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THE NEWSPAPER

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OF THE WORCESTER REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Worcester Women's
Leadership Conference
Celebrates 15 Years. **11**

BRAVE NEW WORLD Local Baseball Family Strive for the Continued Success of the Worcester Bravehearts

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CONTRIBUTOR

Underneath the blast of generic country music playing from the Fitton Field PA speakers, the distinct ping of baseballs hitting aluminum bats echoed throughout the ballpark. The Holy Cross men's varsity baseball team was taking batting practice prior to an April game. Watching from the stands was the new president of the Worcester Bravehearts, Matthew Vaccaro, and Bravehearts general manager, Dave Peterson.

Vaccaro's father, Frank, and his family recently bought the Bravehearts from John Creedon, Jr. earlier this year. Matthew Vaccaro said the team will remain in Worcester and continue to call Fitton Field home for its Futures Collegiate League (FCL) games this summer.

"We always wanted to own a sports franchise," Vaccaro said. Earlier this year, Vaccaro was approached by the Creedon family about selling the team. "The Creedons got a substantial contract for their catering business, Creedon and Co. Catering. That was going to take up a lot of their time. Then they approached us."

The Bravehearts will start their 11th season in late May. They will tie the American Hockey League's former Worcester IceCats (1994-05) team as the longest running sports organization in the city's history.



New president of the Worcester Bravehearts Matthew Vaccaro right and Bravehearts general manager Dave Peterson at Fitton Field. Photo by Kevin Paul Saleeba

Vaccaro, a founding member and president of his family's Worcester-based company, Masis Staffing Solutions, has had a longtime love for baseball. In fact, the Vaccaro name is closely associated with baseball in Central Massachusetts. Frank Vaccaro, along with sons Matt and Frankie, has coached the Shrewsbury American Legion Post 397 for two decades. The Post hosted the Northeast Regional Tournament at Fitton Field six times and advanced to the American Legion World Series in 2017, 2019 and 2022.

Matt Vaccaro was a catcher for Framingham State University, graduating in 2006. He also played for the now defunct Worcester Tornadoes collegiate team in 2005. The Tornadoes were managed by current WooSox batting coach and Red Sox Hall of Famer Rich Gedman.

"Baseball has always been a passion," he said. "It's really a first love ... That love of baseball has never gone away."

Owning a team close to home was very important for the Vaccaro family. "We live in Shrewsbury and having the opportunity to own a sports franchise really intrigued us. Sometimes timing is just right."

Vaccaro said owning a team in Worcester is very surreal. "Here I am on the other side of the field as an owner instead of a player," he said. "I remember the magic from the first year of the Tornadoes and how the fans really enjoyed it. It brought out businesses and brought a smile on kids' faces ... We want to recreate the success that the Creedon family had over the last 10 years owning the Bravehearts, while adding our own personal touch to this new endeavor.

"We are honored to continue the tradition of the Worcester Bravehearts and will strive to deliver a product that the city can be proud of, both on and off the field," he said.

The Creedon family released a statement about the transfer of the team to the Vaccaro family. John Creedon said, "my family and I could not be more excited to pass the Bravehearts' torch to our friends and neighbors, the Vaccaro family. They will continue the incredible run that the Bravehearts have enjoyed over the last decade, and will no doubt enhance it with their own style and touches. Frank, Matt, and the entire Vaccaro family are absolutely first-class in business, in baseball, and in the community. Bravehearts fans

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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 at clubelczyk@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.

Reform, Restructuring, Consistency, and Customer Service Improvements Needed

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



As development and investment has increased over the past decade in the city of Worcester, the chamber has heard with increasing frequency from developers and contractors, complaints about responsiveness, customer service experiences and inconsistent demands from the City's fire department and inspectional services as it relates to construction projects. This feedback comes from both longstanding

Worcester contractors and developers as well as those coming to the city for the first time. As one contractor who has done complicated work in a number of health care facilities in Central Mass and Metro West recently told me, going forward he will have to charge property owners in Worcester a higher rate because of city fire and inspectional service personnel changing their demands after contractors have already completed work previously directed by fire and inspectional service personnel on previous construction site visits. Given Worcester taxpayers, especially on the commercial industrial side, pay some of the highest tax rates in the state and that it is in the city's self-interest to promote growth and investment. The Chamber applauds Councilor Moe Bergman, the chair of the Municipal Operations Committee for asking City Manager Batista to look at best practices, appropriate utilization of staff and staffing levels as well as the use of software and data to bring about consistent expectations and professional and prompt service for property owners and construction contractors when dealing with the fire department and inspectional services. It is in the city's best interest to promote growth and economic development that creates jobs and expands the city's tax base. This in turn lessens the burden on existing taxpayers and pays for important city services. The Chamber looks forward to the City Administration's response to this important item filed by Councilor Bergman and the future discussion before the municipal operations committee and city council.

Worcester Regional Chamber CALENDAR of EVENTS

MAY

May. 21 11:00am **Construction & Real Estate Roundtable**
Presentation and roundtable discussion with Worcester Fire Chief Martin Dyer at Chamber Office
Presenting Sponsors: Bowditch
Supporting Sponsors: Building Evolution Corp & Republic Services

May. 22 9:00am **Diverse Professional Roundtable CEO Breakfast Featuring Seth Pitts and City Manager Batista**
Sheehan Hall | Worcester State University
Presenting Sponsors: Fidelity Bank & The Hanover Insurance Group

May. 30 12:00pm **Healthcare Roundtable**
Recovery Centers of America
Chamber Offices
Sponsors: Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA & Saint Vincent Hospital

JUNE

Jun. 4 11:30am **Power of Women (POW)**
College of the Holy Cross | Hogan Center
Presenting Sponsor: Country Bank

Jun. 5 11:00am **Manufacturing Roundtable | Supply Chain**
Supporting Sponsor: S&G Business Consultants & Certified Public Accountants, LLP, Industrial Transfer and Storage

Jun. 13 7:00am **The Breakfast Club**
Mechanics Hall
Presenting Sponsor: Country Bank
Supporting Sponsor: Discover Central MA & Visit MA

Jun. 18 11:00am **Nonprofit Roundtable**
Ball Consulting Firm
Chamber Offices
Presenting Sponsor: Bowditch

JUNE

Jun. 24 7:30am **William J. Short Annual Golf Tournament**
Charter Oak Country Club
Presenting Sponsor: Harvard Pilgrim Health

June 26 12:00pm **Business & Government Forum**
Assistant Secretary Ken Brown
Chamber Offices
Presenting Sponsors: Wellpoint and WuXi Biologics
Supporting Sponsors: Ventry Associates and Takeda

JULY

Jul. 17 5:30pm **Craft Beer Night at the Bravehearts**
Fitton Field
Presenting Sponsor: RE/MAX Diverse
Supporting Sponsor: Avidia Bank

AUGUST

Aug. 27 5:00pm **Young Professionals Night Out**
X Golf Worcester
Sponsorship Available

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 12 7:00am **The Breakfast Club**
Hogan Center | College of the Holy Cross
Presenting Sponsor: Berkshire Bank

Sept. 18 5:00pm **Business After Hours w/Corridor 9/495**
Cyprian Keyes Golf Club
Presenting Sponsor: Bay State Savings Bank

Sept. 19 5:00pm **Diverse Professional Round Table Awards & Networking Event**
The Hanover Insurance Group
Sponsors: Fidelity Bank and The Hanover Insurance Group

Sept. 24 11:00am **Nonprofit Round Table**
DEI Initiatives and Where They Can go Wrong
Chamber Offices
Presenting Sponsor: Bowditch

OCTOBER

Oct. 11 7:30am **Game Changers Business Conference | Workforce**
Mechanics Hall
Presenting Sponsor: M&T Bank

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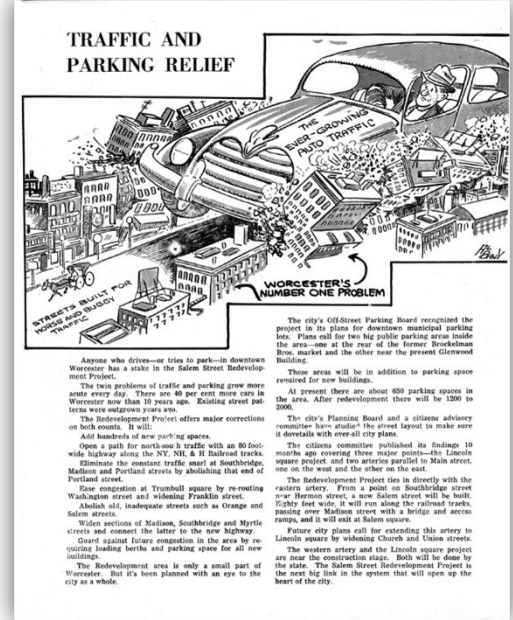
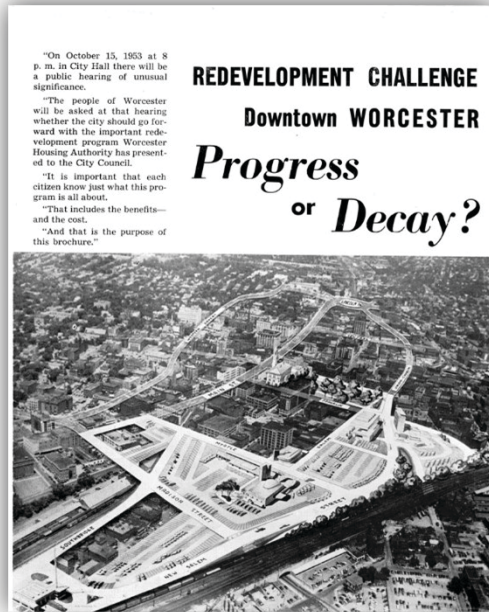
Connecting Neighborhoods to Downtown: Worcester's West Side Artery

