

# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY TASK FORCE

April 2019

Dear Mayor Elorza, City Council President Sabina Matos, and Members of City Council:

The Environmental Sustainability Task Force respectfully submits to you our annual report and priorities for 2019. We look forward to discussing these with each of you over the coming weeks and continuing to work with you & your staff to achieve our shared goals.

As you are undoubtedly aware, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – comprised of the world's top climate scientists – released an urgent report at the end of 2018, warning that unprecedented changes will be needed within the next *twelve years* in order retain the possibility of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Above 1.5 degrees, the risk for catastrophic drought, flood, heat, and other impacts dramatically rises.

And this is having – and will continue to have – serious ramifications for Providence. From the draft Climate Justice Strategy presented to the Task Force by Leah Bamberger at our January 2019 public meeting, we saw maps showing the effects of sea level rise on parts of Providence – particularly communities of color, who are already bearing an unequal share of the burden of environmental stressors in their communities. We also saw that while our temperatures increase, so too do the number of days in our mosquito season (16 days longer per year than in the 1980's) and the frequency of extreme weather events.

As a City, we have seen some strong statements come from City Hall pertaining to climate and environmental justice. Mayor Elorza signed an Executive Order committing Providence to carbon neutrality by 2050, and the City Council passed a resolution & the Mayor joined with 406 other mayors in committing to uphold the Paris Climate Agreement after our current President pulled the United States out of the Agreement. We have also seen bold leadership from the Sustainability Office in their support for the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee (REJC) and centering sustainability efforts **on frontline communities of color.**

Given the need for “unprecedented” action & the City's own climate mitigation aspirations, this is a time when we should be seeing bold, concrete action and support **for this work.** We are very grateful & supportive of the plastic bag ordinance that was passed on Earth Day. **However, the plastic bag ban is the only binding sustainability -related ordinance passed by the Council & signed by the Mayor in approximately a decade.**

Further, the Office of Sustainability recently saw the departure of one grant-funded staffer, and another will be sun-setting at the end of this fiscal year. Between January 2019 and the start of FY 2020, the staff of the Sustainability office will have been halved.

**Our major priority for 2019 is to see the City act on climate change mitigation & adaptation.** This can take many forms:

- Expanded financial support for staffing in the Office of Sustainability

IN CITY COUNCIL  
MAY 16 2019  
READ  
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT  
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.  
*Sam Seligman* CLERK

# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY TASK FORCE

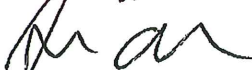
- This includes additional staffing, commensurate with the urgency of the need to support resilience and climate action.
- Adoption by City Council & the Mayor of the Climate Justice Strategy being finalized by the Office of Sustainability in partnership with the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee (REJC):
  - The draft Climate Justice Strategy – and we are fully supportive of City Council & the Mayor acting with deliberate speed to adopt these recommendations. Rather than re-create a series of recommendations, we want to voice our support for this effort.

We kicked off a series of public meetings to garner public input & excitement on climate change strategies with a presentation in November by former-Mayor and City Councilor of Cambridge Henrietta Davis, who spoke to the Task Force and a room of approximately 30 stakeholders about her experiences drafting, passing, and enforcing climate & energy-related ordinances in Cambridge. In January, we discussed the draft Climate Justice Strategy, again to a roomful of additional stakeholders. Several of you have attended these conversations – and we are grateful and inspired by your engagement. We will continue with these types of public meetings – giving residents of Providence the opportunity to engage with City Hall on sustainability related issues – **and encourage you to join the conversation.** We will invite you to these conversations & will also plan to send regular updates on the outcomes – **we also welcome your input and feedback on topics you'd like to see us dig in on.**

We will also continue to work to draw in more participation & increased engagement from across the City. We currently have several open slots on the Task Force that we are looking to fill – and will present to you nominations for additional members that are mindful of our role in building support for advancing climate change strategies within the City.

We want to thank you in advance for your renewed focus on these issues. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with any of us. We know that we have amazing leaders across the Council and in our Mayor – and we do not have any time to waste.

