



# PROVIDENCE TOMORROW

our city ■ our neighborhoods ■ our future

## DOWNTOWN PLAN

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December 2010





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## INTRODUCTION

On May 31, 2006, Mayor Cicilline and the City Council announced *Providence Tomorrow*— an innovative and inclusive planning process designed to provide a framework for the growth and preservation of Providence’s neighborhoods. Since then, the City Council has adopted a new Comprehensive Plan and the Department of Planning and Development has conducted detailed planning studies in each of the City’s neighborhoods. During the development of the Comprehensive Plan, it became clear that Downtown Providence is an area of special value, of particular concern and interest to the City.

### Planning Process

This plan is the result of a planning study with several components, the most significant of which was the Downtown Charrette, held in October of 2008. Unlike the other neighborhood charrettes that were held throughout the Providence Tomorrow planning process, the Downtown Charrette focused on urban design. Though the Charrette touched on other important topics, it did not address in detail the variety of topics in the other neighborhood planning studies such as housing, infrastructure, and recreation. The goal of the Downtown Charrette was to set the framework for a unified design vision for the entire Downtown area which would detail specific land use and design regulations (such as height, massing, scale, and interaction with the public realm) to achieve the design vision and support the continued growth and economic development of Downtown. This plan is one step toward that goal. As part of the

study of Downtown, past planning efforts were evaluated, and current conditions, which have changed considerably since the completion of the charrette, were considered.

The next step, beginning in the Fall of 2010, is a more in-depth analysis of the development potential of the part of Downtown known as the emerging “Knowledge District.” The analysis will include a development plan for the Knowledge District, with focus on the unique conditions needed to support the development of life science-driven projects, and a development code for all of Downtown that puts into place the regulatory framework to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the Downtown Charrette, this Downtown Plan and the specific development plan for the Knowledge District.

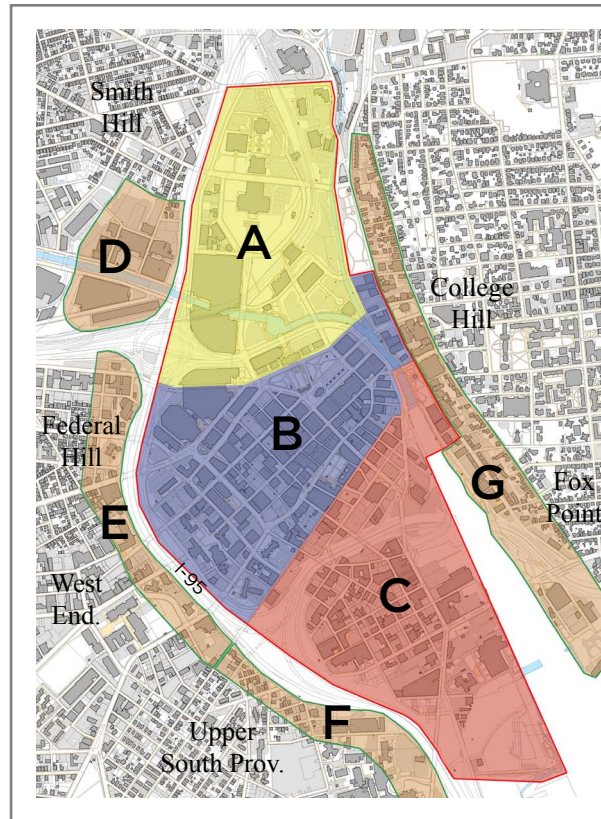
# The Study Area

With nearly 150 acres of land area, Downtown Providence is divided into three areas: **Downcity**, **Capital Center** and the **Jewelry District**. This plan addresses issues in all three districts as well as connections to the surrounding neighborhoods of Upper South Providence, Fox Point, College Hill, Smith Hill, Federal Hill, and the West End.

**Downcity** is the core of Downtown Providence and is bordered by I-95 to the west, Pine Street to the south, Memorial Boulevard to the north, and the Providence River to the east. Subdistricts within Downcity include the Financial District, the Downcity Arts District, Cathedral Square, and the Convention Center. In addition to being home to the City's Financial District, Downcity is rich in historical and cultural resources, many of which have been reinvigorated by historic tax credits and a wave of re-investment over the past two decades.



In 1994, the City created the Downcity District, an overlay zoning district designed to direct development in Downcity, protect historic and architectural character, encourage round-the-clock pedestrian activity, promote the arts and entertainment, and support residential uses. The Downcity Design Review Committee (DRC) was created to administer



*Downtown is bounded to the north by Orms Street; to the south by Henderson Street; to the west by Interstate 95; and to the east by the Moshassuck River, Canal Street, and the Providence River.*

*It includes three subdistricts, **Capital Center (Area A)** to the north, **Downcity (Area B)** in the center, and the **Jewelry District/Old Harbor (Area C)** to the south.*

*This study also evaluated edges of Downtown: the **Promenade Connection (Area D)**, the **West Side Edge (Area E)**, the **Hospital Edge (Area F)**, and the **East Side Edge (Area G)**.*

the Downcity regulations. Downcity also includes the area traditionally known as Weybossett Hill, where future efforts such as the activation of Cathedral Square, the re-establishment of the historic street grid, and improved connectivity to the West End will soon take center stage.

**Capital Center** is comprised of the land area north of Memorial Boulevard, east of Canal Street/College Hill, and South of Orms Street. Capital Center is home to the State Capital and state office buildings. The Capital Center that we see today is the result of the 1979 *Capital Center Plan* which proposed and later resulted in the implementation of the expansion

of Downtown through the relocation of the existing railroad tracks and the uncovering of the River. The uncovering of the River and construction of the new street connections began in 1986 and was completed by 1992.

In addition to the Providence Place Mall, in re-







cent years, Capital Center has seen the construction of three new hotels, two high-end residential towers, and a new corporate headquarters building. The Veterans Memorial Auditorium Arts & Cultural Center in the northern portion of the Capital Center District has also reinvented itself and is contributing to the revitalization of a long ignored corner of Downtown. The Providence Train Station is an important transit hub within Capital Center that serves rail commuters and travelers through both the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and Amtrak systems.

The **Jewelry District** is located between I-95 to the west, Henderson Street to the south and Pine Street to the north. With portions designated as a Local Historic District in 1991, the Jewelry District includes many industrial structures and factories constructed between 1830 and 1930. This area was once home to innovation and creativity in the jewelry industry and served as one of the centers of manufacturing in Providence. With the downturn of manufacturing in the United States, the Jewelry District, like so many other northern cities, changed from a dense thriv-

ing center of industry to an urban neighborhood marked by surface parking lots and disuse.

Over the last 15 years, several health care and higher educational facilities, as well as private-sector life sciences firms have sprung up in the Jewelry District, which is strategically located between the main campuses of Brown University and Rhode Island Hospital. Brown has begun construction of its medical school in the Jewelry District. The City continues to build upon the Jewelry District as a center of research and innovation to ensure that it becomes a true center of the State's knowledge-based economy.

The relocation of Interstate 195—which currently separates the Jewelry District from Downcity—will allow for the reconnection of the historic street grid, will open up approximately 14 acres of land for redevelopment within the District, and will include a new five-acre waterfront park. The area is well positioned to again become a dynamic urban neighborhood.



## Planning Framework

Since the 1970s, a number of plans have been developed for portions of Downtown. These plans have informed the development of this Downtown Plan. The most significant of these plans are described below:

The *Interface: Providence* plan of 1974 was a response to the energy crisis of the previous year. The plan aimed to make Downtown a walkable area that could be accessed by multiples modes of transit including buses and trains.

The *Capital Center Plan* was created in 1979 with the intention of creating marketable land for a new commercial sector of Providence, enhancing access to Downtown Providence, providing an ordered set of public open spaces, creating a dense urban district, creating visual and physical linkages between Downtown Providence and Smith Hill, and enriching Providence's livability and vitality, among other objectives. To accomplish this, the *Capital Center Plan* proposed relocating the existing railroad tracks, constructing a new railroad station, and daylighting the River.

The *Old Harbor Plan* of 1992 was created to plan for the relocation of Interstate 195, which would open up a significant amount of land for redevelopment in Downtown Providence. The objectives of the plan were to identify land that would be created by the relocation and establish street patterns for the land disturbed. The land use component of the plan was meant to identify accessible waterfront areas, define the nature of the reclaimed land and strengthen relationships between Downtown, the East Harbor

and the East Side. In addition, the plan also aimed to complete the extension of Memorial Boulevard and define a program of implementation and funding for what was proposed.

The *Downcity Plan* (written between 1991 and 1994), was sponsored by the City of Providence and the Providence Foundation and was intended to be a re-development plan for Downtown. Traffic circulation, parking, physical Improvements, architecture and design standards, development strategies, and the promotion of arts and entertainment were some of the topics that the plan recommendations covered. Some vital implementation efforts included the creation of a Downcity District, the Downcity Design Review Committee, the *Downtown Circulation Plan* and the creation of the Downtown Improvement District. These efforts continue to play an integral role in defining and regulating Downtown development.

The *Jewelry District Concept Plan* of 1999 revolved around developing the District as a regionally competitive business area to boost employment and cultural capital through its reputation as a design/arts district and increase access to the waterfront. The plan also envisioned the Jewelry District as a location for live/work spaces and a collection of public spaces. Like other Downtown plans, the need for pedestrian-oriented streets and effective public transit was stressed.

The *Connecting and Completing Downcity Providence* plan, based on a charrette conducted in 2004, touched on similar themes of connecting Downtown with other parts of the City. There was a strong

focus on improving the economic, social and cultural vitality of the city with emphasis on design and pedestrian friendliness.

*Providence 2020*, produced in 2006, recognized the need to create a development pattern for Downtown, as many proposed projects exceeded Downtown dimensional requirements, resulted in haphazard development with inconsistent densities and heights, and lacked physical and economic connections to other parts of the City. The plan also recognized the need for a method to direct public and private investment to different sectors of Downtown and simultaneously develop parks, explore shared parking and build upon the architecture of old and new buildings.

The *Providence Knowledge Economy Study* of 2004 targeted the potential of academic, medical and educational institutions as an economic engine for the City. Strategies included fostering collaboration, increasing the commercialization of research, increasing the competitiveness of knowledge-based industries, and delivering a sustainable governance structure for the newly proposed economy. The study was particularly relevant to the Jewelry District as it was already home to a number of knowledge economy components including medical institutions such as Rhode Island Hospital and Women and Infants Hospital and, more recently, educational institutions like Brown University.

The *Cathedral Square Feasibility Study* of 2007 examined the feasibility of reconnecting Westminster Street through Cathedral Square as recommended in the *Westminster Crossing* and *Completing and Connecting Downcity* reports. The objectives of the study

were to:

- Improve pedestrian, vehicular and biking connections between Downtown and the western neighborhoods along Westminster Street;
- Reduce the negative environmental effects of I-95 within the project boundaries;
- Connect Cathedral Square to its surroundings and redesign Cathedral Square, making it a vital, well-used center of a mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhood; and,
- Identify sites for mixed-use and mixed-income development, including affordable housing.

The intention of the *Rethinking Kennedy Plaza* study of 2008 was to attract more people to Kennedy Plaza by connecting it to other parts of the City and increasing the pedestrian-friendly nature of the Greater Plaza area. Some of the main recommendations of the study were to integrate the Plaza as part of a larger circulation system, take advantage of the Plaza's proximity to arts venues, partner with local institutions, and improve the Plaza's connectivity to the nearby skating rink.

The *Jewelry District/Old Harbor Planning Framework Study* of 2008 specifically focused on the Jewelry District, acknowledging its mixed-use nature and its potential to become a vital area for the emerging knowledge economy due to its proximity to hospitals, educational institutions and research facilities. The major goals of the plan were to create a greater mix of uses within the Jewelry District, increase strategies for economic development, improve connectivity, and define design guidelines for development. Proposed actions to achieve these goals included

additional planning and rezoning, creating an open space implementation plan, fostering public/private partnerships, creating incentives for mixed-use development, and improving the management and maintenance of public spaces and infrastructure.

The 2009 *Rhode Island Interstate 195 Relocation Surplus Land: Redevelopment and Marketing Analysis* was a collaborative effort between the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), the City of Providence and the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC). The report analyzes issues related to the disposition of the parcels of land created by the demolition of the existing I-195 through Providence's Jewelry District and the Fox Point neighborhood and offers recommendations for the redevelopment of the parcels. The plan's analysis focused on ways to maximize the potential of new development to increase the commercial tax base in the City, increase income, sales and corporate taxes to the State, and to attract knowledge-based industries and promote the commercialization of institutional research. The report also addressed the revitalization of the area by identifying ways to maximize the development of high-quality mixed-use space, thoughtfully address the historic character of surrounding properties and ensure high-quality urban design. Establishing connections to parks and taking advantage of the proximity of the waterfront were also stressed as way to guide the infill of the available parcels.

In the summer of 2009, The Providence Foundation launched a program called Young Leaders to engage younger professionals within member organizations. Consultants led a series of three workshops,

with more than sixty participants from all sectors of the community. Charged with developing a new Vision for Downtown Providence in 2030, the group first reviewed the Foundation's 2010 vision document, which it adopted in the 1990s. After the workshops ended, a core group of Young Leaders continued to develop a new document, *Providence 2030: A Vision for Downtown*, incorporating sections about the economy, culture, the civic realm, mobility, education and sustainable practices. The committee finalized the vision with guidance from key Foundation members, and it was formally adopted by The Foundation in early 2010. This twenty year vision for Downtown Providence reflects the group's aspirations for Providence including continuing to grow a vibrant economy, supporting a world renowned culture, caring for the civic realm, celebrating mobility, and expanding sustainable practices. This Downtown Plan advances many of the goals identified by the *Providence 2030* vision

## Providence Tomorrow Neighborhood Charrettes

Providence has 25 distinct neighborhoods, each with unique character and identity. While neighborhoods share many features, each has its own set of planning issues and concerns. An important part of *Providence Tomorrow* is the in depth, detailed planning studies that are conducted at the neighborhood level. The neighborhoods were grouped together so that a total of ten neighborhood charrettes, or planning studies, were completed between 2007 and 2009. In

### What is a Charrette?

The term "charrette" originated at Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, the world's top architectural school in the 19th century, and is derived from a French word meaning "little cart." Carts were circulated to collect final plans. Students would jump on the cart, polishing their drawings up to the last minute.

Today the word "charrette" describes a process of dynamic, interactive community planning. Its goal is to bring all the stakeholders—and all the issues—into one room. This process can be applied to different projects, but always uses the same basic strategy. A team consisting of citizens, elected officials, planners, architects, developers, business owners, city officials, and other stakeholders works to root out potential problems, identify and debate solutions, and create a plan in a set amount of time. Meeting both day and night for several days, participants work together in both large and small groups through a series of brainstorming sessions, sketching workshops and other exercises.



More than 200 people participated in the Downtown Charrette.

addition to the neighborhood charrettes, a separate charrette and planning study was undertaken for the waterfront.

## Providence Tomorrow Downtown Charrette

More than 200 people participated in the planning charrette for Downtown, which took place October 27-30, 2008. The ten public sessions were held at 222 Richmond Street in the Jewelry District. The charrette was a balance of presentations, education and input from the public. The first evening session was an opportunity for the public to join with elected officials in a visioning exercise for the future of Downtown.

Three of the sessions analyzed the existing conditions and the vision for the future of Downtown's districts: Capital Center, Downcity and the Jewelry District. The other sessions were in-depth discussions of topic areas, including a session on Downtown parks, which focused on the two new waterfront parks and the pedestrian bridge that will connect them when the highway is demolished. A session on edge conditions and transitions to neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown focused on the height, massing and scale of buildings of new developments. Another session focused on how to use nodes of activity, green spaces and greenways to create connections and linkages between Downtown's districts. The other evening sessions were devoted to the consultants' presentations of alternative concepts for the future development of Downtown, which were based on the input from the public discussions and

### The Benefits of Charrettes in Planning

- ⇒ Charrettes provide a framework for creating a shared vision shaped by community involvement, directed by consultants representing key disciplines.
- ⇒ Charrettes provide an opportunity to improve and expand the relationships between residents and their government through meaningful public involvement and education.
- ⇒ Charrettes help a community to develop a shared vision of its future by allowing for increased opportunities for residents to make positive contributions to the planning process.
- ⇒ Charrettes help to create better plans by gaining more diverse input and involvement and help increase the likelihood that plans will be realized.

### Downtown Charrette Schedule

	MONDAY, OCTOBER 27	TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28	WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29	THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30
9-12	<b>Studio Closed (9 am-11:00 am)</b>	<b>Workshop: Focus on Downcity</b> Downcity has experienced a reawakening over the last several years with renovation and rehabilitation of several buildings as well as new construction. Are there any changes to the vision for this area? How do we continue to enhance the historic fabric of Downcity while encouraging infill development?	<b>Workshop: Focus on the Edges</b> How does the height, mass and scale of Downtown transition into surrounding neighborhoods?	<b>Work Session: Studio Open (9 am-4 pm)</b>
	<b>Workshop: Focus on Capital Center (11:00 am-12:30 pm)</b> What do we need to do to complete Capital Center? Are there any changes to the vision for this area?			
<b>CHARRETTE STUDIO OPEN</b>				
1:30-4:30	<b>Workshop: Downtown Parks</b> Share your ideas on the design of Downtown's two newest parks and the pedestrian bridge that will connect them after the relocation of Interstate 195 is completed	<b>Workshop: Focus on Jewelry District/Old Harbor</b> With the relocation of I-195, the opportunity exists to reconnect the Jewelry District to Downcity. Additionally, the Jewelry District is fast becoming the center of the knowledge economy in the city with the presence of Brown, J&W, Lifespan and Care New England. How do we capitalize on these opportunities with a new vision for this area?	<b>Workshop: Connections and Linkages</b> How do we physically connect the different districts to each other and surrounding neighborhoods? How do we bridge the barriers created by the Interstate highways?	
<b>CHARRETTE STUDIO CLOSED (4:30 pm-6:00 pm)</b>				
6-9	<b>Opening Session: Creating a Vision for Downtown</b> Join your elected officials in a visioning exercise and share your vision for Downtown Providence	<b>Evening Critique: Master Plan Alternatives</b> Join us for a presentation of alternative concepts that have been developed based on your input over the last two days—Discuss the pros and cons and help us identify the preferred direction	<b>Evening Critique: Draft Master Plan</b> Join us for a presentation and discussion of a draft master plan based on all the input you have provided over the last three days	<b>Final Presentation</b> Join us for a presentation on the vision for downtown that has been developed during the week and ways in which that vision will be implemented



additional discussion and feedback. The final evening session was a presentation of a vision for Downtown that emerged over the course of the ten charrette sessions.

*financial, institutional, public, quasi-public, cultural, residential, appropriate light manufacturing, and other related uses. To preserve and foster the economic vitality of Downtown, a mix of compatible uses is encouraged to promote commercial and other business activity at street level*

*and residential, office, and commercial uses on the upper floors. In order to promote economic development while maintaining compatibility between uses, sub-districts may be established to address building height, entertainment and light industrial uses.*

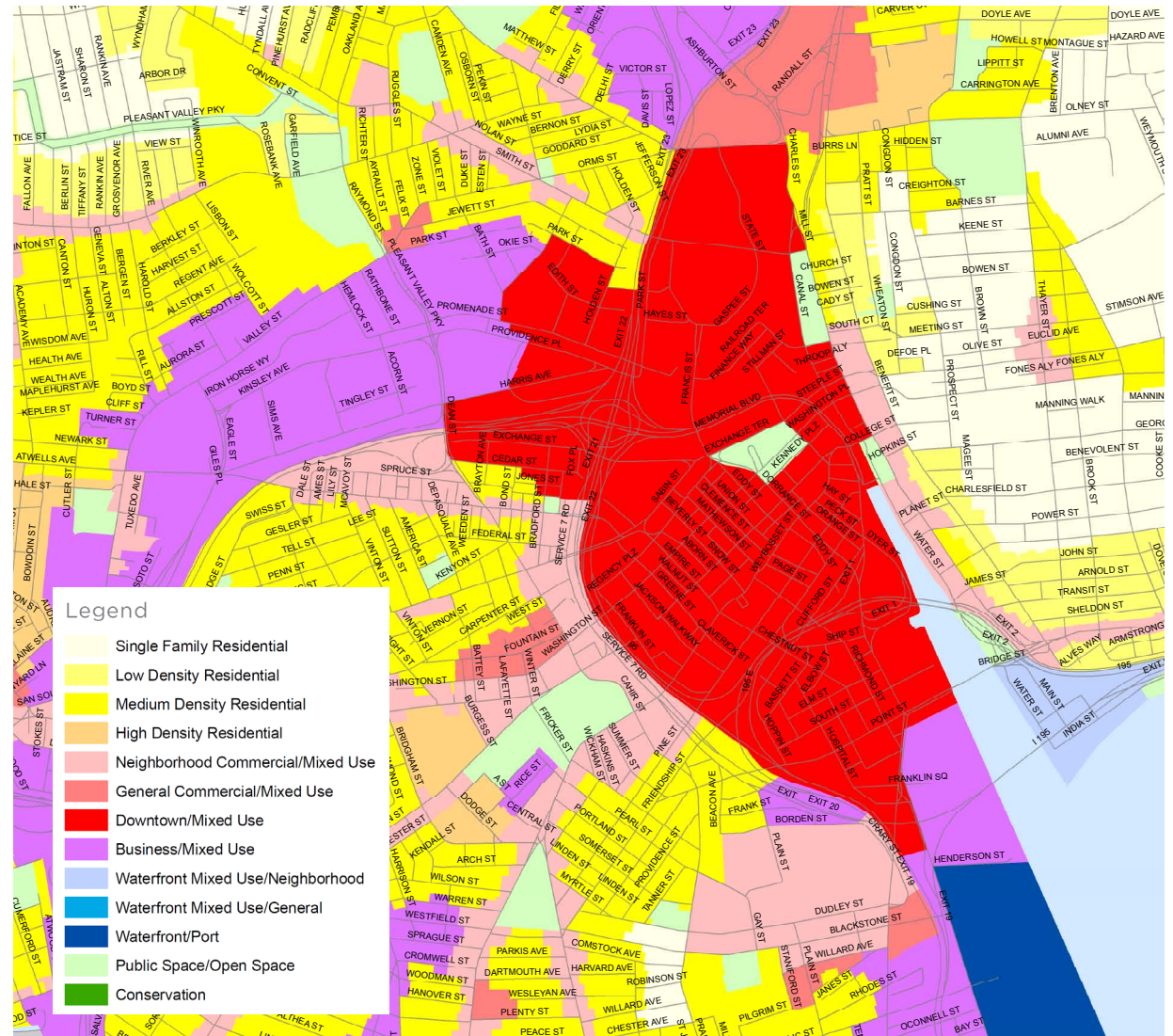
## Providence Tomorrow: The Interim Comprehensive Plan

*Providence Tomorrow: The Interim Comprehensive Plan* was approved by the State of Rhode Island in July of 2008. The plan sets a framework for future land use by identifying the City's long term goals for growth and sustainability.

