

FITCHBURG REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
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Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority



Annual Report



Strengthening Downtown,
Creating Opportunity

2025

Photo: City of Fitchburg Website

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FITCHBURG REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority (FRA) was founded on January 21, 1964 pursuant to the authority granted by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 121 B, § 3 as amended.

The FRA office is located at Putnam Place, 166 Boulder Drive, Suite 104, Fitchburg, Massachusetts, 01420. The hours of operation are 7:00 am to 4:30pm, Monday-Friday.

The FRA can be found online at <https://fitchburgredevelopment.com> as well as on Facebook and LinkedIn.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Membership as of December 31, 2025

Charles Caron, Chair

Jarrold (Jay) Roy, Vice Chair

Laura O’Kane, Governor Appointee (until October 2025)

Joseph Bowen, Governor Appointee (started October 2025)

Maribel Cruz, Treasurer

Laura Bayless, PhD, Member

FRA STAFF

Meagen P. Donoghue, Executive Director

Robert Hasche, Facilities Manager

Sarah U. Stebulis, Business Administrator

MISSION

The FRA is committed to implementing imaginative, creative development that achieves the community's best interest within the Urban Renewal District. Our goal is to work in the public's interest to facilitate infrastructure investments and development projects that integrate commercial, housing, civic, and open spaces use. We are a public real estate entity with a unique set of development tools, working in close partnership with the City of Fitchburg and other organizations.

OPERATING PRINCIPALS

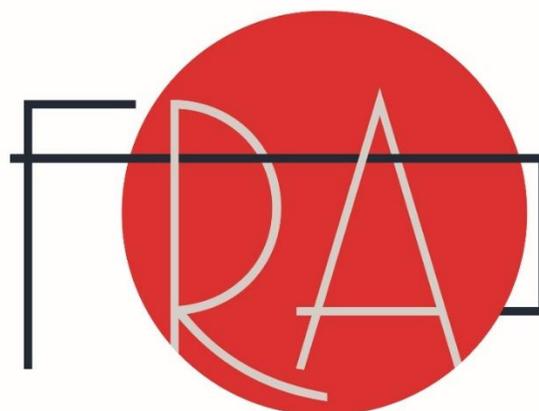
Act: Complement the City's planning role by focusing on implementation using redevelopment tools imaginatively.

Operate with transparency: Be visible and foster face-to-face relationships and a forum for discussing ideas.

Maximize the public benefit: Serve a broad public purpose with ethically sound practices in partnership with the City and others.

Operate with fiscal responsibility: Use our independent recourses wisely to accomplish our community-centered mission.

Set an example: Advance thinking on issues; be innovative while maintaining an awareness of Fitchburg's rich past.



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INTRODUCTION

The Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority (FRA), with a committed staff and the Board of Directors, 2025 was no different from years past. The FRA worked diligently to support the mission of the Urban Renewal Plan, building on existing and new relationships, while continuing to evolve and deliver transformative projects for Fitchburg.

This report highlights key developments, ongoing projects, and future goals that align with FRA's mission to enhance the economic vitality of the downtown Urban Renewal District.

Key Accomplishments of 2025:

- **Downtown Revitalization:** Continued investment in downtown infrastructure through public/private partnerships as well as the purchase and sale of properties identified in the 2020 and 2040 Urban Renewal Plans.
- **Small Business Support:** Continued FRA grant programs focusing on activating storefronts and housing in the Urban Renewal District.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Continued to build new and carry-on strong relationships with local and state agencies, private developers, and nonprofit organizations to drive redevelopment initiatives throughout the Urban Renewal District.

Financial Overview:

The FRA maintained a stable financial position throughout the year, leveraging state grants and earmarks. Fiscal responsibility remained a priority, ensuring sustainable solvency while providing for the FRA's mission through resource allocation.

