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Echoes from the
Archives **11**

Thousands of New Housing Units on the Horizon

by **MIKE KANE**, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY ASSOCIATE



A Worcester housing unit boom is on the horizon as it's estimated there are over **3,900** new units of housing that have made their way through or are still in the process of gaining final approval from the City. Just recently, the Worcester Planning Board's agenda for its meeting on January 15, had around 350 new units slated for development within the City, all of which are much needed to help alleviate Worcester's housing production shortfall.

According to the MassINC's Policy Center, a non-partisan think tank focused on economic development, civic engagement, and social policy in the Commonwealth, Gateway Cities like Worcester will be essential to the production of housing in Massachusetts over the next ten years. Released at the Gateway Cities Innovation Summit in Worcester last November, the housing study highlights that Gateway Cities need to produce roughly 36,000 additional homes to meet the immediate housing shortfall state-wide.

Further, over the next 10 years, Gateway Cities, which are midsized urban centers between 35,000 and 250,000 in population size that anchor regional economies around Massachusetts, should aim to produce 83,000 new homes. In Worcester, the study states that the City will have to produce around 8,600 homes over the next 10 years to address its current shortfall while also keeping up with new growth.

However, getting to the point of shovels in the ground in Worcester has been a challenge since the end of the pandemic, as developers face a variety of factors that disincentivize housing production, including higher property values, increased interest rates on loans, and higher construction costs. One effect of higher construction costs for development across the state is that the cost of construction stays relatively the same statewide, but with lower assessed values and lower rental prices the farther from Boston the development is located, the risk on the amount of returns from rental prices to pay for the development in Worcester increases.

The MassINC study and a New Bedford Light article do a great job of portraying this increased risk, as in Worcester developers could expect to lose over \$250,000 for every unit under construction without subsidies, meaning that just rent alone does not offset the costs of construction and the property maintenance of the housing development. However, in the Boston area, this per-unit rate is much lower, as in cities like Chelsea, Everett, Revere, and Salem, their estimated financial gap is around \$100,000, due to the higher rents developers could charge with similar construction costs.

At the Chamber, we believe this figure should not be a disincentive for developers to build housing in Worcester and Central Massachusetts, as locally there are funding mechanisms and tax incentives/exemptions that developers and investors can utilize to create the much-needed housing for our community. Programs such as the Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP), whose funding was expanded by the legislature through a bill signed by Governor Healey in October of 2023, are essential to the creation of housing in Worcester and Gateway Cities. The program has two primary features that are provided to developers, one is a local option real estate tax exemption, known as a TIE, on the new value of the property. This means that properties will still be taxed at their original assessed value, but the tax exemption would be on a percentage of the property's new value over a certain period of time. The other primary function of HDIP is to provide state tax credits for qualified project expenditures, which are awarded by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) through a rolling application process, that developers could use to explore funding possibilities.

Most importantly, this program, especially for TIE agreements, brings developers to the negotiating table with the City to promote responsible housing growth to produce a mix of market, affordable, and accessible housing units to reflect the community's needs. For example, projects in the North Main Street area at 204 Main Street, the Kane Building across from the Worcester District and Superior Courthouse, and 1 Exchange Place, the former police headquarters and Worcester District Court, applied for HDIP/TIE through the City and to the EOHLC. Both properties once completed will create sixty-six (66) units of housing with eleven (11) units reserved as affordable and one (1) ADA-accessible unit, to provide necessary infill development in our Downtown.

As the Chamber estimates there are over 3,900 units proposed for construction, this figure could be even higher as there are many projects throughout the city that are adding only one (1) or two (2) units. To improve the amount of housing in Worcester and meet the 8,600 units to address our current shortfall, holistically we need to continue to both prioritize and incentivize housing development as well as the investment in market rate, affordable, supportive, and ADA-accessible housing for residents of all ages. To do so requires the government working collaboratively with the private sector to continue to add thousands of new units of housing needed for our City and region.



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Focus and Collaboration: Creating Thousands of New Housing Units

by **TIMOTHY P. MURRAY**, PRESIDENT & CEO,
WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Building a multi-unit housing development complex is challenging, whether it is market rate, affordable or mixed-use project. The complexity of these projects is multifaceted. Securing financing from banks and/or investors, assembling local, state, or federal historic or affordable housing tax credits takes time and money upfront. Fundamentally, financing is not much different than when an individual seeks to obtain a car loan or mortgage.

Banks, investors or lenders will only provide financing if the project pencils out – meaning the lender knows that the borrower has the ability to pay back the loan plus interest. Additionally, a developer has to acquire land for construction, prepare and pay for architectural and engineering design plans and then select a general contractor and sub-contractors. Throughout this process the developer will be monitoring construction costs and materials while staying informed of state and local building requirements. Lastly, a developer may be required to appear with a land use attorney before a city board or commission, like the Planning Board or Conversation Commission, which costs money, for appropriate legal representation. Notwithstanding these very real challenges, Worcester over the past 20 years has made significant progress in adding new units as the population has grown and kept the percentage of affordable housing above the state requirements of 10%.

In fact, according to the Chamber’s housing tracking analysis of both proposed and housing units under construction there are 5,591 units of housing that are either under construction or proposed for construction in total. 915 of those units are designated as affordable housing. Of this total 1,682 are currently under construction of which 546 are affordable housing units.

In 2019 the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce commissioned a study called, “Worcester for Everyone: A Regional Housing and Economic Development Study”. It was projected Worcester would experience 8% population growth by

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With publication dates in February, May, August, and November, Chamber Exchange: The Newspaper is a quarterly publication written and produced by Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce staff and members. Content is geared to business professionals, members, elected officials, and engaged citizens.

Each quarter, 20,000 copies are mailed to 6,000 members and business professionals and roughly 13,000 City of Worcester registered voters. The remainder are distributed among area businesses.

If you’re interested in being a point of distribution, or would like to know more about placing an advertisement in the Chamber Exchange, please contact Kristen Luna at kluna@worcesterchamber.org. To contact the editorial staff, please email Caitlin.Lubelczyk@worcesterchamber.org.

Unless otherwise noted, the editorial content herein is the opinion of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and does not reflect the opinion of any specific member, business, or partner of the Chamber.

WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 150 YEARS 2025 calendar of EVENTS MARCH & APRIL

MARCH

- Mar. 5** 11:00am **Healthcare Roundtable**
Massachusetts Health Policy Commission Chamber Offices
Presenting Sponsors: Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA, Saint Vincent Hospital
- Mar. 5** 2:00pm **Human Resources Roundtable**
Navigating Key Employment Regulations
Live on Zoom
Supporting Sponsor: Nichols College
- Mar. 6** 8:00am **The Breakfast Club**
AC Marriott Hotel
Presenting Sponsors: Fidelity Bank & Mass General Brigham Health Plan
Supporting Sponsor: Wellpoint
- Mar.13** 5:00pm **Business After Hours at the Railers**
DCU Center Arena
Presenting Sponsor: Country Bank
- Mar. 18** 9:00am **Seminar Series**
Show Me the Money - Entrepreneurial Access to Capital

MARCH

- Mar. 19** 5:00pm **Young BIPOC Professionals Night Out**
MINT Kitchen & Bar
Sponsor: UMass Chan Medical School
- Mar. 20** 11:30am **Power of Women (POW) Luncheon**
You belong in the room: Dealing with imposter syndrome
The Mercantile Center | 19th Floor
Presenting Sponsor: Country Bank
- Mar. 23** 3:05pm **Member Appreciation Night at the Railers**
DCU Arena
FREE for all Members
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APRIL

- Apr. 2** 9:00am **Seminar Series**
Artificial Intelligence today & tomorrow
Chamber Offices
Presenting Sponsor: National Grid
- Apr. 2** 12pm **Leadership Worcester Info Session**
Live on ZOOM
- Apr.7-10** **StartUp Week Worcester**
Sponsorship Available
- Apr. 10** 11:00am **Business & Government Forum**
MBTA General Manager Phillip Eng
Chamber Offices
Presenting Sponsor: Wellpoint, WuXi Biologics
Supporting Sponsor: Ventry Associates, LLP
- Apr. 16** 10:00am **Worcester Emerging Workforce Forum**
South High Community School
Sponsored by: National Grid
Supporting Sponsor: Skanska
- Apr. 24** 5:30pm **Business After Hours w/ Affiliates**
at Sparetime Recreation
Presenting Sponsor: Rockland Trust

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Triple Net Leases– The Impact of Building Expenses on Commercial Rents

by **DARNELL DUNN**, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS RECRUITMENT, WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



"Small businesses in the city are hurting and a competitive commercial tax rate will attract new businesses while helping the existing ones. I believe it shows we're working to help our small businesses and bring new folks in if we can just try to start shrinking the gap a little bit," said Worcester City Councilor Jenny Pacillo as she prepared to cast a vote on tax classification for fiscal year 2025.

