



Wednesday, February 15, 2023 [George Nelson](#)

## Plans Announced for First Building at West Warren Industrial Park

WARREN, Ohio – A local partnership plans to build a 100,000-square-foot spec building offering modern manufacturing and warehousing space on the site of the former Western Reserve High School, 2668 Front St. SW.

The building will be the first phase of the new West Warren Industrial Park, which will be constructed using the former school property and the site of the onetime Westlawn housing projects.

The project is being developed by Sapiaientia Ventures LLC, whose managing partners are Chuck George, Mike Martof and Wiley Runnestrand, co-owners of GreenBoard IT in Warren.

The partners plan to spend \$9 million to develop the first building, Martof said. The space is needed to meet the needs of existing local companies looking for modern space to expand as well as to attract companies looking to capitalize on developments including the emerging electric vehicle supply chain.

“It is a speculative build. So we don’t have a tenant right now, but we do have those that are interested,” Martof said. There are projects that passed on the Mahoning Valley because of the lack of such space. He anticipated a spring groundbreaking for the site, with construction taking 18 to 24 months.

“We want to start off with a proof-of-concept investment, which will be 100,000 square feet of speculative industrial space,” Martof said. “From there, after we’ve proven that tenants want to locate here, we want to build out the rest of the park.”

Sapientia Ventures formally took possession of the 86-acre site following Wednesday’s meeting of the Western Reserve Port Authority, which facilitated the property transfer under agreements with the city of Warren and Warren City Schools. Sapientia purchased the land, which had been vacant for more than 20 years, for \$195,000, the full appraised value of the property, port authority officials said.

“The fact of the matter is we are seeing a lot more interest in developers coming to this region as supply chain opportunities come up with Ultium and Foxconn and everyone. And we don’t have the shovel-ready space, let alone buildings that are ready for space for occupancy,” Anthony Trevena, WRPA’s executive director, said. “We’ve sometimes seen companies that have had to go to some other region or area as a result of not being prepared.”

The port authority entered into an agreement with the city of Warren about seven years ago to permit it to directly deal with potential developers of specific sites. Cities are required to put properties out for public bid and sell then to the highest bidder, sometimes leading to the “wrong person” acquiring the site, which is left undeveloped for years or even decades, Trevena said.

The Sapiientia project “changes the narrative” of disinvestment that has taken place in that section of the city and provides opportunities for the entire Mahoning Valley, Mayor Doug Franklin said.

“It’s a huge victory for the west side of Warren and, particularly, the residents from that neighborhood who haven’t seen an investment of this size probably in the last 40 to 50 years since the high school was built there,” Franklin said. “It also, I believe, is just the tipping point of what’s to come because there’s going to be so many supply-side opportunities for what’s going on in Lordstown with Foxconn and Ultium Cells.”

Warren City Schools Superintendent Steve Chairo also expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to repurpose the long unutilized property.

“It’s going to, what I believe would be, a very good use,” he said.

The industrial park’s partners envision construction of nearly 1 million square feet of modern industrial space on the site, representing between 300 and 500 jobs, or potentially more depending on the employers, Martof said.

“Our hope is that this building is leased up relatively quickly, and then we can move on to the rest of the site,” he said.

*Pictured at top: From left, Sapiientia Ventures partners Wiley Runnestrand and Chuck George, Warren City Schools Superintendent Steve Chairo, Warren Mayor Doug Franklin and WRPA Executive Director Anthony Trevena look on as Sapiientia’s Mike Martof signs a transfer document.*

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