

Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force

Dear Mayor Elorza and Members of the City Council,

The Environmental Sustainability Task Force respectfully submits its 2016 update as well as our 2017 priorities.

The Task Force is pleased with the progress the City has made in 2016, particularly around the commitment to become a carbon neutral city by 2050, prepare for the long-term impacts of climate change, and the explicit focus on prioritizing social and racial equity. Furthermore, we applaud the City's continued commitment to lead by example in areas such as energy efficiency and recycling. The release of the first Municipal Energy Report demonstrates an important commitment to transparency and data-driven decision-making and highlights exciting investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy. For recycling, we are pleased to see recent efforts to improve recycling facilities and education in the schools and commend the highly visible composting and recycling facilities that were provided at PVD Fest.

All of these efforts show tremendous leadership and commitment to achieving the goals set forth by the 2014 Sustainable Providence plan. Attached is a more detailed update of the progress made.

Given the need to expand upon these successes, we have included four priorities for 2017 that will build upon this progress and get us closer to our goals. These priorities are:

1. Hire staff to help reduce waste fees by increasing recycling education and enforcement efforts-- potentially avoiding excess fees and fines of up to \$1 million per year.
2. Support new city-wide energy efficiency policy and programs to reduce carbon emissions from buildings
3. Fund critical stormwater infrastructure investments and support implementation of a stormwater utility
4. Support and leverage the Equity in Sustainability Initiative

Task Force members are eager to support the administration and City Council in addressing these critical actions to protect our environment, create more vibrant and equitable neighborhoods, and reach our Sustainable Providence goals. If you or any members of your staff have further questions about this document, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to discussing these actions with the Council in the coming months.

Sincerely,



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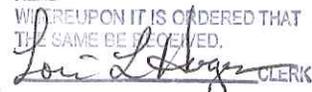


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Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force

1. Fund additional staff to increase recycling education and enforcement capacity

A 2016 pilot led by the Office of Sustainability and Department of Public Works found that consistent and targeted efforts for recycling education and enforcement are able to eliminate contamination and improve recycling rates. Contaminated recycling currently costs the City over \$700,000 per year, and with tipping fees from RI Resource Recovery increasing, this number could reach over \$1 million in the coming fiscal year.

The City's pilot program focused on a trash and recycling route in the Washington Park neighborhood. Enforcement officials spent four weeks distributing warnings with educational materials to residents who had put out contaminated recycling carts. This was followed by two weeks of ticketing. Prior to the pilot, about half of the loads from this recycling route were contaminated. After the pilot, the route had no rejected loads for almost two months.

Although successful, scaling this pilot is limited due to insufficient staffing levels in DPW's environmental division. It is our recommendation that the City fund two new positions to focus exclusively on strategic recycling education and enforcement. The savings in recycling, plus the revenue from ticketing, will more than cover the costs of salary, making this a revenue neutral measure and potentially a generator of savings for the City.

2. Support implementation of city-wide energy efficiency policy and programs

The Office of Sustainability was recently selected to be a part of the City Energy Project, a highly competitive grant to implement a suite of policies and programs aimed at improving the energy efficiency of Providence's building stock, which accounts for roughly 70% of the city's carbon emissions. Municipal government has benefited financially for years due to its energy management practices of benchmarking its buildings and investing in energy efficiency and renewables. New citywide policies and programs would help the private sector follow suit and address the largest contributors to our carbon emissions.

Part of this grant award includes funding for a new staff position that must have a match. The ESTF encourages the City to leverage savings from recent energy efficiency projects (i.e. LED lighting retrofit, which is saving the City \$3 million per year) to provide this match. This new staff person will be critical to developing policies and programs that will help private buildings take advantage of energy efficiency savings. This effort will also help grow the local green jobs sector and support industries such as construction and electrical workers. This staff position is critical to ensure Providence's building stock is energy efficient is critical to improving the value of our built environment, will help achieve our goal to become a carbon neutral city by 2050, and will bring cost-savings to local businesses.

3. Fund critical stormwater infrastructure investments and support the implementation of a stormwater utility

Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force

The City must fund critical stormwater investments and avoid being fined by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM). A consent agreement, which at the time of this letter, has been introduced to City Council, outlines steps the City must take to come into compliance with its stormwater permit. This consent agreement would direct City agencies, such as the Department of Public Works, to implement actions to maintain street catch basins, conduct routine street sweeping, and implement green infrastructure projects with community partners. The City should adhere to this agreement and ensure that appropriate funding is allocated in the coming fiscal years to do so. We recognize that the costs are estimated to be roughly \$2 million dollars per year but these investments will improve the health and wellbeing of Providence's neighborhoods by cleaning our streets and waterways and reducing localized flooding events. It will also avoid costly and unnecessary fines, demonstrating fiscal responsibility.