More than 80% of chamber members are small business owners with 10 employees or less. Commercial property tax policy impacts not only where businesses are located and where individuals choose to live and work, it also factors into their future choices.

Few businesses influence the quality of life more directly than supermarkets. While Worcester's population is growing, the number of locations where fresh fruits, vegetables, and other perishables and nonperishables can be purchased is shrinking.

In the last four months, two supermarkets, Price Chopper, and Stop and Shop, have closed their locations in Webster Square and Lincoln Plaza respectively.

Members of the chamber staff were able to connect ownership of the former Price Chopper location with a regional, family-owned grocery store mulling an expansion in Worcester. The key consideration for the grocer involves weighing the size of the opportunity to grow their footprint in the market against the cost of occupancy.

Occupancy costs vary by tenant, lease, and property type but almost exclusively include some combination of base rent, property taxes, insurance, utilities, common area maintenance, and tenant improvements. Base Rent or the amount of rent that goes directly to the property owner, usually expressed on a per-square-foot basis, is charged in exchange for the right to occupy the space.

Commercial property owners often carry multiple types of insurance to protect themselves against financial loss in the event of an unforeseen event. As a condition of the lease, tenants are commonly billed for their proportional share of the insurance cost for the roof and structure of the building they occupy. Most leases will go further, stipulating that tenants maintain a policy on their rental space and its contents. Imagine a scenario where the tenant's inventory is stolen or damaged. If the tenant's business is interrupted, both parties are left injured.

If the property is sub-metered, the tenant may pay for all the electricity, natural gas, water, and sewer they consume. In the absence of a submeter, tenants generally pay their pro-rata share. In Massachusetts, we have some of the highest electricity rates in the county.

A retailer's inventory, a manufacturer's CNC machine, or a hair stylist's blow dryer at a hair salon are all forms of tangible property. These "contents" are subject to personal property taxation unless exempt by statute.

In a multi-tenanted property, parking lots, elevators, lobbies, hallways, and amenity spaces are owned collectively by business owners, staff, and customers alike, the cost of maintaining these spaces must be shared, generally on a pro-rata basis. Like other elements of the cost of occupancy, tenants pay a proportional share of the property taxes based on the percentage of square footage they occupy. For example, if they occupy 1,000 SF in a 10,000 SF building, a tenant would be billed for 10% of the property tax bill.

If a tenant wishes to customize or improve their commercial real estate space before moving in, they may have to pay for some, or all of, the cost associated with doing so. In some cases, a property owner may offer a "TI (Tenant Improvement) Allowance" to the tenant as part of their commercial lease terms to help offset this cost.

In the case of Price Chopper, three elements tied to the cost of occupancy, present major challenges to consummating a deal:

- Differentials in property assessed value
- Size and configuration of the space
- Business terms

The difference in the assessed value of the property they currently own versus the Price Chopper where they would be tenants. Due to an \$8 million

difference in the assessed value, they would be required to pay an additional \$20,183.80 per year or \$4.79 per square foot in property tax alone for the same amount of square footage.

As is currently configured, the Price Chopper is 67,000 square feet. Request For Proposals (RFP) were provided consisting of two configurations, in one, with 27,000 square feet, and in another, 40,000 square feet. Whichever the two parties might mutually agree upon, there is a cost that must be absorbed by the landlord, prospective tenant, or some combination of the two over the life of the lease.

Few tenants pay closer attention to their co-tenants than retailers. In this case, the prospective tenant sought to have the landlord fill the remaining leasable square footage to complementary uses like a bank, barber shop, nail salon, or dry cleaner. All else being equal, grouping these types of businesses tends to increase the drawing power of a shopping center and revenue for the tenants while lowering the risk of foregone lease payments to the landlord.

Ultimately, the challenges surrounding commercial tax rates and occupancy costs highlight the financial burden placed on small businesses in Worcester. Many commercial leases, including those being considered for the Price Chopper site, operate under a **triple net lease (NNN)** structure. In this type of lease, tenants are responsible not only for base rent but also for property taxes, insurance, and maintenance costs—further increasing their financial obligations. This arrangement, while common in commercial real estate, can make it difficult for smaller businesses to compete with larger corporations that have the resources to absorb these expenses. If Worcester hopes to attract and retain independent businesses, city leaders must find ways to create a more balanced and competitive tax policy that fosters sustainable growth while maintaining affordability for entrepreneurs.



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STARTUP WORCESTER SPOTLIGHT: Need Help this Winter with Snow Removal and Lawn Care Next Spring? Download SnowGo & MowGo

by MIKE KANE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY ASSOCIATE

There has to be an easier way! This is what Christian Lopez '24, said in the freezing cold as he was clearing snow from his home in Fitchburg after a classic New England Nor'easter. Originally from New York and a graduate of Fitchburg State University, Lopez was not someone who was afraid of the cold but dreaded shoveling snow after a snowstorm. Not wanting to heave wet snow over his shoulder anymore, he and his business partner Raffael DeFeo created the new app called SnowGo.

This app makes shoveling a breeze, as you'll be able to shovel your driveway from the warmth of your home, at the click of a button. The SnowGo app, available free for download on Apple and Google Play, allows property owners to submit their winter shoveling, snow-blowing or plow tasks to over 100 service providers within one app. Then, once a service provider accepts the job, the user's driveway and/or sidewalk will be cleared.

Lopez says this is a great tool for both service providers and property owners alike, as it frees up time and clears headaches. For service providers, a major benefit of the app is that there is no need to pay upfront costs to get leads, they are all on the app, which they can accept and decline jobs. For property owners, there is no need to look for services as once you post your job, you will be the one selecting the service provider to do the heavy lifting.

Another key feature of the app that sets itself apart from the old system is the artificial intelligence pricing system, which takes the guesswork of how much service providers should charge property owners to complete their jobs. This tool allows users to take a picture or video of their task and receive a quote to submit to service providers.

From a local business perspective, Lopez said their business is growing and becoming recognized locally and nationally. This year locally, Lopez would like to grow his business outside of Central Massachusetts tapping into both the Boston and Western Massachusetts markets. Also, nationally, Lopez and DeFeo were invited to TechCrunch, a premiere technology conference for entrepreneurs and startups in San Francisco, California to showcase their App. Lopez told us it was a phenomenal experience, mostly because of having the ability to speak with peers, industry experts, and investors. SnowGo/MowGo even had the opportunity to pitch in front of the crowd.

When the grass starts to grow again, download the MowGo app, which will utilize the same platform as SnowGo, but modify it for lawn maintenance and care. Again, users will have the ability to submit a task to an array of service providers, which they can accept and in turn complete the job.

So, if you are living in Central Massachusetts and don't want to shovel your driveway or sidewalk this winter give SnowGo a try, and come spring, be on the lookout for MowGo to help you with your Spring outdoor cleaning and maintenance.

StartUp Worcester is a pre-incubator program run in collaboration with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, WorcLab, and the Venture Forum, which provides resources to local start-ups and entrepreneurs to successfully grow their businesses.

SnowGo | MowGo is a mobile app developed to provide on-demand outdoor maintenance services, specifically snow removal and lawn care. Co-Founders Christian Lopez and Raffael DeFeo pictured below.



HOUSING, CONTINUED

2030, which equals 14,751 people and the need for 3,000 new workforce housing units. Important to attracting private sector investments into Worcester, the study identified the creation of new market rate and affordable housing as a 1.5 billion untapped housing market.