by MICHAEL KANE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY ASSOCIATE

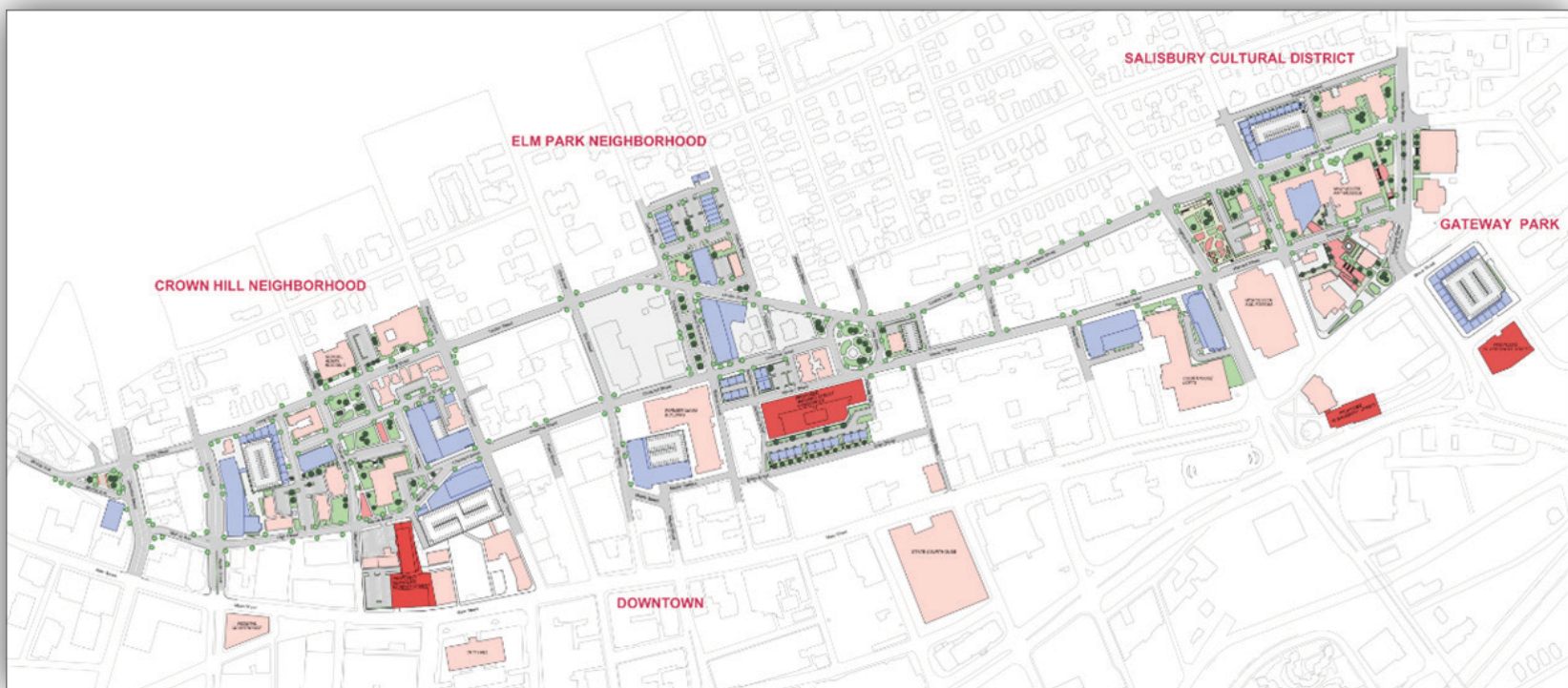
On March 19th, 2024, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce presented a concept plan to link the Crown Hill, lower Chandler, Pleasant Street, Elm Park, Highland Street, and Salisbury Cultural District neighborhoods with downtown Worcester.

The concept seeks to address past mistakes of urban planning made in the 1950s, which at the time was to increase car access and parking in the city center by building large parking lots and expressways. However, this type of urban planning has created virtual concrete canyons that divide various parts of Worcester. An example of the past mistake is the West Side Artery, which consists of two large, one-way, 2 to 3-lane highways that connect Salisbury Street to Chandler Street via Harvard, Lancaster, and Chestnut Streets.

The Chamber's concept focuses on four specific nodes of the West Side Artery: the Salisbury Cultural District, Morris Square, Channing Block, and Chandler Street/Murray Ave. These nodes are potential areas of focus that seek to facilitate conversations between property owners, residents, developers, neighborhood



Left: Article from the 1950s on the Redevelopment Challenge in Worcester, unknown credit. Right: Worcester's Number One Problem. Al Banx, Worcester Telegram.



West Side Artery Concept Plan Steve Mita & Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

organizations, institutions, and government officials, on how to address past planning mistakes and encourage pedestrian connections. This concept looks at how the area can add more community greenspaces and create housing density through infill development on excess surface parking lots, as residents, businesses and property owners, and city officials consider future economic development, housing, and transportation planning priorities.

To create and present the concept, the Chamber retained the services of local architect, Steve Mita. Mita said that through his research, he found that there was a tremendous opportunity to fix the planning decisions made with the establishment of the West Side Artery back in the 1950s. Further, Mita said "Worcester is primed to become a pedestrian-friendly city by connecting neighborhoods with the downtown district by creating density, walkable routes,

greenspaces, housing, and more."

President & CEO of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, Tim Murray, said "Steve did a great job presenting the traffic and mobility issues as well as density opportunities that might be addressed throughout the corridor over time."

Lastly, the Chamber wants to remind readers that this is a concept plan, and the slide deck looks at potential areas of focus and utilizes images and designs of what the corridor and the four nodes might look like.

To access more information about the Chamber's West Side Artery Concept Plan and Slides, visit our Website, www.worcesterchamber.org, and type into the search bar "West Side Artery."



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StartUp Worcester: The Next Trivia App Is Born In Worcester

by MICHAEL KANE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY ASSOCIATE

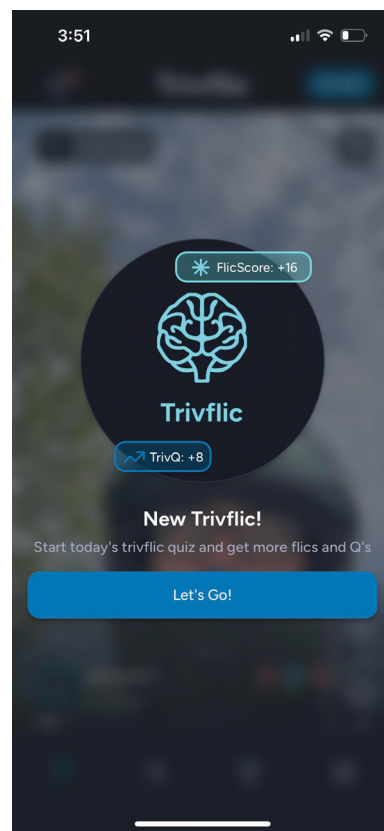
Put yourself in the shoes of a college student, you've moved-in, your parents have left, and you find yourself roaming the halls of your residence hall, trying to figure out what is the best way to interact with friends and family with trivia. For TJ Haigh, a sophomore at the College of the Holy Cross and a StartUp Worcester 2023-24 Company, his answer to that situation was to develop the first gamified social media trivia app.

In November 2022, as a freshman, Haigh envisioned the beginnings of a trivia app, Trivflic, which leverages what 79% of Americans engage in every year, trivia, and allows its users to compete with friends, family and others to become the #1 in the World. "Each day users receive three questions to answer on a related topic, and once they complete the questions, they can post a picture of what they are doing, eating, or who they are with," said Haigh about the function of the App.

People of all ages can get in on the fun, as questions are specifically tailored to current events, celebrities, or funny themes. "Just the other day we had 'Will Farrell Day', which were questions that were all about the actor, and we broke our record of a number of users."

With the growth in popularity of the app, which has been downloaded across New England and the country, Haigh credits his StartUp Worcester cohort and mentors, as well as support from Rob Murner and the team at the Ciocca Center at Holy Cross, Sonia Descormiers at Berkshire Bank, and Zak Dutton of the Venture Forum for its success.

"Doors have opened for me and opportunities to connect with people that I have never expected to have been offered right here in Worcester, said Haigh, on his experience with StartUp Worcester. "Networking with everybody in your cohort and taking full advantage of connecting with your mentors has absolutely helped. I was matched with Ryan Canuel, CEO of Petrocore, but I still communicate regularly with many of the mentors."



Furthermore, at the start of April after winning the Holy Cross "Cross Tank" for the second year in a row, Haigh and Trivflic had to opportunity to pitch the App at the inaugural Woo Tank Intercollegiate Showdown

which brought together eight young entrepreneurs from our local colleges and universities to pitch in front of real judges to invest their own money into the students StartUps. On being asked about his experience Haigh said, "I have pitched to judges before, but never to ones like this, who I would have to negotiate back and forth for their money"

"Further, standing up in front of 200ish people is an opportunity that existed in Worcester, and it was a phenomenal experience and opportunity to promote our App."

On what the future of Trivflic is, Haigh said, "we expect to explore several different opportunities and paths. As Trivflic is easily accessible from your phone you could play it waiting in line at an amusement park or during the changing in-between performers at a concert. The end vision is to become the all-in-one trivia solution, now we need to figure out the rest of the details."

Currently, Trivflic is available for download on Apple and Android and is growing in popularity every day. You can visit <https://www.trivflic.com/> to learn more about the app and TJ, and follow them on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, and LinkedIn under the name @trivflic.



BRAVEHEARTS CONTINUED

and the Bravehearts franchise are in the best hands moving into the future."

Creedon said he is thankful to all of Bravehearts nation. "My family and I want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the entire 'Hearts Fam' which includes the thousands of fans; hundreds of players, coaches, ballpark staff, and concessions staff; the incredible host families; our years-long sponsors, suppliers, and supporters; and, also, our landlord Holy Cross College. It has been the privilege of a lifetime to have been the stewards of the national pastime here in our hometown. The Bravehearts' decade of excellence has never been about any one person, rather it was built by a team of supremely talented folks who worked their tails off, quietly operated with respect, defied the odds, cheerfully overcame adversity, enjoyed some wins, set some records, and pulled it all off with aplomb (style)."

The Bravehearts launched in October of 2013. They filled a one-year baseball void left by the Worcester Tornados, who played at Fitton from 2005-12, but folded from accumulating too much debt.

The Bravehearts has since become a model organization across the country in all of summer collegiate baseball, both on and off the field. They have welcomed more than 505,000 fans through the Fitton Field gates since their inaugural season in 2014. Recently, the team's attendance has increased by 45 percent. In the last three seasons, 53,605 people have attended games.

On the field, Worcester has captured the second-most championships in FCL history with four, going back-to-back on two occasions in 2014-15 and 2018-19. Worcester is one of three teams to win more than 300 regular-season games in the league, while its 23 postseason victories are second all-time.