The ESTF understands the challenging financial realities of getting the City's stormwater management system into compliance. Many surrounding cities and towns in Rhode Island, as well as municipalities all over the United States, are facing similar challenges. Creating a stormwater utility would provide a dedicated and equitable funding stream for stormwater infrastructure and operations. Over 2,000 stormwater utilities currently operate in the United States; and Providence, with support from RIDEM, has led a regional stormwater utility feasibility study. By working with our surrounding municipalities who are facing similar challenges, we can appropriately address the challenge at the watershed scale and ensure that all municipalities are doing their part so we achieve the full results of our investment. The ESTF asks that the City and its Council support the implementation of a regional stormwater utility.

4. Support the Equity in Sustainability Initiative

The City of Providence received a \$100,000 grant to make equity an explicit part of the City's sustainability plan. This initiative is being led by the Office of Sustainability, the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island, and Groundwork Rhode Island (formerly Groundwork Providence). The project team is creating a Racial and Environmental Justice Committee (REJC) to further engage the community in this work. The REJC will be made up of both community members and municipal officials and is charged with providing recommendations to the City of Providence for a long-term process and structure to ensure that communities of color are more equitably served by the Office of Sustainability. We ask that the City work to ensure that these recommendations are adopted and implemented by all City departments. This will take action from departments other than the Office of Sustainability, as well as the City Council and the Mayor's Office. Our hope is that the City leverages lessons from this work to influence more equitable decision-making across City government.

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2016 SUSTAINABLE PROVIDENCE UPDATE

WASTE

COMPLETED

Incorporate lessons into the school curriculum about waste diversion.	Recycling and composting has been integrated into the new Next Generation Science Standards. Grades K-2 create and monitor recycling in their classrooms throughout the year. Grades 3 - 5 implement composting in the classrooms.
Establish a permanent drop-off location for electronic waste.	In October 2014, the City established a more secure and well-maintained e-waste site at DPW – open on Saturdays from 7 am - 1 pm.
Implement a pilot project to encourage public events to incorporate waste reduction, recycling and sustainability strategies.	Green Event Guidelines checklist incorporated into online event permit application; Implemented Zero Waste Stations at PVD Fest 2016 that resulted in a 80% diversion rate

IN PROGRESS

Implement Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) purchasing ordinance to favor vendors with responsible recycling and diversion programs.	IT department currently donates and recycles e-waste; Need to find out about light bulbs, paint
Reduce use of disposable service ware in school cafeterias.	Installed dishwashers in 12 schools to eliminate use of Styrofoam trays
Develop a plan to implement a Pay-As-You-Throw waste management program.	Explored an "overflow" program that would make special bags available for purchase for trash that doesn't fit in city-issued bin.
Develop a cross-departmental plan to repurpose waste wood from Forestry Division operations.	Working on identifying suitable site; Incorporate into Urban Forest Master Plan.
Conduct a waste audit of materials disposed and recycled from City properties to identify priority items for waste reduction or diversion strategies.	
Explore strategies to reduce usage of single-use items that are difficult to recycle	The Office of Sustainability is working with UpStream and a number of other NGOs and North American cities to create policy solutions to address certain plastics and other hard-to-recycle materials.

ON GOING

Promote development of businesses which will assist in implementation of waste diversion goals including mattress recycling operations and composting.	City participating in statewide mattress recycling program; statewide composting legislation passed
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ON HOLD

Expand the Big Green Can for Business recycling program.	Roughly 50 businesses are currently participating. Expansion is on hold until we have cleaner routes so we can ensure that participants recyclables are not going to landfill
Expand the Providence Composts! pilot project to additional locations to serve more households.	After expanded in 2015 to 7 sites, the program is on hold because the funding source is no longer available. Furthermore, after speaking with program contractors and other stakeholders, it was determined that the model was not scalable.

NEW

Increase recycling in the public realm	New recycling bins being installed on Admiral Street
Add composting services to municipal buildings, including schools	Composting program piloted in Charles Fortes Elementary School
Create requirements for sustainable waste management at public events	Incorporated recycling and composting at the 2016 Providence International Arts Festival and diverted 80% of festival waste.

ENERGY

COMPLETED

Develop an energy use baseline for all City-owned properties	Published report that encompasses baseline data.
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.	Program data has been collected and a baseline has been established.
Complete the renewable energy feasibility study of City property.	Study completed in May 2015.
Launch Solarize campaign for Providence residents	Promote WBNA's Solarize Programs and launched a municipal Solarize program with RI Office of Energy Resources. This program resulted in over 30 contracts signed that will increase installed capacity in Providence by 200 kW.

