

# City of Providence

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

## CHAPTER 1994-52

### No. 798 AN ORDINANCE

ADOPTING PROVIDENCE 2000: THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AS THE CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO DIRECT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY, AS AMENDED.

Approved December 27, 1994

### *Be it ordained by the City of Providence:*

WHEREAS,

the Providence City Charter directs that a Comprehensive Plan for the City be prepared and adopted; and

WHEREAS,

the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (RIGL 45-22.2) mandates that every community shall prepare a Comprehensive Plan every five (5) years that provides a basis for rational decision making regarding the long term physical development of the municipality.

WHEREAS,

the Providence City Plan Commission, pursuant to Article X, Section 1013 (A) of the Providence Home Rule Charter, has prepared Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan, which contains goals and policies relating to land use, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, community services and facilities, open space and recreation, traffic and circulation, and an implementation program.

WHEREAS,

the Providence City Plan Commission, after a public hearing, approved on December 3, 1992 Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan as the city's comprehensive plan and official planning document, and authorized the Director of the Department of Planning and Development to submit said plan to the City Council for its review and approval.

IT IS ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE THAT:

1. Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Providence Home Rule Charter and the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (RIGL 45-22.2).
2. Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan, a document consisting of text, figures, charts, tables, appendix and maps, is hereby approved, adopted and designated as the Official Comprehensive Plan for the city and all city officials, departments, boards, commissions, authorities and agencies are hereby directed to carry out this plan.
3. In enacting this Ordinance and in adopting Providence

**2000: The Comprehensive Plan**, the City Council intends to establish general citywide policies for the development and renewal of the city and its neighborhoods in conformance with this Plan.

4. In order to implement **Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan**, the City Council pledges its cooperation in helping to carry out said Plan and city officials, departments, boards, commissions, authorities and agencies of the City of Providence are directed to exercise their functions and powers in a manner consistent with said Plan.
5. This Ordinance shall take effect and become enforceable upon adoption of the City Council and approval of the Mayor. The City Clerk is hereby directed to forward a certified copy of this Ordinance to the City Plan Commission upon adoption. **Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan** shall not become official until its approval by the state of Rhode Island pursuant to RIGL 45-22.2 and any rules and regulations adopted thereto.

IN CITY COUNCIL  
DEC 1 1994  
FIRST READING  
READ AND PASSED

*Michael R. Clement* CLERK

IN CITY  
COUNCIL

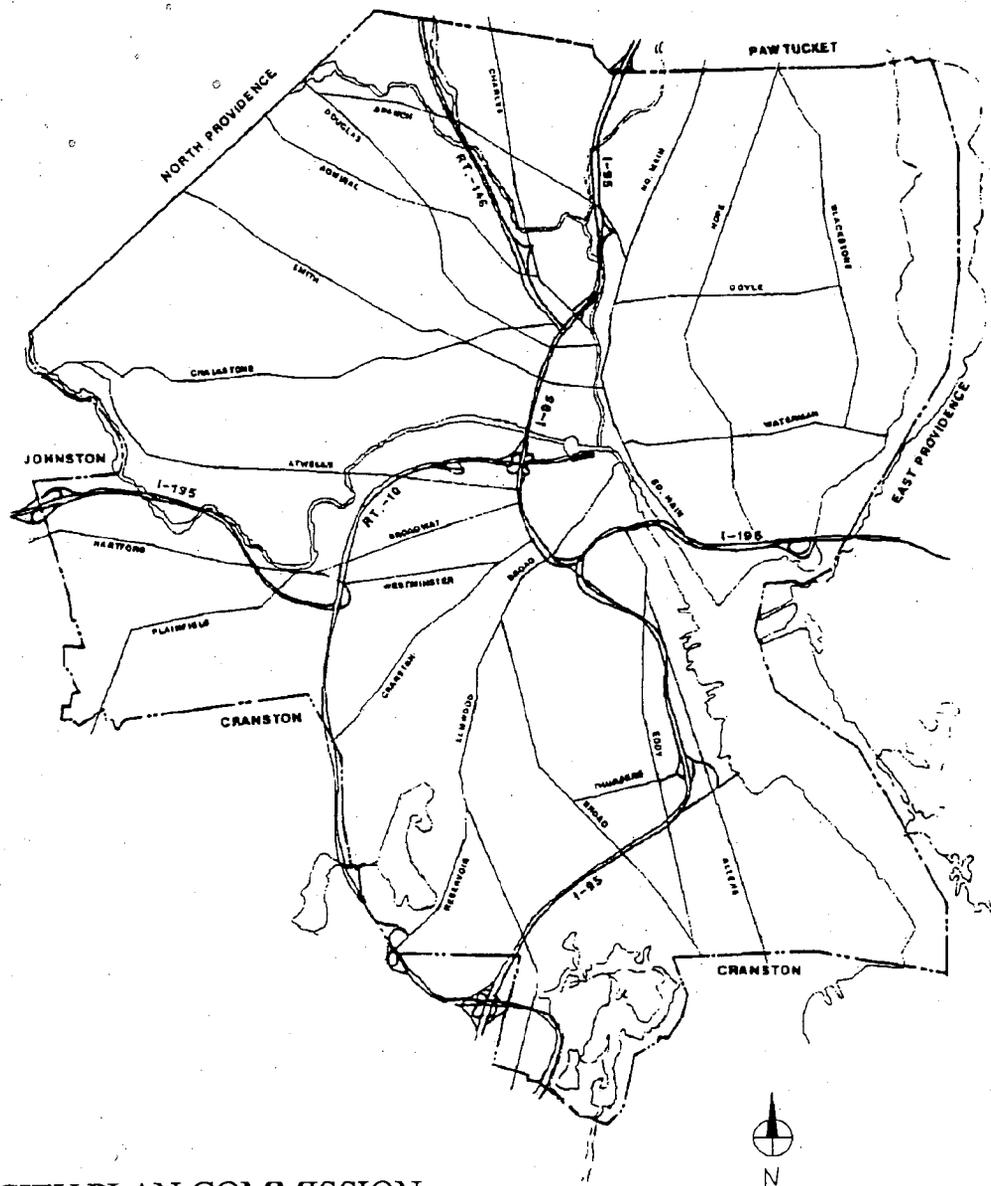
DEC 15 1994  
FINAL READING  
READ AND PASSED

*James A. DiPasquale*  
PRESIDENT  
*Michael R. Clement*  
CLERK



# PROVIDENCE 2000

## THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



CITY PLAN COMMISSION  
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING  
AND DEVELOPMENT  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND  
JULY, 1993

VINCENT A. CIANCI, JR.  
MAYOR

## **PROVIDENCE 2000: THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Approved by Providence City Plan Commission December 3, 1992

Approved by Providence City Council December 27, 1994

Approved by State of Rhode Island \_\_\_\_\_

### **Amendment #1**

\*Smith Street Map Change (allow Residential and Residential/Professional Uses)

\*Technical Amendments (text corrections and revisions following state review)

\*Adult Entertainment Plan (adopt as Plan #3 of Comprehensive Plan Series)

Approved by Providence City Plan Commission June 19, 1996

Approved by Providence City Council January 27, 1997

Approved by State of Rhode Island \_\_\_\_\_

## **The Comprehensive Plan Series of Providence 2000**

### **Plan #1: *Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan 1991-1995***

Approved by Providence City Plan Commission April 17, 1991

Approved by Providence City Council December 27, 1994

Approved by State of Rhode Island \_\_\_\_\_

### **Plan #2: *A Plan for Preservation***

Approved by Providence City Plan Commission January 19, 1994

Approved by Providence City Council December 27, 1994

Approved by State of Rhode Island \_\_\_\_\_

### **Plan #3: *Adult Entertainment Plan***

Approved by Providence City Plan Commission June 19, 1996

Approved by Providence City Council January 27, 1997

Approved by State of Rhode Island \_\_\_\_\_

## **The Area Plan Series of Providence 2000**

### **Plan #1: *Downcity Providence: Master Plan for a Special Time and Implementation Plan***

Approved by Providence City Plan Commission January 19, 1994

Approved by Providence City Council December 27, 1994

Approved by State of Rhode Island \_\_\_\_\_

### **Plan #2: *I-195/Old Harbor Plan***

Approved by Providence City Plan Commission January 19, 1994

Approved by Providence City Council December 27, 1994

Approved by State of Rhode Island \_\_\_\_\_

**PROVIDENCE 2000: THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
JULY 1993**

**VINCENT A. CIANCI, JR.  
MAYOR**

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**PROVIDENCE 2000:  
1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

*In cities all over the world, land is used for specialized purposes such as housing and industry. One of the main problems of any city is how to control these uses to enable the city to function and evolve.*

*The Uses of Land in Cities  
Charles Abrams*

Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan is the result of over four years work by the Department of Planning and Development, the City Plan Commission a large number of citizens, city staff and consultants. The plan presents a guide for future growth and change in the city. It sets the city's policies for public and private actions in the coming years. As a result of the plan, city, state and private endeavors in Providence, and other actions that may be taken outside the city but which affect it, will be directed and coordinated. The comprehensive plan is based on the goals and objectives of the city's residents and leaders. It sets forth a program to achieve specific policies and actions. The plan was developed as a result of and is designed to reinforce an open and broadly participatory process of citizen involvement in establishing goals and objectives for Providence's future development and management. Finally, the comprehensive plan is to inform those interested in Providence as a potential place to live or do business.

### 1.1 WHY A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

*The powers and duties of the City Plan Commission shall include, without limitation, ... [the] prepara[tion] of a Comprehensive Plan for the City of Providence;*

*Providence Home Rule Charter*

Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan is a statement that our desire for Providence is not just for a good city, but a great city; that we are craving not just a stable economy, but a dynamic economic climate that offers investment and employment opportunity to all of its citizens. The citizens of Providence demand neighborhoods that are not just good, but neighborhoods that are vital parts of the city, free of blight and crime, great places to live. These are aspirations for greatness, aspirations that can be achieved. This is how great cities come into being.

A comprehensive plan is an official document adopted as a policy guide for decisions about the physical, social and economic development of a community. It is partly based on the existing patterns of land use, community facilities and social and economic interactions in the community. It is also based on the desires and aspirations of the community and on how these interact with basic social and economic and environmental conditions, both at a local and regional level. A comprehensive plan sets forth in a general way how the community should develop over the next ten to twenty years. It is, in essence, an official statement of the community, setting forth its major policies concerning desirable future development.

A comprehensive plan ultimately relates appropriate future development with the land's capabilities, the protection of natural resources, the balance of housing choices, economic

development, preservation and protection of open space, recreation, historic and cultural resources, and the orderly provision of public services and facilities.

The Providence Home Rule Charter requires the City Plan Commission to prepare a comprehensive plan for the city. The City Code of Ordinances expands on this requirement and directs the City Plan Commission to make "careful studies of the construction, resources, possibilities and needs of the city with reference to its future and progressive development ..." (Section 2-249, Providence Code of Ordinances).

In addition to serving as a key management and planning document for the City of Providence, as spelled out in the City Charter, this plan meets the requirements of the "Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act." This act mandates the development of a comprehensive plan, setting out a series of plan elements and a process for plan development. The act further mandates that a community's zoning must be made consistent with the plan within a year after the plan is adopted. The Act requires extensive local plan review by state agencies and assures that once approved at the state level, all state actions covered by the plan will be consistent with it.

This act requires that local comprehensive plans be more extensive than they have been in the past, and that the plan and related documents become a means for state and local coordination. The Act requires, as a minimum, nine elements be included in local comprehensive plans. It further requires that these elements be interrelated with existing and future land use. These elements are:

- Statement of Goal and Objectives
- Economic Development
- Services and Facilities
- Open Space and Recreation
- Implementation Program
- Land Use
- Housing
- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Circulation

The Act also requires that local zoning ordinances directly relate to the goals and policies and land use pattern contained in the Comprehensive Plan.

Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan includes elements not specifically required in the Act. Historic Preservation and Environmental Protection have been identified as elements requiring special attention. In addition, the city's plan recommends that citywide specific plans (Comprehensive Plan Series), and area specific plans (Area Plans) be prepared, in accordance with the policies stated in the comprehensive plan, in order to fulfill and implement the overall goals of comprehensive planning in Providence.

Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan has been developed in accordance with the City Charter as well as the "Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act". It is the result of many meetings and interviews with representatives of both public and private agencies, nonprofit organizations, and citizens of the City of Providence. The City Plan Commission's primary charge – to oversee the preparation of the comprehensive plan –

empowers the citizens of Providence with the ability to become involved in the Plan's development, and thus, the future development of the City. In fact, the development of this comprehensive plan, Providence 2000 has involved constant contact with city residents and community leaders, private and nonprofit organizations and public department and agency heads.

It must be remembered, however, that the fundamental good that is in this plan is not within any of its policies or maps. The fundamental good of this plan rests in the demonstrated commitment to the betterment of Providence. As this plan, Providence 2000, evolved through the City Plan Commission hearing process, and as it is changed in the future, the dream of the plan continues.

## 1.2 MISSION OF PROVIDENCE 2000: THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

*A plan that is a vision for the future, which establishes the ... city as the center of commerce and cultural activities in the [state], recognizes the unique environmental setting and historic precedence of the area, incorporates the residential and business characteristics of individual districts within the [city], preserves the integrity of adjacent neighborhoods, and improves the livability of the [city] for all citizens.  
Central City Plan, Portland, Oregon*

Providence is a city with a rich history and broad cultural diversity. It is a city in transition, as decades of population loss have turned into small gains. Employment and income are expected to grow over the coming years, leading to pressures for change and redevelopment in the city. It is imperative that change not overwhelm existing neighborhoods, and that important legacies from the past be preserved. What is good and desirable about Providence should be maintained and enhanced: cultural and ethnic identities, historic buildings and districts, and natural features and environmental qualities. Major steps have been taken in meeting these objectives through such initiatives as the College Hill Historic District, Roger Williams Park improvements and the Capital Center Development. This comprehensive plan envisions similar ambitious and well conceived programs and projects that enhance and improve the city without losing what is most attractive and historically associated with Providence.

Providence 2000 envisions solutions to some of the most vexing problems facing Providence: declining educational levels in public schools, lack of affordable decent housing, the need for increased public safety and intrusion of institutional uses and activities into residential neighborhoods. Some of these problems can be addressed by conventional means, such as zoning changes and better enforcement of zoning. Other problems, particularly social problems, will require not only physical means, such as investment in facilities, but also coordination of services and programs that all have some impact on the social conditions that spawn the problems.

In developing Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan, the City Plan Commission set a ten year guide for city growth. The plan establishes land use designations. These designations establish the highest and best use of land in the city and will be the basis for Providence's new zoning ordinance. This plan and the zoning to be developed to carry out this plan will protect the

city's many assets. Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan includes implementing provisions which go beyond regulations. Actions are identified that link specific projects and programs to form strategies for economic development, transportation improvements, recreation opportunities, cultural growth, human services, public safety and urban design. These strategies aim at creation of a 24 hour city which is safe, humane and prosperous.

### **1.3 PROVIDENCE 2000: AN ACTION PLAN**

The comprehensive plan sets the vision for Providence. Once the vision is set by this plan, we must aggressively act to lead the city into the twenty first century. Without action to achieve the policies of this plan, we will have a document that will sit on the shelf and collect dust. It is important that we not let this happen, but that we act, as spelled out in this plan, to make Providence a better city for all its residents.

The responsibility to achieve this plan rests with the citizens of Providence, because it is their plan. The citizens of Providence must know this plan and must demand that the plan be achieved. Once adopted, the policies of this plan must guide the actions of all city agencies. Every step to improve the quality of life in Providence should be built on this plan. Every new direction must be evaluated in light of this plan to insure that Providence moves forward in a cohesive and directed manner.

Every Department and agency of the city is charged with the responsibility to carry out the policies of this plan. Through their actions, the goals for Providence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be met. In planning for the future, each department and agency must bring their plans into conformance with this comprehensive plan. Through this process, the city is assured of a clear and concise policy for its future.

### **1.4 PLAN ORGANIZATION**

Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan is organized into five parts. The first part is the INTRODUCTION which gives an overview of why we do and what we hope to achieve by comprehensive planning. The second part of the plan gives the BACKGROUND on planning in the city. The third section of the plan presents THE CITY YESTERDAY AND TODAY giving us a snapshot of where the city is today. The fourth section of the plan is the vision for the city - PROVIDENCE TOMORROW. The final part of the plan is PROVIDENCE 2000: AN ACTION PLAN. This is the work plan to carry Providence 2000 to completion.

Providence 2000 consists of several components. The Plan Map and Land Use Designations, Vision Statement, the Goal and Policies and the Action Plan make up Providence 2000. The Plan Map, showing land use designations, is included in Providence 2000. This is the desired land use in the city. This is the basis for zoning and land use decisions in the city.

The vision statement guides the adoption and future implementation of Providence 2000. The vision is part of Providence Tomorrow, the plan for the city. The vision illustrates where the

plan is leading us and provides a standard by which to measure the plan's success. This is the heart of the comprehensive plan.

The Action Plan is the schedule for implementation of Providence 2000. It is the game plan for action by the city to make Providence a great city.

The plan elements required by state law provide the basic framework for the plan. The two parts of the plan entitled "The City and Its People" and "Providence Tomorrow" are both organized by plan elements. Because the plan is comprehensive and designed to aid in coordinating development policies, each of the plan elements is interrelated with others. As a result, this plan is a somewhat generalized document. The plan is, however, a policy document which will be carried out by many detailed reports, such as those for specific neighborhoods or districts of the city, or for specific facilities and concerns such as roads, public buildings, historic preservation or economic development.

This comprehensive plan gives equal emphasis to matters directly under city control and those controlled by other agencies. The criterion for inclusion in the comprehensive plan is how important a matter is, not who has control over it. One of the functions of the plan is to aid in the necessary coordination between agencies and levels of government to achieve the objectives city residents feel are important.

**PROVIDENCE 2000:  
2.0 BACKGROUND**

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## 2.0 BACKGROUND

*Since the adoption of the first Master Plan in 1946 a number of amendments have been necessary ... It is now time to consolidate those amendments in a new publication, and in the process to revise and update the Plan... a new plan is needed – a plan more sensitive to what is achievable and desirable ...*

*The Master Plan (1964), Providence City Plan Commission*

### 2.1 THE PROCESS

The City has changed substantially since the 1964 master plan. While there were many redevelopment, neighborhood and special issue plans and a number of master plan amendments, a comprehensive review and updating of the full master plan has not been completed. The City Plan Commission initiated the process in 1987 with the development of Citywide land use maps. In 1988, the Department of Planning and Development committed staff time for the preparation of a preliminary comprehensive plan and in 1989 hired a consultant to bring the plan to completion.

#### 2.1.1 PREPARATION OF THE PLAN

The City of Providence is administered and managed by a fully trained administrative and professional staff. Each city department and agency has developed policies and plans for the future, based upon the findings specific to each agency. Providence 2000 consolidates the different plans and policies, forming a cohesive planning document and series of policies for the entire city.

The preparation of this comprehensive plan was initiated by the Department of Planning and Development. The Department completed preliminary data collection, research and drafting of a preliminary version of a plan by the end of 1988, to serve as the basis for Providence 2000. In March of 1989, the Department of Planning and Development hired the firm of Camp Dresser & McKee Inc., a professional planning firm, to help in the completion of the comprehensive plan.

From March through July, 1989, more than thirty individuals and agencies were interviewed by the consultant and the Department, for the purpose of obtaining all relevant materials and information, and to understand specific areas of concern from the viewpoint of community leaders and agency heads. Additional data was received from agencies and individuals through the month of July, and was incorporated into the text of the first draft of Providence 2000 prepared by the consultant. Throughout August, drafts of individual sections of the plan were distributed to those persons interviewed for review, to ensure that the drafts were accurate and complete.

From the end of August through the beginning of September, the first of two public meeting series was held throughout the city. The purpose of this first series of meetings was to identify relevant issues and to insure that they were incorporated into the plan. The information gathered at these four workshops was incorporated by the consultants into a second draft of the

plan. In October, this revised draft of the plan was forwarded to eighty people, representing private nonprofit agencies, public departments, ward representatives, various interest groups and community leaders and representatives throughout the City of Providence for review and comment (See Table 2.1).

A second series of public meetings was held during the month of November. At these meetings the Department and the consultant presented the proposed land use plan for community reaction. Community involvement was facilitated through a meeting format which targeted specific issues and proposals, and asked meeting participants to respond to specific questions. The overall response was outstanding and written comments on the plan were received throughout the month of November and into December.

All of the public meetings were held in public buildings in key locations throughout the city, to make the plan more accessible to the residents of Providence. Public school buildings and community center buildings were utilized for familiarity and convenience. Nine meetings were held, covering nearly every regional area of the city.

Throughout 1990, the Department, the consultant, other city agencies and the City Plan Commission consolidated and incorporated the comments received both in writing and at the nine regional meetings, and prepared a final draft of Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan. This draft, based upon department, agency and citizen's comments, was presented to the City Plan Commission in January, 1991. At this time, the Plan Commission requested further revision to the plan. This required a reformatting of the plan to make it a stronger base on which to build and direct the city's future. This revised final draft was submitted to the City Plan Commission for public hearing in November 1991. A series of revisions were made based on Plan Commission comment. The plan was finally made public in February 1992, with the final public hearings scheduled for March 1992.

The comprehensive planning process, as developed by the City of Providence, is designed to be interactive and ongoing (See Figure 2.1). The comprehensive planning process has been designed to involve a variety of different public and private interests. As data is collected and issues are identified, policies are then developed based upon the findings, for the purpose of review and revisions. In the case of Providence, those persons who reviewed the plan included representatives of the city administration and departments, private nonprofit agencies and organizations, and citizen interests throughout the city.

The policies and goals of the plan then were revised to reflect comment received from different readers and participants. Another draft of the plan was prepared and the process has been continued. In this way, the accuracy of the plan, and its implementation, is better assured.

Ultimately, the success of this plan will be assured by the development of the Comprehensive Plan Series and Area Plans and their implementation. As stated earlier, these plans will be based on the policies established in this comprehensive plan. The City Council, City Plan Commission, Zoning Board of Review and other city and state regulatory and permitting

agencies will use this plan and its policies in making decisions about specific investments, projects and permits.