"It is no small feat for the Bravehearts to have started in 2013 as the only

sports team in the city, and to now be the longest running sports team in Worcester history with an immensely bright future ahead," Creedon said. My family and I could not be prouder of the Bravehearts' past, and eagerly look forward to the team's future success under the leadership of the Vaccaro family."

"We want to add our own personal touch to this new endeavor," Matt Vaccaro said. "We're so excited to offer an all-inclusive experience for every fan at our stadium this season."

Fans who have 2023 Worcester Bravehearts Ticket Vouchers will be able to use them as a \$10 credit to any Bravehearts home game. Also, the Bravehearts will be the first team in the Northeast to offer All-You-Can-Eat for every ticket sold in the entire ballpark. For the 2024 season, any fan who purchases a Bravehearts ticket will get access to unlimited hot dogs, burgers, chicken nuggets, sausages, soft drinks and more. The All-You-Can-Eat menu will be announced at a later date. However, the team has confirmed they will offer vegetarian options included in All-You-Can-Eat for those with dietary restrictions. Additional concessions items such as chicken tenders, pizza, ice cream, and fried dough will also be available for purchase.

The team will host three "Baseball in Education Day Field Trip Games" on June 4 and 6 and July 25. These games will not be included in the All-You-Can-Eat promotion, however students who come with a school will receive lunch during the game.

Season tickets and All-You-Can-Eat flex vouchers are now on sale and can be purchased at Worcesterbravehearts.com. Bravehearts tickets will go on sale shortly. For more information, email Don@worcesterbravehearts.com.



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Women's Leadership Conference Celebrates 15 Years in Worcester

by STEFANIE SILVA, DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Each year, close to 700 women gather at the DCU Center in the heart of downtown, to attend the Worcester Women's Leadership Conference. This spring, on May 2nd was particularly special as WWLC celebrated its milestone 15th anniversary.

As Central MA's largest women's conference for over a decade, this full day program is meticulously designed to inspire and ignite all attendees with information that they can apply to their current professions, career development goals and personal lives. This is not your average "sit in a ballroom all day" event. The agenda includes two nationally known keynote speaker addresses, eight workshops, 40+ vendor/exhibitors and a Women's Wellness Corner; it is no surprise that it sells out each year and is sponsored by dozens of businesses looking to be a part of a one-of-a-kind leadership event.

Celebrating 15 years is an accomplishment shared by the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Women's Leadership Conference committee. Their dedication to delivering a purposeful event year after year is why they have welcomed well known keynote speakers such as Deborah Roberts, Mel Robbins, Lisa Ling, Luvvie Jones and Alison Levine just to name a few. Each year, inspiring names like these draw big crowds of women looking to hear and be inspired by other women who have worked just as hard, overcame obstacles, and have trailblazed paths to success even in the face of gender-based inequality in the U.S.

Forbes recently published that women earn just 84 cents for every dollar a man makes, with women of color making even less. This conference is crucial to how we can come together to support Central MA's female workforce and spotlight our hope to overcome these discouraging statistics that unfortunately still plague women professionals from all walks of life.

"As the largest employer in Central Mass. and one which employs thousands of female caregivers, the women of UMass Memorial Health are critical to our operations. We couldn't care for our patients without women. However according to the World Health Organization - women account for 67% of the global health and social care workforce, yet an estimated 75% of leadership roles are held by men. So, we have some work to do and supporting the WWLC is an important step to get us to a place of equity. We need leaders of change and the WWLC provides the motivation and empowerment women need to continue reaching for the stars. UMass Memorial Health is extremely proud to be a presenting sponsor for several years, and support the female leaders of our community" says Lori Albert, Marketing Manager of UMass Memorial Health, long standing supporter and sponsor of the event.

In addition to focusing on the current workforce, the conference highlights and supports future female leaders. In 2019 in recognition of its tenth conference anniversary, the committee unanimously voted to commemorate the occasion by establishing the Susan Mailman Aspiring Young Women Leaders Scholarship to support young women and help them aspire to their dreams. That year over \$8,000 was raised by attendees to seed the scholarship fund.

Named in honor of its first committee chair, who has continued to support this event through sponsorship, and has been a long-time supporter of the Chamber including serving as chair of the board of directors, Sue Mailman is also an outspoken advocate for the Worcester Public Schools, currently serving as School Committee Member, and always supporting and lifting up women everywhere.

The scholarship is available to young women enrolled in Worcester public schools for them to be with others at the conference to connect them with professional development, potential mentors, and provide connections that may inspire them and influence their path for the future. This year, at the afternoon reception, Sanai Lewis, a North High School Senior, received a financial scholarship of \$1,000. Additional funds raised at each conference will go toward a fund for future awards.

The Chamber and WWLC Committee are committed to organizing this event for another 15 years, focusing on creating an engaging and inspiring experience. We would love to see you at the next one so save the date for June 12th, 2025!



Above: Keynote speaker Cassandra Worthy addresses the crowd. Photo Credit: Tiana Delia Photography



Above: Conference Committee member and Exhibitor, Briana Azier, Owner of Bri's Sweet Treats. Photo Credit: Tiana Delia Photography



Above: Conference Chair Stefanie Silva, and Emcee Cait Lubelczyk, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. Photo Credit: Tiana Delia Photography

food FOR thought



A FRESH TAKE ON A CLASSIC EVENT: Taste of Shrewsbury Street is Back on June 18

by BREANNA DIBELLA, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, STUDIO DIBELLA

When it comes to traditions, it's important to honor the past while keeping an eye on the future. For over two decades, businesses along Worcester's "Restaurant Row" have joined forces to put on Taste of Shrewsbury Street, bringing together the community in celebration of good food and a good time. "The Taste of Shrewsbury Street is like a big summer kick-off party! Up and down Shrewsbury Street, people are happy and sampling delicious snacks from each restaurant," remarked Caitlyn Carolan, president of Worcester Restaurant Group. "It is an event that we look forward to and are happy to participate in each year!"

This year, the Shrewsbury Street Merchants Association (SSMA) decided it was time to evolve the event, keeping the best parts, while making changes both visible and behind the scenes. First and most foundational was a partnership between SSMA, Studio DiBella, and Infinity Events.

Both local, women-owned businesses have roots in the region and extensive experience working for clients in Worcester. My creative and marketing agency, Studio DiBella, has niche experience serving membership-based nonprofit organizations, in addition to rebranding, event branding, and event marketing.

Ashling Trainor, owner of Infinity Events, is the planner behind some of the most notable events in the city, such as the UMass Hope and Healing Celebration and the Annual Worcester Independence Day Celebration. When asked about her involvement in Taste of Shrewsbury Street 2024 Trainor exclaimed, "Infinity Events is thrilled to be able to assist in planning this incredible community event for the city. I'm looking forward to a wonderful night!"

The second change involved sponsorship, a cornerstone to the success of most nonprofit events. In addition to expanding the sponsorship levels, the SSMA decided to manage their own sponsorship outreach, leveraging a new sales sheet that reflected the updated brand and clearly communicated benefits. "We're hitting record levels of sponsorship this year," noted long-time SSMA President, John Piccolo, owner of Piccolo's Restaurant. It's become clear that approaching their event fundraising directly, instead of outsourcing the process, has allowed SSMA's leadership to build stronger ties with sponsors.

Another behind the scenes process improvement is the communication and asset tracking conducted by Infinity Events. Their team is building systems and tools that SSMA will be able to utilize for years to come, streamlining the event production workflow with sponsors and participating restaurants.

On the visible side, the event's brand identity system received an overhaul by Studio DiBella. The redesigned logo, color palette, typefaces and graphic styles come together to bring a fresh, new look to the event. In a nod to the former event identity, a plate and the Shrewsbury Street sign are still key elements of the logo design, intentionally creating a sense of familiarity for the crowd who's known and loved this event for years.

For the uninitiated, this food festival also offers a large helping of live entertainment. Seven of the businesses are booking musicians, and you'll discover a DJ set and karaoke along the route too. "The Taste of Shrewsbury Street is a wonderful event to bring the community together and celebrate all that this area of Worcester has to offer. Vintage Grille is excited to participate again and to welcome back Stone County to entertain with their country and rock music."

PARTICIPATING RESTAURANTS

111 Chop House	Pepe's Dolce Bar
Basil n' Spice Thai Cuisine	Pepe's Italian Restaurant
Boulevard Diner	Piccolo's
Café Reyes	Ralph's Tavern
Dad's Keto Kitchen	Redemption Rock Brewing Company
Flying Rhino Café & Watering Hole	Root & Press
Funky Murphys Bar And Grille	Subway
La Scala Ristorante	The Pint
Leo's Ristorante	The Shisha Room
McDonalds	Via Italian Table
Meraki Café and Dessert Bar	Victory Bar & Cigar
Mexicali Cantina Grill	Vintage Grille & Gourmet Pizza
Meze Estiatorio	Volturmo
Nuovo	Wonder Bar
	Wormtown



announced Chris Stone, owner of Vintage Grille & Gourmet Pizza. "Last year our famous mac 'n' cheese and pulled pork was a hit and we are working on our specialty to offer this year. We look forward to seeing you on June 18th!"

One big update for SSMA that I'm particularly proud of is the new website. With the design and launch of this website we've enabled SSMA to offer ticket sales, accept donations and build their own email marketing list. To celebrate this milestone, tickets are on sale online for a discounted \$25 until midnight on June 17th. After that, you'll need to pay \$30 on the day of when you arrive at the event.

Buying a ticket gets you a silicone event wristband, which you'll wear so restaurants know you've paid to participate in the event. This is another upgrade from the stickers and buttons of years past. I'm personally looking forward to collecting a wristband for each year. It's a memento of the night and something future me will consider a nostalgic token of local pride. There are three wristband pickup locations: Wormtown Brewery, Flying Rhino, and Vintage Grille & Gourmet Pizza.

Now, if you're a business owner or HR leader interested in attending, consider this before you buy your tickets: Event sponsorship gets you 10 wristbands, recognition on the event website, plus your support helps the SSMA fund the beautification of the neighborhood and support local charities. The group camaraderie of Taste of Shrewsbury Street is undeniable, and the Friend sponsor level is only \$500.

So, why not treat your team to a fun night out?

Last but not least, this year the tasting public votes which restaurant offered the most delicious food. The first-place prize is \$500 (and bragging rights for the year) and the runner up wins \$300. The online polls won't open until the event starts at 5pm and final votes are tallied at midnight.

