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2017 Annual Review: Donald Grebien of City of Pawtucket

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What was your greatest professional accomplishment in 2017? As mayor, I see the importance of education and its impact on the city's business community. We are heavily investing in the future of our students. For example, Potter-Burns Elementary School underwent a \$12 million renovation. The nearly 100 year old school has new classrooms, offices, school library, media center, elevator, energy efficiencies and playground. Students, teachers and parents are ecstatic about their new and improved school. Our students are some of the best and brightest in the world. They deserve a 21st century learning environment to inspire them and allow them to flourish and compete in a global economy. This was one of my greatest professional achievements last year.

What was your most notable project, deal, or transaction in 2017? Throughout 2017 I have called for approval of the new PawSox Ballpark at Slater Mill. It's not just about baseball; it is about adding a critical missing piece to the puzzle of unlocking the potential of downtown Pawtucket. With the commitment to ancillary economic development around the stadium, Pawtucket will see new retail shops, hotels and restaurants, bringing additional revenues and growth the City, and lessening the tax burden placed on its residents. We saw Isle Brewers Guild open in our Downtown earlier this year, bringing Narragansett Beer back to Rhode Island and five other brewing operations to the Guild. With Foolproof, Bucket Brewery and Crooked Current also in Pawtucket, we are easily the craft brew capital of Rhode Island. This is just a taste of the resurgence of Pawtucket in 2017.

What are your predictions for commercial real estate in 2018? Pawtucket is beginning to see new investment spurred by the prospect of the new commuter rail which is scheduled to open in 2020 and the proposed ballpark at Slater Mill. Investors are purchasing properties in our Downtown and Train Station District and renovating these properties for new apartments and live-work space. Our economic development upswing is not just confined to the city's historic downtown, however. We are seeing new commercial investment in our retail corridors, including the new Newport Ave. proposed mixed-use commercial development by Carpionato Group. We are also seeing Pawtucket-based manufacturers expand and bring more jobs to Pawtucket, including the Matlet Group and Rand-Whitney. I am confident that 2018 will see continued growth and recognition that Pawtucket is a prudent real estate investment.

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