Gateway Cities hold tremendous promise as regional economic anchors. Each is home to a unique urban fabric, diverse communities and important civic and cultural institutions.

As the Baker-Polito administration looks to the future in the new statewide economic development plan – “Partnerships for Growth” – lessons learned from MassDevelopment’s Transformative Development Initiative (TDI), its Gateway City program, now inform state strategy by demonstrating how place-based, partnership-led and incremental development is key to revitalizing downtowns. Early successes in Gateway Cities can guide other communities across the commonwealth as they strive to achieve local economic development priorities.

Since 2014, designation as a TDI district has served as an accelerator directing state funds to spur development in specific Gateway City neighborhoods. The program acts as an innovation lab, piloting new tools that benefit urban neighborhoods – from embedding seasoned economic development fellows in communities; to providing flexible, locally administered block grants to help small businesses thrive; to facilitating a collaborative planning process where work is guided by “TDI Partnerships,” groups of local, cross-sector stakeholders, TDI has created a template for how to focus resources in post-industrial neighborhoods.

Crafted through extensive engagement with local leaders, business owners and other stakeholders across the state, “Partnerships for Growth” emphasizes communities as engines of economic growth. One of the plan’s four guiding pillars, Build Vibrant Communities, calls for increasing capacity and providing assistance for local planning efforts; supporting the people, places, and businesses that make neighborhoods vibrant and sustainable; and building partnerships critical to a community’s growth.

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Day-to-day contributions lead to a neighborhood’s long-term success, which is why TDI focuses on establishing sustained partnerships between a variety of stakeholders with meaningful impacts, from the smallest storefront improvement to the largest new development. It is this collaboration that builds confidence in place.

**Haverhill and Springfield Catalyze Investment**

Haverhill exemplifies how TDI catalyzes an environment of sustained co-investment, partnership and on-the-ground assistance. In 2015, Traggorth Cos. identified its first investment in Haverhill: JM Lofts, a $6.5 million redevelopment that transformed a vacant downtown building into 18 market-rate apartments with ground-floor retail.

The city’s TDI fellow played instrumental roles in both troubleshooting development issues and securing street-activating ground-floor tenants like veteran-owned Battle Grounds Coffee and the Switchboard Artspace. Furthermore, Switchboard was able to move in as a result of a lease subsidy funded through our TDI Local program, which pairs a MassDevelopment grant with matching local dollars. Following the success of JM Lofts, Traggorth Cos. became a member of the TDI partnership in Haverhill and invested an additional $5.9 million in the neighborhood through a nearby mixed-use development, The Granville, which opened last fall.

Nestled between Union Station and the MGM Casino, Springfield’s TDI district demonstrates how various TDI tools complement local development efforts to foster continued investment. Recognizing Springfield’s desire to create a downtown dining district, MassDevelopment in 2015 funded an active market implementation strategy to identify tangible steps to attract and grow food businesses.

The following year, the city of Springfield created a Downtown Dining District Fund, securing $1.5 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to offer low-interest loans to restaurateurs. With the help of our TDI fellow, the TDI Partnership then launched its own lease subsidy program – funded by TDI Local – to recruit and support entrepreneurs interested in a downtown location. The Springfield Business Improvement District also invested in programming and creative lighting to drive foot traffic. Today, thanks to the combined efforts of local partners, Springfield’s downtown dining district is home to 15 diverse culinary destinations and a culinary staffing company.

The Baker-Polito administration is committed to fostering economic growth in every community in the commonwealth. Whether you are a developer in need of technical assistance, an entrepreneur looking to launch or grow your business or a public official seeking to build momentum through collaboration, the TDI model – partnership-based, incremental community development that unlocks investments that build upon one another – inspires new and exciting partnerships for growth.

Karyn Polito is the lieutenant governor of Massachusetts. Mike Kennealy is the state’s secretary of housing and economic development, and Lauren Liss is president and CEO of MassDevelopment.

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