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Bentley Builders breaks ground on Greenwood Credit Union City Hall Plaza - by Frank Picozzi

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Frank Picozzi

Following a ceremonial groundbreaking last month, crews from Bentley Builders LLC, have been busy, fencing off the area behind City Hall and getting to work prepping the site before they begin construction of the future Greenwood Credit Union City Hall Plaza.

Upon completion, this eagerly-awaited project, made possible with \$5 million in Congressionally Directed Spending funds secured by U.S. senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse, along with an additional \$3 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds that have been set aside, will result in a year-round community gathering space.

The highlight of the plaza, on the site of the former municipal annex building, which was demolished following extensive damage from a burst pipe, will be a public outdoor ice skating rink, which will transform into a plaza during warmer months. Events envisioned include outdoor concerts, farmers' markets, food truck events, movie nights, art shows, roller disco, pickleball, street hockey, a figure skating day, and much more.

The project will also include parking lot improvements; new concrete curbing to define parking areas and pedestrian walks; new paver walks and plaza areas; installation of entry, informational, and interpretive wayfinding signage; construction of an ADA-accessible walk and landing area; and installation of new landscaping and site adornments, including benches, electric vehicle charging stations, trash receptacles, bike racks, and lighting.

There will also be a shade structure over the rink area, and a building that will house the ice rink mechanicals, restrooms, locker rooms, and concessions. Because the rink is located in Apponaug, which is one of Warwick's three designated historic districts, the city's Historic District Commission worked with municipal departments for a final design that complements the architectural features of city hall and the adjacent library and former Kentish Armory, which are collectively on the National Register of Historic Places.

Bentley Builders secured the \$6.7 million contract, and the Greenwood Credit Union won the naming rights, with a bid of \$300,000. The initial naming rights agreement is for a five-year term.

We're certain that the Greenwood Credit Union City Hall Plaza, when complete, will be a popular year-round gathering space for residents of all ages, not only Warwick residents, but, more broadly, for those across Rhode Island and southern New England, enhancing the quality of life for residents, and serving as a boon for local businesses. We look forward to welcoming you to the plaza when it opens sometime next summer!

For more information about municipal improvement projects, or development and re-development opportunities in Warwick, please call the Department of Economic Development at (401) 738-2014, or email econ.dir@warwickri.gov.

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

