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Greater Portland Economic Development Corp. launches new website: greaterportland.org

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The Greater Portland Economic Development Corp. (GPEDC) launched their new website, GreaterPortland.org, last month, providing businesses, developers and site locaters a new resource for accessing information on the Greater Portland region.

The new website completes another milestone for this relatively new organization, established in 2011 by a group of communities comprising the urban core of the Portland region, Maine's economic powerhouse. Through GPEDC, the six communities of Portland, South Portland, Scarborough, Westbrook, Falmouth and Cape Elizabeth joined together with private sector and major educational institutions to promote the region and to work cooperatively to serve the business community.

Tom Turner, GPEDC's executive director, talks about the area as a "well-kept secret." For Turner, the website helps him get the message out that Portland is a dynamic area for business.

"Over 55 million affluent people live within 500 miles (a one day drive by truck) of the Portland MSA. This compares favorably with metropolitan areas in the Southeast and Midwest. If you are looking for market proximity, you should look at Greater Portland," said Turner.

"If transportation is important to your client, Greater Portland now has direct container service to Europe along with an international airport, an excellent road system and passenger and freight rail service," added Turner. "Greater Portland has great access to Boston with far less congestion and a cost of living that is 20% less."

The website is definitely aimed at business executives, site consultants and brokers, providing this group with the tools needed to explore the region including a real estate search engine, key demographics, access to education and workforce providers as well as a window into Portland's creative economy and lifestyle.

The website helps Turner promote Greater Portland's world class research centers such as the University of New England, the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (a marine research dedicated industrial park), The Foundation for Blood Research and the Maine Medical Center Research Institute.

Turner also wants his target audience to know that "Maine has the lowest effective tax rate on capital equipment in the nation, which is documented in the Ernst & Young study available on the GreaterPortland.org website."

The website is not the only news in the region. Horizon Solutions, the first major post recession project along Scarborough's Haigis Parkway opened last month. The new facility serves as the Maine headquarters for the company, which provides customers with applications expertise in electrical and industrial distribution. The Haigis Parkway includes nearly 400 acres of serviced land, ready for development.

Phase 1 of the city of Portland's new Technology Park on Rand Rd. is complete (975 feet of road with utilities), opening up three sites for building construction. Site 1 is the largest and will accommodate a 2-story 40,000 s/f building. Sites two and three will each accommodate a one-story 10,000 s/f building. At full build-out the Park will accommodate 86,000 to 120,000 s/f of space in seven buildings. Each company that purchases a unit area in this business park condominium will be responsible for constructing its building, driveway and parking area.

On May 13 the Falmouth town council unanimously approved a comprehensive set of zoning changes for the Rte. One commercial area to create a more village-like area. On June 11, Falmouth voters will cast a referendum vote authorizing spending of \$11.7 million in Tax Increment Financing funds on infrastructure improvements in the same area. Improvements include placing all utility and communication lines underground. The Falmouth Rte. One plan has been more than ten years in the making and represents a major milestone for the community.

Riverfront activity in Westbrook continues its upward trend with the installation of the Sappi Fine Paper North America fish way at Cumberland Mills. The city of Westbrook just installed three ramps and floats increasing access to the river and recreational use of the river by paddlers and fishermen. South Portland's Maine Crossing, a 274,000 s/f regional shopping center, just added Nordstrom Rack to its portfolio of stores. Opening May 16, Nordstrom Rack joins Target, Bed, Bath & Beyond and other retailers at the shopping center, which has excellent access to I-95 and I-295.

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