



The Republican.

Springfield needs economic boost

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Unless the city of Springfield can hitch its fortunes to a new economic engine, it's likely to remain a struggling outpost in the shadow of Greater Boston's robust knowledge-based economy. So says Boston-based venture capitalist Christopher Gabrieli, who has spent considerable time in Springfield as current chairman of the state-appointed Finance Control Board.

With state investment, Gabrieli believes Springfield could develop its own proprietary niche in the knowledge-based economy that is now fueling growth from Boston west to Worcester. We agree.

During a recent meeting with the Editorial Board of The Republican, Gabrieli pointed to the success of Lowell in developing a niche in nanotechnology manufacturing. Lowell is getting a major assist in that effort from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell.

Like Lowell, Springfield needs to move beyond its industrial past to develop knowledge-based companies that offer good paying jobs. Springfield's proximity to UMass-Amherst, the university's flagship campus, is not close enough. The collaboration of Baystate Medical Center and UMass-Amherst that created the Pioneer Valley Life Sciences Institute in Springfield is a step in the right direction, but it needs to be strengthened and more investment is needed.

We're pleased that the control board, at Gabrieli's urging, has authorized \$125,000 to launch a study aimed at developing an economic growth strategy for Springfield. The study, which will be conducted by MassInc., a public policy think tank based in Boston, and the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth's Urban Issues Initiative, will focus on economic revival and jobs, and what industries and strategies should be pursued to create the best avenue for economic growth.

We look forward to the results of the study. And we hope policy makers in the Statehouse will support Springfield's efforts to become a knowledge-based city, second only to Greater Boston. It's in the best interest of everyone who calls the commonwealth home.

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