To maintain the rapid progress Worcester has made over the past 10 years, continued collaboration and cooperation will be needed between local, state, and federal elected and appointed officials with private sector partners in the housing development sector. Urgency, in decision making, consistent policy making and predictable regulatory enforcement are needed by local and state officials to encourage further housing investment and development. Moreover,

with the recent passage of the state housing bond bill expedited decision making at the state level is critical as it relates to projects that have received appropriate local and state approvals but have funding gaps, because of inflationary and construction cost pressures. Approximately 1,000 units, both market rate and affordable in Worcester, fall into this category.

Momentum, collaboration, and urgency will ensure continued progress on the critical need for more housing. Public and private sector partners need to stay focused, and the Chamber will continue to do our part to help make sure this continued focus and collaboration happens.

WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT CAREERS PREPARING FOR TAKE-OFF!

by DAVE GARVIN, MANAGER OF WORKFORCE PROGRAMS

Photos courtesy of Anca Tughin, Worcester Public Schools



The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with Worcester Public Schools, Heart of New England Council, Scouting America (formerly Boy Scouts of America), and Worcester Regional Airport, has developed an innovative program to help students explore potential careers in the aviation industry. Expanding on the Chamber's ongoing collaboration with Worcester Public schools, this initiative aims to expose students to career opportunities earlier in their educational journey.

Thanks to the support and sponsorship of the Massachusetts Port Authority (MassPort), this collaborative effort has launched the first-ever "Exploring Aviation" program for middle school students from Forest Grove and Sullivan Middle Schools.

Once the program was announced, student interest was immediate. Sign-ups for the initial introductory tours on January 14th and 16th quickly filled the event's capacity of over 60 participants. These enthusiastic students experienced a comprehensive tour of Worcester Airport operations. With the support of Atlantic Aviation, JetBlue, American Airlines, and Delta Airlines, students were given an up-close look at the various facets of airport operations, including main check-in counter procedures, baggage handling, and a first-hand interaction with the TSA screening process—complete with the "shoe removal" step.

The tour extended to the tarmac, where students observed runways in action, including the landing and takeoff of a small private plane. They also visited two aircraft hangars, witnessed demonstrations by the Mass Port Fire-Rescue Department, and had the rare opportunity to see two World War II-era War Bird aircraft up close. Many students, who had never been to an airport or flown on a plane, found the experience both eye-opening and inspirational.

A particularly memorable highlight was the story shared by Tim Kane, a Customer Service Representative at Atlantic Aviation. Tim recounted how his first visit to the airport, as an 11-year-old Cub Scout, sparked his interest in an aviation career. His journey resonated with the students and highlighted the impact of early exposure to career options.

Workforce development has been a priority for Worcester Chamber members, with ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships between Worcester Public School students and local businesses. Career exploration programs like this help students gain a clearer understanding of potential career paths and pave the way for meaningful work-based learning opportunities, such

as internships. For students, these experiences clarify industry expectations and ignite passions, while organizations have the opportunity to cultivate a future workforce aligned with their industries.

Building on the enthusiasm generated by the introductory tours, the program will continue with a more in-depth curriculum. Starting January 29th and running through May 28th, students will participate in monthly sessions designed to deepen their understanding of aviation related careers.

This initiative not only enhances the lives of Worcester students but also contributes to the economic growth of Central Massachusetts in both the short and long term. If you would like to get involved in a program like this—whether by speaking to students or hosting a similar event—please contact the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber remains committed to expanding this initiative and identifying additional industries to spotlight, providing students with hands-on opportunities to explore careers in fields such as construction, healthcare, business, and early childhood education. Through exploration and experiential learning, these students are taking their first steps toward bright and rewarding futures. For them, their careers have truly been "cleared for takeoff!"



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Housing Projects That Are Underway In Worcester

by **DARNELL DUNN**, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS RECRUITMENT, WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



According to Redfin’s housing data, the median price of a single-family home in Massachusetts exceeded \$600,000, nearly tripling since 2000. At approximately \$86,000 per year, Massachusetts ranks number one in the nation in per capita income, and yet, access to affordable housing continues to be out of reach for too many working-age residents of the Commonwealth. Lack of affordable housing stock has been one of the main drivers of outmigration. Massachusetts experienced a net loss of about 40,000 people in 2023, all of whom moved to another state. If not for international immigration, The State’s population and workforce would have declined.

Even more troubling is the trend of individuals and families who left. In taking a closer look at outmigration data, it was those in knowledge-based industries like life sciences, technology, and professional services, industries that tended to pull median incomes in the Commonwealth upward, were more likely to be out-movers than those without a degree, outpacing and those in lower-paying service industries.

Over the past year, the Healey-Driscoll Administration has made housing a top priority through the implementation of several key initiatives aimed at facilitating the creation of more housing stock across the income spectrum. Most notably, the signing of the Affordable Homes Act in August of last year which authorized \$5.16b in spending over the next 5 years along with 49 policy initiatives to counter rising housing costs.

In Worcester, there are roughly 1,600 new units under construction with a healthy mix of affordable, mixed-income, market-rate, and senior housing.

Developing and investing in multi-family real estate properties for over 30 years, SMC Management Corporation out of Watertown, MA is currently building

210 units of market-rate housing in the Poet Hill neighborhood of Worcester.

No stranger to Worcester, WinnDevelopment is undertaking the redevelopment of the historic Lincoln Square Boys and Girls Club and turning the building and surrounding land into 80 affordable apartment homes for adults 55 and older. The \$51 million project will preserve and renovate the current 94-year-old building creating 16 apartment homes and a variety of community spaces and additionally will build a brand new five-story apartment building alongside it to house 64 new apartments. The two buildings will be connected on the ground floor by a single-story glass walkway.

Boston-based Synergy Investments, recently broke ground at the former Fallon Health building at Chestnut Place on the largest office-to-multifamily conversion in the Commonwealth. Acquired in March 2023 for \$10.5 million, the property will consist of 198 apartments, which will include a mix of studios, 1 & 2 bedrooms.

Leveraging the State’s Commonwealth Builder Program, the neighboring four-story building next to the former Fallon building will also be converted to include 22 affordable condos, offering homeownership opportunities to populations that have long been priced out of the market.

Recently approved mixed-income residential development projects in the pipeline include 44 units at 57 Exchange Street, also known as One Exchange, a place that housed the Firehouse Café and Michael’s Cigar Bar, 204 Main Street, slated for 20 units above the Garden Fresh Courthouse Cafe, and 39 Lamartine Street, a 36 unit project that straddles the Canal District and Green Island neighborhoods, the city of Worcester is focused on creating much-needed supply in one of the fastest growing cities in Massachusetts.



Above: One Exchange Place

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BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: Why Businesses Can't Afford to Wait

by **AMELIA TIERI**, WORCESTER GREEN CORPS COORDINATOR, WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



As we enter 2025, the world is just five years away from the Paris Agreement's critical target of reducing emissions by 50%-52%. To meet this goal, it is important to prioritize sustainability not only at home--but in the workplace as well. Businesses have a unique opportunity to lead this charge in reducing emissions by embracing sustainable practices that benefit the environment while also driving long-term growth and profitability.

In 2022, the United States accounted for 13% of global greenhouse gas emissions, with the transportation, electric power, industry, and building sectors being the largest contributors. The transportation sector led the way at 29% of greenhouse gas emissions, followed by electric power generation (including fossil fuel combustion) which accounted for 25% of emissions. The industrial sector accounted for 23% of emissions, while buildings--both commercial and residential--accounted for 13% of emissions.

It is important for both large corporations and local businesses to take responsibility for reducing these emissions within their own operations. By making sustainable investments, businesses can contribute to efforts to combat climate change while also reducing their long-term risk and improving efficiency. As the world becomes more climate-conscious, businesses that act now will be better equipped to adapt to the changing landscape and thrive in a sustainable economy.

While making the initial switch may be more expensive, switching to energy-efficient practices can save businesses a lot of money in the long-run. For example, switching to LED lighting can reduce energy bills by 75% and investing in energy-efficient heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems can cut costs by 20%-40%. Additionally, energy-efficient systems tend to need less maintenance which makes them more reliable, leading to fewer breakdowns and disruptions.

