



Accomplishments of the Mitchell Administration *January 2012--2015*

#1 PROGRESS ON JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

Mayor Mitchell has worked hard to find ways to **build consensus around the economic priorities of the city** and to help advance an actionable agenda in pursuit of those priorities, so that more residents have an opportunity to hold good jobs.

At the Mayor's urging, the civic and business leaders comprising the so-called "**Regeneration Committee**" met in 2014 to produce a comprehensive blueprint for action. Now entering its second year, the Committee's blueprint, the "**Regeneration Committee Report**," remains the city's touchstone document for all public- and private-sector economic development projects and programs.

And by placing a high priority on **fiscal responsibility, transparency, and a general openness to business**, the Mitchell Administration's overall economic development approach has quietly contributed to the city's ongoing economic recovery.

The Wall Street Journal reported New Bedford had the **greatest drop in unemployment among 372 cities nationwide** last year. The city's unemployment rate has now dropped by 5 full percentage points. In total, **3,000 more residents are working today** than when Mayor Mitchell took office. In fact, the city's **unemployment rate is down by 5.7%**. In January 2012 the rate was 13.4%, it is now 7.7%.

The average single family home in New Bedford is selling for nearly 40% more than it did in 2012. **The number of construction permits being issued is also up 40%**. All of these developments are indicators of confidence in the city and region's economic future.

#2 PROGRESS ON EDUCATION

The Mitchell Administration has not only made education a priority, but it has demonstrated it has **the courage to make the tough leadership decisions necessary** to avoid state receivership and put our schools back on track. That is not to say we have accomplished our goals, but the evidence is mounting that New Bedford schools are turning around:



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The latest "PARCC" scores for city students rose across the board and showed encouraging student improvements in most grade levels in English Language Arts and Math.

Most important, for the first time since the state began measuring student growth percentile (or how students grew compared to their academic peers), **New Bedford has now surpassed the state average (50), with a SGP of 51 in ELA. In other words, our students are improving faster than half of the state.**

In addition, **the latest school accountability data** shows continued progress across city schools. Earlier this month, DESE announced that 2 elementary schools became Level 1 schools, 2 schools were named Commendation Schools, improvement continues across the district, and all three middle schools are gaining ground. In all, **16 schools showed improvement** as they increased in their percentile rankings for student growth.

New Bedford now has three Level 1 schools, the first time since 2012 that two schools in New Bedford became Level 1. Two schools that achieved Level 1 status, Casimir Pulaski and William H. Taylor, were named "Commendation Schools."

As important, New Bedford Public Schools have now **fully reached 4 of the 9 goals of the state-approved Turnaround Plan**. We have partially reached our other 5 goals according to the most recent state review.

We have come a long way--when the Mayor first took office, the state had no confidence in the district's reform plans and was rejecting plan after plan. **Today, the state is praising our progress** in implementing our new, effective reform plans.

There are many other positive signs. Our **dropout rate** is down to its lowest level in 15 years. **City funding** for education has been increased by \$15 million so we can start addressing needs after years of neglect. And we supported a major **expansion of Advanced Placement** classes at New Bedford High School, which has allowed many more students to pursue college-level coursework while still in high school.

We have also made major progress on **two new schools buildings**. In October the City broke ground on new \$12.5 million Taylor School and the state has also agreed to pay 80% of a new Hannigan School now in design.



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New Bedford had the oldest stock of school buildings in Massachusetts when Mayor took office. The existing Taylor School, for example, is 117 years old.

#3 FISCAL PROGRESS

The Mayor's commitment to **hire the city's first dedicated CFO** has ushered in a new era of management and fiscal reforms that has saved taxpayers millions. Citing this move toward strong financial management, Wall Street upgraded New Bedford to its **highest bond rating in modern history**.

Among the fiscal reforms put in place under Mayor Mitchell:

- The City now boasts its **first long-term Capital Improvement Plan**.
- The City entered into a partnership with Siemens Corp. to convert all **10,000 streetlights to LED** and to retrofit dozens of city buildings with new energy efficiency measures.
- The City has **doubled the size of its rainy day fund** from when the Mayor took office.
- **Our switch to solar power will save taxpayers \$1 million this year**, and \$22 million over the next twenty years.
- And by holding the line on spending, the city has **closed every fiscal year with a budget surplus**.
- And at the Mayor's personal urging, city departments also came together to draft "**The New Bedford Way**" a document that identifies the principles and values that all municipal employees are committed to honoring as they serve the residents of the city.

