

# City of Providence

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

## CHAPTER 1997-3

### No. 3 AN ORDINANCE

TO AMEND THE OFFICIAL REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE  
SPECIAL VACANT LOT PROJECT, CHAPTER 1986-53, No. 561,  
APPROVED OCTOBER 23, 1986.

Approved January 27, 1997

*Be it ordained by the City of Providence:*

WHEREAS, the City Council created a Special Vacant Lot Program in 1986, and

WHEREAS, the City has since adopted a Comprehensive Plan entitled *Providence 2000*, and

WHEREAS, the State of Rhode Island has revised its enabling legislation affecting land use controls and requires compliance with the Comprehensive Plan, and

WHEREAS, the need to acquire and dispose of vacant and abandoned buildings is as great as the need to acquire and dispose of vacant lots.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE:

1. Chapter 1986-28 of the Ordinances of the City of Providence, No. 318, "An Ordinance authorizing the Providence Redevelopment Agency to create a special project area for the purpose of acquiring and disposing of vacant land within the city and providing for a systematic foreclosure of city liens on vacant land, as amended," adopted on June 12, 1986 is hereby repealed.

2. Chapter 1986-53 of the Ordinances of the City of Providence, No. 561 "An Ordinance approving and adopting the official redevelopment plan for the special vacant lot project," approved on October 23, 1986 and as amended by Chapter 1989-26, No. 577 and adopted on December 11, 1989 is hereby amended by deleting all sections therein and replacing them as follows:

(a) There is hereby adopted "The City of Providence Vacant and Abandoned Properties Plan Program - 1996."

(b) The Plan entitled "The City of Providence Vacant and Abandoned Properties Plan and Program - 1996" shall be adopted as a part of this Ordinance, in compliance with *Providence 2000 - The Comprehensive Plan*.

(c) Nothing in this Ordinance shall negate or otherwise invalidate any action taken by the City of Providence and the Providence Redevelopment Agency in acquiring and/or disposing of land under the Special Vacant Lot Program of 1986.

3. This Ordinance shall take effect upon passage

No.

CHAPTER  
AN ORDINANCE

IN CITY COUNCIL  
NOV 21 1996  
FIRST READING  
REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON  
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT  
RENEWAL & PLANNING

*Michael R. Clement*  
CLERK

THE COMMITTEE ON  
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT  
RENEWAL & PLANNING  
Approves Passage of  
The Within Ordinance

*Barbara A. Parris*  
12/3/96  
Clerk

IN CITY COUNCIL  
DEC 19 1996  
FIRST READING  
READ AND PASSED

*Michael R. Clement*  
CLERK

IN CITY  
COUNCIL

JAN 1 1997  
FINAL READING  
READ AND PASSED

*Evelyn V. Fargnoli*  
PRESIDENT  
*Michael R. Clement*  
CLERK

APPROVED

JAN 27 1997

*Vincent D'Amico*  
MAYOR

DEPT. OF  
PROVIDENCE, R.I.

Nov 15 2 50 PM '96

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Councilman Allen and Councilman Rollins (by Request)

**CITY OF PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND**  
**VACANT AND ABANDONED PROPERTIES PLAN**  
**AND PROGRAM - 1996**

**I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

As part of the Mayor's concern with the state of the City's neighborhoods, it has become clear that among the most negative influences are blighted vacant lots and abandoned buildings. Not only are their numbers increasing but they are contributing to disinvestment in both commercial and residential areas as well as creating a public health and safety problem. Therefore, in an attempt to curb and reverse these conditions and to help clean up the neighborhoods and strengthen their economic potential, the Special Vacant Lot Program of 1986 is being expanded into a new Vacant and Abandoned Properties Program of 1996 that will include vacant and abandoned buildings as well as vacant lots. It will keep the basic format and approach of the Special Vacant Lot Program of 1986 but will add abandoned buildings to the list of properties to be taken and disposed for productive use.