Sincerely,



Sue AnderBois  
Chair, ESTF  
Ward 3 Resident  
908-337-1639 (cell)  
[Sue.AnderBois@gmail.com](mailto:Sue.AnderBois@gmail.com)



David Veliz Mix  
Vice Chair, ESTF  
Ward 4  
646-238-6093  
[velizmix@gmail.com](mailto:velizmix@gmail.com)

ESTF Members:  
Carlos Garcia- Quijano  
Kevin Purdy  
Amelia Rose



# 2018 SUSTAINABLE PROVIDENCE PROGRESS REPORT

## SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

	Completed (total)	In Progress	Ongoing	New	On Hold	Total
<b>2016</b>	14	27	8	25	3	77
<b>2017</b>	17	45	12	3	3	78
<b>2018</b>	21	42	13	4	3	83

## Completed Actions 2018

<b>ENERGY</b>	Create challenge program to recognize leaders in the community for energy efficiency	Launched RePowerPVD program March 2018.
<b>ENERGY</b>	Explore Virtual Net Metering for municipal buildings	Construction completed of 23 MW solar farm; awaiting interconnection to the grid.
<b>WASTE</b>	Establish program to sell discounted compost bins to residents	You can now buy compost bins via DPW or at the annual spring SustainPVD Fair.
<b>WATER</b>	Host first annual rain barrel sale	Program launched in Fall 2016; First class completed in spring 2017.
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Launch a municipal bike-share program.	JUMP Bikes launched in September 2018 with 400 E-assist bikes.

## New Actions

<b>CLIMATE</b>	Include climate resilience in the Capital Improvement Planning process
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New Actions	
<b>CLIMATE</b>	Develop a program that recognizes and supports local businesses that take steps to reduce waste, conserve energy, and other measures to contribute to a more just and sustainable Providence.
<b>ZERO WASTE</b>	Develop a citywide composting strategy that recommends new policies and programs to divert food waste from the landfill.
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Expand Bike Share Citywide

#### ADDITIONAL 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

Action		2017 Update
<b>Waste</b>	<b>Increase recycling in the public realm</b>	City added 65 new recycling bins to Broad St with funding from Rhode Island Commerce Corporation.
<b>Food</b>	<b>Expand PPSD's commitment to purchasing locally-sourced food</b>	In spring 2018, HCO was awarded a Farm to School planning grant by the US Dept. of Agriculture to create a district-wide Farm to School Action Plan for the City of Providence. The Action Plan will also define Providence's local procurement goals and set reporting mechanisms.
<b>Food</b>	<b>Expand adoption of season-extension technology in urban agricultural sector</b>	City CDBG funded completion of the greenhouse at Sankofa Farm.
<b>Transportation</b>	<b>Incorporate Complete Streets concepts into all future road construction and repair projects.</b>	As part of the City's Complete Streets and Urban Trail Master Plan process, consultants will review all City procedures, policies, and regulations and develop recommendations for changes to further improve implementation and integration of Complete Streets policies and projects.
<b>Transportation</b>	<b>Update Bike Plan</b>	The City hired Toole Design Group to create a Complete Streets and Urban Trail Network Master Plan and Implementation Guide. Community engagement will take place early 2019 and both documents are expected to be complete by Summer 2019.
<b>Transportation</b>	<b>Assess sidewalk conditions and map assets to determine needs</b>	DPW is finalizing its sidewalk assessment survey and developing a sidewalk repair policy. Both of these will be used to create a comprehensive sidewalk repair plan by the spring of 2019
<b>Water</b>	<b>Clean storm drains regularly to improve water quality</b>	DWP purchased a new vacuum truck for cleaning storm drains and sewers via RIDEM grant. This, in addition to new a new procedure for handling waste removed from the basis, has increased capacity significantly.



Action		2017 Update
Water	Pursue pavement reduction strategies and implement green infrastructure projects to improve water quality and reduce flooding	<p>The Parks Dept. is planning for 29 new GI projects in RW Park for spring 2019 and is doing pavement reduction in several locations.</p> <p>The City and WRWC developed plans for green infrastructure on the Citizens Bank lot and along San Souci Drive in Olneyville Square. Implementation of both projects is expected Summer 2019.</p> <p>Green infrastructure/pavement reduction projects are in the design/engineering stages on River Drive, Gulf Avenue, and Irving Avenue adjacent to the Seekonk River. Project completion is expected by 12/31/19.</p>
Climate	Develop carbon neutral by 2050 strategy with an equity lens	Completed robust community process that centered frontline communities of color. Plan will be released in early 2019.

