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Reimagining Pawtucket - by Gaetan Kashala

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Pawtucket has always been a city characterized by resilience, innovation, and ambition. From its founding as the “cradle” of the American Industrial Revolution to the dynamic community we see today, our city has never run away from a challenge. Now, once again, we stand at a pivotal moment to Reimagine Pawtucket that calls for bold ideas, strong partnerships, and collective action. The city is witnessing a transformation fitting of its historical legacy. True, Pawtucket has faced setbacks such as the departure of the PawSox and Hasbro, but those changes have not diminished the city’s promise. Public and private investments underway today are among the most transformative in Pawtucket’s history, positioning the city as an economic and cultural hub for Rhode Island and the broader region.

The Pawtucket Foundation is a membership organization composed of businesses and community-based organizations. We are united in our efforts to drive economic development, placemaking, and connectivity to bring about a maximally attractive, sustainable, and livable city. With strategic priorities focused on infrastructure, housing, and transportation, the Foundation and its partners are bullish on Pawtucket’s future. Here’s why:

The Tidewater Landing Development project stands as the largest economic development project in Pawtucket’s storied history. Anchored by the state-of-the-art Centreville Bank Stadium, which opened to great fanfare on May 3rd, Tidewater is already positioning Pawtucket as a regional hub for sports, entertainment, and commerce. But the stadium is just the beginning. Plans call for market-rate and affordable housing, retail, office space, and vibrant green areas along the riverfront, including a riverwalk and pedestrian bridge that will connect the east and west sides of the river. These are key to maximizing Tidewater’s economic contribution. Developers Pennrose and Wood Partners are advancing these efforts, including Pennrose’s recently proposed 72-unit, 100% affordable housing project at 177 School St. This transformation of a formerly industrialized area into a thriving, sports-anchored, mixed-use waterfront community is the very definition of reimagining Pawtucket. Another anchor of Pawtucket’s reimagination is the Pawtucket Central Falls Train Station, a \$63 million project and the culmination of a 21-year, multi-stakeholder effort. Located within the Conant Thread Special Economic Development District, the station has already proven catalytic in attracting significant investment, delivering economic impact, and reshaping the residential landscape. More than 1,000 residential units have been constructed or are in the pipeline, leveraging the station’s frictionless connectivity to Providence, Boston, New York, and beyond. A new \$5 million passenger amenities center, now under construction, will further enhance the commuter experience when it opens next year. By making Pawtucket more accessible and better connected, the train station strengthens the city’s competitiveness and expands its appeal as a place to live, work, play and invest.

Looking ahead, the Downtown Gateway Project represents the next bold step in Pawtucket’s reimagination. The Pawtucket Redevelopment Authority is preparing to issue an RFP calling on visionary development partners to transform 20 acres of prime real estate at the city’s heart. The vision is ambitious: a reactivated waterfront restoring visual and physical connection to the river, modern energy-efficient infrastructure, dynamic mixed-use development, and new spaces where

people will want to live, work, and play. As the “front door” to I-95, downtown Pawtucket is uniquely positioned to make a lasting first impression on visitors, prospective employers, and investors alike. By complementing investments such as Tidewater Landing and the train station, the DGP promises to accelerate economic activity and breathe new life into existing businesses while attracting new employers and residents.

Reimagination has been a recurring theme in this article however, it is also the reality taking place in Pawtucket. From Tidewater Landing to transit-oriented development around the train station to the Downtown Gateway Project, the pieces are falling into place for a citywide transformation. This reimagination has not occurred in a vacuum. The Pawtucket administration has set the vision and enabling policies. The business community has invested in growth and jobs. Educators are preparing our students for jobs in tomorrow’s economy. Community-based organizations are working hard, despite many headwinds, to ensure that all residents share in a Reimagined Pawtucket’s prosperity. These stakeholders, many of whom count as constituents of The Pawtucket Foundation, are acting with a shared purpose, a shared commitment, and shared belief in the unlimited potential of our city.

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