



FRA CONNECTOR

Volume 9 • May 2026

WELCOME THREE NEW MEMBERS TO THE FRA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

by Meagen Donoghue

The FRA would like to welcome three new members to its Board of Directors. Mr. Joe Bowen, Mr. Brian Lipomi and Mr. Kerry "Chuck" Siomos.



Mr. Bowen is the FRA's gubernatorial appointee and also serves on the City Council. He is committed to Fitchburg for years as seen serving in the role as Chair of the Cultural Council in the past.



Mr. Lipomi is a local downtown business owner (Letz Rage at 20 Putnam Street) and has previously worked in the construction and ambulance fields.



Mr. Siomos is a retired Fitchburg police officer and former downtown business owner (former JR's Pub on North Street, now the site of CVS Pharmacy).

We welcome our new Board Members who bring years of experience and local knowledge to the Board!

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THE FRA JOINS THE TDI PARTNERSHIP

by Meagen Donoghue

According to MassDevelopment, the Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) is designed to build wealth and opportunity in Massachusetts' Gateway Cities from the ground up. Through a three-year partnership and accelerator model, the program invests sustained resources into targeted commercial districts—leveraging existing assets, community commitment, and strategic redevelopment within a defined area.



A cornerstone of the program is the TDI Fellow: a mid-career professional who brings technical expertise while coordinating stakeholders and strengthening district-wide collaboration. Fitchburg previously benefited from this model through Francisco Torres (2018–2022), who focused on Main Street. Building on that experience, the City of Fitchburg and its partners successfully advocated for a new Fellow to support the Water Street corridor.



Through the Office of Planning and Community Development and its local partnership, Fitchburg was awarded a new TDI Fellow, Luis Cotto, who is expected to begin around July 1, 2026. He will work closely with stakeholders to develop and implement a redevelopment strategy for the Water Street corridor, particularly between First Street and [insert endpoint]. His work will emphasize relationship-building with small business and property owners, fostering investment, and strengthening pride of place.



The initiative officially launched at a TDI kickoff event hosted by UMass Lowell in early March. The full-day session focused on identifying “quick wins” for immediate impact while establishing long-term goals for the three-year effort.

FITCHBURG REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY'S NON-TRADITIONAL SCHOLARSHIP GRANTED TO FITCHBURG STUDENT

by Sarah Stebulis

The FRA has supported the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce's Non-Traditional scholarship program since its creation in 2023. This scholarship was the Community Leadership Institute project of Business Administrator, Sarah Stebulis' class. The scholarship was created to recognize individuals whose paths may not follow a traditional route, but whose determination, resilience, and purpose set them apart. It honors those who work hard, overcome obstacles, and pursue education with a clear sense of why it matters—not just for themselves, but for others around them. Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority's Non-Traditional scholarship was awarded this year to someone who truly embodies that spirit: Soridania Mora.

Soridania's journey is one of courage and determination. She came to the United States from the Dominican Republic in 2022, bringing with her not only ambition, but a deep passion for making a difference. She will be graduating from Fitchburg High School and continuing her education at Mount Wachusett Community College in the ESL Childcare Associate Program.

Soridania is passionate about early childhood education and working with young children—helping them learn, grow, and feel supported. These are not just career goals; they reflect her character. She demonstrates the qualities of a true educator: kindness, compassion, patience, and dedication. What stands out even more is her work ethic and reliability. Both of her letters of recommendation speak highly of her commitment, her consistency, and the way she shows up fully in everything she does. Those are the traits that build trust, create impact, and lead to long-term success.

The FRA's congratulates Soridania and all of the scholarship recipients this year.



FOOD TRUCK FEST IS ON THE MOVE!

It's May and you haven't seen anything about the Annual FRA Food Truck Festival (FTF) held at 166 Boulder Drive! There is a reason for that! A portion of the property's parking lot will be part of the City's sewer separation project (much like most of downtown) and will be torn up for approximately 9 weeks. Making matters difficult is that our FTF occurs in the middle those 9 weeks. So as a safety precaution, we are shifting gears (a little truck humor) and hosting in the fall. We're also hoping that it doesn't rain as it usually does for our event in May.

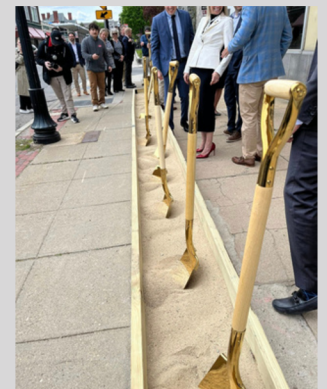
So mark your calendars for **September 19, 2026!** We will see you then!



REDEVELOPMENT ON MAIN STREET

On Friday, May 8th, the Tocci Group celebrated two major milestones in downtown Fitchburg: a groundbreaking for 533 Main Street, the former YMCA, and a ribbon cutting at 347 Main Street, showcasing beautiful market-rate apartments and, of course, Power Surge!

The FRA is proud to support these redevelopment projects as a resource, intermediary, and financial partner for both initiatives. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Tocci Group and supporting their future projects in downtown Fitchburg.



FRA GRANT PROGRAMS

Attention small business owners (under 10 employees) and developers—did you know the FRA offers mini grants to help launch your project or close financing gaps?

Available Programs:

- 1. Urban Renewal District Housing Grant** – Up to \$50,000 (\$5,000 per unit, max 10 units) in reimbursable funds for projects within the Urban Renewal District.
- 2. Small Business Internet Grant** –
 - o Up to \$100 for internet-only service
 - o Up to \$1,000 for bundled services (internet, Wi-Fi, phone, etc.)
 - o Available to small businesses (under 10 employees) within the District, including those upgrading existing service.
- 3. FRA Design Grant Program** – Up to \$2,000 for build-out design work, available to small businesses (under 10 employees) and developers citywide.

Check if your property is in the District:

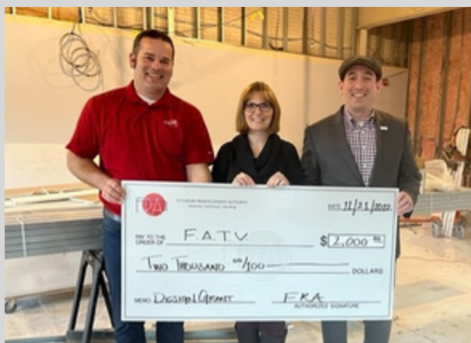
<https://fitchburgredevelopment.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/FRA-URD.jpg>

Find our applications online:

<https://fitchburgredevelopment.com/services/grants/>

Or visit us at 166 Boulder Drive, Suite 104 for a hard copy and assistance.

Applications are reviewed monthly. The Board meets every 3rd Wednesday at 8 AM at the FRA office—meetings are open to the public.



Let's stay in touch...

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