

53

SECOND ANNUAL
STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS



OF

JOSEPH R. PAOLINO, JR.
MAYOR OF PROVIDENCE

TO THE

PROVIDENCE CITY COUNCIL

JANUARY 1986

Dedicated to my grandfather

Anthony C. Paolino

His integrity, honesty, and foresight for the City of Providence have been an inspiration to me throughout my life.



JOSEPH R. PAOLINO, JR.
MAYOR

***An Agenda for Neighborhood Progress
Through Unity and Pride:
A PROVIDENCE RENAISSANCE***

Thank you Mr. President.

Honorable members of the City Council, Department Directors, Honorable members of the City Judiciary, members of municipal boards and commissions, State and local officials, people of Providence: I am proud to stand before you tonight to deliver my second annual address on the State of the City. I am proud because we have worked hard and we have achieved our goals. I am proud because we have realized success. I am proud because in just one year, since I last spoke to you, we have set this City on a dynamic new course that will guide us through this decade and into the next.

Last year when I stood before you and set my vision of pride and progress for Providence, I was faced with the challenge of rebuilding from the past, the challenge of restoring confidence in our government and pride in our City. With the support of you, my friends on the City Council, who heard my call to join in the challenge, together we have succeeded. So it is tonight that, free from the shadows of the past, I come to set a new five-year agenda for the revitalization of the neighborhoods of our City. Tonight I stand with you in the bright light of dynamic change. The dark days are gone. The successes we have seen are *our* successes. The changes we have made are *our* changes. The course we have set is *our* course, and the future is brighter than it has ever been.

Everywhere we look, from Kennedy Plaza to Mt. Pleasant, from the new River Waterfront to the West End, from the Capital Center to Elmhurst and the South Side, we are seeing a Providence Renaissance, a vigorous revival of a great and historic city founded in 1636 on the compact of "liberty of conscience." Tonight I can proudly report that the state of the City is excellent because we now stand at the watershed of historic change, at a time of revivals and recollections. This year, as we celebrate the 350th anniversary of the founding of Providence, let us recall Roger Williams and the people who were to come here through generations to raise their families and build their futures. Let us celebrate their legacy and the gift of community

that they share with us through history. Let us celebrate the changes we have made as we recall the proud traditions of the many immigrants who worked so hard and gave us so much to make this City great. This year, through our neighborhoods and the streets of downtown, let us celebrate the New Providence as we remember the old.

Tonight I come before you to celebrate the concept of neighborhood and community, and the renaissance of a city. I come before you to set a dynamic five-year agenda that will lead us into the next decade, and I intend to follow it through. It is an agenda that will succeed or fail on the strength of our commitment to the concept of unity. We will succeed if we understand that the diversity of our neighborhoods is our strength. We will succeed if we understand that in our individual "liberty of conscience" we have a common purpose. We will succeed if we understand that the strength of this City is its neighborhoods, the individual strands that together form the fabric of our future.

It has been said that, despite our individual imperfections, despite our individual failures of will and imagination, in the next decade we will be faced with a new challenge. We as a city and as a government will be challenged to deal with a concept that runs through the Old Testament and the New. It is the concept of stewardship, the commitment of each of us to the welfare of all, a commitment embodied in what we will do as individuals, as neighborhoods, as a government; but also in what we can achieve together, for each other, as a community.

Last year, as I ended my State of the City Message, so this year I begin. I said then: "We share the history of ideas and events, of diversity set in a common place. The rich and proud Italian heritage that I so deeply cherish is as closely bound to the past and future of this great City as the rich and proud heritage of others." Now, this year, we must rise to the challenge of the future. We must rise to the challenge of recognizing, appreciating, and reinforcing the strength in our diversity while building one true spirit of community from our individual pride.

Tonight I ask each of you to join with me in this challenge. Join with me in giving every ounce of support we can to our neighborhoods without ever forgetting that we are, in fact, a single city; and in giving every ounce of support we can to the development of our City without ever forgetting that it is built

from neighborhoods, each unique and together strong. Join with me in the revival of our City through unity, pride, and common purpose. I ask each of you to feel it. I ask each of you to believe in it.

The Right Direction in City Government

In many ways it can be said that our revival, our Providence Renaissance, is much like the Renaissance in Europe. It truly began only when people realized that they no longer lived in the middle ages. Tonight I can proudly report to you that the state of the City is excellent because, in the past year, Providence emerged from its middle ages.

We have come of age. In just one year efficient, modern government systems and professional managers provide better and more effective service. I remember visiting my Recorder of Deeds when he first took office. We were amazed to find that the City's land records were piled high and collecting dust, that there was no system to ensure their accessibility or safety, not to mention their proper distribution to homeowners. Now, a two-year backlog of document processing has been eliminated; and all records are not only accessible and safe but up to date.

In the past year, I have worked diligently in every department to bring government out of the middle ages. I have sought to professionalize government, not for the sake of any one person but for the sake of every person. Municipal government is a government of services, and if it cannot effectively and efficiently respond to the basic needs of neighborhoods, then it cannot achieve imaginative and progressive results for the future.