IN PROGRESS

Convert streetlights to energy efficient technology	Under contract with PRISM to purchase and convert all streetlights to LEDs with dimmable controls. Expected cost savings: \$3.3 million; Expected KWH savings: 13.7 kWh; Expected CO ₂ savings: 8,500-9,400 metric tons of CO ₂
Install renewable energy on city-owned properties	Released RFP for solar development on city buildings and selected solar installer.
Establish tax assessment policies that encourage renewable energy development	Solar panels on residential properties are not currently taxed. The state recently passes legislation allowing municipalities to charge solar energy producers \$5.75/kw produced. The City has not implemented this charge.
Implement deep-energy retrofits on municipal buildings	Using the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank's (RIIB) Efficient Building Fund (EBF) to invest \$1 million in 5 buildings for deep energy retrofits that will result in energy savings of over 40%.
Encourage large businesses and property owners to measurement and disclosure energy and GHG emissions	Held workshop in the spring of 2016 with over 40 property owners and managers in attendance. Selected for City Energy Project

ON GOING

Complete audits on City-owned buildings to identify energy efficiency opportunities	23 IGA completed to date; All schools audited through RI Dept. of Education
Implement an employee education campaign to engage City employees in achieving energy conservation goals	Conducted Energy Challenges in 9 City buildings; Integrated sustainability intro into new employee onboarding training

Promote participation in energy reduction programs available to City property owners.

Participating in the Georgetown University Energy Prize; Mayor's Home Energy Assessment; Completed Find Your Four! RI Energy Challenge; Hosted energy management educational event with RI OER, National Grid, Emerald Cities and others in the spring of 2016; Awarded City Energy Project grant

ON HOLD

None

NEW

Promote energy efficiency and renewable energy incentive programs to developers, contractors, and homeowners as they interface with City permitting and project approval processes

FOOD

COMPLETED

Align City of Providence planning, zoning, and funding to support healthy food consumption and local food purchases.

Zoning is permissive of urban agriculture; Healthy food access grants created

IN PROGRESS

Support the establishment of indoor farmer market space throughout city neighborhoods

ONGOING

Maximize use of Providence's land for urban agriculture, including vacant City-owned property.

5 Lots of Hope properties, including a new greenhouse. Charles St is in the works; identify new LoH site

Support food processing business development

HCO developed guide for onsite farm sales through LASA grant

ON HOLD

None

NEW

Create a Providence school garden initiative

Assessment of current school garden activities completed, Hired coordinator

Healthy Food Access Grants program

Distribute \$125,000 in healthy food access funds;

Expand PPSD's commitment to purchasing locally-sourced food

PPSD requires that RI-grown products compose at least 15% of all food purchases annually

Expand availability and use of SNAP/WIC enhancement incentives (e.g. Bonus Bucks)

Support outreach and communication regarding utilization of SNAP and WIC at farmers markets, including Bonus Bucks

Expand adoption of season-extension technology in urban agricultural sector

Completion of first Lots of Hope Greenhouse

TRANSPORTATION

COMPLETED

Remove parking minimums and allow shared parking in the City's new zoning ordinances.

Removed parking minimums in downtown and TOD zones; reduced parking mins in other areas of the city; Allowed for shared parking and allowed for other parking flexibilities throughout the city

IN PROGRESS

Incorporate Complete Streets concepts into all future road construction and repair projects.

US DOT Mayor's Challenge; RIDOT funding to develop complete streets implementation plan and conduct staff training; Empowered BPAC to have a stronger voice in city decisions; Worked with RIDOT to advocate for Complete Streets design concepts in major city projects such as Pleasant valley parkway bridge

Lead the effort to transform Kennedy Plaza into a lively civic center.

First phase completed

Work with RIPTA to implement their five-year strategic plan.

Successfully launched R-line service along Broad and N. Main streets

Advance efforts to introduce a modern streetcar system, beginning with a line connecting College Hill to the Hospital District

Secured federal TIGER funding to advanced bus circulator

Launch a municipal bike-share program.

Continued sponsorship outreach; Secured federal funding through TIGER grant

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.

90% design completed; Construction is scheduled to begin in 2016

ONGOING

Be the lead municipal advocate for stable state funding for the Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority (RIPTA)

ON HOLD

None

NEW

<i>Created a 10-year vision for transportation in the City</i>	Seeking funding
<i>Update Bike Plan</i>	Updated existing conditions map; Seeking funding
<i>Support the development of ZEV infrastructure</i>	
<i>Reduce GHG emissions from municipal fleet</i>	Collected data and established baseline
<i>Assess sidewalk conditions and map assets to determine needs</i>	Currently underway as part of the city's streetlight conversion program
<i>Promote incentives for City employees to take alternative transportation to work</i>	New ZipCar Program; Bike to Work Day; EcoPasses available to employees and interns
<i>Create mechanism for businesses to request and install bike parking</i>	
<i>Incorporate bike programming into city schools and recreation centers</i>	Rec. center bike program piloted in 2015. There will be two bike education classes with rec centers this fall. Piloting bike education at Bailey Elementary this spring with Recycle-A-Bike. Parks and HCO are sponsors of Red Shed bike camp this summer.
<i>Invest in modern parking management system, adding more meters and payment methods</i>	The City will be contracting out this year to allow motorists to pay the parking meter by phone; Install meters that accept credit cards

