

Bridgeport on pace for record year in economic development

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BRIDGEPORT, W.Va. – Economic development in Bridgeport is on record pace.

On WAJR’s “Talk of the Town,” Community and Economic Development Director for the city, Andrea Kerr said projects range from heavy industrial, retail, commercial, and residential.

“We have just been non-stop through the winter,” Kerr said. “So far, for the first two months of the year, we are showing around \$30 million in construction already, so it’s just been quite the start to 2023 for us.”

By the end of the year, the Meadowbrook Mall will undergo a complete makeover to include the addition of a 151,000-square-foot Boscov’s department store. To accommodate the new location, Books-A-Million and Marshall’s will relocate to different newly renovated areas of the mall.

“That is an \$8 million build-out for the mall, so that is just astronomical, and with the relocation of other stores within different parts of the mall,” Kerr said.

The industrial portion of expansion is led by the North Central West Virginia Airport (CKB) and the Aerotech Business Park, which have an estimated annual economic impact of \$1 billion. The airport is home to a passenger terminal, expanding aviation training programs, and a host of support businesses.

A division of Boeing, Aurora Flight Sciences specializes in a variety of manned and unmanned aircraft and satellite applications for military and commercial use. Aurora also has the contract to supply the next generation of the Virgin Galactic spaceplane, due to roll out in 2025.

“Aurora Flight Sciences is adding 50,000 square feet to their facility, and with the new airport terminal, we’ll see a lot of job creation out toward the airport,” Kerr said.

Charles Pointe is a 1,700-acre development valued at \$1.5 billion inside city limits that has been called a model for other municipalities for mixed-use developments.

To date, Charles Pointe, managed by Genesis Partners, has more than 350 residential units in seven neighborhoods with 3.4 miles of streets with sidewalks, technology infrastructure, and a mix of small businesses. Menards is building a 250,000-square-foot retail store, and Mon Health has announced plans to build a small-format hospital in the development.

According to Kerr, Menards has a loyal following of other smaller businesses that expand with them, and those affiliations are likely in the future.

“They’ve (Genesis Partners) been a great partner with the city in bringing businesses in, a lot of different businesses, and we’ve seen some relocations, which is great too,” Kerr said. “They have really grabbed the bull by the horns on the residential front.”

Plans to annex additional land were put on hold during the pandemic, but Kerr said those options and property owners are back on the radar.

“With all this construction and all this building out, that leaves little room for what we currently have in the footprint left in Bridgeport, so we are looking at a couple annexations,” Kerr said.