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**TABLE 2-1**  
**PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE PREPARATION OF**  
**PROVIDENCE 2000: THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**City Departments and Agencies**

City Council	School Department
City Plan Commission	Department of Public Properties
Mayor's Office	Fire Department
Department of Planning and Development	Police Department
Department of Public Works	Department of Inspection and Standards
Department of Traffic Engineering	Housing Authority
Port Authority	Water Supply Board
Redevelopment Agency	Department of Human Services
Public Building Authority	Department of Recreation
Department of Public Safety	Department of Public Parks
	Historic District Commission

**Regional and State Agencies**

R.I. Department of Transportation	Narragansett Bay Commission
Capital Center Commission	R.I. Housing and Mortgage
Bay Ports	Finance Corporation
R.I. Department of Human Services	R.I. Department of Economic Development
R.I. Historic Preservation Commission	Coastal Resources Management Council

**Private and Quasi-Public Organizations**

Providence Chamber of Commerce	The Providence Foundation
Providence Library Services	Save the Bay
The Multi-Service Center Executive Directors Assn.	Keep Providence Beautiful
Providence Community Action Program	Providence Preservation Society
Twenty-six Neighborhood and Resident Groups	The League of Women Voters of Providence

**Other Communities**

The City of Cranston	The City of Pawtucket
The City of East Providence	The Town of Johnston
The Town of North Providence	

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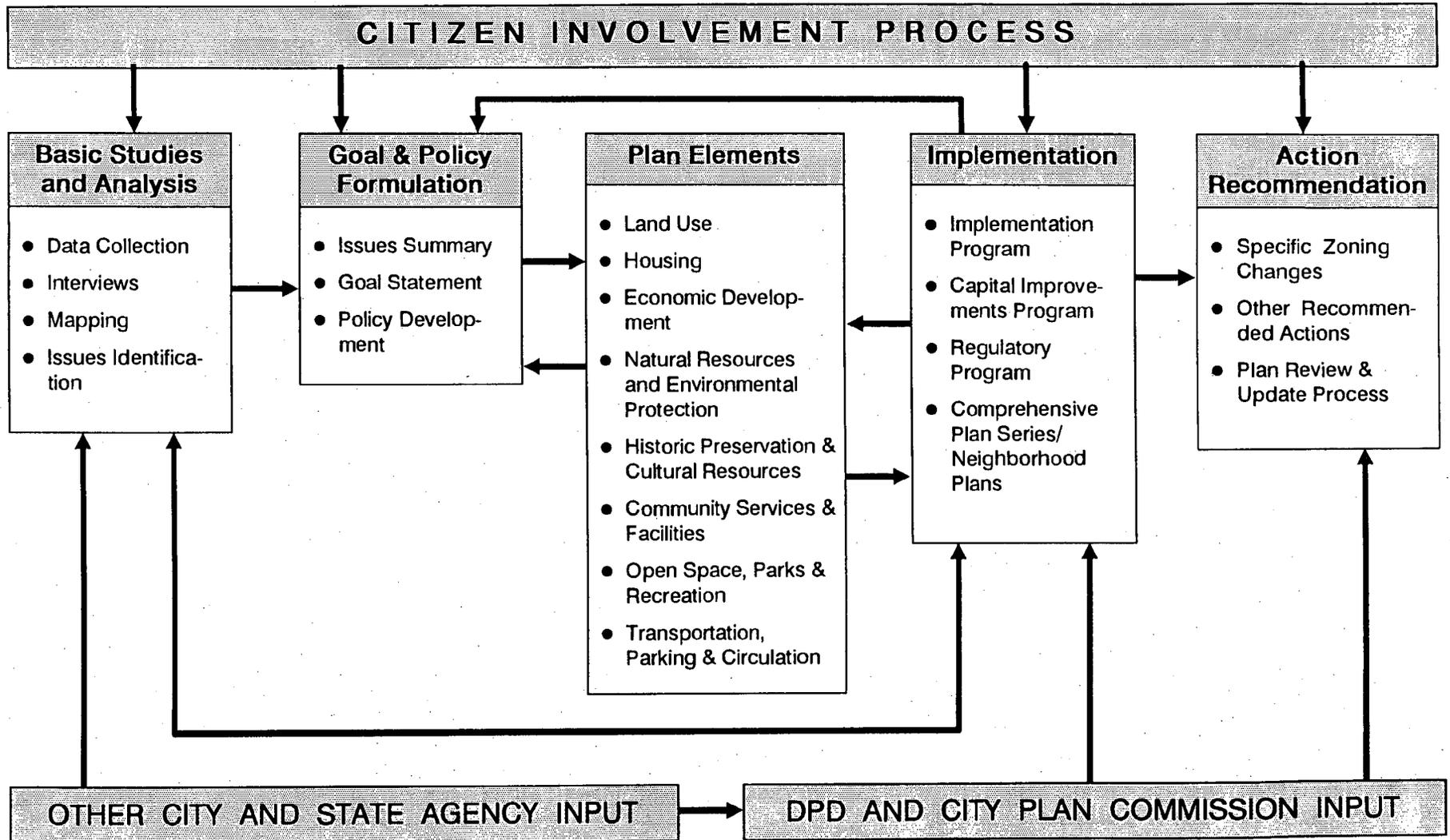
After a public hearing, the City Plan Commission's recommended plan will be forwarded to the City Council for its own public hearing and then adoption as a city ordinance.

When adopted, Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan will be submitted to the Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Planning for its approval, as per the provisions of the state Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act.

FIGURE 2.1

Providence 2000 - The Comprehensive Plan

MAJOR STEPS IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS



### *2.1.2 Citizen Involvement*

Throughout the preparation of Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan, the City Plan Commission and the Department of Planning and Development encouraged and relied on review and comment from the public to insure the overall validity of the plan. Interviews were held with key representatives throughout the City of Providence; public workshops were scheduled at central locations; drafts of the plan were distributed to a large number of people, and were made available to the general public at the Department; and written comments were solicited from citizens, nonprofit agencies and city department heads. The following steps detail activities undertaken for citizen and public participation in the preparation of Providence 2000.

#### *Step One – Interviews*

Throughout May and June 1989, over thirty different people and agencies were interviewed to obtain relevant information and past studies, as well as to assess the major issues facing the city, for inclusion in the plan. The list of persons interviewed and dates and places of the interviews is available at the Providence Department of Planning and Development.

#### *Step Two – Meeting with Neighboring Communities*

The Providence City Plan Commission held a special meeting in August, 1989 to discuss the comprehensive plan with the officials from adjoining communities, as well as representatives from the state planning agency, in accordance with the state Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act. The intention was and still is to encourage cooperative planning among the communities, and to facilitate a more regional planning approach. Representatives from East Providence, Cranston and Pawtucket met with the Commission, and discussed key issues which cross the city boundaries. Those communities which could not attend the meeting were contacted and asked to participate in a general program of information exchange and cooperation. As a result of the meeting in August, the six communities now bordering Providence now readily exchange information, and participate in each other's comprehensive plan preparation. Copies of Providence's draft comprehensive plan were forwarded to the adjacent communities for their review and comment.

#### *Step Three – Public Review of the Draft Comprehensive Plan*

As individual sections of the draft plan were completed throughout the month of August, 1989, they were distributed to those persons that were interviewed in June, to insure the accuracy of the information presented in those sections. Other interested persons were also provided with this first draft of the comprehensive plan, and written comment was encouraged. The list of persons provided with this draft is on file in the office of the Providence Department of Planning and Development.

Over the course of the ensuing next several weeks, after mailing out copies of the draft plan, comments were received from a number of agencies and organizations, city departments and private individuals. After receiving the comments, a number of additional interviews to clarify

comments and issues raised by the reviewers were scheduled. Where appropriate, comments were incorporated into a revised draft of the comprehensive plan.

#### *Step Four – The First Series of Public Meetings*

The City Plan Commission and the Department of Planning and Development were interested in assessing the success of the first draft of Providence 2000 by learning what the citizens and business people of the city thought were problems and issues, both on a local (neighborhood) basis, and throughout the entire city. This first series of public meetings were held on August 28, 29 and September 5 and 6. Advertisements for the meetings appeared in the Providence Journal–Bulletin and in minority papers on August 25, 28 and 29 and September 4, 5 and 6, and in local neighborhood papers on varied days, in advance of the first meeting. As noted earlier, meetings were held in different parts of the city.

The meetings were successful in eliciting comment and insight into area-wide and citywide issues from the perspective of city residents and business people. These informal meetings helped the Department and its consultant complete the second draft of the plan. Notes on, and comments received at, these meetings are on file at the Department of Planning and Development and are readily accessible to anyone interested in reviewing them.

#### *Step Five – Second Draft Plan Completed; Informal Review Group Established*

In October 1989, the second draft of the Providence comprehensive plan was prepared. In order to obtain comment from a wide cross-section of the community, and thus properly reflect an informative sampling of the city's population, more than eighty people were identified as community representatives, including leaders of private nonprofit organizations, directors of public service agencies, leadership of resident and neighborhood groups, public officials, regulatory board members and city department heads. In addition to the specific people asked to review the draft plan, and comment on it, the Draft Providence 2000 was made available to the general public at the Providence Department of Planning and Development and at all branches of the city library. Throughout October and November 1989, more than 200 copies of the draft plan were distributed to members of the general public.

#### *Step Six – The Second Series of Public Meetings*

Once the second draft of Providence 2000 was completed and distributed, the City Plan Commission and Department of Planning and Development wanted to solicit direct reaction to, and comment on, the proposals presented in the draft plan. A second series of public meetings were held on November 6, 8, 13, 15 and 21, at which time the proposed Land Use Map was presented, and very specific issues and questions were raised, to facilitate public reaction. The questions raised at the meetings evolved directly from the previous meetings and interviews, as well as from comments received from the public regarding citywide and area-specific issues. The advertisements for these meetings appeared in the Providence Journal–Bulletin and in minority papers on October 23 and 30 and November 6, 8, 13, 15 and 21. In addition to the advertisements in the Journal–Bulletin, a public service announcement was released to thirteen

radio stations, four television stations and two cable television stations. The meetings were held in different areas of the City.

All comments and notes taken at these five meetings, as well as the list of persons who attended and the materials presented and distributed, and are on file, and are available to anyone interested in reviewing them, at the Providence Department of Planning and Development.

After this second series of public meetings in the neighborhoods, the Department of Planning and Development and the consultant held a number of additional meetings to further clarify both written comments received and comments from the meetings. These meetings were with the Port of Providence Director, the Department of Human Services, representatives of the Association of Multi-Service Center Directors, the Chamber of Commerce, Save the Bay and various neighborhood and resident associations.

#### *Step Seven – Incorporation of Comments Received on the Second Draft Comprehensive Plan*

The Providence Department of Planning and Development received written comments in response to both the public meetings and the draft plan. These comments, along with those comments recorded at the meetings, were reviewed by city officials and by the consultant, and were incorporated into the third draft of Providence 2000. This draft was the version presented to the City Plan Commission by the consultant as the final draft.

#### *Step Eight – City Plan Commission Review*

After receipt of the third draft, the City Plan Commission and the Department of Planning and Development reviewed and revised the plan. This review process was to insure that all issues were adequately addressed and that the policies proposed, reflected the direction set for the city. This process was slow and involved reformatting the plan to better express the city's concerns. Upon completion of the reformatting and rewriting of the plan, the Commission held a public workshop in September 1992. Based on the comments received, minor revisions were made to the plan.

In October 1992, the City Plan Commission held a public hearing on the draft of Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan. The meeting was held at Bishop McVinney Auditorium; unfortunately, the meeting was poorly attended and few comments were received. After the public hearing, the Commission made a final review of the plan, making several minor modifications and at the April 1993 City Plan Commission adopted the plan as revised. The plan was forwarded to the city council.

#### *Step Nine – The Public Hearing Process*

In May 1993, the plan, as approved by the Commission, was forwarded to the city council in accordance with the Providence City Charter. The council accepted the Plan and referred it to the Council Committee on Urban Renewal, Redevelopment and Planning for consideration. The Committee delayed action on the plan for several months asking members of the committee to

review the plan. After several months and the submission to the council of several Area Plans and Comprehensive Plan series reports, the committee finally met with the staff of the Department of Planning and Development and agreed to a work session to review the plans. In January 1994, a work session was scheduled, unfortunately, due to a snow storm the meeting was canceled and was not rescheduled until April 11, 1994.

At this work session, the council committee reviewed with staff the plan and the plan elements that had been submitted. After a lengthy discussion of the plans, a public hearing was scheduled for April 27, 1994.

The public hearing was advertised in the Providence Journal and Bulletin and notice was sent to several groups that expressed interest in the plan. Approximately twenty people attended the public hearing. Testimony was taken and the public hearing was closed. The council committee reconvened on May 10, 1994 to review public comment. After discussion, the plan was reported out of committee without changed. The full council gave first passage to the ordinance adopting the plan on May 20 and second passage on June 2. The mayor signed the ordinance adopting Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan on June 13, 1994.

## **2.2 RESEARCH**

Over the four year process of developing Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan, a large volume of information was gathered and analyzed. Over fifty neighborhood land use maps were produced by staff of the Department of Planning and Development for consideration. In addition, a number of plans that were prepared by city, state and local agencies were reviewed for application to the comprehensive planning process. Based on this information, the staff prepared a preliminary comprehensive plan for review on which the final draft of the plan was based.

## **2.3 PAST PLANNING EFFORTS**

Providence has had a long and illustrious history. From its founding in 1636 it has passed through many notable periods. Until the 1940's, the city had no overall plan for land use and public facilities; problems such as highways, water supply and subdivisions were faced independently as they rose. In 1913 a city plan commission had been established by city ordinance as an advisory body to the mayor and council with responsibility for making a city plan. In 1921, a zoning ordinance was drafted for Providence and enacted in 1923.

By 1944 nationwide interest in postwar planning plus mounting urban problems resulted in passage of a revised city planning ordinance. It created a city plan commission, consisting of the mayor, two members of the city council and five lay members appointed by the mayor. The ordinance authorized, for the first time, the hiring of a planning director and permanent staff to do technical work.

Between 1946 and 1953, the commission produced a master plan which was published as a series of separate reports. Through the 1950's the commission worked on a number of other reports culminating in the "College Hill Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal". This

report was the basis for historic preservation and local historic districts in Providence. In the early 1960's the commission published "Downtown Providence 1970"; out of this plan grew the Capital Center project. Additionally, the commission updated the city's master plan.

Through the 1960' and into the 1970's, the commission continued to publish master plan reports dealing with specific issues. And in the mid 1970's, neighborhood planning began in the city with the refinement of neighborhood boundaries, the preparation of a Citywide neighborhood analysis and the completion of a series of individual neighborhood plans. In the 1980's, the commission prepared an update of the 1964 Master Plan and a series of neighborhood plans. In addition to the neighborhood plans, several plans dealing with preservation on a neighborhood level were prepared, as well as a revitalization plan for downtown and the port area. In 1987, the commission committed to the development of a new city master plan.

Planning has been a vital element of change and growth in the city for the past fifty years. Through the development of this plan, Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan and the development of neighborhood and element plans, planning continues to direct Providence's future.

## **2.4 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN PROVIDENCE**

The process of comprehensive planning is continual, even though from time to time a document called the comprehensive plan is issued, reviewed and adopted. Monitoring of social, economic, cultural and other conditions must be continuous to insure that the policies of the city are being met. Because of the changing nature of the city, comprehensive planning must be responsive to the changing city environment. To this end, the comprehensive planning process in Providence consists of three different levels of planning: **Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan; the Comprehensive Plan Series; and the Area Plans** (Figure 2.2). Providence 2000 represents the first phase of the comprehensive planning process. It establishes general, citywide policies relating to land use and the provision of services, recreation and open space, historic preservation, housing, economic development, transportation and parking, and natural resources.

The second level of the comprehensive plan process for the city is the Comprehensive Plan Series. These are issue specific plans which address issues on a citywide level. The Comprehensive Plan Series may include a Waterfront Land Use Plan, an Harbor Management Plan, an Historic Preservation Plan, an Housing Plan, a Traffic Plan, a Parking Plan, a Park and Recreation Plan and a Plan for the Provision of Human Services. These plans will present a culmination of the suggestions and needs expressed throughout the public involvement process in the development of this Plan. The purpose of this series of citywide plans is to insure that planning in the City of Providence is ongoing, continuous, inclusive and appropriately detailed.

The third level of the comprehensive planning process for the city is Area Plans. These plans address issues on a neighborhood level. These plans are much more specific than either Providence 2000 or the Comprehensive Plan Series. However, all plans will conform with and fulfill the city's goals and policies established in the comprehensive plan. The College Hill

# CITY OF PROVIDENCE

## COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING SYSTEM ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY / PRODUCT

#### GENERAL PURPOSE

To establish development policies and implementation priorities.

To define detailed sector objectives and projects.

To specifically locate and inter-relate projects, and address impacts.

#### SCOPE

Overall City-Wide Development and Implementation Plan

Functional City-Wide Sector Plans (Comprehensive Plan Series)

Special or Local Area and Neighborhood Plans

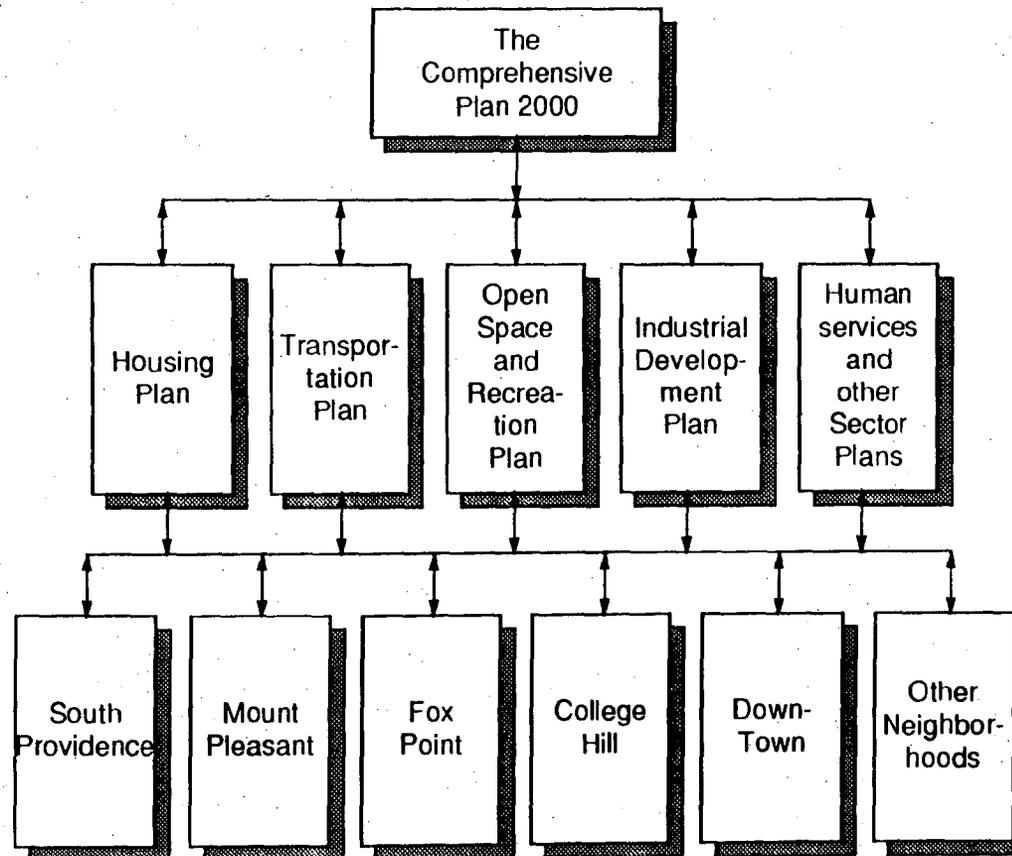


Figure 2.2

Growth Management Plan represents such an area plan, as well as the plans prepared for the thirty-four redevelopment areas of the city.

The Comprehensive Plan Series and Area Plans build on and carry to a higher level the policies spelled out in the comprehensive plan. These plans will be more detailed based on the policies of the comprehensive plan. Several plans have already been prepared and are being reviewed for conformance with this comprehensive plan. The plans that are being reviewed are:

- The Providence Waterfront: 1636 A 2000 (1985)
- Providence Industrial Waterfront (1989)
- The Capital Center Project (1989 as amended)
- Smith Hill Historic Districts: Preservation Plan (1985)
- College Hill: A Growth Management Plan (1988)
- Broadway: A Comprehensive Preservation, Development and Urban Design Plan (1986)
- Providence Development Strategy (1985)

Six (6) plans have already been prepared or are in the process of being prepared as elements of the Comprehensive Plan Series:

- Downcity Providence (1992)
- Providence Cares: A Transition Plan (1992)
- Providence Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (1992)
- The Capital Improvement Program: A Plan to Improve the Process (1992)
- A Preservation Plan for Providence (1991)
- Park, Recreation & Open Space Plan: 1991 – 1995.

The Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan has already been adopted as Plan Number 1 of the Comprehensive Plan Series. The other plans will be reviewed and adopted once this Comprehensive Plan is official.

From time to time it will be desirable to update the written comprehensive plan and the plan elements, based on changed conditions and on continual work being done on each of the plan elements. It will be important to keep the plan current since it will be used as a major reference document for city management and policy decisions. It is expected that each plan element will be updated every five to eight years, depending on need and opportunities.

Through the planning process, the City of Providence can develop in an orderly fashion, preparing for the provision of services and traffic flow, housing needs, and recreation and open space access and availability, among other important growth and change issues. Through this planning process, the plans of all city Departments and Agencies can be developed in accordance with Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan.

## 2.5 CARRYING OUT THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Regulation is the major tool for carrying out the comprehensive plan. Through the regulation of land use, the physical, social and economic components of the city are impacted. Without a land use policy to carry out this plan, many other aspects of the city are neglected. But it is not enough to establish regulations, they must be enforced.

### 2.5.1 Zoning

The "Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act" sets two requirements for the implementation of a comprehensive plan. First, the act mandates that all land use decisions made by the city or any of its agencies shall be in conformance with this comprehensive plan. Second, the act requires that the city's zoning ordinance shall be brought into conformance with the adopted comprehensive plan. Providence is actively pursuing this objective by rewriting its zoning ordinance as the plan is completed. When finally adopted by the City Council the rewritten ordinance will be based on the comprehensive plan and will reflect the plan's goals and objectives. It is expected that the revised zoning ordinance will be the principal regulatory means of achieving the land use pattern, densities and other features of this plan.

Zoning changes will recognize new areas of commercial development such as the Capital Center and the Waterfront. Zoning changes will also consist of refinements needed to carry out policies such as provision of off-street parking and loading areas where required, and conversion of buildings to multiuse purposes where only one use existed before. The desire to preserve historical features and buildings will be recognized in these refined zoning provisions. Also to be recognized are the needs for housing in some areas like the downtown, and the need to protect the existing character of the city's residential neighborhoods. Zoning for institutional activities, preservation and conservation is also important. Separate provisions dealing with these issues will be included in the new zoning ordinance. Through the new zoning ordinance, adjacent land use on the borders of Providence, as well as future land uses in adjacent areas, are being recognized.

This plan and all regulations, like zoning, that grow from it, cannot be static documents. The city is living and vibrant. As the city changes, we must be ready to address that change and to direct it so that Providence can reach its potential. Just as comprehensive planning is continual, so to must be the process of regulating growth and change. To adopt a new zoning ordinance and to be satisfied that we have set the direction for the city is to be short sighted. As the comprehensive plan is revised and updated, zoning, and other regulations must also be revised and updated. Only through addressing the change in the city will we be able to ensure that we determine the city's future.

However, all of the planning and regulation is only as good as the enforcement. The "Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Regulation Act" recognized the importance of enforcement. As a result, the act requires that all land use decisions made by the city or any of its agencies must be in conformance with the comprehensive plan. This provision of the act places responsibility for the enforcement of the city's regulations with all the people of the city. This

provision gives the people of Providence standing to raise questions concerning the land use decisions of the city.

The day to day enforcement of the city's regulations is a monumental task. Through the development of the zoning ordinance, efforts will be made to develop a concise regulation, one not open to interpretation; a zoning ordinance that contains few, if any loop holes. With the development of this new zoning ordinance, city agencies will have to be educated as to the ordinances provisions. Through this education process, city enforcement staff will become aware of the importance of the new zoning and its reliance on the comprehensive plan.

### *2.5.2 Capital Improvement Program*

Providence's capital improvement program is another tool to carry out Providence 2000. The capital improvement program should be a tool to implement plans, react to capital improvement needs, to see projects through to completion, and to monitor the city's capacity to fund needed projects. The city's program should be designed to coordinate needs assessment, finance, planning, and decision-making to produce the most cost effective and beneficial capital improvement plan and budget. In short, the city's capital improvement program should be the primary tool by which decision-makers can effectively manage capital improvements efforts throughout the city.

A capital improvement program serves two purposes: it establishes a city's policies and goals for the future and serves as a means to communicate and coordinate financial needs, estimates and budgets. Implemented correctly, the capital improvement program enables a city to evaluate projects based on the goals and objectives as established in its comprehensive plan. By basing a capital improvement program on the comprehensive plan the city can measure how effective its program has been in achieving its goals and objectives in the past and can set a framework to insure greater success in the future. The capital improvement program also offers a base from which future costs to a city can be programmed so that sound financial decisions can be made.

Seen as a process, the capital improvement program: sets a city's goals regarding physical development and maintenance; translates those goals into criteria; measures and compares project requests submitted from all departments and places them in priority based on how the projects meet the established city goals; prepares a document reflecting that analysis with recommendations; and prepares and adopts a capital improvement program which sets forth projects that should be funded and details the proposed funding mechanism.

By joining comprehensive planning with capital improvement budgeting reinforces the concept that communities should plan for growth and change and the expenditures that they must make to achieve the planned growth. By including the capital improvement program as part of a comprehensive plan, a community is able to develop a capital needs list. Based on the planning period for the comprehensive plan, the needs list may consist of two parts: a capital improvement schedule; and a planned project reserve list. The first is a list of improvements which should be addressed in the first five years of the capital improvement program. The reserve list contains

those improvements that are suggested by the plan but are long range because of cost or other factors.

As a result of this comprehensive plan, the shortcomings of the Providence capital improvement program have been identified and a study on how the program can be improved is being prepared. As previously noted, the study will be adopted as an element of the Comprehensive Plan Series. The city's capital improvement program will be a policy statement, not a funding document. The purpose of the capital improvement program will be to establish the city's goals for development for a five year period. The program will be tied closely to the Comprehensive Plan which is the principal planning document for the city. Each department will be expected to file with the city plan commission a five year capital improvement plan that carries out the department's plans for improvements in the city. These plans will be evaluated by the city plan commission for their conformance to the city's Comprehensive Plan, the goals for the coming year set by the mayor, and the need as established by the department. The city plan commission will recommend a capital improvement program to the mayor. Once reviewed, the mayor will submit the program to the city council for adoption. The council will hold public hearings and adopt the five year program. The policy for growth and change in the city, the capital improvement program, will then be set for the next five years.