Strategic Initiatives for 2025:

- **Downtown Revitalization & Housing Production:** Advanced mixed-use development along Main Street through public-private partnerships
- **State Funding Maximization:** Partnered with local business, City, and state offices to pursue grant and earmark funding for the FRA.
- **Brownfield Remediation & Site Readiness:** Pursued Brownfields assistance in the form of funding and testing to perform Phase II of largest FRA-owned land.

Conclusion:

The Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority remains committed to its mission of driving economic revitalization, enhancing quality of life, and fostering a vibrant community. With continued collaboration and strategic planning, the FRA looks forward to building upon its successes and positioning Fitchburg for long-term prosperity in the future.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS NEWS

2025 saw significant activity with the Board of Directors as evident in the number of meetings held throughout the year. The FRA continued to work with the local political delegation and various anchor institutions throughout the community. The FRA provided funding through in-house grants as well as funded requests from community organizations who sought to make an impact within the city. As for the Board itself, in 2025, it remained a strong group who upheld the mission of the organization.

Board Members

The FRA was pleased to welcome Mr. Joseph Bowen to the Board in October of 2025. His experience and perspective have shown to be an asset as we advance our mission and strategic initiatives. At the same time, we extend our sincere gratitude to Ms. Laura O’Kane for her dedicated service and leadership. Her contributions have helped shape our work and strengthen the Authority’s impact on the community. We thank her for her commitment and wish her continued success in her next chapter.



Joseph Bowen, New Member



Laura O’Kane, Outgoing Member with FRA Chair, Charles Caron

Board Meetings

The Board continued to meet on a regular monthly basis (third Wednesday of each month), in a hybrid capacity. The Board also held several additional executive session meetings throughout the year to discuss potential purchase and sales of properties, lease opportunities, funding requests, and any business pertaining to the Urban Renewal District or Plan. In 2025, the Board held eleven (11) regular meetings, and fifteen (15) executive session meetings, twenty-six (26) in total.

2025 Urban Renewal Planning

In 2025, Urban Renewal planning consisted of focusing mainly on the maintenance and upkeep of existing properties, while exploring options throughout the current District and potential future districts.

A significant milestone in the FRA's ownership of 520 Main Street was reached when, following two (2) competitive Requests for Proposals processes, the Board voted to approve the sale of the property to The Applewild School. The Applewild School intends to develop a hotel on the site to accommodate visiting families and guests, as well as individuals seeking lodging in proximity to local businesses, Fitchburg State University, Game On, and downtown Fitchburg.

Allocation of Funding

The FRA has a long history of supporting local businesses and property owners in its downtown Urban Renewal District. The FRA's role in the community began in 1964 and was charged with assisting the efforts of supporting and attracting business to Fitchburg. These three grants are part of a continued supportive effort aimed at helping both property owners and their tenants upgrade or activate their spaces by tackling some of the most critical and challenging building needs within the downtown area.

The FRA continued its allocation of grant funding throughout the year. The grants comprise of the FRA Housing Program, the Design Grant, and the Small Business Internet Grant.

STAFF NEWS

The FRA Staff comprises of three positions, Executive Director, Facilities Manager, and Business Administrator. As a team, the staff works to advance the mission of the FRA and serve at the pleasure of the Board of Directors.

URBAN RENEWAL PLAN

The FRA's 2020 Fitchburg Downtown Revitalization and Development Plan (The Plan) was approved in 1999 and guided two decades of transformative investment, including redevelopment of the former GE Complex at 166 Boulder Drive, creation of Riverfront Park (later conveyed to the City of Fitchburg), and development of the CVS on Main Street adjacent to Fitchburg State University. The Plan expired on January 1, 2021. To ensure continuity, the FRA obtained state extensions on the 2020 Plan while drafting an updated plan throughout 2021. In early 2022, the FRA secured local approvals from the Planning Board, City Council, and its Board of Directors before submitting the plan to the Department of Housing and Community Development. The 2040 Fitchburg Downtown Revitalization and Development Plan: Amendment #9 was approved by DHCD in July 2022, allowing the FRA to complete unfinished elements of the original Plan, expand the Urban Renewal District, add properties, and advance new goals and objectives.