When Alvareta Murphy stood at the microphone at a neighborhood meeting in June and told me that a garage on Plainfield Street was an eyesore and a hazard, that the roof needed repairs and the garage was filled with trash and debris, I knew that my administration could move quickly and effectively. I demanded action, and I got it. The owner of the garage was immediately notified; the hazardous portion of the garage roof was removed; and the garage was cleaned. When Dorothy Russo stood at that same microphone and said that the intersection of Manton Avenue and Atwells Avenue was dangerous and something should

be done, I did it. I instructed my traffic engineer to get to work. Within a week, a "Yield" sign was installed; and a traffic safety island was painted to better channel the traffic flow.

Yes, we are changing the course of government. We are changing it for the neighborhoods and the people of Providence. We are changing it for Alvareta and Dorothy, and it is gratifying to know that those changes have already been recognized. It is gratifying to know that the dedicated men and women of a Special Grand Jury investigating Providence City government said in their final report, and I quote: "The Grand Jury recognizes that steps have already been taken to implement more progressive and businesslike procedures within the City of Providence." In October when the Grand Jury said, for example, that problems in personnel resulted from poorly defined or non-existent job descriptions for City employees, I had already addressed the problem. I had already appointed a new Director of Personnel and retained the professional services of a local labor relations attorney who had extensive experience in arbitration, and successfully negotiated three separate labor agreements which included a clarification of all job descriptions and their status. The process of updating each job title to meet current requirements before the posting of any open position had already begun. The Grand Jury went on to say: "this atmosphere of change is encouraging and leads this body to believe that its constructive criticisms and suggestions will not fall on deaf ears," and they hoped their suggestions would: "blend in with the present spirit of progress and change that one sees and feels in the City of Providence."

Our ability to respond to the simple needs of people like Alvareta Murphy and Dorothy Russo is the essence of professional municipal government. It is government for the people's sake — competent, honest, businesslike government. During this past year, the first priority of this administration has been to restore confidence in our government, to identify where it went wrong and right it, to find out why it was inefficient and fix it. Now, as we set our new agenda tonight, I pledge to you that we will diligently continue to root out problems while preserving the integrity of new systems and procedures we have set in place.

Success in Implementing the Management Study

We began to change and modernize City government with the implementation of the Providence Management Study. When the Study was released in August of 1984, it stated that: "implementation will not be accomplished in just one or two months, or even one year." It stated that: "based on experience with similar efforts, if two-thirds to three-quarters of the recommendations are implemented within two years, this effort will have been successful, and the investment made of the private sector justified."

I am pleased to announce tonight that, in just one year, more than two-thirds of the Study's recommendations have been implemented and that the remaining recommendations have been accepted by this administration and are in the process of completion. I am proud to announce tonight that 70 of the 104 recommendations of the Management Study are in place and working to make this government more responsive to the needs of the people of Providence. As we begin the new year and set a new agenda for our neighborhoods, I call on the private sector to continue to play an active roll in our efforts to modernize and professionalize government management practices.

Under our leadership, we have set this City in the right direction by implementing, in just one year, all of the priority recommendations of the Management Study. We established an implementation review committee, appointed an implementation director, recruited the best and brightest personnel director, labor relations specialist, data processing coordinator, public properties director, purchasing director, and director of administration. We awarded a contract to improve data processing capabilities and streamline record management systems. We entered into an agreement with the State to enhance revenue collections through computer checks of automobile registrations and property tax records. We streamlined management systems by completing a purchasing procedures manual as well as a budget procedures manual that was used last April during the development of a budget that was the most honest and responsible representation of the true needs of our City that this chamber had seen in a long time. And we developed a new employee handbook that informs all personnel of their responsibilities to the City and to the people of Providence.

As recommended, we have consolidated departments and services: the Department of Planning and Development successfully took over the scattered functions of three former departments of City government, and now all outside legal services are monitored in a streamlined City Solicitor's Office under the professional and brilliant leadership of one of the most dedicated and respected public servants in this City, Judge Edward C. Clifton.

When I said to you last year that: "with a vision of hope and progress for Providence, I will begin the implementation procedures proposed by RIPEC, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Management Study Team and set the wheels of change in motion," I knew that I would succeed. I knew that I would succeed because I passed City government to a new breed of proud professionals who dared to dream with me of a great and prosperous city. I knew that, once the infrastructure of government was successfully rebuilt, we could then turn our attention to the neighborhoods of Providence. We could respond to the needs of Alvareta Murphy and the concerns of Dorothy Russo. During this past year, our success has surpassed the expectations of even the experts.

A New Era in Labor Relations

In this City, at the heart of our ability to provide more effective and efficient service to our neighborhoods, is the ability of the City and its labor unions to recognize mutual problems, appreciate individual concerns, and, in good faith, negotiate fair and equitable agreements based on rationality and cooperation. This year, in successfully negotiating three labor agreements, we averted any interruption in services to the people of Providence. Schools opened on time, and all services were maintained. With a skilled management team on one side and dedicated and seasoned labor officials from the police, firefighters', and laborers' unions on the other, a new era in labor relations in this City began. It began with an understanding that we must redefine the proper balance between labor and management.

