



Brockton, Massachusetts
"City of Champions"
Linda M. Balzotti – Mayor

Inauguration Address of Mayor Linda M. Balzotti
January 2, 2012

Good morning and Happy New Year.

I want to begin today by congratulating our City Councilors and the members of the school committee on their election and thank them for their willingness to serve. I look forward to working with all of you as we continue to chart a course for Brockton's future.

I'd like to thank the state, county and city officials who are in attendance. To the members of clergy, I thank you for all of your contributions to our city and for your dedication to our citizens.

Public service is a burden shouldered not only by those who serve but also by their family members. A special acknowledgement to my sisters, Mary and Gina, my brother James, my nieces Katie and Emily, for their continued support and understanding and to my mother Betty, who as most can attest to has been my biggest cheerleader.

I am honored to be here today – a day that is very different from the first time I took the Oath of Office as Mayor of Brockton two years ago. The greatest challenges we face have not changed – the economy is still weak and optimism is illusive. The housing market has improved, but not stabilized. Our neighborhoods are still populated by hardworking, honest people, but there is still doubt, concern and far too many foreclosed and abandoned properties.

That is the bad news.

The good news is we spent the past two years building the foundation we need to see us through.

We have a direction – and a long-term plan. We are turning to each other instead of the federal and state government for answers, and we are fighting through this as we always have – as the get-tough, scrappy fighters we have always been. We are Brockton and every time we get knocked down, we get back up and keep swinging.

During my first term, we focused on fiscal restraint, neighborhood stabilization, economic development and planning, public safety and education. Brockton has taken its knocks during this economic downturn. But there is a concerted effort – a coalition of political, business and community leaders - working together to pull us through this. The hurdles are high but in the last two years we have laid the groundwork necessary to overcome these obstacles and bring Brockton through this recession.

In my first term, we worked together to attract new businesses, to reduce the corporate vacancy rate and bolster our commercial real estate base. We accomplished this by attracting Bernardi Auto Group, which invested \$20 million in two new dealerships that opened this summer on

Manley Street. Bernardi also brought 200 new jobs to Brockton, a much-needed infusion of employment opportunities for our citizens.

Westgate Mall is undergoing a \$13 million expansion that will bring an 80,500-square-foot Market Basket to the city, and a pair of restaurant chains have invested in new franchises on the mall property, returning an important amenity-dining- to this key commercial area.

Belmont Street has been also been a hotbed of activity in the past year with the opening of Eastern Bank, a new CVS Pharmacy and Panera Bread within a 2-mile stretch of roadway. And one of our mainstays and biggest employers, Good Samaritan Medical Center – now part of Steward Healthcare System - opened a new 32,000 square-foot emergency room in October, a more than \$30 million dollar investment, which adds to our tax base due to the facility's new, for-profit status.

This is the type of development I promised you; development that is good for the city and provides needed goods and services to our residents.

But we're not here to just talk about accomplishments; we're here to talk about our action plan. I'm pleased to see so much development at the mall and on Oak and Belmont Streets, but I'm equally concerned now about the gateways to Brockton that haven't seen this resurgence, areas of barren strip malls that exemplify the problem facing our local and national economy.

In my next term, I'll be focusing on the East and South sides of Brockton – on the empty storefronts and under-developed properties. I'm turning my focus to the areas where there are vast swaths of vacant retail space.

These two parts of the city have prime locations for development, and we will capitalize on them.

One of our most pressing issues is keeping the lights on at the Shaw's Center and Campanelli Stadium. There is cautious optimism as discussions continue with possible investors and operators. Finding a solution that minimizes the financial impact will not be easy, but a city of 100,000 needs a facility to hold community and social events and more empty real estate is not a step in the right direction.

One of my first promises to my fellow citizens was to reinvest in planning in Brockton. I've said it a thousand times – *a city without a plan has no future*. Brockton now has two professionals with planning credentials who are helping to oversee our long-term development and planning. The Brockton Redevelopment Authority, which was re-formed under my administration, has a new executive director with an extensive planning background and the city Planning Department has a staff planner for the first time in three years – providing technical oversight and guidance.

MassGIS, a part of the Commonwealth's Information Technology Division, received funding this year to contract with Camp, Dreeser, McKee to create and enhance digital mapping for Brockton's local tax parcels. The results of this project will be provided to the city free of charge and will begin the process of establishing a much needed GIS system for Brockton.

Additionally, the Brockton 21st Century Corporation leveraged state grants to fund a comprehensive downtown review. If we are going to move downtown forward, we need a step-

