

MICHAEL BARDSLEY — FOR — MAYOR



Economic Development and Jobs

Locally and across the nation we are living through rough economic times. Northampton is an increasingly expensive place to live, and our working and middle-class families are really struggling. The challenge for business is also daunting. We need more local jobs that pay living wages. We must have a focused, effective plan to get this important work done!

My vision for economic development in Northampton is grounded in two observations I have made over many years living and working here.

One, simply put, is “What is Good for Northampton is Good for Business.” Northampton has several unique features which make it a desirable place to visit, to work, and to live. We can capitalize on these features, which include the arts, education, the natural environment, and local history. We have to continue to support and nurture these in order to successfully utilize them for economic development.

Two, Northampton’s single most valuable resource is its people. When I talk about Northampton being a great place, I first and foremost think about the extraordinary folks who have chosen to call Northampton home. We have a highly educated workforce, an asset that presently is not being used to its full economic development potential.

My three specific initiatives for local economic health are:

1. To re-focus the city’s economic development priorities as part of my transition team. I will appoint a business retention and recruitment task force, whose goal will be attracting new technology and environmental businesses to Northampton, while continuing to support manufacturing and construction and existing retail, of course.
2. To expand and improve our current economic development partnerships with area higher education institutions as well as with “economic engines” such as Holyoke and Springfield. The goal of these collaborative efforts, again, would be increasing the number of technology and environmental businesses and jobs.
3. To hold quarterly meetings for all business owners, including Florence and Leeds, to listen to concerns and to brainstorm possible solutions to existing problems. These meetings will be my first step to address the existing issues raised by current businesses with our local government.

My Plan

These initiatives will enable me to foster economic development through the following specific actions:

- I will have the current open position for the economic development head advertised widely so that we review a broad range of candidates who may present skill sets that will help lead the city in achieving a more successful jobs development program. We need a director in place who is the very best fit for meeting our current economic development needs.
- We should emphasize efforts on creating jobs which are sustainable, which utilize a wide range of skills, and which provide a living wage to our city's workforce.
- We will identify emerging businesses and industries suited to our location.
- We will set up sector-specific training in a partnership with local schools, colleges, and universities.
- I will encourage citizen and corporate use of programs like MassSAVE and the Center for Ecological Technology, whose work focuses on energy efficiency, renewable energy, improved waste stream management, and environmental education.
- I will join with surrounding communities to create a shared strategy to attract, retain, and grow businesses to improve the economic vitality and sustainability of the whole Valley.

I am particularly energized by problem-solving. After 33 years of working as a professional educator, I look forward to bringing my talents and leadership style to working with all parts of the community to address economic development issues.

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