

Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force

March 2015

Dear Mayor Jorge Elorza, Council President Aponte, and City Council members,

The members of the Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Mayor and the newest members of the City Council, as well as thank returning members of the Council, for your continued support of sustainability initiatives in the city.

We offer the enclosed overview of the work of the Task Force over the past year, and look forward to working with all of you to further our collective work. In addition, we will connect with both the Mayor and Council President's staff to convene face-to-face meetings between members of the Task Force and you both in order to go into more detail about our work and your recommendations for where we should focus our energies this year.

The members of the Task Force have greatly enjoyed working collaboratively with the Office of Sustainability in the implementation of the projects and initiatives described in the attached document. We are encouraged by the new Administration's focus on environmental sustainability and are eager to support the Mayor and Council to implement Sustainable Providence, the City's first Sustainability Action Plan adopted by the Taveras administration in 2014. The plan strives to set a course to protect our environment and public health, promote ecologically-sound economic development that benefits Providence residents, reduce Providence's carbon footprint, and ensure Providence's resiliency as a changing climate brings new challenges to our city.

If you or any members of your staff have further questions about this document, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you again for your continued support and work to make Providence a better place for all residents!

Sincerely,



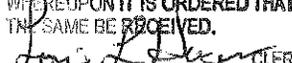
Amelia Rose, Chair



Nicole Pollock, Vice- Chair

ESTF Members: Julia Gold, Angela Bannerman-Ankoma, Carissa Richard, Melissa Sanzaro, Christopher Bull, Kevin Purdy, and Sue AnderBois

IN CITY COUNCIL
MAR 19 2015

READ
WHO UPON IT IS ORDERED THAT
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.
 CLERK

Overview of Environmental Sustainability Task Force Recent Work and Accomplishments

Recent Work of the Task Force

After the former Mayor, Angel Taveras, announced six major sustainability goals on Earth Day 2013, the Environmental Sustainability Task Force worked closely with the Director of the Office of Sustainability to convene over 100 members of the public in the creation of *Sustainable Providence*, the City's first sustainability action plan. *Sustainable Providence* was released to the public in the summer of 2014. The Task Force is now eager to work together with the Elorza administration and members of the City Council to identify immediate and priority action items that will set Providence on the path towards achieving the bold goals we have set for ourselves.

Initially, the Task Force prepared a summary document for Mayor Taveras outlining descriptions of both the need and opportunities involved in setting long-term goals in six key sectors: Energy, Food, Water, Waste, Land Use & Development, and Transportation. The Mayor then worked with his staff to refine the goals, and made a public announcement about the sustainability plan on Earth Day 2013. Task Force members supported the development of work groups for each sector comprised of experts and other interested parties who developed metrics and key indicators to help the City measure our progress towards these stated sustainability goals. Each work group was instructed to think about their goal in relation to three overarching themes – *Equity* for all Providence residents, how *Climate Change* will impact their sector, and how their sector supports *Economic Prosperity* for Providence residents. The six goals are as follows:

Zero Waste: Fully implement a Zero Waste strategy by 2033. Zero Waste encourages the redesign of products to promote waste reduction and recycling, requires improved recycling and composting, and promotes reuse in innovative, economically-strategic ways.

Food: Providence is part of a local and regional food system and has a critical role to play in ensuring that this system: A) Provides every Providence resident with access to safe, affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food; B) Cultivates a healthy environment in Providence by striving for zero waste, adopting ecologically sound and sustainable practices, and ensuring healthy, fair, and just working conditions and wages; and C) Contributes to the state and city's economy by supporting long-term economic development opportunities in the food sector.

Transportation: Ensure all road users have access to balanced, safe, and affordable transportation options.

Water: Strive for all water bodies to be fishable, swimmable, and accessible, and to provide high quality, affordable drinking water to all residents.

Energy: Achieve a minimum of 30% energy use reduction by 2030 in all City-owned property. Expand renewable energy and clean energy projects, and implement energy reduction policies and practices city-wide through promotion and project development. Any initiative designed to minimize energy usage in the City should also maximize economic benefits and job creation.

Land Use and Economic Development: Prioritize the City's overarching sustainability goals when making decisions about public and private land use and development. Sustainable developments emphasize the creation and preservation of open space, reinforce neighborhood character and diversity, support the development of healthy and walkable neighborhoods, promote green economic development opportunities, and improve the overall quality of life for all residents.