I'm looking forward to trying the unique and delicious food from each restaurant, and I hope you'll join me at Taste of Shrewsbury Street on Tuesday, June 18th!

To buy tickets and learn more, visit <https://www.tasteofshrewsburystreet.com>.



5 QUESTIONS with

Dr. Sheri-ann McLean, Founder and CEO Executive Developmental Coach | Leadership Development Trainer | Keynote Speaker, McLean Coaching and Consulting, LLC

What inspired you to start your own leadership development and Coaching organization, and how does your background in developmental coaching influence your approach to leadership?

It all began with a straightforward yet potent vision: to empower individuals within our community, one leader at a time. My journey into leadership commenced at the tender age of eight, right within the heart of my small Jamaican neighborhood. Armed with nothing more than youthful energy, a thirst for knowledge, and a touch of creative ingenuity (like transforming zinc fences into makeshift chalkboards and utilizing charcoal as writing implements), I gathered my friends to impart the knowledge I was acquiring. That early encounter ignited a spark within me—a fervent desire to make a positive impact that continues to propel me forward to this day.

Throughout my upbringing, my parents ingrained in me values such as honesty, community spirit, and the importance of cherishing individuals. These principles have remained steadfast within me, serving as guiding lights in my endeavors.

With over 12 years of experience in leadership development, coaching, and community building, my background is diverse. Armed with a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology and certifications as a Maxwell Leadership Executive Trainer, Coach, and Speaker, I've merged my passion for psychology and leadership to better assist my clients. It's all about leveraging my wealth of experience and expertise to facilitate the growth and flourishing of others.

Can you share some key principles or methodologies that guide your leadership development and Coaching services, particularly in fostering personal and professional growth?

Our leadership development and coaching services are anchored in the ACT framework—Assess, Cultivate, Transfer—providing a comprehensive approach to fostering personal and professional growth. Through the GROWTH Leadership Development Program, we begin by assessing individuals' current skills and areas for development, utilizing various assessments and feedback mechanisms. Subsequently, individuals engage in cultivation activities such as workshops, mentorship, and coaching sessions to enhance their leadership competencies. As they progress, emphasis is placed on transferring their newfound knowledge and skills to their teams and organizations, promoting leadership development at all levels. We then tailor programs to suit the specific needs of each client, ensuring a customized and effective approach to leadership development.

As an executive developmental coach, how do you balance supporting your clients' growth while also managing the strategic direction and operations of your own company?

Balancing the roles of a leadership development trainer/executive coach and company leader presents unique challenges. However, by intentionally focusing on time management and ensuring alignment with overarching goals, I've been able to navigate these challenges smoothly. For example, I utilize a time blocking technique to dedicate specific time slots for training/coaching sessions and company operations. This allows me to give each role my full attention. Moreover, I ensure my training and coaching objectives are directly tied to the company's broader goals. By aligning my training/coaching and leadership roles, I've been able to create a synergy that elevates effectiveness across the organization.

Can you share a particularly rewarding or challenging coaching experience that has shaped your approach to leadership within your organization?

One coaching experience that deeply influenced my leadership approach involved supporting a client who grappled with self-doubt and negative self-talk upon returning to a fast-paced work environment. They harbored doubts about their ability to excel in their field. Throughout our coaching sessions, we



Above: Dr. Sheri-ann McLean

implemented cognitive reframing techniques to challenge these self-limiting beliefs. For instance, we identified a recurring thought pattern of "I'll never be as good as I used to be" and transformed it into a more empowering affirmation like "This is an opportunity to learn and develop new skills." Witnessing the transformation was truly remarkable. The client reclaimed their confidence and actively pursued a leadership role within the company. Their newfound self-assurance ultimately propelled them to secure a significant promotion, emerging as a top performer within the organization. This experience solidified my conviction in the transformative power of coaching, highlighting the importance of self-awareness and empowerment in unlocking a leader's full potential.

How do you prioritize self-development and continued learning as a CEO and executive developmental coach, and what advice would you give to aspiring women leaders in the coaching and consulting industry?

As a CEO and executive developmental coach, I understand the critical importance of prioritizing self-development and continuous learning. John Maxwell's "law of the lid" resonates deeply with me, as it emphasizes that growth stagnates when learning comes to a halt. To uphold the highest standards of service for my clients, I make it a priority to invest in my own growth through various avenues such as certifications, conferences, webinars, and other learning opportunities.

For aspiring women leaders in the coaching and consulting industry, my advice is straightforward: remain open-minded and receptive to feedback. Cultivating a mindset of being coachable and teachable not only facilitates personal growth but also broadens your capacity to serve clients effectively. Embrace the philosophy of ongoing improvement, eagerly seeking out new knowledge and honing your skills to amplify your impact in your chosen field. By continuously evolving and expanding your expertise, you position yourself as a dynamic and invaluable resource for your clients, empowering them to achieve their goals and aspirations.

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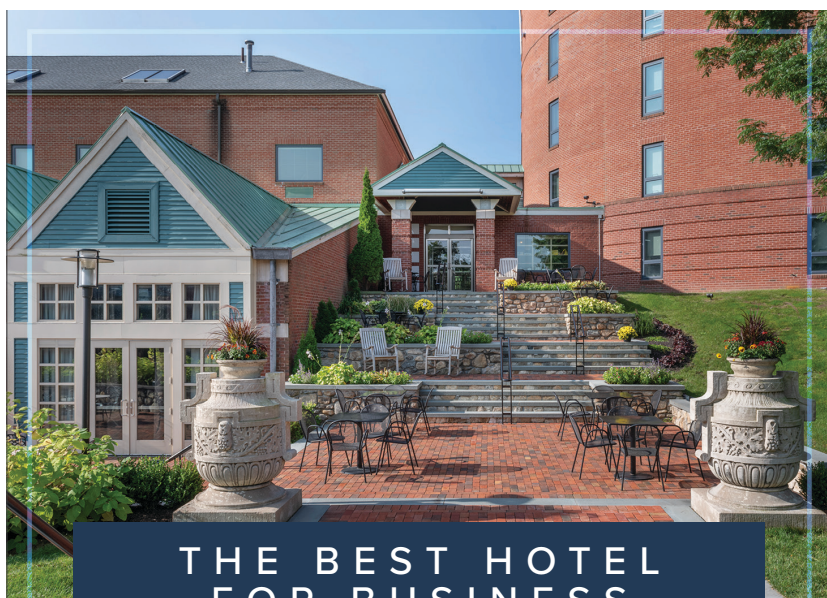
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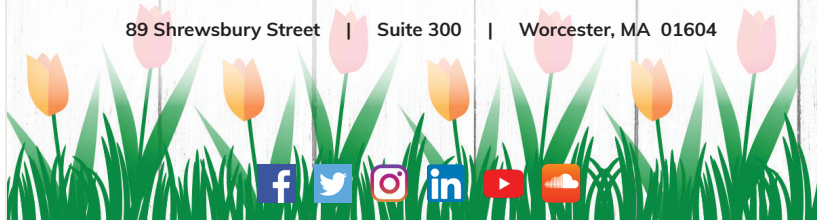
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Another Side Effect of High Commercial Property Taxes: Hotels, Grocery Stores & NCAA Tournament

by MICHAEL KANE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY ASSOCIATE

Last December the Worcester City Council voted to once again widen the gap between commercial/industrial taxpayers and residential taxpayers, ranking Worcester as the 7th highest commercial tax rate in Massachusetts. Yet, as Worcester continues to widen its tax classification gap over the years, the City has expressed interest in supporting bids for large events to help create economic impact downtown, without the necessary infrastructure in place to accommodate such events.

Recently, the City Council discussed the possibility of bidding for the NCAA Men's & Women's Basketball Tournaments to be held at the DCU Center. The last time Worcester hosted such an event was in 2005 when fans were treated to an upset victory by the #13 seed Vermont Catamounts who knocked off the #4 seed Syracuse Orange. If awarded again, the Tournament would attract thousands of spectators to the Heart of the Commonwealth to watch their team fight for the National Championship.

Many cities throughout the United States that have hosted the NCAA Basketball Tournament have seen a major economic impact from the event. For example, Spokane, Washington, a city of similar size to Worcester, saw a \$2.4 million economic impact over just one weekend in their city and downtown, when they hosted the first and second rounds of the NCAA Men's Tournament this year. Albany, New York hosted Iowa's Caitlin Clark and the Women's Sweet Sixteen and Elite Eight Tournament games this year and that city saw an estimated \$8.6 million impact.

However, to achieve an economic impact on such a scale to assist Worcester's businesses, restaurants, and workforce, there must be the necessary infrastructure in place to handle such a large event. A major hurdle for Worcester in the bidding process is lodging for the teams, officials, and spectators at full-service hotels in the City.

According to the NCAA bidding material, to qualify to host the 2027 & 2028 NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament, a city must have a total of 9 full-service hotels that are in reasonable proximity to the event, no farther than 30 minutes with traffic. In order to accommodate NCAA teams and staff alone, there would have to be hotel space for 2,462 rooms that's not even taking into account the space needed to house spectators who come from around the country to cheer on their colleges and universities.

Worcester currently has 9 hotels, however, according to Discover Central Massachusetts, the City's and Region's convention and visitor's bureau, of these nine hotels, there are only 1,132 rooms, and only one of the hotels is considered a full-service hotel. Thus, to accommodate the teams, spectators, and staff, the City will have to look beyond the city limits and utilize hotels as far as Westborough.

The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce has been a supporter of the development of more hotels in Worcester, to make Downtown Worcester, the DCU Center, and Polar Park, destinations for events like the NCAA championship tournaments and college conference championships. But here is where the issue lies, hotel developers have told us that a major factor why they are choosing other towns around Worcester to develop hotels is the City's high commercial tax rate.

TABLE 2: 2024 TOWN & CITY RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL TAX RATES

	Residential Tax Rate (per \$1000)	Commercial Tax Rate (per \$1000)
Auburn	\$14.93	\$16.81
Millbury	\$13.23	\$13.23
Northborough	\$14.28	\$14.28
Shrewsbury	\$12.38	\$12.38
Westborough	\$16.41	\$16.41
Worcester	\$13.75	\$30.04

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Tax Rate by Class, https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=PropertyTaxInformation.taxratesbyclass.taxratesbyclass_main.

