

March 28, 2023

Yvonne Hao
Secretary of the Executive Office of Economic Development
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Economic Development
1 Ashburton Place, Room 2101
Boston, MA 02108

RE: New Bedford State Pier Redevelopment

Secretary Hao,

We want to begin by welcoming you as the new Secretary of Economic Development for the Commonwealth and introducing ourselves. We are excited to work with you to help advance the opportunity, prosperity, and growth in Massachusetts, and as members of the New Bedford Regeneration Project Committee, we know our goals are aligned. Our committee is a collaborative platform that represents 40 community, institutional, and business leaders who are committed to shaping, advocating for, and tangibly advancing strategies for sustainable and shared growth for the City of New Bedford—especially initiatives that support our thriving waterfront that generates more than \$11 billion in annual economic impact.

We are writing today in support of the ongoing efforts by MassDevelopment to redevelop the State Pier in New Bedford to its highest and best uses. This is a site of such importance to us that we have highlighted the need to target investment and new development for nearly eight years.

- Our 2018 report, *Realizing the Potential*, outlines four “big ideas” to drive local, sustainable, and equitable economic growth in New Bedford. One of those big ideas is to build a vibrant, diverse, and uniquely New Bedford downtown and waterfront experience for all. As the center of our prosperous waterfront, the State Pier site is critical to driving those experiences and economic growth.
- Our 2016 report, *Uniting in the Pursuit of Growth and Opportunity*, also identifies the redevelopment of the pier as a key strategy to connect the central waterfront with our historic downtown district.
- In our 2016 whitepaper, *Charting the Course: A Sustainable, Productive, and Robust Port of New Bedford*, we note that a higher level of industrial function and pedestrian use has been imagined for the State Pier since the late 1980s as a part of the planning to establish a New Bedford Heritage State Park for the waterfront and downtown. This effort, conducted by the Department of Conservation and Recreation’s (DCR) predecessor, the Commonwealth’s Department of Environmental Management, was the impetus for the establishment of the Whaling National Historical Park in 1996. Public support for the proposed concepts of waterfront plazas and an interpretive center was heard again in planning charrettes held by the Waterfront Historic Area League (WHALE) in 1995 and 1996. Such ideas that provided public access without impinging on the ongoing industrial uses of State Pier continued to have public support in the late 2000s through public planning exercises for the waterfront and downtown.

Our ultimate goal is to appropriately broaden and strengthen the economic utility of the State Pier in such a way that not only maximizes maritime industrial uses, but also forges a strong connection between the central waterfront and downtown for all who come to and work in New Bedford. We understand this work is incredibly difficult for both the public and private sectors, and progress without obstacles is not realistic.

Despite some of the controversy surrounding input into MassDevelopment's RFP for the site, we encourage you to continue driving this initiative forward. We support the process MassDevelopment has followed, and we strongly endorse the project proposal since it is consistent with the goals of enhanced maritime industrial uses and supportive uses on 20% of the western edge of the pier as allowed by the Legislature in 2018 (Acts of 2018, Chapter 228, Section 58 (a)). As things stand, losing momentum now could effectively stop the development of the current proposal and future opportunities on the horizon. To this end, we look forward to seizing this moment and working closely with you, the entire Healy administration, and all local elected leaders to see this through to the finish line.

On behalf of The Regeneration Project of the New Bedford Economic Development Council, we thank you for your thoughtful consideration. Should you have any questions, require additional information, or wish to continue the dialog, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Anthony Sapienza
President
New Bedford Economic Development Council

Patrick Murray
President & CEO
Bristol County Savings Bank

Rosemary Gill
Executive Director
Zeiterion Performing Arts Center

Ivan Brito
COO
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Rontell Grant
Owner/CEO, Lite Weights Fitness
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Michelle Neves Hantman
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Maria Rosario
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Nick Christ
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BayCoast Bank

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Jennifer Downing
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Roland Giroux
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Rep. Antonio Cabral
Rep. Chris Hendricks
Rep. Chris Markey
Rep. Paul Schmid
Rep. Bill Straus
Mayor Jon Mitchell
City Council President, Linda Morad
New Bedford City Council
Dan Rivera, President and CEO, MassDevelopment