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School renovations give our students better experiences - by mayor Donald Grebien

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Donald Grebien

As we move into the post-pandemic world and see signs of a “new normal” as Rhode Island lifts its COVID-19 restrictions, the city of Pawtucket moves forward to continue many school upgrade projects that ultimately will give students a better educational experience.

We know that our students deserve the best educational experience we can give them, and we must maintain our commitment to them, their teachers and the school department to further opportunities and engage in education through better schools and classrooms.

In 2018 a \$220 million bond for school projects was approved by the voters to complete all necessary upgrades at Pawtucket’s 17 schools. So far we have completed upgrades at Potter-Burns Elementary and Nathanael Greene Elementary, with Henry J. Winters Elementary underway after the groundbreaking on April 14th of this year.

The money from the school bond has been put to good use and will continue to provide our students with a better educational experience through upgraded safety equipment and updated facilities. Businesses operating in Pawtucket will benefit from a workforce that was educated in state-of-the-art facilities.

Besides the full demolition and rebuilding of the Henry J. Winters Elementary School and completed projects at Potter-Burns and Nathanael Greene Elementary, Pawtucket has completed numerous other projects to increase safety for students, teachers and administrators.

Here are just a few...

Since 2014 the initial \$32 million bond helped to renovate the Pawtucket School Annex, Potter-Burns Elementary and Nathanael Greene Elementary as well as other smaller but similarly important upgrades, such as restroom upgrades to early child education classrooms, and renovations. Additionally, safety upgrades at Shea High School with exterior stairs, district-wide entry door upgrades, and Tolman High School fire code upgrades were also necessary

expenditures.

The second bond of \$24 million covered district-wide security upgrades and site safety upgrades along with the necessary boiler project completion for Elizabeth Baldwin Elementary, Fallon Memorial Elementary, Lyman B. Goff Middle School, Samuel Slater Middle School and Shea High School.

Additional project funding has come from the 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 Shovel Ready Programs, which has helped to complete fire alarm upgrades, fire sprinkler upgrades and restroom upgrades.

All of these projects may not be large scale overhauls that are clearly visible but each is extremely important. This does not happen without coordination between my administration, the Pawtucket City Council and the Pawtucket School Department.

We have the unprecedented opportunity to capitalize on the momentum of these projects to propel our schools forward and provide state-of-the-art facilities for our students to prepare them for their future employment.

Donald Grebien is the mayor of city of Pawtucket, R.I.

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