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Central Falls: The comeback city continues to rise - by James Diossa

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James Diossa,
Mayor of Central Falls

As I reflect on the successes of 2018, I realize that Central Falls would not be the “comeback city,” without assessing our strengths and planning for the next year.

This past year, has been a year of growth, expansion, and perseverance for the City of Central Falls. The Neighborhood Health Station was constructed on Broad Street and is set to open in two weeks, we broke ground on the Pawtucket-Central Falls Commuter Rail Station and Bus Hub, we opened the splash pad feature at Veteran’s Memorial Park for our youth and families to enjoy, our culinary scene continues to excel, and we continued work on the Rhode Island Urban Education Teaching Center on Dexter St. and The Landing project on Broad St. We are undergoing an exciting renaissance that is charged by a new positive spirit in our city!

The Central Falls Office on Health is charged with helping Central Falls to become the healthiest city in Rhode Island and what a better way to do that than building and opening the first urban Neighborhood Health Station in the nation. The health station will offer the almost 20,000 residents a one-stop shop for health care needs including primary care, urgent care, dental care, behavioral health care, physical therapy, lab work and pharmacy needs. This is the type of innovation that will improve the lives of many people, we are on the road to success, or on the right track rather.

Central Falls has long awaited a transit center that will help connect our region to the Boston market; we are proud to have finally broke ground on The Pawtucket- Central Falls Commuter Rail Station this past November in the Conant Thread District. I am excited about the opportunities and possibilities this will bring to our city and economy in the coming years. In addition to new developments, we continue to renovate existing landmarks in the city.

Veterans Memorial Park underwent a complete renovation in 2017, the park now combines land from the old VFW Post, two refurbished cannons from the Post that are mounted on the sides of the waterfall memorial hoisting the flags, a walk path, and more. This past year we were able to add a splash pad for residents to play and cool off in the summer which has been a success. The summertime in Central Falls brings out visitors for our annual Restaurant Week which takes place in

late August.

Central Falls has a unique and diverse array of restaurants, representing a variety of cultures from around the world. At Central Falls Restaurant Week, we believe you can experience the world in one week, in one square mile! Small businesses are the backbone of our city, so it is important for us to bring interest and exposure to the amazing restaurants we have to offer. Over 20 restaurants offer specials throughout the week attracting both residents and visitors throughout the state and region. This year we will host our 3rd Annual Restaurant Week and hope for the biggest turn out yet. Another big focus in Central Falls is bringing higher education to our city.

We want our residents to envision college as a realistic path by having access to higher education right in their own city. Central Falls has partnered with Rhode Island College (RIC) and Navigant Credit Union to develop The Rhode Island Urban Education Teaching Center. RIC has taken over an empty, newly renovated, 22,000 s/f bank building at 943 Dexter St. This building is an ideal location for a college campus not only because of the building's size and appeal, but also because it is located on one of the city's busiest streets and is accessible by bus. We look forward to opening this new education center soon.

Central Falls also looks to finish The Landing project later this year.

It's been about two years since we broke ground on a project to turn the Central Falls Landing from an abandoned mill into an exciting commercial center on the south bank of the Blackstone River. We are working with the Tai-O Group to renovate and make additions to The Landing. The Landing is a 7,000 s/f mill at 1420 Broad St. that has been vacant since 2008 and a 3,000 s/f, one-story building for retail space at the intersection of Broad and Madeira Sts. The rehabilitated Landing is expected to open in the Fall of this year.

In closing, we have come a long way from bankruptcy, proving that Central Falls is a place to receive healthcare, education, access transportation, enjoy a day at the park, eat culturally diverse foods, and a place to live. As we enter the second month of the new year, we continue to look ahead to create more jobs, encourage tourism, innovate, and renovate as we soar ahead.

James Diossa is the mayor of Central Falls.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540