purchase homes within the Area (the Fitchburg State College Employee Housing Assistance Program), and c) grant assistance for market rate single family housing on the formerly unbuildable vacant lots in the Area (the Downtown Neighborhood Improvement Program).

An additional part of the housing strategy will be the creation of the Myrtle Avenue Historic District, a portion of which will lie within the Area. The historic district will buttress the new institutional zone, further providing a sense of stability to potential investors. The historic tax credits will also serve as additional incentives for

individual owners and investors to begin to rehabilitate the houses in the neighborhood.

The proposed new housing will consist of primarily market rate single and two-family units. Single-family houses will also be used as infill houses on all vacant lots currently too small to build legally. The single- and two-family units, as opposed to multifamily structures, will offer more potential for existing neighborhood residents to purchase a new home. The housing on the upper levels of Main Street will also be single and double unit residential units.

Gentrification is not the goal of the Plan. The goal is to help existing residents stabilize their own neighborhood by using a variety of incentives. From housing programs to infrastructure improvements, the Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Plan is committed to enhancing the livability of the neighborhood and its current residents.

Infrastructure Improvements

The obsolete street patterns have contributed to many of the conditions currently facing the Area. On Main Street, the speed of the one-way design insures an unfriendly environment and detracts from the ability of businesses to succeed. Currently, Boulder Drive is a dangerous bypass road. Blossom Street is a highly traveled entrance to both Fitchburg State College and Burbank Hospital. North Street, despite a large public investment attempting to create a gateway to Fitchburg State College, is not being used as the gateway to the College. Sawyer Passway is a 12-acre tract of land in close proximity to Main Street and the River, without any legitimate truck access in and out of the property, taking away from its redevelopment potential. All of these conditions show the intense need in the Area for significant infrastructure improvements. (see Section 7. Public Improvements)

As previously mentioned, Main Street and Boulder Drive will be redesigned for two-way traffic and the construction of both streets will be coordinated. A two-way Main Street will assist in the Street to become a friendlier place for people to visit, shop, and do business. A two way Boulder will give the street a more prominent feel and allow for people to travel to Main Street and the River safely.

Sawyer Passway is underutilized because of its poor access. The Plan set out to solve this issue by providing adequate entry and exit with a new connection to Moran Square. By providing this much needed connection, and a necessary environmental cleanup, the Sawyer Passway area will be a prime location for providing investment and job creation.

North Street has been the major emphasis of City efforts to revitalize the Area. Unfortunately, the public investment on North Street has not yet created the entranceway to the College originally envisioned. With a new fire department headquarters and the Fitchburg State College Recreation Center, the Street is on its way to being an impressive entrance to the College. The Plan will continue that work and acquire property along North Street to finish the improvements up to the College and finish the job.

Blossom Street is a major street in the neighborhood but is primarily used for access to Fitchburg State College and Burbank Hospital. The Plan will seek a variety of design changes to deter people from using this street as a thoroughfare to the College and force travelers to Burbank Hospital to slow down. The safety of the neighborhood residents will be the priority of the new design for Blossom Street.

Nashua River

Fitchburg was born of the Nashua River and reached its glory by tapping into the power of the Nashua River. Again, the City is looking to the river to be a catalyst to its revitalization. The Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Plan sets out to use the river to attract people to the Downtown Area and create a more attractive urban setting. The vision for the River is to create a river walk from the Sawyer Passway area to Crocker Field, linking the entire riverfront. Pedestrian bridges will be constructed to facilitate better access to the River and downtown area from the adjacent neighborhoods. In addition, there will be a new green space on Boulder Drive across from the new parking garage. (see Section 7. Public Improvements)

Parking

Parking is essential for the revitalization of the Area and has been one of the single most pervasive reasons why the downtown area and neighborhood have had difficulty stabilizing. After extensive interviews with Area stakeholders, parking was identified as a significant issue for many of the residents, institutions and businesses. For business owners on Main Street, the lack of parking symbolizes the inability of the City to assist them in offering a basic service to their customers; for residents, the lack of parking deters them from using the Area for retail shopping and caused excess perking throughout the neighborhood; for institutions such as Fitchburg State College, parking has deterred the college from looking toward the downtown for expansion due to lack of legitimate parking space.

Recognizing the need for a parking solution, the Plan calls for three new garages to be constructed: 1) Main Street Garage, 2) the Intermodal Garage, and 3) the Courthouse Garage. Combined, these three public investments will go a long way in remedying the current parking problems within the Area (see Section 7. Public Improvements).

Primarily to alleviate the dire need for retail parking space, the Main Street Garage will give immediate relief to existing and new businesses that need parking for customers. The garage will also service offices in the Area that require parking for employees and the planned green space on Boulder Drive.