It has been said that labor is the best customer that management has, and management is the source of labor's livelihood. Both are wholly dependent on the other.

I sat for many long hours with the leaders of each of the City's unions, and I learned that four months of fair and equitable compromise negotiated in good faith can do more for the long term betterment of the City than any one side's insistence on individual demands.

In negotiating a successful contract between the City and Local 1033, together we learned that it was time for change. We agreed that past contracts were ambiguous, confusing, and sparked conflict rather than cooperation. We agreed to change that. We agreed to maintain employee benefits, and, in an effort to increase morale and the image of our City, we agreed that all City employees in certain departments would be required to wear uniforms; and I intend to see that they do. We agreed to a more balanced approach to normal management prerogatives with the development of a management rights clause that allows department directors greater flexibility in shaping their staffs and transferring employees. We agreed, for the first time, on exactly which classifications were included in the bargaining unit and which were excluded; and we clarified and modified the subcontracting clause to allow a continuation of past practices and set guidelines for the future.

Armed with new labor agreements built on cooperation, understanding, and compromise, I am now better equipped to implement a responsive agenda for progress and neighborhood pride. Under my leadership, government is successfully being rebuilt from the inside out. Let me tell you some of the things that we have done, for example, in the Department of Public Works.

Progress in Public Works

Now, I am not going to say tonight that all problems in Public Works have been solved. I am not going to say that those problems can be solved in one or two more years. It may take five years to completely restore systems and procedures, but with the management flexibility of the new labor contract and with the continued dedication of a new senior administrative staff, we are making dramatic progress in Public Works.

For the first time in many years, we have made capital improvements in the department. I ordered the purchase of five new ten-wheelers with sanders, two Blazers with plows, a small

bulldozer, and a street sweeper that I drove to my Washington Park Neighborhood Meeting. Granted, the streets of our neighborhoods are not clean enough, but this new street sweeper is more than a piece of equipment — it is a symbol of my commitment to the taxpayers of the neighborhoods of Providence. But this administration is committed to improving the condition of our streets and to the overall revitalization of the Department of Public Works through better equipment and more workable contracts.

Since I stood before you last year and spoke about Public Works as the well oiled machine that makes the City run, we have succeeded in shifting gears and setting that machine in motion. The Department of Public Property, with the assistance of the new Fleet Manager who brings twenty-five years of professional and military experience to his position, has undertaken and maintains an ongoing inventory of all assets and vehicles in Public Works as well as in all other City departments.

Because of the changes I have instituted, the General Services Administration of the Federal government has revised a previous ruling and placed Providence back on its list of cities eligible to receive surplus property. This listing has resulted in the acquisition of \$150,000 worth of needed surplus equipment.

Additionally, in a dedicated effort to make Public Works a source of pride to the people of Providence, I established, under provisions of the new labor agreement, an explicit chain of command. Now, daily work sheets are being utilized and certified for the first time. Each work crew is required to complete a daily "Time and Performance Report" and have a properly certified work order for each assignment. Under these new procedures, supervisors must review all forms before certifying that a work assignment has been completed.

The beneficiaries of these dramatic changes are the people of Providence — taxpayers who rightfully demand and expect modern, efficient, effective, and professional service from City government.

Tonight, as I set my agenda for the neighborhoods, I know that we have successfully moved government in the right direction. I know that we have modernized government to make it work for the future.

Purchasing — Good Business in Government

Last year, I said to you that the people of this City must be confident that the business of government is good business. Tonight, I am proud to say that City government has succeeded in setting the highest standards and fairest procedures in its quest for quality at the best price to the taxpayers.

Let me cite another example. Last year, I instructed my Purchasing Director to dedicate her time to cost reduction and system improvement. Many of the purchasing systems and procedures that I initiated immediately after assuming office have been updated. And for the first time, the City has a comprehensive purchasing manual establishing specific informal bidding procedures as well as procedures for the Board of Contract and Supply. We have significantly reduced costs because of new competitive bidding procedures. The city has been able to purchase, for example, manhole cover hooks for \$360 each rather than \$1,740; and that is good business.

Some may say that honest, efficient purchasing procedures are cumbersome; and sometimes they are. Tonight, I am instructing the Director of Purchasing to review all existing procedures in an effort to streamline the process without compromising its integrity.

Additionally, I am asking the Director of Purchasing, in our ongoing efforts to improve vendor relations and broaden our choices in the marketplace, to organize a statewide symposium designed to attract new vendors to the public bidding process and explain the process to the private sector. This symposium will improve our sources of supply and attract additional quality vendors to bid on City purchases. We can become more competitive as we seek greater competition in the marketplace.

I am also instructing the Director of Purchasing to develop a plan for the consolidation of citywide purchasing under her department. This consolidation will allow the City to purchase volumes of certain commodities, resulting in lower costs to the taxpayers of Providence. This has already been successfully accomplished with the consolidation of the School Department's purchasing practices within the City purchasing system. Good business practices are not inconsistent with good government practices, and this consolidation is good business for the City.

