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The Wilder Companies to expand, reconfigure and redevelop 500,000 s/f Garden City Center

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Garden City Center, one of Rhode Island's premier outdoor shopping venues, detailed a multi-phased strategy to expand, reconfigure and redevelop the historic shopping center. Construction of a new 20,000 s/f building begins an extension of the iconic Village that will turn former large format retail space into a mix of mid-size and smaller specialty stores. Later phases include construction of several new restaurant spaces and improved traffic and pedestrian links to the Whole Foods Market section of the center.

"Retailing in the U.S. has changed, and Garden City Center needs to provide retailers and consumers with the atmosphere, amenities and experience they want in a 21st Century shopping center," said Thomas Wilder, a principal of The Wilder Companies, management company of Garden City Center.

The multi-million dollar project will employ a contemporary design leveraging Garden City Center's New England village concept and utilizing the traditional New England elements and materials already found throughout the center, Wilder said.

"Garden City Center is a major engine for Cranston's economy and the city is committed to helping The Wilder Cos. bring its vision for Garden City Center to reality," said mayor Allan Fung.

Phase I extends Garden City's "Village" to the south with the addition of the new 20,000 s/f building immediately adjacent to Papa Razzi. The new space will be home to two premier national retailers. At the same time, the iconic Garden City gazebo will be transformed from the end-cap of the Village into the new focal point for the center. Construction is anticipated to break ground in late spring with delivery of the space to retailers in late 2012.

Phase II will see the conversion of previously occupied large format stores, located in the area that is now called the Commons, into smaller 3,000 to 10,000 s/f stores and restaurants. It is anticipated the Phase II construction will be complete by early 2013. Further phases will include the addition of new restaurants and redesigned connections to the Whole Foods Market section of the center.

"The extension of the Village will create a strong vehicular and pedestrian connection across the entire center," said Andrew LaGrega, another principal of The Wilder Cos.

Building upon the 2011 openings of Anthropologie, Destination Maternity, Pinkberry and Ten Thousand Villages, and the soon-to-open Soma-Intimates and Edible Arrangements, LaGrega also announced additional new stores and store updates. Women's specialty retailer Ann Taylor will open its second store in Rhode Island in July. Gourmet cookware and home furnishing retailer Williams-Sonoma has committed to expanding its presence at Garden City Center and will build a brand new store in the space currently housed by Eddie Bauer. The existing Williams-Sonoma will accommodate a new, specialty sportswear retailer.

Additionally, several other Garden City center mainstays have entered into new, multi-year leases

and will be performing major interior and exterior store renovations, including: Mel & Me, Starbucks, Providence Diamond Company, Hallmark and Yankee Candle.

"Garden City Center's success over the last seven decades has been due in large part to our unique mix of stores owned and operated by local residents as well as regional and national companies," LaGrega said. "We are excited and optimistic that the impressive mix of retailers, restaurants, events and amenities offered at Garden City Center will continue to make the shopping center Rhode Island's premier outdoor shopping destination for years to come."

Located on Rte. 2, Garden City Center has 500,000 s/f of retail and office space. It was one of the first centers of its kind in the country. The center is home to 55 shops, services, and eateries including Anthropologie, Banana Republic, Loft, Mel and Me, White House/Black Market, Providence Diamond Company, Chico's, Coldwater Creek, Pinkberry, Williams-Sonoma, and Whole Foods Market.

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