The vacant lot problem and its effects on the neighborhoods were long recognized and, in 1986, a plan and ordinance creating the Special Vacant Lot Program were adopted. The program authorized the Providence Redevelopment Agency to acquire and dispose of the vacant land within the City of Providence. This ordinance authorized the Agency to systematically foreclose city tax liens on vacant land.

With passage of this legislation, the City, through the Providence Redevelopment Agency, embarked on an innovative program to clear the city of blighted, trash-strewn vacant lots and return them to the tax rolls. The success of this approach has led the City to this expanded version of the plan which includes land acquisition of both vacant lots and abandoned buildings, coupled with an annual review process.

Acquisition and disposition of deteriorated vacant lots through Special Vacant Lot Program has been changing the face of many Providence neighborhoods. The expanded program is expected to further promote new construction and/or new site improvements and encourage private investment in the neighborhoods throughout the City.

With the passage of the \$50 Million bond issue by the voters of Providence in 1996, this redevelopment plan amendment can be the catalyst for the revitalization of all the neighborhoods of the City.

## **II. SUMMARY OF APPROACH**

On a city-wide basis, all properties that are vacant or contain abandoned buildings will be identified and mapped. Each property that is eligible for tax sale will be targeted for acquisition by the PRA. Methods of acquisitions will be as follows:

1. **Negotiated Buy-out** - The PRA will approach the last owner of the property and offer to purchase the property based on a negotiated price.
2. **Purchase of Right of Reverter** - Properties will either have been sold at tax sale, which the PRA can acquire OR the PRA will the tax title to the property at an advertised tax sale.
3. **Foreclosure** - Properties that have undergone bank (or other financial institution) foreclosure due to delinquency or other failure to perform, will be acquired by the PRA.
4. **Receivership** - Petition the courts to appoint the PRA as receiver for abandoned properties.
5. **Gift** - This option is available to property owners who have to appear before the Housing Court. If such owners are not able to meet the conditions of the court, they should be given the option of making a "gift" to the PRA, which will clear title and prepare the site for future use.
6. **Condemnation** - This would be a last resort attempt to acquire blighted properties, if the other methods are unsuccessful.

Condemnation would be the only method that would require City Council action to authorize specific parcels. All the other methods would enable the PRA to quickly move through the City in acquiring vacant and abandoned properties.

Once acquired, the following means of disposing the properties will be utilized:

1. **Blighted, unsafe structures** will be demolished to below-grade level and the site cleared of all environmental hazards.
2. **Salvageable buildings** that can be rehabilitated will be sold for \$1 to qualified individuals and organizations. However, consideration must be given to density issues in certain neighborhoods and a judgment must be made as to whether such structures should be razed or put back to active use. Preferred organizations will include non-profit housing corporations and the Providence Plan Housing Corporation.
3. **Cleared sites and vacant lots** will be kept clean and debris free until disposed.
4. **Disposition of clean vacant sites** will include the following methods:

- a) Subdivision of the parcel and sale for \$1 for side yards, where feasible.
- b) Merger and/or resubdivision of lots to create buildable parcels.
- c) Creation of larger lots for special development that meet economic development goals.
- d) Sale or donation for parks and open space.

In all cases, the Zoning Ordinance and Development Review Regulations of the City shall prevail and govern all uses and reuses of land, including the merger and subdivision of lots.

## **MEMORANDUM**

**To : Michael Clement, City Clerk**  
**From : Thomas E. Deller, AICP, Deputy Director**  
**Date : November 15, 1996**  
**Re : Proposed Amendment of the Special Vacant Lot Project**

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Attached is an original and twenty-two (22) copies of a proposed amendment to the Official Redevelopment Plan for the Special Vacant Lot Project. The amendment is for the adoption of "The City of Providence Vacant and Abandoned Properties Plan Program - 1996".

The Ordinance is being sponsored by Councilman John H. Rollins and Councilman Ronald W. Allen.