PUBLIC PROPERTY — The Image of a City

But good business practices are not what we see when we walk into City Hall. They are not what we see when we walk into a school or swim in a City pool. Time and neglect took a dramatic toll on the physical appearance and condition of our buildings, equipment, and vehicles. In this past year, I ordered my persuasive Director of Public Property to work within budgetary and staffing limitations to restore the image that Providence City government presents. Though much remains to be accomplished, much has been done.

We have reinvested in ourselves. The floors in City Hall shine, and the workers are rightfully taking pride in their accomplishments. The windows in City Hall have finally been cleaned. Ten offices that had not received even a single coat of paint in twenty years have finally been painted. These changes may not seem important, but they symbolize the modernization of government and restore not only integrity to the workplace but also pride and efficiency in the workers.

At my direction, when I was told that the boilers in our schools were in deplorable condition — some beyond repair — when I was told that students would be cold if something was not done to correct the problem, I immediately instructed the Director of Public Property to take action. We developed with energy conservation financing firms a comprehensive long range plan that would reverse the process of decline and patchwork maintenance in our schools and to develop a plan for all City buildings. Consequently, we have entered into a fourteen-year program whereby capital expenses for repairs in all our schools are borne by the contractor; and all heating systems are upgraded. This program is the most comprehensive of its kind in the nation and has received an Energy Efficiency Award from the State of Rhode Island.

As we look around this great chamber, we see the importance of appreciating and maintaining our public property, for in that appreciation lies the image of a city. Antoinette Downing has referred to the restoration of this City Council Chamber as the finest project of its kind in New England, perhaps in the nation. Let us look at the beautiful restoration of this magnificent chamber as not only the restoration of government but the restoration of the image of Providence and the life of a city.

PARKS — The Land We Own Together

The life of our City exists as more than a computerized listing of City vehicles — it is shared in our common land and found in the spirit of neighborhood that our parks provide.

This year, as we celebrate our 350th anniversary, our commitment to Roger Williams Park takes on new meaning. Last year I took steps to reinforce that commitment. We improved traffic safety at the park, trained security officers in the latest techniques, improved street lighting and security lighting at major park buildings, and completed restoration projects at the Casino and the Rose Garden. And, on April 1st, I broke ground for the \$863,000 Zoo Barn Restoration Project.

Let us never forget, however, that our park system is more than one park — it is those small spaces that we share throughout the neighborhoods of Providence. It is Garibaldi Park in Federal Hill and Neutaconkanut Park in Silver Lake, where Roger Williams stood to oversee the land that was to become Providence. It is India Point Park where last summer 100,000 celebrated our City at the waterfront festival with John Denver and a magnificent fireworks display. In appointing a new Parks Superintendent, I searched until I found a person who shared my interest in the development of neighborhood parks, a woman who shared my view that parks are the life of our City. When I appointed Nancy Laudati Derrig, I told her that there is no other City service that can so visually impact a neighborhood as the park service. I told her that a poorly kept neighborhood park is a drain on City resources and morale.

I have instructed the new Superintendent to stress quality maintenance of every neighborhood park, as well as Roger Williams Park. I told her that I intend to see noticeable improvements in early spring. I intend to begin a new era of stability in our Park system; one in which staff, the Board of Park Commissioners, other City departments, and special interest groups work together to achieve steady progress. The Park system will need to cope with diminishing Federal resources and will need to aggressively develop new resources through revenue enhancement, increased aid through legislation, and increased public support. Last year we received a special \$100,000 state appropriation, and this year we will need and seek more. We will investigate the feasibility of pursuing our options under the

Metropolitan Park District Act of 1907. This act enables Providence to enter into a maintenance and management agreement for parks such as Roger Williams and India Point without sacrificing ownership of our land. City departments, State agencies, and neighborhood businessmen and women must rise to the challenge of preserving the lands we own together.

EDUCATION — Our Legacy To Our Children

Together we share not only common land but the educational and cultural life of a city. Just as our parents and grandparents worked to give us the tools to build the life of this City that we have come to cherish, so must we work to ensure that our children have the tools to build their legacy for the future.

The strength of our commitment to the maintenance of quality education and a businesslike school administration that adheres to budgetary limitations and good business practices is our legacy to our children. I have worked to strengthen that commitment. Last year, I brought to the School Board new members who had business as well as educational expertise with the goal of ensuring that proper management practices were implemented. But there is more to the partnership of business and government.

In October, I joined with the School Department in announcing the implementation of a unique and successful educational partnership between the City and the private sector. I announced that October would be Adopt-A-School Month, and I commend the City Council and the private sector for making that program possible. Throughout the year, individual local businesses adopted a City school and provided it with badly needed equipment and resources. What better parent could Hope High School have than Brown University. Individual commitments such as these together are the strength of the community. And tonight, I call on the private sector to continue to participate in such progressive programs with us as we pass the torch to the next generation.

To ensure that our schools are properly maintained and that the educational atmosphere continues to exemplify our commitment to the future, I will create a new Blue Ribbon Committee on School Maintenance and ask that Committee to report to me and the School Board on the conditions of all

schools and present a prioritized list of required maintenance. The band-aid approach to school maintenance must come to an end.

