



# FRA CONNECTOR

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## A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

by Meagen Donoghue

Have seen *It's a Wonderful Life*? It is one of my favorite holiday films. It is about the story of George Baily who selflessly helps people out throughout the duration of the film. I won't give it all away, but one of my favorite lines in the film is: "Dear George: Remember – No man is a failure who has friends." This line has never rung truer than with our friends, the local political delegation of Senator John Cronin and State Representative Michael Kushmerek. From the very start of their first terms, the two legislators have seen the value in redeveloping downtown Fitchburg and have brought thousands of dollars to the community for various reasons through their earmark process. To the FRA's surprise, we were a recipient of not one but two earmarks, equaling \$750,000 each (a total of \$1.5 million).



It is through Senator Cronin's and Representative Kushmerek's commitment to fostering economic growth and community development that these earmarks will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in furthering the FRA's mission to enhance the quality

of life for Fitchburg residents, promote job creation, and attract investments that contribute to the overall prosperity of the region.

The funding secured will be instrumental in advancing various projects that are integral to the FRA's redevelopment plans (see the article 'Tis the Season of Giving). From infrastructure improvements to innovative economic initiatives, these earmarks will empower the FRA to transform Fitchburg into a thriving hub of opportunity and potential. We are deeply appreciative of the legislative team's steadfast support, which serves as a catalyst for positive change in the community.

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The FRA understands the complexities and challenges associated with advocating for funding in the state budget, and we are truly grateful for the Senator's and Representative's effective representation and tireless dedication to ensuring that Fitchburg remains a priority. Their leadership and commitment inspire us as we work towards achieving our shared vision for our city's future. And "we get by with a little help from our friends" ~ The Beatles.

## 'TIS THE SEASON OF GIVING

by Meagen Donoghue

No matter what or who you believe in during the holiday season, many of us feel the joy in giving gifts. May it be a gleaming smile from your gift recipient or knowing you've made someone's day by making it brighter, there is no better feeling. The FRA has been granting money to many causes this year. It may be through funding requests from community groups, grant programs, or just providing help in other ways. These gifts have bridged financing for large-scale projects, provided assistance to small business owners when they needed that little something to cover the costs, funded community events and organizations, and provided non-monetary assistance to a few community-minded organizations.

As mentioned in the article "A Little Help from Our Friends," the FRA received two allocations of \$750,000 from the local political delegation of Senator John Cronin and State Representative Michael Kushmerek. The FRA then paid it forward to NuView Communities' Arts Community to help bridge the funding gap to kick off the construction project that has been eleven years in the making. The second \$750,000 allocation will go to the housing project at the former Iver Johnson Mills along River Street. Due to a steep escalation in supplies and construction costs, this money will help close the financial gap the developers face as they embark on this transformative project. The FRA also donated \$50,000 to the Library Capital Campaign because of the long-standing service it provides to young and old alike.



It is not always about the big projects, however. The FRA has also granted developers and small businesses owners the following:

# THE NEW DESIGN GRANTS IN ACTION

The Design Grant is a new program to help ease the costs of design drawings often required, but not necessarily planned for by the business owner. Drawings can include, but are not limited to architectural, mechanical, or structural designs for new spaces or upgrades within the FRA's Urban Renewal District. This reimbursement grant awards up to \$2,000 and can be applied to at any time throughout the year.



## 2023 Design Grant Recipients include:

- 87-91 River Street - IVJ Group, Inc.
- 759 Main Street - Prime Real Estate Investment, LLC
- 356 Main Street - Juan Reinoso-Luna
- 423 Main Street - Victor Vicioso Frias
- 633-639 Main Street - Manuel Joaquin

# MAIN STREET HOUSING PROGRAM

## \$35,000 REWARDED IN 2023



651-655 Main Street  
James C. Pappas



759 Main Street  
Prime Real Estate Investment, LLC

The Main Street Housing Program is aimed at providing a financial boost for developers whose projects involve residential units on upper floors of commercial buildings along Main Street. The program grants \$5,000 per unit for up to ten units, potentially totaling \$50,000. This reimbursement grant can be applied to at any time but must be completed within the year of the approval date.



# COMMUNITY GIVING - 2023 RECAP

## \$67,450 IN DONATIONS ~ 17 RECIPIENTS

The FRA takes its role in the community seriously and is committed to engaging and supporting with community-centered events and programs in their programming and events. This year we surpassed our previous giving by donating to 17 different organizations, each for very different projects or events. We are proud to have supported the following in 2023.

- North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce - CLI Class of 2023 Scholarship fund for MyTurn, Inc.
- Fitchburg Civic Days - 2023 Block Party Sponsor
- Mayssa Sports Management - 2023 Silver Sponsor
- Fitchburg Cultural Council - Visual Arts Scholarship Fund
- Fitchburg Public Library Capital Campaign
- StageWorks, Inc. - Program advertisement
- North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce - Annual Meeting Supporting Sponsor
- Crocker Field Restoration Committee - Restoration of Crocker Field
- The Arc of Opportunity - 2023 Annual Charity Auction Bronze Sponsor
- Fitchburg Veterans Council - Bronze Sponsor for 9th Annual 5K
- InTown Fitchburg - Sponsorship for Trick or Treat on Main Street
- Stratton Players - Donor Lucy's Barn Restoration Fund
- Rotary Club of Fitchburg - Sponsor of Breakfast for the Bands
- Fitchburg Cultural Alliance - 45th Anniversary Sponsor
- City of Fitchburg - Holiday Lights Diamond Sponsor
- Fitchburg Art Museum - Patron Membership
- MOC (Making Opportunities Count) - 2023 Holiday Gift Distribution

We are always accepting requests for support of local events and organizations. Feel free to email requests to Executive Director, Meagen Donoghue at [director@fitchburgredevelopment.com](mailto:director@fitchburgredevelopment.com) or mail them to our office: Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority, 166 Boulder Drive, Suite 104, Fitchburg, MA 01420.



# 'TIS THE SEASON OF GIVING, CONT.



*The Salvation Army at Putnam Place*

It is not always about putting forth money for the FRA. It is also about the value of community connectedness. When the Salvation Army lost their space at the last moment for their toy drive, the FRA donated space at 166 Boulder Drive so they could carry out the much-needed program to community's most vulnerable.

The FRA also donated the use of land at our property at 520 Main Street, the former Johnsonia lot. Various programs included the City's annual Earth Day Celebration, a pop-up food court for the Maker on Main event, and for both the Civic Days Block Party and Trick or Treat on Main Street.



*Meagen Donoghue and Sarah Stebulis representing the FRA at Trick or Treat on Main Street.*



The FRA also donated the parking lot at 166 Boulder Drive for an art and fashion show that occurred in June as well as the annual Antique and Classic Bike Swap, and a collaborative effort between Intown Fitchburg, the City, and the FRA to carry out the annual Food Truck Festival.

The FRA is more than just a quasi-government organization or an agency that works with real estate developers. We are committed to the community and truly believe that it is better to give than receive.

## Let's stay in touch...

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

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## Follow us...