## WASTE

### Completed in 2018

**Establish program to sell discounted compost bins to residents** You can now buy discounted compost bins via DPW for \$35 or at the annual spring SustainPVD Fair.

### In Progress

**Implement Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) purchasing ordinance to favor vendors with responsible recycling and diversion programs.** Began audit of materials most frequently purchased. Plan to create green procurement recommendations based on this in 2018.

**Reduce use of disposable service ware in school cafeterias.** PPSD is in the process of developing an RFP for the Food Service Management contract that will include this and other sustainability items as requirements for bidders.

**Develop a plan to implement a Pay-As-You-Throw waste management program.** Launched Overflow Bag program that allows residents to purchase bags for excess trash.

**Develop a cross-departmental plan to repurpose waste wood from Forestry Division operations.** The City is in the process of acquiring a site for this project.

**Conduct a waste audit of materials disposed and recycled from City properties to identify priority items for waste reduction or diversion strategies.** *No Update*

**Explore strategies to reduce usage of single-use items that are difficult to recycle** Two different plastic bag ordinances were introduced. The first was vetoed over concern about the fee and lack of community engagement. The second has been sent to Finance Committee in April but has not been heard.

**Increase recycling in the public realm** City added 65 new recycling bins to Broad St with funding from Rhode Island Commerce Corporation.

**Add composting services to municipal buildings, including schools** *No Update*

**Create requirements for sustainable waste management at public events** No update.

*Red italics indicates two years in a row of "No Update" status.*



Expand the Providence Composts! pilot project to additional locations to serve more households.	Working with Compost Committee of Zero Waste Providence to expand compost access for residents. Created Compost page on SustainPVD.org that provides resources for various options for composting in providence including backyard/indoor, drop-off sites, and collection services.
On Going	
Promote development of businesses which will assist in implementation of waste diversion goals including mattress recycling operations and composting.	Worked with the Compost Committee of the Zero Waste Providence group, which includes various local compost services providers, to create a new composting web page that helps residents connect with local composting businesses.
New	
Develop list of restaurants that compost with the goal of getting to 100 by the end of the year	
On Hold	
Expand the Big Green Can for Business recycling program.	
ENERGY	
Completed in 2018	
Create challenge program to recognize leaders in the community for energy efficiency	
Explore Virtual Net Metering for municipal buildings	
In Progress	
Promote energy efficiency and renewable energy incentive programs to developers, contractors, and homeowners as they interface with City permitting and project approval processes	No Update
Encourage large businesses and property owners to measurement and disclosure energy and GHG emissions	Working with RePowerPVD participants to use Portfolio Manager to track and report energy use and GHG emissions.

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<b>On Going</b>	
<b>Complete audits on City-owned buildings to identify energy efficiency opportunities</b>	Four audits were completed including Messer Street, Mount Pleasant HS, and Hartford Avenue Firehouses, and the Telecommunications Building.
<b>Implement an employee education campaign to engage City employees in achieving energy conservation goals</b>	Continued to engage employees via orientation; Hosted an energy efficiency coffee hour for City employees at the Energy Hub.
<b>Promote participation in energy reduction programs available to City property owners.</b>	Launched RePowerPVD energy challenge. Continued to promote C-PACE and solar programs. Providence Public Library took advantage of C-PACE, which helped finance \$1.6 million for energy efficiency improvements as part of their larger renovation of the Empire St building.
<b>Implement deep-energy retrofits on municipal buildings</b>	No Update.

<b>On Hold</b>	
<b>Install renewable energy on city-owned properties / Work towards 100% renewable electricity for municipal operations</b>	

## FOOD

<b>In Progress</b>	
<b>Support the establishment of indoor farmer market space throughout city neighborhoods</b>	Sowing Place markets have been taking place on the first Saturday of each month, plus an indoor holiday market at South Side Cultural Center. Farm Fresh Rhode Island is in the process of developing the RI Food Hub on Kinsley Avenue in the Valley neighborhood which will include retail markets for both the individual consumer and wholesaler. Projected opening of the Food Hub is 2020.
<b>Create a Providence school garden initiative</b>	In 2018, the Healthy Communities Office received technical assistance from the Children and Nature Network and the National League of Cities on development of a Providence Public Schools Green Schoolyard Strategy. The goal of this strategy is to create systems and opportunities resulting in multi-functional school grounds designed for and by the school community that offer places for students, teachers, parents and community members to play, learn, explore and grow. 2019 direction for this work will include integrating Green Schoolyards goals into district-wide school facilities planning. Construction of the improved Bailey schoolyard and Baxter Park in 2019 will serve as a pilot.
<b>Expand PPSPD's commitment to purchasing locally-sourced food</b>	In spring 2018, HCO was awarded a Farm to School planning grant by the US Dept. of Agriculture to create a district-wide Farm to School Action Plan for the City of Providence. The Action Plan will also