Rivers and Neighborhoods

I have spoken tonight about specific accomplishments in the departments of City government. I have spoken about the many inspiring changes that have combined to rebuild government and make it more efficient. But, as President Harry Truman said: "efficiency alone is not enough in government. There must be life and hope in government."

Now that the structure is sound and management practices and systems are working, we must turn our attention to the life and hope of a city. We must now make this new government work. We must set an agenda for the neighborhoods of Providence and rise together as a community in celebration of our individual pride and the pride of our heritage and traditions.

This past year on one special occasion I was deeply reminded of my heritage. That occasion was Columbus Day. For me, it was a homecoming. It was a time to reflect on the dignity of a noble people and a noble city — a people whose heritage and traditions were founded on intellect, imagination, and creativity. As I spoke that day with my wife Lianne and daughter Jennifer at my side, I looked out at many faces, most older than mine — faces that recalled the lessons of a more distant past. I was struck with a sense of the profound importance of family and customs and of the influence of men like my grandfather, Anthony Paolino, on our lives as we grew up. I was reminded of the unique perspective we gain on the present from the struggles and sacrifices of the past. I was reminded that we are merely the caretakers of the future. And I was reminded that this City is made up of thousands of people with equally unique perspectives — thousands of people joined by the accident of geography; thousands of people who share the boundaries of a single community, and within that community share the boundaries of individual neighborhoods, and in the center of those neighborhoods share a single heart in the downtown.

The development of our downtown is the development of our City as a whole. But development must be combined with

progress in our neighborhoods. It must be accepted by all of us in a spirit of unity, pride, and common purpose. Those whose interests lie in downtown development must understand the depth of our commitment to our neighborhoods. They must understand what I felt when I looked into those faces on Columbus Day. They must understand that investment in the future of this City also includes investment in areas like Mt. Pleasant, the South Side, Elmhurst, the North End, the West End, and the East Side wherein the character and soul of our community can be found. They must understand that our diversity is our strength; it is the essence of our City. I pledge to you tonight that I will never sacrifice that strength for any amount of development. As we develop our downtown, we will investigate new and progressive ways to ensure that future development, where appropriate, includes provisions to benefit the neighborhoods of Providence.

The struggle for unity, pride, and common purpose is a difficult struggle. There are rivalries and jealousies. There are concerns important to one neighborhood that are unimportant to another. But we cannot allow those rivalries to hinder our progress or rule our destiny. If we fail to understand the linkage not only from downtown to the neighborhoods but also from each neighborhood to the other, then we fail to grow as a city. We fail, in a competitive world, to preserve the legacy of the past and build upon it for the future. Let us appreciate the progress we have made in the development of the downtown as the centerpiece of the neighborhoods, and let the developers understand that, when they join us, they join a single community of common purpose.

I worked hard to see that the River Relocation Project became a reality, and it did. With that project, we have changed not only the course of two rivers but the course of our City's history. I spent many hours in negotiations with the Governor to work out a mutually acceptable agreement that allowed the project to begin.

I stand before you in the hope that, long after I am gone, the River Relocation Project will be our legacy — that it will be the beginning of a new era for our City, an era of prosperity and strength, an era of downtown residential living and commercial and cultural development that can expand our tax base to ease the burden on the neighborhoods while providing our

children with a reason to be proud of living in Providence again. In 1966, Benefit Street was ripe for restoration. Success speaks for itself. Now in 1986, downtown is ripe for apartment living and the development of a residential neighborhood.

Downtown Development

There is a new and exciting feeling when you mention Providence. It is a feeling that comes from the changes we have made and from experiencing the sheer beauty and magnificence of a city coming back to life. There is a feeling that my vision of a new residential neighborhood in the heart of downtown can be a reality. It will take hard work and tough negotiating, but it will happen. People know that we have succeeded in developing a new spirit of cooperation between City Hall and the State House, exemplified by our success with the River Relocation Project; and I intend to work with the Governor in looking at the total redevelopment of our greatest natural resource, our waterfront — from the Port to Fox Point.

We are opening a new and exciting chapter in Providence's history. People have said to me that Providence is doing well and things are changing for the better. Last year when I stood here, I came with a few good ideas and a lot of desire. This year I can proudly say that those ideas have paid off and that Providence is truly on the move again. You can feel it when you find yourself in a fine restaurant in an area that not long ago was run down and boarded up. And you can feel it when you talk to thirteen-year-old Jerome Denson on a hot summer day at the Dudley Street Pool that was opened only because we completed badly needed electrical work and repainted the pool.

You can feel it when the business community demonstrates renewed confidence in the future with the development of the Hay Building and the proposal to have AT&T locate a portion of its international facility in Providence. You can feel it with Textron's renewed commitment to the City in maintaining their corporate headquarters here; you can feel it with the development of areas like Corliss Landing and with the Davol Square and Richmond Square projects; you can feel it with the progress of the Capital Center Project and how it will change the face of the City.

And you can feel it when Angelina DeGiulio of Elmhurst

thanks you for finally getting City government to clean a vacant lot piled high with debris and garbage next door to her house.