One of the goals of the *The Interim Comprehensive Plan* was to direct growth in a manner that would complement the entire City and develop a uniform vision for how future development would be designed. Several areas were identified as key "areas of change"—those places where development and redevelopment is most likely to occur in the future. Residential and open space areas, to be maintained and preserved, comprise the majority of the City's land area. Downtown Providence is identified as a Growth District, an area that the plan identifies as one that is expected to see change and development.

*Providence Tomorrow: The Interim Comprehensive Plan* designates virtually all of the study area as Downtown/Mixed Use. According to the plan:

*This area is intended to revitalize and restore the historic core business area and to accommodate appropriate expansion of the Downtown area. It is characterized by a variety of business,*



Land Use Map (Providence Tomorrow: The Interim Comprehensive Plan)

The Plan's Objective LU 4 states: "Promote vibrant mixed-use areas. Promote the development of mixed-use areas with different levels of intensity and use to improve the jobs/housing balance and encourage alternative modes of transportation." Regarding Downtown, Strategy C states:

*C. Encourage continued investment in the area designated as Downtown/Mixed Use on Map 11.2 'Future Land Use' with a high concentration of business, commercial, institutional, cultural and residential uses by:*

*1. Identifying changes to regulations and other strategies to minimize the conflict between residential, business and entertainment uses, such as developing a measurement process for nightlife's impact and creating a strategy for its use by the Board of Licenses in managing the renewal of licenses and projecting the effect of a new license issue.*

*2. Refining the unified design vision for the area through the neighborhood planning process, using previous plans such as the DOWNCITY PLAN, the JEWELRY DISTRICT PLAN and PROVIDENCE 2020 as a starting point.*

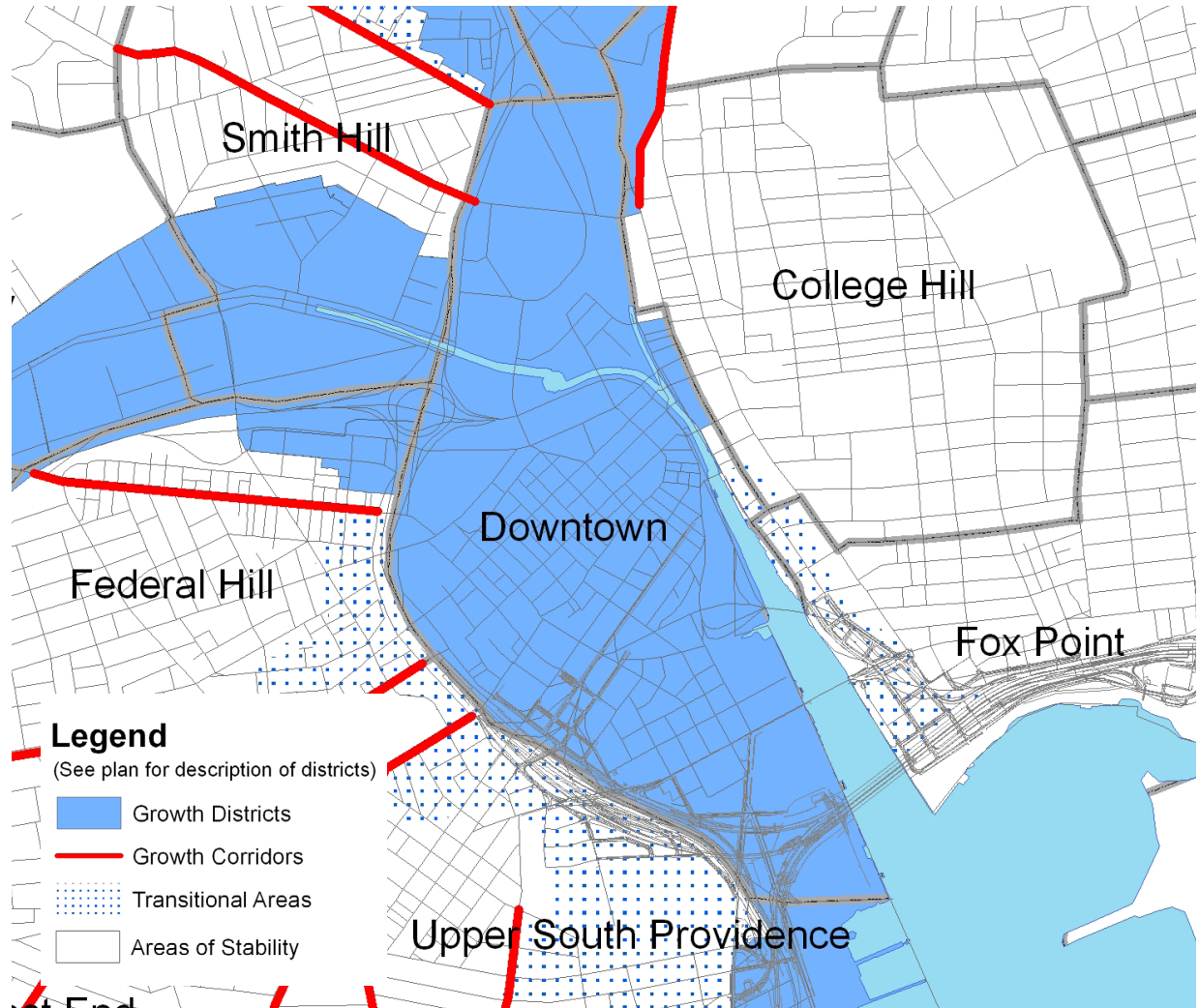
*3. Refining existing regulations to better implement the goals of protecting the historic character and environmental assets of the area while promoting new investment.*

*4. Identifying strategies to increase parking Downtown without negatively impacting the character of the built environment.*

District, defined as follows:

*These areas are centered around the Downtown core, and along the waterfront and in manufacturing areas in the city. They have many different characteristics, but common traits include: close proximity to a commercial arterial street, locations in older industrial ar-*

*eas or large vacant areas. Opportunities for pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development and transit hubs can be found in most of these areas. Successfully developing these areas should not come at the expense of displacing existing residents. Instead, these areas are intended to become diverse mixed-use areas,*



Areas of Stability and Change (Providence Tomorrow: The Interim Comprehensive Plan)

The Plan also designates Downtown as a Growth

*with the addition of new residents to the areas, rather than displacement.*

Objective LU 2 states: "Direct Growth. Encourage growth in areas best suited to provide access to jobs, housing and transit." The strategies for this objective are as follows:

*A. Use the neighborhood planning process to:*

*1. Develop a unified design vision for Growth Districts, Growth Corridors and Transitional Areas identified on Map 11.1 'Areas of Stability and Change' that identifies the preferred pattern and character of development including mass, scale, building height, design, use, and density, and considers topography, streets, sidewalks and open spaces.*

*2. Identify nodes of increased density to support transit options.*

*3. Identify significant buildings and view corridors to be protected.*

*4. Identify environmentally important features to be preserved or enhanced such as views, river and harborfront areas and potential pedestrian access points.*

*5. Confirm and/or refine proposed locations and boundaries for Jobs Districts, land use designations, proposed greenways and proposed open space/public space.*

*B. Update regulations to:*

*1. Maintain and enhance waterfront views to and from the city.*

*2. Reflect design vision adopted as part of neighborhood plans.*

*3. Encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures where economically feasible.*

*4. Create incentives for development.*







## STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

Since 2007, when Providence Tomorrow: The Interim Comprehensive Plan was written, significant changes have impacted Downtown. The economic downturn has resulted in vacant office space and a difficult climate for retail storefronts and small business throughout the City; however, the effects are most pronounced in Downtown. At the same time, new opportunities for economic growth are on the immediate horizon in the emerging Knowledge District, with the expansion of a number of the City's largest institutions, and with the relocation of the I-195 corridor and its unprecedented opportunity to create a new vibrant urban neighborhood as part of Downtown.

This section identifies several of the recent changes, challenges and opportunities with immediate impacts for Downtown. Some of the challenges facing Downtown are presented as a series of case studies that highlight a particular issue that is representative of a larger district-wide concern. Nine projects that are currently planned or underway are identified as opportunities. These projects have the potential to be transformative and catalytic and are expected to shape the future of Downtown.

# Changes

## Investment in Downtown

In December of 2007, when *Providence Tomorrow* was adopted, the City and Downtown were still enjoying a building boom. Like the rest of the country, the financial crisis that began in 2008 hit Providence hard. Some Downtown projects have stalled, leaving vacant lots and buildings, yet there still is development happening. Notable projects recently completed or under construction include: the headquarters of Moran Shipping on Francis Street and the Blue Cross/Blue Shield headquarters at Waterplace Park in Capital Center; AS220's Mercantile Block on Washington Street and the renovation of the Smith-Mathewson building in Downcity; and, in the Jewelry District, the renovation of 222 Richmond Street for Brown University's new medical school.

## Interstate 195 Relocation

The half-billion dollar relocation of a segment of Interstate 195 through Providence is rapidly moving toward a conclusion. Almost all of the new traffic movements are open on the new highway and the demolition of the old highway has begun. (For more information on the I-195 Relocation refer to the "Opportunities: Transformative Projects" section of this plan.)

## Knowledge District

The Jewelry District and the Hospital District to its south are emerging as an area of growth for health care and higher educational institutions. Lifespan, Care New England, Johnson & Wales University, and Brown University all now have prominent presenc-

es in the District. There are also a handful number of small life sciences and technology firms locating here.

## Green the Knowledge District

"Green the Knowledge District" (GKD) is a collaborative effort of the Ocean State Consortium of Advanced Resources (OSCAR) and the City of Providence that aims to catalyze sustainable economic growth and development and raise the profile of Rhode Island through new jobs, technologies and businesses, along with retention of businesses in the area. The group will work with key stakeholders to help facilitate the green design, planning, implementation, and marketing of environmental and cost efficiencies for the Knowledge District.

In addition to savings in operating costs and energy, an expected outcome of GKD will be for the Knowledge District to serve as a state, regional and national model for sustainable design and development and to promote human resource and capital investment. By encouraging and even requiring the use of sustainable elements such as solar power, grey water recycling, and green roofs, "Green the Knowledge District" is intended to demonstrate how urban communities can simultaneously foster economic development and improve energy efficiency, ecological health and sustainability, and quality of life.

## Downtown Improvement District

The Downtown Improvement District (DID), which launched in early 2005, has helped to significantly improve Downtown by removing litter, power washing sidewalks, removing graffiti, and weeding. The

DID also manages the Downtown beautification program, which has grown to incorporate nearly two-hundred hanging baskets, five ground level planting areas and fifty sidewalk planters. By partnering with the City, the DID helps to repair downtown sidewalks, find funding for sidewalk brick repair, replace missing and broken street signs, and place new bike racks and trash receptacles throughout Downtown.

In addition to keeping Downtown clean and beautiful, the DID also employs "Safety Guides" who patrol Downtown on foot and on bicycle, promoting a friendly, safe downtown atmosphere.

## Hospitality Resource Partnership

In January 2007, the Downtown Improvement District (DID) collaborated with the City of Providence and other organizations to establish the Hospitality Resource Partnership (HRP) with the goal of creating a more safe and vibrant arts and cultural environment in Downtown. The HRP is a model of private/public collaboration among diverse stakeholders—including the City of Providence, the Downtown Improvement District, the Rhode Island Foundation, the Providence Foundation, various colleges and universities, the Providence Police Department, multiple neighborhood organizations, the Providence Downtown Churches Association, and numerous music venues—to identify opportunities to create safe and vibrant nightlife in the Capital City. These efforts include:

- Partnership with the Providence Police Department License Enforcement Unit to establish a program aimed at identifying and targeting underage drinking throughout the City of Provi-



dence.

- Development of the floor host training ordinance which mandates floor hosts (bouncers) to receive job specific training and background checks.

## Challenges

### Land Use

#### Available Land and Interim Uses

Downtown's historical development pattern has been eroded over the years. Buildings have been demolished and not been replaced, leaving gaps in the urban fabric. Parking lots now occupy prime development sites. While parking is a necessity, Downtown's land should be used more efficiently, with parking in structures.

Once an area of dense, uninterrupted urban fabric, Downtown now has a proliferation of surface parking lots. Prior to the 1990s, when Providence adopted a Downtown Historic District and, later, the Downcity District, there were no restrictions on demolition and establishment of surface parking. This has resulted in a Downtown punctured by holes in the fabric that detract from the pedestrian environment of Downtown.

When first enacted, the Downcity Zoning District strictly controlled demolition and prohibited most surface parking lots. Following a court judgment that invalidated the Downcity Zoning regulations, the re-adopted provisions of 2004 resulted in weakened demolition provisions. The ordinance no lon-

ger required review of demolition by the Historic District Commission. It also permitted demolition to be granted if a building was vacant for five years, despite efforts to lease the space, and allowed temporary surface parking lots as a temporary use when construction delays followed demolition.

Several high-profile demolitions were to follow, some enabled by the new Downcity Zoning regulation, others not. The Grant's Block proposal, a large parking structure with mixed-use retail and residential buildings on each end, resulted in the razing of numerous buildings along Union Street between Westminster and Weybosset Streets in 2005. In 2008, two three-story buildings were demolished on Washington Street to make way for an eleven-story Sierra Suites Hotel. Both of these demolitions were approved by the Downcity Design Review Committee. The former police and fire headquarters building at LaSalle Square and the fire-damaged Second Universalist Church building that housed the original Downcity Diner were both condemned by the City building official and demolished. In all of these cases, temporary parking lots have either been approved or are pending approval.

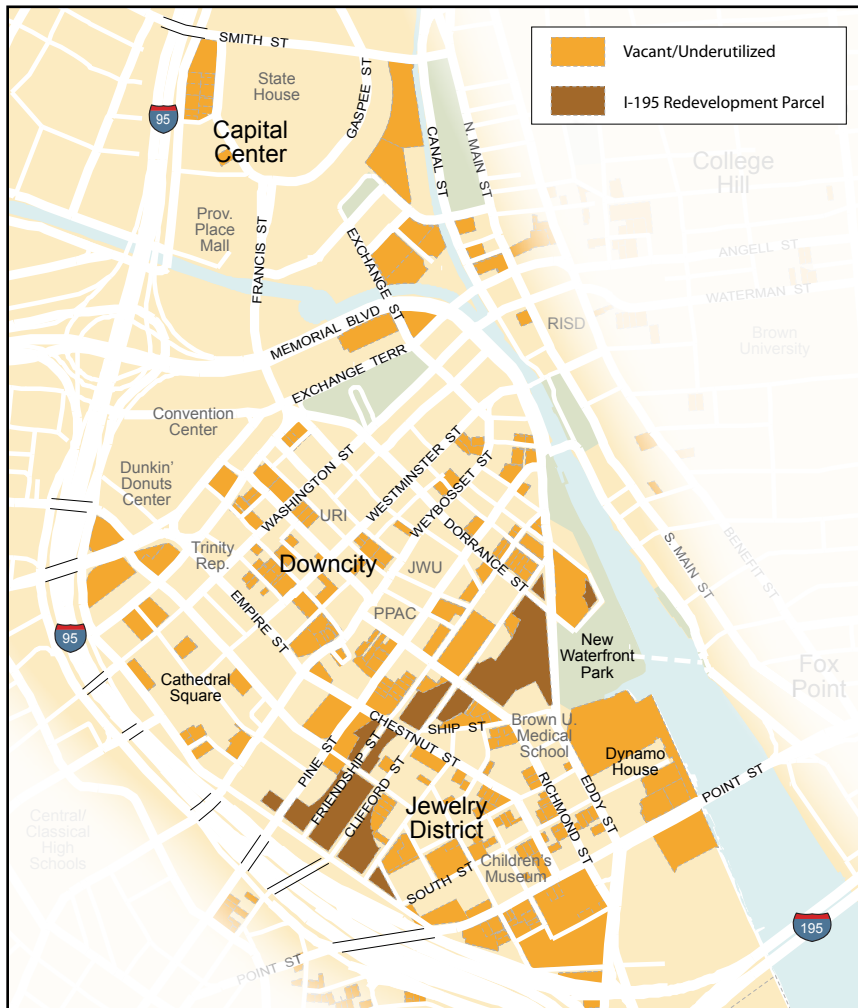
To combat this issue, significant changes were made to the Downcity Zoning Ordinance in 2009. Demolitions are now only permitted once architectural plans are complete and building permits for new construction have been granted. The provision that permitted demolition of a building vacant for five years has been removed. The regulations were strengthened to permit surface parking only when it is shielded by a building from a major street. A perceived loophole that would have allowed a tempo-

rary lot for more than two years was closed.

The difficult economic climate combined with a challenging regulatory climate can make Providence's Downtown unattractive to developers. When a new development project is not viable in Downtown, surface parking can be financially attractive for a developer; however, surface parking is aesthetically and environmentally detrimental to Downtown and contrary to the City's vision.

Interim uses for vacant lots and blank storefronts must be seriously considered during this economic downturn. Innovative interim uses such as temporary retail stalls, sheltered market space, public art displays, and community gardens should be encouraged at these sites. Although many agree that surface parking and other uses that do not positively contribute to a vibrant pedestrian environment should not be allowed in Downtown, there are many challenges, such as existing zoning regulations, that must be overcome.

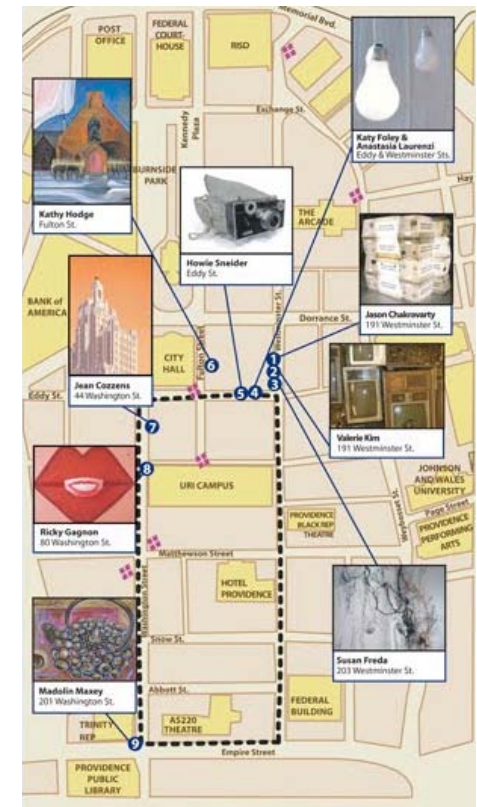
Over the past twelve years, Providence has absorbed only 641,000 square feet of office space, for an average of 53,000 square feet per year. In the next few years, over 400,000 square feet of office space is expected to become available (Chan Krieger report). Even if the absorption rate returns to the twelve-year average of 53,000 square feet per year after the recession, it would take eight years for all of that space to be occupied. In addition to the significant amount of office space and land already available in Downtown, the release of the I-195 parcels for redevelopment will increase the supply of available land. This vast supply of developable land and available



office space drives down demand and rent prices throughout the City.

The limited availability of capital and the downturn in the real estate market caused by the national recession will especially impact the marketability of the I-195 properties in the short-term. The City and appropriate partners should consider strategic acquisition of I-195 parcels and vacant lots in Downcity in order to reduce the available supply of land as well as to provide public amenities like Downtown parks that can, in turn, add value to the remaining available parcels. As Downtown is built-out, those parcels could be developed to fill in the urban fabric. When the economy comes out of the recession, Downtown, especially the I-195 parcels, will be very attractive for development, given the highway access and proximity to institutions.

