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RIIB awards Warwick \$225,000 MRP Action Grant - by Frank Picozzi

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Mayor
Frank Picozzi

We know that having good infrastructure is important for economic development, job creation, and ensuring a better quality of life for those who visit, live and work in our communities. Here in Warwick, we've already been investing in roadway improvements and will soon begin the conversion of our streetlights to environmentally-friendly, cost-effective LED technology.

We've also been actively identifying other measures to build on our work, and I'm pleased to report that the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank (RIIB) has recently awarded the city a Municipal Resilience Program (MRP) Action Grant in the amount of \$225,000 to help further our efforts. This funding will pay for the construction of a bio-retention stormwater system and coastal embankment restoration in our seaside community of Oakland Beach – a favorite seasonal destination and one of our most popular coastal neighborhoods.

This plan is important for several reasons: it will help reduce/prevent erosion of the existing beach area, increase wildlife habitat, and enhance the overall aesthetics of the area while minimizing pollution in Greenwich Bay by intercepting and treating stormwater runoff before it discharges into our coastal waters. When you consider Rhode Island's \$5.2 billion tourism industry, its \$1.3 billion marine trades and recreational boating industry and \$3 million aquaculture industry – translating to some 82,100 jobs – it's very important to ensure these types of projects become a reality, not just for the environment, but to sustain and grow the economy.

The project will also complement our larger efforts supported by local, state, and federal agencies to include nature-based resiliency solutions along the Oakland Beach coastline that will increase the public's enjoyment of the shoreline by expanding public access and recreational opportunities. Thanks to grants totaling approximately \$1.16 million, we'll be making further improvements in Oakland Beach by removing pavement in areas subject to flooding; installing vegetation to establish a coastal buffer and to treat stormwater runoff; extending existing walking paths; and creating new pathways to the beach. Plans also include implementing measures to prevent erosion, improve

resiliency and water quality, provide handicapped access to the beach and boardwalk, enhance the existing playground with the addition of a splash park and other amenities, and create an attractive pedestrian entryway.

These comprehensive improvements at Oakland Beach can serve as a model for green resilient infrastructure throughout the state and region. I'm very excited about these projects to protect and restore the environment, support economic development, provide better recreational opportunities, and continue to increase pride in our community. Stay tuned for further announcements regarding other exciting new developments in the city of Warwick in the months ahead.

Frank Picozzi is the mayor of the city of Warwick, RI.

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