The final approval of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act, or MEPA, occurred in July of 2023 which enabled the ability to act on the goals and objectives addressed in the Plan.

Amendments to the Plan:

There were none in 2025.

FRA-Owned Properties:

As a quasi-government agency whose primary purpose is real estate within the Urban Renewal District, the FRA owned several properties throughout the City of Fitchburg in 2025 including:

Within the Urban Renewal District:

166-200 Boulder Drive

520 Main Street

866 Main Street

Outside of the Urban Renewal District:

0 Airport Road/0 Fallulah Road (gifted property in 2013)

Property Acquisitions:

There were none in 2025.



Google Street View, 866 Main Street

Dispositions:

There were none in 2025.

Putnam Place:

In 1999, Putnam Place, a former General Electric factory, was gifted to the FRA. Since taking ownership, the FRA has made strides with the property having been identified as a target site within the agency's Urban Renewal Plan. To create a cohesion of office and industrial space in one location, the FRA demolished smaller, deficient buildings and concentrated efforts on the main building (Building 2/166 Boulder Drive) within the complex. It was here where in 2004, offices were built out in the front of the building while a national defense contractor maintained a factory in the rear. Today the main building is ~85% occupied with state offices, a National Science Foundation environmental lab, the national defense contractor which builds propulsion motors for submarines, and the FRA's headquarters. Adjacent to the main building is the former GE machine shop, known as Building 3 as well as Building 6, the decommissioned power plant. Both have stayed vacant for decades and the FRA continues to seek funding to assist in the redevelopment of both buildings.

Building 2 can be described as the heart of Putnam Place. With a mixture of businesses comprised of a mix of public and private entities, the property serves patrons not only from the city, but also the region and country. The tenants include:

Battelle Memorial Institute:

Battelle Memorial Institute (under Battelle's Cooperative Agreement with the National Science Foundation) is now the party responsible for National Ecological Observatory Network, Inc. (D/B/A NEON, Inc.) and continued to lease space in Building #2 for a total amount of 2,000 square feet. The lease signed in December of 2012 and was set to expire in November 2022. Through early outreach by the FRA, NEON renewed their lease for an additional seven years, expiring in 2029.

Fitchburg Fiber:

Fitchburg Fiber, LLC (FF) began leasing a space comprising of 650 square feet in June 2021. FF is a small tech start up that provides low-cost quality internet to residents in Fitchburg, primarily currently within the Urban Renewal District. As more interest builds, they will expand their user radius beyond to other areas of the city. In December of 2025, Fitchburg Fiber signed a new ten-year lease.

Leonardo -DRS:

Leonardo-DRS continued to lease space in Building #2/166 Boulder Drive for a total amount of 114,454 square feet of Manufacturing Space, and 22,000 square feet for office operations. In January 2017, Leonardo-DRS signed a five-year lease extension for both the manufacturing and office spaces. The extension ran until October 31, 2025, however, a new two-year extension for the manufacturing side and a five-year for the office space of DRS was granted as they will continue lease negotiations with the FRA into 2026.

Worcester Northern District Registry of Deeds:

Worcester Northern District Registry of Deeds continued to lease 12,981 square feet of space in Building #2. In June of 2019, the Registry of Deeds signed a five-year extension. A new five-year lease was signed in June of 2025.

City of Fitchburg Public Library:

As the City of Fitchburg Public Library (the Library) breaks ground on the expansion project of their Main Street location, the FRA worked with the City to house a condensed version at Putnam Place. The Library began their lease of 13,875 square feet of space in January 2023. A renovation of the space that was once occupied temporarily by City Hall was completed, and their doors opened in December 2023. In 2024, the Library extended its lease term from 2025 to December of 2026.