In order to create the vibrant urban environment that is desired in Downtown, the City must revise the existing regulations and remove barriers to achieving this goal. Incentives may need to be developed to encourage property owners to provide interim uses other than surface parking. The City should also work with Providence Art Windows to expand their program to include a broader area of Downtown and possibly to include vacant lots. Providence



*Providence Art Windows fills vacant storefronts with art installations as a way to connect Downcity gallery spaces and improve the pedestrian environment. (Image courtesy of Providence Art Windows)*

	Total Area of All Lots		Vacant/Underutilized Lots		% of Total Area that is vacant/underutilized
	SF	Acres	SF	Acres	
<b>Capital Center</b>	2,952,152	68	380,000	9	13%
<b>Downcity</b>	4,395,710	101	630,000	14	14%
<b>Jewelry District</b> <i>(including 16 acres of I-195 Redevelopment parcels, excluding planned waterfront park)</i>	4,427,425	102	2,009,846	46	45%
<b>DOWNTOWN TOTAL</b>	<b>11,775,260</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>3,019,846</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>25%</b>

Art Windows—a program that is supported by the Providence Foundation, Fidelity investments, the City, the RI State Council on the Arts, and Verizon—exhibits art installations in empty retail

## Land Use Challenge: 110 Westminster

Granoff Associates and BlueChip Properties' 2005 announcement of their plans for "One Ten" Westminster was exciting news for Providence—it would be the tallest building in the City, and the first significant new building in Downcity in decades. It was also contentious, as the skyscraper of luxury condominiums would require the removal of several historic buildings. Proposed for the lots between the Arcade and the Turk's Head Building, the modern building was welcomed by some as an emblem of the Providence "Renaissance". Others preferred to save the historic Providence National Bank building that "One Ten" was slated to replace.

The developers' design was approved by the Downcity Design Review Committee under the condition that they preserve the Weybosset Street façade of the bank and incorporate it into their new tower. The developers complied with the DRC's request and began demolition in September 2005. Within a few months, the bank façade was braced with steel supports in preparation for the duress of the adjacent construction work and the rest of the lot was fully cleared.

After the demolition was complete, the project experienced continuing delays as the financing became unstable in the economic downturn. The tower was redesigned several times, and in 2006 new plans featuring a W Hotel in the lower floors were presented to and approved by the DRC. In June 2008, after further delays, another much shorter building was proposed in an attempt to cut costs.

In 2009, four years after the demolition, the financing for the tower had still not solidified and the lot at 110 Westminster remained vacant. The bracing that held the deteriorating bank façade still obstructed the Weybosset Street sidewalk and prevented any repaving efforts by the City. O'Connor Capital Properties, who acquired the property from BlueChip in 2008, went before the DRC in October 2009 to request permission to remove the bank façade in order to build a temporary surface parking lot. While area retailers were supportive of the measure

to remove the façade on the grounds that it was an obstruction and an eyesore, preservationists demanded a more creative strategy that held the developer to their original contract of maintaining the façade and utilizing the empty space in



*110 Westminster Street, where a historic facade faces the possibility of demolition to make way for another surface parking lot in Downcity.*

a productive manner. Either way, the committee insisted that O'Connor must first present reports on the financial feasibility of alternatives to demolition and bring to them proof of financial hardship in order to proceed in addressing their request. O'Connor has yet to return with their findings, and the lot remains vacant, with the steel structure still encroaching on the public right-of-way.

In a sense, the façade has become symbolic of the difficult development climate in Downtown. For the owner, it has become a liability—standing in the way of a clean, marketable site. For the City, it is in the way as well, blocking pedestrian traffic and preventing repaving of the street. Nevertheless, the façade is a part of the historic fabric of this curving stretch of Weybosset Street. For many, its presence is preferable to the alternative view of a parking lot. The City and the owners are still working together to find a solution for this development site.

spaces in Downcity. The shows, which are judged by local residents and artists, positively contribute to the pedestrian experience throughout Downcity.

## Institutional Challenges

Tax exempt colleges and hospitals are increasingly important to the State's economy, and many of these institutions are poised to expand their presence in Downtown, particularly in the Jewelry District and on the I-195 redevelopment parcels. Institutional expansion—by both the construction of new buildings on already owned land and through the acquisition of new land—creates great potential for economic growth through the provision of jobs and the creation of related enterprises; however, expansion of the institutions' tax exempt property within Providence results in a significant loss of local property tax revenue.

In 2003, the City and four of the City's colleges reached an agreement which stipulates that instead of an automatic tax exemption once a property is brought into institutional use, the tax payments decline incrementally over a 15-year period. This agreement also resulted in the colleges paying annual payments in lieu of taxes, although they are significantly less than what the taxes would be for tax-paying entities. This landmark agreement was the first of its kind in Providence, but as it doesn't apply to other tax exempt institutions such as hospitals, it is limited in scope. Recent cuts in State revenue-sharing to municipalities have made Providence even more reliant on property taxes. The City must explore other means to mitigate the loss of revenue from non-profit expansion. Downtown benefits greatly from institutional growth, but the City must ensure that



this growth is tied to sound fiscal policy.

### Tensions between Land Uses

Downtown Providence is home to a diverse mix of uses, as a healthy urban area should be. Characterized by a variety of business, financial, institutional, public, quasi-public, cultural, residential, light manufacturing, and other related uses, potential conflicts arise with the close proximity of uses, often within the same block or building.

Downtown is the right location for arts and cultural venues, including those that are regional entertainment destinations. The diversity of arts, cultural and entertainment venues in Downtown is central to Providence's identity and should continue to be encouraged and developed further. In recent years, however, with the conversion of buildings in Downtown's core to residential use, Downtown is also becoming a residential neighborhood. It is essential to find ways to balance the mix of uses within Downtown and mitigate potential conflicts, such as noise and late night crowds, so that the diverse mix of uses remains. One way to better address these potential conflicts is to consider special criteria for entertainment venues with performance standards to mitigate the impacts on less intensive uses. The Hospitality Resource Partnership is working to create safe and vibrant nightlife in Providence. (See page 12 for more detail.)

### Infrastructure

Like other areas of the City, Downtown's physical infrastructure—including roads, streetlights and underground utilities—requires regular maintenance to keep it functioning safely and efficiently.

### Infrastructure Challenge: Train Station Parking Garage

The underground parking garage at Providence Station is in dire need of repair. Due to deferred maintenance, the garage has been subject to serious water damage through the open joints in the concrete supportive structure. Despite not being directly responsible for the garage, the Department of Transportation (RIDOT) is invested in keeping the 360-space garage open to serve the commuters riding on Amtrak and Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) trains. The expanding MBTA system and proposed South County Commuter Rail Service will require all the existing parking at the Providence Station and more.

The ownership situation and, therefore, the responsibility for maintenance at the site, is complex. The land beneath the garage is owned by Capital Properties and leased by Meyers' Park Row Properties. The garage is owned by Meyers' and run



by MetroPark Ltd. The land above the garage, which features a plaza, Railroad Street and Park Row West, is owned by the City.

The plaza has deteriorated dramatically since it was built, which has increased the amount of water damage sustained by the garage beneath. The City hopes to renovate the plaza as soon as the necessary funds become available. The project is expected to cost roughly \$10 million.

### Infrastructure Challenge: Woonasquatucket River Dredging

The Woonasquatucket River, which flows under the Providence Place Mall through the heart of Downtown before emptying into the Providence River, is an invaluable asset to the City of Providence. It is also home to WaterFire, Providence's major public art display that occurs weekly throughout the summer and early fall. WaterFire commissioned a study in 2004 that found it generates an estimated \$33 million for the City in spending and draws roughly one million spectators to the city each year. Unfortunately, the Woonasquatucket is silting at a rapid rate, creating very shallow areas that make it difficult for WaterFire boats to load and light its floating braziers. WaterFire spend roughly \$24,000 each year on the maintenance of engines and rudders that run aground in low water. Already, WaterFire is forced to aim for high tide and close the hurricane barrier to artificially raise water levels in order to put on the spectacle. In March 2010, massive floods across Rhode Island caused exaggerated silting that formed pungent shoals in the Water Place basin which brought increased public attention to the urgent need for dredging. Despite an obvious need, funding to dredge the lower Woonasquatucket is not easily obtained. Maguire Group's January 2008 *Dredging Study* projected it would cost roughly \$10 million to dredge the river to its original dimensions by relocating 60,000 cubic yards of silt upland. However, returning the river to those dimensions is not a sufficient solution in the long-term, considering the speed in which it has recently become silted. In order to slow the rate of silting in the future, a committee of stakeholders and City officials proposed the building of a sedimentation basin that would collect the silt in an area away from the park with road access that would ease future dredging when necessary. In November 2009, the City applied for \$3.8 million of State funding through the Water Resources Development Act to remove 12,000 cubic yards of material in the lower Woonasquatucket and an additional 18,000 cubic yards for the construction of the sedimentation basin west of Francis Street. The request is pending.

Unique to Downtown, however, are other infrastructure challenges such as the dredging needs of the rivers, the repair of the train station parking garage and the maintenance of historic materials on sidewalks. Several sidewalks in Downtown are beginning to buckle due to the existence of historic underground vaults that have not received reinforcement or maintenance. As Downtown is home to many visitors, events and festivals, it is essential that the infrastructure be upgraded and maintained for aesthetics, safety and artistic excellence. The Rhode Island Department of Transportation is currently using federal funds to ensure that all sidewalks in Downtown are ADA compliant.

## Wayfinding

To a newcomer, Downtown may appear to be a confusing series of one-way streets and alleys with unclear indications of how to reach a given destination. In lieu of coherent signage, locals often base directions on landmarks and, while this may seem quaint to some, to many visitors it is uninviting.

Downtown Providence is a critical regional transportation hub for Rhode Island, yet it currently lacks a comprehensive wayfinding system. The Downtown Providence Wayfinding Signage Committee, which has been focusing on this issue since 2008, hopes to better connect residents and visitors with information about major attractions. The Department of Planning has helped to guide this committee, in partnership with staff from the Providence Department of Art, Culture + Tourism, the Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Providence Foundation and other Downtown organizations.

The committee has built upon the standards report produced by Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) in January 2000, which identified sign types and general specifications. Led by Urban Place Consulting, the committee's goal is to launch a new signage program that incorporates the WSA findings, where relevant, with necessary updating to ensure that the finished product is accurate, current, and ready for implementation.

After much consideration, the committee determined that Phase One of the wayfinding plan would focus on a vehicular signage program for the geographic area bounded by Smith Street to the north, I-95 to the west, Benefit Street to the east, and Point Street to the south. The committee completed an inventory of existing Downtown signage, noting each sign's current condition. Plans for new signs are currently underway, and fieldwork is nearly complete. Once a list of new signs has been finalized, a design firm will be able to develop documents for sign fabrication and installation.

## Urban Design

### **Creating a Linked Open Space Network**

Downtown has many wonderful iconic structures—such as the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, the Courthouse, City Hall, and PPAC—and many existing and planned open spaces—such as Burnside Park, the State House lawn, Roger Williams Memorial Park, and the planned five-acre waterfront park in the Jewelry District.

The challenge for Downtown is to link those structures and sites in an identifiable and cohesive way.

Important civic structures should be celebrated with active plazas and urban design features. In order to maximize the use of our open spaces, the City must ensure that residents, workers and visitors are easily able to locate and link into the open space network. Activating these important nodes is a challenge; the City should continue to activate open spaces through enhanced programming (markets, live music events, etc.) and should promote active ground-floor uses along the edges of open spaces. Consideration should also be given to views and vistas that will showcase these iconic structures and open spaces.

### **Completing the Urban Fabric and Enhancing Connections**

Completing the urban fabric not only involves improving connections to surrounding neighborhoods, but also improving connections and filling in holes within Downtown's three districts. Highway construction and urban renewal schemes such as Cathedral Square that were implemented throughout Downtown in the mid-20th century separated individual neighborhoods and districts from one another, interrupting the urban fabric and severely reducing pedestrian and vehicular connectivity. To mitigate these effects, the City will need to make significant infrastructure investments. Throughout the three Downtown districts, gaps in the urban fabric effect the character of streets and pedestrian linkages. *(See page 13 for further discussion of interim uses and available land.)*

The conversion of one-way streets to two-way streets greatly improves the connectivity of



Downtown and should be continued where feasible. The Downtown Circulator Project has already resulted in the conversion of Washington Street to two-way, and is currently in the design and planning phase for Weybossett, Empire and Fountain streets. (See page 34 for further discussion of the Downtown Circulator Project.)

Key areas where connections should be enhanced include those identified below. Retail and street-level activity should first be strengthened along key corridors and nodes within Downtown, then expanded to connect to adjacent neighborhoods and districts. Particular attention should be paid to streetscapes, pedestrian amenities, signage, the quality of urban design, building heights, and land

uses (especially ground floor uses) along these key corridors and streets that connect Downtown to surrounding neighborhoods. Loading, service entrances, blank walls, and garages should be prohibited along these important corridors.

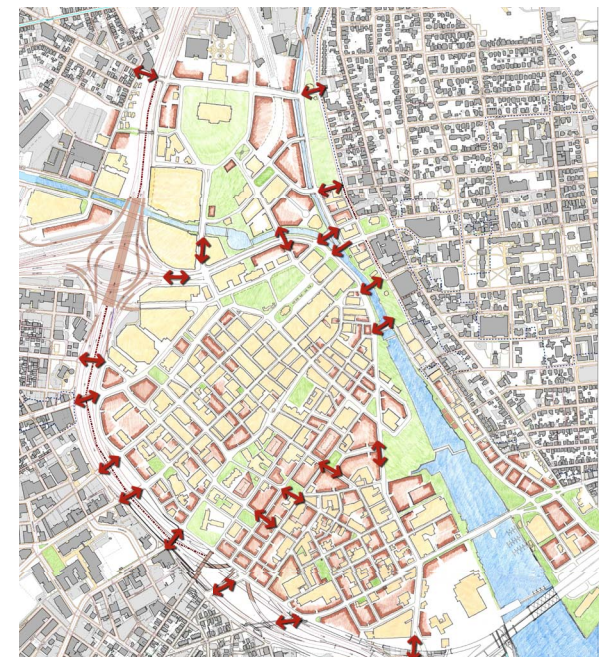
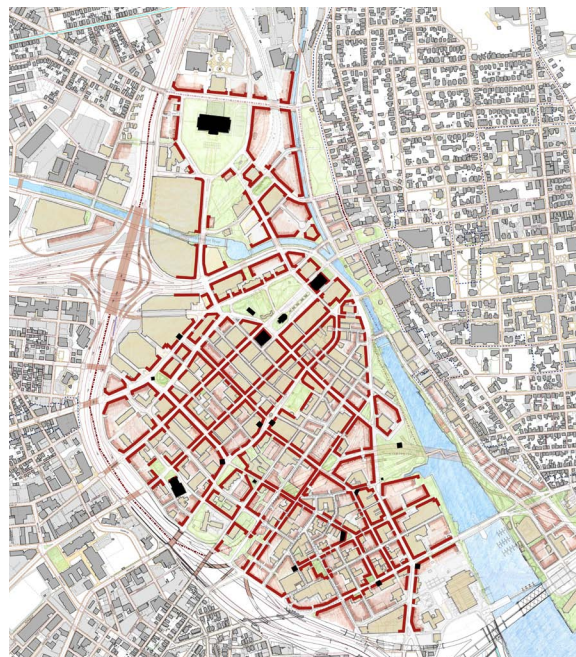
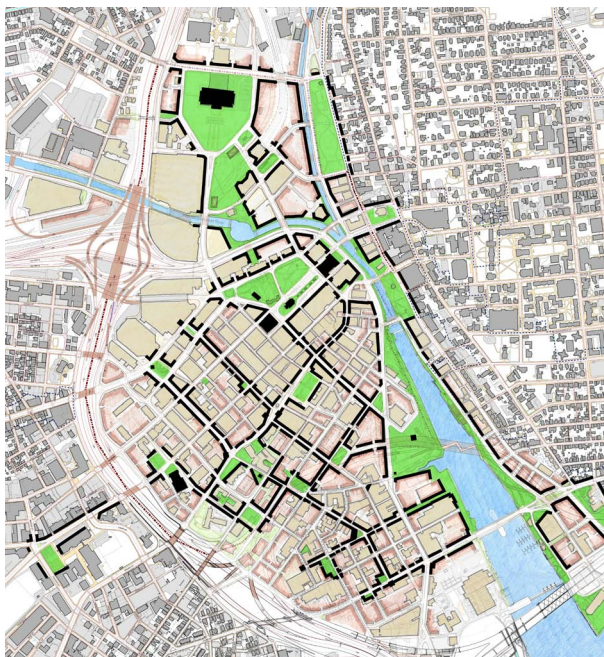
### **Downtown**

Within Downtown, the unique identity of small blocks, architectural character, and the diverse skyline should be maintained and enhanced. The viability of retail corridors, especially Westminster Street, should be enhanced with appropriate infill development in order to complete the urban fabric. Important gateways such as LaSalle Square should be celebrated with proper urban squares to calm traffic and improve pedestrian connectivity.

As new development sites, such as those in the Knowledge District and Capital Center emerge, office space is becoming less common in Downtown while residential and entertainment uses are becoming more common, especially along Westminster and Washington streets. The City must begin to adjust the way we look at Downtown in order to reflect the unique identities of important corridors and subdistricts (Financial District, Downtown Arts District, Cathedral Square etc.) within Downtown.

### **Capital Center**

Due to the large block sizes that were created by the 1979 *Capital Center Project Development Plan*, connectivity from Capital Center to Downtown, Smith Hill, the Promenade District, and College Hill is par-



As part of the planning process for Downtown, the consultant team studied ways to improve connections between important open spaces and iconic structures (left), ways to improve the urban fabric (middle) and ways to improve connections to surrounding neighborhoods (right).





The connection between the train station and the rest of Downtown could be improved by enhancing pedestrian amenities and introducing active uses, such as small retail stalls or cafes.

ticularly difficult. With popular MBTA commuter rail service and several new developments, including the new Blue Cross Blue Shield offices and several residential buildings, Capital Center may now have the population density to support active ground-level uses and active open spaces. The expansion of the MBTA commuter rail service south of Providence will also bring additional pedestrians to the area. As an important gateway to Providence, the area surrounding the train station should be vibrant and attractive. The current lack of quality street-level urban design and active uses surrounding Station Park and the train station plaza must be addressed. By introducing small-scale retail stalls or cafes in and around the park and plaza, the City could begin to activate this neglected area.

Particular attention should be paid to the pedes-

trian connection beneath the Providence Place Mall to Francis Street. Both Promenade and Kinsley streets should be enhanced to create a better connection from the Promenade Corridor to Capital Center.

Within Capital Center, these connections are also particularly challenging:

- Capital Center to College Hill and Smith Hill via Smith Street;
- Park Row between College Hill and Capital Center;
- Avenue of the Arts between Park and Francis streets in Capital Center;
- Exchange Street between Gaspee and Railroad streets, just west of the Providence Train Station; and,
- Capital Center to Downtown along Memorial Boulevard and via Francis and Exchange streets.

### West Side Edge

The West Side Edge runs south from Atwells Avenue to the Hospital District along the I-95 corridor. This area is currently home to a mix of building types and uses including senior housing high rises, the Providence Public Safety Complex, a variety of auto-oriented businesses, and several vacant lots and underutilized parcels. The vacancies in this corridor underscore the rift between the neighborhoods to the west and Downtown created by the construction of I-95. Developing these parcels and improving the

pedestrian experience along this corridor would create a more seamless connection over the highway.

Several proposals to develop these lots have come forward in the past several years (*see inset box on the next page*), but none of the plans have come to fruition. The height of new development along this corridor is a particularly important issue. This edge must be sensitively developed to respond to neighborhood character while reacting to the development potential of increased height and density that comes from the edge's proximity to Providence's dense urban core.

The 2010 *West End, Federal Hill, and Reservoir Neighborhood Plan* calls for neighborhood-serving mixed use developments that would increase walkability and neighborhood identity along this corridor, such as locally-owned street-level businesses like grocery stores, pharmacies, dining establishments, and other mixed-uses. The *Neighborhood Plan* also suggests that the Downtown edge should have building heights that step down from the parcels closest to the highway into the residential neighborhoods, keeping topography in consideration and limiting height to buffer the neighborhood from the highway and draw vitality from Downtown out into the neighborhoods. At both the West End and Downtown charrettes, participants hoped for iconic and innovative buildings to act as neighborhood gateways, preferably designed with sustainable practices in mind. The *Neighborhood Plan* also suggests that projects should have two faces, one on West Franklin and the other on the side streets to address the neighborhood edge, and forbids drive-thru use as inconsistent with the urban character desired in the

## Urban Design Challenge: West Side Edge

The following four sites and others along the West Franklin Street Corridor are crucial to the task of knitting together Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods. While none of these projects have, as of yet, come to fruition, the City has recognized this area as one ripe for growth.

