

Thanks to the participants in the “Design and the Reinvented City” roundtable [May/June 2008] for helping to bring the discussion about the creative economy in Massachusetts to the forefront. I’m an industrial designer and co-founder of a design and distribution company based in Boston. Lured by the exciting product design happening here, we moved from Canada in 1997. Boston’s design reputation is in fact firm among designers everywhere; the challenge is to disseminate this information more broadly to integrate it more fully into our culture. For a creative economy to flourish, it needs to be both “special” and “common” at the same time; we want people to take good design as a given, yet we need to maintain its integrity via well-educated, skilled experts. When people walk into one of our stores, they’re startlingly engaged and want to learn about the items that have been designed here; this knowledge adds value to the products and also equips customers with new information to pass on — to “preach,” if you will.

People love to learn about their city and state and how the things that happen here impact their daily lives. With this in mind, a simple, proud campaign of “designed in Boston” would go surprisingly far in helping to raise public awareness of Massachusetts as a design center, and in illustrating the breadth of the design industry in a very straightforward way. The more far-reaching benefits of efforts such as government funding and public programs would follow suit much more smoothly as a result of establishing Massachusetts’ creative economy as common knowledge.

It looks like we have a self-driven design challenge on our hands — but who better to tackle it than entrepreneurial designers themselves? Think about how great the posters will look!

Stefane Barbeau
Vessel
Boston

In the May/June 2008 roundtable discussion [“Design and the Reinvented City”], the participants spoke about the potential of the design industry as an economic engine that needs to be fostered and supported akin to our more visible industries in Massachusetts. Though the article was specific to Boston, I believe it is applicable to the rest of the Commonwealth as we search for new forms of revenue and jobs.

One of the greatest potentials I see in the design industry, and something that was touched on by Beate Becker during the discussion, is the ability of design to offer opportunities to our workforce outside of the more visible sectors of our economy: financial services, academia, healthcare, and biotechnology.

I have seen this with my own constituents. Young people in particular, considering training and entry into professional fields, are attracted to technology-intensive career opportunities in design — from graphic design and architecture to industrial, fashion, and web design. As we strive to strengthen our young people’s skills in math and science, design offers a bridge connecting education to real-life application. That experience is what can spark creativity to power innovation. It is where I feel Massachusetts can stand apart from the rest because of our unique population.

If the design industry is to fulfill its potential as a dynamic economic cluster, there is much work to be done in defining, quantifying impact, raising visibility, organizing, and making connections to other industries. On the state level, we have begun this work with a commitment to the creative economy through recently passed legislation, and filed legislation seeking to establish a Creative Challenge Index. We in the House of Representatives have recently reinforced our commitment to the design industry through an appropriation for the Designing an Industry Initiative. I am excited for the future of design in Massachusetts as we work in partnership

to find new ways to foster its growth and see this vibrant industry’s full potential.

Jeffrey Sánchez
State Representative
15th Suffolk District

Readers of the roundtable discussion

“It All Starts Here: The Politics of Planning in a Small Town” [March/April 2008] may be wondering about the outcome of the Hopkinton Town Meeting’s vote on the future of Legacy Farms (the Weston Nurseries site). I am pleased to report that on May 6, and with a very large turn-out, the Hopkinton Town Meeting overwhelmingly passed (87 percent in favor) the proposed special zoning district (Open Space Mixed Use Development district — OSMUD) that will allow the 733-acre Weston Nurseries property to be developed as a mixed-use master-planned community with large contiguous conservation spaces, rather than as a conventional large-lot single-family home subdivision. The OSMUD benefits to the town will include major contributions to the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of Hopkinton through:

- Conservation of contiguous and connected open spaces.
- Creation of a neighborhood-scale retail center.
- Positive fiscal impacts to the town.
- Provision of a wide range of housing types and price ranges, including affordable housing.
- A mix of land uses for commercial, retail, civic, residential, and conservation purposes.
- Continued operation of the Weston Nurseries retail operation and viable agricultural/horticultural uses.

I believe this issue of *ArchitectureBoston* was very helpful to Hopkinton citizens in their consideration of how to vote on the proposed OSMUD for Legacy Farms. This article and the entire March/April issue in general were frequently cited throughout the zoning review process. The roundtable

was particularly useful in presenting the broad range of considerations and viewpoints and the potential ramifications of the choices facing the town.

The land-use planning and community-impact challenges raised in the Legacy Farms planning process are clearly found in other suburban communities confronting growth and development pressures due to changing demographic, socio-economic, and environmental conditions. Hopkinton's experience and process should be seen as an instructive model in forward-looking town planning to which *ArchitectureBoston's* Hopkinton issue made a significant contribution.

Fred Merrill
Sasaki Associates
Watertown, Massachusetts

ArchitectureBoston's recent focus on Hopkinton [March/April 2008] raises some interesting issues, but fails to acknowledge larger, more critical, issues linked to the region's inability to effectively harness the latent capacity within its former "gateway cities" (see "Reconnecting Massachusetts Gateway Cities: Lessons Learned and an Agenda for Renewal" by the Brookings Institution www.brookings.edu/reports/2007/02regionsandstates_muro.aspx).

Yes, it is important to develop near transit and to establish growth centers; however, if we focus on communities that lack proper infrastructure and support for such growth, we are overlooking more established historic centers that have ample gray- and brownfield sites, as well as a tremendous store of civic and cultural infrastructure. Most current literature on the subject shies away from the tired urban/suburban dichotomy for just this reason.

It pains me to see the Metropolitan District Planning Council's myopic insistence on irrelevant metropolitan boundaries in an age of increased regional interdependence. If Boston is to succeed as an emerging global city, it is going to need the help of its former partners from the dawn of the industrial age. Boston, Haverhill, Lawrence, Lowell, Worcester, Woonsocket, Providence, Pawtucket, Attleboro, Taunton, Fall River, and New

Bedford once functioned as an integrated whole. One need only look to better integrated regions within the mid-Atlantic states or to the Bay Area of California for inspiration. San Francisco is now linked to San José by way of an integrated transit system that serves important communities on both sides of the bay and allows greater access to jobs, housing, and education for all. Locally, the extension of rail service to the T.F. Green airport and the South Coast Rail project are steps in the right direction; however, if the notion of Boston as "the Hub" is to be reinvigorated, we need more bold initiatives like these that break down barriers to regional cooperation.

Edgar Adams
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Not only did I thoroughly enjoy reading the recent issue on Hopkinton [March/April 2008] (Carlisle is also facing similar growth issues), one of the citations in your "Site Work" feature finally resolved a major question that has consumed debates within our home for the last six months — where to find the perfect dog for our growing family.

After visiting the Greyhound Friends' website, we visited the shelter the following Saturday and took home Millie, a 3-to-4 year old female lab/greyhound mix. She is extremely mellow and pleasant around our young children (Emily 8, Caroline 6, and Michael 4). Thank you for helping us find a gem of a dog!

Timothy Downing
Design & Co.
Carlisle, Massachusetts

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