Switching to energy-efficient systems and sustainable practices can also improve a company's brand image. As climate change becomes a more and more pressing concern, consumers are prioritizing sustainability when making purchasing decisions. According to a survey by PwC, 85% of consumers said they experienced negative effects caused by climate change, affecting their purchasing decisions, and expressed that they would be willing to pay 9.7% more for products that were sustainably produced. This increasing preference presents an opportunity for businesses to take their products into the future while still maintaining their customer base.

Implementing sustainable practices is in the best interest of both companies and the environments that they are in. Investing in energy efficient systems, establishing proper waste and recycling programs, and setting company-wide sustainability goals are all great methods for shrinking a business's carbon footprint. Programs like the Mass Save HEAT loan, Main Streets Energy Efficiency, and the Green Worcester ElectriciTY Municipal Aggregation Program can provide valuable incentives to help make these switches more attainable. To learn more about how your business can start making sustainable changes, visit green.worcesterma.gov/call-to-action. It is integral for businesses to start investing in sustainable practices today so that they can position themselves as leaders in the transition to a greener economy tomorrow.

Amelia Tieri is the Coordinator for the Worcester Green Corps.

Sources:

- Preliminary US Greenhouse Gas Estimates for 2024 - Rhodium Group
- Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions | US EPA
- Consumers willing to pay 9.7% sustainability premium, even as cost-of-living and inflationary concerns weigh: PwC 2024 Voice of the Consumer Survey | PwC
- 8 Clever Ways Businesses Can Save Million Of Dollars



This January, three of our amazing college student managers—Clare, Tom, and Johnny (not pictured)—put their winter break to good use by tackling daily cleanups in various neighborhoods like the Canal District, Main South, Vernon Hill, and Green Island. Armed with gloves and a whole lot of energy, they collected 26 bags of trash, weighing in at 359.20 pounds over two weeks! From early mornings to chilly afternoons, they showed some serious dedication to keeping our community clean and vibrant. Big thanks to Clare, Johnny, and Tom for going above and beyond during their break!

Auxilium Prepares to Launch as Worcester's Premier Hub for Entrepreneurship

COURTESY OF AUXILIUM

Rucker Investments is pleased to announce Auxilium Worcester, a groundbreaking program dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship and innovation in Central Massachusetts. With a state-of-the-art facility set to begin construction at 311 Main St. in the heart of the city, Auxilium aims to provide unparalleled support to startups and scalable businesses.

Auxilium will offer customized support tailored to meet the needs of entrepreneurs. With a focus on providing entrepreneurs the resources they need to succeed, Auxilium's programming will emphasize collaboration, adaptability, and real-world solutions. Two distinct pathways will be available for participants:

The Innovation Studio — A rolling admission program offering a 12-month residency with access to mentorship, tailored business support, and capital investments. This program focuses on helping early-stage startups build strong foundations for success. Participants will have access to Auxilium's

collaborative workspaces, workshops, strategic mentorship, and up to \$100,000 in milestone based funding during their residency with Auxilium.

Auxilium Accelerator — A three-month, intensive program launching in June 2025, designed to meet businesses where they are and provide tailored solutions for rapid growth. Participants gain access to investments starting at \$250,000, collaborative workspace, strategic mentorship, and a robust network of investors and industry leaders.

ZACHARY DUTTON NAMED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Leading Auxilium's mission is Zachary Dutton, the newly appointed Executive Director. Dutton brings over 25 years of experience in business and entrepreneurship, with a distinguished career spanning healthcare, pharmaceuticals and beyond. Dutton co-founded a U.S. based pharmaceutical company that raised more than \$5 million in financing and was acquired in 2019.

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Echoes FROM THE Archives

Worcester Natural History Society—Its Work and Worth

WORCESTER MAGAZINE JUNE 1905

The Worcester Natural History Society has long since outgrown the accommodations of the dwelling house on the corner of Harvard and State Streets, given several years ago by Mr. Edwin Conant.

Dr. W. H. Raymenton is engaged in a movement for a new building and a permanent endowment. Worcester has always responded generously in carrying on the work of this society, and our representative educators and businessmen have served on its board of directors. The time has now come when a suitable museum building is adequately equipped, and a permanent endowment should be secured.

The society has made a record for educational work along original lines that has commanded the attention and commendation of our best educators. Its methods have been in some respects similar to those used at our Free Public Library in teaching how to best make use of its museum and its collections. Acting on the suggestions of Louis Agassiz, in the early days, and later those of Alexander Agassiz, his son, the society has done a work in popularizing nature study that has not its parallel in the history of any other society in the world.

Twenty-five years ago, under the presidency of Dr. Raymenton, a plan of work was inaugurated which has been carried on with increasing success from year to year. Scores of willing workers have given their services to teaching thousands of students who have attended its free public classes. The Natural History Camp for boys and girls on the forty-acre park at Lake Quinsigamond, was organized twenty years ago, and was the pioneer of the many similar camps and similar schools since established throughout the country. This year, in the line of evolution, the Natural History Camp will be held for the special use of teachers. By this plan the 20,000 boys and girls in our city schools may, through the teachers, receive the benefits of the summer's work at the camp.

In this issue of the Magazine we are glad to present from several points of view, the work of one of the educational factors in our community: the Worcester Natural History Society.

EDWARD EVERETT HALE

The Worcester Natural History Society—Its Past and Present Work and Worth as a Popular Educator.

I had the honor to preside at the first meeting of the Worcester Natural History Society, as it is now organized, and while I lived in Worcester I did my best in it as a member and an officer. I had but very slight knowledge of any department of natural history, but my interest in botany and in mineralogy was quite in proportion to ignorance, and I greatly valued the frequent conference brought about by the society with so many who knew more, and some who knew as little as myself.

From the very moderate beginning, which we then made, there has grown the strong working society of today, which has become an important force among the best agencies of this Commonwealth for universal education. The function of collecting a museum, popularly thought of as the

