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The pandemic has been a difficult time for businesses - by Joseph Solomon

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Mayor Joseph Solomon

The pandemic has been an extraordinarily difficult time for most businesses. Just as all of us have had to find new ways of doing things in our everyday lives, companies have had to completely transform their day-to-day operations, from shipping delays due to supply chain disruptions to new safety measures.

However, there are signs of hope amidst all of this uncertainty: just recently, I've been to the ribbon cuttings of two new independently-owned small businesses in Warwick, Zaydah Creations and Little Learners Academy of Kent County, and we are anticipating the grand opening of a new Dunkin' Donuts later this month. Our Planning Department is also presently working with investors who are in various phases of project development.

Since I've been Mayor, I've visited dozens of local businesses, from large, international chains to family-owned micro businesses. In that time, a number of businesses have chosen Warwick as their first Rhode Island location, including Tesla, Edge Fitness, Dogtopia, and Metal Supermarkets. And, we're luring companies from other Rhode Island communities, such as Massey and Associates and the Rhode Island Parent Information Network.

Our location – in the heart of southern New England, with close proximity to Interstates 95 and 295 and convenient access to T.F. Green Airport and the InterLink intermodal train station – gives companies a strategic advantage, and they can find space here at a lower price tag than other major metropolitan areas.

We have worked diligently to cultivate a strong climate for commerce, and it makes me incredibly proud to hear feedback from local business owners about what drew them to Warwick, or how much they enjoy calling our community home. I've heard from local businesses that my office and the Department of Tourism, Culture and Development have been instrumental in helping them navigate through the challenging circumstances of COVID-19.

So that businesses can have a direct line to City Hall, I regularly conduct “Business One-on-One” visits, where I go out to local companies to hear directly from owners and employees. I like to know what’s working well for them, as well as what could be improved. Brewed Awakenings, Chelo’s, TigerEye Gift Shop, the Chocolate Delicacy, Squad Locker, Homewood Suites by Hilton, Gregg’s – these are just a few of the places I’ve had the opportunity to visit as part of my program. Later this month, we’ll be supporting the nationwide effort to promote “Small Business Saturday” and to shop local during this holiday season.

During these times of continued uncertainty, it is important to find signs of hope and optimism. I hope your holiday season is filled with these moments and the blessing of family and friends.

Joseph Solomon is the mayor of the city of Warwick, R.I.

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