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Mayor's message: Piscopio to open Ironworks Tavern

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A decade ago, when plans to construct an intermodal train station a stone's throw from T.F. Green Airport were first announced, longtime resident and local developer Joseph Piscopio saw the great potential for growth and success in the area.

In less than two years' time, he had unveiled plans for the Metro Center Plaza, including construction of a Hilton Garden Inn. The hotel opened in the fall of 2005, and has enjoyed a steady occupancy rate ever since.

One of the qualities local officials admire in Piscopio is his insistence on excellence and in trying to preserve much of the local history - the hotel stands on the site of the former Rhode Island Malleable Iron Works. The hotel's facade is made from bricks that were salvaged from the razed foundry building and painstakingly cleaned for re-use.

A second Iron Works building remained intact, and, later this month, Piscopio expects to open the Ironworks Tavern, a grill and bar located directly across the street from the intermodal facility that is rapidly taking shape.

On a tour recently with city officials and members of the local media, Piscopio proudly showed off the work that had been completed so far. True to form, he's insisting on retaining as many of the building's original features from the 1800s as possible. A 300-pound oak door remains as part of the entrance, and a tile mosaic bearing the Iron Works' logo in the foyer greets visitors. Fourteen-foot high wooden ceilings, a working sprinkler system and a brick archway will also be left intact.

An etched stainless steel bar, awnings, lighting and a rust-colored concrete floor have all been carefully selected or restored, when possible, to reflect the building's history. The first floor space will seat 105, and Piscopio eventually plans to offer additional seating on the second floor, which includes magnificent woodwork, wide expanses of brick walls, and wainscoting complementing the staircase. From large, nearly floor-to-ceiling windows featuring original flowerboxes, Piscopio tracks the daily progress of the train station's construction.

Piscopio has already gathered up some memorabilia that he plans to use as decorations in the Tavern, and is hoping that residents with maps, photos and other items will donate or loan them to him.

Despite the building's history, Piscopio says the only artifact he's found on site is a 1910 dime - perhaps, he said, wages lost by a former worker.

We look forward to celebrating the opening of the Tavern, a reflection not only of Warwick's rich heritage but of its future promise.

Scott Avedisian is the mayor of Warwick.