The capital improvement program is important to the city. With the cooperative effort of all departments and city officials, the program will serve to direct growth and change in the city and help bring to completion this comprehensive plan.

### *2.5.3 Program Management and Coordination*

Each department and agency in Providence has its own internal management practices and means of program coordination. There are several interagency management devices in effect including the budget procedure, appointment, and supervisory responsibilities of the Mayor, and investigation powers of the City Council. Preparation of the capital improvement program is the responsibility of the City Plan Commission and the Department of Planning and Development. That program is submitted to both the Mayor and the City Council for further review and adoption. The Department of Planning and Development is an advisory agency to the Mayor on all aspects of physical city development. Matters of social, economic, cultural and other importance also are referred to the Department of Planning and Development on an informal basis. In this role the Department of Planning and Development has a major coordinative function with all departments concerned with development and management in Providence.

By City Charter, the City Plan Commission is charged with the responsibility of preparing all plans for growth and change in the city. Through the Department of Planning and Development, the Plan Commission prepares and updates the comprehensive plan and all of the plan elements. The Plan Commission coordinates all plan elements with appropriate departments. As a result of the City Charter, all city departments are required to submit any plans for future growth and change to the Plan Commission, so that the Commission can determine if the plan is in conformance with this comprehensive plan. Through this cooperative process, a coordinated plan for the city's future is developed.

## 2.6 GUIDING CONCEPTS FOR THIS PLAN

The development of a Comprehensive Plan provides the opportunity to think about what makes a city special. As this comprehensive plan was developed the issues that kept arising were neighborhoods, open space, the waterfront, historic preservation, to name a few. We can summarize what we heard at public meetings into a simple statement, "Providence is special, let's protect what we have".

What is it that makes Providence special? Providence is formed by its geography. The city's manufacturing heritage used the waterfront and other water resources for shipping and production. Plants and warehouses were located along the water; workers found housing in the surrounding areas. The clustering of Providence's residential neighborhoods with clear spatial orientation was reinforced by transportation and housing patterns. Open spaces and schools were integrated into the fabric of the neighborhoods. The overall sense was of a city providing a place for families to live and work with ease of access to all activities and services. Providence's neighborhoods are special.

Downtowns have a variety of reasons for existence. They are seats of government, the economic life blood, the entertainment center and present an image of the city to its residents and the outside world. Providence's downtown is special. Cities are viewed, not only by what they are today, but what they were yesterday. Providence has a rich history that is evident in the many buildings that make up the city. From the houses on Benefit Street, the old mill buildings along our rivers to the commercial buildings downtown, Providence's historic fabric and character is evident and special.

Providence developed as a result of its waterfront. Mills were built along the rivers to power the industry. Shipping developed along the waterfront to move the goods. Today we see a new awareness of our waterfront. Through the River Relocation Project, the Providence River is uncovered; in Capital Center, Water Place is being built to remind us of the tidal basin and the city's historic dependence on water; and now, the relocation of I-195 is being examined to make better use of the Old Harbor area of the city. Providence's waterfront is special.

This plan is based on the premise that Providence is unique; that the many special attributes of the city must be protected and built upon. Only by this means, can we make Providence great.

**PROVIDENCE 2000:  
3.0 THE CITY AND ITS  
PEOPLE**

### 3.0 THE CITY AND ITS PEOPLE

#### 3.1 PROVIDENCE - YESTERDAY

The City of Providence developed in a unique way compared to most older cities. Its settlers, refugees from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, seemed to have no need for a common square or meetinghouse, and the town grew in a linear fashion, along the side of the Providence River. The downtown area, typically the core of early development in a community, remained undeveloped for a century after Providence's colonization. Known then as Weybosset Neck, the downtown area to the west of the river, was dominated by steep hills, marshy lowlands, and muddy creeks. Not until 1771 was any kind of permanent link created between the downtown and the east side.

A demand for a specialized commercial district in Providence increased around the turn of the nineteenth century, as the "downtown" started to develop west of the Providence River. Shipping and manufacturing became the key industries around the downtown area, as residential development continued along the fringes of the downtown district. By the end of the 1820's, today's downtown was a thriving area. Providence continued to grow, becoming a prominent city in New England, reaching its peak in the 1940's. With the suburbanization process that started nationwide in the 1950's, Providence's growth was reversed; a period of decline began. During this time the jewelry industry grew most significantly of the manufacturing trades, later establishing Providence as the jewelry capital of the region. The East Side of Providence was maintained as large tracts of agricultural land, while the western regions of the City saw tenement houses and mills develop.

The City of Providence is ideally located along the eastern seaboard of the United States. Providence's settlers developed near a good natural harbor, establishing a populated area along one of the earliest key trade routes. Today this network includes the major northeastern cities: Boston, Providence, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. This Northeast corridor runs 600 miles long and 30 miles wide, and Providence is well situated within it. Providence's location facilitated its development as a transportation center, offering access to both water and overland routes.

Providence's growth and transformation from a small shipping town to the major economic center of the most highly industrialized state in the nation was rapid and dramatic. Providence grew in population from 15,000 people to more than 175,000 at the turn of the twentieth century. Forty years later the City enjoyed its highest population ever (253,504), as industries and businesses continued to migrate to Providence's active harbor and commercial areas. The next forty years, however, from 1940 to 1980, saw a significant decrease in population, as the "suburbanization" phenomenon negatively impacted most of the older cities throughout New England. Providence reached its lowest population count of the century in 1980, with 156,804 people. This trend, however, has started to reverse, as recent years have shown consistent increases in population.

## **3.2 PROVIDENCE - TODAY**

The City of Providence is characterized by a number of outstanding features; its topography and open spaces; its waterways and shoreline; its unique scale in terms of buildings and population; the many respected private and public learning and health institutions; its history and historically significant architecture; and its proximity to a variety of economic, recreational and cultural areas, including the cities of Boston and New York, the ocean and the mountains in northern New England, all adding to the significance of Providence as the capital city of the state of Rhode Island. Providence's population is diverse and varied, and helps create a unique cultural and educational environment. Its health facilities are numerous and have gained national recognition in the field. The City is alive with new development designed to compliment existing scale, and along with the ongoing preservation and renovation activities, is helping to continue the tradition that is Providence.

This Plan deals with issues on a citywide level, emphasizing the comprehensive approach to resolving specific problems. Correlation between land use and all other issues allows the City of Providence to plan for future change, rather than react to changes as they occur. The recent resurgence in construction and change in population have prompted the preparation of this Plan, to properly evaluate the City's evolution. This Plan - as well as subsequent plans of the comprehensive planning process - identifies the various issues that face the City today.

Changes in population, employment, the economy and financial resources, will necessitate that this Plan be revised continually, to insure that it adequately represents the City and addresses issues. Ultimately, the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the City of Providence are of primary interest and concern as this Plan is completed and implemented.

## **3.3 THE PEOPLE**

After years of population loss, the City of Providence has begun to grow in population again. This growth is the single most important factor in planning new development, services and facilities in the City. Population growth can mean a variety of things for the city. The growth could mean expanded markets for housing, consumer goods and services. It may also expand the fiscal resources of the City. The population growth will require increased City services. If the increased population growth is a result of the concentration of the poor and under-privileged individuals in the city, the implications to the city are far different.

### *3.3.1 Past Trends*

Figure 3.1 shows population trends from 1900. The City reached its peak population of 253,504 in 1940. Population declined every decade since then until 1980, when the U.S. Census recorded 156,804 people. In forty years population declined by thirty-eight percent (96,700 people). Most of this loss occurred because people moved to suburban areas around Providence.

Figure 3.2 shows household trends since 1960. While the number of households have declined, the percentage loss has not been as marked as population loss. Between 1960 and 1980 population declined by twenty-four percent while households declined by twelve percent. This is

because population per household was also declining. Average household size was 2.94 people in 1960 and 2.44 in 1980, a seventeen percent decrease in the twenty year period. This is a very significant figure because it means the demand for housing did not diminish as fast as population loss, and now that population is increasing the demand for housing will increase faster than population increase. Average household size is expected to continue to decrease.

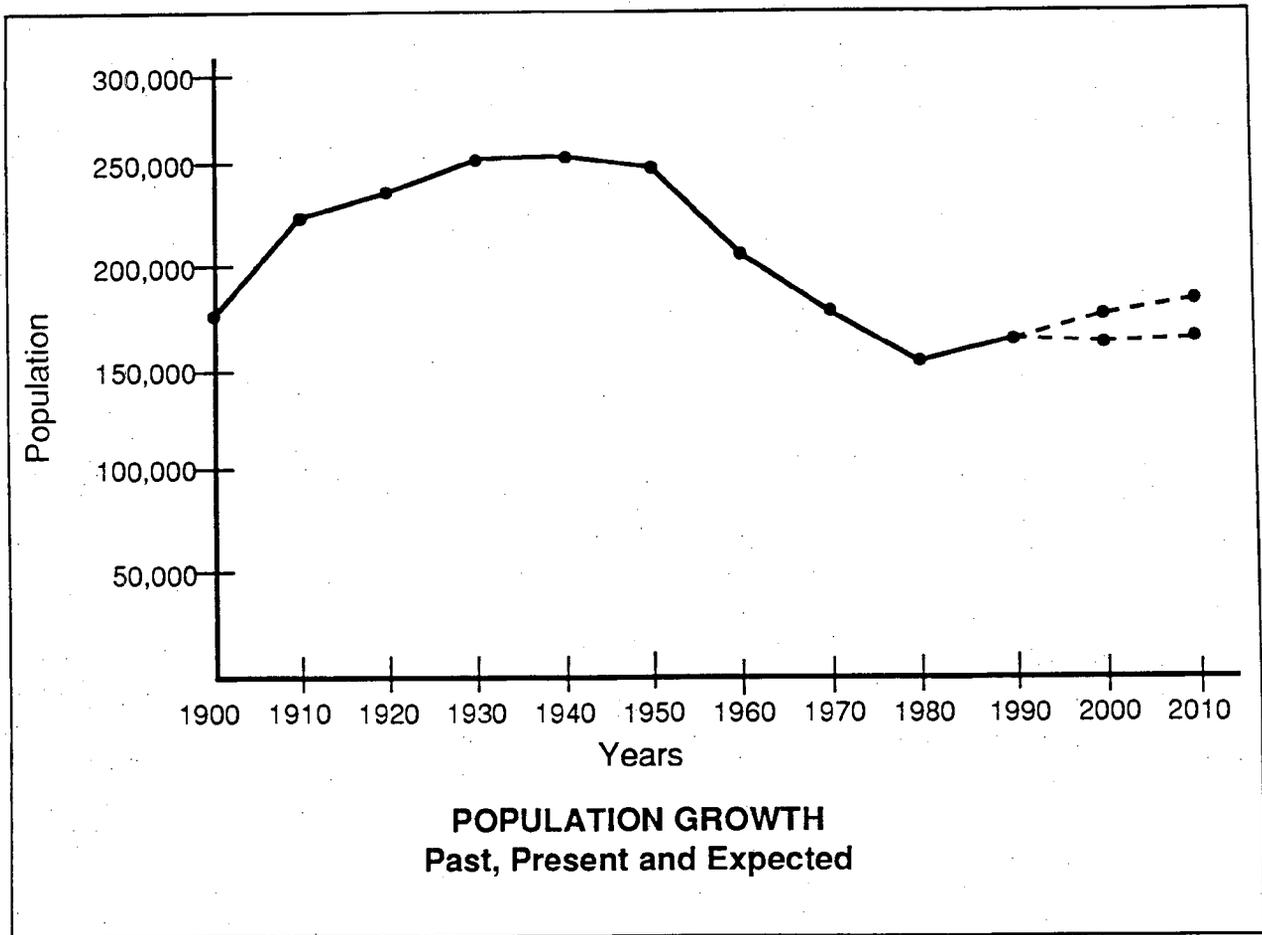


Figure 3.1

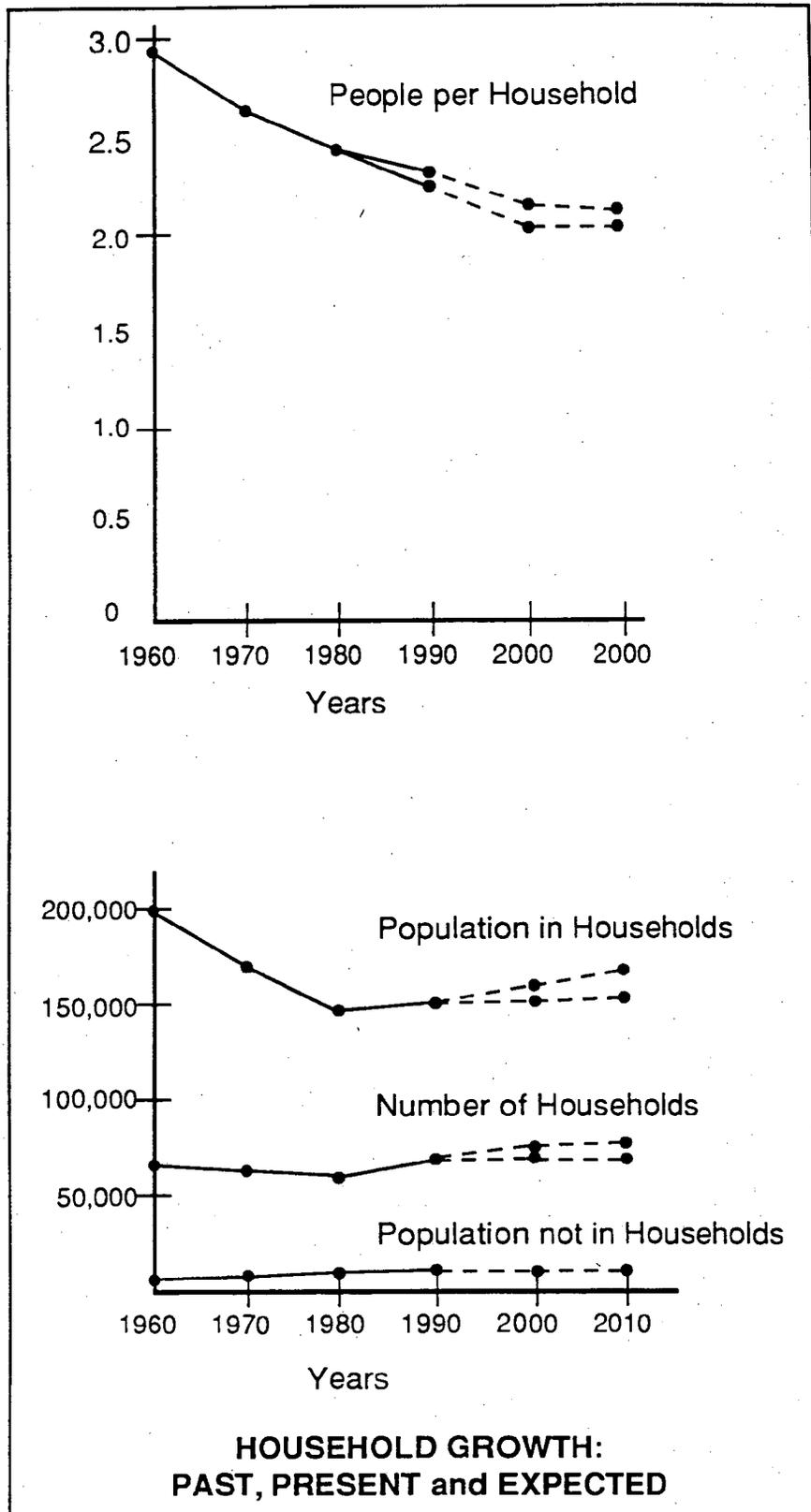


Figure 3.2

### 3.3.2 Existing Conditions

Presently, average household size is estimated to be 2.24 persons. Population is estimated at 162,870 and the total number of households is estimated to be 68,248. These estimates were prepared by CACI, Inc., a demographic and market analysis firm specializing in U.S. Census data analysis and forecasting. Table 3.1 shows adjusted CACI estimates and forecasts for Providence. These figures are based on current trends, including births and deaths, migration, income and age and gender. Population decline has been halted and reversed in Providence. Since 1980 population is estimated to have increased by almost eight percent while households have grown by sixteen percent.

The median age of the population is estimated to have increased from 29.9 years in 1980 to 33.8 years in 1989. This is a significant figure because as the population ages it continues to decrease in household size. Household size is very important because it is one of the major factors that determines demand for housing. The adjusted CACI short-term forecast shows average household size decreasing to 2.30 people per household by 1994. This is associated with an increase in total households to 74,047 (an annual growth rate of 1.1%) by 1994.

In 1980 about 19% of Providence's population was classified as black or other (non-white). By 1989 this figure is estimated at about 23%. The rapid growth in non-white population was caused primarily by an in-migration of Southeast Asians. About 6000 to 7000 of them were resettled in Providence between 1980 and 1989, causing the share of other non-white population to increase from 7.0% to 10.5%. The resettlement program, however, has diminished. Future growth is expected to be slower. The white population, while declining slightly in relative proportion, is expected to remain over 75% by 1994.

### 3.3.3 Future Expectations

It is unlikely that household size will continue to decrease at the same rate as it has since 1970 (about -1% per year). An estimate of future population and households has been prepared for the long-term (20 years) which assumes that household size will remain at 2.30, the level that CACI has estimated for 1994. Among the reasons that household size is not expected to decline further than this level are:

- By 1994, and certainly by the year 2000 the last of baby-boom generation will have reached the age of establishing permanent households (age 35). Upon establishing permanent households, this generation is expected to have at least one child per family.
- Many of the newer migrants to Providence are racial minority groups that are characterized by higher birth rates than the baby-boom generation.

Figure 3.2 shows forecasts of population and households out to the years 2000 and 2010. Two estimates are shown for each future year. The high estimate of population is based on a growth rate of 4% per decade, the rate estimated to have occurred between 1980 and 1990 without the influx of Southeast Asians. The low estimate is based on a growth rate of 0.6% per decade, the short-term growth rate for population chosen by CACI in their forecasts. If the

# TABLE 3-1

Providence Comprehensive Plan  
Population and Demographics by Planning District

Census Tract	Population			Households			Families			Total Income (in millions of dollars)			Race Distribution							
	1980	1989	1994	1980	1989	1994	1980	1989	1994	1980	1989	1994	1980	1989	1994	1980	1989	1994	Other	
<b>SOUTH DISTRICT</b>																				
1	7763	8063	8068	2543	2880	3029	1815	1965	2012	37.5	72.1	79.2	6041	8123	5893	1037	1160	1293	5893	
2	8811	8972	8972	2950	3340	3513	1930	2079	2123	30.1	73.9	81.3	4363	4063	2325	2736	2736	2736	2325	
3	5688	6224	7102	2193	2798	3007	1114	1463	1636	24.6	54.1	61.9	2805	2782	1652	1824	1824	1824	1652	
4	3334	3463	3473	1031	1167	1227	710	767	784	10.8	20.5	22.5	985	884	1403	1517	1570	1570	1403	
5	2682	2993	3002	942	1085	1120	661	715	733	10.5	19.8	21.8	704	872	618	1559	1732	1732	618	
6	1374	1458	1458	445	513	541	340	350	350	5.5	10.5	11.9	371	355	327	888	919	919	327	
7	1881	1746	1751	1012	1150	1209	308	309	301	8	15.4	16.9	685	621	789	881	905	905	789	
12	2643	2745	2753	1013	1149	1206	581	632	642	8.5	16.3	17.6	782	735	667	1634	1886	1886	667	
13	3773	3919	3931	1448	1638	1720	938	1007	1027	15.8	30.6	33.6	3336	3311	3267	2062	237	2863	3311	
14	4860	7734	8420	1812	2856	3172	1173	1962	2210	19.7	58	70.8	2682	2650	2522	1280	1422	1521	2650	
15	2592	2691	2938	970	1156	1228	727	836	867	15.1	30.7	34.3	2494	2575	34	45	64	262	2575	
subtotal south	45221	50770	51900	16557	19712	20974	10275	12105	12585	194.9	401.9	451.6	25128	25102	24191	12634	13847	14616	25102	
<b>WEST DISTRICT</b>																				
9	2343	2433	2441	1119	1267	1332	589	600	604	10.8	20.4	22.4	2298	2384	2380	8	6	8	2384	
10	2321	2452	2470	1061	1230	1302	584	628	638	11.5	22	24.3	2270	2353	2354	12	14	16	2353	
11	2658	2761	2789	1211	1370	1441	625	658	662	14.1	26.2	26.9	2511	2593	2584	76	86	98	2593	
16	5949	6179	6199	2357	2666	2804	1705	1838	1879	35	66.2	72.8	5908	6132	6147	9	11	12	6132	
17	3129	3251	3281	1289	1458	1534	913	953	1003	17.1	32.6	35.9	3241	3233	3241	1	1	1	3233	
18	5535	5749	5767	2185	2449	2575	1448	1559	1592	26.9	51	56.1	4810	4924	4862	304	454	504	4924	
19	4674	4953	5875	2013	2528	2709	1212	1519	1599	22.7	46.6	50.9	4530	4600	4600	47	55	82	4600	
22	3766	3911	3923	1515	1717	1805	942	1006	1024	19.4	37	40.9	3702	3842	3850	16	16	18	3842	
25	2306	2617	2934	936	1191	1280	550	696	728	10.8	24.4	28	2026	2078	2055	121	138	154	2078	
28	3332	4096	4271	1469	1859	1997	749	954	1004	16.4	35.5	40.7	2800	2856	2808	121	159	159	2856	
subtotal west	36013	39302	39910	15154	17739	18779	9297	10443	10731	184.7	384.9	406.5	33968	35065	34978	1037	1213	1342	35065	
<b>NORTH DISTRICT</b>																				
20	3217	3341	3351	1145	1295	1362	684	666	691	17.5	33.3	36.8	2767	2829	2789	261	323	358	2829	
21	7770	8147	8192	3092	3476	3661	2259	2457	2518	51.52	99	109.1	4707	7098	8016	15	18	20	7098	
23	5315	5521	5538	2078	2351	2472	1404	1496	1517	42.8	78.9	87.5	5248	5444	5453	10	22	25	5444	
24	7870	7987	7992	2094	2400	2526	1664	1851	1901	44.3	84.2	92.2	7583	7805	7805	36	38	38	7805	
27	3724	3868	3881	1271	1443	1519	684	929	948	17.2	33.3	36.7	2947	2989	2924	799	799	873	2989	
28	5065	5282	5289	2048	2317	2437	1401	1503	1531	28.5	54.5	60.3	4862	5026	5016	116	135	151	5026	
29	5982	6214	6233	2528	2860	3007	1704	1832	1869	37.9	72.5	79.6	5924	6143	6160	14	16	18	6143	
subtotal north	38763	40340	40466	14216	16142	16984	10210	11036	11273	239.52	456.7	502.3	37038	38314	38263	1187	1351	1483	38314	
<b>EAST DISTRICT</b>																				
30	523	543	545	296	342	352	28	17	12	1.7	3.2	3.5	460	473	489	43	46	52	473	
31	3534	3670	3682	1645	1861	1957	747	770	765	24	43.7	47.6	1794	1762	1667	1334	1472	1564	1762	
32	3018	3758	3770	1425	1812	1895	932	994	1009	27.4	50.3	55.2	2143	2124	2027	1893	1219	1309	2124	
33	4624	4803	4818	1790	2032	2137	1172	1255	1274	36.4	66.3	72.9	4248	4375	4346	257	294	325	4375	
34	4973	5166	5182	1907	2159	2270	1386	1490	1519	78.5	110.6	119	4832	5007	5008	66	74	81	5007	
35	5212	5414	5431	2668	3024	3180	967	969	943	54.1	96	104.5	4864	5157	5151	92	104	114	5157	
36	6028	6338	6364	1897	2013	2125	550	551	520	34.2	60.4	65.7	7203	7489	7468	389	389	389	7489	
37	4250	4415	4429	1829	2070	2177	926	971	974	28.5	51.7	56.9	3719	3769	3769	232	267	296	3769	
subtotal east	34762	36107	36221	13257	15113	15893	6710	7017	7016	278.6	482.4	525.1	26383	30173	29907	3306	3667	4130	30173	
<b>DOWNTOWN DISTRICT</b>																				
8	2045	2124	2130	1173	1346	1417	234	206	173	16.4	28.3	30.8	1803	1857	1844	162	180	194	1857	
subtotal downtown	2045	2124	2130	1173	1346	1417	234	206	173	16.4	28.3	30.8	1803	1857	1844	162	180	194	1857	
<b>Providence Total</b>	156804	168643	170647	60157	70052	74047	36726	40807	41778	914.32	1734.2	1916.7	127320	130637	129183	18546	20458	21787	130637	

Note: Adjusted for Southeast Asian Migration Since 1980

Source: 1980 figures from 1980 census, U.S. Census Bureau; 1989 update and 1994 forecast from CAGI Inc.; Southeast Asian adjustment based on R.I. Office of Refugee Resettlement data.