Still, there is much work to be done before our downtown truly becomes a centerpiece for the neighborhoods. Tonight I am instructing my Director of Planning and Development to implement a new and more aggressive marketing program that will be directed at attracting new office space clients to the downtown. Along with the River Relocation Project, Capital Center, and the development of residential living in the City, a successful new office space marketing program will mean economic stability to the business district for years to come. Combined with that effort, I have recently appointed the new Providence Off-Street Parking Authority; and tonight I am asking the authority to present to me, as quickly as possible, a long overdue parking plan for the downtown area.

Additionally, I will continue to seek the full cooperation of the Governor and the State in making Providence the site for a new Convention Center and an expanded Civic Center. I applaud the Governor for joining with me in seeking creative methods to finance and implement this plan and for working to make our joint Task Force a success. It would mean more jobs for the people of our neighborhoods and expanded downtown activity, allowing arena and convention events to be conducted simultaneously. Make no mistake — Providence *is* Rhode Island, and a Convention Center belongs downtown.

A comprehensive downtown strategy will be completed this year. I am asking the Director of Planning and Development to make recommendations based on that strategy and report them to me by the spring. We must address the future of Westminster Mall and determine the advantages to opening Westminster Street to traffic again. Combined with that determination must be a dynamic plan for the linkage of the Capital Center with the rest of the City and a strategy for ensuring that the downtown is not divided by progress.

As in all cities, a tragic reality of modern urban life is the plight of the homeless and dispossessed who seek solace on the streets. If we have compassion as a people and if we are to revitalize the downtown and open it to residential development, we must address this problem; and we must address it now. Accordingly, I am announcing tonight the creation of The Prov-

idence Commission on the Homeless. This commission will make recommendations to me on establishing and implementing a citywide policy on the dispossessed, emotionally disturbed, and poor who need our assistance. I am asking that commission to report on the concept and implications of de-institutionalization and how it has and will affect the future of our City.

An Agenda for Rebuilding the Neighborhoods

Last year, I set a vision for the future and a goal of restoring confidence in the ability of government to achieve that vision. Tonight I have spoken about the progress we have made and about specific accomplishments that have strengthened our government. I have spoken about a new spirit of community that provides life and hope as well as efficiency, a community that allows for the whims of economic, educational, and cultural change while preserving valued traditions.

To continue our effort to do our best for the people of Providence, tonight I am announcing a dynamic five-year "Neighborhood Agenda." It is an agenda that combines what we have done and what we can do together to make Providence the most liveable city in the nation. It is an agenda that consolidates services already in place, creates services where they are needed, and coordinates policies and programs that are scattered throughout government. It is a dynamic plan that addresses the concerns that I heard as I visited every area of the City with my Neighborhood Council. I have seen the problems first hand. I have spoken with Alvareta Murphy, Dorothy Russo, and Angelina DeGiulio. I have learned what the neighborhoods need. I know their individual requirements and the problems that are common to all.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The first and foremost concern in every neighborhood is the maintenance and enhancement of a strong public safety network. I intend to strengthen, consolidate, and coordinate the elements of that network under the dedicated and tireless leadership of Charles Pisaturo, an outstanding Public Safety Commissioner who has proven that coordination is always better than conflict.

When I became Mayor, I knew that our police were understaffed and under-equipped. I knew that the cost of rebuilding was high but that the safety of our families is worth any price. I pledge to you again tonight that this administration will seek to ensure that the Police Department and Fire Department are maintained at a full compliment of officers.

In addition to the 54 new police cars already patrolling the neighborhoods, I initiated a three-year replacement program to ensure that the most modern and efficient police vehicles were available to respond to our needs. In addition to the young professional police officers who were added to the force this year, I am asking the Public Safety Commissioner and the Chief of Police to undertake a comprehensive study of projected manpower needs. With our new minority recruitment program that ensures the maintenance of high moral, physical, and intellectual standards for new police recruits, we can dramatically increase the effectiveness of our police force.

I pledge to you tonight to maintain the Police Neighborhood Task Force that I began last January. This new unit has the flexibility to respond at a moment's notice to speeding vehicles, robberies, and youth gangs. It consists of not only two-man car patrols, but also the K-9 Unit and the Mounted Command. And I have ordered that the Housing Security Officers become part of that Neighborhood Task Force in our effort to better coordinate all neighborhood safety programs. My goal last January was to pay specific attention to the annoying crimes that affect neighborhoods. I believe that we have succeeded. I believe that we have created an atmosphere of renewed safety to ensure that we can peacefully live family lives without the fear of intrusion from youth gangs who congregate on street corners, from local bars that are a neighborhood nuisance and abuse their licensing privileges, from drug abusers in our schools and on our streets and the crimes associated with them, and from reckless drivers who speed through neighborhood streets endangering the lives of all of us.

Neighborhood speeding was a major concern at my July meeting in Elmhurst. In response to that concern, I asked the police to move into action. In just a three-week period in August, the police put to work the new radar units that I ordered purchased earlier in the year, and to which we have added six more, and issued 119 speeding violations and 33 moving violations. We are realizing similar results from increased patrols in all neighborhoods.