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	define Providence's local procurement goals and set reporting mechanisms.
<b>Expand adoption of season-extension technology in urban agricultural sector</b>	City CDBG funded completion of the greenhouse at Sankofa Farm.
<b>Ongoing</b>	
<b>Maximize use of Providence's land for urban agriculture, including vacant City-owned property.</b>	HCO is supporting Parks Dept. development of a Farm + Wood project in West End.
<b>Expand availability and use of SNAP/WIC enhancement incentives (e.g. Bonus Bucks)</b>	<p>\$70,268 in SNAP dollars were redeemed at farmers markets in Providence in the 2018 market season, matched 1/1 by Bonus Bucks for a total of \$140,536 in fresh fruits and vegetables to Providence SNAP shoppers- a \$93.42% increase over 2017.</p> <p>Through HEZ partner agencies, HCO distributed a total of 463 \$10 market vouchers, resulting in an additional \$2280 in fruits and vegetables bought by Providence shoppers.</p>
<b>Support an urban food economic development strategy</b>	Plans continue for Farm Fresh RI's Food Hub; Urban Greens construction of the cooperative grocery store prepares for opening this winter; Gotham Greens broke ground this fall and is working with OEO to develop a workforce training plan for their future employees. Identified need for a co-packing/co-manufacturing facilities in order to scale industry. Food is a focus area of the Woonasquatucket Valley Innovation District, which is also a Federally designated Opportunity Zone, which provides additional incentives for investment.
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	
<b>Completed in 2018</b>	
<b>Launch a municipal bike-share program.</b>	
<b>In Progress</b>	
<b>Incorporate Complete Streets concepts into all future road construction and repair projects.</b>	As part of the City's Complete Streets and Urban Trail Master Plan process, consultants will review all City procedures, policies, and regulations and develop recommendations for changes to further improve implementation and integration of Complete Streets policies and projects.

In Progress	<p><b>Lead the effort to transform Kennedy Plaza into a lively civic center.</b></p> <p>Based on the result of community stakeholder input and the needs of the Downtown Transit Connector project, the City began the next iteration of changes to transform Greater Kennedy Plaza into an active, vibrant, safe and attractive city center; connect Burnside Park, the skating rink, and Biltmore Park; improve pedestrian safety; create space for programming and revenue generating activities; provide more intuitive boarding areas for RIPTA passengers; and better balance the impacts of bus activity on surrounding properties and businesses— all while maintaining a transit-rich environment in the Plaza. Implementation is planned for Summer 2019.</p>
Work with RIPTA to implement their five-year strategic plan.	No Update.
<p><b>Advance efforts to introduce a modern streetcar system, beginning with a line connecting College Hill to the Hospital District</b></p>	<p>The City and RIPTA have re-purposed \$13M in USDOT TIGER funds previously allocated to construction of a streetcar line to instead construct the Downtown Transit Connector which will provide dedicated bus lanes and high-frequency transit service between the Providence Amtrak/MBTA Station and the Hospital District in Upper South Providence. Construction will begin in early 2019.</p>
<p><b>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.</b></p>	Due to construction delays, the project is expected to be completed by Aug. 2019.
Created a 10-year vision for transportation in the City	<i>No Update</i>
<b>Update Bike Plan</b>	The City hired Toole Design Group to create a Complete Streets and Urban Trail Network Master Plan and Implementation Guide. Community engagement will take place early 2019 and both documents are expected to be complete by Summer 2019.
<b>Support the development of ZEV infrastructure</b>	The City and RIDOT developed a plan and awarded a contract to May Mobility to run a pilot autonomous EV shuttle program in the Woonasquatucket Corridor in 2019.
<b>Reduce GHG emissions from municipal fleet</b>	Collected baseline data from fuel use of municipal fleet.
<b>Assess sidewalk conditions and map assets to determine needs</b>	DPW is finalizing its sidewalk assessment survey and developing a sidewalk repair policy. Both of these will be used to create a comprehensive sidewalk repair plan by the spring of 2019

