

The Heartbeat of Haverhill

Good News from A Great City

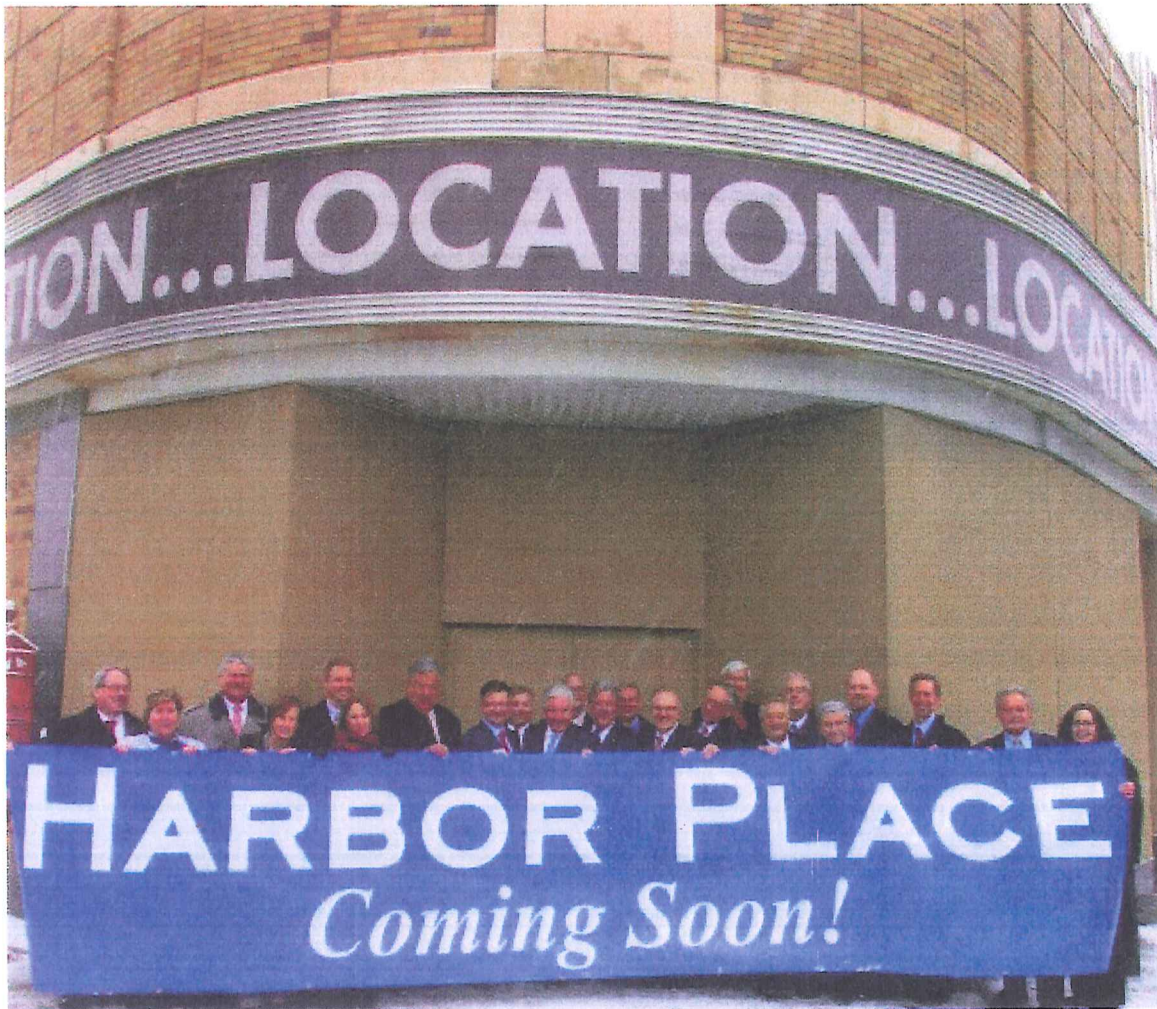
Harbor Place, Harbors Haverhill's Dreams for Its Future

The Heartbeat of Haverhill got a mysterious message Friday night from a very credible source – Mayor Fiorentini. “Be at the Pentucket Bank Community Room on Monday – can’t tell you why, but it will be good. Bring your camera.”



So you can bet THOH was there on time with not one but two cameras in tow. We had our suspicions, one of the meeting places was out front of the Woolworth Building and the other across the street at Pentucket Bank. We astutely guessed new plans for that end of town were in the works even before the guests started piling in with similar conjectures. There were some mighty heavy hitters in that crowd – a television crew, several reporters, and photographers, a few people whose name tags labeled them as chancellor or chairman, representative, a couple of name tags with “president” on them plus the mayor, city council, and state representatives. Lots of suits making it feel like the auspicious day it would become. Elegantly displayed catering with lobster bisque and assorted tasty tidbits added a

sense of festivity. We later found out Chicken Connection of Plaistow catered and let me tell you there wasn't a chicken finger in sight. This was beautiful food that took back seat to the growing excitement and mystery surrounding the announcement. Five easel cards were covered with black board labeled Merrimack Street Ventures LLC, Waterfront District Development, teasing the crowd, yet no one peeked.



