

'Beloved Berkshires'

Posted: 10/15/2011 12:55:33 AM EDT

Saturday October 15, 2011

This is what Gov. Deval Patrick deemed our bucolic county Friday during a groundbreaking for Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts' Center for Science and Innovation. (See story, A1.)

We know that "beloved" is a good word to use for the Transcript's feelings on the Berkshires, and we know that the same is true for a good many in North County, but let's discuss what the ceremonial shovels hitting the dirt on this center means for our beloved North Adams.

The Center for Science and Innovation is expected to be completed in 2013, and the project includes \$24.5 million in renovations for Bowman Hall, where the college's math, computer science and sociology departments, along with its robotics program and a Geographic Information System lab, will be located.

This sort of investment in a college can be transformative for the surrounding community. Major developments such as this one, as well as the smaller improvements the school has been making regularly, carry with them the gravity that draws students to MCLA and the city. What's more is that they also hold the potential to give our native North County youth motivation to stay in the area for college and beyond.

When young people see this school growing, it gives them reason to consider that there really are things happening locally that they might want to join. When students graduate from MCLA, having reaped the benefits of the top-notch

education these investments produce, they see that there are reasons to stay in the beloved Berkshires -- as long as the momentum continues.

Pair Friday's groundbreaking with plans for the Mohawk Theater described during the recent preliminary mayoral radio debate (Transcript story, Sept. 23), and it's easy to envision an MCLA that will have an ever-growing positive influence on downtown North Adams.

Mayor Richard Alcombright made mention in this debate of a plan to partner with MCLA and MoCA at the Mohawk that we think could be just as significant for the city as the impending science center. He spoke of 12 to 14 months of talks that focus on making the theater a campus away from campus for MCLA that could bring 200 to 300 students and faculty downtown daily.

And therein lies the key: More feet on the street equals greater economic health for our local businesses. The science center and a possible education and performance venue at the Mohawk all hold this promise. As the college continues to blossom, so does its positive influence on downtown North Adams. The more MCLA can draw people to itself with its inertia and projects, the more the city and its businesses stands to benefit.

Change is sometimes a slow-moving beast, but there has been a quick series of glimpses into this city's future in recent months. We encourage the city's residents to remain open to those possibilities and with luck, we'll be celebrating their realizations in the years to come.

Get a FREE ADT-Monitored Home Security System.*

(With \$99 customer installation and purchase of ADT alarm monitoring services. See important terms and conditions below.)

Call Now! 1-877-835-8373



*\$99.00 Customer Installation Charge. 36-Month Monitoring Agreement required at \$35.99 per month (\$1,295.64). Form of payment must be by credit card or electronic charge to your checking or savings account. Offer applies to homeowners only. Local permit fees may be required. Satisfactory credit history required. Certain restrictions apply. Offer valid for new Security Choice - An ADT Authorized Dealer customers only and not on purchases from ADT Security Services, Inc. Other rate plans available. Cannot be combined with any other offer. **\$100 VISA® Gift Card Offer: \$100 VISA Gift Card is provided by Security Choice and is not sponsored by ADT Security Services. Requires mail-in redemption. Call 1-888-407-2338 for complete restrictions and redemption requirements.