Planning District	Census Tracts	Council Wards	Neighborhoods
South	1 - 7, 12 - 15	6 - 11	Elmwood, West End, Reservoir, South Elmwood, Lower South Providence, Upper South Providence, Washington Park
West	9 - 11, 16 - 19, 22, 25, 26	7, 12, 13, 15	Smith Hill, Valley, Federal Hill, Olneyville, Silver Lake, Hartford (West Broadway)
North	4 - 6, 14	4 - 6, 14	Cherries, Wanskunk, Elmhurst, Mount Pleasant, Manton
East	30 - 37	1(part), 2, 3	Hope, Mount Hope, Blackstone, Wayland, College Hill, Fox Point
Downtown	8	1(part)	Downtown

higher growth rate of the 1980-1990 period prevails, by 2010 Providence will have a population of 188,000 people (about the same level as 1965) and 78,700 households. If the lower growth rate prevails, Providence population is expected to be 172,200, about 3400 more than that estimated for 1989. 74,900 households would be the lower estimate for this demographic variable in 2010. The implications of future population growth are profound. There will be an increased demand for city services such as fire and police protection. There will be renewed need for replacement and maintenance of city facilities such as schools, roads, sewer and water lines. Human services such as job placement, daycare, substance abuse counseling and elderly programs will also be required at higher levels.

More housing will be needed. Smaller, one and two bedroom units will be needed to match the decline in average household size. Less expensive "affordable" units will also be required to recognize the fact that there are many low and moderate income households in Providence.

Table 3.1 shows racial composition by neighborhood. Two-thirds of all non-white population is located in the neighborhoods that make up the southern part of the City. These neighborhoods are Elmwood, West End, Reservoir, South Elmwood, South Providence, Lower South Providence and Washington Park. The non-white population is expected to remain concentrated in these areas and will require special social, employment, and housing services.

### **3.4 EMPLOYMENT**

Providence enjoys a key location at the head of Narragansett Bay. This enabled the City to become both a water powered manufacturing center and a water bourn trade center in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. While still maintaining these functions the economy of Providence has been supplemented by service and government activities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Figure 3.3 shows the mix of employment in 1980 and in 1987. In 1980 manufacturing and wholesale and retail trade accounted for forty-three percent of total employment. By 1987 this figure had fallen to thirty-five percent. Services, including finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) and government accounted for fifty-one percent of total employment in 1980, and by 1987 this share had increased to fifty-eight percent.

The City would like to regain some of the manufacturing and trade activities it once had. One way to do this is to create opportunities for such activities on the waterfront, where there is space and support facilities for them. The Providence industrial waterfront extends from the Fox Point Hurricane Barrier south to Fields Point and the Cranston city line. Within that area, the Port of Providence is defined as the city owned land north and east of Terminal Road.

#### *3.4.1 Past Trends*

Providence, like many other New England cities developed a significant textile industrial base in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A substantial jewelry industrial base was also developed in Providence. The textile industries left in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century but the jewelry base remains, although at a reduced scale from earlier years. One reason for the jewelry industry remaining is the existence of

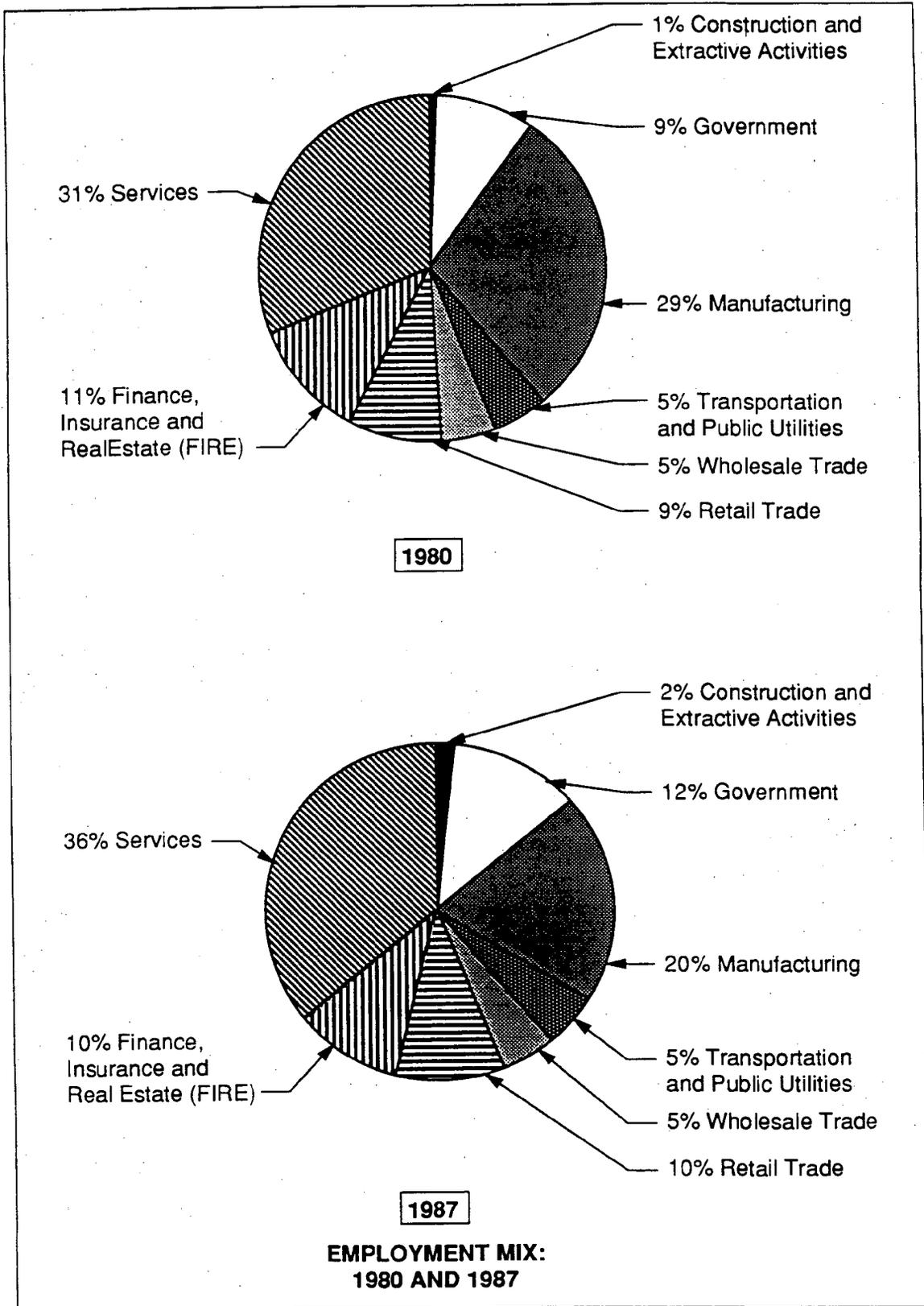


Figure 3.3

a highly skilled labor force trained in the crafts necessary for jewelry manufacturing. The existence of the jewelry industry has led to recent high-tech industries concentrating in materials coatings. Other specialized manufacturing industries have shown some interest in Providence based on its historic jewelry trained craftspeople.

Trade, both wholesale and retail has been important in Providence. The wholesale activities have remained constant in recent years, while retail activities have increased slightly (up to 1987), after declining quite markedly earlier. Before 1980 suburban retail malls and a decentralizing population in general, served to decrease the importance of Providence as a retail center. The slight recovery in retailing in the City is based on recent population growth and some retail specialization, for example in high quality goods in smaller shops and boutiques.

#### *3.4.2 Existing Conditions*

The reversal of retail decline can be seen in the sales data of Table 3.2. The decline continued until 1983, but picked up substantially in 1984 and 1985 and continued to increase somewhat through 1986. By 1987 retail employment in the City had increased 10% over its 1980 level. Manufacturing employment continues to decline as it has statewide and throughout New England. Even though manufacturing activities are declining they are going through a change in mix. Older traditional activities are the ones in most severe decline, like jewelry, textiles, and shoes, while newer high-tech industries are showing some signs of growth. This creates a small demand for modern high-tech industrial space, and a surplus of older loft type manufacturing space, some of which has been converted to other uses. This means industrial parks and sites must be created or maintained for expansion of these industrial activities.

Service activities including finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) and government are the growth sectors of the economy. This follows overall economic trends in New England and in the nation as a whole. From 1980 to 1987 these service employment categories grew by twenty-four percent in Providence. This growth more than offset other losses, resulting in an overall employment growth of seven percent from 1980 to 1987. This represents an annual average growth rate of 1%, and if continued, would result in a total employment of 143,000 by the year 2000, and 157,000 by 2010, a growth of 30,000 jobs from the 1987 level of about 127,000.

Figures 3.4 and 3.5 show private sector employment growth and overall unemployment in Providence from 1980 to 1987. The graphs show the same thing in two different ways. As employment increases, unemployment goes down. The total supply of labor may be a constraint on how fast the economy can grow. When unemployment drops below 3% the labor market is considered to be very tight. However, employment in Providence draws on a labor pool much larger than the City itself. Moreover, many people live in Providence and work outside the City. Balancing labor force with employment is a matter of maintaining a good transportation network, an affordable supply of housing and ease of entry into the labor force. These are some of the basic development issues covered in the Comprehensive Plan.

**TABLE 3.2**  
**GROSS RETAIL SALES, PROVIDENCE 1982 - 1986**  
(In 1,000s of Current Dollars for Calendar Years)

Year	Gross Retail Sales	Annual % Change
1982	\$2,384,994	---
1983	2,162,171	(9.3%)
1984	2,677,697	23.8%
1985	3,393,865	26.8%
1986	3,569,711	5.2%

Total Change in Retail Sales, 1982 - 1986 = 49.7%

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SOURCE: Gross Retail Sales of Establishments Subject to the R.I. State Sales Tax. R.I. Division of Taxation

### 3.4.3 Future Expectations

Whether Providence will be able to maintain its recent average employment growth for the next twenty years depends on the regional economy and responses to it by the City. A growth of 30,000 jobs is optimistic but not unattainable. One-third of these are planned for the new Capital Center. Other important projects are in various stages of planning which would result in 4000-5000 new jobs. If major developments occur at the Foundry and on the Industrial Waterfront, another 7000-8000 new jobs could be created. These two areas alone could provide over 2,000,000 square feet of commercial and industrial space. The rest of the City could easily provide the space for the remaining 7000-9000 new jobs to bring the total to 30,000 by 2010. Statewide population forecasts however, show only another 20,000 new Rhode Island residents by then. Clearly, higher population growth would occur, and the nearby Massachusetts labor force would be used to meet the 30,000 new job figure. Even meeting only one-half of this would be a substantial achievement for the City. A figure of 15,000 new jobs (one-half the optimistic expectation) would provide for the Capital Center and the other projects now in the planning stage. These jobs would support a new population of about 25,000 most of whom would live outside the City.

### 3.4.4 Implications

Providence must continue in its pro-active economic development efforts in order to achieve substantial new employment. These efforts include providing parking or improved public transportation for employees and customers of new businesses, continuing job training programs to better prepare the local labor force, and preparing sites for the businesses. The private sector must provide the capital and entrepreneurship for the new or expanded businesses. Public/ private cooperation will continue to be needed, as it has in the past, to coordinate the roles both sectors must play.

Improved infrastructure is another important requirement for continued economic expansion. Roadway improvements, sewer and water system improvements and port

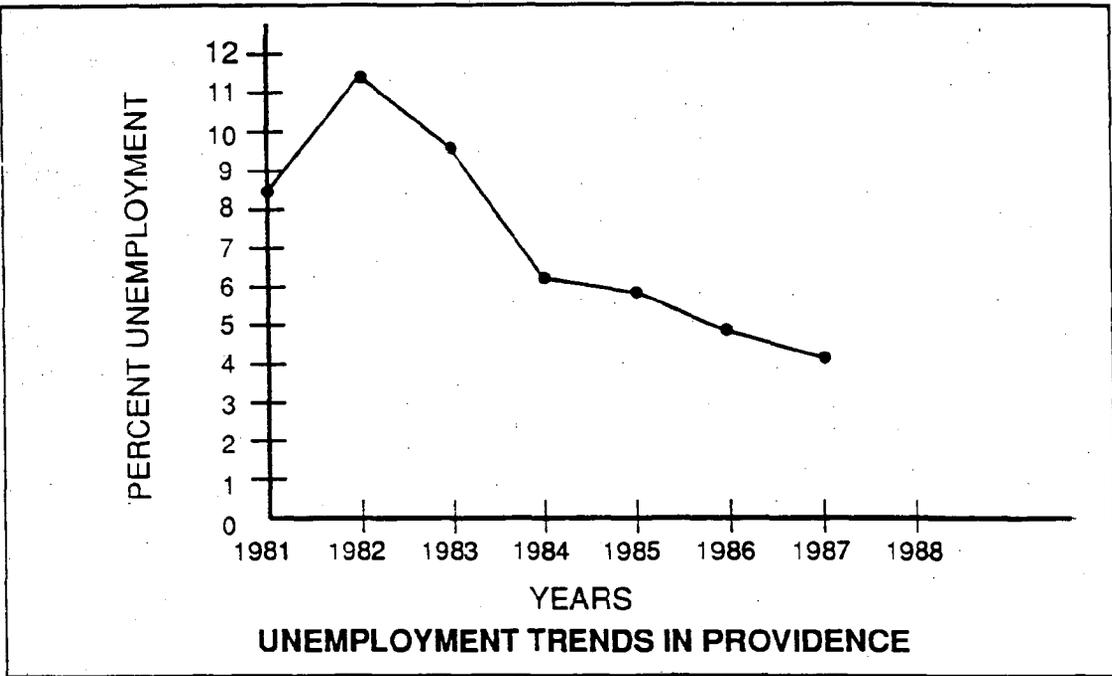


Figure 3.4

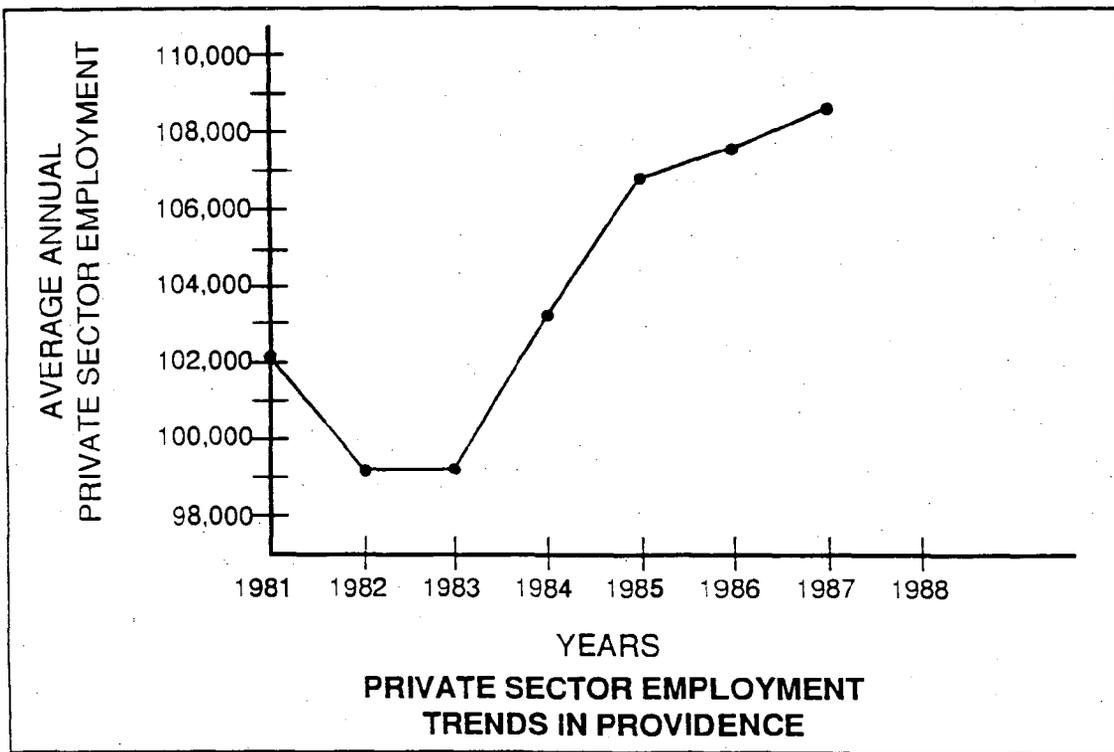


Figure 3.5

improvements are all necessary in order to sustain economic development. It will also be necessary to provide suitable affordable housing and recreational opportunities to attract the labor force required for new jobs.

### 3.5 INCOME

Median household income for Providence was twenty-nine percent below the statewide average as reported in the 1980 U.S. Census of Population. Providence, like many central cities in the U.S., is home for a relatively large number of low income households. Table 3.3 shows the number of households in each income category in 1980 and as estimated for 1989. A 1994 forecast prepared by CACI is also shown in Table 3.3.

#### 3.5.1 Past Trends

In 1980 about forty-five percent of all Providence households had an annual income of less than \$10,000. In 1980 the poverty level for a household of four people was \$8,385. A substantial number of households in Providence had and still have low income. This fact means that special demands are placed on the City in terms of housing, human services, transportation, education, public safety and employment. While all local governments face these issues to some degree, the large proportion of low income households in Providence means the City must respond with higher and specialized levels of effort in providing human services and facilities.

**TABLE 3.3  
NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS BY INCOME CATEGORY**

Household Income Categories	1980 Census	%	1989 Update	%	1994 Forecast	%
\$ 0 - 9,999	26,866	44.7	18,740	27.5	18,566	25.9
\$10,000 - 14,999	10,287	17.1	8,950	13.1	9,676	13.5
\$15,000 - 24,999	13,104	21.8	13,917	20.4	14,155	19.7
\$25,000 - 34,999	5,578	9.3	10,244	15.0	10,681	14.9
\$35,000 - 49,999	2,522	4.2	8,940	13.1	9,793	13.6
\$50,000 - 74,999	1,058	1.8	4,588	6.7	5,405	7.5
\$75,000 and over	742	1.2	2,869	4.2	3,500	4.9
Median Household Income for Providence	\$11,452		\$19,623		\$20,402	
Median Household Income for Rhode Island	\$16,097					

Source: CACI, Inc., Demographic and Income Forecast Report for Providence, R.I., 1989  
U.S. Census of Population for 1980

### 3.5.2 Present Conditions

Table 3.3 indicates that about twenty-eight percent of all households in Providence have incomes of less than \$10,000. However, the poverty level for a household of four had increased to \$12,091 by 1988. Forty-one percent of Providence households are now estimated to have incomes of less than \$15,000. There has been a small improvement since 1980. Table 3.3 shows that the improvement is expected to continue to 1994, when about thirty-nine percent of all Providence households are forecasted to have incomes of less than \$15,000 (about twenty-six percent will still be below \$10,000).

### 3.5.3 Future Expectations

Figure 3.6 shows median household annual income and per capita annual income forecast out to the year 2010. Forecasts are based on recent (1980-1989) estimated growth rates. There is no assurance that these growth rates will continue. By the year 2000 median household income is expected to be about \$21,400 (in 1989 dollars) and by 2010 this figure is expected to rise to 23,200, representing an overall growth of eighteen percent from 1989. On a per capita basis, income is expected to grow to the year 2010 even faster (by forty-six percent). The difference is attributable to the slight decline in persons per household over the next twenty years (as measured from 1980). There is really no reliable way to predict a poverty level over the next twenty years because it depends on the prices of basic commodities such as food, clothing, and shelter. It is safe to say, however, that Providence will continue to maintain a large proportion of the low income households statewide over the next twenty years, and that services, facilities and programs will continue to have to recognize this situation.

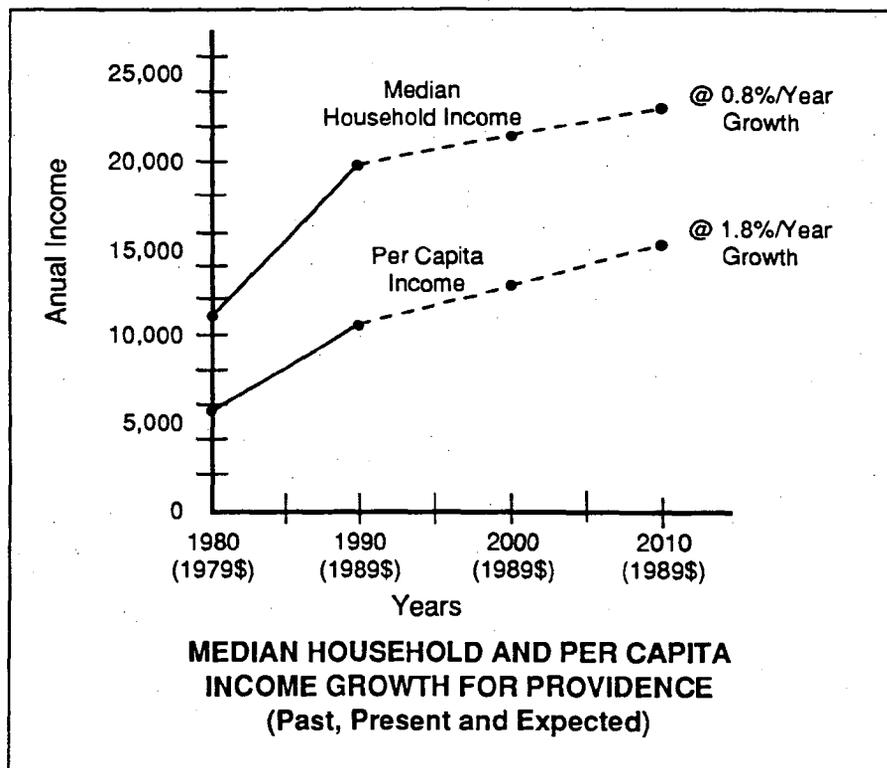


Figure 3.6

### *3.5.4 Implications*

Education, job training and human services will all be important to help maintain income growth. It is likely that income growth will be dependent on these services because of the changing nature of the employment mix, and the changing technology of the workplace.

One impact of income growth will be increased markets for retail goods. This should help in maintaining the viability of some downtown and neighborhood retail areas, although care must be taken to insure that a good mix of retail activities continue to exist in both downtown and neighborhoods. Otherwise retail activities will not be able to "feed" off of each other, that is to draw the customers that circulate and shop in several establishments.

## **3.6 LAND USE**

### *3.6.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS*

As shown by population and economic data, the City of Providence has changed significantly over the past nine years, since the 1980 Census. Land use changes are good indicators of growth. Trends in land use are essential in formulating planning policy. As an example, between 1953 and 1986, the net developed and accessory land area in Providence decreased more than five percent (5%), while the City's street and highway area increased 20 percent (20%). This increase in paved land area represents the intense roadway improvement activities performed by the State DOT, as well as the City's Public Works Department. Changes in the trend can be seen by 1986, as the paved area actually started to decrease slightly. Table 3.4 shows the actual change in the proportions of land area since 1953.

While the overall net developed and accessory land area slightly decreased in Providence from 1953 to 1986, the land areas of specific categories of land use dramatically changed. For example, the amount of vacant land in the City decreased 34 percent between the two key years. And while residential land area decreased 3.3 percent, commercial land area increased almost 64 percent. The commercial increase was offset by a 21 percent decrease in industrial land, reflecting the shift from a manufacturing to a service and trade economic base. Table 3.5 shows the land areas in acres, by major land use category from 1953 to 1986.

About forty percent (40%) of the City of Providence is in residential use. Commercial uses are generally located along the major arterial streets in the City, as well as in the downtown area. Industrial uses are scattered throughout the City, but a large proportion of the industries are located along Allens Avenue, including the Port of Providence. In addition, industrial uses are located along the northerly side of Route 6, the westerly side of Route 10, and in developed industrial parks including Huntington Park, West River Park, and Silver Spring Park. (Please refer to the detailed set of land use maps maintained in the Providence Department of Planning and Development for a delineation of the land use distribution in the City of Providence).

There are three types of land use in the city that require special acknowledgment, they are institutional land uses, committed open space and undeveloped land.

