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Ball park at Slater Mill the final piece in the puzzle - by Donald Grebien

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Donald Grebien, Mayor of the
City of Pawtucket

After decades of planning, work and private and public investment, so many of the pieces are coming into place for the economic rebirth of downtown Pawtucket.

Twenty years ago Pawtucket had the vision to call on our legislature to declare 307 acres of its historic downtown as an Arts and Entertainment District and aggressively market 22 vacant and underutilized mill buildings for reuse as artists' studios and loft space. These efforts have proved to be successful in revitalizing the city by attracting artists to our mills. Today, nearly 500 businesses and over \$110 million in new investment have been generated by Pawtucket's arts policy initiative.

Putting the pieces together in Pawtucket's downtown

A new commuter rail station is scheduled to open in 2020 financed by federal, state and local funds. New investment is already occurring in the mills surrounding the commuter connection to Boston. Pawtucket and Central Falls, partners on this project, designated the 160 acres of land and 2 million s/f of unique, historic mill buildings as a prime redevelopment opportunity. A new joint planning committee was established earlier this year to provide for the most streamlined processes for permitting desirable development within the district. This train station district will be a truly walkable, bikeable urban center with an eclectic mix of restaurants, public spaces, recreational and entertainment venues.

Additional amenities such as microbreweries, a network of bike paths, a national park at Slater Mill, and newly renovated pier with access for fishing, festivals, and tour boats also serve to attract residents and employers.

Bring AAA Baseball to downtown Pawtucket

The linchpin project of Pawtucket's economic revitalization strategy is the relocation of the Pawtucket Red Sox's McCoy Stadium to the "Apex Site" that sits at the entrance of the city's historic downtown, on the river's edge, prominently visible from Route 95.

Revitalization of any urban downtown requires a multifaceted approach; employers and residents seek a vibrant, authentic location that offers places to live, work and play. The Ballpark at Slater Mill is not just about baseball; it is about adding the critical missing piece in the puzzle to unlock the potential of downtown Pawtucket. This project will be more than a stadium; it will create a place that can serve as the civic hub for Pawtucket and beyond.

The Ball Park at Slater Mill will become a gateway to our city and our state, the AAA stadium hosting concerts, festivals and community events that will generate activity for the nearby downtown businesses. New development will be spurred by the presence of a lively, attractive destination in the heart of the city.

The Rhode Island General Assembly is now considering proposed legislation that establishes the framework for a partnership between the private sector, the State and the City to invest in the future of Pawtucket, by financing the construction of the new stadium.

Throughout the years, Pawtucket has demonstrated that it has the vision, resourcefulness and creativity to shape the destiny of its downtown. The Ball Park at Slater Mill is just the catalytic project needed to finally fulfill the city's vision for creating a vibrant downtown.

Donald Grebien is mayor of the City of Pawtucket, R.I.

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