



The Republican.

Governor Patrick unveils Springfield growth grants

Tuesday, July 08, 2008

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SPRINGFIELD - Gov. Deval L. Patrick yesterday announced grants totaling \$2.1 million and designated two major corridors in Springfield as a "growth district," all aimed at improving the city's economic climate.

The governor delivered the grants and announcements following a 45-minute walking tour of the Main Street corridor beginning in the South End and ending at Court Square. Many city councilors and local legislators joined Patrick as he stopped at South End businesses, and spoke with many merchants and residents.

Patrick said the administration wants Springfield "not just to survive, but to thrive," and will continue working with local and state officials to spur economic revitalization.

The announcements included a \$2 million grant awarded to Springfield to improve a two-mile stretch of Armory Street from the Interstate 291 rotary to Federal Street. The Massachusetts Opportunity Relocation and Expansion grant will allow milling and paving of the roadway, signal improvements at the intersection of Genesee, Taylor and Worthington streets, installation of additional catch basins, and the addition of sidewalks, crosswalks and trees.

The road improvement project will benefit businesses along Federal Street, including the STCC Technology Park. Liberty Mutual is moving to the park, and creating 300 jobs.

Patrick also announced that the Main Street and State Street corridors, which intersect in the downtown, have been selected as an economic growth district totaling more than 1,000 acres. Under that designation, the state's Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development will focus resources to ensure the district is "development ready," Patrick said.

The Springfield growth district can accommodate more than a million square feet of mixed-use commercial buildings and an additional 394 housing units, officials said.

The growth districts are modeled after the state's assistance with the massive redevelopment of the former Fort Devens military base, Patrick said. Additional districts will be announced across the state.

By focusing on growth districts, "we are creating the conditions for business growth and community revitalization for years to come," Patrick said.

Local officials including Mayor Domenic J. Sarno and state legislators said the news from the governor shows his continued commitment to the city. They praised his administration's repeated visits to the city and region.

"There is a true partnership here," Sarno said. "I commend the Patrick administration for its continued focus

on Springfield."

With local businesses and investors nervous about the economy, "this is like a shot in the arm for any business that wants to relocate or expand in the Springfield region," said state Rep. Cheryl A. Coakley Rivera, D-Springfield.

Patrick also announced work-force training grants for three local firms totaling \$164,350, to train 116 workers, as follows:

Hampden Bank: \$91,250 to train 79 workers in customer service and sales management.

Thorn Industries: \$36,500 to train 15 workers in lean manufacturing and inventory control systems.

Hayden Corp.: \$36,600 to train 22 workers in RAPID robotics software.

The work-force training fund provides matching grants to business and labor organizations.

David B. Panagore, the city's chief development officer, said the growth district designation supports the redevelopment plans recommended for those corridors by the Urban Land Institute of Washington, D.C., and the State Street Corridor Alliance. Major roadway improvement projects have begun on both corridors.

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