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## Town of North Kingstown, Rhode Island

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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**TO: Nicole Lafontaine, Planning Director**

**FROM: Liz Dolan, Economic Development Administrator**

**DATE: August 15, 2018**

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### REPORT OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN NORTH KINGSTOWN

This report documents economic activity town-wide in the last year and will be made available on our Town website [www.northkingstown.org](http://www.northkingstown.org).

#### POST ROAD CORRIDOR (PRC):

The Post Road Façade Improvement Program is our new endeavor with the goal of improving the aesthetics of the PRC. 111 applications were sent to Post Road property owners. The deadline was May 31<sup>st</sup>: thirteen applications were received; ten were timely. Nine were approved after administrative review; approval letters were sent, and work should begin shortly. The recipients are spread throughout the PRC, and are a mix of façade, landscaping and exterior aesthetic improvements. A visible improvement is anticipated, and we expect to open a second round this Fall focused on landscaping improvements.

Dryvit, a West Warwick based manufacturer of bricklike exterior product, will be leasing 120,674 sf of space at the old Brown and Sharpe site at 200 Frenchtown Road. Plans for construction permits have been received by the Building Official: we are expecting *60 new employees* in North Kingstown upon their imminent opening.

6689 PR is now Plenti Mediterranean Restaurant. They have applied for a liquor license and the public hearing will be held in early fall.

7535 PR (Blue Moon) was sold in May.

7570 PR O’Rielly’s Auto Parts will begin construction soon.

7835 (Gillian's) is closed and for sale. The assessed value is \$597,500.00 – the current asking price is \$1,299,900.00. Properties that are listed for prices well in excess of value have traditionally remained vacant for lengthy periods of time.

Discussions are ongoing for corner of Camp Ave (gas station and adjacent lot); engineers are meeting with the Town next week.

6670 PR Brewery at Great Harvest Bread Co. called "Beer to Earth" with hours of 3pm til 9pm. Brewing entities are licenses and regulated by the State.

The Tarbox property on Post Road is a 3-acre parcel with half under contract with Cumberland Farms. RIDOT and Army Corp of Engineers are currently cleaning out drains that cause flooding with the goal of removing property from the flood zone.

Largest, of course, is Reynold's Farm: 650 units will be completed – development is a combination of single family, attached, duplexes, apartments and senior housing. Currently, two apartment buildings are underway, Phase 1 is almost complete with condominiums under construction, the first part of phase 2 is underway, and the affordable senior housing component of the project is under review by Rhode Island Housing for funding.

Camp Avenue – 9 duplexes (18 units) have master plan approval.

Sachem Road: 27 single family units are in the approval process and awaiting a public hearing for the preliminary planning stage.

Reynold's Farm North: Application received for 78 new homes; this is a new application, soon to proceed to the Planning commission for Preapplication review.

Harbor View: Potentially 20 new homes south of the State police barracks; 23-acre parcel of which 9.3 would remain as open space.

Saw Mill Square: 47 one-bedroom condominiums and 72 two-bedroom condos are built or under construction. For apartments, there are 24 one-bedroom units and 72 two-bedroom units. Revenue derived from Moran properties in 2017 for all apartments and condos under construction is \$102,137.18. Individually owned condos would generate a total of \$209,800 annually at full assessment; however, several have veterans and elderly exemptions that reduce tax liability.

*\* As of January 30, 2018, there was approximately 41,300 square feet of vacant building space along Post Road. As of June 30, 2018, that number declined to approximately 33,600 square feet. Goals for FY 2019 include contemplating additional economic tools that*

*discourage long term vacancies and encourage the development of businesses that serve the needs of our residential population and the ever-growing workforce population at Quonset.*

**\*\*SIDEWALKS ON both sides of Post Road are call for in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) for 2019-2010 (item 5120).**

**\*\*NATIONAL GRID EASEMENTS along Post Road continue to hamper the marketability of a number of parcels which are directly constrained by the easements. The Town Manager and the Town Council continue their efforts to engage the company and state leaders in an effort to solve this problem that is mutually beneficial to all.**

## **WICKFORD**

Sewer connections continue, and we predict growth in commercial activity during the coming year. Sewer construction is halted for the summer; after Labor Day, the line will be completed to 1A, and West Main St. will be repaved, and the disturbed sidewalks restored.