TABLE 1: 2024 TAX CLASSIFICATION RANKINGS MASSACHUSETTS

Ranking	Municipality	Commercial Tax Rate (per \$1,000)
1	Holyoke	\$40.26
2	Pittsfield	\$39.61
3	North Adams	\$36.34
4	Springfield	\$35.41
5	Chicopee	\$31.78
6	Westfield	\$31.34
7	Worcester	\$30.04
8	West Springfield	\$29.80
9	Hopedale	\$29.04
10	Avon	\$27.84

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Tax Rate by Class, https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=PropertyTaxInformation.taxratesbyclass.taxratesbyclass_main.

According to data retrieved from the City of Worcester, the current commercial tax rate is \$30.04 per \$1000 of the current assessed value of the property. (See Table 2) To showcase the savings of operating a hotel outside of Worcester, the Chamber created a cost comparison chart with data from the City of Worcester's Assessor's office, and the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. The chart compares 5 towns' commercial tax rates to Worcester: Auburn, Millbury, Northborough, Shrewsbury, and Westborough, and shows the difference in tax rates levied on the 4 largest hotels in Worcester.

The data from the chart concluded that on average a hotel property owner would save over \$270,000 yearly if they were to construct a hotel outside of Worcester. If you do the math, after only four years if the hotel developer chooses to build outside of Worcester, they would save over \$1.0 million on their taxes, and after a decade the hotel would save an estimated \$2.7 million.

Constructing large developments outside of Worcester has been a similar trend with other larger businesses such as grocery stores. Many in Worcester have asked why grocery stores are not developing within the city. The new Market Basket Supermarket located less than a mile from the Worcester city line in Shrewsbury is a great example. Shrewsbury has a commercial tax rate of \$12.38 per \$1000, one of the lowest in the region, and the current assessed value of the store is over \$12.5 million. Thus, in Shrewsbury the property owner will pay around \$154,000 in property taxes, but, if this same store was located

TAXES, P14

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Tips, Tricks & Consideration For Using AI In Your Business

by PAUL CARELIS, SHRM-CP, PHR, VICE PRESIDENT OF HR SERVICES, MP

In the fast-paced world of business, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) has become inevitable. For many business professionals, however, the thought of incorporating AI can be both exciting and daunting. If you are worried about using AI for your business, here are some tips, tricks, and considerations you should think about before diving in.

- 1. CREATE, IMPLEMENT, AND COMMUNICATE AN AI POLICY:**
Begin your AI journey by developing a comprehensive AI policy that outlines the guidelines for its use across your organization. This policy should cover both internal and external usage, clearly define disclosure requirements, set standards for handling sensitive information, and establish application methods.
- 2. TEST PILOT INTERNALLY AND UTILIZE PROOFREADERS:**
Before fully integrating AI into your business operations, conduct internal test pilots. This allows you to identify potential challenges and fine-tune the technology to align with your specific needs. Additionally, use proofreaders to assess the outputs of AI systems, ensuring accuracy and relevance.
- 3. UNDERSTAND THE RISK OF NOT APPEARING GENUINE:**
While AI can enhance efficiency and streamline processes, there is a risk of appearing insincere or detached when using it for communication purposes. Ensure that the tone and messaging align with your company's values to maintain authenticity and trust.
- 4. LIMIT SPEND, IMPLEMENTATION, AND DEPENDENCY UNTIL LEGAL CLARITY:**
In the rapidly evolving field of AI, laws and regulations are still catching up. It's prudent to limit spending, implementation, and dependency on AI in new systems until legal frameworks are sorted out and finalized. Stay informed about the latest developments to adapt your strategies accordingly.
- 5. CONSIDER COMPANY HISTORY, PRECEDENT, AND CULTURE:**
Current AI systems lack the ability to factor in company history, precedent, and culture when making decisions. Keep this in mind, especially when dealing with nuanced situations that require contextual understanding beyond the capabilities of AI algorithms.



- 6. ALWAYS BE CONSIDERATE OF A POTENTIAL PR ANGLE:**
Public perception matters. Consider how your audience may perceive the use of AI in your business. Be transparent about the technology's role and emphasize its positive impact on customer experience, efficiency, or innovation.
- 7. HAVE FUN WITH AI AND GET CREATIVE:**
AI is not just a tool; it can be a source of inspiration and creativity. Explore the fun and innovative side of AI, leveraging its capabilities to enhance your products, services, or customer interactions. Numerous free and low-cost options are available for experimentation.
- 8. EXPLORE OPTIONS BUILT INTO VARIOUS PLATFORMS:**
Many existing platforms offer built-in AI features that can be easily integrated into your business processes. Explore these options to harness the power of AI without the need for extensive development or customization.
- 9. BE MINDFUL OF PRIVACY:**
Privacy is a paramount concern when using AI. Ensure that your AI systems comply with data protection regulations and prioritize the security of customer information. Establish clear protocols for handling and storing data to maintain trust with your clientele.

Undoubtedly, the age of AI is upon us, and embracing it is not just a choice but a necessity for businesses looking to stay competitive. By creating and communicating a robust AI policy, testing internally, understanding potential risks, and being considerate of public perception, you can effectively integrate AI into your operations. Remember to keep an eye on legal developments, be mindful of privacy, and most importantly, have fun with AI. The possibilities are vast, and with the right approach, AI can propel your business to new heights.

Paul Carelis, SHRM-CP, PHR, Vice President of HR Services at MP, a Massachusetts headquartered human capital management (HCM) company focused on transforming the employer-employee relationship and experience.

TAXES CONTINUED

TABLE 3: SAVINGS FOR HOTEL PROPERTY TAXES

Sources: (1) City of Worcester Taxes & Assessments Office, (2) Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Tax Rate by Class, https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=PropertyTaxInformation.taxratesbyclass.taxratesbyclass_main.

Hotel	Current Hotel Assessment	Taxes on Hotel Property in Worcester	Average Tax Bill in the Five Towns Other than Worcester	Average SAVINGS on a Tax Bill Compared to Worcester
AC Marriott Hotel	\$18,287,800	\$549,366	\$267,404	\$281,961
Beechwood Hotel	\$12,014,000	\$360,901	\$173,146	\$187,755
Hilton Garden Inn	\$24,133,000	\$724,955	\$352,873	\$372,083
Homewood Suites	\$15,576,000	\$467,903	\$227,752	\$240,151

in Worcester the property owner would pay over \$375,000 in property taxes and take an overall \$220,000 hit yearly.

The City has hosted the NCAA Men's Hockey Regionals multiple times and Discover Central Massachusetts has been a key partner in those winning bids, so hosting large events isn't out of the question. However, the Hockey tournament is a significantly smaller event with only four teams and does not require as many hotels or rooms.

If Worcester wants to continue to boost its economy by hosting large events downtown and across the City, it needs the hotel infrastructure in place to house spectators for these events. Reducing the tax classification gap will seek to assist in the development of more hotels, grocery stores, and commercial properties, and will jointly aid our existing neighborhood small businesses who are disproportionately affected due to the high commercial tax rate.

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Remembering Larry Lucchino

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

With an aluminum Polar seltzer can in hand, Larry Lucchino saluted a packed city hall in the summer of 2018. The Pittsburgh native triumphantly proclaimed the Heart of the Commonwealth as the new home for the Pawtucket Red Sox at the time.

Two years later, Polar Park was built. It has since been voted “Best Ballpark in Triple-A Baseball” by *Ballpark Digest* on May 11, 2023 in a vote of more than 87,000 fans. Lucchino played an integral role in constructing the park, as well as successfully bringing professional baseball back to Worcester after missing it for more than a century.

Sadly, Polar Park will be Lucchino’s final chapter in a long legacy of baseball accomplishments, highlighted by helping the Boston Red Sox break the “Curse of the Bambino” in 2004. On April 2, 2024, after battling lymphoma, he died from congestive heart failure. He was 78.

Lucchino devoted 44 years of his life to professional baseball. He served as the distinguished president of the Baltimore Orioles, the San Diego Padres, and the Boston Red Sox. He played a vital role in building Oriole Park at Camden Yards, Petco Park in San Diego, and the renovations to modernize Fenway Park.

During Lucchino’s funeral service at St. Cecilia Parish in Boston last month, WooSox president Dr. Charles Steinberg said Lucchino believed a baseball ballpark should be “cozy, not crowded; intimate, not intimidating; colloquial, not colossal.” Steinberg also said Lucchino reviled the “cookie-cutter” stadiums of the 1960s and 70s.

The first of these sterile stadiums or “concrete donuts” was Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium in 1961 in Washington D.C., followed by other cookie-cutters like Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium and the Houston Astrodome in 1965, Busch Memorial Stadium in St. Louis and the Oakland Coliseum in 1966, San Diego Stadium in 1967, and Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh in 1970.

Lucchino was determined to reverse this trend. “Why this passion?” Steinberg asked. “He loved his native Pittsburgh and the downtown of his youth. He said it had everything a kid could ask for: a ballpark, a library, a park, a Y, and pizza. And that’s (how) he fell in love with downtowns and with downtown ballparks.”

When Forbes Field, a beloved Pittsburgh ballpark (1909-1970), was demolished and replaced with Three Rivers Stadium, “it created a wound that refused to heal,” said Steinberg. “And that’s why he famously said he wanted ‘a traditional, old-fashioned downtown ballpark with modern amenities.’ It became his mantra. And he fined us five dollars for using the ‘S’ word. We never said stadium again.”