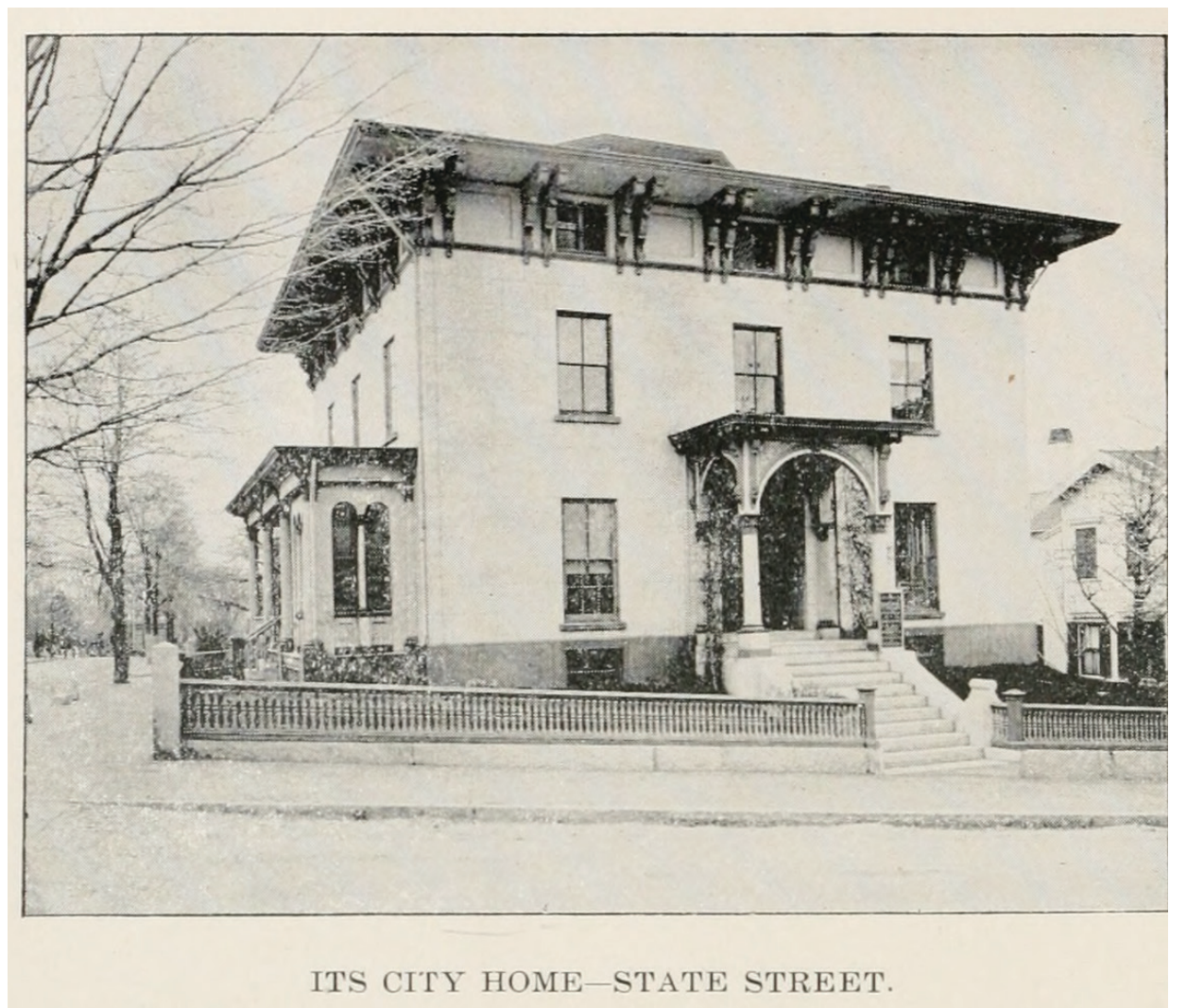


first and principal business of a society of natural history, ought not to be made an end, as it is so apt to be; indeed, it is too often the end of the society in more instances than one; for, if the collection be all the members have to think of, they are soon exhaust the superficial resources of the flora and fauna and the mineralogy of the neighborhood, and the society died "because it had nothing to do, you know."

The truth is that it is only when the good beginning of its museum has been well made that a true society for natural history is able to begin its proper work. The members really associate to learn more than they know of at the method of nature and to teach what they have learned to others who do not know. In these two lines of work, the museum is one of the requisites, as the library is another, and such tools as microscopes are others.

The first stimulus given to our society was that which we received from Louis Agassiz, who, with

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ITS CITY HOME—STATE STREET.

Let's Grow

by **MARIA MILAGROS VAZQUEZ**, MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER, KEYNOTE SPEAKER, TRAINING FACILITATOR, STORYTELLER, LIFE COACH AND AUTHOR

I sat across from my therapist, frustrated and angry, having just completed a rant that took up the remainder of our time together. It was about a change that occurred that I wasn't ready for. She looked at me, head tilted to the side, eyebrows lifted, smirk on her face, and that look in her eyes that said, "Are you kidding me?"

Then, she sat up in her chair, straightened out her head, took a deep breath and said, "Are. You. Kidding. Me?" I could hear the punctuation after each word. I was shocked that she said exactly what I thought her face was saying.

Actually, I was surprised more than shocked that she actually said it out loud. From our first session, when I walked in with a list of things I wanted to work through or work on, I requested that she not hold back so that our sessions could be efficient and effective, and she had no issue obliging me. I was stunned into silence.

While still sitting in her chair, she walk-rolled herself over to her desk. After scribbling a short message on a post-it note, she aggressively snatched the pink square from its pile, walk-rolled back over to me and handed me the paper. "This is your homework. You like research. Learn all about it and at your next session tell me how it helps." She then proceeded to remind me that I knew that life is full of change and brings uncertainty. Her gaze was finite. Her eyes shifted to the clock, which I followed. Session over. Telling me I did good work today as we walked to the door, she pointed at the paper in my hand and said, "Homework." When I heard her door shut behind me, I looked at the slightly crumpled paper in my hand and read the words GROWTH MINDSET.

And there began my journey, over 15 years, to develop and cultivate a growth mindset. It has helped me through some of the most chaotic times in my life, be it personal or professional, internal or external change. Right now, as changes are happening swiftly around us, whether within our lives, businesses, country and/or world, it can be tempting to surrender our sanity. Here are a few things I practice, strong emphasis on the word practice, to stay sane and even optimistic as change occurs, with and without my consent.

A growth mindset is the belief that skills and intelligence can be improved with effort and consistency. When practicing a growth mindset we learn to see challenges as opportunities where we can use our education, experience, skills, capacities, creativity, and even communities. We become solution oriented. This allows us to stay resilient in the face of difficulty, learn from feedback, find inspiration in the success of others, and remain in alignment with our priorities, values, and mission. Just to be clear, I'm not writing about toxic positivity and pretending that everything is fine when it's not. This way of perceiving life gives us room to fully accept what is AND to not catastrophize it so we can rise above it. The good news is that like building a muscle, the more we embody these practices, the stronger and more accessible they are. And because change is an inevitable part of life, there will be plenty of opportunities to practice.

My dear friend Grace Aldrich said, "In the midst of uncertainty lies ALL potentials, ALL possibilities, and ALL of your power." I personally love the reminder that uncertainty is a gift that helps us expand and evolve, grow and level up.

Here are the top 5 practices to create and strengthen a growth mindset, so that when life throws its curveballs, as it always will, we can minimize the emotional and mental toil and maximize our mental health and overall lives.

STAY FOCUSED ON YOUR 'WHY':

"Those who have a 'WHY' to live can bear almost any how." Viktor Frankl wrote this in his book, "Yes to Life: In Spite of Everything" in 1946 shortly after being liberated from a Nazi concentration camp. As changes come along, because they always will, when we know why we're doing what we're doing, our brains will find ways around, under, over and through the obstacles in our way. Think about something that you really wanted to achieve and did...you were so committed to making it happen, that nothing was able to successfully stop you. Whether consciously or unconsciously, your 'WHY' dominated and helped you navigate to the other side. Our 'WHY' also becomes a guide to check our thoughts and words, ensuring that they are in alignment with our priorities, values and mission. The self-determination theory by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation, or knowing your 'WHY', which is closely tied to one's personal values and sense of purpose, and enhances resilience in the face of challenges.



RADICALLY ACCEPT WHAT IS, NOTHING MORE AND NOTHING LESS.

"Know the difference between a catastrophe and an inconvenience. To realize that it's just an inconvenience, that it is not a catastrophe, but just an unpleasantness, is part of coming into your own, part of waking up." Bruce Lee was brilliant in many ways and this saying helps remind us to practice radical acceptance. We tend to make smaller problems into massive concerns simply because of how we think about them. I remember the days when I'd give something as small as a spilled drink first thing in the morning power over my entire day and be in a 24-hour funk because of it. Eww. It was a simple inconvenience but not a reason to surrender my joy. While practicing radical acceptance I realized that I had some control over the moment and could take action to change the situation. By taking action in situations where we recognize we have power, we empower ourselves to do so consistently. Radical acceptance is a key skill from Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), developed by Marsha Linehan, and has proven to help build resilience, reduce stress, and improve mental health and relationships.

LIGHTEN UP AND PLAY MORE.

I recall a brief interaction with my daughter when she was younger and we were doing some housekeeping tasks. She was making every step of the task a theatrical performance and I was annoyed that she wasn't more serious about it. (That notion clearly stemmed from my own childhood.) "Knock it off, not everything is all fun and games." I scolded her. After another twirl, she looked at me with quizzical eyes and asked, "If it's not fun, why are we doing it?" I was speechless.

Again, why was I surrendering my joy and the ability to have fun? She was right in her youthful genius and I committed to having more fun in my every day life and with my everyday responsibilities, even household chores. We can use a little more light and play in our lives, music helps. In their book, "Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul", Stuart L. Brown and Christopher C. Vaughan share studies that show that adults that play are more creative, come to solutions faster, are more productive, and report having greater life satisfaction, even in difficult and trying times.

RECOGNIZE FAILURE AS A FRIEND

Maya Angelou said, "There is no failure as long as you learn from your



STARTUP WORCESTER SPOTLIGHT: CROI.io Nick Gronda

by MIKE KANE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY ASSOCIATE



Choosing what college or university to go to is tough, and not knowing what the costs are going to be after you graduate creates ever-increasing anxiety. For Nick Gronda '25 the co-founder and CEO of CROI, he was left in this predicament, needing to make a decision on which school he should spend his next four years at to gain his education. The candidates, Bucknell University, Gronda's dream school, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

However, instead of choosing the dream school that was closer to home, Bucknell, the New Jersey native chose WPI to continue his education after high school. In coming to this decision, Gronda told me in an interview "It was tough especially since I had to say no to my dream school, but when I looked at the cost comparison and the price it would cost to attend one over the other, it was an easy decision."