**TABLE 3.4:**  
**Land Distribution, City of Providence, 1953 - 1986 in Acres**

Category	1953	1961	1969	1975	1986	75 - 86 %Change
Net Developed and Accessory Land Area (Incl. Water)	9,541	9,361	8,987	9,003	9,031	0.3%
Street and Hwy Areas	2,559	2,739	3,113	3,097	3,069	- 0.9%
Gross Land	12,100	12,100	12,100	12,100	12,100	-

Source: 1975 Land Use Comparison  
1986 Taxable Property List

**TABLE 3.5:**  
**Distribution of Net Developed and Unused Land Area by Land Use City of Providence, 1953 - 1986**

CATEGORY	1953		1961		1969		1975		1986*	
	# Of Acres	%Of Tot	# Of Acres	%Of Tot	# Of Acres	%Of Tot	# Of Acres	%Of Tot	# Of Acres	%Of Tot
Residential	3,671	38	3,611	39	3,643	41	3,614	40	3,551	39
Accessory to Residential	163	2	128	1	316	3	315	3	307	3
Commercial	469	5	572	6	799	9	781	9	768	9
Industrial	1,584	17	1,507	16	1,301	15	1,328	15	1,249	14
Public and Institutional	2,274	24	2,351	25	2,186	24	2,197	24	2,246	25
<u>Vacant</u>	<u>1,380</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>1,192</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>724</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>768</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>910</u>	<u>10</u>
Total Net Land Area	9,541	100	9,361	100	8,987	100	9,003	100	9,031	100

Source: 1975 Land Use Comparison  
1986 Taxable Property List

\*Note: Some discrepancies may exist regarding 1986 land use, due to the different sources of data.

## **Institutional**

Providence contains a number of institutional facilities including private schools, colleges and hospitals. These facilities tend to be concentrated in a few sections of the City. The neighborhoods in which institutions are concentrated include:

College Hill/East Side (northeast): with Brown University, Rhode Island School of Design, Wheeler School, Lincoln School, Moses Brown School, Providence Hebrew Day School, Miriam Hospital and Butler Hospital.

Upper South Providence (southwest): with Rhode Island Hospital, St. Joseph's Hospital and Women and Infants Hospital.

Elmhurst/Mount Pleasant (northwest): with Rhode Island College, Providence College, Veteran's Hospital, Rhode Island School for the Deaf, LaSalle Academy and Roger Williams Hospital.

Downtown (central): with the University of Rhode Island Continuing Education and Johnson and Wales University.

Washington Park (south): with Johnson and Wales University.

(Please see the Utilities and Public Facilities Map (Figure 3.17) for the distribution of the institutions in Providence).

The large number of institutions and the size of some institutions can threaten the integrity of surrounding neighborhoods in a number of important ways. Special problems result from turnover of tenants in rental housing, transient population driving housing prices up and physical barriers to circulation caused by the extensive buildings and grounds of some institutions.

Institutions are quite important in the economic, social, and cultural life of Providence. The larger institutions such as universities and hospitals have extensive payrolls, and some have annual budgets that are larger than the City's budget. Some institutions are among the largest employers in Providence.

Because of their importance, and their impacts, a special way of dealing with institutions has been established in Providence. An institutional zoning district has been created which regulates institutions, primarily higher educational and medical facilities, separately from their surrounding uses. One of the requirements of the institutional zoning district is that each institution prepare, and file with the City, a five-year master plan, indicating where new facilities will be built or expanded. It is important for the institutions to keep these plans up-to-date. It is also important for the City to revise its institutional regulations from time to time to reflect current problems and neighborhood concerns. Current problems which require City attention are continued encroachment into residential areas, parking, both on and off-street, and the use of potential neighborhood open space. It is anticipated that some institutional zoning regulations will change as a result of preparing this citywide comprehensive plan.

## **Undeveloped Land**

Undeveloped land is a resource which needs specific policy attention in Providence. Most undeveloped land is platted and consists of vacant lots; some of which were once developed. There is some vacant land, especially on the industrial waterfront, that is subject to replatting or subdivision into specific development parcels.

The largest concentration of vacant lots is in the Upper South Providence neighborhood, while the lowest number is in the College Hill and surrounding neighborhoods. The City currently is in the process of reusing over 600 vacant lots through a special program, whose goal is to eliminate all such vacant lots in Providence. The program gives interested parties the opportunity to bid for ownership of identified tax reverted vacant lots. This program is intended to reactivate lots which are underutilized, thereby enhancing areas, expanding the tax base and decreasing crime. Increasing yard space and providing sites for new housing are also objectives of this program.

How vacant land is developed can have a major impact in the City. Substantial residential expansion can occur through a process of infill on vacant lots. Substantial industrial and commercial development can occur on replatted or newly subdivided land. One of the purposes of this comprehensive plan, and related area plans is to define the specific roles vacant land can play, and to determine the services and utilities needed to support the new development.

## **Committed Open Space**

Providence contains a total of 149 parks which are scattered throughout the City. The largest are:

Roger Williams Park: located in the South Elmwood neighborhood, and consisting of 432 acres;

Wanskuck Park: located in Wanskuck neighborhood, consisting of 25 acres;

Neutaconkanut Park: located in the Silver Lake neighborhood with 57 acres;

Triggs Memorial Park: located in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, with 158 acres;

Blackstone Park: located in the Wayland neighborhood, consisting of over 40 acres; and,

Woonasquatucket Park: located on the Johnston line, consisting of 40 acres in Providence and 40 acres in Johnston (state owned, for future active recreation development).

These large natural areas need to be preserved for the enjoyment of the city's citizens. (For a more detailed delineation of the recreation areas in the City of Providence, please refer to the Open Space Map shown in Figure 3.19 on Open Space, Parks and Recreation).

It is significant to note the number of public and private institutions, cemeteries and park lands in the City of Providence. Ultimately the amount of tax-exempt land in the City including streets and highways, amounts to roughly 50 percent of the total land area. This disproportionately high amount of tax-exempt land can burden the City's resources, particularly in terms of limited tax revenues and provision of public services.

The 1332 acres of public land used for active and passive recreation represents about 15% of all land (excluding streets and highways) in Providence. The city has adopted the recreation standards established in "Standards for Local Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Plans" issued in 1989 by the Rhode Island Recreation Resources Review Committee. Providence has insufficient acreage available for recreation and open space, and moreover, has some problems in terms of the distribution of public land by neighborhood. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 3.12 and in the Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan: 1991-1995, Report No. 1 of the Comprehensive Plan Series which has already been adopted.

### 3.6.2 *CHANGES IN LAND USE*

The amount of vacant land in Providence decreased 54 percent, or by 638 acres between 1953 and 1986. But 200 of those acres "lost" were due to a change in the method of recording land use and land ownership that occurred in 1969. Many of the vacant lots that were adjacent to residential lots, previously recorded as "vacant", were recorded from 1969 on as "residential accessory" land. Furthermore, much of the remaining vacant land has since been reclaimed through new highway construction, the City's vacant lot program and residential infill construction, most prevalent in South Providence. Therefore this figure is somewhat misleading.

While residential land use is the largest category in Providence, residential land area decreased slightly throughout most of the 33-year period. A total of 63 acres or 1.8 percent since 1975 - of residential land was lost. This decrease was primarily caused by demolition and clearance of deteriorated residential structures. That land is now vacant. It is expected that the period of extensive demolition is over, and that rehabilitation, along with new construction will increase the amount of land used for residential purposes in the future. There has been an additional small loss of residential use to commercial land use, as conversions from housing to businesses occurred. This happened primarily in areas zoned for business, although some conversions represent variances granted by the City's Zoning Board of Review.

The most significant change in land use occurred in the commercial land use category. A total of 330 acres were added to the inventory of commercial land in Providence between 1953 and 1969, representing a 70 percent increase. This gain was due to increases in commercial uses as well as parking areas accessory to commercial establishments. From 1969, however, commercial land area experienced a slight decline of 3.9 percent (31 acres), primarily due to the mid 1970's recession period. However, this figure is expected to increase in the future. The Capital Center project alone will add substantial amount of commercial acreage.

Providence experienced a moderate but steady decline in industrial land area from 1953 to 1986, a trend typical among older mill communities. The City's industrial land decreased by an annual average of 1 percent, even though two industrial parks were developed by the Providence

Redevelopment Agency (PRA) within that period. Overall, Providence saw a decrease of 21 percent - or 335 acres - in industrially-used land between 1953 and 1986. This loss can be attributed to the acquisition of industrial land for the construction of roads and highways, as well as individual land use changes mostly from industrial to commercial use. Industrial land is expected to stabilize and even grow slightly as appropriate sites are identified and developed as a result of this and subsequent plans.

**TABLE 3.6:**  
**Land Use Comparison and Changes**  
City of Providence, 1953-1986.

CATEGORY	1953 Acres	1961 Acres	1969 Acres	1975 Acres	1986 Acres	53 - 86 Change	53 - 86 % Change
Residential	3,671	3,611	3,643	3,614	3,551	- 120	- 3.3%
Accessory to Residential	163	128	316	315	307	+ 144	+ 88.3%
Commercial	469	572	799	781	768	+ 299	+ 63.8%
Industrial	1,584	1,507	1,301	1,328	1,249	- 335	- 21.2%
Public and Institutional	2,274	2,351	2,186	2,197	2,246	- 28	- 1.2%
Vacant	1,380	1,192	742	768	910	- 470	- 34.1%
Net developed and accessory land Area	9,541	9,361	8,987	9,003	9,031	510	5.4%

Source: 1975 Land Use Comparison  
1986 Taxable Property List

While the total amount of public and institutional land changed very slightly from 1953 to 1986, there have been some shifts within this category. This category which includes parks, recreation, open space, government, cemeteries, schools, hospitals, libraries, and museums, experienced an increase of 3.4 percent between 1953 and 1961, primarily due to the construction of a new elementary school in South Providence, the development of Rhode Island College, and the expansions of Brown University and Rhode Island School of Design. This category experienced another increase of 2.2 percent between 1975 and 1986 due to additional expansion of both public and private educational and health-related facilities necessitated by changes in population distribution. Public and institutional lands are expected to remain stable in the future, with the addition of some small park and recreation land, and the slight expansion of some institutions. In the past some public land was converted to institutional use, as some public schools and underutilized recreational areas were closed. Some of these properties were picked up by adjacent institutional uses.

As mentioned previously, net developed and accessory land area in Providence increased slightly between 1975 and 1986. By 1986 the net developed land area increased 28 acres from 1975, reversing a long term downward trend. These changes in land use acreage are delineated in Table 3.6.

### 3.6.3 *LAND USE OF CONTIGUOUS MUNICIPALITIES*

Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan has been prepared in full recognition of existing conditions and plans in neighboring cities and towns. Generally, the Providence land use plan presents no inconsistencies with those of contiguous municipalities. Land uses along the city borders typically are similar in terms of both land use category and density or intensity of use.

The City of Pawtucket is located to the north of Providence. Its land uses and zoning directly correlate with those in this City. Along the North Main Street area, both cities maintain industrial uses and zoning districts compatible with the area's rail lines and accessibility from Interstate 95. From Hope Street in Providence to East Avenue in Pawtucket, the zoning and land use are low-to-moderate density residential.

To the northwest of Providence, the City of North Providence maintains basically the same land uses and zoning districts as does Providence. Low density residential areas in Providence coincide with like areas across the city line. There exists small areas of differing land use and zoning in North Providence; but the effect is positive because that community's low intensity commercial districts provide the necessary services for Providence's residents in that part of the City.

Further west and south, the Town of Johnston maintains similar land uses and zoning to Providence's across the city line. Lower density residential combined with lower intensity commercial uses appear in both municipalities along their common border.

To the south of Providence is the City of Cranston. Potential conflict does exist between the port/industrial uses in Providence and the residential uses in Cranston along the city line. For that reason, this City is proposing to coordinate efforts with the City of Cranston, and create transitional uses between the industrial and residential areas. Such uses could include low intensity industrial research and development activities, as well as water-related activities, such as a marine and seafood restaurant. This effort is similar to a proposal made in this plan to buffer the residential areas of Providence's Washington Park neighborhood from the existing heavy manufacturing uses in and around the municipal port, with transitional zones.

Finally, to the east, the cities of Providence and East Providence are bounded, yet separated by the Seekonk and Providence Rivers. The land use related issues between the two cities are unique because of the river's presence, and while the river does separate land uses, impacts of differing land use types can be significant. Currently, industrial and residential uses compete for riverfront land in both cities. Therefore, the two communities must coordinate planning efforts along the rivers, to insure the validity and long-range value of future plans and studies. In addition, data collection and maintenance should be shared between the two cities, including information on environmental features, to better coordinate land use planning activities

in Providence and East Providence. The Harbor Management Plans of each city should also be highly coordinated.

### **3.6.4 FUTURE LAND USE TRENDS AND ISSUES**

As the City of Providence continues to grow, the land use configuration and distribution in the City will continue to change. A number of planned and ongoing development projects could greatly affect the future land use pattern in Providence. Some of these projects are simply an expansion of land use trends that were set during the 1980's and which the city seeks to encourage, such as housing in Downtown. Others are much more dramatic and will greatly impact the city, like the Capital Center Project.

#### **o Interstate 195 - The Providence River Bridge**

The Providence River Bridge, a portion of Interstate 195 must be replaced before the end of this decade. It has been proposed that the portion of I-195 from I-95 to the India Point Park area be relocated south of the hurricane barrier. This relocation would straighten the route making it safer; be built on underutilized land; and would open up almost sixty acres of land on both sides of the Providence River for reuse. This relocation would open for development the Old Harbor Area and would have major impacts on the city and downtown. The Jewelry District would be reconnected to Downtown; the waterfront from the Crawford Street Bridge to Corliss Landing would be connected; and the impacts on the College Hill Historic District would be minimized; and it would relieve the use of residential streets as access to downtown.

This relocation would result in a new redevelopment area (the Old Harbor District) to the south of the city that will complement the work going on as part of the Capital Center Project.

#### **o Residential**

More emphasis will be put on creating residential opportunities in the downtown area in an attempt to revitalize selected retail activities there; and to stimulate a market for adaptively reusing some architecturally and historically important buildings.

Efforts will continue to lessen residential densities in some neighborhoods, and to maintain existing densities in others. Strong neighborhood sentiment has been expressed concerning maintaining or lessening residential densities, in the neighborhoods and encouraging higher residential density solely in the downtown.

Residential growth will be encouraged on appropriate undeveloped land, with safeguards exercised through a project review and approval process. One important indicator of appropriateness for residential development is whether needed community services and facilities exist with sufficient capacity for each proposed project. The ease of pedestrian movement from residential to neighborhood commercial areas must also be taken into consideration.

**o Commercial**

Areas of mixed commercial and residential activities will continue to be encouraged, especially in the downtown. Some neighborhood commercial areas will continue to have this character as well. Unrestricted commercial expansion will, however, be controlled. Where services, facilities and space for commercial development is not available, it will be discouraged. Commercial development will also be subject to project review and approval, with sufficient impact information made available for each review.

**o Industrial**

Most new industrial uses will be "light" rather than "heavy" in character. Any heavy industry will be located only in specific areas prepared for it and in which impacts can be controlled. Light industry will be permitted in a larger number of areas, but with impacts regulated in appropriate ways. Some existing industrial buildings will continue to be converted to non-industrial use because of the favorable location for such uses and their obsolescence for industry (primarily multistory mill buildings). The industrial waterfront area will continue to provide the greatest amount of land for future industrial expansion.

**o Parks/Open Space**

Only small changes will be made to the supply of park and committed open space land. These changes will be made primarily in response to population based demands for recreation, and preserved open spaces.

**o Institutional**

Institutions will continue to expand slowly, primarily in response to increased educational and medical services markets. Such expansion will be planned and orderly, guided by institutional zoning requirements and will be based on the institutions master plan which must take into consideration the impacts of such development on the surrounding land uses. All institutional master plans will have to be revised once this comprehensive plan is adopted and will be carefully reviewed by the City Plan Commission to determine their compliance with the requirements of this plan.

**o Downtown**

With the development in Capital Center, the opening of the Old Harbor District for development and the reconnection of the Jewelry District to the Downtown, the traditional downtown is faced with a dilemma: what is its purpose or function for the city. For the city to remain strong and vital, the downtown must be strong and vital. A variety of possible roles have been proposed for the old downtown (housing, institutional and university uses, arts and entertainment), these roles must be made into a vision, a plan for action for the old downtown. Without a vision for the old downtown, it will deteriorate and weaken the city as a whole.

**o Waterfront**

More emphasis will be placed on the city's waterfront: from expansion of the industrial waterfront and the City's port, the development of commercial and residential uses, the expansion of public use and access, to the development of conservation and open areas. These competing uses will have to be balanced by the City to insure that the interest of all

the city's residents are addressed.

#### **o Undeveloped Land**

There will be competing interests in the City for the remaining undeveloped land. The City is presently experiencing this competition: developers want to build to the greatest density possible, while neighboring property owners want the land to remain undeveloped or lightly developed. This competition will increase as this vacant land decreases.

#### **o Adjacent Communities**

Through the process of developing this comprehensive plan, Providence has worked closely with the adjacent communities. Every effort has been made to insure that the proposed land uses in Providence do not adversely affect the land uses in adjacent communities. We expect the same consideration.

### **3.7 HOUSING**

When Providence had a population of about 250,000 (in the 1940's and early 1950's), it maintained a housing stock of about 70,000 units. With population loss the housing stock also declined. In the 1980 U.S. Census of Housing, 67,513 housing units were reported. Of these, 60,175 were occupied. The vacancy rate then was eleven percent, a relatively high figure. A four to six percent figure is considered normal. Historical data on housing losses does not give much insight into the present situation, even though two thirds of the housing stock existing in 1980 was built before 1940. Much of the loss in housing stock prior to 1980 was through demolition of substandard and unoccupied units. In this way the City managed to make impressive gains in reducing blighted or substandard housing up to the mid 1970's. After this time a policy of "boarding up" rather than demolition of vacant units was undertaken. This, combined with the abandonment of some public housing projects in the City resulted in the large 1980 vacancy rate.

#### **3.7.1 EXISTING AND FUTURE CONDITIONS**

In 1980 sixty-three percent of all occupied housing units were renter occupied. More than half the housing stock was in structures that contained three or more units. Structures that contained two or more units accounted for seventy-four percent of the housing stock. Providence is, for the most part, a relatively dense, tightly developed city. Average residential lot size is about 4000 to 6000 square feet. Slightly over one-half the residential area of the City is developed with structures containing two to four units. Only twenty-six percent of the City's housing stock consists of single unit structures.

Providence has special housing needs because of its concentration of low income population. As measured in the 1980 Census of Population, 15% of the City's families lived below the poverty level. Of these 5700 families 3700 were headed by females. Nineteen percent, almost 30,000 people, lived below the poverty level. Of these, two-thirds were white and one-third were non-white. In addition, fifteen percent of Providence's population is elderly, compared with thirteen percent for the metropolitan area as a whole. All of these indicators mean special and assisted housing must be provided as part of overall development policies. Table 3.7 shows the numbers of occupied housing units in 1960, 1970, and 1980 as reported in the U.S.

Census of Housing. Also shown are estimates for 1989 and 1994 based on household forecasts. The 1994 figure shows an expected demand of an additional 4,100 housing units over the existing 1989 stock. A five percent standard vacancy rate has been applied in these estimates. The 2000 housing units, estimated as feasible for Downtown Providence by various reports and the work of the Providence Company, fall well within this potential of 4,100 units by 1994.

An important measure of the strength of the City's housing market is the extent to which existing structures are vacant. A low number of vacancies shows a tight market, while an over supply of housing would be indicated by a high number of unoccupied units. An adequate vacancy reserve, typically 5%, is necessary in the transfer of housing to broaden consumer choices and maintain stable rent levels. In 1960 the vacancy rate was 7%; in 1970, 6%, and in 1980, 11%. By 1980 vacancies were at a level which suggest a surplus of available units which in turn should help keep rent levels from rising. Beginning in 1984, there was an influx of home buyers, primarily from the Boston area, as well as a significant in-migration of persons of Asian descent (2500 households since 1980), which has tightened the housing market in Providence.

When substandard housing (defined as lacking complete plumbing facilities) is removed from these statistics, the housing market becomes tighter still. Vacancy rates can be recomputed as 6% in 1960; 9% in 1970, and 10% in 1980. Table 3.8 shows the number of substandard units.

These figures represent a seventy-one percent decrease in the number of substandard units from 1960 to 1980. As mentioned, demolition, as part of an aggressive urban renewal program in many parts of the City, was responsible for this decrease.

**TABLE 3.7**  
**NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS, 1960 - 1994**  
**PROVIDENCE, R.I.**

	1960 Census	1970 Census	1980 Census	1989 Estimate	1994 Projected
Total Housing Units	73,027	68,163	67,513	73,600	77,700
Vacant Units	5,045	4,084	7,356	3,500	3,700
Occupied Units = No. of Households	67,982	64,079	60,157	70,100	74,000
Vacancy Rate	7%	6%	11%	5%	5%
Population	207,458	179,124	156,804	168,600	170,600

Source: U.S. Census

\* Estimated and Projected figures from CACI Adjusted Demographic/Income Forecast Report. 5% vacancy rate assumed for 1989 and 1994, and vacant units and total housing units computed from number of households and vacancy rate.

Table 3.9 shows residential building and demolition permit activity since 1980. The data supports the conclusion that the vacancy rate has fallen to a more normal figure. The demolition and building data also shows that about three percent of the City's total housing stock in 1980 has been replaced. This does not include the number of repairs, additions and alterations, which is even more substantial. For example, the Providence Housing Court handled 1,994 cases from October 1987 to September 1988; its first year of operation. This figure represents three percent of Providence's total housing stock. These are involuntary repairs.

**TABLE 3.8**  
**SUBSTANDARD HOUSING UNITS, 1960 - 1980**  
**PROVIDENCE, R.I.**

Housing Units	1960	1970	1980
Owner-occupied	396	230	286
Renter-occupied	5,553	1,869	1,288
Vacant	<u>1,271</u>	<u>351</u>	<u>533</u>
Total Substandard Units	7,220	2,450	2,107

**TABLE 3.9**  
**BUILDING AND DEMOLITION PERMITS, 1980 - 1987**  
**BY DWELLING UNIT (DU's)**  
**PROVIDENCE, R.I.**

Building Permits	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	Total
1-Family	85	8	12	5	11	14	49	75	259
2-Family	14	26	12	6	6	24	66	182	336
Multi-Family	323	27	15	30	218	8	21	203	845
Conversions	5	6	22	23	20	35	86	120	317
Total DU's	427	67	61	64	255	81	222	580	1,757
Demolition Permits in DU's	404	256	172	285	238	180	83	82	1,700
Increase or Decrease	+23	-189	-111	-221	+17	-99	+139	+498	+57

Source: Department of Inspection & Standards

The last two years shown on Table 3.9 indicate that the current trend is for new units to substantially exceed demolitions. This trend will probably continue as the market for housing continues to be strong and because the City is interested in discouraging demolitions. This strength also means that some existing units, which might otherwise have been demolished, will be rehabilitated. In a normal housing market new construction is the crucial element in housing supply. An adequate level of new construction is essential to meet demand and to activate the turnover (reselling) process. While the trend shown in Table 3.9 for new construction and demolition is encouraging from the viewpoint of adding new units to the housing stock, it also indicates that supply is not keeping pace with demand. The demand for housing in Providence has been intensified by the influx of Massachusetts residents and investors, who consider prices relative to the more expensive Boston Area housing market. There are however, current indicators that this trend is diminishing.

A significant component of the City's housing supply has been the return of abandoned or deteriorated units to the market through substantial rehabilitation. A local citizens group called Stop Wasting Abandoned Property (SWAP) has been responsible for some of this rehabilitation through a program of "sweat equity," requiring the home buyer to contribute personal labor to the rehabilitation effort. "Infill housing" on vacant lots has also contributed to stabilizing the City's housing stock.

Publicly assisted housing has also been a factor in increasing the housing supply through the Section 8 and rental rehabilitation programs, as well as the improvement in public housing. These units represent a large portion of the new or "recovered" housing units in Providence. Table 3.10 delineates the number of assisted or non-market rate housing units in the city.

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**TABLE 3.10**  
**ASSISTED HOUSING IN PROVIDENCE, 1989.**

	No.	Units
Existing Section 8	922	(201 Elderly/Handicapped)
Section 8 Vouchers <sup>1</sup>	442	(1313 Family)
Moderate Rehab <sup>2</sup>	150	
Private Section 8	4,323	(3,136 Elderly/Handicapped) (1,187 Family)
Public Housing	2,402	(1,033 Elderly/Handicapped) (1,369 Family)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,239</b>	

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Source: Providence Public Housing Authority, 1989

1 Grant/loan to participating owners to cover rehabilitation work on substandard rental units.

2 Housing assistance payment contract over a 15 year period tied to specific subsidized rental unit

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The 8,239 units of assisted housing in the City represents eleven percent of the estimated 73,600 total number of housing units in Providence. Table 3.11 shows the name, size, and neighborhood of the ten public housing projects and Phase I Scattered Site Public Housing in Providence. Depending on current occupancy at any given time, public housing represents about 23% to 29% of all assisted units.

