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Developer eyes former Memorial Hospital site - by Donald Grebien

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City of Pawtucket

The city of Pawtucket has some great opportunities with the commuter rail – Transit Oriented Development District (TOD) scheduled for 2021, and great waterfront opportunities around the Slater Mill National Park along with easy on/off access to Rte. 95. This year, the city was fortunate to be designated with Federal Opportunity Zones. We also worked closely with the general assembly and our state delegation on passing an enabling Tax Increment Financing (TIF) legislation to be used as an economic tool for investment. This has helped us market the city outside of Rhode Island. Lockwood Development Group, out of New York, originally showed interest in Pawtucket's opportunity zones designations.

The city, through our Commerce Department, my office and Pawtucket Foundation have been aggressive and strategic with marketing these incentives to benefit Pawtucket and the Blackstone Valley. We made the connection with Charles Everhardt at Lockwood and have been building on the relationship, as well as sharing a number of locations.

As the city and Lockwood continued our due diligence, it became clear that Lockwood's vision for a veterans facility was in line with the overall needs of our community. My administration then connected Lockwood and Care New England (CNE). CNE, to its credit, has been working diligently to find alternatives for the underutilized former Memorial Hospital property and was willing to meet with Lockwood.

We have been informed that Lockwood and CNE have a goal of getting something finalized in the near future. They are currently in their stages of discussions and negotiations.

The city is willing to continue its commitment to working with Lockwood Development and Care New England so long as the project benefits and meets the community's needs. We look forward to working on developments that will breathe life back into a major property in our city. The city will continue to have regular communications with Care New England regarding the future of the property to ensure that the site will once again be beneficial to Pawtucket and the surrounding Blackstone Valley communities.

Donald Grebien is mayor of the City of Pawtucket.

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