WATER

COMPLETED

Adopt a Harbor Management Plan by 2015	The Harbor Management Plan is completed and adopted. The City is awaiting approval from RI DEM.
Complete the Upper Narragansett Bay Regional Stormwater Utility Feasibility Study by 2015	Phase I was completed in 2015; Phase II was completed fall 2016

IN PROGRESS

Continue to repair and update water supply infrastructure	10.44 miles of cast iron water mains replaced/relined in 2015. 556 partial lead service lines replaced in 2015. The Influent Chamber rehabilitation and the Aerator rehabilitation projects at the Treatment Plant Installed 3,000 feet of new 16" Ductile Iron main in Cranston
Implement recommendations of the Providence Water Supply Board expert panel investigating the issue of lead levels in drinking water	Providence Water began to implement expert panel recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued Unidirectional Flushing Program by flushing 105 miles of main • Continued the operation of pipe loops to evaluate/test various treatment options for corrosion control
Clean storm drains regularly to improve water quality	The City typically has two trucks on the road (weather permitting) cleaning catch basins. Recently replaced one truck to expand capacity and now averaging 10-12 tons of material removed per day. Approximately 25% visited each year. Developing program to regularly inspect and clean catch basins
Work toward fulfillment of Total Maximum Daily Load, stormwater management, and wastewater requirements	Measures being taken to address TMDL requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public education and outreach in the watershed of Roger Williams Park Ponds, Mashapaug Pond, and Woony River. • Installation of several stormwater retrofits in the RW Park. • Bio-infiltration Basin in the J.T. Owens Park • Citizen Bank Rain Garden Demo. • Streets are swept 6 to 7 times per year
Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to achieve 30% tree canopy citywide and plan for systematic block pruning to maintain city street trees	i-Tree Eco System Analysis report completed Feb. 2014. Systematic block pruning began. Funded from Helen Walker Raleigh Tree Care Trust with 50% match from City. In the process of developing map and full execution plan. Content for comprehensive tree plan exists

ONGOING

Pursue pavement reduction strategies and implement green infrastructure projects to improve water quality and reduce flooding

Brown TRI-lab work in West End; Various green infrastructure projects at Roger Williams Park; RIPTA parking lot: largest permeable pavement lot in New England; Pleasant Valley Stormwater Improvement Project and others. Visit <http://www.greeninfrastructureri.org/> for complete list of projects.

ON HOLD

None

NEW

Explore opportunities to incorporate stormwater management best practices into zoning and other regulations

Working with support from Harvard Law Environmental Policy Initiative to examine all ordinances

Develop and Implement a Citizen Forester Program

Train citizens to do structural pruning and other basic tree maintenance on small trees; Funding from the Raleigh-Providence Young Tree Care Fund

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

COMPLETED

Develop incentive programs and policies that increase the sustainability features and characteristics of existing uses of land, buildings, and other forms of development.

IN PROGRESS

None

ONGOING

None

ON HOLD

Provide training to City employees in using the Sustainability Evaluation Tool for evaluating proposed development projects as well as proposed changes to existing development.

NEW

Incorporate climate and sustainability survey into project review process to create baseline of current practices

Use tax stabilization agreement (TSA), zoning variance requests, and other processes to encourage advanced sustainable design in new development

Emphasize the importance of sustainable design upon initial engagement with developers

Promote energy efficiency and renewable energy incentive programs to developers, contractors, and homeowners as they interface with City permitting and project approval processes

CLIMATE – NEW SECTION!

COMPLETED

Establish a baseline inventory for community-wide greenhouse gas emissions	Completed first citywide GHG inventory
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IN PROGRESS

Lead by example by tracking and disclosing municipal greenhouse gas emissions	Emissions from buildings have been calculated as part of the City's 2015 Municipal Energy Report. Baseline data from municipal fleet has been collected.
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Engage large, long-term property owners to meet climate mitigation and resilience goals	With support from the Climate Center for Energy Solutions, the Office of Sustainability hosted a two-day workshop with key private sector, university, and healthcare stakeholders to evaluate and discuss Providence's long-term climate resilience.
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NEW

Set interim greenhouse gas reduction target	On Earth Day 2016, Mayor Elorza issued an executive order that set a goal for Providence to become a carbon neutral city by 2050.
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Include climate vulnerability assessments in the update of neighborhood plans	
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Assess the vulnerability of the port and the surrounding industrial areas	
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