The housing stock in each of the twenty-five neighborhoods of Providence represents the City's greatest single physical asset. At an average value of \$100,000 per unit the estimated 73,600 units in 1989 are worth 7.36 billion dollars. No other physical asset in the City approaches this value. Housing is an asset that must be well managed and properly planned.

A very important issue in housing is affordability. Apartment rents in Providence increased 181 percent between 1980 and 1986. Average home values increased 207 percent during the same period. However, household income increased only about fifty percent from 1980 to 1986. The housing market has reached a point where most people can not afford to buy their own homes. On the East Side of Providence, where housing prices have historically been higher than in other parts of the City, the average home price of \$195,000 (in 1986) would require an income of \$72,300 to purchase. Median household income on the East Side in 1986 was estimated to be about \$33,000; less than half the level required to purchase the average priced home. The same relative situation exists in other parts of the City. And the gap in affordability is increasing, as illustrated by Figure 3.7.

Table 3.12 shows incomes and affordability for rental units by neighborhood. An affordability index, which is the percentage of before tax income spent on rent, is shown on Table 3.12 for 1979 and 1989. Data indicate that rental units have become less affordable in lower income neighborhoods; that is that residents of these neighborhoods must pay a higher proportion of their income for rent. Data also show how more income is required for rent in 1989 than in 1979. For the City as a whole the figure went from 14.6% to 21.5%, a forty seven percent increase. In absolute dollar terms rents increased citywide by 224% between 1979 and 1989, from \$159 to \$450 per month.

An affordability gap has always existed because Providence is home to low income groups, including students and female headed households. However, since 1984 when housing prices increased markedly, the affordability gap has grown substantially. Special efforts will be required to overcome this increasing gap. Such efforts will include identifying sites for assisted housing; greater provision of scattered site assisted housing; planning and permitting of apartment buildings, especially in the Downtown Area, inclusion of housing in mixed use developments and identification of adaptive reuse projects in which housing is an appropriate reuse.

Special housing efforts should also include measures to further stabilize and upgrade the existing housing stock. These include rehabilitation assistance; targeting of publicly controlled or influenced mortgage money for first time home buyers, and owners who will live in their multifamily units; and further Housing Court legal actions to correct housing code violations.

Nonprofit housing development corporations should be encouraged to provide housing where appropriate. Moreover, full advantage of the pro-active policies and programs of the

Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation should be taken. These policies and programs are expressed in their Strategic Planning Task Force report "Facing the Challenge" issued in October, 1988.

### 3.7.2 TRENDS AND ISSUES IN HOUSING

Since 1970, the population and economy in Providence have changed significantly. These changes have made an impact on the availability of housing in the City in the following ways:

- The increases in poverty-level persons has increased the overall demand for low-to-moderately priced housing;
- The decrease in the average household and family sizes have increased the demand for additional housing units;

**TABLE 3.11**  
**PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS IN PROVIDENCE**

Name	Number of Units	Neighborhood
Carroll Towers	198	Smith Hill
Codding Court	117	West End
Dexter Manor	291	Downtown
Dominica Manor	204	Federal Hill
Hartford Park	222	Hartford
Kilmartin Plaza	106	West End
Manton Heights	305	Olneyville
Parenti Villa	198	Federal Hill
Roger Williams	40	Lower South Providence
Chad Brown/Admiral/Sunset	263	Wanskuck
<b>TOTAL UNITS</b>	<b>1944</b>	

### **OTHER PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN PROVIDENCE**

(Scattered Site Housing Project - Phase 1)

No. of Developments	Number of Units	Neighborhood
3	12	Elmwood
3	14	Hartford
18	30	Lower South Providence
5	8	Manton
9	19	Smith Hill
22	37	Upper South Providence
1	2	Valley
1	12	Wanskuck
3	6	West End
<b>Total 65</b>	<b>140</b>	
<b>TOTAL UNITS</b>	<b>1944</b>	

SOURCE: Providence Housing Authority

- The number of single and/or female-headed households, and therefore the number of persons unable to afford the average home, has increased since 1970;

- There has been a significant increase in the number of homeless persons within the City;
- The number of dormitories in the city has increased. With rising institutional uses in the city, student housing is impacting neighborhoods;
- With the increase in homeless, there has been increased development of SRO's (single room occupancy units); and,
- Rent levels have increased more rapidly in low income neighborhoods.

The housing stock in Providence is old, making maintenance and upgrades often cost-prohibitive. Certain inner-city residential areas are decaying and have become substandard.

Increases in housing and land costs, combined with the recent revaluation in Providence, are making the "average" home unaffordable to the "average" resident. Overall, the supply of housing in Providence does not satisfy the demand, in terms of both the actual number of units and in costs.

Like many cities throughout the country and particularly in the northeast, Providence is faced with a potential housing crisis. The number of single parent families in 1980 was 37 percent of all families in the City. Many of these families are headed by females. Close to 19 percent of the total population in 1980 fell below the poverty level. More than 65 percent of the occupied housing units in Providence were built prior to 1940. In addition, better than 15 percent of the households in 1980 received public assistance. Almost sixty percent of statewide general public assistance goes to residents of Providence, and almost forty percent of aid for dependent children for the whole state goes to Providence residents.

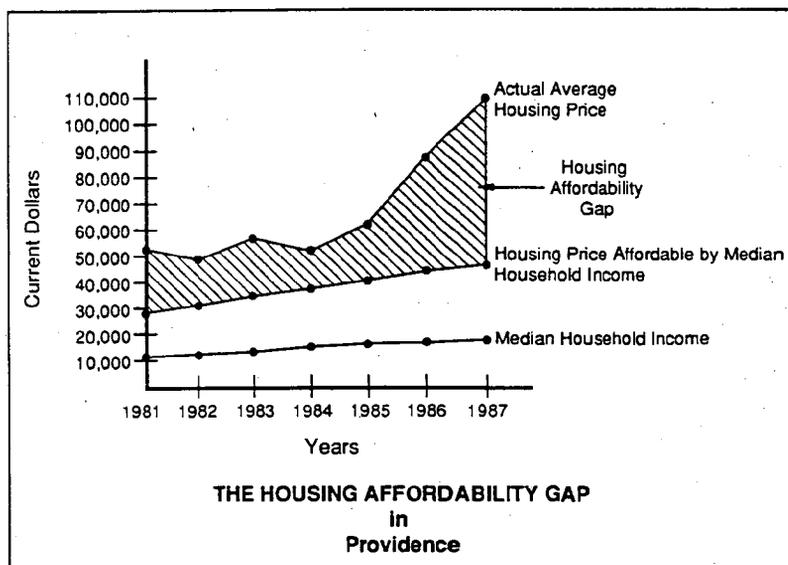


Figure 3.7

**TABLE 3.12**  
**PROVIDENCE RESIDENTIAL RENTAL MARKET, 1979-1989**  
**COMPARISON OF RENTS, HOUSEHOLD INCOMES AND AFFORDABILITY**

Neighborhood	Median Rent 1979	Median Rent 1989	Percent Change (Rents) 1979-89	Median Household Income 1979	Median Household Income 1989	Affordability Index 1979	Affordability Index 1989
Blackstone	\$254.00	\$725.00	185.4%	\$26,847.00	\$59,009.71	11.4%	14.7%
Charles	\$123.00	\$425.00	245.5%	\$12,170.00	\$26,749.66	12.1%	19.1%
College Hill	\$241.00	\$650.00	169.7%	\$12,453.00	\$27,371.69	23.2%	28.5%
Downtown	\$197.00	\$519.00	163.5%	\$ 7,954.00	\$17,482.89	29.7%	35.6%
Elmhurst	\$169.00	\$450.00	166.3%	\$18,029.00	\$39,627.74	11.2%	13.6%
Elmwood	\$150.00	\$385.00	156.7%	\$ 8,672.00	\$19,061.06	20.8%	24.2%
Federal Hill	\$ 99.00	\$409.00	313.1%	\$ 7,265.00	\$15,968.47	16.4%	30.7%
Fox Point	\$152.00	\$550.00	261.8%	\$12,867.00	\$28,281.67	14.2%	23.3%
Hartford	\$105.00	\$500.00	376.2%	\$ 9,284.00	\$20,406.23	13.6%	29.4%
Hope	\$191.00	\$465.00	143.5%	\$16,484.00	\$36,231.83	13.9%	15.4%
Lower S. Prov	\$114.00	\$400.00	250.9%	\$ 7,450.00	\$16,375.10	18.4%	29.3%
Manton	\$164.00	\$325.00	98.2%	\$15,714.00	\$34,539.37	12.5%	11.3%
Mount Hope	\$161.00	\$500.00	210.6%	\$ 9,967.00	\$21,907.47	19.4%	27.4%
Mt. Pleasant	\$151.00	\$460.00	204.6%	\$14,572.00	\$32,029.26	12.4%	17.2%
Olneyville	\$103.00	\$400.00	288.3%	\$ 9,132.00	\$20,072.14	13.5%	23.9%
Reservoir	\$160.00	\$475.00	196.9%	\$14,438.00	\$31,734.72	13.3%	18.0%
Silver Lake	\$138.00	\$450.00	226.1%	\$11,808.00	\$25,953.98	14.0%	20.8%
Smith Hill	\$115.00	\$375.00	226.1%	\$ 8,383.00	\$18,425.83	16.5%	24.4%
S. Elmwood	\$171.00	\$412.00	140.9%	\$14,958.00	\$32,877.68	13.7%	15.0%
Upper S. Prov	\$121.00	\$450.00	271.9%	\$ 5,821.00	\$12,794.56	24.9%	42.2%
Valley	\$136.00	\$410.00	201.5%	\$11,077.00	\$24,347.25	14.7%	20.2%
Wanskuck	\$143.00	\$500.00	249.7%	\$11,632.00	\$25,567.14	14.8%	23.5%
Washington Pk.	\$144.00	\$450.00	212.5%	\$12,822.00	\$28,182.76	13.5%	19.2%
Wayland	\$257.00	\$554.00	115.6%	\$16,556.00	\$36,390.09	18.6%	18.3%
West End	\$125.00	\$425.00	240.0%	\$ 8,215.00	\$18,056.57	18.3%	28.2%
Citywide	\$139.00	\$450.00	223.7%	\$11,437.00	\$25,138.53	14.6%	21.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 1989; R.I. Department of Employment Security, 1989; Providence Journal Classified (S.714), June-August, 1989.

NOTES: 1987 income data for the neighborhoods is extrapolated from U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis estimates for the State of Rhode Island. A linear relationship between U.S.B.E.A. per capita income data and median household income data is assumed. A standard inflation multiplier of 119.8% is used to inflate 1979 income data to 1989 dollars (based on an assumption that income variations among the 25 neighborhoods have not changed between 1979 and 1989).

Average housing prices and land costs have increased significantly more than median incomes. And because of the increase in the affordability gap, the issue of affordable housing now

affects the majority of state and city residents. Finally, the issue of homelessness is becoming serious. The tightened housing market and current economic conditions is forcing some families out on the street, increasing the demand for transitional housing.

### 3.8 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Through the 80's, Providence recovered from a period of economic decline. The city enjoyed a low unemployment rate, significant increases in residential and commercial construction, as well as a gradual increase in total population. In the early 1990's, the picture is less clear.

The economy in Providence has shifted from being primarily manufacturing oriented in the 1960's to being primarily service-oriented in the eighties. Providence maintains a skilled labor force that is prepared to meet the demands of modern industry and commerce. Therefore, the out-migration of economic activities could be reversed in Providence.

The Port of Providence has the potential to facilitate a significant regional, national and even international trade market. It currently is underutilized but this full potential is under study and a comprehensive strategy for the Port is part of this plan. Thus, the Port eventually could exist as a major processor and source of goods, services, employment, and revenue for the City of Providence.

Providence maintains a number of advantages over nearby metropolitan areas in terms of business and industry expansion and relocation, advantages which translate into real incentives. Operating costs like power, rent and salaries are lower in Providence than those found in New York, Hartford or Boston, all within 150 miles of Providence. The available workforce in Providence ranks high in terms of training and experience, thereby saving employers that added expense. In addition, the City of Providence offers a number of financial and other types of incentives for industrial development. These advantages, combined with the high visibility and accessibility of the City, are clear indications that Providence is a regional production and market center with great potential. To these factors must be added the existing attraction values of high quality regional environmental, historic, cultural, and educational facilities, typically found only in larger cities.

#### 3.8.1 EXISTING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The City must be viewed as the core of the Rhode Island economy in addition to being the state capital. Figure 3.8 shows employment trends in Providence and Rhode Island since 1980. These trends are projected out to 1994. After a slight downturn in 1982, employment in Rhode Island grew steadily to 1989. While the current economy does not reflect growth in the area of employment, economic forecasters anticipate a turn around within the next year. Based on the growth in employment from 1980 to 1989, employment is expected to continue to grow at about 0.8% per year. This would result in a 1994 (five year projected) figure of 538,000 jobs. The City of Providence is expected to grow at a slightly faster rate (1.1% per year) because of the economic development efforts in place now. This would result in about 7000 new jobs by 1994 for a total of 137,000 jobs. Currently in the state the service sector is growing at 1.5% per year,

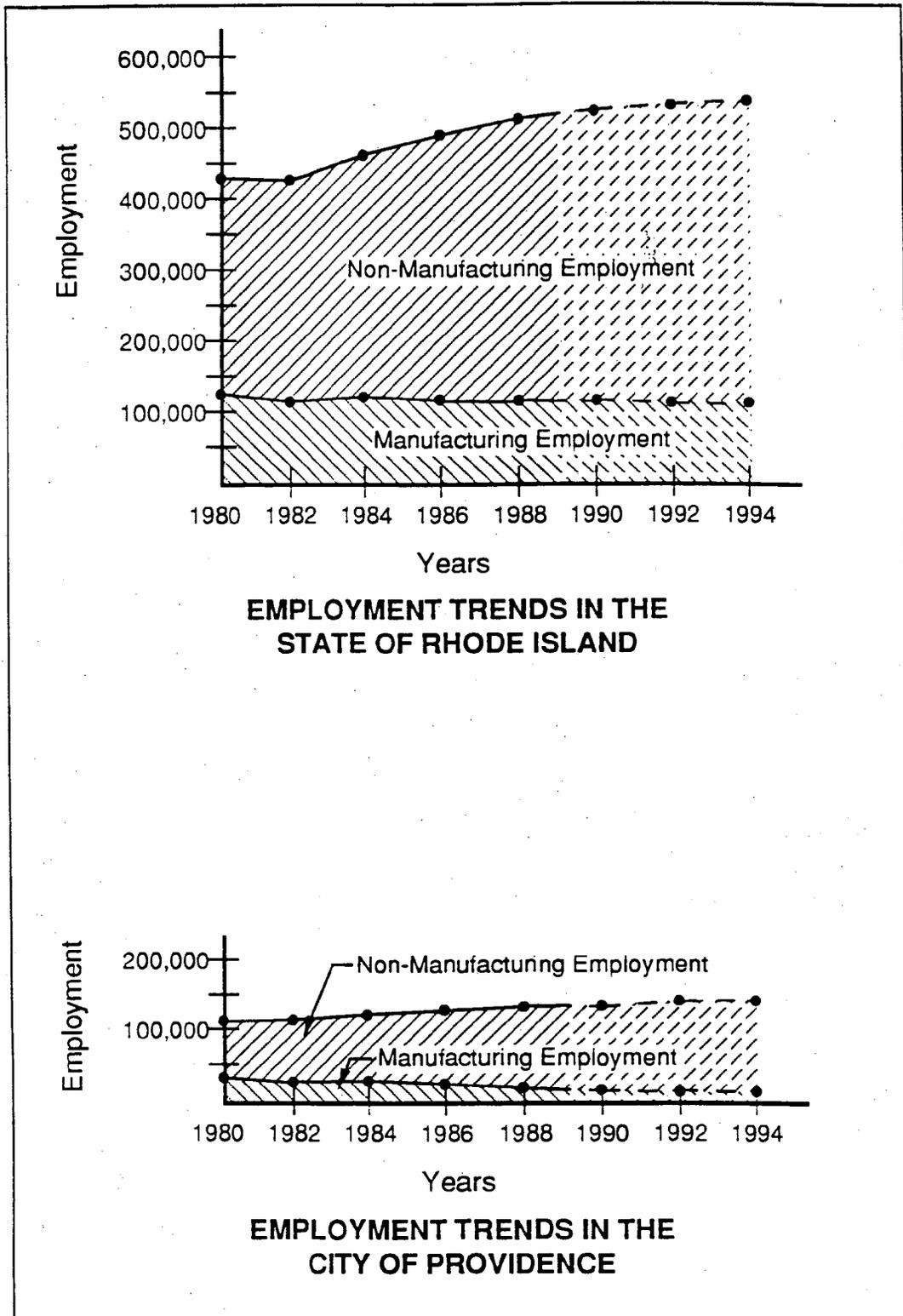


Figure 3.8

while trade (retail and wholesale) is growing at 1.0% per year, and other non-manufacturing jobs are growing at 2.0% per year. Because new employment in Providence is expected to be largely in the services and trade sectors, jobs are projected to grow at a slightly higher figure in the City than the state as a whole.

The 7000 new jobs expected by 1994 would account for about one-quarter of the 30,000 new jobs that may be created in Providence by 2010. Creation of this many jobs will require continued efforts in providing and publicizing the attractions of Providence for economic activities. Some of these attractions are inherent, such as location, access to markets and regional economic conditions; but some attractions are "home grown" and much more subject to local public actions. These are the factors that should be strongly addressed in the Comprehensive and other local plans. Chief among these factors are the labor force, land for commercial and industrial activities, infrastructure, local regulations, and financing.

Providence has sound and solid activities related to all of these factors. Job training activities in the City are being vigorously pursued by the City, the State and the private sector. Examples are the vocational training available in Providence public schools, the State's Workforce 2000 program designed to upgrade the existing labor force, and the private sector's Adopt-a-School program which results in both more general resources being made available for multipurpose education, and in more targeted training in skills useful for jobs in Providence's businesses. In addition, the Providence/Cranston Job Training Partnership is a public/private sector cooperative effort designed to upgrade labor force skills in Providence and Cranston. It is supported with federal funds and private sector expertise.

Land and related commercial property is being made available for economic expansion in a variety of locations and through various projects including the Capital Center, the Silver Spring Industrial Park, the Waterfront and the Foundry. The City is actively revising its zoning ordinance to recognize economic development needs. Special attention is being paid in this effort to the revitalization needs of the downtown area and the waterfront.

Financing needs are provided for in the work of the Providence Economic Development Corporation. This organization provides funding of its own for industrial and commercial development, and aids business by identifying the resources of a network of state and federal business assistance programs. All of these efforts, plus the promotional and public information programs necessary to attract new activities must be continued if 15,000 to 30,000 new jobs are to be created by 2010. 30,000 new jobs is considered the upper limit of growth that could occur by 2010, given a healthy New England economy and continued increases in Providence's competitive position. 15,000 new jobs is a more conservative estimate if overall conditions are not as good, or if efforts to attract new jobs are not sustained.

The labor force for new employment in Providence partly will come from existing and future Providence residents. The 1980 U.S. Census of Population reported the Providence civilian labor force as 72,418 persons 16 years old and over. Of these about 45% worked in the

City and 8% worked in the downtown area. In order to fill the 118,406 jobs reported for Providence in 1980, about 84,500 workers (71% of the total) originated from outside the City.

If these same general proportions hold in 1994 it means that about 2200 new workers will live in Providence, supporting about 3500 new households. By 2010 these figures are estimated to become 9000 new workers supporting 14,500 new households in Providence if the optimistic figure of 30,000 new jobs is achieved. A more modest expectation of 6000 new workers supporting about 9800 new households corresponds better with the total household estimate of 78,000 shown in Section 3.3 of this report. This figure, in turn corresponds to about 20,000 new jobs in Providence by 2010, assuming that 30% of all workers will live in the City, as they do now.

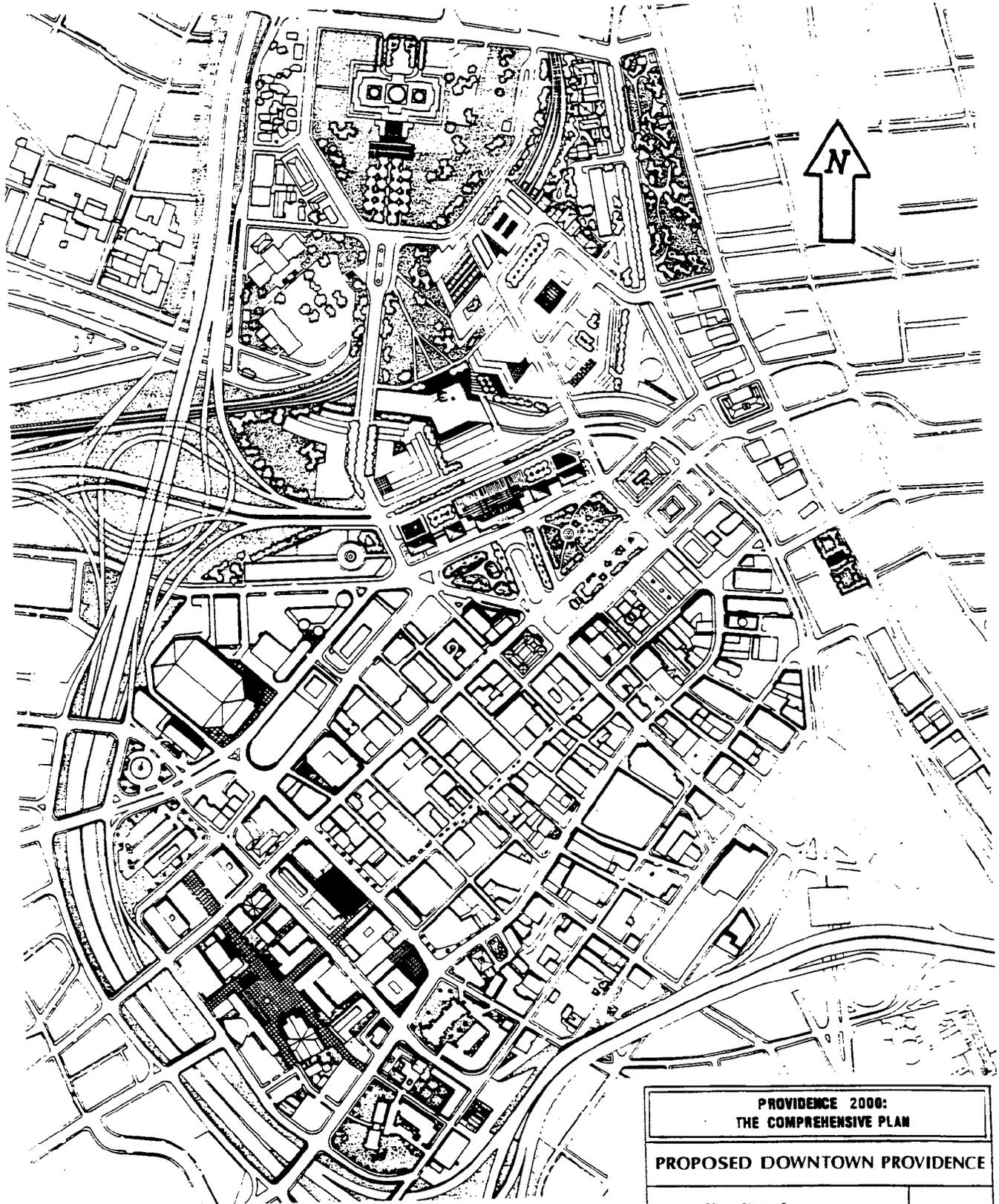
### 3.8.2 *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHANGES*

**DOWNTOWN** - The downtown (Figure 3.9) is made up of three functionally distinct areas within the historic or traditional boundaries of I-95/I-195 and the Providence/Woonasquatucket Rivers. These are the Financial District, the Old Downtown Core and Weybosset Hill. Four other areas are located on the edges of the traditional downtown and provide sites for more recent and projected downtown activities. These are the Jewelry District to the south, the Capital Center to the north, the Foundry just to the west of I-95 and the foot of the College Hill District along South Main and South Water Streets to the east of the Financial District.

Each area has separate plans based on the role and requirements of the activities located in each. The Capital Center is an expansion area for new buildings, especially those that will benefit from access to the State Capitol Building and other nearby state offices. The Jewelry District provides substantial adaptive reuse possibilities for companies that need to be near other downtown activities but cannot afford space costs of being right in downtown. The Foundry also provides these types of opportunities to the north and west of downtown. The foot of College Hill is an area of mixed government, educational, insurance, legal services and institutional uses benefiting from access to downtown and the nearby campuses of Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design.