### 383 West Fountain Street

In October 2005, the Armory Revival Company proposed a \$30-million, 82-condo, six-story development at 383 West Fountain Street. The plan required a permit to demolish existing manufacturing buildings, and a zoning variance that allowed 31 additional feet in height. Some neighborhood residents were resistant to allow the large development due to the necessary demolition of historic buildings and for fear of traffic congestion. Despite gaining master plan approval, this project was shelved and the manufacturing buildings were renovated to house a fitness center and other uses.



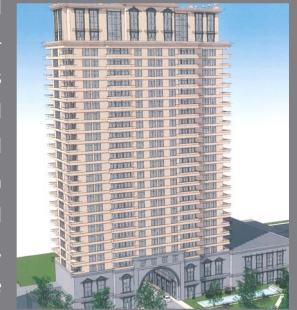
### MetroLofts

In 2006, the Procaccianti Group announced plans to build a condominium tower next to the Public Safety Complex on Service Road 7 between Washington and Westminster Streets. The West Broadway Neighborhood Association was concerned about the design of the building, which would serve as a gateway to West Side neighborhoods, and successfully lobbied to integrate changes into several of the proposed designs. A newer 165-foot design addressed many of the neighborhood's concerns, and tried to draw more directly from Providence's design aesthetic, but was still taller than many preferred. The project did receive the necessary variances from the Zoning Board in November 2007, but additional design review was requested by the Planning Department. The project has since been shelved.

### Vista della Torre

Vista Della Torre is a high-security condominium tower that was proposed in June 2007 by developer Frank Zammeillo for the intersection of Federal and Bradford streets in Federal Hill. The original plans were for an \$80 million, 330-foot tower that would straddle Federal Street and whose adjacent parking structure would require closing a portion of Bradford Street. The City Council Public Works Committee granted the project

an abandonment of Bradford Street and air rights over Federal Street, but the developer's original request for height and density bonuses was denied by the Zoning Board. In March 2008, the developers proposed a revised 250-foot building, which was approved by the Zoning Board; however, the developers are now waiting for more favorable market conditions to begin construction.



### CVS

In January 2009, Paolino Properties introduced a plan to build a 24-hour drive-thru CVS in the place of the former Boy Scouts Building at 15 Broad Street. Although the development could provide potential jobs and amenities, many residents opposed its suburban, auto-oriented design. As one of the key sites right off of the highway, the site should be developed as a gateway to the neighborhood, using design features that better fit the neighborhood's character. Several variations of the plans were presented, but the project has since been withdrawn.

Two additional projects that are proposed or underway could positively impact the West Franklin Street corridor. The first, a new peripheral bus hub planned for Cahir Street between Broad and Westminster streets will create queue space for buses and also include pedestrian amenities such as new bus shelters, map and schedule information, and bike racks. This sub-hub will increase economic viability in the area by drawing riders into the corridor from three nearby high schools and by adding convenient transportation options for businesses and residents.

The second project, the reconnection of Westminster Street through to Downtown may have the most potential to merge Downtown with West Side neighborhoods. Although only proposed at this point, this connection would further increase the importance of the West Franklin Street corridor, since the additional connection would need to be linked into a vibrantly developed neighborhood across I-95. The through-street would itself have an enormous impact on the continuity of Downtown and the neighborhoods, but could also spur development in its vicinity. Both projects will improve connections between neighborhood-based cultural activities.

corridor. In addition, the Plan calls for right-of-way amenities to be designed to be more pedestrian-friendly through the use of improved street-level retail, landscaping, lighting, street furniture, bike lanes, and signage throughout the corridor, especially around the I-95 bridges. These recommendations would bind together adjacent neighborhoods with Downtown to improve both.

If feasible, Westminster Street should connect through Cathedral Square to fully link Downcity with the West End. *(For more information on the proposed phasing plan for Cathedral Square, see pages 36-39.)* Along the West Side Edge, these connections are also particularly challenging:

- Broad Street, Washington Street, Broadway, and Atwells Avenue between the West End/Federal Hill and Downcity;
- East Franklin Street; and,
- West Franklin Street.

### **Jewelry District and Hospital District Edge**

The Jewelry District contains diverse block sizes and an eclectic urban fabric. Infill development should respect this existing urban context. The City should ensure that any large “knowledge industry” buildings, such as research facilities, constructed in this area are well integrated into the smaller surrounding context. Providing active street-level uses, such as retail, will be essential to maintaining connectivity, especially along key corridors and across the I-195 redevelopment parcels. Connectivity to the waterfront is also an important challenge that must be addressed during redevelopment efforts.

Within the Jewelry District and Hospital District

Edge, these connections are particularly challenging:

- Dorrance, Richmond, Chestnut and Claverick streets to connect Downcity with the Jewelry District;
- Point Street and the planned I-195 pedestrian bridge between the Jewelry District and Fox Point; and,
- Friendship, Clifford and Eddy streets between the Jewelry District and the Hospital District.

The redevelopment of the I-195 parcels, with the development of new waterfront parks and a pedestrian bridge that links them together, provides an opportunity to consider a larger network of linked urban spaces that connect Fox Point to the Jewelry District continuing through the I-195 parcels and linking across I-95 along the Crawford Street bridge to Upper South Providence and the Southside neighborhoods. The cohesive network of linked open spaces could be made of a sequence of varied landscapes from parks to bridges to promenades and generous public sidewalks and pedestrian-oriented streetscapes.

To fill in the missing pieces from India Point Park, through the waterfront parks and pedestrian bridge will require careful planning of the I-195 parcels with special consideration for pedestrian movements through the corridor. Public access through building plazas or courtyards can be an essential component to making the linked network of open spaces a success, while ensuring that the I-195 parcels are fully redeveloped.

In addition, a coherent identity, such as “CityWalk”, together with a branding and wayfinding program, will help to promote this new network of linked urban spaces.

## **Downtown Pedestrian Environment**

In addition to highlighting the important connections in each of the districts in Downtown, it is critical to improve the overall pedestrian environment throughout Downtown, and connecting downtown along its edges to adjacent neighborhoods to the east, west, north and south.

The Downtown Circulator and IWAY projects represent significant investments in public infrastructure, and a great opportunity to ensure that pedestrian amenities, putting a priority on pedestrian movements and walkability are addressed and showcased in these projects.

In addition, these projects point to a larger issue of the need to develop a comprehensive approach to public infrastructure that puts into practice good urban design principles and results in an outstanding public realm. Providence should be, and can be, known as a City that is completely walkable with a great pedestrian environment and as a City that honors the public realm with outstanding infrastructure.

## **Regulations**

The regulation of land in Downtown is both permissive and restrictive. It is permissive in the sense that it allows for a wide range of uses and for the tallest buildings in the City, but restrictive because of

the various special districts that impose significant regulation and often require review by one or more public boards and commissions. The State and local regulatory environment—where the time required and the overall complexity of the permitting process are concerning—contributes to the high cost of development in Downtown. Property taxes, rents, construction costs, and the cost of parking Downtown are also concerns, especially when nearby cities and towns offer lower costs and free parking.

### Zoning Regulations

Two base zoning districts predominate Downtown: D-1, Downtown Central Business District, and D-2, Downtown Mill District. Both are mixed-use zones, permitting residential, office, services, entertainment and, in the case of D-2, some light manufacturing. The zones both require buildings to be built with no setback from the street. Height in D-2 is capped at seven stories, not to exceed 90 feet, while in D-1 the maximum height varies with several subzones, from 45 feet to 300 feet.

### Special Districts

Downtown also is regulated by several special districts that impose requirements additional to the base zoning:

- The **Downcity District** is an overlay zone, more or less coincident with the D-1 zone, which subjects new structures and modifications of existing structures to design review by the Downcity Design Review Committee. The review and regulations are intended to ensure that the buildings are urban in character, pedestrian-oriented, and fit in to the historical context of the District.

The regulations discourage demolition of historic structures.

- The **Jewelry Manufacturing Historic District** overlays portions of the D-1 and D-2 zones. It also discourages demolition and regulates alterations and new construction through review by the Historic District Commission (HDC).
- The **Industrial and Commercial Buildings District (ICBD)** contains several individual properties in the D-1 and D-2 zones. The ICBD is a historic district and requires HDC review, but the regulations are somewhat less stringent than in traditional historic districts.
- The **I-3 Floating Zone** overlays several blocks in Downtown. It is intended for the development of higher educational institutions. Development in this zone must be in accordance with an Institutional Master Plan approved by the City Plan Commission. Because the I-3 zone is also within the Downcity District, the Downcity Design Review Committee must also review development here.
- The **Capital Center Special District** is an area in the northern part of Downtown, also within the Downcity District. Any development in the Capital Center District is reviewed by the Capital Center Commission according to the Commission's regulations. Some aspects of the Downcity District regulations apply here as well.

Each of the various regulations for Downtown was developed with a legitimate purpose; however, over

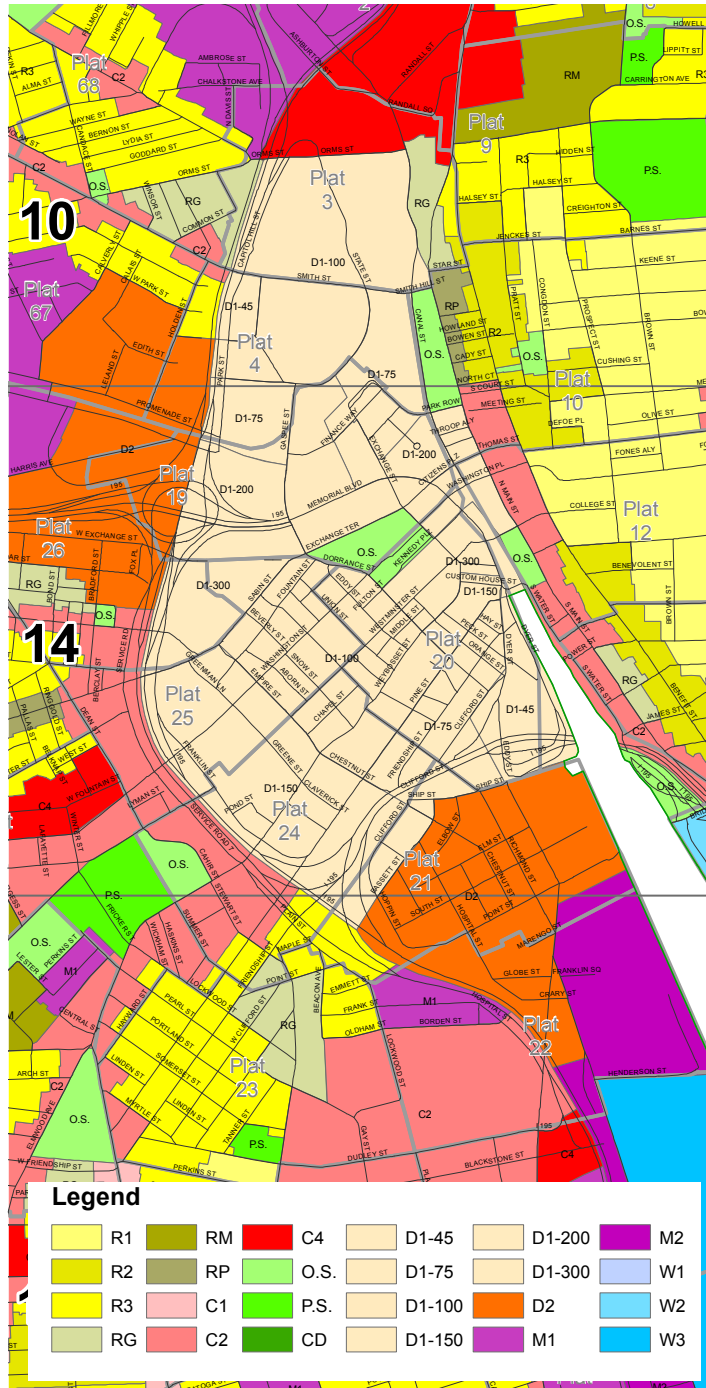
time, the rules have become a patchwork, with some unnecessary overlap and some conflict. New regulations should be crafted that implement the vision of Downtown as distinct districts within a coherent whole. One common element of Downtown regulations should be design review. In fact, per two separate memoranda of agreement with the State and Federal governments, design review is required for land in the I-195 corridor and in Capital Center, to ensure that there will be no adverse impact on historic resources.

Aside from overlap and conflict, there are several issues that the Zoning Ordinance has not kept pace with. These include outdoor uses, such as restaurant seating and open air markets, both of which are arguably overly restricted in Downtown. (*For more detail on tensions between land uses see page 15.*) Also, the Ordinance is not equipped to deal with desirable development such as research and development facilities and laboratories—especially in the emerging Knowledge District.

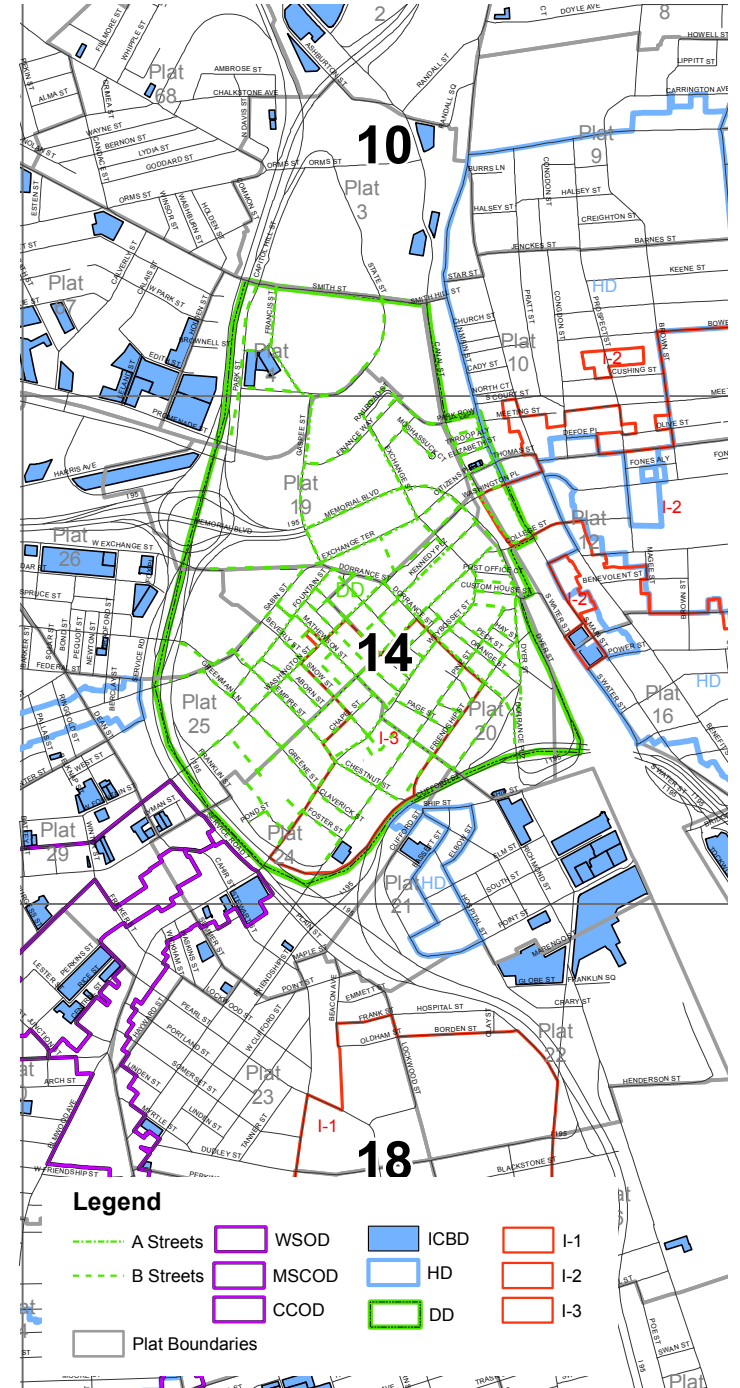
### Other Regulations

Other regulations governing the use of property in Downtown include the building and fire codes, which often require major modifications of older buildings. Many businesses must secure liquor, restaurant, or entertainment licenses from the Licensing Board. Also, the RI Coastal Resources Management Council regulates land use within 200 feet of the tidal rivers in Downtown.





Zoning Map for Downtown



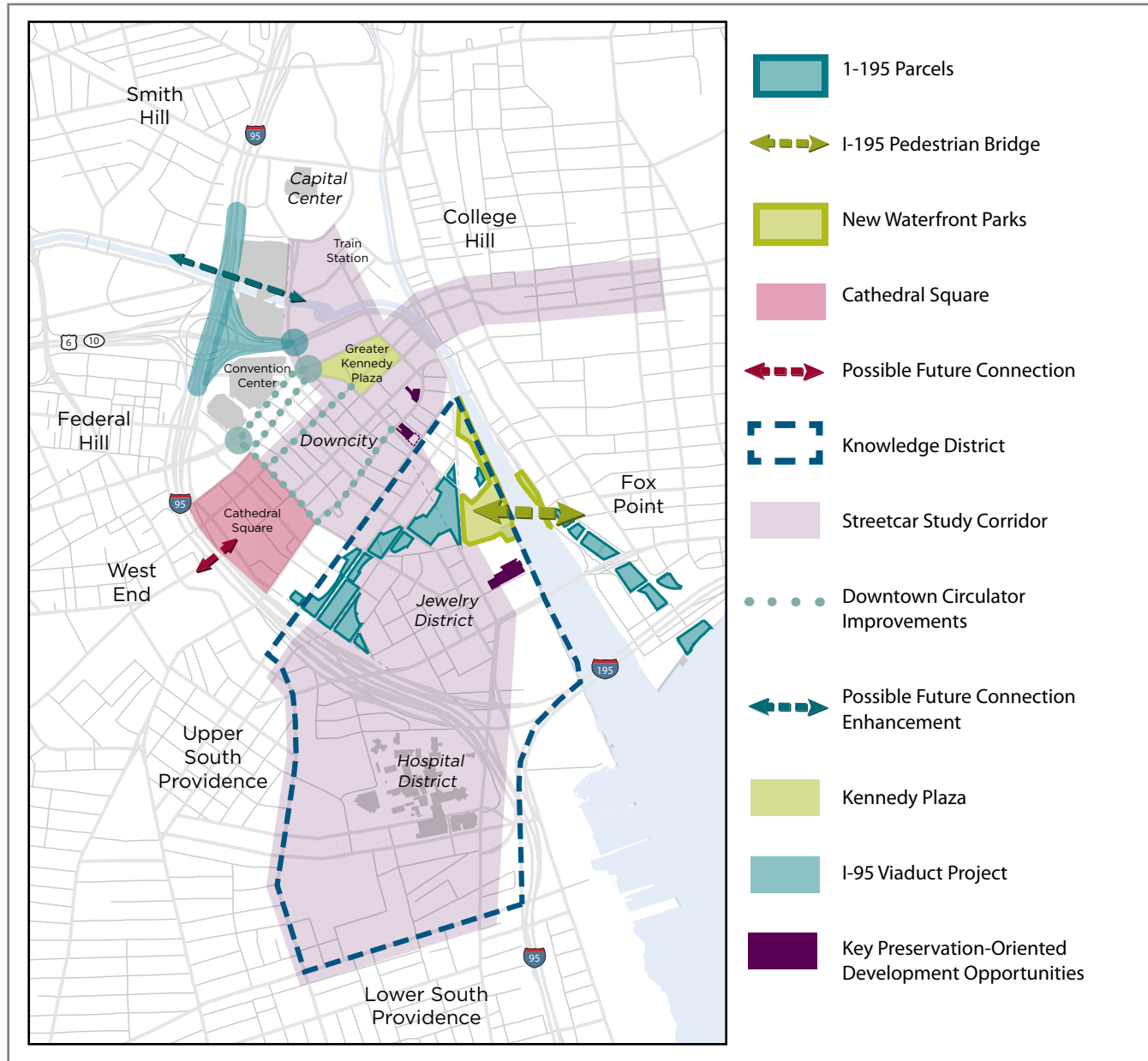
Overlay Zoning Map for Downtown





# Opportunities: Transformative Projects

Already a decades-long process, the revitalization of Downtown is continuing with initiatives large and small. The following is a list of projects that, if realized, have the most significant transformative potential.



## Redeveloping the I-195 Parcels

Urban renewal schemes and the construction of Routes 6/10 and Interstates 95 and 195 in the 1950's and 1960's destroyed a significant part of the city's urban fabric and isolated neighborhoods from each other and from Downtown.

The concept of relocating Interstate-195 was officially adopted by the City in the form of the *Old Harbor Plan* (1992). The Plan identified 44 acres of right-of-way to be liberated by the relocation of I-195, and proposed to enlarge the area by an additional 26 acres of land for potential development. The basic concept of the Plan was "to return Old Harbor to its historical status as [the] gateway of the city." As such, the Plan established a continuous street pattern with a balanced mix of land uses, guaranteed access to the waterfront, and included a program of implementation and funding. Goals of the Old Har-



*The construction of Interstates 95 and 195 in the mid-20th century separated the Jewelry District and West End from Downtown.*

bor Plan's I-195 Relocation strategy also included:

- Using the western area to accommodate the expansion of institutions such as Rhode Island Hospital and Johnson & Wales University;
- Expanding the existing residential and commercial uses on the east side;
- Identifying sites for public attractions;
- Increasing public transportation by land and water;
- Linking to adjacent districts with walkways and corridors; and,
- Dedicating significant portions of the land for open space uses.

