



The City of Fitchburg

Massachusetts
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Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale
INAUGURAL ADDRESS

We gather tonight on the first day of our expedition. This is the beginning of Fitchburg's new journey.

Just as Meriwether Lewis and William Clark prepared to embark upon their historic, scientific and yes romantic expedition, we as a city on the river prepare to launch a renewed and re-energized municipal craft.

Our city has had a strong industrialized past and now, together we must capitalize on the opportunities of a knowledge based economy. Yes, our journey will require us to deal with many challenges, however I look upon these challenges as opportunities that we will successfully meet with the help and engagement of our residents and the business community.

Our first objective is to make our city stronger, healthier and prosperous for the benefit of every resident and business. To do this we must seek out every opportunity to manage costs through thoughtful fiscal planning, increased accountability, transparency and operating efficiency.

As a first step, starting tomorrow, I will begin a process of improving communications among city hall departments to be sure that those who have a need for city services and assistance have a smooth and helpful interaction with their city government.

Our second objective is to make our city economically competitive with other communities by gradually lowering the tax burden on our business sector. In addition, we must create a more efficient permitting process that will be welcoming and helpful to any businesses that want to come to our city. A "one-stop" approach will be developed so entrepreneurs, business owners and developers will have a cooperative city government working with them to accomplish their goals.

Furthermore it is critically important to have an effective economic development strategy so we can reach out to those industries and businesses that can grow and prosper with us. As a start, we need to do a comprehensive

review of our zoning map to provide us with the necessary information to make appropriate commercial and industrial growth decisions.

We also need our city government to have a stronger partnership with the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce. Together we can have a persistent effort to support existing businesses and attract new ones to our community. I am committed to personally reach out to our business community to be sure we have a true open door policy and that we nurture a positive and collaborative working relationship.

To make all of this happen we must work together to create new economic connections.

As your mayor I will take the lead and proudly be our city's chief salesman delivering the message that "Fitchburg is open for business." Our message to every prospective business will be, "We welcome you and will work with you to earn your confidence so that you will respond to us... Yes, Fitchburg is my location of choice."

We will not accomplish our economic goals unless we have a trained workforce ready for potential businesses. Therefore, I will cultivate the relationship between the business community and our outstanding educational institutions. We will explore new ways to partner with Fitchburg State University, our city's largest non-municipal employer and most significant economic engine. We will also reach out to our other regional asset, Mt. Wachusett Community College which has a special focus on workforce development and job training. Fostering partnerships with the various segments of the region's education community will contribute to Fitchburg's intellectual, cultural and economic growth.

We all want to live and work in a pleasant environment. For this reason, we will not succeed in our economic efforts without addressing the poor image of neglected buildings and blighted parcels of land in Fitchburg. These deserted properties make us carry the burden of decreased property values and increased crime. However, vacant and abandoned lots can provide prime opportunities for affordable development as they are often acquired for less than market value. This administration is committed to aggressively identify these problem properties and affected neighborhoods. We will encourage private development and seek grants to eradicate blighted areas.

I will place great emphasis on those city departments empowered to enforce building and public health codes to form a team to work with builders, developers and homeowners to assist in the rehabilitation and construction of new properties. Key to our effort will be addressing the needs of our infrastructure particularly along the gateway entrances to our city. Common sense initiatives such as community outreach, maintenance of streets and landscaping, upgrading street lighting, painting municipal fences and hydrants, and greater police visibility will result in a much safer and more appealing community.

Finally, we are a city that recognizes the importance of the Arts and Culture. They serve as a medium for diversity and can be used as a spring board to celebrate the advantages of our cultural diversity. I intend to actively promote a nurturing environment so that our art and culture activities will grow and flourish. By mobilizing our home grown institutions such as the Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg Historical Society, Fitchburg State University and other cultural commissions and not for profit groups, we will create an advantage for the re-imaging North of Main initiative. Rest assured I will remain a strong advocate to keep arts and culture programs in Fitchburg.

Likewise, I will wholeheartedly welcome to our community those individuals, organizations, and programs that will enhance our already outstanding activities. Similar to the importance of the business economy, Fitchburg must and will capitalize on the potential growth and expansion that the creative economy can foster.

Without a doubt, we cannot accomplish all of what I have shared with you this evening alone. I must recognize the importance of engaging and working with the city council and school committee. Their experience and expertise will prove to be a valuable resource in bringing our community together.

Additionally, Governor Baker, my friends in the legislature, many of whom are here tonight, have and I know will continue to serve our city well. Their continued friendship and help is vital to our success. We will continue to enlist and solicit their assistance.

We'll do this by joining the Baker-Polito Commonwealth Community Compact. Fitchburg and the state will work together to create the conditions necessary for a strong and resilient economy. We will commit to promoting mutual standards of best practice. This Compact will also increase Fitchburg's eligibility for existing and future state grant programs.

My fellow citizens, the next two years will be a testament of our new expedition to create a more helpful and financially secure city, a city with a focused economic development initiative, the realization of a safer and more appealing city, and the prosperity of a creative economy.

Much like Lewis and Clark, Sacagawea provided knowledge, language and information that President Thomas Jefferson saw as a valuable resource for the expansion and presence of a more developed United States of America.

Likewise, for me to successfully lead this expedition to restore Fitchburg as a prominent and vibrant city in our Commonwealth, I will need your help. So I ask every resident of our city to join me and to help me. I ask you to participate, volunteer and become a community activist so that together we will realize our dream of a safe, secure and prosperous city.

As we move forward let us be mindful of the words of Thomas Jefferson to Meriwether Lewis....."Steady in the maintenance of order and discipline."

Let's do what needs to be done..... and do it well!

Yes my friends.....believe.....Fitchburg will be a city on the rise.