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Branford sees economic upswing with new businesses opening or planning to do so

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With summer underway, Branford is beginning to see signs of a thaw in the economy. Town hall's land use departments report that Branford is seeing an increase in the number of applications for approvals and permits, with several new businesses opening their doors or planning to do so soon.

New businesses include:

- * SolarUS, a sales and distribution company for solar heating systems, located in the former Echlin site on West Main St.;
- * Recol, a leading information technology company is moving into 17,000 s/f on Pin Oak Dr.;
- * Hershman Capital Corporation, a recycling and waste management company, has moved into one of the former Neurogen buildings, renaming the complex the Northeast Technology Center and making it an owner occupied facility;
- * Boston-based biotech Forma has joined the Branford bioscience community and is one of Hershman's tenants with its new R&D operation; and
- * Urgent Care opened in the Stony Creek Medical Building on Business Park Dr., bringing a new emergency medical facility to shoreline.

Expansions include 454 Life Science now occupying an additional 55,000 s/f on East Industrial Rd.; The Hearth at Gardenside has opened its new 13,000 s/f addition with 20 additional units; Serve-Pro is nearly finished with the construction of its new building on Sycamore Way and is about to move in with its expanded operations; and family-owned Wilson Arms is finishing its 10,000 s/f expansion to meet its increased demand and to accommodate a larger staff.

Meanwhile, everyone on the shoreline is anticipating the early summer opening of the new 36,000 s/f YMCA on Rte. 1. And on the heels of the Y's ribbon cutting, plans for a new 56,000 s/f tennis center on a neighboring parcel will be underway.

With the change in season, infrastructure projects around town are now fully visible. Most notable are the replacement of the Amtrak bridge over Rte. 1 that will provide long-needed traffic improvements to the intersections of Exit 53, Rte. 146 and Rte. 142 at Rte. 1, and the expansion of Branford's train station. Both projects won federal stimulus funding and will enhance the town's appeal as an ideal location between Boston and NYC.

At the same time the town continues to plan for growth and to be well positioned for opportunity. The Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) recently finished its Targeted Business Study. Called for in last year's Plan of Conservation and Development, the project was undertaken jointly by the Planning & Zoning and Economic Development Commissions so that the town could better direct its development efforts.

CERC's key findings include that the number of Branford businesses has increased over the last decade compared to a decrease in the region and a statewide leveling, that the town has a history

of biotech firms locating in town, and that it has well-established areas for mixed-use with flexible zoning tools. The study's findings echo the conclusions made by the Connecticut Economic Digest's 2009 profile of Branford as "a vital community with a strong economic base, low taxes, and excellent schools and municipal services." And just last month, Standard & Poor's reaffirmed its "triple A" rating for Branford, the third time in 15 months.

Combine these findings with Branford's modest growth in its grand list last year and no increase in the mill rate for next year, and you have what every business looks for in a host community - stability and service at a low cost. Add a skilled workforce serving a diverse local economy that includes biotech, healthcare, and manufacturing thriving in a healthy and friendly business environment, along with a sound location with 20 miles of shoreline mid-way between Boston and NYC, and you see that Branford offers just about everything a business needs to grow.

To learn more about Branford and the opportunities it holds, visit the town's website at www.branford-ct.gov or e-mail us at info@branford-ct.gov.

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