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## **Real estate developments continue to heat up, just like the weather - by Frank Picozzi**

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Frank Picozzi

Many people associate the summer months with a slower pace, as vacations are planned and folks take time off to enjoy the beautiful seasonal weather. That's not the case here in Warwick, however; the city is bustling with a number of projects in various stages of development.

At its most recent meeting, the Warwick Planning Board gave master plan approval – the first of several phases of review – to a proposal to construct 20 units of multi-family residential, duplex-style homes on 3.3 acres near Little Pond off Sandy Lane, one of the city's main thoroughfares. The board also voted to issue a favorable recommendation to the city council for a zone change to accommodate the development; the matter is slated to go before the council for a vote in August.

In addition, the board granted combined preliminary/final approval for another major land development, consisting of 54 townhouse-style and 19 single-family style units along Kilvert and Greystone Sts. in City Centre Warwick. These residences, in the heart of the transit-oriented development district, are likely to be an attractive option for those looking for an affordable neighborhood with convenient access to I-95 and 295 and within walking distance of the MBTA commuter rail and Rhode Island T.F. Green International Airport.

Also looking to capitalize on Warwick's role as host to the airport is Gold Coast Premier Properties, a Miami-based hotel development company, which received master plan approval of its proposal to construct a 122-room, four-story extended stay WoodSpring Suites hotel just a minute or two away from the airport. WoodSprings Suites has 300 locations among 38 states and the District of Columbia, offering such amenities as in-suite kitchens with a two-burner cooktop, microwave, full-sized refrigerator and freezer and ample counter space and cupboards, free wi-fi access and access to staff around the clock.

Master plan approval was also granted for a proposal at 35 West Shore Rd. – at the intersection of busy Hoxsie Four Corners – that would entail the demolition of three buildings on three existing lots, the merger of those lots into one, and construction of a new, 5,907 s/f Dunkin' Donuts restaurant

with a drive-thru. This project will allow for the redevelopment of properties that are presently vacant and un- or underutilized into a more attractive area, complete with substantial site improvements to the overall layout, the addition of extensive, attractive landscaping, stormwater management enhancements, and new signage.

The board also voted to grant master plan approval to a plan to merge five existing parcels on and adjacent to Warwick Ave. into one lot, demolish a vacant building that once housed a Rite Aid, and construct a 4,600 s/f Seasons Corner Market with drive-thru window, new parking, landscaping, and related appurtenances on the parcel. This project, too, will provide significant aesthetic improvements to the area.

Elsewhere in the city, we're anticipating the transformation of the former Toys R' Us property into a BJ's Wholesale Club store. The property, adjacent to the Rhode Island Mall campus and I-295, is sure to be a popular destination for shoppers looking for easy, convenient access to one of BJ's newest Rhode Island locations. We're also looking forward to the completion of a new Citizen's Bank currently under construction on what's known locally as the former Benny's property on West Shore Rd. In addition to the bank, the 26.5-acre parcel includes a 32,500 s/f Dave's Marketplace, a 6,500 s/f addition to the Dave's building for retail use, and space for additional retail/restaurant uses on site.

These are just some of the projects underway. Stay tuned for more announcements in the weeks to come, as development continues to heat up just like the summer weather. Please contact us if you'd like to learn more about how we can help your business thrive here in Warwick.

Frank Picozzi is the mayor of the city of Warwick, R.I.

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