**Annex: On April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the voters approved of the sale of the Annex Building. On August 3, 2018 the Superior Court granted the Town's motion to sell the building to Eve Clulow (we executed the Purchase and Sales Agreement on March 28, 2018). We intend to move as quickly as possible with permitting and necessary zone and comprehensive plan changes once cleared to do so by legal counsel. The proposal contemplates a \$2 million dollar private investment into renovations of the interior and preservation of the exterior with a preservation easement to be held by PreserveRI. The venue will be a combination of a performing arts center, fine dining, a bar, and a place for special events.**

The Wickford Design Guideline Project has been an extensive effort for the entire Planning Department this past year: Draft Guidelines with the assistance of Rich Youngken and the Steering Committee are complete. Once they are approved by the Council, along with the enabling ordinance(s), there will be demolition protection for the WVC area along with design guidance for rehabilitation and new construction. Planning staff has been overseeing the Design Guideline process, and the Guidelines and enabling ordinances are now at the Planning Commission for review.

**Parking: In May 2018, Staff conducted an inventory of town owned parking areas in the village. While parking in municipal lots is not currently at or near full capacity on a regular basis, we will work on a long-term plan in conjunction with new restaurant owners to ensure adequate parking for their patrons that will not be disruptive to the residents of Wickford. Future consideration could be given to "resident only" parking stickers for residential side streets, as well as valet and offsite shuttle service. We HAVE CREATED AND ARE USING a Restaurant License Worksheet for all new restaurants which will assist the staff with**

calculating the necessary parking requirements and ensure that off-site parking, when needed, is adequately addressed.

Currently there are two vacancies in WVC: one in Avis Block (1 West Main) and 61 Brown (parking lot building). 61 Brown St. sits in the middle of the municipal lot: it has six private, unmarked parking spaces. This property has been for sale for over two years, primarily because of the FEMA requirement for elevation of building to BFE if improvements exceed 50% of the property value.

The former Beach Rose is now “Wickford on the Water” with extended hours for evening dining.

A new restaurant/wine bar (“Salt”) is proposed for 1 Brown St. (old Kayak Centre). The liquor license application is pending; the proposal shows 49 seats.

Wickford Woods: 40 two bedroom 55+ age restricted condominiums under construction. Some are duplexes, and some are single units.

### WICKFORD JUNCTION

Our Draft Comprehensive Plan (page 51) reads:

“Wickford Junction received mixed reviews from residents, mainly due to the type of commercial development and potential drain on natural resources. Most participants in the planning process saw the station as an asset that could be a driver of economic development but was not yet fulfilling its potential. More activity, better connections, and mixed use (housing, retail, and offices) and transit-oriented development were seen as important steps to improve Wickford Junction.”

Staff is currently analyzing the Wickford Junction zoning ordinance because a number of parties have shown an interest in residential development. Our Water Department has engaged a consultant to do a nutrient/existing conditions analysis. The goal of this study is to determine what the current carrying capacity of the district is and whether or not our ordinance is functional or in need of amendment based upon those findings. Once their findings are shared, the conversation about WJ development will continue. Staff is part of the State’s TOD Working Group and continues to discuss ways in which we can improve the functionality of Wickford Junction as a mixed-use Transit Oriented District.

