

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR MURRAY AWARDS \$300,000 GATEWAY CITIES PARK GRANT TO NEW BEDFORD

NEW BEDFORD --Tuesday, July 31, 2012 – Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray today announced a \$300,000 grant to build a park at New Bedford's Custom House Square. The grant was awarded through the Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Gateway Cities Park Program.

Since 2009, the Patrick-Murray Administration has invested more than \$19 million in creating parks and open space in the state's 24 Gateway Cities.

"Public parks are an essential part of the health and economic well-being of communities, including our Gateway Cities," said Lieutenant Governor Murray. "This grant continues our Administration's commitment to the protection and creation of urban parks that will benefit residents in New Bedford and communities across the Commonwealth."

The grant will allow for the design and construction of an open space in downtown New Bedford. Grant funds will be used to purchase materials including brick pavers, trees, benches and bike racks. Construction will be done by New Bedford municipal employees.

The park design is expected to incorporate sustainable, ecologically and environmentally sensitive materials and processes. Several public hearings will be held this fall to garner input from the community.

Custom House Square is the former site of a municipal parking garage and includes 54th Regiment Volunteer Infantry Plaza, the former location of the Tobey and Coggeshall Building where in 1863, 46 men of color were recruited to the 54th Regiment, and the United States Custom House, which dates back to 1836.

The square is a popular site for events and festivals, including the annual WHALE Wine Festival, Summerfest, and various events on AHA! and City Celebrates evenings.

"This project will provide a much needed green space that has been missing from the downtown core," said Environment Undersecretary Philip Griffiths. "Custom House Square has tremendous potential to become a public space for family recreation, farmers markets and other public events."

"Today's announcement is a testament to the commitment that the Patrick-Murray Administration has made to New Bedford," said Mayor Jonathan Mitchell. "The Administration's support will allow us to turn an underutilized parking lot into a welcoming green space that will become a magnet for office workers and tourists alike. What's most exciting about the project is that will be able to preserve the viability of our seasonal festivals on this site, address the parking needs of local businesses, and give our historic downtown what it has always been missing--a central gathering space we can be proud of."

Gateway City Parks is a flexible program, providing municipal officials with a menu of funding options for all phases of park development. 24 designated Gateway Cities in Massachusetts are eligible for the program, which targets communities with population greater than 35,000 and median household incomes and educational attainment levels below the state average.

Funding can be used for activities and costs such as brownfield assessment and cleanup, park planning and recreational needs assessments – including the development of Open Space and Recreation Plans, activities that were not eligible for state parks funding prior to the Patrick-Murray Administration's creation of the Gateway City Parks program. Communities can also use the grants for acquisition, design and construction of parks, greenways, and other recreational facilities.

Earlier this year, the Gateway City Parks Program funded \$6 million worth of park construction projects, providing jobs and enhancing economic vitality and quality of life in communities including Chicopee, Fitchburg, Lawrence and Taunton.

In addition to the Custom House Square project in New Bedford, the up-coming construction season will see parks built in Everett, Haverhill, Holyoke, Leominster and Malden.