The new intermodal station continues to see its daily use rise, and with the rise of commuter use the need for additional parking also rises. To service this increase, the Plan designates the construction of the Intermodal Garage to service the MBTA commuters. The vicinity of the garage to the new Fitchburg State College building will give it a dual use, providing parking for MBTA commuters during the day, and at night, parking for the high level of commuters attending Fitchburg State College. Existing and new businesses created on lower Main Street will also use the new garage for retail uses.

The Plan identifies the need for a new garage on Main Street across from City Hall to handle the level of parking required by the government offices in the vicinity of upper Main Street, the relocation of the Worcester County Superior Courthouse to the Area, and the renovation of the Fitchburg Theatre. The need for a garage is this area is not presently as severe as the other two garages, therefore the Courthouse Garage will be the last of the three garages to be constructed.

All three garages will be available for overnight parking for residents of Main Street. With the change in the zoning to allow housing on Main Street, the need for overnight parking is crucial to providing enough incentive for private enterprise to create this new housing. The lack of free surface parking may also deter potential residents who want to maintain an automobile. By providing the parking, the Plan removes another disincentive to creating new housing on Main Street and makes the units much more attractive to future residents. (see Appendix C. Design Guidelines)

Zoning

The zoning code in the City of Fitchburg has in many ways hindered the economic development of the downtown Area, and contributed to the instability of the downtown neighborhood. Lots left vacant by building demolition have turned into trash-strewn properties and contributes to the lack of investor confidence in the neighborhood.

Institutional expansion has caused uncertainty in the Area leading to a lack of investment, particularly residential areas. Finally, the fact that property owners on Main Street cannot by right, create residential spaces on Main Street diminishes the potential for creating patrons for Main Street businesses. (see Section 3. Project Objectives)

The Plan calls for three specific changes to the zoning code in order to alleviate existing conditions in the Area: 1) allow housing by right on Main Street; 2) allow construction on vacant lots where construction is currently not allowed due to minimum lot size requirements; 3) create an institutional zone to provide for specific expansion of Fitchburg State College. While the Plan is moving through the public approval process, an Overlay District will be established for the Area in order to avoid the continuation of problems associated with the existing zoning regulations.

By changing the zoning to allow for the construction of housing units on the upper levels of Main Street, the Plan will begin to address the need for pedestrians on Main Street. Public investment for infrastructure improvements on Main Street will not alone bring residents to the downtown area. By bringing residents to the upper levels of Main Street, the Plan will insure that pedestrians do populated Main Street.

Within the neighborhood there exists a high degree of vacant lots where multi family buildings once stood. The City, in attempting to establish zoning controls for a more suburban population, changed the zoning to increase the minimal lot size. This change did not allow for the natural removal of structures from older more densely populated areas of the City. By changing the zoning requirements for building on a minimum lot size, the Plan will allow for infill housing where open, trash-strewn lots not stand.

As seen in many other communities in the commonwealth, where institutions can expand unchecked, investor confidence in that area remains low. Although the creation of an institutional zone cannot bind Fitchburg State College in its future expansion, the zone will serve as a commitment from the College to the City and residents of the surrounding neighborhood.

The allowable uses in new institutional zone will not be limited to just college structures, but will include limited housing so as to maintain a neighborhood feel along North Street. The sizes of buildings along North Street will be subject to design review so as not to create a canyon effect as one travels along North Street. The institutional zone is for the protection of the neighborhood, so any new building must not detract from the residential quality of the existing neighborhood.

Design Review/Design Guidelines

The Plan will call for the adoption of a design review procedure and design guidelines for the Area. Recognizing the need for a Site Plan Review to insure that each project is determined to meet specific criteria set by the City, the Plan calls for a Site Plan Review Process to be adopted. The Plan will also provide design guidelines to help stabilize the neighborhood that will be a benefit to both residents and property owners while providing an additional incentive for existing and potential future property owners to invest in and improve the Area. (see Appendix C Design Guidelines)

Financial Incentive Programs

The Plan will provide a limited amount of direct public investments and establish a framework of incentives programs that improve the Areas ability to attract investors. The Plan recognizes that without private investment, the objectives of the Plan will not be met. Therefore, the Plan includes existing incentive programs already in place, and adds to them to further the likelihood that investors will commit to - along with the housing incentives previously mentioned. The Plan calls for the use of 1) Economic Development Incentive Program; 2) Fitchburg by Design Loan Program; 3) the Brownfields Programs at the State and Federal Levels 4) Fitchburg Business Development Program; and 5) the Fitchburg Industrial Development Financing Authority Micro-loan Program (see Section 2. Eligibility)

The City Administration and the Redevelopment Authority have turned to the state's Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP) to provide public assistance for private commercial investment. The EDIP provides three major incentives: (a) an abandoned tax credit for abandoned properties; (b) an investment tax credit for redevelopment; and (c) property tax relief on the increment between a property's existing taxes and its redeveloped property taxes.