But, finding that price was difficult, as there were no platforms on the web that allowed Gronda to find what the true costs of continuing his education would be. There were no platforms that allowed me to include my personalized financial data or learn what the expected return on investment could be at one school over the other. So, Gronda created an algorithm that showcased a cost-benefit analysis of why he should choose WPI over Bucknell and could be used by any college-seeking high school student.

Seeing his initial struggles with choosing a school without data, at WPI Gronda continued to refine the algorithm and co-founded the CROI platform. The platform aims to help high school students, and their families make informed college decisions by offering personalized data and cost-benefit analyses of various institutions throughout the country. CROI simplifies the complex college selection process, empowering students to choose options that align with their financial and academic goals.

While refining the platform in Worcester, Gronda credits the entrepreneurial ecosystem at i3 Lab at WPI and The Venture Forum in Worcester, as they were both helpful at offering space, access to mentors, accelerator programs, business advice, and the always important sanity checking. He says the i3 Lab's Director Ardian Preci and The Business School's Professor Rosanna Garcia were instrumental in the development of himself and his company, and thanks them for all the great work they do at the lab to promote WPI students.

Gronda, a 2024 college graduate with a bachelor's degree in Management Engineering, now seeks to continue to grow the platform through school districts across the country. Since publicly launching his product in November, CROI is now getting ready to onboard 13 new school districts in January 2025, including North High School and Worcester Tech in Worcester, as well as other school districts in Massachusetts and New Jersey, where it is used by guidance counselors, college-seeking students, and families help make informed decisions of which college to choose for the right price.

Currently, CROI is available for free with access to premium features at a set price, however improving the site through feedback from its users, such as counselors, students, and families is what Gronda would like to accomplish over the next year. As well as onboarding more high schools, financial institutions, and independent educational consultants, to make CROI a one-stop shop for financial advice and resources for those interested in college.

If you have a high schooler who is looking at attending college or know a school district that would benefit from this program tell them to check out CROI at <https://www.croi.io/>.

StartUp Worcester is a pre-incubator program run in collaboration with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, WorcLab, and the Venture Forum, which provides resources to local start-ups and entrepreneurs to successfully grow their businesses.



ECHOES, CONTINUED

his own inborn kindness, acceded to an invitation and at the first meeting of the society have a sketch of its possible work. This sketch, as I reported it in shorthand at the time, will be found in the early records. The suggestions it makes as to the value of honest observations made by straightforward working and listening, by people who are not book learned, may have seemed at that time chimerical. But they have been made good, and more than good, in the experience of those who carry on the society in its work of today. Louis Agassiz, indeed, brought to New England a gift which New England cannot be too grateful for, in giving a start, wholly new, to the popular interest in natural science; in encouraging everybody to observe, whether they studied books or not, and in setting accurate and continued observation in its fit place of honor.

Agassiz was never more brilliant, and I think never more happy, than when he showed to great popular assemblies that every man, woman, and child of them was a student of natural history, or might be; when he unfolded the possibilities of observation to them, and charmed them with stories of the unexpected and marvelous which they could discover.

I have certainly been greatly interested in tracing the success of the Worcester Natural History Society. Side by side with the admirable Public Library of Worcester, so admirably administrated, this society is not satisfied with calling together the people not well educated, who have already

ECHOES, CONTINUED

the passion of observation and study in the things of nature. It goes into the highways and byways to find others who have not yet seen the vision, and if it be possible, to inoculate them with its enthusiasm. More than this, it seeks to extend such an interest up and down through the country that every man and woman shall be a competent "observer."

The Natural History Society proposes and hopes to make use of every man's knowledge and to show the working men everywhere how wide is the opportunity which they have of enlarging the knowledge of the world. It may well take some pride in the discovery on the spot of fossil plants by Joseph H. Perry, one of its own members which has rescued our Worcester "coal mine" from the anomalous limbo in which the older geologists placed it, and has restored it to an intelligible foothold in the order of created things.

In determination to teach popularly all who are disposed to learn to observe, the society has carried on in the last 25 years free classes through winter, which have been attended by hundreds of students. It is fair to say that hardly one of these students would or could of prosecuted these studies under the conditions exacted in regular schools. The instruction given and the interest aroused have been so much additional to the result of the regular school education. Indeed, as anyone knows who has followed closely the methods possible in the public schools, they can, under the present conditions, do but very little toward quickening personal habits of observation or making enthusiastic naturalists of their pupils.

"He that hath eyes to see, let him see; and he that hath ears to hear, let him hear." This was the prayer of the Savior of the world when he saw how superficial were its observations of what was in its very presence. He prayed that men might carefully find out for themselves the truth which reveals itself so wonderfully and so freely. The trouble with the world, alas! has been, and is, that men receive as truth what somebody else says he has seen, and that they

are too easy or too lazy to use the senses which God has given them. To make men see the difference between those who have eyes and those who have no eyes, is the wish of every true educator in every generation.



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STARS TO SHINE IN THE HEART OF THE COMMONWEALTH: Futures League All Star Game Comes to Polar Park this Summer

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

Bravehearts starter Brady Stuart proved to be the best pitcher in the Futures Collegiate Baseball League (FCBL) in 2024. After finishing with a 0.81 ERA and 54 strikeouts, which included a 26-inning scoreless streak to start last season, the Hudson native was selected as the league's Pitcher of the Year.

However, in 2025, Stuart may find himself showcasing his talent from the Polar Park mound this summer. The Worcester Red Sox and the Worcester Bravehearts recently announced that they will jointly host the FCBL All-Star Game on Tuesday, July 22.

"We are extremely excited for the City of Worcester to be the host of the 2025 Futures League All Star Game," said Bravehearts President, Matt Vaccaro.

"This jewel event will bring new families to Polar Park, to the Canal District, and to Worcester," said WooSox President Dr. Charles A. Steinberg. "It's a major milestone."

The Bravehearts last hosted the All-Star Game in 2016 at Fitton Field. At the time, the event drew a record crowd of 4,319. This will also be the first Futures League All-Star game to ever be played in an active Minor League stadium. The Polar Park event is scheduled for Tuesday, July 22, 2025 at 7:30 p.m. Gates open at 3 p.m. for a seven-inning American Legion Baseball game featuring the Shrewsbury Quaranta Post 397 at 4 p.m.

"The entire league is excited to showcase our best players at Polar Park this summer," said Futures League Commissioner, Joe Paolucci. "We intend to bring a great fan experience to this first-class facility and show the Worcester community what we are all about."

The WooSox and the Bravehearts, both Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce members, established their partnership a year ago to promote Diamond Sports and collaborate on goodwill initiatives throughout the Worcester community. The WooSox introduced the 2024 Bravehearts on the field at Polar Park on May 24, 2024, the eve of the Bravehearts' Opening Day game. Since then, Bravehearts players and officials participated in several WooSox youth clinics and other baseball related events. Throughout the offseason, the clubs' Community Relations departments collaborated at several community events, such as a turkey distribution event organized by the City of Worcester in November.

"We are grateful for the development of our partnership with the WooSox, and community events like this are what we envisioned from the beginning. This game will shine a spotlight on the teams, players, and staff members from across the

Futures League"

The All-Star Festivities begin the night before, Monday, July 21, with a Home Run Derby at Worcester's historic Fitton Field at the College of the Holy Cross, where "The Greatest Hitter Who Ever Lived," Ted Williams, blasted his first home run in New England as a member of the Boston Red Sox.

Notable alumni include Jeremy Peña, the Most Valuable Player of the 2022 World Series, who starred for the former Torrington Titans of the Futures League in 2015. The Rhode Island native grew up attending Pawtucket Red Sox games at McCoy Stadium before being drafted in the third round of the 2018 MLB Draft by Houston.