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<b>In Progress</b>	
<b>Promote incentives for City employees to take alternative transportation to work</b>	EcoPass is promoted at new employee orientation. Approximately 90 employees are participating.
<b>Create mechanism for businesses to request and install bike parking</b>	No Update.
<b>Incorporate bike programming into city schools and recreation centers</b>	Recycle-A-Bike delivered the Pedal Power bike education program to a total of 30 children at the John Rollins and Vincent Brown Rec Centers. Additionally, family education opportunities were offered at "pop up open shops" at five community events. A total of 102 community members got free bike tune-ups and basic bike maintenance education at these events. These activities were funded through the City of Providence Health Equity Zone from the RIDOH.
<b>Invest in modern parking management system, adding more meters and payment methods</b>	The City is exploring various options to expand options for and efficiency of parking meters.
<b>Ongoing</b>	
<b>Be the lead municipal advocate for stable state funding for the Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority (RIPTA)</b>	<i>No Update</i>
<b>New</b>	
<b>Expand Bike Share City Wide</b>	
<b>WATER</b>	
<b>Completed in 2018</b>	
<b>Host first annual rain barrel sale</b>	Program launched in Fall 2016; First class completed in spring 2017.
<b>In Progress</b>	
<b>Continue to repair and update water supply</b>	14 miles of cast iron water mains replaced or relined.

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infrastructure	
Implement recommendations of the Providence Water Supply Board expert panel investigating the issue of lead levels in drinking water	95 miles of water mains flushed. Since June 2013, 341 miles flushed. Maintaining/monitoring the recommendations that have been implemented.
Clean storm drains regularly to improve water quality	DWP purchased a new vacuum truck for cleaning storm drains and sewers via RIDEM grant. This, in addition to new a new procedure for handling waste removed from the basis, has increased capacity significantly.
Work toward fulfillment of Total Maximum Daily Load, stormwater management, and wastewater requirements	The City continues to make progress on the implementation of its consent agreement with DEM.
Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to achieve 30% tree canopy citywide and plan for systematic block pruning to maintain city street trees	Met regularly with Urban Forest Master Plan task force and working on grant application.
Explore opportunities to incorporate stormwater management best practices into zoning and other regulations	Began review of current ordinances.
Ongoing	
Pursue pavement reduction strategies and implement green infrastructure projects to improve water quality and reduce flooding	The Parks Dept. is planning for 29 new GI projects in RW Park for spring 2019 and is doing pavement reduction in several locations. The City and WRWC developed plans for green infrastructure on the Citizens Bank lot and along San Souci Drive in Olneyville Square. Implementation of both projects is expected Summer 2019. Green infrastructure/pavement reduction projects are in the design/engineering stages on River Drive, Gulf Avenue, and Irving Avenue adjacent to the Seekonk River. Project completion is expected by 12/31/19.

## LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

### In Progress

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Incorporate climate and sustainability survey into project review process to create baseline of current practices	<i>No Update</i>
Use tax stabilization agreement (TSA), zoning variance requests, and other processes to encourage advanced sustainable design in new development	State passed stretch code. City exploring ways to incentivize buildings to use it.
Emphasize the importance of sustainable design upon initial engagement with developers	<i>No Update</i>

#### 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.

#### CLIMATE

#### In Progress

Set interim greenhouse gas reduction target	Climate plan will be released in early 2019 with targets
Assess the vulnerability of the port and the surrounding industrial areas	The City participated in a relationship building process between the Port and near-port communities, hosted by EPA Region 1.
Develop carbon neutral by 2050 strategy with an equity lens	Completed robust community process that centered frontline communities of color. Plan will be released in early 2019.

#### Ongoing

Lead by example by tracking and disclosing municipal greenhouse gas emissions	The City continues track and report its GHG emissions from buildings and is working towards the inclusion of emissions from transportation and waste.
Engage large, long-term property owners to meet climate mitigation and resilience goals	Continued to work with a wide-range of partners including URI, Brown University, Providence Foundation and others. Hosted Game of Floods and launched RePowerPVD.
Include climate vulnerability assessments in the	Woonasquatucket Vision Plan was completed, which includes chapter on climate change.

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update of neighborhood plans

New

Include climate resilience in the Capital Improvement Planning process

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