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Central Avenue businesses organize new business neighborhood group - by Donald Grebien

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Donald Grebien,
Mayor of Pawtucket

Almost a year ago, the Darlington District, Pawtucket's newest business neighborhood group, was established to channel the energy and resources of over seventy Central Avenue businesses to create a cohesive business community, with the goal of attracting customers from the surrounding neighborhood who reside in small to medium sized apartment buildings and single-family homes, covering an area of approximately three square miles with nearly 30,000 residents.

Initially, co-founders Maureen McCarthy LaChapelle, owner of Maureen McCarthy Salon, realtor Brenda Marchwicki, Jeanne Salisbury, owner of Minuteman Press of Pawtucket, and Victor Claudio, of Central Car Wash, worked closely with the city's Planning Department to lay the foundation for establishing this business group. Over the past several months, attendance has steadily grown, with at least 25 businesses attending these meetings.

LaChapelle says her efforts to establish the Darlington District came from a desire to see the quality of life in the neighborhood improve with greater attention paid to maintenance and beautification. The founders of the group also sought to establish a clear identity for the district as a shopping and business destination.

The Darlington District, whose members included real estate agents, owners of restaurants, drug stores, hardware stores, tax services, car companies, tee shirt printers, manufacturers, and top management of local banks banded together to take ownership to enhance the image of the neighborhood. A logo has been created, banners are planned to be posted along Central Ave. and 35 people came on a Sunday to Central Avenue to pick up litter, filling over 40 large bags. With the newly formed group's push to clean up the Darlington neighborhood, many more of the local businesses along Central Ave. are now joining the effort to improve their properties, too.

The Central Ave. businesses are networking with each other at each meeting and they are sending customers to each other, to bring customers to the street.

Although the Darlington District is now focused on recruiting business members to its rank and file, a

future goal is to reach out to the residents residing on Central Ave. As everyone comes together to take more pride in their street, says LaChapelle, those passing by will take notice.

The Central Ave. businesses strongly support the preserving of the historic Hose Company No. 6 Building at 636 Central Ave. The city is putting time and effort to assist the property owner in finding a buyer who will renovate the property and keep the building to maintain the historic look of the neighborhood. The city has been very supportive in providing resources to the effort, according to LaChapelle.

For more on Darlington District, find details on Facebook or email mmcarthysalon@aol.com with the subject line "Darlington District."

Donald Grebien is mayor of the City of Pawtucket.

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