Within the traditional downtown area the Financial District and Weybosset Hill are stable and fixed in their functions and activities. There has been considerable investment in these areas over the last twenty years and they now contain most of the Class A office space in the downtown. Large stable public and private sector organizations occupy this space and are likely to continue to do so for the next twenty years. The area whose future is less certain is the old downtown core.

Providence no longer has the retail dominance it once had thirty years ago. For the last thirty years suburban malls and strip highway shopping areas have been pulling retail sales out of Providence, especially from the downtown. In 1987 the City accounted for 12.7 percent of statewide retail sales, whereas in 1977 the City's share was 14.7 percent. Currently there is no large department store in the downtown, whereas, at one time there were four. Department stores are beneficial to a downtown because they attract shoppers who then utilize other nearby stores and services.



<b>PROVIDENCE 2000: THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN</b>	
<b>PROPOSED DOWNTOWN PROVIDENCE</b>	
City Plan Commission Department of Planning and Development 400 Westminister St. Providence R.I. 02908	<b>3.9</b>

Some of the space in the retail core area is vacant. Many of the buildings in the area have historic preservation values. One solution for revitalizing the area is to convert some of the space to residential use, and to attract the appropriate retail and service activities, to serve the new residential uses. This strategy requires adequate parking, pedestrian circulation, and public safety services and facilities for the area.

The attraction values of this area for residential purposes include walking to work in the downtown, nearby educational and cultural facilities, nearby links to regional transportation facilities, and the existence of many historically and architecturally important buildings. Market studies have shown that there may be a future demand for up to 2000 housing units downtown. Many of these could and should be located in the old downtown core area.

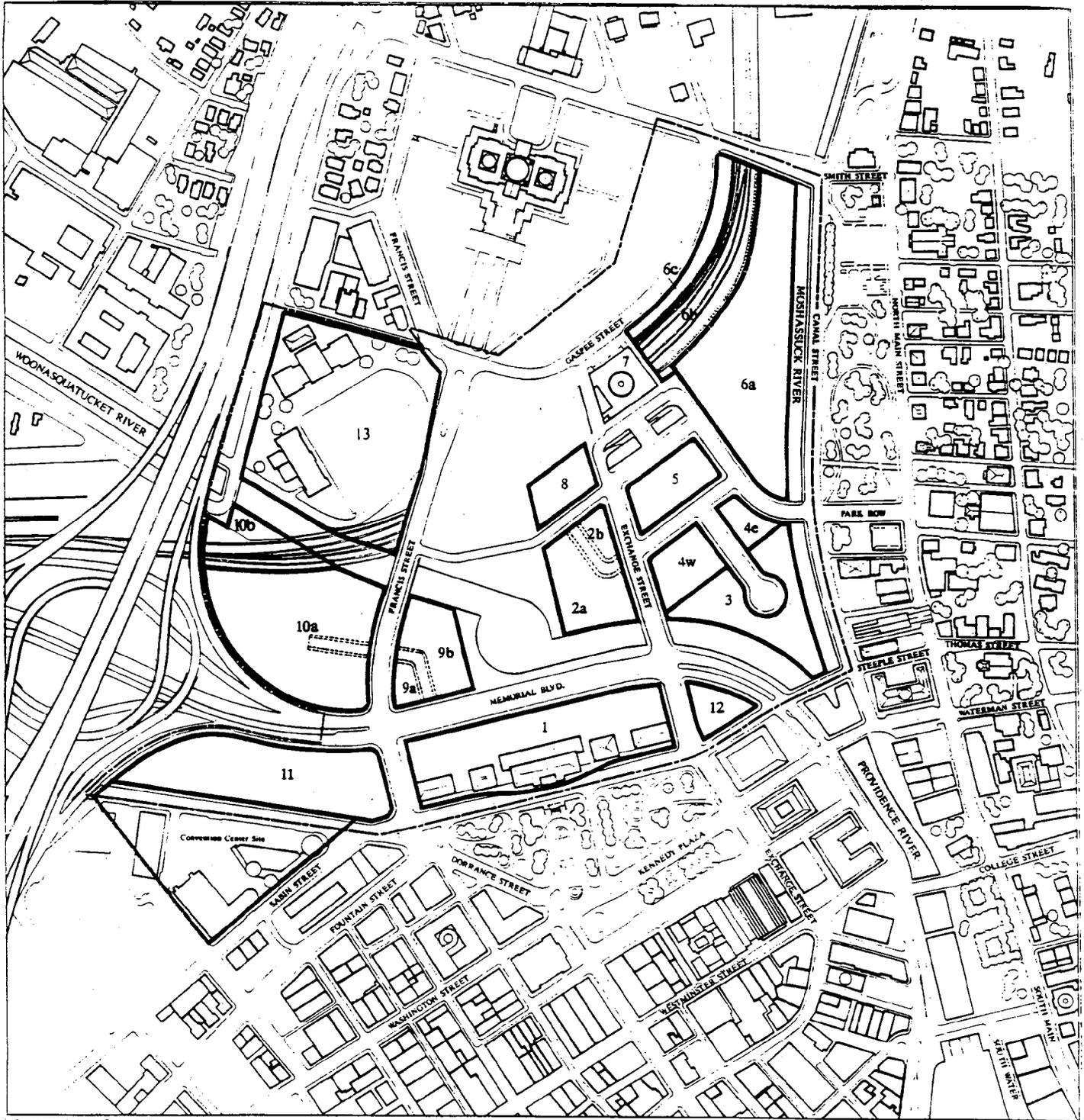
A major new initiative for downtown planning is the Capital Center (Figure 3.10). This 60 acre project, which is really a series of individual projects, involves large scale development, the relocation of a major rail line, a rail station and two rivers, and the completion of the Civic Center Interchange from I-95, with new internal circulation roads. Overall the investments are expected to total \$750 million for private construction and \$140 million for public construction. The Capital Center is one of the most ambitious programs taken recently in moderate sized American cities.

It will include convention facilities which, with the Providence Civic Center, will make Downtown Providence one of the premier east coast convention locations.

A number of objectives are served by the Capital Center project. These include providing room for expansion of the downtown, connecting the state office area on Smith Street with the downtown, featuring the State Capitol Building as a more significant design element and de-emphasizing the rail line as a barrier to future expansion.

Fifteen to twenty million dollars per year are expected to be realized by the City from property taxes from the Capital Center. The overall project will include 3.5 million square feet of office and retail space, about 1000 hotel rooms in four hotels, and 500 residential units. Over 200,000 square feet of public amenities, including an open amphitheater, are planned, as are a convention center and almost 12,000 parking spaces. A new railroad station has already been built. Figure 3.10 shows the overall plan for the Capital Center.

Another major new initiative for downtown is the proposed relocation of the Providence River Bridge (I-195) south of the hurricane barrier. This proposal will open up approximately sixty acres of land for development as well as reconnect the downtown with the rejuvenating jewelry district. While this proposal is just in the feasibility stage, the city supports this project in that it will complete the redevelopment of the city's downtown waterfront, open up land for development and public access to the water, and orient the city to the water. It will enable the city to move boldly into the twenty first century. It is initiatives like the Capital Center and the relocation of the Providence River Bridge that enable city leaders to reshape Providence's image for a more vibrant and economically strong downtown.



Prepared by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

KEY	
PARCEL BOUNDARY	—
CAPITAL CENTER SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT	- - -
OPTIONAL STREET	· · · · ·

N.B. All district delineations are general in nature. Precise parcel configurations must be obtained by survey.



<b>PROVIDENCE 2000:                  THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN</b>	
<b>CAPITAL CENTER</b>	
City Plan Commission Department of Planning and Development 400 Westminister St. Providence R.I. 02908	<b>3.10</b>

**WATERFRONT** - The Providence waterfront consists of three distinct parts: the residential/commercial/open space from the Pawtucket city line to Corliss Landing; the Old Harbor area, which runs from Corliss Landing to the Crawford St. bridge; and the industrial waterfront from the Narragansett Electric Manchester Street Station to the Cranston city line. The waterfront area from Pawtucket to Corliss Landing is an important area for the city, however, it does not have the economic importance of the industrial waterfront.

The Providence Industrial Waterfront area is a major resource for several activities. The City of Providence owns and operates a modern municipal wharf (Port of Providence). New England's second largest deep water port, the Port of Providence is equipped to handle thousands-of-tons of product annually from all over the world. Its 40-foot deep channel accommodates large oil tankers; its facility includes nearly 5,000 feet of berths, 265,000 square feet of enclosed storage space, and 45 acres of open storage area. The Port's 27 public and private docks can handle bulk and general cargo; two (2) forty five-ton Gantry Cranes are capable of handling any form of containerized and heavy lift cargo. The Port of Providence has become an important regional distribution center for automobiles, steel, lumber, and petroleum products.

As it exists now, however, the Port of Providence is underutilized. Its capacity far exceeds its use, in terms of land area for storage and berthing. The City currently is investigating the Port's future potential. A Draft Plan for the future of the industrial waterfront has been prepared, and when brought into conformance with this comprehensive plan it may be adopted as a Comprehensive Plan Series report giving it full status as part of the comprehensive plan.

The industrial waterfront area must be considered primarily as an economic resource. Activities here are important to the city, the state, and to New England. Secondly the area is important for the public facilities and utilities it contains. Energy is a particularly important industry in the industrial waterfront area. Over one-half of Rhode Island's electric power is generated at the Narragansett Electric South Street Plant, and the oil storage tanks in the area contain petroleum products that are distributed all over New England.

The municipal port area also is important because it provides access for activities functionally related to water, such as the Fields Point Wastewater Treatment Plant, and a number of marine shipping businesses.

The importance of the Port to the City, the region and the State cannot be underestimated. Without this critical area, essential goods would not be as easily moved to and through the City. Vital markets are maintained through port activities.

In order for the Port of Providence to realize these markets and perhaps even exceed them by becoming more competitive, it must maintain and upgrade its facilities, and the area must retain its character as a port. The future economic benefits of doing this are substantial. By the year 2000 300-400 more jobs could be created and 10 to 15 million dollars in personal income could be newly created.

Facility maintenance and upgrading would be supported primarily by port revenues. Figures 3.11 and 3.12 show past and projected revenues for types of general cargo and from

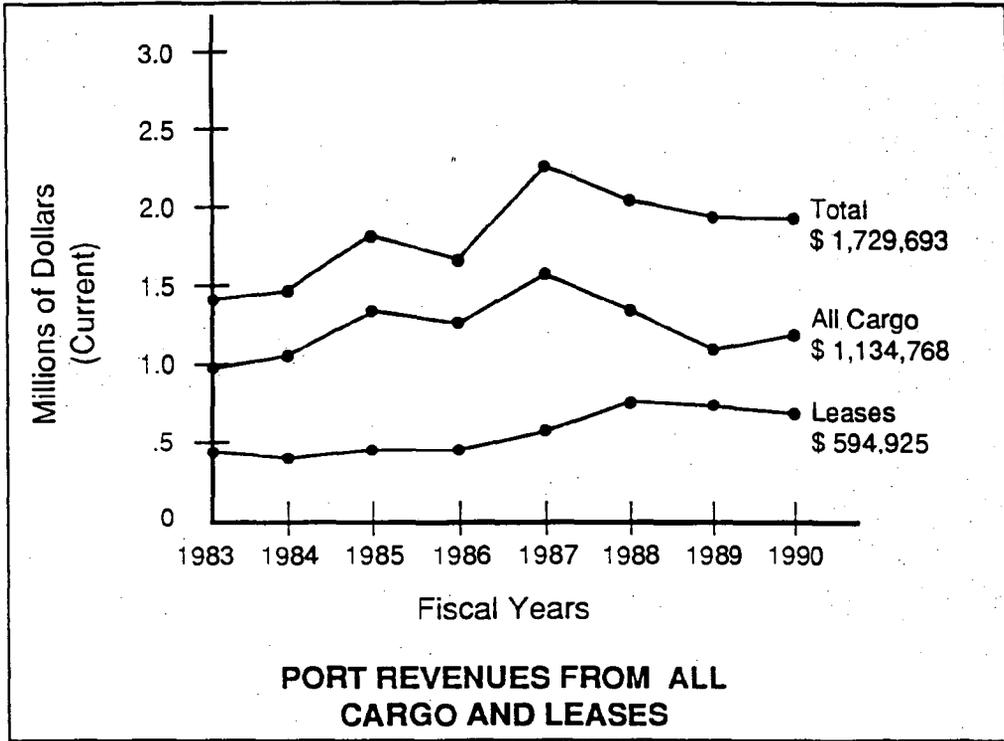


Figure 3.11

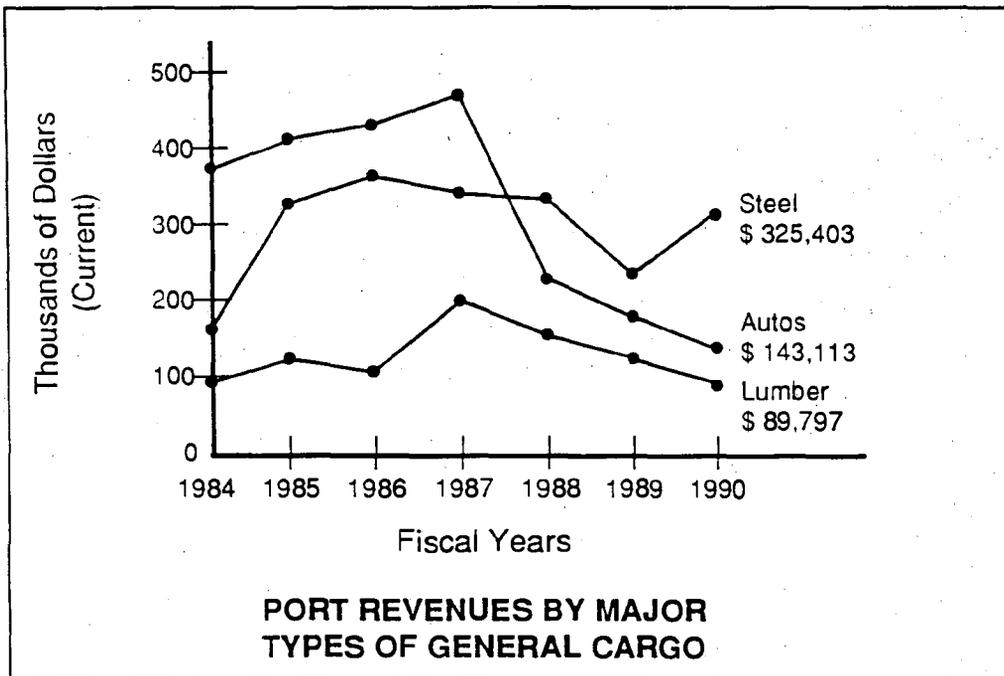


Figure 3.12

lessors. General cargo produces substantially more revenue than bulk cargo despite the greater tonnage of bulk cargo.

In general, the area is occupied by industrial facilities. These facilities tend to be similar in character and are functionally inter-linked. Because of the area's clearly defined edges and its relatively uniform and interrelated land use patterns, the industrial waterfront is particularly appropriate to identify as a single unit for purposes of planning.

A key land use/environmental issue faced by the Providence industrial waterfront is the potential for flooding. Just as certain hazards are inherent to industrial facilities, the issue of flooding is inherent to most waterfront districts. With the exception of the Washington Park neighborhood which is located on relatively high ground, most of the entire area is within a flood hazard zone, as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Southerly portions of the area are also within a "wave-velocity" zone, within which wave action would be expected to be particularly destructive during a storm event. While to some degree potential flooding certainly is an issue for the cargo and industrial facilities within the port area, the concern would be much greater if other more sensitive land uses were present here. This condition is yet another indication that land use management is an appropriate and effective means of minimizing the area's hazards and environmental dangers.

Existing zoning appears to have been successful in maintaining the waterfront's industrial character, however, it does not strongly promote the development of water dependent uses and does not limit the development of a variety of non-industrial uses. To promote appropriate industrial development in this area, there are three objectives which should be central to planning for the future of the Providence industrial waterfront. They are 1) allowing for further needed industrial activities 2) setting aside adequate land for buffering adjacent neighborhoods and to allow for public water access, and 3) limiting the location of potentially noxious uses such as incinerators and power generating plants.

Although zoning and the policies of these agencies influence land use in the port area, there has been no public program or strong proactive approach to land use management which applies specifically to the Providence industrial waterfront. A number of plans have been developed by various public agencies covering various geographic areas which include portions of the Providence industrial waterfront. Future planning for the area is based on the importance of the area for economic development in the City and the State, and on appropriately buffering the industrial areas from the surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, key areas have been identified for providing public access and some mixed uses in the area to take advantage of key environmental features such as views.

**NEIGHBORHOOD** - An area often forgotten, is the neighborhood commercial area. While small, these neighborhood commercial areas service the adjacent residential areas. Over the past decades, we have seen these areas grow and expand when the economy was strong and slowly deteriorate in bad economic times. When the economy is strong, we see many requests for waivers to the zoning ordinance to expand into residential zones or to intensify commercial uses. As a result of these requests, neighborhood commercial areas are often expanded without taking into consideration the impact on the adjacent residential areas and the economic well-being of the

commercial area.

In addition to commercial uses, many neighborhood commercial areas have residential uses located on the upper floors of the structure. Residential use is a good companion use for neighborhood commercial areas and should be encouraged.

In an attempt to better understand the importance of the neighborhood commercial area, the Department of Planning and Development has prepared a model neighborhood business plan. The plan is the department's first attempt to identify the problems that neighborhood commercial areas face and to develop a response to address these problems. It is held that strong neighborhood commercial areas help stabilize adjacent residential areas, while inappropriate commercial intrusions into neighborhoods are detrimental to their character and quality of life.

**INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT** - Further industrial development is planned at several sites. These are:

**Huntington Industrial Park**

Project Area: 150 acres, including 25 acres of water area  
Development Sites: 96.6 acres (18 sites)  
Project Cost: \$ 5.5 million  
Current Status: The project was completed with 18 plants. Recent subdivision has opened 7 additional parcels for development.

**Silver Spring Industrial Park**

Project Area: 37 acres  
Development Sites: 31 acres (16 sites)  
Project Cost: \$3.2 million  
Current Status: 2 plants have been completed and are occupied. 5 more parcels have been committed to developers by the PRA. The other 9 sites are available for new developments.

**Providence Industrial Park (Houghton Street)**

Project Area: 20 acres  
Available Area: 17.5 acres

**Individual Industrial Sites Along North Main Street and in the Port of Providence**

The current status of development of the existing industrial parks, particularly in the Silver Spring Industrial Park, indicates that a demand for additional industrial sites exists. Therefore, the Providence Department of Planning and Development is searching for potential sites for industrial development.

A recent study by the State Office of Planning indicates that there is a scarcity of fully serviced "construction ready" sites for economic development throughout the state, including Providence. The City wants to be able to meet new demands for such space and is fully committed to devoting necessary efforts to provide the needed "construction ready" sites for both

industry and commerce.

### 3.8.3 *ISSUES AND TRENDS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT*

The following issues form the basis for policy making in Providence's economic future.

#### **CITYWIDE**

- Older commercial areas are decaying or becoming blighted. In many cases, the infrastructure is antiquated and in need of replacement and/or repair.
- The economic orientation in the City of Providence has shifted from manufacturing to services.
- Private investments have reinvigorated many areas of the city.

#### **DOWNTOWN**

- The amount of parking is insufficient, particularly in the downtown, to satisfy the demand.
- Need more activity in the downtown retail core including retail, housing and support services.
- Need alternate modes of transportation to relieve pressure on available parking.

#### **NEIGHBORHOOD**

- There will be continuing pressure to convert residential structures in neighborhoods into shops and office space.
- In some parts of the City, the commercial activity is encroaching on the surrounding residential areas.

#### **WATERFRONT**

- The waterfront areas must be addressed and developed on an individual basis, to recognize and retain the unique character of the Providence waterfront.
- The Port of Providence maintains a negative image in the area, and is an unknown entity.

## **3.9 NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

### **3.9.1 *EXISTING CONDITIONS***

The City of Providence is an urbanized area, with only ten percent (10%) of its land area remaining vacant. Due to the intensity and extent of development of the City, the environmental issues and development constraints are much different from those of a rural, less-developed

community. Natural resources and environmental protection considerations in Providence include: topography and soils, surface water and coastal resources; floodplain areas; wetlands; noise factors; air quality; and man-made hazards. Pollution related to urban land use activities is a particular problem that needs to be addressed in Providence. Urban related pollution includes both point source pollution such as chemical storage, leaking underground gas storage tanks, or hazardous materials; and non-point source pollution such as stormwater runoff, or lawn fertilizers. These pollute rivers, ponds and the ocean resources of the City and can negatively impact recreational activities and the overall quality of life for urban dwellers. This section of the Comprehensive Plan addresses those areas of concern which affect the impact of development on natural resources, as well as resource protection considerations which contribute to the character and livability of the City.

**Topography** - The City is characterized by a series of hills. Despite the slope, most of the hilly areas have been developed for urban land uses. When evaluating an area's suitability for development, slopes are primary concerns. Table 3.13 shows land use suitability for various degrees of slope. Typically, areas of slope that are greater than 15 percent are considered unsuitable for development. These areas are prone to erosion and are often more costly to develop or redevelop. The majority of vacant sites with steep slopes are located along the Seekonk River shoreline. Other steep slope sites are in areas that have already been developed. In general, slope has not been an important deterrent to land development, but it has helped to shape the land use pattern. For example, industrial development generally has occupied the low flat valley lands between the hills.

**TABLE 3.13**  
**Slope Suitability for Development by Land Use**  
**Providence, Rhode Island**

Limitations	Suitability Rating	Residential	Commercial	Industrial Park
Slight	Optimum	0 - 6%	0 - 6%	0 - 2%
Moderate	Satisfactory	6 - 12%	6 - 12%	2 - 6%
Severe	Marginal	12 - 18%	12 - 18%	6 - 12%
Very Severe	Unsatisfactory	18% +	18% +	12% +

Adapted from:

Kiefer, Ralph W. "Terrain Analysis for Metropolitan Fringe Area Planing," Journal of the Urban Planning Division Proceedings of the American Society of Civil Engineers, December 1967. Moechnig, Howard. Inventory and Evaluation of Soils for Urban Development (St. Paul HRA C.P. District 6 - North End), Raamsey Soil and Water Conservation District.

**Surface Water Resources** - The City of Providence is traversed by the West River, the Woonasquatucket River, the Moshassuck River and the Providence River. The Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck Rivers are channelized in downtown Providence. The Seekonk River, which flows into the Providence River and then into Narragansett Bay, forms the eastern boundary of the City. Canada Pond and Mashapaug Pond are large bodies of fresh water in the western portion of the City. Several ponds are located in Roger Williams Park in the southern portion of the City including Roosevelt Lake, Pleasure Lake, Deep Spring Lake, Fenner Pond and Bellefont

**Pond.** Figure 3.15 shows surface water and other natural resource features in the City of Providence. The City is subject to flooding. Flood prone areas are shown in Figure 3.14 and are discussed in greater detail below.

Navigable waters within the boundaries of the City of Providence include the Providence and Seekonk Rivers. These rivers have been dredged for regular ship traffic. In addition to the commercial, industrial and cargo-related activities associated with the Port, there exist a number of regular recreational users of these two rivers, including crew teams and sailing groups. Navigable waters contribute to the cultural and coastal heritage of the City as well as providing economic development opportunities for the City, and thus deserve to be protected and enhanced whenever possible.

The water supply for the City of Providence is not dependent upon surface or groundwater resources within the boundaries of the City. The Scituate reservoir supplies water to the Providence metropolitan area; the watershed of the reservoir falls within municipalities in northern Rhode Island and southern Massachusetts. The City therefore is dependent on these municipalities to protect the integrity of the water supply.