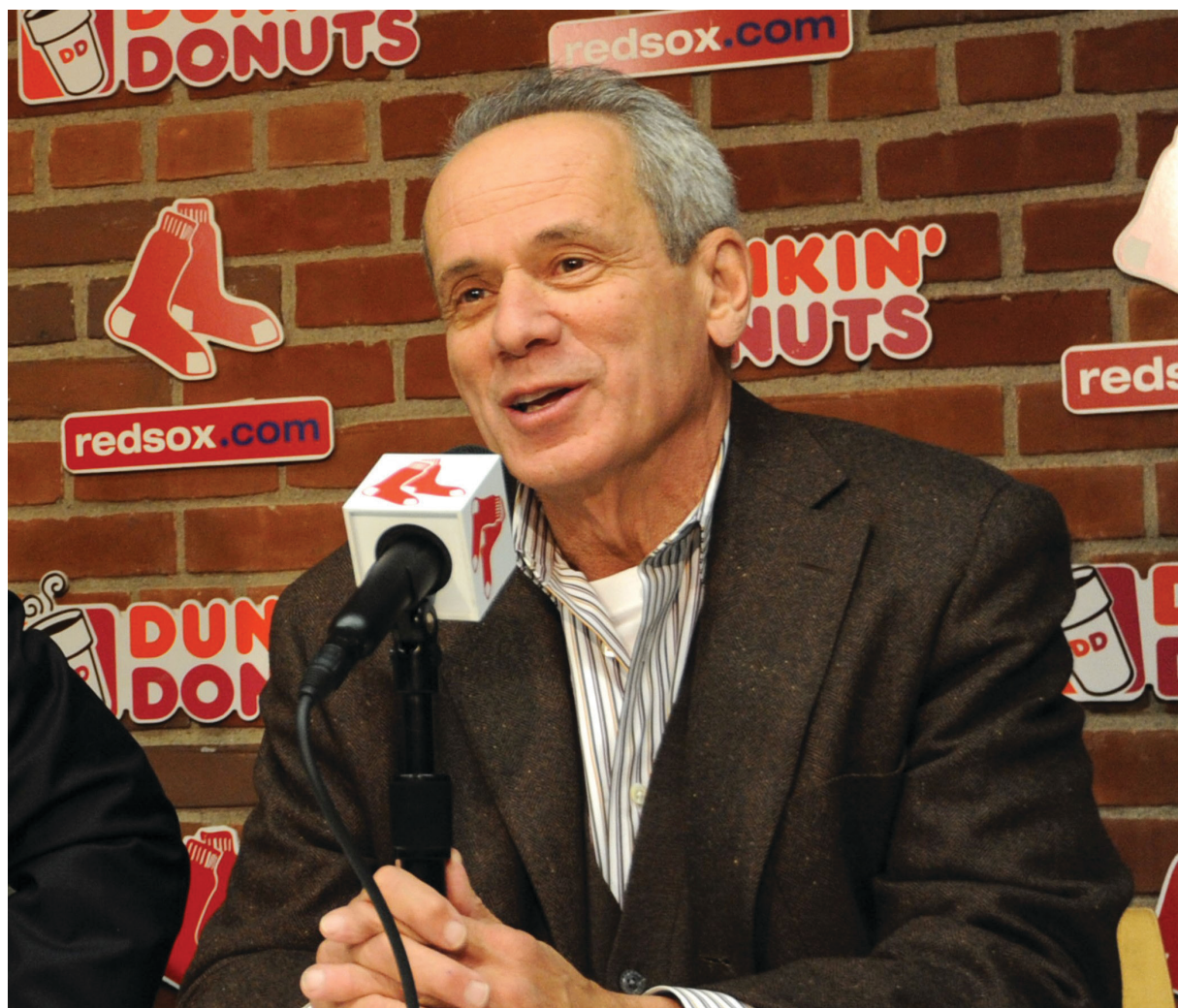
For 30 years since the early 90s, Lucchino and architect Janet Marie Smith worked on numerous ballpark assignments throughout the country, most recently constructing Polar Park. “We signed with a letter intent with the city of Worcester, to build a state-of-the-art, multipurpose ballpark,” he said in front of that packed audience at city hall in 2018. He then reached for his can of Polar seltzer and raised it high, signaled for Ralph Crowley, the CEO of Polar Beverages, and revealed that the new stadium of the Worcester Red Sox would be named Polar Park.

Following his death, the Boston Red Sox issued the following statement on behalf of the Lucchino family:

“We are heartbroken to share that our beloved brother and uncle, Lawrence Lucchino, passed away on April 2 surrounded by his family. The Lucchino family wishes to thank his friends and caregivers who, over the past few months, have surrounded him with love, laughter, and happy memories.

“To us, Larry was an exceptional person who combined a hall of fame life as a Major League Baseball executive with his passion for helping those people most in need.”

The Boston Red Sox also mourned the loss of Lucchino, who served as the



Larry Lucchino, the late principal owner of the Worcester Red Sox. Photo courtesy of the WooSox.

clubs President/CEO (2002-2015). “Larry’s career unfolded like a playbook of triumphs, marked by transformative moments that reshaped ballpark design, enhanced the fan experience, and engineered the ideal conditions for championships wherever his path led him, and especially in Boston,” said Red Sox Principal Owner John Henry.

During this 14-year period, Lucchino helped the team win three World Series titles (2004, 2007, 2013), saved and enhanced historic Fenway Park, established a Major League Baseball record for consecutive sellouts, and created innovations in fan services and hospitality.

Lucchino also helped establish the Red Sox Foundation and further elevated the club’s commitment to The Jimmy Fund. He was treated at the Dana-Farber Institute in the mid-1980s for non-Hodgkins’s lymphoma. He also was treated for prostate cancer in 1999 and kidney cancer in 2019. In 2016, he was appointed chairman of the Jimmy Fund while also being named president/CEO emeritus for the Red Sox.

Henry said Lucchino’s influence on the people he worked with will live on with the Red Sox. “Perhaps his most enduring legacy lies in the remarkable people he helped assemble at the Red Sox, all of whom are a testament to his training, wisdom, and mentorship,” he said. “Many of them continue to shape the organization today, carrying forward the same vigor, vitality, and cherished sayings that were hallmarks of Larry’s personality. Larry was a formidable opponent in any arena, and while he battled hard, he always maintained the utmost respect for a worthy adversary and found genuine joy in sparring with people. I was lucky enough to have had him in my corner for 14 years and to have called him a close friend for even longer. He was truly irreplaceable and will be missed by all of us at the Red Sox.”

Lucchino was instrumental in bringing together Henry, chairman Tom Werner, and their partners, who purchased the Red Sox, Fenway Park, and 80 percent of NESN in December 2001. The club set franchise attendance records in eight of Lucchino’s 14 seasons and set Major League Baseball’s attendance record by selling out every game (820 straight) from May 15, 2003, through April 8, 2013. He also helped conceive and execute a 10-year plan to improve

P.J. AT THE BAT: Baseball Partnership Brings Joy to Local Baseball Lifer

by KEVIN SALEEBA, CORRESPONDENT

About five years ago, P.J. Barry found himself stepping into the batter's box as a member his favorite childhood baseball team, the Worcester Bravehearts.

It was the bottom-of-the-fourth inning in a game the Bravehearts clung to a slim 3-2 lead against Futures Collegiate League (FCL) rival, the Bristol Blues. As the six-foot, 180-pound light-hitting outfielder gripped his bat, an imposing figure stared back at him from the pitcher's mound. The Blues' Arjun Thakar, a 6-foot-4, 225-pound righty, stood ready to deliver the pitch. He was known to throw a fastball in the high 80s.

Barry had only one thought running through his head.

Just look for a pitch to drive.

Leap-forward to February 29, 2024. Barry works as the head of corporate partnership services for the Worcester Red Sox. The Worcester Bravehearts recently announced a new partnership with the WooSox. It was a day Barry's baseball life came full circle. "Today is a special day for anyone in Central Mass who loves baseball," said Barry, a Holden native.

The Bravehearts and the Sox will collaborate on goodwill initiatives throughout the local community. Barry said the teams will work together to help clean neighborhoods, provide food for the hungry, and advocate healthy lifestyles through sports.

Barry, who relishes this new connection between both teams, said playing for the Braveheart was a dream-come-true that did not come easy. His first obstacle came as a high school freshman when he was left off the varsity team. He worked hard to improve and made the team the following year. That season, his team earned a spot in the state championship game. He went on to hit .424 as a senior and headed south to play baseball for the Division 2 St. Leo University team in Florida. As a college freshman, he had 17 hits in 60 at-bats with 16 singles and one double.

Next, he tried out for the Bravehearts but did not make the final cut in 2018. He blamed his lack of power. "I wasn't much of a power hitter," he said. "I was gap to gap. I would try to go to left center or right center field. I tried to hit line drives basically over the shortstop and second basemen's head."

Barry was not deterred. Former Red Sox farmhand, Ed Riley, who served as Barry's St. Peter-Marian High School coach, instilled in him the mindset to take a steady approach to baseball. "He said look at the next pitch. Go pitch-by-pitch. Don't dwell on what was happening before ... Just keep moving forward," Barry said.

Barry's persistence paid off the following year. Helped by stellar play in the outfield, he made the Bravehearts roster the following summer. In two seasons with the Bravehearts, while making an occasional spectacular diving catch, he never made an error in the field. However, his excellent fielding was not going to help him hit against Thakar in the bottom-of-the-fourth against the Blues. He pushed his .267 batting average out of his mind and focused on one thing.

Just look for a pitch to drive. Just tack on some more runs.

As Barry waited for the pitch, deep within his subconscious, there was a 14-year-old boy excited to see the new Worcester Bravehearts collegiate baseball team come to the city in 2014. "Me and my friends would go to games to watch all summer long," said Barry. "It was always really good baseball to watch. It was competitive and I always tried to take and learn something from whoever was on the field. I grew up watching this team play every summer and I always wanted to be on that team."

Just look for a pitch to drive ...

He got it! The pitch was right in Barry's wheelhouse. He swung as hard as he could. "I pulled it," he would later say, but he did not know it was a homerun. At least "not right away." As he scampered down the first baseline, it wasn't until he rounded first when he knew "it was going to get out of there."

It was the only homerun of his Bravehearts career (2019-2020), but that did not matter. "I remember looking up and getting excited that finally I got a hold of one. It was really an exciting moment seeing all the fans clapping ... Just cheering on the hometown kid ... I had one homerun ... It was exciting to finally get one playing for the Bravehearts. That was just a cool moment."

Barry said he is looking forward to more great memories with both the



P.J. Barry at Polar Park. Photo by Kevin Paul Saleeba



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My Leadership Worcester Experience

by SUZANNE GRAHAM ANDERSON, FOUNDER AND CEO, POSITIVELY SUZANNE LLC

If there is one thing most people have, it's an opinion, but an opinion without facts or knowledge can be dangerous.

I heard about Leadership Worcester from Mari Gonzalez at a networking event, we bonded over shoes, and she told me about the program, she thought I would be a great fit. It was a networking event with loud music, and we had to raise our voices to be heard, but I got that she loved the program, she was learning a lot, and I should do it. I thought it was a leadership training course and while they were wonderful, as someone who was constantly taking leadership courses, I thought that I would pass and let someone else take advantage of it.