Former WooSox catcher Mickey Gasper, who batted .367 in 169 at-bats in 2024, was named the Futures League Most Valuable Player as a member of the Nashua Silver Knights in 2016. That summer, Gasper set league-wide career records in batting average (.421), on-base percentage (.532), slugging percentage (.726), and on-base plus slugging percentage (1.257).

"The City of Worcester is a community rich with baseball history, from serving as the home of the Worcester Worcesters of the 1880s to Ted Williams hitting his first home run for the Boston Red Sox at Fitton Field," said Worcester Mayor Joe Petty. "I look forward to welcoming some of the nation's best collegiate baseball players to the Heart of the Commonwealth and watching them play at Polar Park, a year-round civic space utilized in winter or summer, while the WooSox are home or on the road."

Tickets go on sale today at polarpark.com/futuresleague. Fans can purchase Home Run Derby

Below: Hudson native and Futures All Star Brady Stuart pitching for the Worcester Bravehearts last season. Photo by Kevin Paul Saleeba



tickets for \$15 apiece, or a package to both the Home Run Derby and the All-Star Game for \$20. Fans are welcome to fill Polar Park's seating bowl on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Futures League is a collegiate summer baseball league comprising seven teams in New England: the Brockton Rox, Westfield Starfires, and Worcester Bravehearts, all located in Massachusetts; the New Britain Bees and Norwich Sea Unicorns of Connecticut; the Nashua Silver Knights of New Hampshire; and the Vermont Lake Monsters. The rain date for the Futures League All-Star Game is Wednesday, July 23, at Polar Park.

"A highlight of 2024 has been creating this new relationship with the Bravehearts and the Vaccaro family," said Steinberg. "From our announcement in the clubhouse in February to welcoming the players to Polar Park in May to conducting community clinics in July to their support of our WooSox Foundation Honors Gala in December, we have begun a collaboration filled with promise ... "The honor of hosting the All-Star Game takes our partnership with the Bravehearts to a new and inspiring level. We thank the Vaccaros for their commitment to community baseball."

As for Stuart in the meantime, he will be playing baseball as a junior for Endicott College this spring. In 32 games (8 starts) in two seasons, he has 10-2 record with 90 strikeouts, averaging 10 K's per 9 innings, and 3.24 ERA. To learn more about Stuart's baseball career, read the Sports Street article titled, "Bravehearts' Stuart Dominating the FCBL this Summer," located in the August 2024 edition of Chamber Exchange: the Newspaper.



Above: WooSox, Bravehearts, and city officials came together to announce the All-Star game at Polar Park this summer. Courtesy photo from the WooSox.

Worcester Chamber Celebrates 150th Anniversary with Kick Off Event



by **CAIT LUBELCZYK**, VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS,
WORCESTER REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



On January 23rd the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce kicked off its 150th Anniversary with a Business After Hours at the Top of the Tower, 446 Main Street, Worcester. This celebration, sponsored by Country Bank and Simply Delicious Catering, marked a century and a half of dedicated service to the Worcester business community and beyond. The event featured a display of photos, ledgers, and newspaper articles dating back to its inception in 1875. In addition to Chamber staff and members, several members of local and state government joined the celebration including Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll and Secretary Ed Augustus as well as Senator Micheal Moore, and Mayor Joe Petty.

In honor of this milestone, the Chamber created the Linda Salem Pavier Restricted Fund within its 501c3, the Worcester Regional Strategic Opportunities Foundation. The Chamber has already raised \$2.7m from more than 50 area companies, foundations and individual donors, with a goal of reaching \$3m by the end of 2025. The largest contributions have been from Bankhometown, The Hanover Insurance Group, and UniBank. This fund is meant to be an investment in the next 150 years of the Chamber.

Photo credit Alan Dines Photography





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AUXILIUM, CONTINUED

Most recently, Dutton served as Executive Director of the Venture Forum, a nonprofit organization supporting early-stage entrepreneurs. Under his leadership, the Venture Forum expanded its impact by providing critical resources, programming, and mentorship to startups. Dutton also advises startups and is a co-founder of The Wire Group, a Worcester-based angel investment group. He holds a bachelor's degree in arts from Queen's University and a Master of Business Administration from the F.W. Olin School of Business at Babson College.

"I am honored to lead Auxilium as we work to empower entrepreneurs and drive innovation in Worcester," Dutton said. "Worcester is on the rise, and Auxilium will play a vital role in shaping its future as a hub for entrepreneurship."

ABOUT AUXILIUM

Auxilium's mission is to empower entrepreneurs by providing the tools, resources and support needed to thrive. The Accelerator, launching its first class in June 2025, and the Innovation Studio, set to open in Fall 2025, will offer 14,000 sq. ft. of workspace, mentorship, and access to a network of industry leaders and investors. Auxilium is a project backed by Rucker Investments, a family office with diversified holdings that is focused on fostering innovation. To learn more, please visit AuxiliumWorcester.com.

Check out the Auxilium promotional video here:



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Upcoming Affiliate Chamber Events

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Coffee Chat & Canva

February 27, 2025
10:00am-11:00am
Auburn Public Library

Blackstone Valley

Chamber of Commerce

blackstonevalley.org



Food, Beverage and Hospitality Network

March 6, 2025
9:00am-10:00am
Via Zoom

Home & Community Expo

March 15, 2025
10:00am-2:00pm
Northbridge High School
427 Linwood Ave Whitinsville, MA 01588

Professional HR Roundtable

April 8, 2025
9:00am-10:30am
Via Zoom

Member Benefits Session

April 24, 2025
9:30am-10:30am
Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce
670 Linwood Ave, Building A, Ste. 5
Whitinsville, MA 01588

Affiliate Business After Hours

April 24, 2025
5:30pm-7:30pm
Sparetime Recreation
117 Church Street Whitinsville, MA 01588

Food, Beverage and Hospitality Network

May 1, 2025
9:00am-10:00am
Via Zoom

Annual Charity Golf Tournament

May 12, 2025
10:00am-6:00pm
Pleasant Valley Country Club
95 Armsby Road Sutton, MA 01569

Professional HR Roundtable

May 13, 2025
9:00am-10:30am
Via Zoom

Chamber of Central

MA South

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Clinton Area

Chamber of Commerce

clintonareachamber.org



Legislative Breakfast

March 4, 2025
7:30am-9:00am
The Icon Museum and Study Center
203 Union St Clinton, MA 01510

Business After Hours

w/ Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce
April 8, 2025
5:00pm-7:30pm
Sterling Street Brewery
65 Jackson Rd Devens, MA 01434

Seminar Series | Accounting 101 Basic Accounting for Entrepreneurs

April 29, 2025
8:30am-10:00 am
The Icon Museum and Study Center
203 Union St Clinton, MA 01510

Women's Networking Event/Workshop with Dimeco's Nursery & Landscape

May 14, 2025
7:30am-9:00am
The Melody Maker
474 Main St. Suite 100 Clinton, MA, 01510

Business After Hours

May 20, 2025
Berlin Country Club
25 Carr Rd Berlin, MA 01503

LABO

labous.org



10th Anniversary Latin American Business Expo

April 12, 2025
12:00pm-4:00pm
DCU Center
50 Foster St Worcester, MA 01608

Wachusett Area

Chamber of Commerce

wachusettareachamber.org



Webster Dudley Oxford

Chamber of Commerce

wdochamberma.org



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EXPERT, CONTINUED

experience, continue to work, and continue to press on for success." In a world that seems intent on sharing only highlight reels we can think of our own failure as a reflection of our intelligence, creativity and capacities. That thought is a lie. The truth is failure provides us with great information of what does and doesn't work, in the particular situation, place, and/or time. When we think of failure as a necessary part of the process, it actually gives us greater access to our creative facilities and can direct us to think of solutions that may have been previously out of reach. In an article by A. Maya Kaye, Ph.D., in Psychology Today titled, "Failure as a Natural State" Dr. Kaye explores how failure is a natural and vital part of life's journey. It emphasizes that resilience isn't about avoiding failure but learning how to navigate it. The metaphor of a baby learning to walk by falling repeatedly is used to illustrate how stumbles shape our resilience and growth, teach us to recalibrate and get back again.

CELEBRATE YOURSELF & OTHERS.

