

New Bedford Research & Robotics to elevate City's innovation efforts

"NEW BEDFORD – Many have held the City's ceremonial gold scissors at ribbon-cutting events over the years to celebrate the opening of businesses, parks, and schools.

But for the first time in the City's long and storied history, a robot did the honor of cutting the ribbon Thursday morning to celebrate the opening of New Bedford Research & Robotics on Purchase Street.

"Mark Parsons has established a robotics innovative program in New York City and he's now bringing it home to New Bedford," Mayor Jon Mitchell said. "We're thrilled that he is helping lead New Bedford's innovation efforts."

"NBRR is promoting social benefit and economic health through equitable access to frontier technologies, such as industrial robotics. This ribbon cutting is indicative of the trust we've been building with the New Bedford community and our aspirations to continue to create future-work opportunities through creativity, upskilling, and entrepreneurial endeavors," New Bedford Research & Robotics Founder/Executive Director Mark Parsons said. "We are honored to have had so many guests here today to help inspire that future, and it's been exciting to see this team grow."

"New Bedford Research & Robotics stands to be a key contributor to New Bedford's innovation economy, including by empowering the next generation of students and startups with access to cutting-edge technology," Acting MassDevelopment President and CEO Dan O'Connell said. "The Commonwealth's Underutilized Properties Program, which is administered by our team at MassDevelopment, proudly awarded a \$900,000 grant to

help the organization transform 1265 Purchase St. from a vacant, underused building into a home where this exciting work can take place.”

New Bedford Research & Robotics is a nonprofit research- and technology-based collaborative organization that focuses on marine tech, robotics, artificial intelligence/machine learning, clean energy, gaming, and data science. After 24 years in Brooklyn, where he founded the Consortium for Research and Robotics, served as director of production technologies at Pratt Institute Architecture, and was also the director of the New York State Education Department’s Science and Technology Program, Parsons returned to his hometown of New Bedford to create NBRR in 2022. He said he knew he wanted come home back in 2016 when he gave a TEDx talk in New Bedford about how creativity and technology bring people together.

The City and MassDevelopment have supported NBRR with its new home on Purchase Street. The City awarded the organization \$2.25 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds, and MassDevelopment awarded it \$900,000 in grant funding.

NBRR will begin the first phase of a major renovation project later this year. Located at 1265 Purchase St. in the former Glaser Glass building, the transformation will bring its robotics projects and collaboration space top the front of the facility behind upgraded bay doors to make them visible and inviting to passers-by. The renovation will also create spaces for digital prototyping, business and tech incubation, and office use.”