



City of New Bedford
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

City of New Bedford
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P R E S S R E L E A S E

Officials present concept to convert part of municipal golf course to new business park

*New park to help ease tax burden on residents and local businesses;
generating up to \$2 million in new tax new revenue annually*

New park to bring estimated 1,000+ jobs to New Bedford

Existing golf course will continue to operate as 9-hole course

New Bedford, Massachusetts— City and state officials announced that part of the Whaling City Golf Course will be converted by MassDevelopment, the state’s economic development agency, to a modern industrial park. MassDevelopment and the City have agreed to work together to convert a 100-acre section of the 275-acre City-owned public golf course. The City of New Bedford will continue to operate the Whaling City Golf Course as a nine-hole course at the site.

Mayor Jon Mitchell explained the project’s significance, saying “The many conversations I’ve had with residents and small business owners about their property tax burden convinced me that the only way forward was to find new solutions that are bold but also practical. People want city leaders to be doing everything possible to hold the line on taxes, and that is what drove us to develop this concept for a new industrial park.”

The New Bedford Business Park has nearly reached full capacity, leaving the City without large “greenfield” land sites available for new development. The location of the new business park has the size to accommodate major new development, as well as easy access to highways, freight rail, and the New Bedford Regional Airport.

The plan for redevelopment of a portion of the golf course would generate \$2 million annually in new property tax revenue. More than 1.3 million square feet of industrial, distribution, and

research and development (R&D), and office space would be added to the tax rolls. The new park would also generate 1,000+ jobs and measurably impact the city's unemployment rate.

MassDevelopment is also awarding the City of New Bedford a \$300,000 Site Readiness Program grant to engage a planning and engineering team to advance the development of the site by providing environmental and geotechnical investigations; master planning, local and state-level permitting; and the design and reconfiguration of the remaining nine holes. The nine-hole golf course being retained is the original nine-hole course designed by famed architect Donald Ross in 1920.

In 2014, Mayor Mitchell asked the staff of the New Bedford Economic Development Council to explore the possibility of converting a portion of the 275-acre course to commercial development given its size, transportation access, visibility, and the declining golf market in the area. Another key factor in the decision to study the feasibility of a partial redevelopment of the golf course was the lack of available lots in the New Bedford Business Park in the North End.

“The City’s economic future, as well as city government’s financial stability, depend on the successful development of land for commercial use,” said Mayor Mitchell.

“A major obstacle has long been the lack of large-scale so-called ‘greenfield’ development sites within New Bedford’s city limits. Our existing industrial park is just about at full capacity, so we have been working for several years to find creative solutions to this problem. The partial conversion of the existing municipal golf course has, by far, the most potential. The site has terrific highway and rail access, is isolated from residential areas, and allows us to retain an important recreational asset. It’s a win-win for New Bedford.”

Mitchell added, “I am grateful for the support of our local legislative delegation, our City Council, Marty Jones and her team at MassDevelopment, and Secretary Jay Ash and the Baker-Polito Administration, of our efforts.”

"This agreement between the City of New Bedford and MassDevelopment is a leap forward for our city and region," said State Senate Assistant Majority Leader Mark Montigny, who has been a leader of senate efforts to create local economic growth and a consistent advocate of MassDevelopment's ability to leverage private development dollars to benefit local economies. I am excited to see business interest in our city is growing and this project will ensure sustainability of this growth into the future."

“With this project we have the potential to add one thousand or more jobs, and that is a game-changer for the local economy--not just for the residents of New Bedford but for communities throughout the area. I’m also pleased that the plan announced today calls for the continued operation of a golf course. The retention of a 9-hole course will be a marketing advantage for the new park, but it’s also a sign that the interests of the local golf community are being taken into account, and that’s important to me, said State Representative Christopher Markey in whose district the new park would be located.

“We have to keep doing everything we can to create jobs and expand the tax base in New Bedford by encouraging new commercial development, and this project is a major step toward that goal,” said City Council President Joseph Lopes.

Ward 3 Councillor Hugh Dunn said, “Every taxpayer in the City has a strong stake in the success of the project being presented today. The key to addressing the property tax burden on businesses and homeowners is expanding the City’s tax base, so if we are serious about providing relief to homeowners and businesses, then we have to push hard for new development strategies like this one. There is no other way to address the tax burden but to grow our way out of the situation we are facing. The potential addition to the tax rolls of more than a million square feet of new commercial and office space is a unique opportunity we as a community can’t afford to pass up.”

“MassDevelopment works to redevelop Massachusetts sites into revenue-producing resources that provide jobs, housing, and growth. This undertaking at the Whaling City Golf Course will do just that for the City of New Bedford,” said MassDevelopment President and CEO Marty Jones. “We are proud to partner with city and state officials on this project, and excited to offer the city an inaugural Site Readiness Program grant to leverage this existing resource and transform it into a hub of economic activity.”

About MassDevelopment

MassDevelopment, the state’s finance and development agency, works with businesses, nonprofits, financial institutions, and communities to stimulate economic growth across the Commonwealth. During FY2016, MassDevelopment financed or managed 352 projects generating investment of more than \$4 billion in the Massachusetts economy. These projects are projected to create about 8,200 jobs and build or rehabilitate about 4,200 residential units.

About the Whaling City Golf Course

In 1920, famed architect Donald Ross designed and built the original nine-hole Whaling City Golf Course. The popularity of the course led to the addition of nine holes in 1947. In the 1970s, the City of New Bedford took over the course and re-named it the New Bedford Municipal Golf Course. The course is owned by the City and has been managed since 2000 by Johnson Turf Management under a long-term operating agreement. The agreement was recently renegotiated by the City as part of a settlement with Johnson, giving the City more flexibility to decide the future of the course.

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