It takes not a village, but a city to rejuvenate Merrimack St

And then the announcement – the 42 year vacant Woolworth building has a new plan. And what a plan – one that will rejuvenate Merrimack Street. The plan is Harbor Place – and while some may say our river access does not technically constitute a harbor, THOH believes the name is appropriate because the river and its development "harbor" our hopes and dreams for a thriving downtown. Riverview restaurants, public park area, land raised to flood wall height so the view is uninterrupted by dingy albeit necessary cement. Apartments, retail shops, parking.



Mayor Fiorentini with an architectural rendering of Harbor Place Haverhill

And perhaps THOH's favorite piece of information is the one we didn't guess – the University of Massachusetts selected Haverhill for its UMass-Lowell satellite location though at least five other communities were aggressively vying for that honor. Haverhill stood out because NECC is such a strong feeder school to UMass-Lowell. Because Representative Brian Dempsey and The Haverhill Foundation along with the Mayor and City Councilors are such fierce advocates and negotiators, and because the location is right. Much was made of our highway and rail access and public transportation as well as proximity to the river which is a recurrent theme with UMass-Lowell.

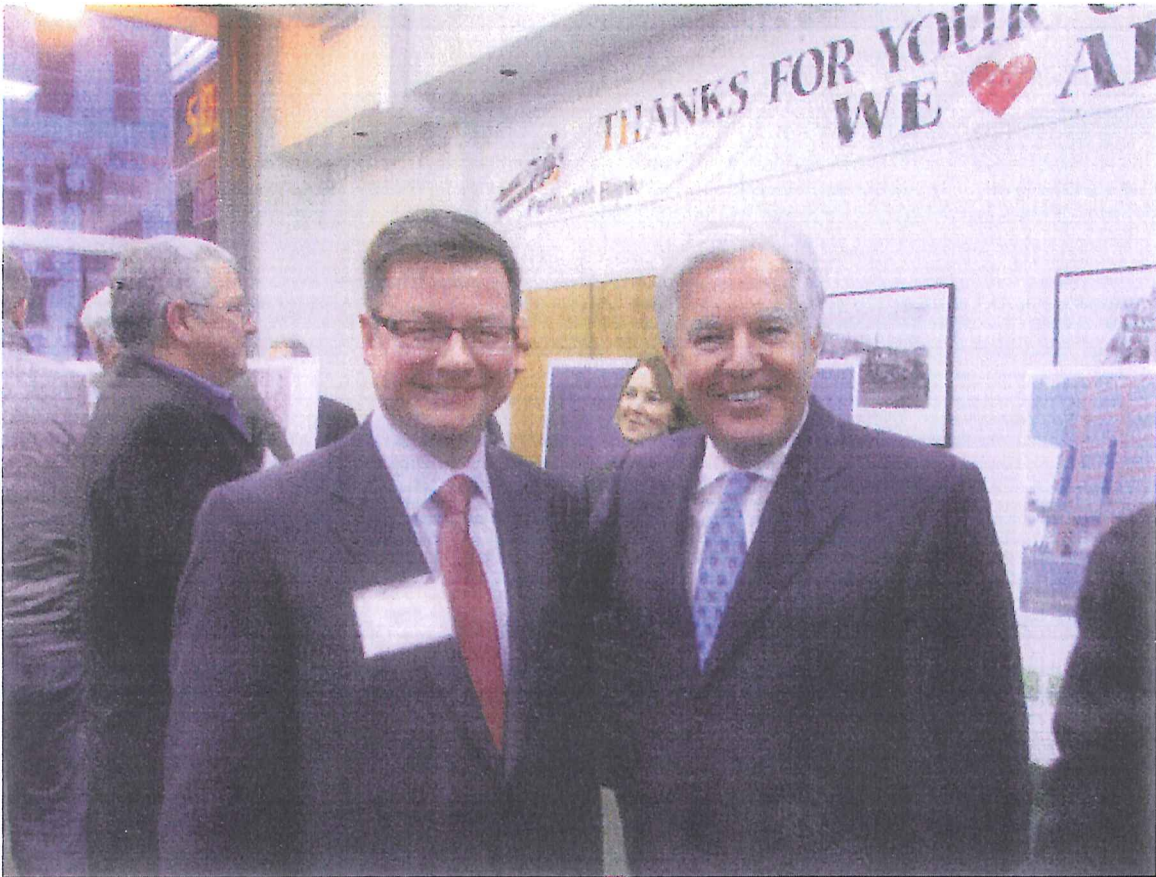


Harbor Place Plans Haverhill

Despite our love of public parks, river access, and fine dining, THOH is most impressed with the UMass connection for a number of reasons: 1. A university will bring young people to town to invigorate the population 2. According to the statistics from the university, students tend to stay in town for the short term at least and then in the state so we will be contributing to a highly educated population and we think we will be making Haverhill a more enticing place for young adults to settle down more permanently. 3. The University will own two floors of the new Harbor Place. And that gives stability to the project and potential customers to the retail and restaurants in the area during the daytime.



When The Heartbeat of Haverhill began writing about the good news in Haverhill almost a year ago, we never knew the depth and frequency of the good news we would cover. Harbor Place is history in the making. Congratulations to all involved in making this a reality and to the citizens of Haverhill for voting in the candidates who can dream such big dreams for our city and get them accomplished. Construction is slated to start next fall.



Rep Brian Dempsey and UMass-Lowell chancellor Marty Meehan

(c) 2014 by Alison Colby-Campbell