I continued along blissfully unaware until I ran into Karen Pelletier at a meeting, she asked me why I wasn't applying, and I told her, that as lovely as it sounded, I did not want to take away from someone else who didn't have the benefit of leadership training as I had. (My opinion) She then explained to me that the program was not about training you to be a leader, it was about exposing leaders to different stakeholders, decision-makers, etc. that are involved in the running of the City, a kind of look behind the curtain to see what it took to run a city like Worcester and see how we can leverage our skill sets with our newly acquired knowledge and connections and make a difference. (The facts). As faith would have it, Senator Robyn Kennedy was there, reiterated her words, and offered to write me a letter of recommendation.

After that the dye was cast, I was going to apply, and I was going to get in. I asked my friend Miguelina Peralta to write me another letter of recommendation, I submitted my application and waited.

When I got the news that I was selected, I eagerly scoured the list to see who I would be on this journey with, I was excited to see Carla Delacruz Davila and Yolanda Ramos Guzman whom I knew previously, alongside a list of individuals that I did not know.

Our first meeting as a cohort was in September at an overnight stay, we met for the first time, got the overview of the program, and learned two very important Karen P. rules. 1. Time will be adhered to. 2. Keep your eyes open for all pictures.

The standards were set on the first day, we met with and listened to great speakers, and leaders in the city, and each session incorporated past alums which was the best advertising for the program to say, you can make a difference.

This has been such a, yes, I am going to say it, life-changing experience for me. The stakeholders I met with touched on topics that I had mostly opinions about, but during each session, I learned facts and data, things that made me go ah, and things that challenged my way of thinking, and for someone like me, this was amazing. I love knowing the history, what is being done, who is doing it, and how they plan to continue doing it. I listened to Peter Dunn wax poetically about



economic development in Worcester and got to ask questions that we don't get to ask during networking events.

When someone asks me about Leadership Worcester, I say to them, imagine someone creating a curriculum for you to meet with leaders, decision-makers, and people who are invested in making a difference in multiple areas, arts, education, mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, food insecurity, safety, and many more, and not only do you meet with them, you have actual conversations about the work that is being done, and you are asked to analyze and think of ways you can help. I also caution them that the most important thing to remember is to keep an open mind because sometimes we form an opinion based on what we know and that is oftentimes partial facts and hearsay.

This journey for me is still ongoing, there are days that I am on information overload after a session and I need to decompress, but I know that every session is important, the work is important, and different perspectives are important. While we may all have different opinions about many things, the most basic thing we can agree on is that we all want for ourselves and our families a thriving and safe community. We can achieve that if we work collectively.

Take the shot, apply to Leadership Worcester, attend with an open mind, and personalize the experience by asking yourself, how can I with my skill set, take what I have learned and make a difference?

The connections you form will last a lifetime!

Deadline to apply for the Class of 2025 is May 27th. Visit leadershipworcester.com.



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Upcoming Affiliate Chamber Events

Auburn

auburnchamberma.org



Auburn Chamber Annual Meeting

Keynote - Joe Salois, president of Atlas Distributing Inc.
Wednesday, June 12, 2024, 7:30am
Auburn / Webster Elks Lodge #2118
754 Southbridge Street, Auburn, MA

Annual Golf Tournament

Monday, September 30, 2024,
Shotgun at 11:00am
Pleasant Valley Country Club
95 Armsby Road, Sutton, MA

Blackstone Valley

Chamber of Commerce

blackstonevalley.org



Professional HR Roundtable

Tuesday, June 11, 2024, 9:00am-10:30am
Virtual

Business After Hours

Thursday, July 18, 2024, 5:30pm-7:30pm
Asa Waters Mansion
123 Elm Street, Millbury, MA

Steamers at Sunset

Wednesday, August 14, 2024, 5:30pm-7:30pm
More Info to Come

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New England Clambake

Thursday, June 13, 2024, 5:00-8:00pm
The Publick House Historic Inn
277 Main Street, Sturbridge, MA

Golf Classic

Thursday, June 27, 2024, 8:00am-4:00pm
Heritage Country Club
85 Sampson Road, Charlton, MA

Drivin' it Ho(I)me for Health & Education Car Show

Saturday, July 20, 2024, 9:00am-2:00pm
Oakholm Brewing Company
80 Lake Road, Brookfield, MA

Chamber Night with the WooSox

Friday, August 16, 2024, 6:45pm First Pitch
Polar Park
100 Madison Street, Worcester, MA

Clinton Area

Chamber of Commerce

clintonareachamber.org

Women in Business Networking

Wednesday, May 29, 2024, 12:00pm-1:00pm
Chocksett Inn
59 Laurelwood Road, Sterling, MA



Info Sessions

Wednesday, June 5, 2024 8:30am and 4:00pm
The Icon Museum and Study Center
203 Union Street, Clinton, MA

Business After Hours

Tuesday, June 11, 2024, 5:00pm-7:30pm
Meadow Brook
209 Chace Hill Road
Sterling, MA

LABO

labous.org



Wachusett Area

Chamber of Commerce

wachusettareachamber.org



Annual Dinner

Tuesday, June 4, 2024, 6:00pm-8:30pm
Chocksett Inn
59 Laurelwood Road, Sterling, MA

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Annual Scholarship Golf Tournament

Monday, June 3, 2024, 8:30am-5:00pm
Heritage Country Club
Charlton, MA

WORCESTER GREEN CORPS WELCOMES NEW COORDINATOR

Welcome to the new Worcester Green Corps coordinator, Amelia Tieri. Established in 2021, The Worcester Green Corps (WGC) is a partnership program of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, the City of Worcester, Worcester Community Action Council, and the United Way of Central Massachusetts.

A Sturbridge native, Ms. Tieri attended college at Bridgewater State University where she developed a fascination with the interconnected nature of environmental concerns, human development, and economic development. In May of 2023, she earned her degree in sociology and economics with a focus on sustainability. Amelia's mission is to mend the damaged relationship between humans and the environment, either through traditional means or innovative solutions.

"I believe that with community building, diverse

talents, and skill sets, we can come together and work with nature to save our planet," said Ms. Tieri. "I am excited for the opportunity to use my talents within this program to make meaningful change in a place so close to home and inspire others to get out there and do the same."

In addition to its year-round efforts, WGC works in collaboration with the Worcester Community Action Council (WCAC) to provide opportunities for leadership and employment to youth and systemically disadvantaged groups. WCAC's Youth-Works program occurs in three sessions: a six-week program in the summer, a 12-week program in the summer and a 12-week program in the fall. The youth workers have the opportunity to learn about career readiness, green initiatives, and environmental careers, as well as to gain experience in the workforce.



WORCESTER GREEN CORPS

The Power of 'Believe'

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

As Mayor of Worcester during the Boston Red Sox historic 2004 World Series Championship season and as Lieutenant Governor during the Red Sox 2007 World Championship, I met Larry Lucchino on a couple of occasions. Cordial, and intense you quickly got the sense Larry was a driven and results-oriented individual. This was logical as he was recognized as the organizing force that assembled the team on and off the field that allowed the Boston Red Sox to win their first World Series in 86 years and exorcise the curse of the Bambino.

In the aftermath of Boston's devastating 2003 loss to the Yankees, fans were at a low point. As written in Gotham Chopra's book, Religion of Sports, Lucchino and his team put together a video of highlights for the upcoming season ending the video with the quote "Still, We Believe". An appeal to Red Sox nation to "keep the faith" which was also part of the 2004 marketing campaign rooted in religious overtones. Lucchino said, "We took the wording straight out of the Catholic canon." This is something Larry was familiar with growing up in Pittsburgh, PA, and attending St. Rosalia's Church where he would recite the Apostles and/or Nicene Creed at weekly Mass. Both creeds include numerous affirmations of the word "believe".

In addition to being the architect of the Red Sox 2004 World Series championship, Lucchino also revolutionized how baseball parks would be built. As President of the Orioles in 1992, he oversaw the opening of a new ballpark in a blighted area of Baltimore named Camden Yards. He reversed the trend of building car-centric stadiums on green space in the suburbs to one that went back in time when ballparks interacted with the neighborhood around it. As Boston Globe reporter Dan Shaughnessy recently wrote, Lucchino who grew

up near Pittsburgh's Forbes Field "never lost his love of asymmetrical green ballparks, replete with nooks and crannies tucked into city neighborhoods. This is why Camden Yards was built and became the most important Major League Baseball change since Jackie Robinson integrated the sport in 1947." A sentiment shared by former MLB Commissioner Bud Selig to the Globe in 2002. Following Camden Yards Lucchino built Petco Park in San Diego, restored Fenway Park, JetBlue Park, and then finally Polar Park.

The Chamber was involved at the earliest stages in recruiting the PawSox to Worcester. This was an important opportunity for Worcester to redevelop 21 acres of property that had been vacant and contaminated for over 40 years in the core of the city. If done properly it could be a true mixed-use district centered around the ballpark and could knit back together neighborhoods that were divided by this vacant space and I-290, while creating jobs and expanding the city's tax base. To have someone experienced and who believed in this vision like Larry was a unique opportunity. While known as a tough opponent Larry more often than not saw the benefit of creating win-win situations when at the negotiating table.

At the exhibition game before the start of the 2021 season and in the middle of COVID-19, I was at Polar Park with my mother and aunt who grew up on Vernon Hill and attended Ascension School and Parish. They repeatedly said looking around the ballpark, "I can't believe I am in Worcester." Moments later Larry Lucchino walked over and introduced himself to my mom and aunt and they repeated that they couldn't believe they were in Worcester. Larry without missing a beat leaned over and gave them a little hug and pointed out at the field and simply said, "Believe".



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LUCCHINO , CONTINUED

Fenway Park while also protecting its storied history. Further, he oversaw the construction of JetBlue Park, which replicated Fenway Park's dimensions at the club's spring training home in Lee County, Florida.

"When John and I joined forces with Larry in 2001, we dreamed not only of breaking an 86-year curse and winning multiple Championships, but also about how a baseball team could transform and uplift a region," said Werner. "Larry was more decorated in sports than any of us, coming to the group with a Super Bowl ring, a World Series ring, and even a Final Four watch from his days playing basketball at Princeton. He added to that impressive collection with us in Boston because he was the kind of man who would find a path to success no matter the obstacles. He was bold and had the audacity to dare, challenge, and even taunt our rivals in ways that made the game of baseball better. In a sport defined by statistics and standings, he was accomplished in every way."

