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Newtown's Fairfield Hills Campus is the focus of activity this spring

March 15, 2012 - Connecticut

The town-owned Fairfield Hills Campus is Newtown's premiere property that will be the focus of activity this spring. The main campus area, located on the western side of the property, encompasses about 40 acres out of the 185 acres purchased by the town. This main campus area, a former state hospital that was closed in 1996, has benefitted from the significant investment in its reuse and redevelopment made over the past several years. While more work lies ahead, the site is being transformed into an active multi-use campus and is quickly becoming an attractive community asset.

A visitor to the campus will see that there are a couple of projects moving ahead now. The most exciting project is a plan for the redevelopment of the Woodbury building. The redevelopment will be privately financed and occupied. It is expected to provide new construction jobs and will bring a number of new businesses and permanent jobs to the campus. The plan is to replace the existing 30,000 s/f Woodbury building with a new 30,000 s/f environmentally friendly flex retail and office building. The new building will redefine the campus entryway and will serve as an attractive gateway into the campus. The new building will become the cornerstone for the designated commercial area and is expected to attract new interests from private investors. The interest in this project clearly illustrates that there are opportunities on the campus for private investors and the Economic Development Commission is planning to capture that interest and help it move forward. This project will be the second privately financed and occupied development on the campus.

Another project moving forward on the campus is the design for a new ambulance headquarters that will be home to the Newtown Voluntary Ambulance Corps. The ambulance facility will be located near Wasserman Way in order to provide quick access to the main roadway system that connects Rtes. 25 and 34. This project is also being privately funded and is expected to move forward in the coming months. A third project includes the completion of landscaping in the area adjacent to the Newtown Youth Academy where building demolition was completed late last fall. The town is planning to construct a new municipal recreation facility in this area and while the design is complete, the funding is still a couple of years away. The Newtown Youth Academy, a private sports and fitness center that is open to the public and its members, anchors this area of the campus along with the Newtown Municipal Center.

A fourth project involving a \$400,000 state grant is also moving ahead on the campus. The grant was approved this past winter and planning is underway for the infrastructure upgrades and new streetscape elements that will be installed this summer. The grant will help enhance both the development potential for the main campus area and the enjoyment of the campus by residents and visitors.

Discussions about cultural arts and activities upon the campus have also surfaced over the past

several months. An outside performing arts center was added to the campus use plan a few years ago and other cultural activities are now in the preliminary stages of discussion. It is envisioned that there will be an opportunity to incorporate such uses into the campus along with the commercial, civic and recreational uses.

Finally, while the Fairfield Hills Campus is the main attraction for our spring preview article, it is important to note that there is construction activity along South Main St. (Rte. 25), Church Hill Rd. (Rte. 6) near I-84 and in Hawleyville. Two new commercial buildings are taking shape and are available for lease at Highland Plaza on South Main St. Consumer Petroleum of CT is planning to build a new filling station and convenience store on Church Hill Rd. and there is space available at the recently completed Plaza South neighborhood shopping center.

I welcome your call or visit and will work with you confidentially to help find you the right Newtown location. Whether you are seeking land along I-84, Rte. 25 or Rte. 6, a building to lease or redevelopment options at Fairfield Hills Campus, I will help you explore the many options available. Newtown's Economic Development Commission and I are dedicated to local business growth and are only a phone call or mouse-click away! We welcome the opportunity to show you how Newtown can help your bottom line. Visit our web site www.newtown.org.

Elizabeth Stocker, AICP is director of economic and community development for the Town of Newtown, Conn. and first vice president CT Economic Development Association (CEDAS).

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