In addition to the EDIP eligibility, Fitchburg by Design, Inc. presently offers a low interest loan program designed to assist primarily private, for-profit business seeking to locate, expand, or remain in business within the Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Area. This program may also be used by non-profit organizations undertaking economic development projects that benefit the Area. Since this program is offered by a private non-profit organization in cooperation with Area lending institutions, the Authority will work to secure this program or similar programs.

The Brownfield program will assist in the cleanup of the Sawyer Passway area and will provide incentive for private interest to clean the area and begin construction of a new industrial park. The Brownfield program will enable private enterprise to bear the environmental cleanup costs to redevelop this underutilized site and become one of the main job creation engines within the Area.

The Authority, in cooperation with Area lending institutions, is committed to establishing the Fitchburg Business Development Program, which will be offered to existing and new businesses who wish to expand or locate within the Area. The main goal is establish a consortium of private lenders dedicated to providing below market financial assistance within the boundaries of the Plan. This program is modeled upon the documented successes of a similar program in Lowell, Massachusetts. The Program is intended to spur job growth within the Downtown Area and create a mechanism for long-term sustainability for existing and future businesses.

The Fitchburg Industrial Development Financing Authority to stimulate manufacturing for the purpose of retaining an expanding industrial development and job growth in the City of Fitchburg. The goal of the IDFA is to create one job for each \$5,000 loaned with a maximum of 25,000 to any singular borrower. All loans will meet job creation, job retention or other public benefit standard establish under the Community Development Block Grant program for the benefit of low and moderate income persons. All loans are subject to a DCBG eligibility review by the Fitchburg Planning Office.

Tourism

Currently, there are few reasons for people outside of Fitchburg to travel to the Downtown Area. Therefore the Plan proposes to 1) establish an artist cooperative on Willow Street to emphasize the significant amount of artists already in the Fitchburg area; 2) assist Fitchburg State College to develop an existing building for an Arts Center; 3) the Authority will work to find a private developer to redevelop and operate the Fitchburg Theater; and 4) hire a marketing firm to market the City and its many attractions to potential visitors.

The Fitchburg Art Museum is one of the few attractions in Fitchburg that draws people to the Downtown Area. The Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Plan capitalize on the museum draw by proposing the creation of an artist cooperative. The Plan will create housing for artist living/work space in the Downtown Area to substantially increase the number of artists living and working in the Area. Attracting additional artists to the Area will

further bolster the City's image as a cultural destination and attract tourist to the Downtown Area. In addition, Fitchburg State is currently searching to locate a new "Arts Center" to house their arts program and other student related events.

The Plan also discusses the need to redevelop the Fitchburg Theatre. The Theatre will be an integral part of redevelopment of the downtown area and although the Plan does not call for a specific public investment at this time, it does call for the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority to seek private investment to restore this historic theatre. A restored theatre would do much to bring people from outside Fitchburg into the Area to capitalize on the many cultural events which would occur at a restored Fitchburg Theatre. A restoration would also go far in emphasizing Fitchburg place as a cultural destination in north Worcester County.

Relation to City as a Whole

The Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization and Development Area is a small part of the overall City of Fitchburg. Over the past decade, the City has made major investment outside the Area, including a new high school, airport improvements, and the creation of an industrial park. In addition, the City will be studying ways to improve the entrance into the City and take advantage of the improvements being made to Route 12. The City will work to capitalize on improvements to Route 12 by improving traffic flow into the City and onto Main Street, North Street, Boulder Drive and Blossom Street through major reconstruction of these downtown streets.

Each of these attempts is significant, but since the City recognizes the Area as the center of government, culture, businesses, the major emphasis of the City's planning has been on revitalizing the downtown area. The Plan is a further recognition by the City that this Area must be revitalized if the image and quality of life of the City is to improve. All other areas in the City will eventually benefit from a healthy Downtown Area.

Community Process

It is common knowledge that a plan will fail without significant public input and support. In that regard, this Plan was developed with the active participation of a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) comprised of 13 individuals representing local residents, businesses, institutions, community organizations, Fitchburg State College, and a number of city agencies. In addition, the Plan calls for Citizen participation sub-committees to be created to work with the

Authority on each major segment of the Plan, such as North Street, Boulder Drive, Housing, Historic District and other major projects. Each sub-committee create, as well a the Fitchburg Design Review committee will include at least one Fitchburg City Councilor who will be appointed by the Fitchburg City Council President, one member from Pride and one member from Fitchburg by Design, or any subsequent business association. In addition, the Nashua River Watershed Association and Fitchburg Stream Team shall be invited to consult the Authority on all projects dealing with the Nashua River (see Section 11. Community Process)

The Authority will meet with the Fitchburg City Council to review the progress of the Plan as often as the Council deems necessary by giving the Authority a 30-day written notice.