"There are so many of us who were given our start in baseball by Larry," said current Red Sox President/CEO Sam Kennedy. "He loved a good slogan and his campaign to 'free the Brookline two' liberated Theo and I from the San Diego Padres, allowing us to work for our hometown team and changing the trajectory of our lives forever. He instilled in us, and so many others, a work ethic, passion, competitive fire that we will carry forever."

Born in Pittsburgh, Lucchino was an All-City League basketball player and second baseman on the Pittsburgh city championship baseball team at Taylor Alderdice High School. He graduated with honors from Princeton University and received his law degree from Yale Law School. At Princeton, he was a member of two Ivy League championship basketball teams. He held honorary degrees from Suffolk University, Boston University, Bryant University, New England School of Law, Anna Maria College, Palomar College, the University of Massachusetts (Boston), Bentley University, and Assumption University.

Early in his legal career, Lucchino worked on the House Judiciary Committee,

aiding its investigation into the Watergate scandal. Following Richard Nixon's resignation in 1974, Lucchino joined Williams and Connolly, the law firm founded by his mentor, friend, and trial attorney Edward Bennett Williams. He became a partner at the firm in 1978 and specialized in sports law and litigation. He was general counsel to the Washington Redskins, of which Williams was president and part owner, and was a member of their Board of Directors from 1979-1985. When Williams bought the Orioles in August 1979, Lucchino entered baseball and became the club's vice president/general counsel. Williams later named him president of the Orioles where he served in that role and as co-owner from 1989 until the club was sold at the end of the 1993 season. In December 1994, he partnered with John Moores to purchase the San Diego Padres, for whom he served as President and CEO through 2001.

Lucchino is survived by his brother Frank J. Lucchino, nephew F.J. Lucchino and niece Jennifer Lucchino, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as well as a younger nephew David L. Lucchino, who lives in Boston. He also is survived by seven grand-nieces and grand-nephews. Lucchino will be inducted into the Worcester Red Sox Hall of Fame later this year with WooSox hitting coach and former Boston Red Sox all-star catcher Rich Gedman, and former Worcester City Manager Ed Augustus Jr.

Former Red Sox great and hall of famer Dennis Eckersley honored Lucchino at Polar Park last month. "I just want to say something about Larry Lucchino," Eckersley said to the a crowd of 9,508 fans in attendance. "It is my first time here (at Polar Park), and it's very sad what happened to Larry ... I was very close to him and thought so much of him but anyway I'm thinking of him right now."

Kennedy said Lucchino's "legacy is one that all of us who were taught by him feel a deep responsibility to uphold. When those he mentored moved on from the Red Sox, he would always say 'we'll leave a light on for you.' The lights will always be on for you at Fenway Park, Larry. May you rest in peace."

BARRY , CONTINUED

WooSox and Bravehearts this season. The WooSox Foundation, WooSox players, and the Bravehearts representatives have already started working together. They recently participated in an Earth Day Canal District Cleanup on April 22. As a welcoming gesture, the WooSox hosted Bravehearts season ticket holders to be their guests for the WooSox home opener against the Buffalo Bisons on April 2.

"We will try to impact and help out as many people as we can," he said. "I can speak for the Bravehearts too, because when I played with them, we tried to do many things, whether it's going out to kids' camps or helping out at the local food pantries, whatever it may be. I think helping the community is the biggest thing ... I think everyone in each organization will help out in the right way."

WooSox President Dr. Charles Steinberg thanked the Vaccaro Family, the new owners of the Bravehearts, "for reaching out to us. Worcester has a rich baseball history, and we have loved supporting amateur baseball and softball at all levels. We are thrilled to add the Bravehearts to the teams we support, and we are excited to partner with the Vaccaros on a variety of community activities. This partnership feels good for the community."

Bravehearts president Matthew Vaccaro credits Steinberg, former assistant city manager Nicole Valentine, and former WooSox president Larry Lucchino for helping make this partnership happen.

"They've been wonderful," he said. "We're going to work on food insecurity with the community freezers. We're going to work with Recreation Worcester to teach the youth of the city baseball and softball."

The WooSox will celebrate Braveheart Night at Polar Park on Friday, May 24. The Bravehearts will be honored on the field and interact with fans. The Bravehearts will kick off their home opener the following day at Fitton Field on Saturday, May 25. A few WooSox players, including WooSox hitting coach Rich Gedman, will attend that game.

"Each team has its fanbase that connects with them," said Barry. "I think showing the baseball fans around Worcester that we are working together can only benefit both teams. Whether we play an earlier game and they play a later game, they probably can go here to there and vice versa. I think our fans will build ties to them, hopefully. I think we're both rooting for the same thing and that's to have successful baseball in Worcester."



Above: Barry taking a swing during his time with the Bravehearts. Courtesy photo from P.J. Barry.

Left: Barry connecting with fans as a member of the Bravehearts. Courtesy photo from P.J. Barry.

Spring into Summer: Film, Food, Fireworks & Fanfare

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



Yes, the region is in full bloom - and so is our events calendar! You're hopefully already experiencing some springtime traditions of Central MA: Gazing at daffodils and tulips at New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill, the Patriot's Day celebrations at Old Sturbridge Village, and kicking off baseball season with the WooSox at Polar Park. Don't forget to cheer on the Worcester

Bravehearts as they take to the field for another exciting season. Now it's time to get your summer bucket list in order. Here are some highlights to get you started, plus a bit of news about "HollyWoo" in case you missed it.

FILMED IN WORCESTER

Alive & Thriving: The Latest Production in Worcester Made a Buzz

"The Walking Dead: Dead City" brought more than just zombies to the City of Worcester—the multi-day production injected life into the local economy. As parts of downtown transformed into a post-apocalyptic New York for filming, local businesses and workers reaped the benefits. Crews hired locals, sourced props from local businesses, catered from downtown restaurants, such as Ziggy Bombs, and fans of the show traveled from as far as New York to catch a glimpse of the action— all stimulating economic activity.

Boston press caught the buzz as well, reporting that "downtown Worcester is anything but lifeless these days." Along with recognition for being a great city to film in, we're seeing Worcester public perception be elevated all around. Boston 25 News reported "The draws to the city are growing: an impressive food and drink scene, vibrant arts venues, nearby Triple-A baseball park Polar Park and more."

KICK-OFF SUMMER ON SHREWSBURY STREET

June 18: Taste of Shrewsbury Street

Unofficially marking the start of summer, Taste of Shrewsbury Street continues to be an event worth attending. This is your annual opportunity to try food and drinks from up and down the street, for a modest ticket price of \$25 online. It is the biggest block party in the city, with live music at multiple locations and enough food to feed a small army. Skip lunch and show up ready to indulge at 5pm.

June 28: Worcester's Annual Independence Day Fireworks Celebration

Another annual tradition in the City of Worcester are the Independence Day Fireworks Celebration, presented by Fallon Health, hosted at Cristoforo Colombo Park. Before the fireworks display attendees will be treated to live entertainment by XLO and a performance by Silver Arrow Band, a high-energy group that will be sure to inspire some dancing. There's also a food court, an ice cream truck, and the park is home to a playground and splash pad, which make the experience extra fun for kids. It's free to attend and always brings together a big, diverse crowd of locals and visitors. We like to think of the event as the kick-off to the 4th of July week. Keep reading to learn how the impressive amount of Independence Day events will keep you busy across the region.



Above: Crowds watch live music before the fireworks at Cristoforo Colombo Park

EVEN MORE INDEPENDENCE DAY EVENTS

July 4: Car Show, Live Music and Off The Rails BBQ

What's more American than cars, rock and roll, and BBQ? Get your tickets for this 2pm event, or reserve a whole table for your crew, and enjoy music by The

Broken Hearts, a tribute to Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers. Admission includes the car show, so if you've got a cool car, all are welcome without an additional fee.

July 4-7: Weekend Festivities at Old Sturbridge Village

This holiday is all about tradition, so get a feel for the roots of it all by celebrating at Old Sturbridge Village. Our region's impressive living history museum puts on a big show for the 4th of July weekend. Visitors will experience fife and drum music, cannon demonstrations, games, a parade, and more.



Above: Fife and drum at Old Sturbridge Village

LIVE MUSIC HIGHLIGHTS

July 10: Free Lunchtime Concerts are Back on the Francis R. Carroll Plaza

Summer Wednesdays are special in Worcester's Theater District. In front of the Hanover Theatre, on the Francis R. Carroll Plaza, attendees are treated to free live music on the Bank of America Stage. Bring your own lunch, or grab a bite from a food truck. On July 10th, the series kicks off with The Party Band, a brass band that promises "unadulterated, unplugged fun." The following week, Clatta Bumboo brings reggae sounds to the stage.

July 11: Out to Lunch Festival & Farmers' Market

Summer Thursdays you'll also be treated to free, live music, this time on the Worcester Common Oval. Presented by the Downtown Worcester Business Improvement District, the City of Worcester, and sponsors, there are six festival dates from July through August from 11am-2pm. Enjoy performances, creative vendors, food trucks and a Regional Environmental Council farmers market.

Below: The Strings Queens.



July 25: Yächtley Crëw at Indian Ranch

Put on your captain's hat and head to Indian Ranch. Take a pre-show cruise on the Indian Princess and then head to the concert venue for "The Titans of Soft Rock," Yächtley Crëw. For those uninitiated, Yacht Rock encapsulates the revival of soft rock and Top 40 hits from the late '70s to the early '80s, which has become a nationwide phenomenon. You'll be singing along into the night!

July 26: Music Worcester & The Village Present: The String Queens at Jean McDonough Arts Center

The Village Worcester joins Music Worcester in bringing The Strings Queens to Central MA. Boasting an authentic, soulful, and orchestral sound, this dynamic trio has graced impressive venues such as Carnegie Hall, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the 2021 Presidential Inauguration Concert, DC Jazz Festival and the Capital Jazz Fest. We're thrilled to see them in Worcester at the Jean McDonough Arts Center, and we expect it will be a sell out event.

July 27: The Southern Rock Experience At Douglas Orchard & Farm

For a casual, countryside experience, head to Douglas Orchard & Farm to see The Southern Rock Experience. A tribute to classic Southern Rock, the band covers The Allman Brothers Band, Lynyrd Skynyrd, and more. Bring your blankets and chairs and enjoy food from Brickstone Kitchen during the show. Before you go home, stock up on local produce at their country store.

Discover many more events at DiscoverCentralMA.org/events.

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.



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