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Another milestone: Erie County and Uniland to break ground on 150,000 sq. ft. Distribution and Advanced Manufacturing Facility at Renaissance Commerce Park in Lackawanna

Erie County Executive will offer an update on redevelopment of the former Bethlehem Steel site, including the purchase and redevelopment of 80 additional acres for the business park

Lackawanna—Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz, Uniland CEO Michael Montante, and local community leaders will celebrate the ceremonial groundbreaking Thursday of Uniland’s new 150,000-square-foot distribution and advanced manufacturing facility. The future building will be the first of its kind at the new Renaissance Commerce Park [RCP], located along Route 5 on the former Bethlehem Steel site.

Poloncarz will also offer a redevelopment update at Thursday’s conference, citing the many recent milestones reached on the site, including the purchase of 80 new acres for redevelopment, negotiating and closing on the deal with Uniland to build a spec building, the completion of the Dona St. Extension and the opening of the TMP facility to name a few, all while he and his administration were also directing the pandemic response.

The County Executive made the redevelopment of the former Bethlehem Steel site a priority when he took office in 2012, and he began to assemble funds for acquisition and remediation of 140 acres along Route 5. Once all but abandoned and overgrown, Renaissance Commerce Park and its adjacent parcels are now home to two large operating manufacturers, a future sugar warehouse distribution business, and Uniland’s future “spec” building.

“Today’s groundbreaking is the culmination of a long process and another sign of the increased interest in the Renaissance Commerce Park from companies recognizing that this is a great place to be and to grow their business,” **said Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz.** “Millions of dollars have been invested in the ongoing redevelopment of the former Bethlehem Steel site to transform what was once an unused, rusting eyesore into a modern business park with accessibility, a terrific location and multiple modes of available transportation for businesses to ship their products. I thank Uniland for their decision to add to this momentum with the new spec building, which is sure to generate even more interest and bring more investment to the Renaissance Commerce Park.”

New York State has supported the acquisition of the former Bethlehem Steel site with \$12.78 million from Buffalo Billion 2 and the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council. In addition, ESD encouraged the expansion of operations of Renaissance Commerce Park tenants TMP Technologies and Sucro Sourcing through its Excelsior Jobs Program tax credits, a performance-based incentive.

“Today’s groundbreaking for the Uniland building is just one of many projects that signal a bright future for the long-vacant former Bethlehem Steel complex,” **said Kevin Younis, Chief Operating Officer and Executive Deputy Commissioner at Empire State Development.** “New York State and ESD have paved the way for the site’s economic rebirth by acquiring unutilized property, remediating the brownfield land, and supporting the new businesses that are bringing good-paying jobs back to this community.”

The Erie County Industrial Development Agency [ECIDA], through its land-development arm, the Industrial Development Land Corporation [ILDC], has served as redevelopment manager of the 150-acre area on the site now known as Renaissance Commerce Park. **ILDC President and CEO John Cappellino** says the success of the development efforts to date are the direct result of fruitful collaboration among the many stakeholders.

“Renaissance Commerce Park is an example of an extraordinary public-private collaboration,” **said Cappellino.** “The exceptional teamwork among all these agencies resulted in tens of millions of dollars in direct private investment; Empire State Development, Erie County, visionary job creators like TMP Technologies and Uniland Development, oversight provided by the Department of Environmental Conservation, grants from National Grid and National Fuel, and support from Lackawanna and former owner Tecumseh Steel all contributed to where we are today,” **Cappellino said.**

Commercial “spec space” is at a premium in Western New York, which can inhibit business growth and encourage new job creators to bypass the region in favor of other states, taking the jobs with them. Manufacturers and warehouse distribution facilities are critical to the nation’s supply chain, and by offering already-constructed sites, Erie County can remain economically competitive. Uniland representatives say the growing Commerce Park site was the right choice for a new-construction spec building.

“The 8 Dona Street project addresses one of our region’s biggest business challenges, which is a lack of Class A industrial space for companies that want to grow their operations here in the Buffalo region,” **said Uniland CEO Michael J. Montante.** “Our investment in the area is a reflection of the work done by New York State, the City of Lackawanna, the ECIDA, ILDC and specifically the vision of Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz to prepare Renaissance Commerce Park to realize its next chapter of growth. Western New York has a great industrial heritage and a bright future.”

The 150,000 sq. ft. facility which will serve as a hub for manufacturing, warehousing, logistics and trucking operations is anticipated to be operational in early summer 2022.

“Uniland’s significant investment in Renaissance Commerce Park represents another step forward in our collective efforts to rebuild the business base and create new employment opportunities in the City of Lackawanna and Erie County,” **said Lackawanna Mayor Annette Iafallo.**

“We’re grateful to Uniland for showing confidence in the development opportunities available on this historic former industrial site and helping to fill the growing local demand for warehouse and manufacturing space. We look forward to continued collaboration with our government and IDA partners as redevelopment efforts continue at Renaissance Commerce Park,” **Iafallo added.**

Uniland’s facility will join Dona Street Extension neighbor TMP Technologies, a cleaning products manufacturer. In 2019, TMP purchased 28 acres of remediated acreage for a new 290,000-square-foot manufacturing facility. Construction is now complete, and the facility is operational.

Erie County and the ILDC are working on an additional 80 acre-purchase to extend Renaissance Commerce Park to the South. The new parcels will allow an extension of the Shoreline Trail Bike Path and enlarge the Park to 240 acres.

For more information about Renaissance Commerce Park, please visit www.ecidany.com/rcp