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Bringing economic activity to Pawtucket's Transit-Oriented Development District - by Donald Grebien

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After 14 years of hard work and preparation, construction began on the Pawtucket-Central Falls Commuter Rail Station in 2020. The pace of construction has quickened in 2021, with the station set to be completed and open to the public in summer, 2022. The city of Pawtucket has worked closely with its partners including the Pawtucket Foundation, state and federal agencies, AMTRAK and the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority to make this transformational project a reality. Construction work for summer and fall of 2021 includes the relocation of a freight track and construction the train's platforms.

As next summer's opening approaches, crews are continuing to build the Barton St. pedestrian access ramp and the Providence and Boston bound train platforms. They will also start overnight foundation work for the system of overhead wires that will ultimately electrify the trains.

The bus hub component of the project is scheduled to be completed in mid-2022 and will include the relocation of the state's second busiest bus hub to the commuter rail station. Work to support the new bus hub includes dedicated bus lanes along Exchange St. and Goff Ave., linking the new transit facility and the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) District to Pawtucket's historic downtown.

The city's new intermodal transit center will include a pedestrian bridge overpass and will allow riders to switch modes easily between the commuter rail and RIPTA's statewide bus network. Ridership studies show this station will attract an estimated 520 daily boardings. The \$47 million commuter rail station, already generating new economic activity for both Pawtucket and Central Falls, will connect commuters traveling to Boston via an approximately 45-minute ride going north and connect to Providence, Rhode Island T.F. Green International Airport and Wickford Junction to the south.

The new TOD District is strengthening Pawtucket and Central Falls efforts to spur re-development in the area with new developers and investors looking to capitalize off of the new intermodal transit center and rehabilitate many of the historic mill buildings in the district.

Within the TOD District, there are more than 22 acres that have been redeveloped or are currently in

the process of being redeveloped since 2016. In total there are approximately 581 residential units, from seven separate projects, which have been constructed in the past five years or are currently under construction in the district.

New commercial activity includes The Guild Brewery, which is the largest beer brewery in Rhode Island, and is one of the largest in New England. The Guild has recently expanded retail operations which include a large outdoor beer garden adjacent to the coming train station.

A new restaurant, Harvest Kitchen, is now located within the TOD District. New England Paper Tube has also made its headquarters in a vacant mill it has renovated. New commercial activity currently under construction includes approximately 20,000 s/f of commercial space as part of a mixed-use development located at 71 Dexter St. which will have retail shops and restaurants/cafés as well as a yoga studio with office space relocating to a former mill building in the northern area of the district.

For more details about properties available for lease or purchase with the city's TOD District, contact commerce director Jeanne Boyle at jboyle@pawtucketri.com.

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