But there is still more to be done. Tonight, I am directing the Commissioner of Public Safety and the Chief of Police to establish a Mayor's Neighborhood Crime Prevention Commission. The objective of this commission will be to reduce crime and the fear of crime through cooperative interaction between public safety officials and community groups and neighborhood associations. This commission will use the Police Department as its foundation and will build upon that foundation with citizen participation. The key to success will be the strength of our commitment to building a close working relationship with the neighborhoods and our ability to work together, for each other, as a community.

I know, in travelling the neighborhoods, that there are complaints about police response time and questions about the professionalism and courtesy of those who handle emergency calls. We have already begun an ongoing training course to ensure that the people of Providence receive professional and courteous treatment from our communications staff. To facilitate and coordinate emergency calls and our citywide communications network, we have recently dedicated a new communications building capable of activating and centralizing a local 911 emergency number pending state approval.

This year, in talking with the people of Providence, I learned that public safety does not end with competent and efficient Police and Fire Departments. In Washington Park and Elmwood, I learned that children are afraid to walk the streets and parents are concerned for the safety of their families because of vicious and stray dogs that roam unlicensed and free. My staff and the Public Safety Commissioner, at my request, have met on numerous occasions with leaders of Volunteer Services for Animals and with the City's dog officers and are seeking new ways to address the problems of kennel overcrowding and licensing.

Accordingly, I ordered a citywide Dog Licensing Program. In the first round of that program, we issued 112 summonses, impounded 57 dogs, and licensed 230 dogs. I intend to continue this effort and to rid the neighborhoods of vicious and stray dogs while ensuring humane and proper treatment of all animals in the custody of the City.

HUMAN SERVICES

In travelling the neighborhoods, I recognize that the human services we provide are sometimes the only meaningful services many people receive. Elderly transportation, day care and youth services, health care, senior services, and community centers are essential to the pride of our neighborhoods. While realizing the need, I also realize the high cost of providing all services to all people. The property tax base cannot bare additional burdens, but neither can the need for services be ignored if we are to truly be a compassionate people.

This year, \$1.6 million has been made available from the Community Development Block Grant program to neighborhood centers for program expenses. In addition, the City has received a grant totalling \$320,000 to provide transportation services to senior citizens; and I am expanding that grant to include weekly elderly transportation services to grocery markets and shopping areas. This program would serve senior citizens in elderly apartment facilities throughout the City and will begin on a limited basis within the next several months. The wisdom of our senior citizens is the treasure of the past.

In light of continued Federal budget cuts, I am creating a task force consisting of members of my administration to work closely with the legislature and with the Governor in developing a progressive plan to fund human service programs at present levels. Part of that plan could be a commitment of a portion of escalating state surplus funds to the people of the inner city. At the same time, however, people must work together to help themselves. The Boards of Directors of each community center must be prepared to investigate alternative funding resources through increased outreach and charitable contributions.

In this regard, I have instructed the Director of Planning and Development to prepare a fund raising manual for community centers. Additionally, I am investigating the possibility of offering total ownership of each community center to its Board of Directors and the people of the neighborhood for \$1. And I have asked the City Solicitor to investigate the feasibility of consolidating all human service related programs within City government in one streamlined Department of Human Services. I am committed to doing all that I can to assist in providing essential human services at the best possible cost to the taxpayers of Providence.

HOUSING

Currently, the City provides an array of varied housing services. But we must develop a comprehensive program that better coordinates and expands existing housing services while creating new services where necessary. Presently, we provide low interest housing loans through the Providence Redevelopment Agency in the West End, Upper South Side, and Trinity Gateway. We provide a Rental Rehabilitation Program. We provide direct loans and grants through the Community Development Block Grant Program, and we support a network of neighborhood based housing programs like SWAP, the Elmwood Foundation, the Providence Preservation Society Revolving Fund, the Elmwood Neighborhood Housing Service, and the West Broadway Incentive Corporation which provide services tailored to the individual needs of specific neighborhoods.

The level of services we provide now in all our housing related programs is what I consider to be minimum. Accordingly, with your help we are creating a new Vacant Lot Program designed to eliminate the blight that such lots bring to our neighborhoods. Under this program, we will identify all vacant lots in the City, analyze their condition, use, special needs, and developmental limitations, and determine the most appropriate option available to us.

Additionally, I am seeking a neighborhood anti-arson initiative through the newly appointed Anti-Arson Task Force that will coordinate a citywide effort to prevent the ravages of arson through identification of potential neighborhood trouble areas and property and provide assistance to victims of this terrible crime that threatens the very heart of our City.

I will also seek to establish through legislation a Neighborhood Housing Assistance Agency that can work closely with the City's financial institutions and appropriate state agencies in the development of a low interest mortgage and rehabilitation program for current property owners and for those who wish to become property owners.

Finally, to increase service and maintain high standards in our public housing program, we must ensure that the City's autonomous housing authority consists of the most qualified and competent commissioners who can implement effective and

efficient management practices and maintenance procedures. Tonight, I am appointing four new Commissioners to the Providence Housing Authority who will be truly able to sort out the problems of that troubled agency. Some cities have successfully sought private management options in the management of local housing programs, and we must investigate all options to ensure the best possible service in the area of public housing. This is one option that I am asking the new commissioners to investigate as they assume their new duties.