#4 INVESTMENTS IN ARTS & CULTURE AND QUALITY OF LIFE FOR RESIDENTS

We have launched **major "beautification" initiatives** for the historic district, the waterfront (the new "Pier 3" sign, for example) and other areas downtown (new planters, new landscaping, and new clean-up crews).



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We have invested in **three new parks** for residents (Custom House Square, River's End Park, and Haskell Gardens (developed in partnership with the Trustees of Reservations)).

And, of course, the **New "Harbor Walk" atop Hurricane Barrier** opened to the public in October and was immediately embraced by residents. City created a truly unique recreational asset and re-established a neighborhood connection to the water after decades of being isolated by Hurricane Barrier.

1,300 new trees have been planted across all neighborhoods.

Researchers have found that planting trees is a cost-effective way to increase property values, slow traffic, absorb stormwater to reduce sewer costs, cut noise, and generally increase the quality of life.

As important, early in the Administration, we intervened to successfully **stabilize the finances of the Zeiterion Theatre**, a major downtown institution, and anchor for downtown businesses. Today the Zeiterion is a resurgent organization, and back on the path to long-term financial stability.

#5 PROGRESS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

To help take on the absentee landlords who are doing harm to our neighborhoods, we proposed a **Problem Properties Ordinance**, and secured its approval from the City Council. From now on, the worst offenders will have to pay for the cost of police responses at their properties, instead of taxpayers.

We created a **Neighborhood Task Force** to increase enforcement of codes designed to protect the public. The work of the Task Force often goes unnoticed, so here are accomplishments of the Task Force **just this year**:

- Nearly **300 correction orders** have been issued for housing code violations. Since we created the Task Force, negligent property owners have been forced to make more than **\$1 million in repairs**.
- More than **2,100 trash tickets** have been issued. The city now issues **3 TIMES MORE trash violations** than the number (681) issued in the year prior to my taking office.
- More than 1,000 constituents who contacted the Task Force this year have been assisted.



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- We've conducted **32 multi-department "sweeps"** of problem areas across the city.
- And we've **taken action taken against 117 abandoned buildings**, and collected a quarter of a million dollars from those who have abandoned their properties.

#6 PROGRESS IN OUR PORT

We have been **an effective advocate for the fishing industry** and repeatedly challenged the decision-making of federal regulators that refuse to factor in the interests of fishing communities as they are required by the Magnuson Act. The federal government announced last week that New Bedford remains the nation's **top fishing port for the 15th year in a row**.

Cargo at our port has doubled from 18,000 tons to 43,000 tons. Each freighter injects a quarter of a million dollars into the local economy - another shot in the arm for our waterfront.

The Mayor was also successful in convincing the Massachusetts Steamship Authority to allow **high speed passenger ferry service to Nantucket**, a long sought-after expansion of service that will bring thousands more travelers each summer to New Bedford.

And we have worked collaboratively with other leaders in the region to support the **offshore wind energy** industry's recent move into the Massachusetts market. The city and entire surrounding region now better poised than ever to benefit from **comprehensive energy legislation** making its way through Legislature.

#7 NATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON GREEN ENERGY ISSUES

This year we completed the last of ten major solar projects (the "Tom Davis Solar Project" in the Industrial Park) which together **established New Bedford as a national leader in green energy**.

New Bedford now has **more installed solar capacity per capita than any other city in the continental United States**. Solar program is saving nearly \$1 million in electricity costs in this year's city budget and is forecast to save \$22 million over next twenty years.



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Not content with our solar progress, we also set out to modernize the existing fleet of city-owned vehicles through an aggressive program to acquire electric-powered vehicles. **Today New Bedford boasts the largest municipal electric car fleet in Massachusetts.**

In all, ten Nissan "Leafs" have been leased at just \$70 per car per month. The vehicles are being used every day in city neighborhoods by Health Department Inspectors.

The City also played a lead role in the recent region-wide effort to negotiate a **14% discount in the electric bills** of local consumers and small businesses through the **nation's 3rd largest Electricity Aggregation Program**. The Program is expected to collectively save local customers \$15 million in the first six months alone.

#8 PROGRESS ON MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

We worked hard to secure and maintain the commitment of various federal and state agencies for the permitting and **construction of the new \$100 million state-funded Marine Commerce Terminal**, as well as the harbor dredging project that has significantly deepened the harbor's main channel

And we worked with UMass officials to plan, and secure land and funding for a **\$55 million SMAST expansion at Fort Taber**. The new facility will further cement the city as a national center of marine research and technology, and help preserve the viability of the commercial fishing industry in years ahead.