In 2000, RIDOT began construction on what has been named the IWAY project. Originally built in the 1950's to accommodate 75,000 vehicles per day, I-195 was serving twice that many vehicles per day by the early 2000's. RIDOT undertook the realignment and reconstruction effort in order to improve both safety and traffic flow at the I-95/I-195 junction. The twelve-year construction project required RIDOT to relocate many businesses and acquire over 80 properties along the new alignment path. Now nearing completion, all new roads, bridges and ramps are scheduled to be in use by the end of 2010. By the end of 2012, the old infrastructure will be demolished and the redevelopment parcels will be ready for reuse.

The completion of the relocation of I-195 will provide safer and more efficient travel through parts of the City, including to and from the hospitals, and will allow the reconnection of the historic street grid when the highway superstructure is removed, contributing to improved multi-modal connectiv-

## IWAY Redevelopment: Past Planning Efforts

*The Jewelry District Concept Plan* (1999), the *Providence 2020 Plan* (2006), the 2008 planning charrette for Downtown, the *Jewelry District/Old Harbor Planning Framework Study* (2008), and the *Rhode Island Interstate-195 Relocation Surplus Land: Redevelopment and Marketing Analysis* (2009) all explored possible development scenarios emerging from the relocation of I-195. The main goals for the I-195 redevelopment effort that emerged from this series of planning initiatives included:

- Maintaining diverse block sizes, eclectic urban fabric, and varied building sizes, mass, and character;
- Improving connections to the waterfront and to adjacent neighborhoods and districts;
- Strengthening the urban fabric of important corridors such as Dyer, Richmond and Chestnut streets;
- Establishing design regulations and building heights that encourage infill development to respect the scale and proportion of the area's historic context, but allows for a contemporary design aesthetic;
- Improving pedestrian safety and connectivity at the Point Street and Clifford Street bridges;
- Developing additional open space;
- Improve access to transit in the area;
- Encouraging a mix of office, institutional, residential, and mixed-use development to support the emerging Knowledge Economy;
- Promoting sustainable development;
- Encouraging the development of cultural establishments such as museums, visual arts venues, and performance venues;
- Leveraging institutional investment and public-private partnerships to achieve a "shared vision";
- Creating of a signature pedestrian bridge across the river; and,
- Developing a unified parking management strategy for the area.



ity throughout the City. The urban patterns of the surplus land created by the I-195 realignment are generally defined by the historic street alignment that pre-existed the highway construction. This approach logically achieves the goals of reconnecting Downcity and the Jewelry District on the west side of the river. This pattern also maintains the east-west continuity of the Downcity street grid (Clifford and Friendship streets) and connectivity toward the riverfront.

The local streets on the west side of the river will be designed to allow for good pedestrian and bicycle movements, enhance connections to public spaces and parks, and adequately allow for through-traffic but at a design speed suitable for an urban neighborhood.

The relocation of Interstate 195 also presents an important new opportunity for waterfront parks. A concept plan has been developed for two signature waterfront parks on eight acres of land liberated by the highway's relocation along the east and west banks of the Providence River. These parks will be connected by a new pedestrian bridge built atop the piers that now carry I-195 across the River.

Leveraging the presence of area institutions to promote private-sector development of research facilities and other knowledge-based industries will be crucial to the redevelopment of many of the I-195 redevelopment parcels. Research- and life sciences-related development will complement the ongoing effort to revitalize the Jewelry and Hospital districts District, known also as the Knowledge District. The properties that are owned by Johnson and Wales



*I-195 Downcity/Jewelry District Redevelopment Parcels*

and Brown University along the I-195 corridor present tremendous opportunities for institutional development of many of the parcels. The institutional presence in Downcity and the Jewelry District, and the stated commitments and interests of each institution, suggest that higher education uses—or uses with institutional partnerships—present viable prospects for parcel redevelopment. Johnson

& Wales University's (JWU's) Institutional Master Plan proposes a development scenario for Parcels 31, 35 and 36, although recently, the University has determined that it will not seek to acquire Parcel 35.

Brown University has also expressed an interest in Parcels 22, 25 and 27. These parcels directly abut property owned by the two universities and would

therefore make non-institutional development more challenging. In the interest of advancing the mixed-use goals for the Jewelry District, institutional development need not consist of entirely academic uses, but would benefit from private development partnerships with supporting uses such as research, conference and hospitality facilities, and incubator space that would benefit from institutional proximity.

### Redevelopment Parcels on the Downtown (West) side of the IWAY project

The 5.90-acre [Parcel P4](#) is designated as open space and is proposed to be a public waterfront park, currently in the programming and schematic design phases and referred to as Harbor Landing Park. The opportunity for highway demolition to open up the Old Harbor and re-establish connections between the Jewelry District and the waterfront is one of the significant public benefits of the IWAY Redevelopment Project. Issues affecting the successful implementation of the park include creating the desired pedestrian bridge connection to the east side of the river, the redevelopment and activation of the edges of the parcels on the north and south sides of the park, and the timing of disposition and development of abutting parcels in concert with the timing of the park construction—both for the benefit of the park’s success and the added value of the parcels that the open space will create.

[Parcel 22](#) has unique potential for development given its position between the proposed waterfront park, the Jewelry District, Downcity, and Old Harbor. Development on Parcel 22 will enjoy significant frontage across Dyer Street from the proposed Old Harbor riverfront park proposed on Parcel P4. The

scale, quality, character, and uses along this frontage will be critical to achieving the goal of appropriate and active park edges. For this reason, an active, mixed-use street frontage is encouraged.

With the potential to combine the parcel with the adjacent surface lot on Eddy and Clifford streets, the dimension of the northern half of Parcel 22 is typical of the larger Downcity block pattern and would support an office or research facility footprint. The proximity of the large, blank façade of the Courthouse on the opposite side of Clifford Street makes this frontage challenging and, because of this condition, the Clifford Street frontage of Parcel 22 may be ideal for structured parking, although some level of active ground floor uses should be encouraged to prevent contributing further to the unfriendly character of this block. The site location also benefits from the proximity to the Jewelry District properties owned by Brown University and their current and future institutional presence within the District.

The dimension, configuration and location of the 2.25-acre [Parcel 25](#) all suggest significant development opportunities. The central proximity to several of Brown University’s properties gives the site the added potential to contribute to the institution’s interests in expanding its presence in the Jewelry District and, in particular, bio-medical and life sciences facilities. The University has expressed an interest in Parcel 25, as the site offers a great deal of flexibility with respect to planning and development options with or without the assembly of the abutting properties.

Development by Brown University or private sector uses seeking proximity to the institution is well suit-

ed to the goals stated in the 2008 *Providence Knowledge Based Economy* report and the *Jewelry District Framework Study*. The site also benefits from frontage along Richmond Street, which has remained an important north-south connector between the Jewelry District and Downcity given its negotiation between the two different street grid geometries and its continuation beneath the highway toward Downtown. Undoubtedly, this street will take on even greater importance following the highway removal, particularly if the Parcel 25 frontage of Richmond Street reinforces the importance of the street and is designed to promote activity at street level. While the Eddy Street frontage of the parcel is likewise important, its terminus at the Clifford Street wall of the Courthouse unfortunately dampens its significance as a major connector.

While the large dimensions of Parcel 25 present the potential to accommodate two or more buildings of adequate dimension for institutional or private research facilities (+/- 30,000 square foot footprints), the width across the block does present various urban design challenges that must be carefully considered. The elimination of the Eddy Street extension through Parcels 22 and 25 offers new ways to think about Parcels 22 and 25 together; there may be opportunities for multiple smaller buildings rather than one or two large structures.

At 0.63 acres, [Parcel 27](#) is one of the smallest of the Jewelry District parcels to be created from the I-195 relocation. The parcel configuration will restore the historic street grid and, together with the proposed Parcel 28 on the north side of Clifford Street, will play an essential part of the successful realization of



a new Clifford Street corridor. The scale, design and proposed uses of development along Clifford Street are particularly important to the success of this new street corridor.

The Richmond street frontage is defined by the area currently beneath the highway overpass connecting the Jewelry District and Downcity. The southern edge of the parcel directly abuts a collection of contiguous property owned by Brown University which fronts on Richmond and Ship streets and is currently used for surface parking. Combined with the Brown parcels, Parcel 27 would occupy the entire triangular block with the exception of a small structure at 89 Ship Street, which is listed as part of the Jewelry Manufacturing National Historic District. Site access is currently available from Richmond Street. Clifford Street will also provide additional site access.

**Parcel 28** is a 1.35-acre parcel that will play an important role in recreating the east-west link of the Clifford Street alignment which was severed by the I-195 construction. The scale, design and proposed uses of a Parcel 28 development along Clifford Street are important to the success of this new street corridor. As a stand-alone development parcel, or when combined with the commercial property on the corner of Richmond and Friendship streets, the dimensions of Parcel 28 could accommodate a 30,000 square foot footprint, which is well suited to office and research facilities. This typology is consistent with the type of development considered by Brown University and suggested in the *Jewelry District Framework Plan*. Strategically, the parcel is unique in its position at the center of the surplus parcels and is an important transition between the Jewelry District

and Downcity. Its definition by two important north-south corridors and two equally important east-west corridors, makes this a key development parcel.

**Parcel 30** is a 0.63-acre parcel that is defined on the north by the proposed alignment of Friendship Street which will extend to the west from the existing alignment that is interrupted by I-195. The narrow dimension of Parcel 30 makes development opportunities extremely limited, unless pursued in combination with either or both of the Clifford Street buildings on the southern half of the block. New development on the site could be combined with a historic rehabilitation of the Irons and Russell Building, which dates from 1903 and is good example of traditional Jewelry District industrial building stock. Without the assembly of the adjacent properties, the dimensions of Parcel 30 would likely be able to accommodate multi-family or student housing. The site has limited east frontage on Chestnut Street and limited west frontage on Claverick Street. Site access is currently available from Chestnut Street. The reconnected Friendship Street and Claverick Street will provide additional site access. The scale, design and proposed uses of Parcels 30 and 31 along Friendship Street are important to the success of this re-established corridor.

**Parcel 31** is a .56 acre parcel that is defined on the south by the proposed alignment of Friendship Street, which will extend to the west from the existing alignment that is interrupted by I-195. Site access is currently available from Chestnut Street. The reconnected Friendship and Claverick streets will provide additional site access. Development of Parcel 31 will be a challenge due to its narrow dimen-

sions, unless combined with the abutting properties to the north, as proposed by the Johnson & Wales University Master Plan. Johnson & Wales (JWU) owns the abutting property to the north, which includes surface parking and Johnson Hall on the corner of Chestnut and Pine streets. The University's acquisition of the surplus parcel is logical and the only likely near-term opportunity for development of Parcel 31. As a stand-alone parcel, the dimensions do allow for a multi-family or student housing, but would be limited to a single-load corridor building over half of the site. The JWU Plan proposes student housing fronting on both Friendship and Pine streets and connected mid-block at ground level with common circulation.

**Parcel 34** is a 1.55-acre parcel that is defined on the north by Clifford Street, extending from East Franklin Street on the west to Claverick Street on the east. Hoppin Street will be discontinued north of Bassett following the creation of Parcel 34. To the east, Parcel 34 abuts surface parking lots and small commercial properties located at 33 and 41 Bassett Street. East Franklin Street and Bassett Street will be extended and Clifford Street will be reconfigured to provide site access. Parcel 34 will ultimately play an important role in recreating the east-west link of Clifford Street which was severed by construction of I-195. The parcel configuration will restore the historic street grid and, together with the proposed Parcel 35 to the north, has the opportunity to anchor the west end of a new Clifford Street corridor. The scale, design and proposed uses of a Parcel 34 development along Friendship Street are important to the success of the new east-west corridor and the sense of arrival into the neighborhood.

At 2.3 acres, [Parcel 35](#) is the largest development parcel of all of the surplus land and represents the only entirely contiguous ownership block among the west side parcels. The parcel configuration will restore the historic street grid and, together with the proposed Parcel 34 to the south and Parcel 36 to the north, has the opportunity to anchor the west end of a new Friendship and Clifford Street corridor. A new bridge across I-95 will connect Clifford Street to the west side of the highway and will present the opportunity for the west end of Parcel 35 to serve as a Jewelry District “gateway” site from the west. The scale, design and proposed uses of a Parcel 35 development along Friendship Street are important to the success of the new east/west corridors and the sense of arrival into the neighborhood. Although Parcel 35 was a central component of the proposed Johnson & Wales Master Plan, the University has determined that it will no longer seek to acquire this parcel. The dimension and layout as a contiguous block provides great flexibility in its redevelopment potential. Parcel 35’s location along the Interstate suggests that it is an appropriate location for a taller building that would benefit from highway visibility.

At 1.15 acres, [Parcel 36](#) is a thin strip of remnant land along Friendship Street that abuts the Johnson & Wales student services building and a surface parking lot owned by the University. Combined with the University’s ownership, Parcel 36 would be a contiguous block of single ownership. East Franklin, Friendship and Claverick streets are all being reconnected to the existing grid and will provide site access from three sides. The existing Pine Street bridge across I-95 will be removed as part of the I-Way project.

Parcel 36 will ultimately play an important role in recreating the east-west link of Friendship Street which was severed by the construction of I-195. Parcel 36 has the opportunity to anchor the west end of a new Friendship Street corridor. The Johnson & Wales Master Plan proposes a Hospitality College at the west end of the parcel. The remainder of the parcel, a narrow sliver of land along Friendship Street, directly abuts Johnson & Wales’ Rolo Building. The Master Plan’s proposal to create a linear open space along the south side of the building is a good solution to what is essentially a remnant site with no real development potential.

[Parcel 37](#) is a 0.54-acre triangular parcel that is defined on the north by the proposed Bassett Street extension connecting to the new extension of East Franklin Street, which will define the west side of the parcel. Hoppin Street will not connect through to East Franklin Street. The parcel will have access from Bassett and Hoppin streets. Site access from East Franklin Street may be restricted by the site’s steep slope. Parcel 37 also presents a challenge due to its triangular shape and small dimension.

[Parcel 41](#) is a 0.3-acre parcel that is defined on the north and east by the abutting property owned by the Providence Housing Authority and an existing high-rise residential development. Site access is currently available from Pine Street. East Franklin Street will be extended and provide additional site access. Due to the steep slope of the parcel, a retaining wall should be constructed to allow reasonable use. Parcel 41 is a small parcel, although it could accommodate a small multi-family residential footprint or,

perhaps, a townhouse typology. Smaller scale housing could be built to complete the street corridor and complement development on the south side of Pine Street. Additional surface parking at this corner should be discouraged.

## Creating the I-95 Pedestrian Bridge and New Waterfront Parks

The City of Providence is now staging a limited design competition to select a designer for the Providence River Pedestrian Bridge, which will replace the old Interstate-195 Bridge that spans the Providence River. The design competition is intended to provide a creative jump-start for the design and construction process and to clarify program elements, design opportunities and associated project costs.

The bridge will create a new connection for pedestrians and bicyclists from the Fox Point and College Hill neighborhoods to Downtown, particularly to the emerging “Knowledge District.” The new bridge will also encourage commuters from the East Side and East Bay, many of whom already work in the Hospital District and the emerging Knowledge District, to use public transit, as the bridge will allow commuters to take the bus to the East Side and walk over to the Knowledge District without having to transfer at Kennedy Plaza. The bridge will also serve as the link between two new waterfront parks that will be developed as part of the I-195 relocation project.

The Providence Foundation and the City of Providence invited Project for Public Spaces (PPS) to engage stakeholders to develop a preliminary program for the parks and to provide best practices for man-

aging vibrant and successful public spaces. In early 2009, PPS held focus groups with area private developers, City staff, the project engineer and designers, community group representatives, and local institutions to discuss activating and managing the spaces. A large public workshop was held. The themes that emerged from that process mirror the principles of creating a great waterfront, namely designing for flexibility and phased implementation, creating both active and passive recreation areas, encouraging non-vehicular access, programming seasonal uses, and connecting to other destinations in Providence.

Since then, a I-195 Pedestrian Bridge Committee—made up of local architects, neighborhood residents, staff from RIDOT and the City of Providence, and private business representatives—has been meeting to advocate for the construction of the pedestrian

bridge, help determine the design and programming concepts for the bridge and initiate a “Friends of the Bridge and Waterfront Parks” group that will partner with the City in the management and maintenance of these important public spaces.

In addition to connecting the existing river walks and the College Hill neighborhood with the Jewelry District, the new pedestrian bridge is an exciting opportunity to weave together the design themes of the City’s history and emerging future as a center of innovation, design excellence and creative- and knowledge-based businesses and industries. The proposed bridge must incorporate the five existing piers as a primary design element. The bridge should be twenty feet wide at a minimum (inside dimension) to allow for walkers, bikers, runners, strollers, and roller bladers to safely traverse the bridge.

Adequate seating and passive gathering spaces should be included along the 450-foot span to accommodate small gatherings and passing pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Expanding and Planning for the Knowledge District**  
Providence has long

been home to great higher-educational institutions, including Brown University, Rhode Island School of Design, Johnson & Wales University, the University of Rhode Island, and the Community College of Rhode Island. All of these institutions have facilities in the Downtown area, bringing creativity, knowledge, innovation, youth, and culture to the environment. In addition, medical facilities and related research activities form a core and expanding component of the greater Downtown’s economy, led by Rhode Island Hospital and Women and Infants Hospital.

The Knowledge District is already home to several significant research centers such as Brown University’s 135,000 square foot Warren Alpert Medical School (under construction), Women and Infants’ Hospital, the Kilguss Research Institute, Brown University Laboratory for Molecular Medicine, Lifespan Biomedical Research Center, the Center for Restorative and Regenerative Medicine, Miriam Hospital’s Weight Control and Diabetes Research Center, the Neurosurgery Foundation, the Tech Collective, and the RI Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. In addition, private research and development firms such as NabSys and Isis Biopolymer are taking root and growing in the Knowledge District. IBM recently designated Providence for its newest global partnership which will explore technology & community problem-solving together with Brown University, the City and the State.

As the area of the City best positioned to accommodate the growth and expansion of jobs through life science research and product development, it is essential that the Knowledge District be carefully planned to ensure that this limited acreage is devel-



*The new pedestrian bridge must incorporate the five existing granite piers as a primary design element.*



The Knowledge District capitalizes on the City's compact size and the close proximity of each partner's campus.

oped to its best advantage. The City of Providence is now undertaking a study to determine the types of buildings that are necessary for the life sciences and how they can be integrated into the Knowledge District.

In order to realize the vision in Providence's various plans for the district, the zoning and land development regulations in the study area—such as land use, building and block dimension, building design, and the review process—will

## The Knowledge District Boundaries

There is broad interest from stakeholders to revise the boundaries of the Knowledge District to include the Downtown core. As much of the Jewelry District and I-195 land is targeted for medical research and development and related uses and activities, Downcity is becoming attractive to other knowledge-based businesses, such as design and technology innovation. There is consensus that the 'Knowledge District' brand should be considered more broadly to include all knowledge-based and creative businesses and industries. The revision to the Knowledge District boundary would reflect its broader meaning and definition.



be evaluated and revised. The City will consider a wide range of regulatory schemes, including form-based codes, incentive zoning, regulations and incentives for "green" development, transit-oriented development, transfer of development rights, land development project review, and design review.

## Working Towards a Streetcar System

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) and the City of Providence are currently working with HDR Engineering to perform an Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Assessment (AAEA) for an urban circulator system (such as a streetcar or enhanced bus service) to link Upper South Providence, Downtown, and College Hill. The AAEA Study, named the *Providence Core Connector Study*, is expected to be completed by late 2011/early 2012.

The *Core Connector Study* aims to connect destinations in Downcity and the Knowledge District between Kennedy Plaza and Rhode Island Hospital to the Providence



Train Station, and to a proposed Thayer Street Hub on College Hill. An investment in this area would provide access to numerous attractions, including Downcity offices, college campuses, medical and research facilities, cultural and entertainment venues, transportation centers, and the Convention Center. If proved feasible, the initial circulator alignment and operating plan will be finalized after various circulator alternatives have been considered. Extensions to serve adjoining neighborhoods may be studied as part of a later phase.

Streetcar, one of the urban circulator systems being considered, is a rail-based technology that is different from other forms of rail transit because of its reduced infrastructure requirements and its ability to operate with automobiles in mixed traffic. Streetcar lines are typically designed for relatively short distances, and provide urban circulation rather than regional mobility. Streetcars are a vital component of place-making and have positive impacts on all three primary aspects of sustainability—economic, social,



Streetcars helped to shape Providence in the late 1800's and early 1900's. (Source: *The Providence Journal*)

and environmental. From an economic perspective, the streetcar acts as a catalyst for development and redevelopment, and provides an opportunity for public-private partnerships. Socially, streetcar projects enhance the pedestrian experience and create places where people want to be. Service is available and oriented to all residents. From an environmental viewpoint, streetcar projects encourage a smaller carbon footprint, and support the use of “green” technology and infrastructure.

