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## POSITION STATEMENT

### The New Bedford Community Benefit District Project Re-Boot

*The New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit business advocacy and economic development organization. It has a diverse membership base of 1,000 businesses – primarily small and medium size - in the SouthCoast region of Massachusetts. This policy position is intended to serve as guidelines for the Chamber's Government Affairs efforts and has been reviewed and approved by the Chamber's Government Affairs Committee and Board of Directors.*

Adopted: 11/5/2015

**Position:** The New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce and its Board of Directors fully endorses and supports the New Bedford Community Benefit District Project Re-Boot for the following reasons:

- Community Benefit Districts have been a national trend to enhance downtowns beyond the capability of cities and towns.
- The CBD goal is to increase market rate housing, raise property values, increase business in the downtown, all while attracting new businesses to the region.
- The CBD fosters an opportunity to lock in a baseline of municipal services.
- Formation and dissolution requirements for the CBD are set by State legislators
- Stakeholder advocacy on City taxes, policies, processes and plans
- The formation of the CBD will create a powerful voice for downtown needs and projects, such as: Cleanliness, Landscaping, Safety, Hospitality, Parking Management, Marketing/Branding, Streetscape, and Infrastructure Projects.

**Rationale:** While on its face the CBD increases the cost of doing business in Downtown New Bedford, there are important distinctions between this self-taxing mechanism and the imposition of an additional tax on property owners. The Chamber has a longstanding position regarding the challenges of high taxes in our city and the potential chilling effect of that burden on business success.

First, the CBD has a sunset clause, requiring re-authorization by the property owners every five years. Second, the goal is to make significant and noticeable changes to the Downtown area that will make the area more attractive to relocating businesses, create additional opportunities for increasing the residential count in Downtown and foster an atmosphere of pride in place. Third, it places control of the funds into the hands of those with the greatest stake in the success of the area. No properties in the service area are exempt, meaning that government properties and non-profits infuse their proportionate share into the funding pool.

Community Benefit Districts exist throughout the nation and have met with substantial success in revitalizing downtown areas. The goal is a more attractive and successful Downtown area, allowing for business growth and business success well in excess of the investments made by any individual property owner.

From reviewing recent Community Benefit District survey results, responses and feedback to this program, it has become apparent that the responses from most downtown stakeholders have been extremely positive and supportive. As the downtown infrastructure improves under the CBD, we believe it increase market rate housing, raise property values, increase business in the downtown, all while attracting new businesses to the region. The ultimate goal of a Community Benefit District is not to supplant local municipal services already in place but rather supplement existing services to help foster a more vibrant epicenter for our city.

The New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce encourages all stakeholders to continue working toward a Community Benefit District that fits the needs of downtown.

*While this statement is policy as of the effective date of this document, the Chamber reserves the right to adopt changes and make modifications and additions to its policies, and will continue to monitor issues as they develop.*

Please contact Kim Perry, Chair of the New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee at (508) 999-5231 with any questions regarding this policy position.

*The New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce is a private, non-profit business association based in the City of New Bedford, Massachusetts. Chartered in 1885, the Chamber serves nearly 1,000 member businesses of all sizes from virtually all industries in the ten communities of New Bedford, Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Freetown, Mattapoisett, Marion, Rochester, Wareham, and Westport. The Chamber supports and promotes the local business community through leadership in public advocacy, education, networking, information, and community development.*

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