I am also calling upon the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation to work with the PHA to utilize RIHMFC's surplus funds in improving housing conditions at PHA.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Tonight, I am establishing a Rent Escrow and Repair Program. Tenants whose housing is determined by the Building Inspector to be a hazard to their health and safety will be able to pay their rents directly to the City and have the City, through the Department of Planning and Development, ensure that repairs are completed. This year, after hearing many complaints in every neighborhood of poorly maintained housing and absentee landlords, I instructed the Building Inspector to institute a systematic Code Enforcement Inspection Program by neighborhoods. Three man teams began to inspect problem properties throughout the City. Properties that were found to be substandard and having a detrimental effect on the neighborhoods were cited for violations.

However, a continuing problem is the successful prosecution of violations of the building and zoning code. For too long, absentee landlords have been trying to steal our neighborhoods. The current system is not and has never been effective. Accordingly, I am announcing tonight that I will seek state legislative authority to establish a Providence Housing Court to expedite the prosecution of violations and begin the long overdue process of clearing our neighborhoods of substandard property.

PROJECTS FOR COMMUNITY PRIDE

Finally, just as we have rebuilt the infrastructure of government, so must we rebuild the infrastructure of the City. We must adequately maintain roads and sidewalks, street signs and traffic lights. We must ensure funding for the cleanliness and maintenance of the workings of our City. We must recognize that we are an old City, and with age comes not only character but also the gradual decay of our public structures and systems.

Accordingly, I am pleased to hear the Governor recommend a Municipal Bond Bank. We have explored this concept with the Governor's Office, and I agree that a framework be established that allows municipalities like Providence to utilize the State's rating to obtain funds for needed public infrastructure improvements. However, the City needs to explore all options available, and therefore I am establishing a Mayor's Community Improvement Task Force to study the issue of public facilities bonding and to make recommendations to me on progressive financial mechanisms for funding improvement projects. I am asking this Task Force to review the feasibility of general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, user fees, and the opportunities available to shifting maintenance costs for certain City facilities and lands to the private sector.

In this regard, I am proposing a unique program that can assist the City in its efforts. I am asking local businesses in the downtown and in the neighborhoods to "Adopt-A-Park." I am asking that they share the cost of maintenance and ensure that their adopted park is properly kept. And I will be proposing other community projects during the year.

Our efforts to revitalize the infrastructure of our City can be a lively exercise in community pride that includes all our citizens. Tonight, I am signing an Executive Order requesting all City employees to report to my office any potholes, broken sidewalks, vacant lots, rodent problems, clogged catch basins, missing traffic or street signs, broken traffic signals, or any other problem that they see in travelling the City. This effort, combined with a five-year sidewalk and street repairing program that will begin this year can continue to make us feel good about our City.

Revivals, Recollections, and Progress

This year, our challenge is not in setting a new course for the future, but in staying the course we have successfully set. In just one year, we have made great progress; and together we will continue that progress into the next decade. We have restored confidence and faith in our government and our City, and we have set a dignified tone for the conduct of City business. As last year was a year of revivals, so this year will be a year of recollections. It will be a year of celebration of our history and commitment to the legacy of hope, tolerance, and faith that we hold in escrow for the future.

Our challenge in the coming year will be to recognize, appreciate, and reinforce the strength in our diversity while building one community of common purpose and pride. In accepting that challenge, we must renew the commitment of each of us to the welfare of all, of each individual to the welfare of others. It is the challenge of what we can achieve together as a community.

Let us rise to that challenge tonight. Let us join together in re-affirming the dreams that Roger Williams had for his tiny colony of rugged individualists while, at the same time, we dare to dream of our own great and prosperous future. In 1636, Providence was a haven for a group of colonial mavericks who sought a common land to practice individual liberty of conscience. They sought the freedom to be different and took pride in that difference. Now, three hundred and fifty years later, we celebrate a city that still exemplifies the best and finest of those beliefs.

We have taken bold steps to change the course of a city's history, and it is perhaps fitting that, in doing so, we have embarked upon the same course that Roger Williams set for his colony three hundred and fifty years ago. Once again, we seek the freedom to be different. Once again, we seek an agenda for progress through unity and pride.

This year, let us celebrate the founding of this great City and the rediscovery of its purpose with festivals and fireworks, street fairs and fun. Let us celebrate in our neighborhoods and in the streets of downtown. Let us celebrate the New Providence as we remember the old. "Providence Harbors the Best." It

harbors the best waterfront, the best people, the best neighborhoods, and I hope it harbors the best Mayor.

Let us go forth from this chamber and proudly proclaim to the nation that Providence has come of age. Let us proclaim that we hold the legacy of Roger Williams to be sacred. Let us proclaim that we have rekindled the flames of hope, tolerance, and faith that burn ever brighter tonight because we, the people of Providence, have shown the courage and determination to make this City what we know it can be — America's Best City.

Thank you and good night.