A cautionary tale of two cities

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Lynn and New Bedford are cities of comparable size.

New Bedford has a population of 95,072, while Lynn clocked in — after the 2010 census — at 90,329.

Where they differ is in the stars to which they’ve tried to hitch their wagons. Lynn is going at it the slow and steady way, while New Bedford is looking for the quick hit.

And in the case of New Bedford, it’s a cautionary tale to cities that want to reinvent themselves.

Last week, plans for a casino that the city had hoped would lift it out of its doldrums fell through because the developer couldn’t secure funding. It also stood to host the Olympic sailing event in 2024 if Boston’s plans to host the game had not been scrapped.

We had to learn the hard way up here not to put our eggs in one basket — especially if that basket had anything to do with casinos. Suffolk Downs’ proposal lost out to Wynn Resorts’ Everett plan, after all.

Lynn chose not to go that route, and it is looking pretty good now. Instead, it focused on rezoning to create attractive residential districts downtown, and encouraging restaurants to locate in the area as well.

So far that seems to be working.

The state’s older cities have had tough go of it over the last quarter century, and their renewals have been hit-or-miss.

Areas such as Lowell and Somerville had done well, while places such as New Bedford are still looking for something they can point toward.

This is just one more reason that while slow and steady doesn’t necessarily make a big splash, at the end of the day those who go that way can often come out ahead.