

Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force

January 2011

Members of the Council of the City of Providence,

Please find the attached recommendations from the Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force. The document is organized to suggest policy priorities for the Council. In the first section, we list the Task Force's recommendations for immediate action.

The Task Force thanks the Council for their leadership in addressing pressing environmental issues affecting the environment and quality of life of Providence residents and for showing leadership in promoting green development opportunities throughout the City. We look forward to continued collaboration with the Council to implement the recommendations outlined in this document.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Task Force with further questions. We look forward to meeting with each of you individually in the coming months to review the document and its recommendations.

Sincerely,


Nicole Poepping, Chair

Sheila Dormody, Vice- Chair



Gary Calvino
Gregg DeMaria
Julia Gold
Mark Kravatz
Alan Sepe
Joseph Spremulli
Christine West

IN CITY COUNCIL
FEB - 3 2011

READ
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.
 CLERK

January 26, 2011

**City of Providence
Environmental Sustainability Task Force
2011 Report**

Background of Task Force

In 2007, the City of Providence redefined the Environmental Sustainability Task Force, formerly the Clean Energy Task Force (Chapter 2007-51 Ord. No. 504). The ordinance mandated the Task Force to promote and make recommendations on the City's sustainability initiatives, specifically those laid out in ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection Campaign. In addition to this mandate, the Task Force was charged with working with city departments, agencies, and their staff to obtain and analyze the City's progress on meeting its energy & environmental goals.

To this end the Task Force worked extensively with the City and ICLEI to develop a preliminary climate action plan with a specific focus on renewable energy and energy efficiency. This yielded an initial energy and greenhouse gas inventory and the establishment of an energy efficiency program in the City's schools. Building on this work, the Task Force expanded its focus to other areas of sustainability with a focus on solid waste, storm water management, and green development.

Role of Task Force

The task force's role in advancing environmental initiatives in the City is three fold:

1. Work with the Mayor, City Council, city departments, and other agencies to coordinate the City's energy and environmental agenda and provide a level of accountability for the environmental initiatives the City is currently to implementing or is planning to implement.
2. Communicate with the public important developments in the City's environmental agenda, including green job development, green technology investments, and sustainability efforts at City Hall. This will bring an extra level of transparency and accessibility to the City's progress on important environmental goals.
3. Include experts from the City and from the community to discuss and propose innovative, yet achievable, environmental initiatives which the City could adopt to further green its operations.

2011 Goals for Task Force

The Task Force will work with the new administration and the new City Council to develop a framework for communication between city departments to ensure accountability and progress is made. To facilitate in the transition to a new Administration and new City Council, the Task Force has prepared recommendations using the following framework:

- Identify the biggest opportunities for Providence that should be acted on immediately by the new administration and Council ;
- Identify long term action steps that the administration and City Council should adopt in the first 6 months and beyond;
- Recommend how to measure success in order for the City to track progress moving forward

2011 Environmental Sustainability Task Force Recommendations

Immediate goals for the new administration and council:

- **Hire an Energy and Sustainability Manager as created by the 2007 ordinance (Chapter 2008-46 Ord. No. 435)**
 - This position will ensure competent and aggressive advancement of the Mayor's, the City Council's, and the Energy and Sustainability Task Forces' sustainability initiatives.
 - The person hired must have the adequate authority to oversee and evaluate the success of environmental actions taken within each of the City's departments.
 - Responsible department: Mayors Office
- **Re-Sign the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.**
 - Mayor Taveras can reinforce the City of Providence's commitment to the environment and join more than 1,000 mayors nationwide who are working to address climate threats in their cities.
 - Responsible Department: Mayors Office
- **Set a recycling rate goal of 40% by 2013.**
 - The City recycling rate is currently 20%, which is one of the lowest recycling rates in Rhode Island and amongst similar sized cities throughout the United States.
 - The City should enforce current recycling programs and promote new strategies to reach this goal.
 - Responsible Department: Department of Public Works
- **Convene Illegal Dumping Taskforce.**
 - This Task Force should include representatives from multiple city departments, state agencies, community organizations, neighborhood groups, & neighboring municipalities.
 - This Taskforce must submit a report with policy recommendations, an enforcement procedure, a clean-up procedure and a public educational campaign to reduce illegal dumping in the City.
 - Responsible Department: Department of Public Works, Police Department
- **Set strong producer responsibility guidelines for City purchasing.**
 - The City recently passed a resolution (Resolution #201 of the Council of the City of Providence approved June 23rd 2010) in support of including preferential producer take-back language in purchasing contracts. This gives the city the opportunity to support companies that are taking responsibility for products at the end of their life through recycling and take-back programs.
 - The Task Force recommends the City include producer responsibility criteria in their purchasing contracts to ensure partnerships with responsible companies which maintain strong environmental and recycling programs.
 - Responsible Department(s): Purchasing, Public Property

- **Use the environmental priorities established in the GreenPrint to inform a detailed climate action plan for the City.**
 - Responsible Department: Mayors Office, Policy Office
- **Align Providence Zoning and Building Codes to allow voluntary compliance with the Rhode Island Stormwater Design and Installation Standards Manual.**
 - This guide was published by RIDEM and CMRC in December 2010.
 - First specific recommendation requires an alteration of zoning code paragraph 704.1 to specifically allow permeable driveway and parking surfaces in accordance with section 5.4, including permeable paving, turf reinforcement, wheel strips with permeable centers and sides, and other materials, subject to approval by the department of public works.
 - Responsible Department: Department of Planning and Development

Long term action steps for new administration and council:

- Establish a composting demonstration site in the City.
- Carry-out a waste audit to identify recyclable waste streams that are currently not being recycled or that have a low recycling rate. An education campaign targeted at these specific products in lieu of traditional blue bin/green bin education strategy should be implemented by the head of the recycling program in the Department of Public Works
- Require the City, the School Department, and the Department of Public Property to include comprehensive recycling requirements in contracts with facilities management companies, food service companies, and in other contracts with companies that perform services involving solid waste streams.
- The City DPW is currently piloting the 'Main Street Commercial Recycling Program' to offer small businesses the opportunity to participate in curbside recycling at a nominal cost. The Task Force recommends, pending a full report on the pilot, full implementation of such a program on current recycling routes to increase the City's recycling rate. This program would result in tipping fee savings and increased profit sharing from RIRRC.
- Create incentives for residential and commercial energy efficiency upgrades, including the establishment of a green revolving fund for middle-income homeowners to make energy efficiency improvements to their homes.
- Create tax incentives for green companies to site in the "Green Corridor" of the Valley/Harris area where there are already several new and incoming green businesses.
- Remove regulatory obstacles and provide support for green site development practices, Low Impact Development (LID), and local/sustainable food production. Priorities include converting on-street parking programs to permanent status in current pilot areas and reducing the parking units per dwelling unit to 1.0. These priorities will allow the City to maintain and expand green space, encourage more back yard gardens and community gardens, and increase permeable surfaces.

Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force

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Dear Mayor Taveras,

Please find the attached recommendations from the Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force. The document is organized to suggest policy priorities for your administration. In the first section, we list the Task Force's priority recommendations for immediate action.

The members of the Task Force are eager to support your administration in working to implement these essential actions to protect our environment, promote green development, and reduce Providence's carbon footprint. If you or any members of your staff have further questions about this document, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Nicole Poepping, Chair

Sheila Dormody, Vice- Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Calvino", with a stylized flourish at the end.

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