Putnam Place

Leasable Space at Putnam Place – Building 2:

As of December 31, 2025, space allocation is summarized as follows:

Totals for the Site:

Total area – ~193,381 square feet
Total Leasable – ~176,607 square feet
Total Leased – ~164,349 square feet
Percent leased – ~85 %

520 Main Street:

The lot has been vacant since a fire ravaged through the upper stories of the former grant hotel-turned luxury apartment building eleven years prior. The FRA acquired the property in 2022, and much interest has been generated as a result.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued in 2024 to garner interest, and the FRA received one proposal. After a thorough review and discussion, the FRA reissued the RFP in 2025 to which the sale of the property was awarded to The Applewild School seeking to develop a hotel. Discussions will continue in 2026.

0 Airport Road:

The City of Fitchburg sold the property to the FRA in April 2013 for \$1.00 and continues to manage it. In 2021, 4.6 acres of the property were sold to Tango Properties. Also in 2021, GFI Properties signed a Purchase and Sales Agreement with the FRA to buy the property and has extended the deadline to June of 2026 to conduct further due diligence.

866 Main Street:

On February 26, 2024, the FRA purchased 866 Main Street. The prominent lot has stood vacant since a fire tore through the structure decades prior. The purchase was sparked by the surrounding local businesses seeking local control for future community use and came to the FRA as a result. Once the purchase was complete, the FRA held a community meeting with the surrounding tenants and business owners to garner ideas for short and long-term uses. For 2025, the FRA rented the property out to contractors who were working on the Main Street sewer separation project for their construction materials. This will continue in 2026.

Capital Improvement Projects at Putnam Place:

Switchgear Replacement Project

An RFP was issued in 2024, to procure an engineer to design and act as future project manager for the installation of a new switchgear. The contractor chosen and their sub-contractors worked through 2025 and will be completed in 2026.

FINANCES

In 2025, the FRA continued its commitment to the Fitchburg community by allocating funding in the forms of donations and grants as well as through state earmarks obtained by the local political delegation. Work also continued with programmatic priorities and a focus on mobilizing grants to meet the needs of small businesses facing challenges in this post-Covid environment became a priority.

The FRA's primary source of revenue continues to be from the tenants of Putnam Place, grant awards, and the sale of properties. Thus, revenue fluctuates with tenancy and FRA development activities.

The FRA's investment income comprised \$376,732.89. The assets are managed by MMDT, Rollstone Bank, and Rockland Trust, and consist of long-term assets in equity and bond that support current and future investments.

The significant areas of the FRA's expenses are personnel, office management, professional services, and redevelopment investments. Additional 2025 expenses included the continued support of downtown civic engagements and Fitchburg organizations, allocating \$14,550 in funds.

Grant Awards & Earmarks:

State Senator John Cronin and State Representative Michael Kushmerek secured a \$375,000 earmark for the FRA through the FY 2025 state budget process. The FRA allocated these funds to the Tocci Group's Watch Us Grow, LLC and Pelletier Properties to support continued investment along Main Street. Later in 2025, Senator Cronin and Representative Kushmerek secured an additional \$750,000 earmark. One-half of this funding was allocated to the Tocci Group's Waverly Properties, LLC, with the remaining funds scheduled for allocation in early 2026, also to Waverly Properties, LLC.

The FRA also was awarded \$4.1 million from the State's MassWorks program. The funding will be put toward a roofing project for Building 2 at Putnam Place.

Annual Audit:

The 2024 financial audit was completed by accountant Mark Mueller. For reference, the audit is one year behind as the fiscal year begins on January 1. A copy of the 2024 Audit and all previous years are available on request.

PILOT Program:

The FRA made a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) to the City of Fitchburg for all properties owned in the amount of \$112,047.89 for fiscal year 2025.