Streetcars had a defining impact on the growth of Providence beginning during the Civil War. Horse-drawn streetcars and, later, electric trolley cars,

shaped the expansion of Providence until they were replaced by buses in the 1940's. Now, nearly 150 years after streetcar was first introduced, the technology again has stirred interest as a means to shape growth and spark new economic development opportunities.

Providence is not alone in its renewed interest in streetcars. Cities across the country are rediscovering streetcars as a place-making tool and mobility option to support a desire for increased economic development, pedestrian activity, and sustainable growth. Unlike more intensive rail technologies

### The “Core Corridor” of the Streetcar/Circulator System

The concentration of activities within the compact “core” area of Upper South Providence, Downtown, and College Hill makes central Providence an excellent candidate for a streetcar line:

- As one of the lowest income neighborhoods in the City, **Upper South Providence** has a large population of residents who are considered to have a great need for improved public transit.
- As the state's primary medical district, the **Hospital District** contains three major hospitals supporting over 10,000 employees, making it the state's largest private employer. As part of this project, RIPTA and the City hope to help Rhode Island Hospital reduce demand for parking in the district, which, at approximately 15,000 cars per day, is encroaching upon residents in Upper South Providence.
- Over 99,000 employees work in or near the **Knowledge District**, which is home to numerous facilities specializing in research and development for the life sciences field including: educational facilities for Brown, Johnson and Wales, and the Community College of Rhode Island; a research labs for Brown, Lifespan and Women and Infants; and numerous private bio-tech related businesses.
- **Downtown destinations** such as PPAC, Trinity Repertory Company, the Dunkin' Donuts Center and the Convention Center draw tourists and residents alike to Downtown for various events throughout the year.
- As RIPTA's principal hub of bus operations for the metropolitan area and much of the State, **Kennedy Plaza** serves over 30,000 passengers daily.
- The **Providence Train Station** provides MBTA-operated commuter rail service to Boston and Amtrak-operated service to Boston and New York City. This station currently serves over 2,700 daily MBTA riders. In addition, Providence Station is the 18th largest station in Amtrak's system, serving over half a million Amtrak riders annually.
- College Hill's **Thayer Street**, which is proposed as the northern terminus for the streetcar/ circulator, is a high volume pedestrian area that links to both the **Brown University campus** and adjacent residential neighborhoods. Brown University is, in addition to being one of the City's largest employers, the base for a large student population.

such as heavy rail and even light rail, streetcars are viable in cities large and small, and their unique benefits are being successfully demonstrated in places ranging in size from Kenosha, Wisconsin to Seattle, Washington. Nearly 100 cities are actively engaged in streetcar planning, design, or construction.

The feasibility of a streetcar starter line was initially explored during the *Providence Metropolitan Transit Enhancement Study*, which RIPTA, in partnership with the City, initiated in 2008. The Study identified and prioritized current, emergent and future transit opportunities for the Providence metropolitan area. The conclusions of this study were issued in a final report in December 2009. (A full copy of the report can be found at [www.transit2020.com](http://www.transit2020.com).) The Report identifies ten recommendations to further enhance transit in the metropolitan area. One of those recommendations is to “Build a Providence Streetcar System.”

The *Providence Core Connector Study* will include a strong public outreach component to educate a range of stakeholders on the costs and benefits of any proposed investment.

An initial Economic Impact Development Analysis was completed as part of the Report, evaluating the feasibility of building a streetcar system in Providence. The *Core Connector Study* will further evaluate potential economic impact to result from the development and operation of a streetcar system versus other possible circulator systems. Given the many demands on state and local spending, innovative funding options, and the potential for developing predictable revenue streams to support ongoing

operating costs will be explored. Any financing plan will also assess RIPTA's ability to operate and maintain a streetcar/circulator system.

## Improving Circulation Downtown: LaSalle & Emmett Squares

Restoration of Weybossett, Empire and Washington streets to two-way traffic was first proposed during the early 2000's as part of the Downtown Circulator project. In 2004, the decision was made to phase the project in order to advance the Washington Street portion of the project while design continued for Empire Street and Weybossett Street.

### Key Actions

The following actions describe the phased implementation plan of the Downtown Circulator project.

#### Phase I

Phase I, the conversion of Washington Street from one-way to two-way traffic, was successfully implemented in 2004. This conversion has resulted in an increase in investment along Washington Street as it is now easier to access both sides of the street. Since the street was returned to two-way traffic, the Hotel Dreyfus and the Mercantile Block have been rehabilitated with artists housing and restaurants and retail businesses. Additionally, the block across from Trinity Repertory Theater has received significant investment. While it is likely that some of this investment would have occurred without the street being returned to two-way traffic, it certainly contributed to the transformation of the street.

#### Phase II

Since 2004, planning and design has continued for Phase II of the Downtown Circulator project. Phase

II includes converting Empire Street from Fountain Street to Weybossett Street from one-way to two-way traffic as well as converting Weybossett Street from Dorrance to Broad Street from one-way to two-way. Empire Street will have one lane going south (towards Broad Street) and two lanes traveling north bound (toward Fountain Street). Empire Street will be repaved, parallel parking will be striped on both sides of the street, and it will receive new coordinated traffic signals and pedestrian crossings. The overall objective of Phase II is to make Empire and

## Improving Circulation Downtown: Past Planning Efforts

Prior to the 1963 *Weybossett Hill Redevelopment Plan* and the 1970 *Downtown Providence Plan*, Weybossett Street was two-way and met Westminster Street in front of the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul. The 1963 Plan squared off Weybossett Street with Broad Street and Empire Street, eliminating the western section to construct the Cathedral Square apartments and additional buildings in the area.

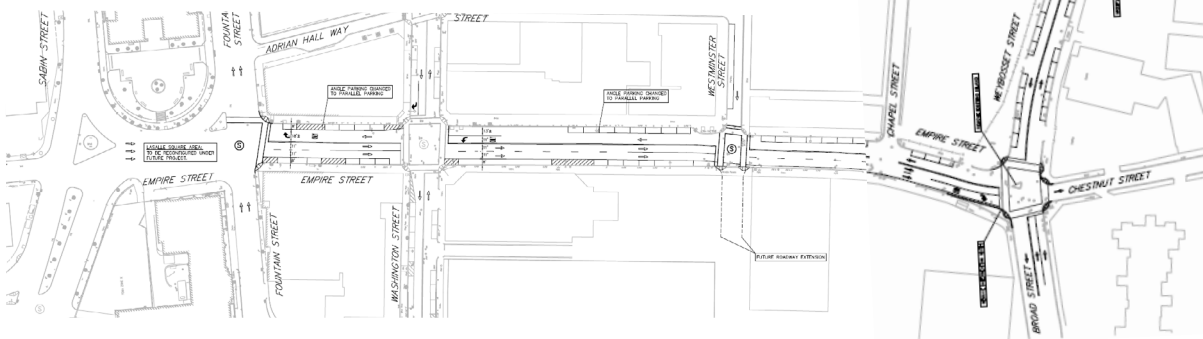
The 1970 *Downtown Plan* proposed Downtown as a series of superblocks with automobile traffic only allowed on the periphery of Downtown or on the highways surrounding Downtown. The blocks within Washington, Empire, Weybossett, and Dorrance streets were envisioned as a pedestrian zone with the Westminster Street pedestrian mall as the centerpiece of a revitalized Downtown.

To achieve this vision Washington, Empire, and Weybossett streets were converted from two-way streets to one-way, creating a counter-clockwise ring road around the Downtown pedestrian zone. It was anticipated that these ring roads would allow people to feel safer moving about the Downtown pedestrian retail zone surrounding Westminster Street, but it is now widely recognized that this design had the opposite result, leading to the further decline of Downtown.

Weybosset streets more pedestrian-friendly and to improve traffic flow and circulation throughout this part of Downtown.

Weybosset Street will also receive new coordinated signals and pedestrian crossings, as well as being repaved and restriped. Damaged sidewalks in the project area will also be repaired. In the vicinity of the Providence Performing Arts Center (PPAC), Weybosset will receive additional streetscape enhancements. These enhancements will define the area around PPAC as a pedestrian-oriented, urban destination through the use of different materials such as granite pavers, exposed aggregate concrete roads and sidewalks, street furniture, relocation of parts of the historic comfort station, new traffic signals, and decorative street lighting.

This phase of the project also includes realignment of much of the curb line along Weybosset Street between Dorrance and Snow streets to make traveling along the road safer for both pedestrians and automobiles while allowing for a drop-off lane in front of the theater. This project will serve as a catalyst to further spark revitalization along the street, building on the restoration of the Smith-Mathewson building that was damaged by fire in 2006, the construction of a new building on the adjacent vacant lot, and the renovation and restoration of the eastern half of the Benjamin Dyer Block, which is currently being converted into apartments with upgraded restaurant and retail space at ground-level.



Phase II Empire and Weybosset Street improvements.



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### Phase III

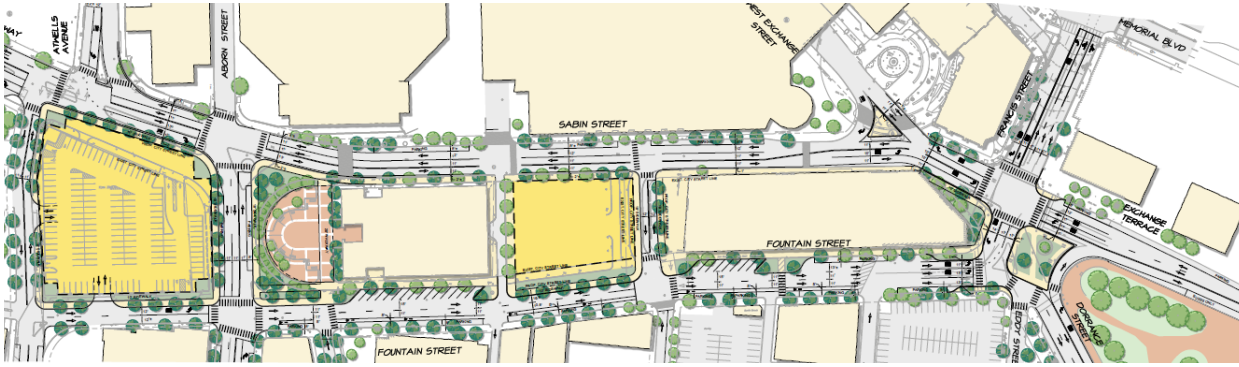
During the planning and design process for Phase II, the re-configuration of LaSalle and Emmett squares, along with Fountain and Sabin streets, was raised. The reconfiguration of these two squares has been discussed periodically through the years and was discussed by Andres Duany during his 1994 and 2004 Downtown charrettes.



LaSalle Square (above) and Emmett Square (below) will be re-configured as part of Phase III.







*The conceptual plan for Phase III of the Downtown Circulator Project proposes making Sabin Street two-way and enhancing the existing Fountain Street, which will remain one-way, with enhanced street trees and planted medians. The reconfiguration of LaSalle and Emmett squares are also proposed as part of Phase III.*

The 1994 proposal gave two options for Emmett Square; both options eliminated the three islands currently in the intersection. (LaSalle Square was studied in the 2004 charrette.) The first option called for reconfiguring Burnside Park to allow Exchange Terrace to line up with Washington Street and redesigning the park so it extended up to the former Union Station buildings along the current Exchange Terrace. It also proposed redesigning the corner that is currently home to the Providence Journal in order to improve pedestrian and vehicular flow through the intersection.

The second option suggested a roundabout that would eliminate the three islands currently in existence and reconfigure property lines to accommodate the roundabout in a manner safe for pedestrians and automobiles. In this option, Exchange Terrace was reconfigured slightly, but not to the same extent as the first option.

The 2004 charrette looked at both Emmett Square and LaSalle Square. In 2004, Duany recognized that

Emmett Square had become “a critical connection between Capital Center and Downcity,” and recommended redesigning the intersection as an urban square with a one-way traffic pattern. To accomplish this he proposed building two lanes of one-way traffic on three sides of the square. He also proposed taking property for the redevelopment of certain sites to facilitate development of the area. Duany proposed transforming LaSalle Square from an intersection into an actual square. It was felt that redesigning the area would alleviate congestion and make a safer and more enjoyable pedestrian environment.

The LaSalle Square and Emmett Square plans for the third phase of the Downtown Circulator are currently in design. Current design plans propose making Sabin Street two-way with Fountain Street remaining one-way with a “boulevard-like” feel accomplished through new street trees and planted medians. It is expected that design elements such as bumping out the sidewalks at crosswalks, improving landscaping and reconfiguring parking will slow traffic on Foun-

tain Street making it a more pedestrian-friendly environment. These elements will work together to help transform the street from a pass-through to a destination for City residents. It is expected that the street improvements will add to the significant development opportunities in the immediate area, including the redevelopment of the old Public Safety building parking lot, the Fogarty building and, potentially, the Providence Journal buildings.

Under the current design plans, Sabin Street will become two-way from Broadway to the Dorrance/Francis/Exchange intersection. Dorrance Street will also become a two-way street. This will improve the flow of traffic for buses and cars to the Financial District and will take some of the pressure off of the Downtown exit ramps and Memorial Boulevard.

Emmett Square will be reconfigured to function more like an actual city square. LaSalle Square will have two-way traffic from Broadway/Sabin to Fountain Street. Reconfiguration of these areas will facilitate better pedestrian movement across the intersections and will allow for more efficient bus and car movements through the area. Materials, details and final design are still underway for Phase III of the Downtown Circulator, but it is anticipated that construction will begin in 2011. This work will dovetail with the proposed improvements to Greater Kennedy Plaza that are discussed below.

### Improving Kennedy Plaza

Kennedy Plaza has gone through several physical transformations over the past 150 years. When first laid out in 1848, the area was named Exchange Place



and it was the civic center of Providence. In the mid-1860s, Exchange Place became an important transportation node as a result of the streetcar lines that radiated from this area. By the early 20th century the Plaza had been developed as a fine example of the City Beautiful movement in urban planning—a grand concourse connecting the imposing civic monuments of City Hall and the Federal courthouse. It was officially named Kennedy Plaza in 1964. Since then, the plaza has been altered and redesigned several times to meet the State’s increasing public transportation needs.

The most significant redesign took place in 1999,



*The City continues to work with RIPTA and other stakeholders to reinvent Kennedy Plaza and to improve the pedestrian experience in the area.*

when The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) transformed the entire plaza into an intermodal transit hub. Along with the creation of a centrally located hub for RIPTA’s buses and passengers came the problems that now plague the Plaza. As its role as a major transportation node increased, gone was the civic center and gathering space that the Plaza had once provided. Bus congestion, overcrowding, noise and crime became new challenges for the Plaza.

As RIPTA’s principal hub of operations for the metropolitan area and much of the State, Kennedy Plaza’s operations are at full capacity with no room for expansion. In addition to two privately utilized berths, 44 of 56 routes in the statewide RIPTA system terminate in Kennedy Plaza utilizing 19 berths. These berths serve over 30,000 passengers daily and are concentrated around an area with limited shelter and seating for passengers. This pedestrian and transit activity includes passengers served by intercity coach buses also in operation in the plaza area. To address the operational issues at Kennedy Plaza, RIPTA and the City of Providence are currently working to develop new “peripheral hubs” throughout Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods to relieve pedestrian and vehicular congestion and create a more pleasant and welcoming environment in the Plaza area. Four new hub locations have been identified in the West Side, College Hill, Capitol Center, and the Hospital District.

In 2006, the Greater Kennedy Plaza Working Group (GKPWG) was formed by a group of civic leaders and public officials to focus on ways to improve Kennedy Plaza and connect the success of the City to one of its most significant public spaces. Several meetings and workshops were held to immediately address



*Increased programming in Burnside Park and throughout Greater Kennedy Plaza, along with improvements to the pedestrian environment, will help make Kennedy Plaza more than a utilitarian transit hub.*

the concerns and problems with the Plaza, and to create and generate new ideas for programming it into a lively public space.

In late 2007, the GKPWG hired the New York-based non-profit firm Project for Public Spaces (PPS) to help support the group effort in creating a great public space. In February 2008, the City of Providence hosted a workshop with PPS to meet with and present to groups of key area stakeholders, which helped design and initiate a public process for moving forward. A focal point for participants was the immediate need for more events, programs and active use of the space itself by the public at large. Within months of that meeting, funds were raised and a Program Manager was hired to launch a programming schedule for the 2008 summer season.

RIPTA sponsored a Kennedy Plaza workshop in the summer of 2009 to generate visionary ideas for the

Plaza to improve our center of operations. For the City, beyond enhanced transportation, the economic and social benefit of Kennedy Plaza is that it simply provides a concentration of students, workers, residents, and visitors in the Downtown area. By redesigning activity locations, physical features and open space, this population density is an opportunity to nurture businesses and activities.

Development of the four new peripheral hubs will heighten the visibility, accessibility and convenience of transit to employment centers and destinations just outside of Downtown, and will enable RIPTA to reduce bus layover time and the overall level of bus activity in Kennedy Plaza. This will help connect the Plaza to Burnside Park and Downtown Providence, while reinforcing it as the central hub of the RIPTA system.

Reconfiguring berths in the Greater Plaza area will better facilitate transfers between carriers and improve the safety and security of the area. It will also create a more pleasant experience for pedestrians as they enjoy the enhanced amenities and programs that have evolved over the last two years such as the Monthly Market Bazaar, Public Square Day, Noon Tunes, Fun and Fit Thursdays, Beer Garden Thursday events, and Farmers' Market Fridays.

Today, the City is continuing the engagement with the public and private sector concerning the next steps of the reinvention of Kennedy Plaza with the goals of enhancing ridership, improving the pedestrian experience, offering public space, and reconnecting Downtown to the surrounding neighborhoods. This dialogue promises to transform Kennedy Plaza

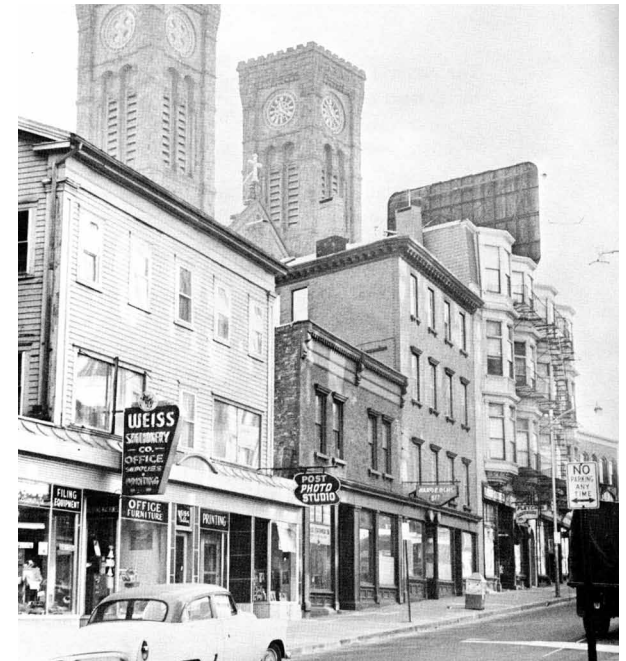
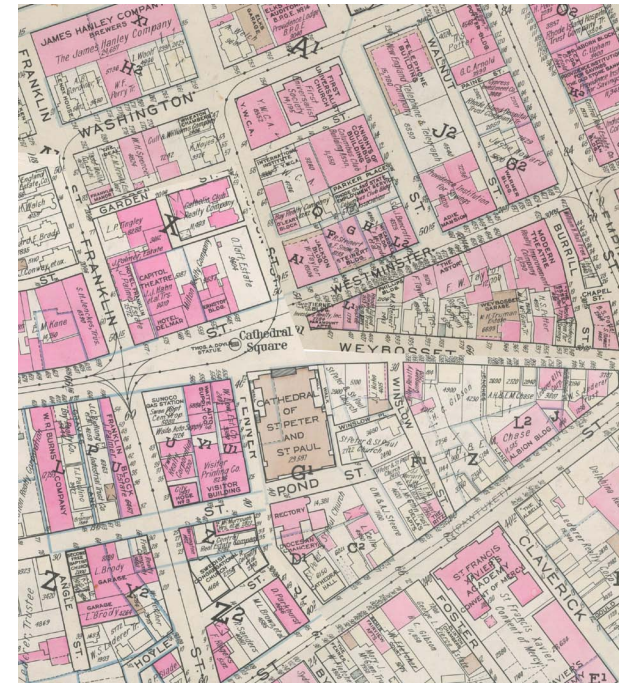
from a utilitarian transit hub into a vibrant gateway to Downtown that offers activities, events and commerce and is a true destination for the City.

## Revitalizing Cathedral Square

Cathedral Square—a half-acre public plaza framed by the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul—has historically been a significant node within the city of Providence. The Square once marked the confluence of Westminster, Weybosset and Jackson streets. Neighborhood shops, theatres, hotels, and residences once lined the tight-knit fabric of these streets. With the construction of Interstate-95 and urban renewal efforts during the 1960s and 1970s, that urban fabric was destroyed, dividing Downtown from the West End.