CVS at Route 2 and 102: They are in the process of submitting plans for fire review prior to receiving building permits.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

This extremely dedicated group of volunteers completed an inventory of town owned land in the fall of 2017 which culminated in adding two parcels to the 4/24/2018 ballot which were approved for sale by the voters. EDAB members are working on a “metrics measurement tool” that will offer measurement tools to monitor economic development moving forward. thus far. Implementation efforts include the EDAB Post Road Working Group and sub groups which have been meeting with engaged residents and businesses to vet common concerns and thoughts for improvement (i.e. connectivity through better crosswalks, off street parking lot connections, sidewalks and bike lanes). EDAB is interested in finding individuals who sustain this public engagement and may be interested in forming a “Post Road Economic Development Advisory Board” like the WEDAB sub-group formed as an outgrowth of EDAB.

Wickford Economic Development Advisory Board (WEDAB) continues to provide invaluable input and guidance on the Design Guidelines, and on ways to advance economic growth in the Village with the advent of sewers.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GRANTS PENDING

\$292,000 Commerce RI Streetscape Grant (with a one third match to be provided by the Town) is intended to make improvements to both the infrastructure and the aesthetics of the municipal parking lot off of Brown St. in Wickford Village. Improvements include better stormwater management, a raised platform connected walkway from Brown Street to the existing sidewalks, improved park space, lighting, traffic circulation, and potentially improved and added non-resident dock space for kayaks and boats. The issuance of the RFP is forthcoming. Ocean State Job Lot is on board with the concept *provided that* the design does not reduce their number of parking spaces. Work should be completed per the grant by 11/30/2019.

## COMMERCIAL TAX REVENUE FOR FY 2018 COMPARED TO FY 2017

FY 2018	@18.59	\$10,828,853.46
FY 2019	@19.09	\$11,122,752.22

We see a modest increase; note that the Lowe’s property has come off the tax rolls for FY2019 as the building was vacated and returned to the Quonset Development Corporation.

## RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR FY 2018 COMPARED TO FY 2017 AND FY 2016

We are seeing a substantial increase in residential units, mostly due to the Reynold's Farm development.

### Building Permits:

FY2016: 73 single family units

FY 2017: 22 single family units; 24 condominiums, 24 apartments (1 building)

FY 2018 (through 6/30/2018): 101 single family units, 90 apartments (2 buildings); 3 mobile homes

FY 2019 (7/2018-current): 39 single family units, 1 mobile home

Additional residential housing units adds to our property tax revenue base and increases business for local merchants. As sales and rentals in developments such as Saw Mill Square and Reynold's Farm continue at current strength, it appears that we are addressing the national trend/demand for smaller, more densely concentrated housing.

### Town-wide School Enrollment:

2016	3989
2017	3999
2018	3920*
2019	3936
2020	3885
2021	3806

\*projected, NK School Department information

While the projections above predict a steady decrease in student enrollment for the near future, it is extremely important that we continue to work closely with the school department to monitor anticipated vs. actual school enrollment numbers as new residential developments evolve.

## CHANGES IN BUSINESS TENANCIES (COT)

COT'S in town have increased over the past two years; they are a combination of retail, office and restaurant facilities. COTs are not indicative of an increase in the overall number of businesses in town, as most are new entities coming into previously occupied space, but do show a moderate level of activity compared to previous years.

2017: 39	2014: 30
2016: 48	2015: 30

It is expected that, as a natural outgrowth of the increased residential population along Post Road, and the sewer connection, we will see a demand for new restaurant activity, particularly along Post Road South.

## **TAX INCENTIVES**

North Kingstown offers a five year property tax phase in (0% due in year one; 100% by year six) for new commercial and manufacturing developments and substantial redevelopments. This incentive sunsets per the ordinance this December. The Town Manager will be bringing this ordinance back to you for your consideration this Fall.

## **CONCLUSION**

National and state economic indicators are showing improvements in construction and employment activity thus far in calendar year 2018. Economic activity in North Kingstown is also on the increase. We hope that current and future policies, actions and programs, all aligned with the Town's Comprehensive Plan, will result in continued local growth and economic strength as well.