

## Fitchburg Reimagined



Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale, in front passenger seat, rides in 1914 Model T to mark the return of Main Street to two-way traffic. (Photo courtesy City of Fitchburg)

A recent CommonWealth Magazine [article](#) highlighted the successful revitalization efforts underway in Fitchburg, especially in the downtown Main Street area. New restaurants and businesses are opening, and new housing units are underway. For years, this neighborhood struggled with poverty and vacant buildings. A collaborative group of North Central organizations approached the Foundation in 2014 to help transform the North of Main neighborhood into a great place to live, work, and invest, and thus began the ReImagine North of Main (RNOM) Round 4 Synergy Initiative project. Though the Foundation's funding concluded in 2020, the positive momentum created by this early investment continues to this day.

Tom Skwierawski, Executive Director of Community Development & Planning at the City of Fitchburg and the first Project Coordinator for the RNOM project, reflected,

*"We are now at an exciting moment in Fitchburg's downtown, where tangible change is happening all around us: new businesses opening, housing being built, murals painted, and roadways reshaped. It feels a bit sudden, but in reality this has been over a decade in the making. In the early stages, the projects were less flashy: it was about building relationships and a common vision we could all get around. None of this transformation could have happened without that work. And that work wouldn't have been possible without funders like the Boston Fed and The Health Foundation. They were patient and*

*responsive to our needs as a community, and worked with us—not just as a funder, but as a partner—in this collective effort. Years ago, The Health Foundation took a chance on a neighborhood revitalization project, and that project is now helping to lead a rebirth of Fitchburg’s urban core, as North Central’s Gateway to Arts and Culture.”*

From 2015-2020, the Foundation invested \$2.1 million in direct grant funding to the RNOM project. In addition to that funding, a wide array of other funding partners, including the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, the City of Fitchburg, and state agencies, have contributed to the project. The Foundation’s RNOM project can take some measure of credit for helping the community leverage investments totaling more than \$54.7 million and an additional \$66 million in pipeline capital projects, bringing the total community impact to date to \$120.7 million, as of July 2022.

The Foundation is gratified that it could play a part in the transformation of this Gateway City into the Gateway to Arts and Culture, and we look forward to seeing all that is to come with the reimagining of Fitchburg!

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