

# Students Discuss Documentary About New Bedford and the Star Store



*Star Store as it looked in 1914. (Spinner Publications)*

This week I was able to sit down with a couple of my fellow students here at Umass Dartmouth and interview them about a documentary they're making, specifically focusing on the university's Star Store and in more broad sense its effects on the city of New Bedford.

For those unfamiliar with the Star Store, basically it's a satellite campus for Umass Dartmouth's College of Visual and Performing Arts. For the city of New Bedford however, it's far more than just a place for students to learn and display their works. According to Brooke Lyons, one of the students working on the project, "It's bringing in graduate students from all

over the country and all around the world, and they end up staying in New Bedford...and with that it also boosts economic growth.”

The other students working on this project alongside Brooke are Ross Gelmete and Nikhila “Nikki” Vijaybhaskar. Interestingly, instead of specifying in one area of the production the trio shares responsibilities for all of their duties such as editing and writing. The one area these documentary makers aren’t involved in is the actual filming, which is being provided as a public service by the Dartmouth Cable TV (DCTV) public access channel and its cameraman, Michael Fernandes (a current UMass Dartmouth MBA student).

In addition to promoting further cultural and artistic diversity, as well as the already established economic benefits, the Star Store also promotes community outreach programs. With all the benefits the city is reaping from this arrangement I couldn’t help but wonder what the city offered that was so special.

Apparently though, New Bedford is one of the most artistic cities in the United States, and according to the documentary makers it provides a niche that may not exist in other bigger cities where these institutions may be more plentiful, a clear place where one can start their career.

Additionally it also provides plenty of room for the store to grow. This symbiotic relationship between the Star Store and New Bedford will be the primary focus of the documentary, according to the team.

Making this documentary has been a real challenge, right from the very beginning when the trio was forced to decide between multiple topics such as the Zeiterion theatre. In the end they chose the Star Store because of its connection to the university, not just a safe topic but one they felt especially passionate about working on. They also had to decide on what

they would do with the Star Store topic and formulate a script without the benefit of interviews, meaning that as they now do these interviews there's a process of evaluation and adjusting in order to make sure everything fits a cohesive narrative. The interviews they've done so far are expansive, ranging from students to local citizens, and even the Mayor of New Bedford himself.

The documentary will be finished sometime in late November or early December at the latest, and when it's finally done there will be several screenings both on the university campus and off. It will also air on the DCTV public access channel. As to why you should tune in, according to Ross Gelmete, "You're sometimes not aware of the things going on in your community...Something like this offers you an in-depth look at the full picture rather than what an article in a newspaper or magazine can provide you."

This project is a positive look at the city of New Bedford, and a chance for us to learn about something we may have no knowledge of. Knowledge of the Star Store and what it offers can open a wide range of opportunities, and art is something important that connects people in their enjoyment of it.

So when the screenings for this documentary begin I'll be more than happy to attend and even if you aren't able to do the same I recommend you watch it on the DCTV public access channel. It's a solid, interesting topic that these three filmmakers are working very hard to realize, and for these reasons and many more it deserves your recognition. Unfortunately a precise date has not been decided for screenings as of yet, but when it is I can imagine it will be posted on the DCTV Facebook page here.

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