My girl Oprah Winfrey said, "The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate." I can only speak for myself, and all of my clients, and almost every woman I've ever met, and say that there tends to be a belief that we can only celebrate when we do the big things. While in therapy, with the same therapist listed above, we had a session where she asked me to write down all of the things I had accomplished and could celebrate. To her surprise, my list consisted of the college degrees and major purchases but also had things like cleaned the bathroom, did all my laundry, got my passport,

"The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is life to celebrate"

and let myself cry. She said she didn't expect me to put the smaller things on there. I stated that my life is made up of the 'smaller' things so if I was always waiting for the big moments I wouldn't have a lot to celebrate. We both had an a-ha moment. And, I've been practicing celebrating my small and big wins ever since. The bonus is that the more I celebrated myself the more I wanted to celebrate others for their small

and big wins. This led to me becoming inspired by the wins of others, where I used to allow myself to be threatened, challenged or minimized by another's success. It also gave me the room to define success for myself and release the desire to keep up with the Jones. Carol Dweck's research on growth mindset shows that this perspective allows us to see success as a source of motivation and learning, rather than a reason for self-doubt or competition.

Your homework: pick one of these practices and begin putting it into practice, immediately. Pay attention to the difference it makes in your personal and professional life and share what you've learned with others. When we know why we're doing what we're doing, radically accepting what is happening without minimizing or catastrophizing it, lightening up and playing more, learning from our failures and celebrating ourselves and others, we are actually building our resilience. When we count our wins and realize how amazing we are, how capable and creative we are, how intelligent and resourceful we are, and celebrate that, we also realize that life will have it's ebbs and flows, its ups and downs, its back and forth, AND we have what it takes to create a life we can enjoy, personally and in community. We enable and empower ourselves to live fuller and more satisfying lives, no matter the external conditions or circumstances, and dare I say, even have the capacity to change them for the betterment of all.



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Your Central MA Après Ski Guide

by **MONIQUE JOSEPH**, PRESIDENT, DISCOVER CENTRAL MA



If you're part of the uninitiated, "après ski" is a French way to describe your social plans and entertainment after your day skiing or snowboarding. In Central MA, there are plenty of options within a short drive from our local ski slopes. To help you plan your next ski getaway in the region, we've curated a guide that anyone from a ski novice to experienced shredder will find useful.

LEARN TO SKI IN CENTRAL MA

Central Massachusetts is a great place to learn to ski because destinations like Wachusett Mountain and Ski Ward have trails that are perfect for beginners, hundreds of instructors, and the environments are much less intimidating compared to bigger ski resorts. Did you know you can even show up with no equipment, outerwear or experience, and get everything you need to have a fun day learning to ski? Here are some of the packages beginners should know about:

Wachusett Mountain's Learn to Ski or Snowboard (3-Day Package: \$249 OR 1-Day Package: \$149 weekend/holidays or \$145 weekdays) We love that these packages come with rentals of skis, boots & poles or snowboard & boots, because we know beginners won't always have their own equipment. You can even add on a helmet & Gore-Tex outerwear rental, and Wachusett has thoughtfully come up with a Wach-U-Need Start Pack add-on, which includes handwarmers, socks, gloves and goggles, which are yours to keep. Beginner Group Lessons are about 1.5 hours long, and the package lift ticket is valid for a 4-hour session.

Wachusett Mountain's Return to Learn (\$179 weekend/holidays or \$175 weekdays) This package is perfect for beginners who have been on skis or a snowboard before, but need more instruction to level up and grow their confidence. The package includes a lift ticket, rental equipment and a group lesson (ages 9+ and level 3 and up).

Ski Ward's Private Lessons (\$125-\$170) Private lessons for both skiing and snowboarding for ages 3 to adult are available to Ski Ward visitors. Private lessons must be booked at least 24 hours in advance, and you can even book with friends or family of a similar age and level for a semi-private learning experience at only \$120 per additional person. The higher priced package includes a lift ticket to ski 90-minutes after your lesson, plus equipment rental.

Kids Lessons - Wachusett's per session Polar Kids (ages 4-8) and Arctic Aces (ages 9-14) lessons, and Ski Ward's multi-week Tiny Tracks / Mini Stars (ages 3-14), Small Tracks / Little Stars (ages 4-7), and First Tracks / Future Stars (ages 8-14) programs are all great options for parents to consider when giving their kids the opportunity to learn to ski or snowboard.

FUEL UP ON AND OFF THE SLOPES

At Ski Ward you'll want to visit the Fireside lodge and hit the snack bar, or hang out at the Slopeside Bar & Grill, which serves beer, wine and food specials.

At Wachusett Mountain there are both on and off-slope options. On the slopes you must make a pit stop at the Bullock Cider Lodge as well as the Waffle Cabin. Tasty treats include apple turnovers, fudge, hot cider donuts, and don't miss the Belgian sugar waffles with chocolate drizzled on top.

Back at the Base Lodge, there are many options for you. The food court serves breakfast, lunch and dinner classics. Identity Coffee Lab is the place for your caffeine kick, and at The Core, operated by Red Apple Farm, you'll find apple products, fudge and those classic apple cider donuts everyone loves. Stay outdoors with your food and draft beers at the O'Brien's Deck Bar & Grill. Or

get cozy inside at the pub-style Black Diamond Restaurant or après ski at the Coppertop Lounge, featuring The T-Bar with tapas and drinks.

DRIVE TO YOUR APRÈS SKI DESTINATION

A short drive away, there are so many more options for your après ski plans, so we've curated a couple favorites in every direction for you to consider:

TO THE EAST

Thirsty Robot Brewing Co. is only 20 minutes from Wachusett, and boasts 14 rotating taps of micro-brews. This family owned and operated establishment has a group-friendly taproom, and flavor-driven, masterfully crafted beverages, plus live entertainment. They have a full food menu, but you can also bring your own, and you'll find board games, mega jenga and more.

TO THE NORTH

Great Wolf Lodge Water Park is the après ski hotspot for families with kids, just 10 minutes north of Wachusett. This massive indoor water park resort is kept at 84-degrees, so after a cold day on the mountain, it's like a spa day with slides. They have themed suites, fun attractions and daily events that include a kids story time, Yoga Tails, arts & crafts.

TO THE WEST

Red Apple Farm is 20 minutes west of Wachusett, and there are more than just apple products when you visit the farm. The destination is also home to **TimberFire Pizza** and the **Brew Barn Restaurant**, both perfect après ski hangouts for groups. TimberFire's Neapolitan pizzas are perfectly cooked in a wood-fired pizza trailer, and a perfect complement to the hard ciders and beers at the Brew Barn, locally crafted by **Moon Hill Brewing**.

TO THE SOUTH

Head into downtown Worcester (30 minutes from Wachusett and 15 minutes from Ski Ward) to après ski at **The Mercantile**, a popular party spot with two floors, boasting huge bars, and a roof deck that features reservable igloos, donning a beautiful tablescape, fireplace, blankets and a Bluetooth speaker. Everyone loves the cozy vibes, sharable food options (don't skip the pizzas), espresso martinis, and the Blood Orange Cranberry Drink Towers that put the cherry (or rather, the cranberry) on top of your après ski experience.

STAYING OVERNIGHT

There are dozens of brand name hotels to choose from in the greater Worcester area, and for a more unique, high-end experience, consider one of these two other options:

Beechwood Hotel is a luxury Four-Diamond getaway stay, where you can enjoy beautifully appointed rooms, including fireplace suites, perfect for a warm night in after a day of skiing.

For a more home-like experience, book a stay at a **Luxo Executive Rentals** property - fully furnished 2-4 bedroom apartments and townhomes in Worcester. Perfect for larger groups who want to stay together and leverage a fully equipped kitchen, plus amenities like a washer/dryer, while also having comfortable, private bedrooms. They even have some pet-friendly rentals!

Discover Central MA is the official Regional Tourism Council of Worcester and Central MA. Interested in becoming a member of Discover Central MA? Email Tim Power, Business Development & Engagement Manager at tpower@discovercentralma.org.

This article contains excerpts from the full article on DiscoverCentralMA.org.



Above: Sunset at Wachusett Mountain



Above: Skiers at Ski Ward



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KEYNOTE

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