Through the process of convening experts and other stakeholders in the process of developing the final plan, we also developed a set of 39 high priority actions and 27 metrics which will be tracked in annual reports to measure the City's progress. All priority actions and metrics strive to address the three overarching themes of equity, climate change, and economic prosperity by identifying opportunities to 1) explicitly address and overcome environmental disparities among city neighborhoods, 2) prioritize actions that address the current and future impacts of climate change, in particular urban heat island effect and flooding events, and 3) support the development of small businesses, jobs, and entrepreneurship that will fill current voids in our ability to meet environmental goals. To read the complete plan visit providenceri.com/sustainability.

Below are the highest priority actions in each category, followed by the metrics:

Highest Priority Actions

Zero Waste

- Incorporate lessons into the school curriculum about waste diversion.
- Implement Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) purchasing ordinance to favor vendors with responsible recycling and diversion programs.
- Reduce use of disposable service ware in school cafeterias.
- Promote development of businesses which will assist in implementation of waste diversion goals including mattress recycling operations and composting.
- Establish a permanent drop-off location for electronic waste.
- Develop a plan to implement a Pay-As-You-Throw waste management program. Expand the Big Green Can for Business recycling program.
- Expand the Providence Composts! pilot project to additional locations to serve more households.
- Develop a cross-departmental plan to repurpose waste wood from Forestry Division operations.
- Conduct a waste audit of materials disposed and recycled from City properties to identify priority items for waste reduction or diversion strategies.
- Implement a pilot project to encourage public events to incorporate waste reduction, recycling and sustainability strategies.

Food

- Maximize use of Providence's land for urban agriculture, including vacant City- owned property.
- Encourage home food processing and food processing business development. Support the creation of a year-round Providence Farmers' Market.
- Align City of Providence planning, zoning, and funding to support healthy food consumption and local food purchases.

Transportation

- Incorporate Complete Street concepts into all future road construction and repair projects.
- Be the lead municipal advocate for stable state funding for the Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority (RIPTA), lead the effort to transform Kennedy Plaza into a lively civic center, and work with RIPTA to implement their five-year strategic plan.
- Advance efforts to introduce a modern streetcar system, beginning with a line connecting College Hill to the Hospital District.
- Remove parking minimums and allow shared parking in the City's new zoning ordinances.
- Launch a municipal bike-share program.
- Oversee the construction of a new pedestrian bridge over the Providence River linking the Jewelry District to Fox Point and develop plans for the extension of this pedestrian and bike-friendly path from India Point Park to Roger Williams Park.

Water

- Adopt a Harbor Management Plan by 2015.
- Complete the Upper Narragansett Bay Regional Stormwater Utility Feasibility Study by 2015.
- Support the protection and restoration of buffers and habitat through Bio Blitz activities, where the community is engaged the community in a comprehensive inventory of urban flora and fauna within a defined geographical area.
- Continue to repair and update water supply infrastructure.
- Implement recommendations of the Providence Water Supply Board expert panel investigating the issue of lead levels in drinking water.
- Clean storm drains regularly to improve water quality.
- Work toward fulfillment of Total Maximum Daily Load, stormwater management, and wastewater requirements.
- Pursue pavement reduction strategies and implement green infrastructure projects to improve water quality and reduce flooding.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to achieve 30% tree canopy citywide and plan for systematic block pruning to maintain city street trees.

Energy

- Develop an energy use baseline for all City-owned properties.
- Complete audits on City-owned buildings to identify energy efficiency opportunities.
- Convert streetlights to energy efficient technology.
- Implement an employee education campaign to engage City employees in achieving energy conservation goals.
- Identify all programs available to Providence property owners and gather data on use of programs by Providence property owners to establish a baseline of program utilization.
- Promote participation in energy reduction programs available to City property owners.
- Complete the renewable energy feasibility study of City property.

Land Use and Development

- Provide training to City employees in using the Sustainability Evaluation Tool for evaluating proposed development projects and as well as proposed changes to existing development.
- Develop incentive programs and policies that increase the sustainability features and characteristics of existing uses of land, buildings, and other forms of development.