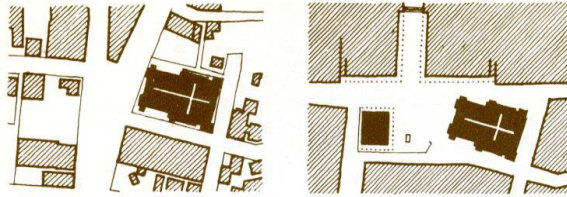
The 1970 Downtown Providence Plan called for the creation of “superblocks” that would eliminate through-traffic in the Weybossett Hill area, however several service roads with on-street parking were to remain. A European-inspired pedestrian plaza was planned as the terminus of Westminster Street, providing what was deemed a more appropriate setting for the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul.

The Cathedral Square that exists today—designed by architect I.M. Pei—eliminated the street grid altogether, completely cutting off the area from vehicular traffic. It was imagined that the buildings lining the Westminster walkway would be arcaded and would contain a mix of uses at ground level, creating an active pedestrian environment leading up to the square. Above, high-end apartments and offices would provide a constant pedestrian flow. Due



*Cathedral Square and Weybossett Hill were once integrated into the traditional urban fabric of the City.*





*I.M. Pei's design for Cathedral Square (above) was based on the designs of European plazas such as the Piazza San Michele, the Piazza Grande, the Domplatz, and the Piazza del Duomo.*

*Without the mix of uses that were envisioned for the buildings lining the Square, Pei's full vision of an active European plaza was never realized, and today, Cathedral Square sits devoid of almost any pedestrian activity (below).*



to an economic downturn however, this full vision was never achieved. Elderly, assisted-living and low-income housing were built instead, and retail uses never filled in the arcaded ground-floors along the Westminster Mall extension. Due to a lack of both pedestrian and vehicular activity surrounding Cathedral Square, the area has become a place for vagrants and crime.

With little on-street parking and a lack of service roads throughout the Square, residents of the Cathedral Square apartment buildings, workers at the offices of the Archdiocese and service trucks park illegally in the Square. The lack of street connectivity, the placement of Bishop McVinney Auditorium, the lack of a signaled crosswalk, as well as the unfriendly nature of both Franklin Street and the Westminster Street bridge over the highway, prevent pedestrians from comfortably walking between Downtown and West End along Westminster Street.

### Key Actions

The following actions describe a proposed implementation plan for the redevelopment of Cathedral Square. The goal of the phased implementation plan is to improve both pedestrian and vehicular connections from Downcity through to the West Side neighborhoods and to make Cathedral Square an active, welcoming neighborhood node.

#### Phase One

- Open Westminster Street to outbound vehicular traffic between Greene Street and Jackson Walkway, Jackson Walkway to outbound vehicular traffic between Westminster and Washington streets, and Lyman Street to outbound vehicular traffic between Jackson Walkway and Franklin Streets. In

accordance with the I.M. Pei Plan, several streets in the project area, including Westminster Street, Jackson Walkway and a section of Winslow Street have been converted to pedestrian walkways. The City of Providence has retained ownership of these walkways and provides maintenance. As these streets were previously converted from vehicular roads to walkways, there is sufficient right of way to restore these walkways as roadways. The trees and ornamental lighting that were installed along these walkways could easily remain as pedestrian amenities once they are converted to vehicular roadways.



Delivery trucks, USPS trucks, and other vehicles regularly drive throughout the Square and along Jackson Walkway, entering from the Broad, Franklin and Fenner street entrances. These vehicles make the plaza and walkways uncomfortable for pedestrians and have broken many of the pavers. Phase Two recommends that these entrances be closed off with new bollards and that the broken pavers be replaced. On-street parking should be provided where possible along these newly estab-

lished streets.

### Phase Two

- Install new bollards to prevent unauthorized vehicles from entering Fenner Street, north of Pond Street. Removable bollards would still allow emergency vehicles access to the walkway.
- Install new bollards to prevent unauthorized vehicles from entering Jackson Walkway via Broad Street. Removable bollards would still allow emergency vehicles access to the walkway.



- Patch broken pavers and fix broken lights along Jackson Walkway.

### Phase Three

- Redesign the Square in front of the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul. The stairs and pavers in front of the Cathedral are in poor shape and are a hazard to pedestrians.
- Renovate the historic front facade and entrance of the Cathedral.
- Redesign the planted area in Cathedral Square. The extensive paving, uncomfortable benches and dense tree canopy make this area especially uncomfortable for pedestrians. Replacing the pavers



with grass, and installing new benches, trash cans and ornamental lighting will help to make this area more pedestrian-friendly. The City will work the Parks Department and City Forester to replace unhealthy trees with lower lying vegetation.



### Phase Four

- Open Westminster Street to outbound vehicular traffic between Empire and Greene streets. The streetscape treatments that make Westminster Street east of Empire Street such a wonderful pedestrian environment should continue along the newer portions of Westminster Street beyond Empire Street. The continuation of this street and its pedestrian-friendly elements will help to unite Cathedral Square with the rest of Downcity.



### Phase Five

- Open Westminster Street between Jackson Walkway and Fenner Street to outbound vehicular traffic
- Open Fenner Street to two-way vehicular traffic.

### Phase Six

- Option A - Open Westminster Street to outbound vehicular traffic between Fenner and Franklin streets; demolish McVinney Auditorium and the Chancery offices. This option would leave two development parcels of 18,000 and 43,000 square feet.
- Option B - Open Westminster Street to outbound vehicular traffic between Fenner and Franklin streets; demolish only the central section of the McVinney Auditorium while retaining both the north and south wings of the Chancery. The 500-foot long north wing includes three floors of offices. The 720-foot south section includes two full stories of offices with a reduced office footprint on the first floor. A two-story boiler room in the basement of the south section currently serves the heating needs of the Chancery, Cathedral and ad-



jaacent rectory. In addition to the Auditorium, the center section, proposed for demolition under this option, includes the entrance lobby, elevator shaft and stairs. A National Grid electrical vault, located in the center of the building, provides service to the Chancery only. Demolition of the central section would require new entrance façades, elevators and stairwells to be constructed along the demolition faces, and new heating/ventilating/air conditioning facilities to be installed. The function of the existing electrical vault would also have to be replaced. A minimum 15-foot separation would be required between the western fenestrated facade and adjacent development parcels (*Cathedral Square Feasibility Study*). This option would allow for the possibility of two new building footprints or additions along the new portion of Westminster Street between Fenner and Franklin streets.

- Option C - Renovate the Franklin Street facade of McVinney Auditorium. If Options A and B prove infeasible, renovating the facade to improve the building's relationship with pedestrians, adding a traffic signal and crosswalk, and improving the pedestrian right-of-ways along Franklin Street and the Westminster Street Bridge (as described at below) would help to establish a better pedestrian connection between Cathedral Square and the West End.

### Phase Seven

- Improve the pedestrian right-of-way along the Westminster Street bridge over Interstate-95; add a traffic signal and crosswalk to the Franklin/Westminster intersection. Narrow sidewalks and little protection from oncoming vehicles make the Westminster Street Bridge particularly forbod-

ing for pedestrians. The lack of a crosswalk forces pedestrians to walk to either the Broad/Franklin or the Washington/Franklin intersection to cross Franklin Street.

- Improve the pedestrian right-of-way along Franklin Street. Unlike some earlier alternatives, this plan does not call for the relocation of Franklin Street closer to the highway, although wider sidewalks, bulb-outs, on-street parking, and other streetscape improvements should be considered here as they would greatly improve the pedestrian environment.

## Reconstructing the I-95 Viaduct

The Providence Viaduct, completed in 1964, carries a quarter-mile of Interstate 95 over the Woonasquatucket River, Amtrak's north-east corridor train tracks, Kinsley, Promenade and Francis streets, and the Routes 6/10 interchange. Exit ramps off the Viaduct provide access to Rhode Island State offices, the Providence Place Mall, the Dunkin' Donuts Center and Convention Center, the Veteran's Memorial Auditorium, and Downtown Providence, Kennedy Plaza, and Waterplace Park. The Viaduct carries approximately 230,000 vehicles per day (115,000 in each direction).

The Viaduct has been determined to be structurally deficient by RIDOT and USDOT engineers. According to RIDOT, the deck of the Viaduct is badly deteriorated and has been shored up in many locations. There are numerous cracks in the steel girders and they no longer meet State and Federal standards for load carrying capacity. The concrete support piers under the bridge are decayed, with the concrete testing

below the design strength and the rebar inside the piers obviously rusting.

RIDOT has been informed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that they will not support the rehabilitation of the bridge and that it must be replaced. To that end, RIDOT is proposing to replace the Viaduct through a design-build process rather than the traditional bridge design process. This will shorten the design and construction period for the new Viaduct bridge and should result in cost savings for RIDOT.

From the City's perspective, the reconstruction of the Viaduct bridge provides an opportunity to create better connections to Downtown from the highway and to improve conditions for pedestrians and cars on the roads below the Viaduct. Due to its utilitarian design, it is often difficult for drivers to discern that they are traveling on a bridge over a river, local roads and pedestrian crossings. The City plans to work with RIDOT to ensure that the new bridge design feels and looks like a bridge.

Although the design of the new viaduct bridge is important to the City, the opportunities for improving the areas below the Viaduct are of even greater importance. The City will be working with RIDOT to improve connections underneath the Viaduct from Kinsley and Promenade to the Mall and Francis Street. While there is an existing pedestrian connection, it is poorly lit and not well used due to pedestrian safety concerns.

The City will work with RIDOT to enhance the pedestrian environment under the Viaduct along Kinsley



*Connections below the Viaduct, such as the connection beneath the Providence Place Mall to the Promenade area, will also be an important part of the rebuilding of the Viaduct.*

and Promenade to complement the improvements to the pedestrian crossing under the Viaduct and the Mall. This will help draw residents from the Smith Hill and Valley neighborhoods (in particular, the Foundry and The 903 residents) to Downtown through the improved crossing. The improvements to the pedestrian crossing and the area underneath the Viaduct should include new lighting and landscaping to



*The intersection of Memorial Boulevard and Francis Street should be studied to slow traffic, improve pedestrian safety and to possibly permit a pedestrian crossing on the west side of the intersection (shown above).*

make the area a more welcoming environment and to increase the feeling of safety in the area.

As part of the Viaduct project, the State should also look at the bridge's off-ramps to explore making the intersections at the ends of the ramps more pedestrian-friendly. In particular, ramps from the Viaduct to Memorial Boulevard should be studied to determine ways to slow the traffic down on the ramps to make the pedestrian crossings at Memorial Boulevard and Francis Street safer and to possibly permit a pedestrian crossing on the west side of the intersection.

## Guiding Preservation-Oriented Development

Providence has a proven record of successful rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of its historic buildings. While there are many examples of successful preservation-oriented development located throughout the City's neighborhoods, some of the most high-profile examples are located in Downtown. These include the Smith Building, the Dreyfus Building, the Providence Performing Arts Center, the Pell-Chafee Theater, the Mercantile Building, the Burgess, Low, O'Gorman & Alice buildings, the Shepard's Building, and many others. These examples show that preservation-oriented development is a viable economic development tool that has had a significant impact on the look and feel of Downtown.

By adaptively reusing Downtown buildings, we preserve not only individual architectural gems, but also the traditional fabric of the City, which lends itself so well to a pedestrian environment. Preservation-oriented development is also green development,

since reusing buildings conserves resources.

In the past two decades, Downtown made great strides. Tax incentives for preservation, such as the Rhode Island State Historic Tax Credit, have had a dramatic impact in Providence. Created in 2002, the State Historic Tax Credit offset some of the high costs associated with preservation-oriented development and enabled the rehabilitation of many buildings in Downtown.

Downtown now contains hundreds of dwelling units and many of the necessary services to accommodate the new residents, but Downtown's transformation is not yet complete. When the State Historic Tax



*Downtown has many successful examples of preservation-oriented development, such as the rehabilitation of the 1890's Peerless Building into 97 loft-style residential units and ground floor retail space.*



Credit was eliminated in 2008, an important incentive to Downtown development was lost. There remain underutilized and vacant buildings that should be renovated and rehabilitated. As buildings are re-used and re-purposed, they can catalyze other developments.

The following are examples of possible preservation-oriented development sites that have the greatest catalytic potential:

### **Providence Gas Company site**

The Providence Gas Company site consists of the Providence Gas Company Building, 100 Weybosset Street, the Teste/Philip Wolfe Building, 108 Weybosset Street, the Dorrance Building, 92 Dorrance Street, the Narragansett Garage, 98 Dorrance Street, and the surface parking lot located at 110 Dorrance Street.

National Grid relocated their offices from 100 Weybosset and 98 Dorrance streets in 2006. Since then, these buildings, along with the adjoining Teste/Wolfe Building and the Narragansett Garage, have stood vacant. The potential redevelopment of this approximately 20,600 square foot development site offers multiple opportunities. Ideally, the existing buildings could be rehabilitated into office/retail space with a rehabilitated Narragansett Garage providing parking for the buildings. The 10,000 square foot surface parking lot adjacent to the garage provides an opportunity for new infill construction of a six- to ten-story mixed-use building that would fill the current void in the streetscape and help activate this part of Downtown. This parcel could also potentially be developed in conjunction with the afore-

mentioned properties if appropriate.

### **110 Westminster Street**

A casualty of the financial crisis of 2008, the vacant lot at 110 Westminster Street, with its propped-up facade on Weybosset Street, is a hole in the heart of the City's Financial District. Adjacent to the site sits the Arcade at 130 Westminster Street. Reputedly the country's first retail mall, the Arcade's doors are now closed for business. The combined parcels provide an excellent opportunity for preservation-oriented development.

The development opportunities at 110 Westminster Street are abundant. The approximately 20,000 square foot site could accommodate a range of projects, from a 350-foot tall skyscraper to the subdivision of the lot and the building for one or two smaller structures. Two elements of the site lend itself to preservation-oriented development: the engineered facade along Weybosset Street and the adjacent Arcade. The 18,000 square foot Arcade is an internationally-known architectural attraction that brings many visitors to Providence.

The issues associated with making the Arcade a financially-viable property are well known. An opportunity exists to develop 110 Westminster Street and the Arcade into a project that favors both sites. An ideal development would be a 10- to 15-story mixed-use building that could house retail, hotel and office uses and incorporate the existing Weybosset Street facade. The Arcade could easily be connected to this development with minimal intrusion while hosting additional retail space on the upper floors and restaurants on the first floor. The new development



*Since National Grid relocated their offices in 2006, 100 Weybosset, 98 Dorrance (above), the adjoining Teste/Wolfe Building, and the Narragansett Garage have stood vacant. In 2005, a skyscraper—set to be the tallest in Providence—was proposed for 110 Westminster (below). Today, the lot remains vacant due to financing issues and the historic Weybosset Street facade that was preserved during demolition has an uncertain future.*





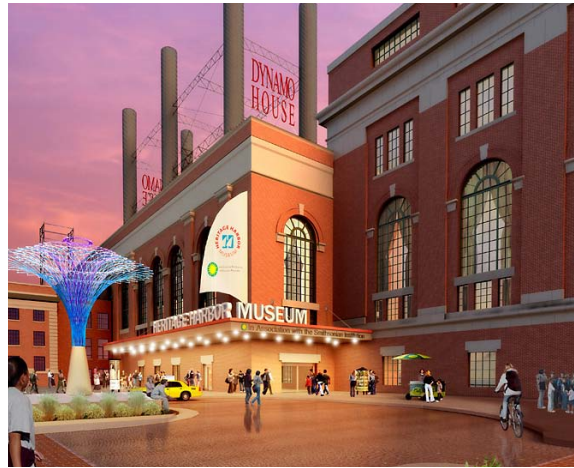
would allow the Arcade to be economically viable while keeping this important architectural landmark open to the public.

### Dynamo House

Another casualty of the financial crisis, Dynamo House, is a stalled adaptive reuse project of the former South Street Station Power Plant. This significant waterfront development will house retail, office space, a hotel, and the Smithsonian-affiliated Heritage Harbor Museum. The cathedral-like 390,000 square foot structure, located on the Providence River, is planned to be the cornerstone of the redevelopment of the Jewelry District and the Downtown Providence waterfront.

The project has been idle for two years. Currently, the structure has no windows and is completely open to the elements. With the developer in bankruptcy, various parties, including the City, have been attempting to analyze the project's current economic situation and find a path to move the project forward.

Even in the best of economic times, the redevelopment of this site would be daunting. In addition to the significant expense of rehabilitating the building, the site presents numerous constraints—primarily a lack of parking. Most of the vacant land to the north of the building has been reserved by National Grid for an electrical sub-station. A potential solution is to develop a parking garage or mixed-use building that encloses the sub-station. If realized, the proposed streetcar/urban circulator starter line running along Eddy Street south to the Hospital District could alleviate the site's parking issue. *(For more information on the City's efforts to create a streetcar*



*With the developer in bankruptcy, the Dynamo House—an adaptive reuse project of the former South Street Station Power Plant in the Jewelry District—has sat partially finished for two years while the City and various parties have been attempting to find a solution that will move the project forward.*

*line see page 32.)*

Providence has a history of taking “white elephants” and providing vibrant, new uses for them. With some determination and thoughtful development, Dynamo House can be another success story for the City.

# GOALS AND POLICIES

The key outcome of the Downtown Plan is the development of a multi-phase action plan for the neighborhood. The Goals and Policies table below details the goals for Downtown and identifies specific actions needed to achieve the vision.

Address the key land use challenges Downtown: vacant land, interim uses, institutional uses and tensions between land uses.	
<b>Work with area institutions to ensure that their growth and development Downtown is mutually beneficial for the City and the institutions.</b>	Leverage the presence of area institutions to promote the commercialization of research and development and to attract knowledge-based industries.
	Allow for the expansion of institutions Downtown in a manner that is consistent with the mixed-use character of the area and also bolsters the City’s tax base.
	Encourage area institutions to serve as lead tenants in privately-developed buildings and to create partnerships with developers.
	Partner with institutions to improve infrastructure, parks and public rights-of-way Downtown.
<b>Minimize conflicts between residents and other uses.</b>	Revise licensing and zoning regulations for entertainment venues to create performance standards to mitigate impacts on less intensive uses.
	Consider staggering the closing times of Downtown’s bars and clubs to improve public safety
	Ensure through regulation that life sciences facilities will be compatible with a mixed-use environment.
	Continue to work with the Hospitality Partnership to address conflicts as they arise.

**(cont'd) Address the key land use challenges Downtown: vacant land, interim uses, institutional uses and tensions between land uses.**

<p><b>Discourage the creation of additional vacant land Downtown.</b></p>	<p>Incentivize the redevelopment of vacant land Downtown.</p>
	<p>Extend uniform demolition controls to all Downtown districts.</p>
	<p>Evaluate opportunities to improve existing demolition controls.</p>
<p><b>Encourage interim uses that will provide activity along surface parking lots edges, and provide destinations for underutilized parcels Downtown, including the I-195 parcels.</b></p>	<p>Collect examples of successful urban interim installations and research the management structure and roles and responsibilities of the parties involved.</p>
	<p>Update zoning regulations to allow various types of interim uses such as farmers markets, pop-up retail spaces, temporary parks and public open spaces, community gardens, temporary structures, temporary performance and cultural venues, public pavilions, areas for food vendors, etc.</p>
	<p>Align zoning, building, fire and licensing review as needed to make it easy and fast for a business or individual for to gain approvals necessary to establish an interim use.</p>
	<p>Create a marketing campaign for Downtown’s interim use program and for the individual installations.</p>
	<p>Create a public/ private partnership to manage the program and ensure high quality installations.</p>
	<p>Identify a “champion” for the program.</p>
	<p>Work with Providence Art Windows to expand their program to include a broader area and possibly include vacant lots.</p>



**Address infrastructure challenges Downtown.**

**Improve the safety and attractiveness of Downtown by upgrading the infrastructure and maintaining cleanliness.**

- Continue to support the Downtown Improvement District and its efforts to keep Downtown clean, safe, attractive, and accessible.
- Develop ongoing public/private partnerships to address ongoing infrastructure problems and maintenance.
- Identify funding sources for the most critical infrastructure issues facing Downtown such as the repair of the train station parking garage and dredging of the Woonasquatucket River.
- Ensure that all sidewalks downtown are ADA compliant.

**Improve wayfinding throughout Downtown and surrounding areas .**

**Connect residents and visitors with information about major attractions and destinations in Downtown.**

- Implement Phase I of the wayfinding plan developed by Downtown Providence Wayfinding Signage Committee.
- Identify a design firm to develop documents for sign fabrication and installation.

