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City and state incentives bring jobs to Pawtucket - by Donald Grebien

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Donald Grebien

A successful mix of state and city tax incentives is priming Pawtucket's economic development engine.

Over a week ago, the Rhode Island Commerce Corp. board announced that two Pawtucket applicants were approved for grants, under the state's Rebuild Rhode Island Tax Credit Program and Jobs Incentive Act, that is expected to bring hundreds of new jobs into the city.

The Commerce board's Rebuild RI State Tax Credits were granted to Peyer Real Estate Group to support a new ground up 150,000 s/f mixed- use development in Pawtucket. The new project includes 150 market rate residential units along with 25,000 s/f of retail space, in close proximity to a commuter rail to become operational by 2022.

This development, at 71 Dexter St., is considered to be the first ground-up construction in Pawtucket's Conant Thread Transit Oriented District (TOD). It represents the new "gateway" to the district and will establish the tone and the market for future development surrounding the city's new commuter rail. This is precisely the kind of project we envision for the TOD. A project of this size and magnitude will attract additional investment to the area as well as reposition an underutilized property to spur significant economic development.

The Rhode Island Commerce board also approved tax incentives for Change Healthcare at 100 Freight St., to expand into Rhode Island by increasing its workforce by 300 employees, from beyond the current employment base of approximately 250. The number of new jobs could increase by as many as 600 over time, many to include higher-salaried positions in the fields of project management, sales, human resources and learning and development.

In 2015, we successfully attracted this Long Island, New Jersey-based call center (then Tunstall) to an 85,000 s/f mill in Pawtucket. The former Tunstall was purchased by Connect America LLC in January, then acquired again by Change Healthcare, Inc. in November 2019.

My administration, Rhode Island Commerce and the Department of Labor and Training worked together with Change Healthcare to come up with a competitive economic package to keep the company in the state. Pawtucket had provided a competitive tax agreement on tangibles for the previous expansion and the state also offered tax credits for job growth and grants for training the new employees.

The combination of city and state incentives, as well as our strong relationship with Change Healthcare leadership, put us in a strong position to successfully compete for this expansion and retain the existing jobs, and add 300 jobs plus new investment to its Pawtucket headquarters.

For information about economic development opportunities in the city of Pawtucket, contact commerce director Jeanne Boyle at jboyle@pawtucketri.com.

Come to Pawtucket. Join the revolution.

Donald Grebien is mayor of the city of Pawtucket.

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