Metrics

Zero Waste

- Annual waste diversion rate
- Number of households participating in City composting program
- Annual pounds of trash generated per capita
- Number of businesses participating in the main street recycling program
- Number of clean and liens to clean up vacant lots

Food

- Number of community gardens and urban farms
- Number of community garden beds in Providence
- Percentage of population that is a 10 minute walk (1/2 mile) from a community garden
- Number of food processers in Providence County
- Number of City-owned properties used for urban agriculture
- Percentage of Providence County residents who are food-secure

Transportation

- Number of vehicle miles travelled per household
- Percentage of mass transit commuters
- Miles of bicycle friendly roads (including bike lanes, shared lane markings, and bikeways)
- Percentage of bicycle commuters
- Yearly bicycle and pedestrian accident data

Water

- Number of trees planted
- Miles of cast iron water mains replaced/relined
- Number of access points for passive and active recreation on the waterfront
- Gallons per capita per day of water consumed by Providence residents
- Number of lead service lines fully replaced
- Number of water filters distributed to households at risk to lead in drinking water during the completion of Providence Water lead service replacement construction.

Energy

- Energy use intensity (amount of energy used per square foot of a building) of City owned properties
- Percent reduction of energy use in residential and municipal properties
- Percentage of energy used in City of Providence properties that comes from renewable sources
- Number of renewable energy projects in Providence

Land Use and Development

- Number of development projects reviewed using the Sustainability Evaluation Tool.

To support the development and implementation of *Sustainable Providence*, the Task Force also collaborated with a Public Humanities graduate student at Brown University to create a 30-minute documentary, broken into 5-7 minute segments, that compiles interviews of 40 people who live and/or work in the city about their vision and definition

of a sustainable Providence. Interviews were conducted by members of the Task Force along with many other volunteers from across the city. We anticipate this documentary will prove to be an invaluable community outreach and awareness-raising tool to build support for the implementation of the sustainability goals. The film segments are available on the website providenceri.com/sustainability as well.

In addition, the Task Force continues its role of supporting the Office of Sustainability and looks forward to working with the new Director, when he or she is hired. Meeting on a monthly basis at City Hall, Task Force members provide advice and recommendations to the Director of Sustainability and identify opportunities to help promote new sustainability initiatives within the broader Providence community.

Where We Are Headed in 2015

The Office of Sustainability is currently spearheading a number of initiatives that are supported by the Task Force, and that speak to the goals, priority actions, and metrics outlined above. These include:

- Seeing through the implementation of a city-wide bike-share program
- Continuing to convene stakeholders to assess the feasibility of a regional stormwater utility to develop our capacity to control flooding and meet water quality standards
- Reporting back the results of a solar feasibility study to determine opportunities to add solar projects to municipal buildings
- Strengthening the Big Green Can recycling program and expanding the city-wide composting pilot to increase the city's waste reduction/diversion rates and profit-sharing earnings from RI Resource Recovery Corporation

Members of the Task Force anticipate supporting these ongoing projects, as well as the implementation of *Sustainable Providence* over the course of the next year. We will assist with convening or partnering on community engagement events in collaboration with the Mayor, City Council, Office of Sustainability, and other city offices so that more community members can be involved in implementing components of the action plan. Recently we have begun discussions about how to best support the Office of Sustainability's efforts to encourage Providence residents to sign up for free home energy audits as part of the City's participation in the competitive \$5 million Georgetown University Energy Prize. The Task Force will be assisting with community outreach efforts over the course of the year towards this purpose. We will also support efforts to engage City staff who are responsible for programs that are affected by the *Sustainable Providence* plan; efforts that are currently being led by the Office of Sustainability. Examples include:

- Engaging the Department of Public Works to assess their needs in relation to stormwater management and how we can achieve the goals outlined in the action plan

- Meeting with Aramark to assist in identifying how best to implement school-based recycling efforts
- Meeting with the Planning Department to review the Land Use and Development matrix tool that was created as part of the action plan and identify upcoming opportunities to put it into practice
- Meeting with the Providence Redevelopment Agency and Planning Department to determine additional opportunities to reclaim city-owned vacant lots, as well as privately-owned lots that have been abandoned, on either an interim or permanent basis to create more neighborhood green space

We look forward to working closely with the Elorza administration as well as members of the City Council to develop and refine the scope of work of the Task Force based on your feedback.