**Create a coherent, linked open space network and enhance connections throughout Downtown.**

<p><b>Create an identifiable and cohesive open space network that links important destinations within Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.</b></p>	<p>Celebrate and link iconic structures and sites: PPAC, Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul; the Courthouse, Kennedy Plaza, City Hall, and the Convention Center through active plazas and urban design features, as well as streetscape improvements, signage and markers.</p>
	<p>Maximize use of open spaces by ensuring that residents, workers and visitors are easily able to locate and public open spaces find connections between them.</p>
	<p>Continue to activate open spaces and through enhanced programming such as markets, live music, etc. and expand programming to new areas.</p>
	<p>Ensure that ground-floor uses along the edges of open space areas are active and promote pedestrian activity.</p>
	<p>Travel routes within the open space network should consider views and vistas to iconic structures.</p>
	<p>Improve Waterplace Park: activate the Riverwalk by encouraging restaurants, retail and cafes within the Riverwalk area, especially along South Water Street; consider creating a kayak and canoe launch</p>
	<p>Continue to work with the public / private partnerships to transform Kennedy Plaza from a transit hub into a vibrant gateway in the heart of Downtown that is a destination for amenities and programs such as the market bazaar, farmers markets, live music events. Create enhanced public spaces within the Kennedy Plaza and Burnside Park area with amenities such as small cafes.</p>
<p><b>Complete the urban fabric and enhance connections within Downtown and to surrounding areas.</b></p>	<p>Continue to pursue the conversion of one-way streets to two-way streets where feasible to significantly improve connectivity throughout Downtown.</p>
	<p>Strengthen and enhance through regulation, incentives, partnerships retail and street-level activity along key corridors and nodes within Downtown and key connections to adjacent neighborhoods.</p>

**(cont'd) Create a coherent, linked open space network and enhance connections throughout Downtown.**

<p><b>Complete the urban fabric and enhance connections within Downcity and to surrounding areas.</b></p>	<p>The unique identity of small blocks and architectural character should be enhanced through sensitive infill development, particularly along key retail corridors like Westminster Street.</p>
	<p>Important gateways to Downtown such as La Salle Square should be celebrated with a proper urban square that functions as a gateway as well as a way to calm traffic and improve pedestrian connectivity.</p>
	<p>Rethink Downcity as a series of subdistricts each with a unique identity and land use focus, such as the Financial District, Cathedral Square, etc. and revise regulations and marketing approaches to reflect the goals for each subdistrict.</p>
<p><b>Complete the urban fabric and enhance connections within Capital Center and to surrounding areas.</b></p>	<p>Enhance the Providence Train Station as an important gateway to Downtown for visitors and as a focal point for pedestrians. The area surrounding the train station, including the area surrounding Station Park, should be vibrant and attractive with quality street-level urban design and activity.</p>
	<p>Identify creative partnerships to introduce small-scale retail stalls and cafes, and other small-scale or temporary uses in the area.</p>
	<p>The following pedestrian connections are in particular need of improvement: the connection beneath the mall to Francis Street to create a better connection from the Promenade Corridor to Capital Center, the Smith Street corridor, Park Row, Avenue of the Arts between Park and Francis Street, Exchange Street between Gaspee and Railroad Street, and the connections to Downcity along Memorial Boulevard, Frances Street and Exchange Street.</p>



**(cont'd) Create a coherent, linked open space network and enhance connections throughout Downtown.**

<p><b>Complete the urban fabric and enhance connections within the Jewelry District and Hospital Edge and to surrounding areas</b></p>	<p>Maintain the electric urban fabric and diverse block sizes in the Jewelry District with infill sensitive to the existing character.</p>
	<p>Ensure active street-level uses to create connectivity and activity along key corridors and nodes within the Jewelry District and across the I-195 development parcels.</p>
	<p>Ensure connectivity to the waterfront, particularly to the waterfront park and pedestrian bridge, as the area is redeveloped.</p>
	<p>The following connections should be targeted for improvement: the connection between DOWNCITY and the Jewelry District along Dorrance, Richmond, Chestnut and Claverick Streets, the connections along Friendship, Clifford and Eddy Streets between the Jewelry District and the Hospital area.</p>
<p><b>Complete the urban fabric and enhance connections within the West Side Edge and to surrounding areas.</b></p>	<p>Encourage the sensitive redevelopment of the parcels along the I-95 Service Road to improve the pedestrian experience along the road as well as to create a more seamless connection Downtown to the west side neighborhoods.</p>
	<p>Encourage the creation of neighborhood gateways along Broadway and Westminster Streets to enhance neighborhood identity and strengthen the Downtown edge.</p>
	<p>Support RIPTA's efforts to create a peripheral hub on Cahir Street to create a transit center to serve the students, businesses and residents in the area.</p>
	<p>Evaluate the possibility of connecting Westminster Street through Cathedral Square to Downtown to create an essential and direct link from the West Side to Downtown.</p>
	<p>The following connections should be prioritized for improvements: the connections from the West Side to Downtown along Broad Street, Westminster Street, Washington Street, Broadway and Atwells Avenue, and the corridors of East and West Franklin Streets along I-95.</p>

**Improve, streamline and modernize zoning and other regulations for Downtown.**

<p><b>Create revised zoning regulations that are straightforward, predictable and reduce redundancy and overlap.</b></p>	<p>Evaluate ways to eliminate regulatory overlap, including the potential of combining review boards, where feasible.</p>
	<p>Extend design review to include all of the I-195 parcels and the Jewelry District.</p>
	<p>Evaluate the operation and regulations of the City Plan Commission, Capital Center Commission, the Downtown Design Review Committee and Historic District Commission to reduce complexity and overlap and to improve the process and outcomes for design review.</p>
	<p>Consider existing and future transit routes Downtown and revise regulations accordingly.</p>
<p><b>Create revised zoning regulations that proactively encourage a dense, mixed use, urban environment Downtown and prioritizes transit-oriented development, adaptive reuse, and new developments that are compatible with the existing character.</b></p>	<p>Promote developments that positively contribute to the public realm through public open space, outdoor seating, roof gardens, etc.</p>
	<p>Ensure that the revised zoning regulations implement the sustainability goals and objectives identified in this plan.</p>
	<p>Ensure that the revised zoning regulations promote connectivity, enhance views and urban public spaces.</p>
	<p>Craft regulations that implement the vision of Downtown as district districts and sub-districts with unique character and land use focuses.</p>
	<p>Evaluate the regulation for open air markets and uses, including outdoor seating to determine if changes are needed to encourage these uses.</p>
	<p>Ensure that life science uses and knowledge-based industries are permitted and encouraged, particularly in the Knowledge District.</p>
	<p>Work with a zoning consultant with expertise in form-based codes, sustainable practices and mixed-use urban environments.</p>

<b>Grow a vibrant economy Downtown.</b>	
<b>Aggressively market Downtown office space.</b>	Reduce the Downtown commercial vacancy rate by increasing awareness of available space and promoting the diversity of uses possible Downtown.
	Promote Downtown as a lively space that with significant business amenities.
	Package Downtown as an area that can provide business expertise through clustering of creative and knowledge based businesses.
	Promote incentives through tax policy and revised regulations to encourage businesses development and retention.
	Promote the revitalization and renovation of buildings in Downtown.
	Actively encourage existing and start-up businesses to locate in Downtown.
<b>Increase the number of jobs provided Downtown.</b>	Create jobs by attracting a diverse range of businesses with special emphasis on knowledge based industries.
	Use the influence of healthcare and educational institutions to provide expertise and human capital for businesses locating Downtown.
	Promote more arts and art-related businesses Downtown.
<b>Enhance the viability of key retail corridors such as Westminster Street, Washington Street and Weybosset Street.</b>	Focus on attracting specialty retail downtown to increase visitors during evenings and weekends.
	Prohibit loading, service, blank walls and garages along these corridors.
	Consider one-story liner shops as a temporary measure to mask surface parking.
	Strengthen regulations regarding demolition to preserve the historic Downtown fabric.



**Enhance mobility Downtown with improved walking and biking conditions, diverse transit options, improved way-finding systems and adequate parking.**

<p><b>Develop a parking strategy to reduce the need for and impact of parking Downtown.</b></p>	<p>Support a policy to fund and build shared parking facilities Downtown ensuring that all of downtown is within a 10-minute walk from a parking facility.</p>
	<p>Maximize the number of on-street parking spaces in Downtown by evaluating all current on-street parking spaces, loading zones, valet zones, etc. to ensure that all viable parking areas are taken being utilized.</p>
<p><b>Improve pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular circulation and connectivity throughout Downtown.</b></p>	<p>Reconnect the urban fabric of important Downtown corridors by creating consistent street edges and streetscapes: Westminster, Washington, Weybossett should have consistent lighting, street furniture and signage.</p>
	<p>Complete the long-planned Phase II of the Downtown Circulator Project to transform Weybossett and Empire streets into two-way streets to improve traffic flow and improve the pedestrian environment.</p>
	<p>Reconfigure Emmett and LaSalle Squares to function as urban squares to facilitate pedestrian movement and serve as gateways to Downtown.</p>
	<p>Consider transforming Exchange Terrace into a two-way street with buses on the south side and on-street parking on the north side.</p>
	<p>Transform Sabin Street into a two-way street, with on-street parking to improve traffic flow and relieve pressure from the Downtown exist ramps and Memorial Boulevard.</p>
	<p>Narrow Fountain Street to two lanes, one-way, with diagonal on-street parking and pedestrian enhancements to create a boulevard feel and make it a more welcoming urban streetscape.</p>
	<p>Consider ways to improve the pedestrian and bicyclist experience along Memorial Boulevard through traffic calming, streetscape and traffic geometry changes.</p>
	<p>Simplify wayfinding throughout downtown with district maps and improved signage for parking, destinations, and parks.</p>

**(cont'd) Enhance mobility Downtown with improved walking and biking conditions, diverse transit options, improved wayfinding systems and adequate parking.**

<b>Improve public transit.</b>	Support RIPTA's efforts to develop four new peripheral hubs in Downtown and along the Downtown edges to relieve pedestrian and vehicular congestion in Kennedy Plaza, as well to provide additional access to choice to transit riders.
	Reinvent Kennedy Plaza to enhance rider experiences and improve pedestrian spaces; disperse bus berths along Exchange Terrace; complete construction of peripheral bus hubs throughout Providence to alleviate congestion in Kennedy Plaza, ensuring that a peripheral hub is located in the Jewelry District.
	Continue to work with RIPTA to complete the Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Assessment (AAEA) for an urban circulator system (such as a streetcar or enhanced bus service) to link Upper South Providence, Downtown and College Hill.
	Promote the urban circulator goals of connecting destinations in Downcity and the Knowledge District between Kennedy Plaza and Rhode Island Hospital to the Providence Train Station, and to a proposed Thayer Street Hub on College Hill.
	Evaluate various circulator alternatives that include future extensions to serve adjoining neighborhoods.
	Work with RIPTA and other partners to identify innovative funding options and develop predictable revenue streams to support ongoing operating costs for transit.
	Work with RIPTA and others to develop a financing plan for the ongoing operation and maintenance of a streetcar/ or urban circulator system.

**(cont'd) Enhance mobility Downtown with improved walking and biking conditions, diverse transit options, improved wayfinding systems and adequate parking.**

<p><b>Develop a parking strategy to reduce the need for and impact of parking within the Jewelry District.</b></p>	<p>Consider creating a Parking Management District to oversee a parking strategy in the Jewelry District.</p>
	<p>Allow off-site parking to count towards development parking requirements.</p>
	<p>Offer parking reduction incentives in tandem with measures that reduce parking demand.</p>
	<p>Extend the restaurant parking exemption to additional uses.</p>
	<p>Enable parking models that encourage mixed-use development.</p>
	<p>Utilize fee in-lieu of providing off-street parking spaces to facilitate the development of parking garages in the Jewelry District.</p>
	<p>Consider unbundling residential parking requirements.</p>
<p><b>Improve pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular circulation and connectivity throughout the Jewelry District.</b></p>	<p>Reconnect the urban fabric of the corridors between the Jewelry District and Downtown by creating consistent street edges and streetscapes along Dorrance, Clifford, Point, Eddy, Richmond, Empire/Chestnut, and Claverick streets. These streets should have similar lighting, street furniture and clear signage.</p>
	<p>Improve pedestrian safety and connectivity at the Point Street and Clifford Street bridges through improved pedestrian crossings and pedestrian phase signals.</p>
	<p>Address potential pedestrian-vehicular conflicts along Clifford at Richmond and Chestnut.</p>
	<p>Consider connecting Richmond to the waterfront with a new east-west street.</p>
	<p>Site parking structures on larger blocks closest to Interstate 95 and the Point Street overpass.</p>



**Enhance cultural opportunities and experiences Downtown by prioritizing the role of the arts and culture.**

<p><b>Increase Downtown’s profile as a destination.</b></p>	<p>Boost tourism and increase the volume of Downtown business customers by encouraging and promoting conventions and festivals.</p>
<p><b>Provide opportunities for the arts and entertainment to play a prominent role in the everyday culture of Downtown.</b></p>	<p>Incorporate and showcase the work of local artists into the fabric of activities in the built and natural environment and at special events.</p>
	<p>Promote a diversity of cultural programming, reaching out to all demographic groups.</p>
	<p>Promote 18-hour street life fostered by the right mix of residential, business, institutional, and entertainment uses.</p>
<p><b>Enliven the Riverwalks.</b></p>	<p>Provide additional programming of events and festivals.</p>
	<p>Continue to support and build on the success of Waterfire.</p>
	<p>Make walkway improvements to accommodate strollers, cyclists and joggers.</p>
	<p>Implement creative programming on the waterfront.</p>
	<p>Consider the addition of a canoe/kayak launch.</p>
	<p>Promote uses such as galleries, restaurants and appropriate retail along South Water Street.</p>
	<p>Consider an additional civic and/or event structure such as a museum, performance space or community center.</p>
<p><b>Mobilize the creative sector.</b></p>	<p>Establish a Downtown Cultural Authority to strengthen, centralize and effectively market downtown creative activity and public space.</p>
	<p>Encourage and promote the development of cultural facilities in the Jewelry District.</p>
	<p>Integrate the Creative Capital brand into Downtown marketing and support the creative sector.</p>

**Promote green and sustainable practices Downtown.**

<p><b>Promote and maintain sustainable development practices, energy efficiency and transportation use.</b></p>	<p>Promote and facilitate ecologically sustainable site planning, improved stormwater management, and use of rain gardens and other Low Impact Development (LID) practices. When practicable excess paving should be minimized. stormwater management should be entirely on-site, and shared systems should be employed.</p>
	<p>Promote and facilitate energy efficiency and the use of non-petroleum-based energy sources for both buildings and vehicles.</p>
	<p>Promote the availability and use of increased transit options and other alternatives to car travel, the development of transit hubs on the periphery of downtown, and the development and maintenance of more attractive and accessible transit stops.</p>
	<p>Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit and to key shopping, entertainment and open space destinations.</p>
	<p>Promote and facilitate the use of environmentally safe construction materials, minimize construction debris and pollution, and enforce applicable regulations.</p>
	<p>Promote green roofs, planted areas and other more literally “green” practices for new development.</p>
	<p>Make the “Knowledge District” a model of energy-efficient, pedestrian-friendly and sustainable development, supporting the “Green the Knowledge District” initiative.</p>
<p><b>Promote increased green space, minimize paving and connect open spaces.</b></p>	<p>Develop a cohesive and identifiable open space network connecting parks, open spaces, cultural resources, and the waterfront.</p>
	<p>Add green squares and parks at important intersections and along key corridors, designating sites for “de-paving” where feasible.</p>
	<p>Where practicable, consider more literal “greenways,” with more planting and less paved area.</p>
	<p>Reduce parking requirements for new development.</p>
	<p>Promote grassing and planting I-195 parcels prior to their development.</p>

**Promote green and sustainable practices Downtown. (cont'd)**

<p><b>Improve, mitigate and remediate sources of environmental contamination and prioritize air quality, water quality and litter prevention.</b></p>	<p>Assess and remediate contaminated development and open space sites on I-195 development and park parcels.</p>
	<p>Continue to promote the Downtown Business Improvement District and its beautification, planting and cleanup efforts.</p>
	<p>Consider a public education campaign to prevent litter on city streets and in parks and open spaces.</p>
	<p>Mitigate the potential effects of airborne dust and dirt from I-195 parcels prior to and during development and enforce applicable regulations (see also planting, above).</p>
<p><b>Emphasize and preserve the rivers Downtown.</b></p>	<p>Emphasize the development and preservation of access, connections and views to the waterfront.</p>
	<p>Highlight the Providence and Woonasquatucket rivers and Waterplace as important assets by prioritizing routine maintenance, dredging and flood mitigation efforts, and by securing funding to do so.</p>
	<p>Recognize, preserve and support wildlife habitat in the rivers and along their banks.</p>
<p><b>Identify incentives, funding sources, loans and programs to promote and implement these goals and actions.</b></p>	

**Promote green and sustainable practices Downtown. (cont'd)**

**Help trees grow and thrive Downtown.**

Improve overall tree health as well as the number of large, long-lived trees by removing dead trees and stumps, widening tree pit openings, protecting existing trees with tree pit guards and increasing the regular tree care of existing trees.

Create a more dense and continuous tree canopy by increasing species diversity, utilizing highest tree planting standards and innovative technologies, continuing the tree restitution program for damaged city trees, creating public / private partnerships to plant additional trees.

Increase tree stewardship among downtown business owners by distributing tree care instructions to property owners, creating a menu of options for business owners to support tree planting, and forming a group of citizen stewards trained in basic tree care.

Revise design regulations to include more detailed requirements for trees such as identifying appropriate tree species with similar size, structure and leaf form in particular areas, creating new tree pit size standards, utilizing a standard perimeter tree pit guard design.



**Promote the redevelopment of the I-195 parcels and other parcels within the Knowledge District.**

**Contribute to the revitalization of the Jewelry District and the redevelopment of the I-195 parcels by ensuring thoughtful urban design and the development of a high quality mixed-used urban neighborhood.**

Activate the street edge: encourage mixed-use buildings and districts in order to create a more vibrant neighborhood; encourage active ground floor uses; discourage surface parking as a principle use; limit on-site surface parking along the street edge of parcels; pull buildings up to the street edge.

Ensure quality development by implementing a design review process, through the existing Downcity District Design Review Committee or a new committee for the Jewelry District.

Select a method for controlling height by either mandating height or setting height limits that may be increased in exchange for public benefits: calibrate incentive based regulations with demand to ensure that the public benefits are likely to be exercised; regulate height by stories, rather than feet, to allow for flexibility for developers and variation in the skyline (with a maximum height to discourage abuse); identify strategies for appropriate transitions in building height.

Maintain the unique identity of diverse block sizes, eclectic urban fabric and varied building sizes, mass and character.

Complete a detailed block by block development plan for the Knowledge District - including the Jewelry District and Hospital District: Evaluate the possibility of and locations for consolidating blocks to accommodate the larger institutional buildings that will be required as part of the Knowledge Economy; identify strategies for appropriate transitions in land use; identify locations for retail nodes and primary retail corridors; Identify the utility and infrastructure constraints to new development.

Prioritize sustainable design to showcase the Knowledge District as a center for innovation and green approaches and technologies.

Undertake an environmental assessment of the I-195 parcels to identify any presence of hazardous materials, and to better understand the costs, regulatory requirements, and schedule ramifications associated with any potential clean-up.

Consider the strategic acquisition of particular I-195 parcels and vacant lots in Downcity to reduce the supply of available land as well as to provide public amenities such as Downtown pocket parks or temporary uses that will add value to the remaining available parcels.

**(cont'd) Promote the redevelopment of the I-195 parcels and other parcels within the Knowledge District.**

<p><b>(cont'd) Contribute to the revitalization of the Jewelry District and the redevelopment of the I-195 parcels by ensuring thoughtful urban design and the development of a high quality mixed-used urban neighborhood.</b></p>	<p>Work with RIEDC to market key properties and provide economic development incentives and financing.</p>
	<p>Create a development plan for the Knowledge District, including the I-195 parcels, that identifies and plans for the development needs of knowledge-based land uses.</p>
	<p>Ensure that any larger footprint life sciences developments, such as research facilities are well integrated to the surrounding context.</p>
	<p>Work with RIDOT to ensure that local streets on the west side of the river will be designed for pedestrians, bicycles and built for an urban neighborhood design speed.</p>
	<p>Continue to work with RIDOT as the designs are developed and finalized for both waterfront parks and as the adjacent parcels are disposed of and redeveloped. Particular attention should be paid to the uses of parcels adjacent to the west side park to ensure the park's success and to maximize the added value that the park will create.</p>
	<p>Continue to work with RDOT as the pedestrian bridge design process unfolds and ensure that the design suitably addresses the diverse needs of bridge users.</p>
	<p>Ensure that regulations and the development plan promote a balanced mixed use neighborhood with office, institutional, residential and retail developments.</p>
	<p>Ensure that the Parcel 25 street frontage along Richmond Street is designed to promote activity because of the importance of Richmond Street as a north-south connector between the Jewelry District and Downcity.</p>
	<p>Ensure that the scale, design and uses of new developments along Clifford Street contribute to its success as an important corridor. Parcel 28 is a particularly important parcels, located in the center of the i-195 parcels and in the middle of important north-south and east-west corridors.</p>
	<p>Parcel 35 will serve as a key Jewelry District gateway from the west side, over the new I-95 bridge and should be redeveloped accordingly.</p>

**Develop a detailed vision for each district within Downtown.**

**Define a detailed, illustrated, street-by-street vision for Downtown that can be used by the public and private sectors to market Downtown.**

Define a series of street segments that are of the highest priority such as “A” Streets or future transit routes.

Define additional areas of focus for future phases of the visioning process.

Assemble a small, focused group that can help direct the vision.

Create a public engagement and informational process that provides several opportunities for public input.

Summarize key characteristics for each focus area such as height, land use, incentives, etc.

Summarize the types of activities and uses for each Downtown District.

Develop a narrative for each of the Downtown districts to be used with marketing materials.

Assemble a team to develop the materials for Downtown’s vision.





# PROVIDENCE TOMORROW

our city ■ our neighborhoods ■ our future

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