




Murray vows governor office tuned into Lynn

By David Liscio


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YNN -- Over the past few months, Lt. Gov.-elect Tim Murray has visited Lynn nearly 20 times, first on the campaign trail and most recently on Friday, when he was keynote speaker at the Lynn Area Chamber of Commerce's annual awards breakfast.

Murray, currently in his third term as mayor of Worcester, said Lynn has many similarities with his Central Massachusetts community, particularly its contaminated industrial sites and need for an improved commuter railroad.

According to Murray, the environmental cleansing of contaminated lands, or so-called brownfields, can prove key to a community's economic development, as his efforts in Worcester have borne out. As mayor, Murray said he experienced an epiphany of sorts when introduced to the numbers.

"If all of Worcester's brownfields were cleaned up overnight, the value of that land would increase from \$300 million to \$1 billion, and that would bring in another \$30 million a year in property tax revenue," he said. "With that money, we could pave every street and sidewalk in Worcester in one year."

Of course, the reclaiming of Worcester's industrial lands isn't going to happen so quickly, he said. Nonetheless, the strategy is clear and must be followed.

"The potential is there, as it is in Lynn," Murray said, noting that Worcester was once the 25th largest manufacturing city in the United States. He called attention to Lynn's proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, its waterfront open spaces, and its brownfields -- all as assets to economic development.

Worcester is undergoing a renaissance, with new businesses taking up residences on the site of former factories, and developers are looking with greater interest as the city changes complexion, he said. Part of the success has been the adoption of public-private partnerships, including environmentalists as well as real estate developers. As Murray put it, "The government can't be expected to do it all. We are in a difficult economic environment, and everyone is trying to do more with less."

Building a more extensive mass-transportation system and cleaning up brownfields actually follows the footprint left behind by Gov. Mitt Romney and Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey, he said, acknowledging that the previous administration's Smart Growth policies should not be abandoned.

"It's all about redirecting growth back into the urban centers," he said, stressing that in the older cities, sewer systems and utilities are typically already in place, which reduces a community or developer's overall investment cost.

Any plan for economic development can also take advantage of creative thinkers, he said, explaining that one of the Patrick-Murray transition teams is focused solely on how to fuse the arts, culture, history and tourism into the mix. He cited the Gulu Gulu Café in Central Square as an example of an arts-related business that the average outsider might not think of in the context of downtown Lynn, and yet it is there and thriving. Gulu Gulu, a restaurant and coffee house, has hosted live music, art shows, and serves as a wireless hub for many of the city's new condo dwellers.

Murray assured the audience at the Knights of Columbus Hall that Lynn will find a "true partner" in the Patrick-Murray Administration.

“A government is about solving problems, not just pointing them out,” he said.

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