FRA Grant Programs:

The FRA provides grants to developers and small business owners to help kickstart their project or bridge a financial gap. The various grants include:

FRA Urban Renewal District Housing Program:

The FRA Urban Renewal District Housing Program aims at providing a financial boost for developers whose projects involve residential units on upper floors of commercial throughout the Urban Renewal District. Originally known as the Main Street Housing Program, the program expanded in 2022 to allocate \$5,000 for up to ten units (from the original five units), potentially totaling \$50,000. In 2024, the FRA's Board of Directors voted to expand the program to encompass the entire Urban Renewal District. This reimbursement grant can be applied to at any time but must be completed within the year of the approval date. In 2025, the FRA Board of Directors approved \$15,000 (three units) for the developer of 325-327 Main Street.



Joshua Bloomberg of Chris P. Bacon Properties and 2025 FRA Housing Program recipient.

Design Grant Program:

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. This reimbursement grant awards up to \$2,000 and can be applied to at any time throughout the year for architectural, mechanical, or structural designs for new spaces or upgrades within the FRA's Urban Renewal District. In 2025, the FRA allocated \$4,000 between two (2) recipients.

Small Business Internet Grant Program:

The program reimburses micro-businesses, those comprising five employees or under, \$100 for a basic internet installation, while those that take advantage of

packages (such as internet, VOIP, WIFI, and phone) can receive up to \$1000. Throughout 2025, the FRA awarded a total of \$1,400 between three (3) recipients.

Funded Community Projects:

The FRA made seven (7) donations in support of downtown civic activities during 2025, totaling \$14,550.00. The activities are as follows:

1. North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce – 2025 Non-Traditional Student Scholarship
2. A second donation was allocated for the 2026 Non-Traditional Student Scholarship Program
3. Fitchburg Civic Days – 2025 All Events Sponsor
4. North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce – Annual Meeting Supporting Sponsor
5. The Arc of Opportunity – 2025 Annual Charity Auction
6. Fitchburg Art Museum – Patron Membership
7. Fitchburg Veterans Council – 11th Annual 5K – Bronze Sponsor

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING & PARTNERSHIPS

The FRA continues to be a community partner by providing or assisting in programming and events.

Annual Food Truck Festival:

The FRA partnered with several community stakeholders and Woo Trucks to host its annual Food Truck Festival held in May. Like every other year, it rained, but the event was still enjoyed by all who attended.

Fitchburg Rides:

The FRA donated the use of the parking lot at Putnam Place to hold an antique bike swap and sale sponsored by Fitchburg Rides in June.

Help For Our Community:

The FRA donated the use of Suite 102 at Putnam place to hold the organization Help for Our Community's annual Secret Santa event.



Scenes from Help for Our Community's Secret Santa event.



2026 FRA PRIORITIES

As the FRA looks ahead in 2026, the Board of Directors and its staff will prioritize the following:

Urban Renewal Plan:

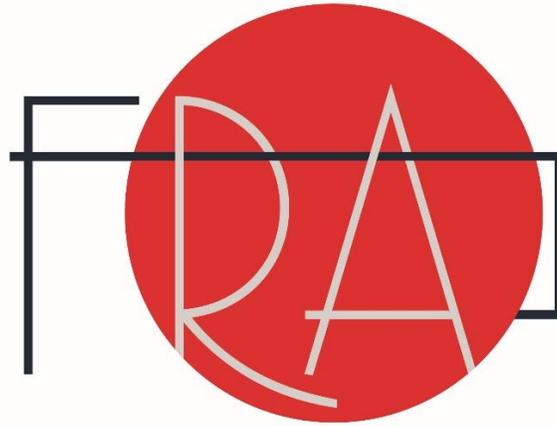
- Mobilize purchases and sales of Downtown Urban Renewal Properties.
- Work with developers to find resources to redevelop properties within the Urban Renewal District.

Citywide Activities and Projects:

- Provide on-going financial assistance by way of FRA Grant programs and state earmark allocations.
- Continue partnerships with City and other organizations throughout the city and region.

Internal Operations:

- Prioritize Capital Projects for all FRA properties.
- Continue to seek funding opportunities through various grant programs.



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