



City of New Bedford
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

Mayor's Perspective

This past month we were pleased to open Custom House Square, a welcoming public park in the center of our downtown. I made this park a priority because I strongly believe that you can't have a great city without a great downtown, and no downtown is complete without a well-designed and well-kept central green space. Think Post Office Square in Boston or Bryant Park in New York.

The idea was to create an outdoor magnet for office workers, residents, and tourists alike, and do it in a way that maintained adequate parking for restaurants and shops. I also felt strongly that if we did it right the park itself would attract investment, generate jobs, and raise property values in the neighborhood.

The design of world-class landscape architect Chris Reed and the skill of our city's construction crews together formed a masterpiece. With its undulating hills and unique plantings, the park is a true work of art. It has quickly become the place of urban respite that we had envisioned, and then some.

I believe that in the long run the park will advance an even more important purpose. It would have been tempting to build something run-of-the mill – to rip up the parking lot, throw down some grass seed, plant a couple of trees and benches, and call it a park. It would have achieved the same functional purpose; people could still have experienced outdoor green space in the downtown. But it wouldn't have been good enough. It was critical that we in New Bedford prove to ourselves that we could take on a high profile project like this and achieve the level of excellence that major cities expect of themselves (and to complete it on-time and under budget!). And we did it. As we strive to take our city to greater heights, Custom House Square is a success we can confidently build on.

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