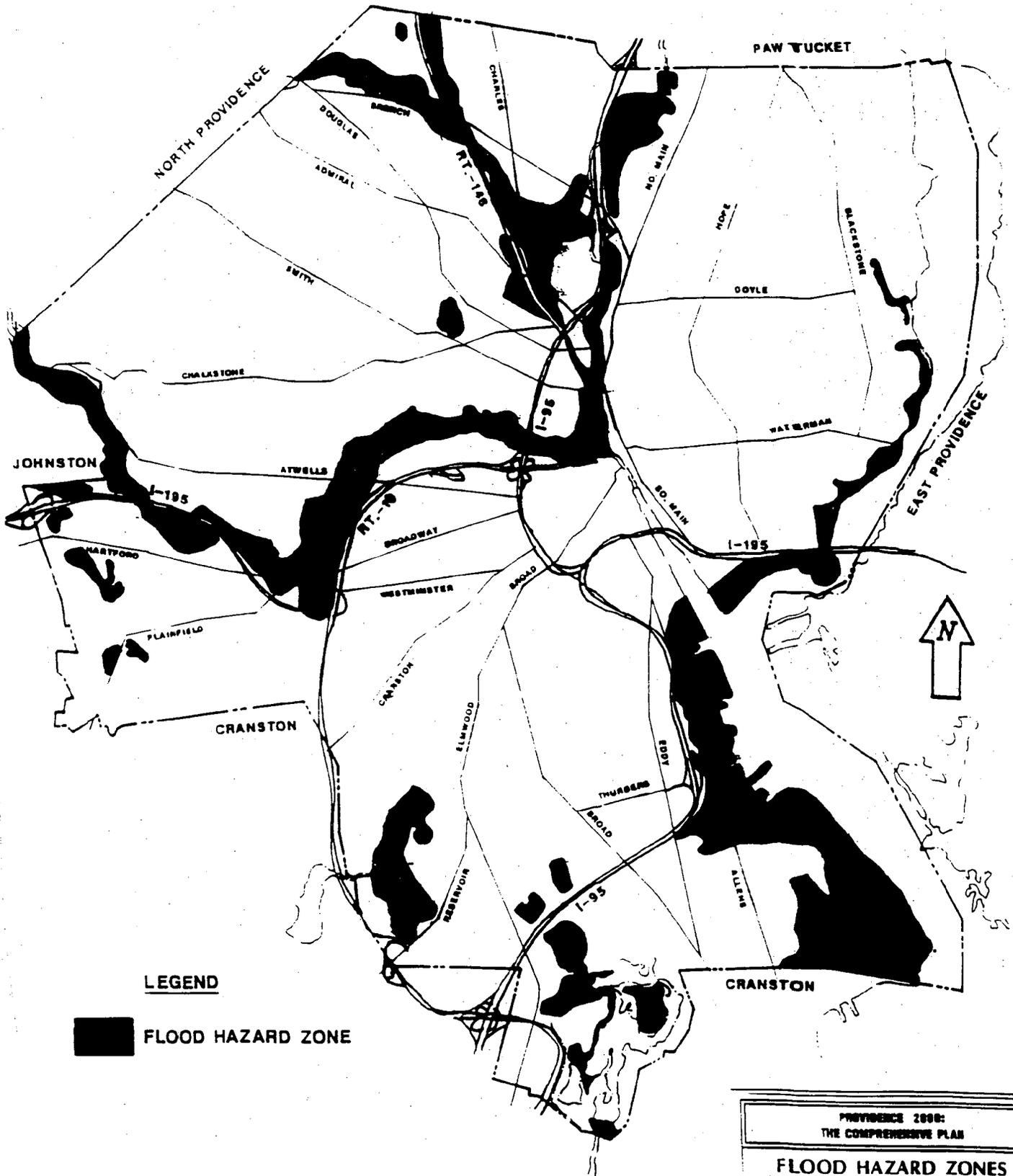
While not located in the City, the Scituate Reservoir belongs to the Providence Water Supply Board and is a critical water resource for the City and surrounding areas. Figure 3.16 shows the areas from which water flows into the Scituate Reservoir. Most of the watershed lands immediately adjacent to the reservoir are owned by the Providence Water Supply Board.

However, these constitute a small portion of the entire hydrographic basin that feeds the reservoir. In recognition of the fact that more watershed land needs to be controlled in order to assure a continued supply of high quality water to the region, the R.I. General Assembly passed an act in 1989 authorizing use of eminent domain powers to acquire watershed land or development rights on that land.

Acquiring appropriate land and development rights to further protect the Scituate Reservoir will be one of the major environmental/water quality programs for the City in coming years.

**Coastal Resources** - The City of Providence is located on the northern end of Narragansett Bay. The Port of Providence extends 10 miles along the shores of the Providence River and is the state's principal general cargo and petroleum port. The Providence shipping channel is dredged to an authorized depth of 40 feet. Primary land uses along the coastline include industrial and commercial uses, public land, and the Fields Point Wastewater Treatment facility. Large segments of shoreline and water in the port area are in derelict condition and littered with abandoned piers and sunken barges.

The Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) is the primary agency involved in the planning and protection of all Rhode Island coastal areas and zones. Chapter 23 of the Rhode Island General Laws (RIGL) authorizes the Council to approve, modify, set conditions for, or reject any proposals for development or operation within, above or beneath the inland edge of the coastal feature. The waterfront area of the City of Providence is classified by CRMC as a Type 6



**LEGEND**

**■ FLOOD HAZARD ZONE**

PROVIDENCE 2000: THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN	
<b>FLOOD HAZARD ZONES</b>	
City Plan Commission Department of Planning and Development	<b>3.14</b>

**Industrial Waterfront and Commercial Navigation Channel**, which is defined as water areas that are extensively altered in order to accommodate commercial and industrial water-dependent and water enhanced activities.

The CRMC published in 1984 a document entitled "Providence Harbor: A Special Area Management Plan." This document outlines specific policies and proposals for the Providence Harbor, and seeks to achieve five (5) major goals:

1. Maintain balanced and compatible shoreline uses;
2. Improve water quality;
3. Encourage port development;
4. Increase shoreline recreational opportunities and public access; and
5. Encourage coordination and consultation.

All development proposals which occur within at least two hundred (200) feet of the water's edge fall within the purview of the CRMC, and must conform to the policies determined by the Council.

**Floodplain Areas** - Floodplains are important natural features since they provide extra storage capacity during storms too large to be accommodated by a river/water body or too great to be absorbed into the ground. The City of Providence is subject to flooding partly due to the funnel-like shape of Narragansett Bay which amplifies the height of a storm surge as it moves up the Bay, resulting in the highest flood levels in the state occurring along the Providence River. To address this problem a hurricane barrier was built at Fox Point in 1966 which protects the downtown area. This barrier requires constant maintenance and improvement.

As shown in Figure 3.14 floodplain areas cover certain areas of the City and are influenced by: 1) hurricanes and strong storms along the waterfront, in areas not protected by the Hurricane Barrier at Fox Point; and 2) overflow from rivers, ponds and the accumulation of water in depressed areas due to sustained heavy rainfall and/or melting snow.

The Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM), published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 1985, delineate four general flood zones. These maps are on file in the Providence Department of Planning and Urban Development. The Floodplain Management Guidelines (43 FR 6030) establish specific requirements of compliance with Executive Order 11988 by all federal agencies. Before any development may commence, the significance of a floodplain must be determined. Therefore, the project must conform with or significantly outweigh the following requirements of the Order to:

- Avoid direct or indirect support of floodplain development wherever a practicable alternative exists;
- Reduce the risk of flood loss; Minimize the impact of floods on human safety, health and welfare;
- Restore and preserve the natural and beneficial floodplain values.

**Water Quality** - Current Rhode Island Water Quality Standards are administered and enforced by the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), Division of Water Resources. Surface and groundwater resources are classified according to their quality and possible uses for consumption and recreation or other activities. The Seekonk River is classified as Class SC which is appropriate for boating, secondary recreational activities (i.e. not swimming), fish and wildlife habitats, and industrial cooling. The Providence River is also classified as Class SC. The Woonasquatucket River is a Class C river with the same uses considered appropriate. There are significant water quality problems associated with combined sewer overflows (CSOs) which discharge into the Moshassuck, West, Seekonk, Woonasquatucket and Providence Rivers. The cumulative discharges from these CSOs, into Narragansett Bay, over the last eight decades have resulted in the permanent closing of 5,600 acres of shellfish beds due to bacterial contamination, and the degradation of general water quality and aesthetic of the City's rivers. In addition, approximately 10,000 acres of shellfish beds are closed for seven days every time a rainstorm exceeds 0.5-in. Of total rainfall in 24 hours.

Deteriorated water quality in the harbor is of serious concern. The waters of the Providence Harbor directly receive the discharges of homes, businesses, industry and storm water runoff. Protecting and preserving water quality should be taken into consideration in relation to waterfront development options, particularly in relation to paving, drainage and run-off.

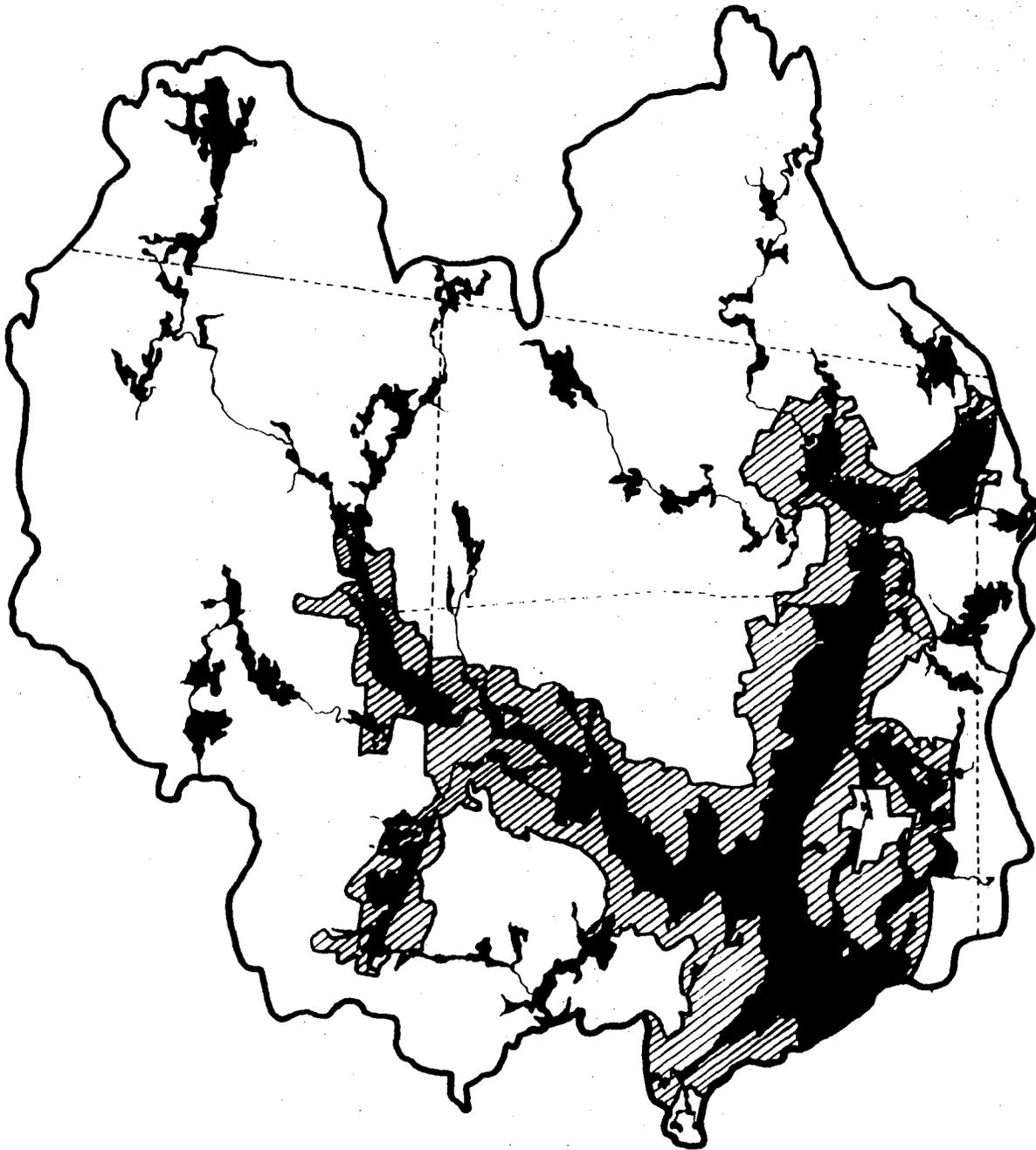
The Narragansett Bay Commission is committed to correcting the CSO problems and has the overall goal of improving the water quality of local rivers, as well as Narragansett Bay. The projects and programs underway to improve water quality are discussed further in the Community Services and Facilities section.

**Wetlands** - Wetlands are those areas that are "inundated by surface or groundwater with a frequency sufficient to support vegetative or aquatic life." Wetlands include swamps, marshes, bogs and similar areas. The protection of wetlands is governed by Executive Order 11990, entitled "Protection of Wetlands."

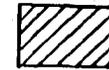
The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) published rules and regulations which enforce the Fresh Water Wetlands Act, restricting wetlands alterations and development. Although the City is 90 percent developed, wetland areas still exist primarily within the base floodplain areas along the West River, the Woonasquatucket River, the Moshassuck River, the Seekonk River and Mashapaug Pond.

These areas provide a filtering function, and can contribute to the maintenance or enhancement of water quality. These are precious resources and should be protected from the impacts of urban development and associated activities.

**Air Quality** - Air quality is an important component of the quality of life for city residents. Air quality is measured by the concentration of pollutants in the air within a specified time interval. The concentrations are analyzed based on their effects on human health. The EPA maintains standards for classifying air quality in primarily urban areas. These standards are twofold: primary standards aim to safeguard human health; and secondary standards aim to safeguard human welfare. Each standard is defined by the concentrations of five potentially noxious elements



**LEGEND**



**Public Water Supply Board**



**Water**



**LOCATION MAP**



**PROVIDENCE 2000:  
THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**SCITUATE RESERVOIR WATERSHED**

City Plan Commission  
Department of Planning and Development  
400 Westminster St.  
Providence R.I. 02908

**Figure  
3.15**

These are 1) Carbon Monoxide (CO), 2) Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), 3) Total Suspended Particle Matter (TSP), 4) Nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), and 5) Oxidants represented by Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>).

Providence is part of the Metropolitan Interstate Air Quality Control region (AQCR 120) which includes southeastern Massachusetts and all of Rhode Island. In the summer months, Providence fails to achieve the federally defined primary or secondary standards for three air pollutants, namely Ozone, Carbon Monoxide and total suspended particle matter. In fact Providence was cited as one of the nations major cities with excessive Ozone levels. The Providence metropolitan area is equal to or better than national standards for Sulphur Dioxide and Nitrogen Dioxide.

In Providence, as in all urbanized areas, the primary source of air contaminants is motor vehicle emissions. Particularly in the summer months, when the air is humid, the air quality is more likely to be threatened, relating directly to the number, type and speed of vehicles, the type of road, and the number of idling vehicles, particularly in parking lots. As an expanding city, Providence is experiencing increases in traffic volumes, as well as in the number of parked cars, particularly in the Downtown. Overall traffic speed downtown is slower, negatively impacting the quality of air throughout the City. Degraded air quality can also be attributed to industrial emissions, and other concentrated urban activities. Providence with the help of the state must take action to reduce ozone levels.

**Noise** - Noise pollution in dense urban settings impacts the living environment for inhabitants. The acceptable degree of noise at a location is determined by the level of outdoor day--night average sound level (DNL) in decibels (dB). The noise level assessment begins with an evaluation of the location's exposure to three (3) major sources of noise: aircraft, roadways and railways. These are combined to assess the total noise level for a location. The noise level may fall under one of three categories:

- a. Acceptable, (DNL < 65 dB);
- b. Normally unacceptable, (DNL is 65-75 dB). Barriers or special construction may be necessary;
- c. Unacceptable, (DNL > 75 dB). The construction costs of alleviating the noise level problem are prohibitive.

In Providence, the major sources of noise are traffic-related including: Interstate 95, Interstate 195, Route 146, Route 10 and major city thoroughfares.

**Man-Made Hazards** - Within the City of Providence, man-made environmental problems include: point pollution sources such as leaking underground storage tanks, industrial activities and by-products, transmission pipelines and loading facilities for hazardous materials; and non-point pollution sources such as urban runoff, litter and improperly disposed of household wastes.

Many of these hazards are located along the industrial waterfront area, in which an active

port operates. The Port of Providence supplies not only the state with necessary energy products, but also a large region including portions of Massachusetts and Connecticut. Associated with these activities is the potential for chemical and petroleum spills; situations which are generally handled through established emergency spill and containment procedures. For example, the U.S. Coast Guard has a Spill Contingency Plan which includes an immediate response set of actions. The state also had immediate response mechanisms through the Department of Environmental Management.

The intensity of the hazards along this area of the waterfront, and the need to make best use of land use opportunities for the waterfront, prompted a study of the area. The Industrial Waterfront Plan for the area will include a section on hazards and environmental problems, and the necessary precautions for the safety of the residents of the City of Providence.

### *3.9.2 FUTURE TRENDS AND ISSUES*

The City of Providence is highly urbanized, with extensive industrial, commercial and residential development concentrated within its borders. There are impacts associated with each of these land uses that could negatively effect the environment and natural resources, which include:

- high traffic volumes and concentrations of vehicles impacting air quality and noise levels;
- urban runoff, sedimentation, road salt, and litter contributing to the pollution of the city's rivers and Narragansett Bay, and negatively impacting recreation opportunities;
- decrease in the amount of open space due to the continued development of the City; and
- continued erosion of slopes contributing to excessive sedimentation of the wastewater system.

The Scituate Reservoir watershed, while not located in the city, is also of concern. The city and the Water Supply Board must work with the Town of Scituate to insure that any development that takes place within the watershed will not impact on water quality, now and in the future.

## **3.10 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

### *3.10.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS*

#### **Historic Preservation**

The City of Providence is unique in its historic character and culture. Historically significant areas and structures appear throughout the City. The City recognizes that its rich historic and cultural resources are an asset, and need to be preserved and enhanced; that steps need to be taken to protect the City's heritage.

The downtown area, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is rich in historic resources with its elaborate buildings and facades and open spaces. Hundreds of buildings and a

number of districts in Providence are listed on the state as well as the national registers. The City has created several local historic districts to protect some of these assets. Examples of Providence's rich historic and cultural heritage include the State Capitol Building, the City Hall, College Hill Historic District, Roger Williams Park, and over twenty additional National Register historic districts and other various architectural points of interest.

In the City of Providence the historic movement was initiated by various local private social organizations. This movement culminated in 1956 with the establishment of the Providence Preservation Society (PPS). The Society was formed by concerned citizens in response to widespread demolition, resulting from active urban renewal and highway construction programs.

In 1956, the PPS joined forces with the Providence Redevelopment Authority and applied for a federal pilot grant to explore ways to protect the architecture of College Hill. The primary result of the study was the designation of the College Hill Historic District, as well as the creation of the city's Historic District Commission. The Commission regulates all changes made to buildings within local historic districts.

Following the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, a federal/state coalition was formed. In response to the 1966 legislation, the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission (RIHPC) was created in 1968. Over the years RIHPC has conducted surveys citywide to identify properties with historical and architectural significance. There are over 3,400 of these properties. A number of neighborhood reports have been completed, as well as a book entitled "Providence: A Citywide Survey of Historic Resources". To date the RIHPC has nominated several thousand buildings to the National Register of Historic Places including 25 historic districts and over 90 individual properties in Providence. Table 3.14 shows the location of the federally designated historic districts throughout the City. The coordination of and development review within these districts is the responsibility of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission which implements the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act. If a local district is included in a National District, the local historic district commission must review and approve all exterior renovations.

In addition to the national register districts, nearly 90 districts and individual properties in Providence have been identified as potentially eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. A number of other areas and properties within the city need further evaluation to determine their potential eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and the State Register. These have been well documented by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission.

The Providence City Council to date has designated seven areas as local historic districts (Figure 3.16). These districts fall under the purview of the Providence Historic District Commission. Structures within the boundaries of these districts may not be altered, repaired, moved, constructed or demolished without review and approval by the Historic District Commission. These districts are:

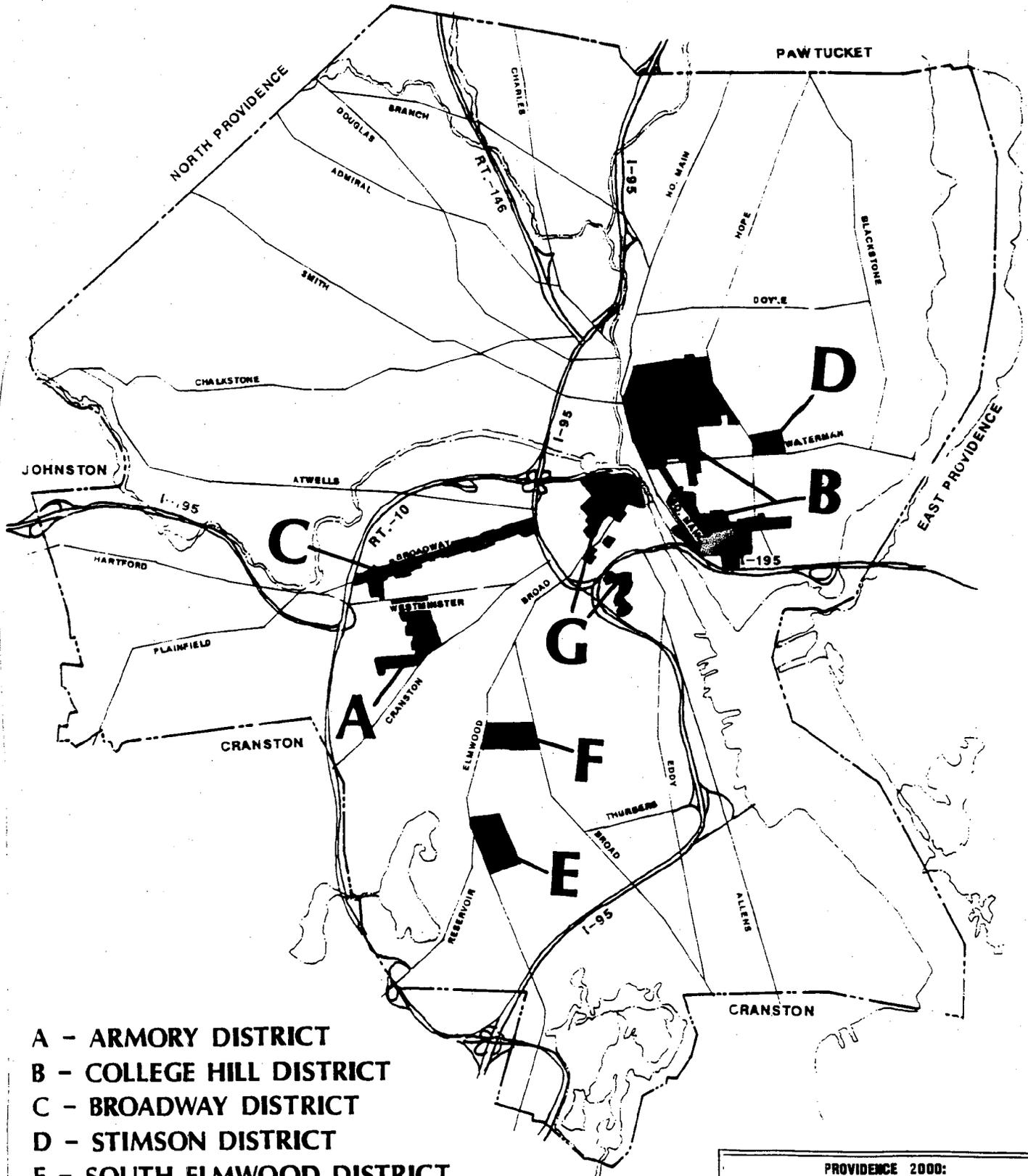
- College Hill - the boundaries of this district have been amended twice. The district includes over half the National District; Benefit St. being its most renowned part.

- Stimson Avenue - including Diman Place and the north side of Angell Street;
  - Broadway - including the north and south sides of Broadway, from Rte. 95 to Rte. 10;
- 

**TABLE 3.14**  
**NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICTS**  
**Providence, Rhode Island**

1. Andrew Dickhaut Cottages Historic District
  2. Blackstone Canal Historic District
  3. Bridgham/Arch Street Historic District
  4. Broadway-Armory Historic District
  5. College Hill Historic District
  6. Custom House Historic District
  7. Downtown Providence Historic District
  8. Doyle Avenue Historic District
  9. Elmwood (northern section) Historic District
  10. Hope Street Historic District
  11. Moshassuck Square/American Screw Company Factories Historic District
  12. Oakland Avenue Historic District
  13. Olney/Alumni Avenue Historic District
  14. Parkis-Comstock Historic District
  15. Pekin Street Historic District
  16. Pine Street Historic District
  17. Power Street-Cooke Street Historic District
  18. Providence Jewelry Manufacturing District
  19. Rhodes Street Historic District
  20. Roger Williams Park Historic District
  21. Stimson Avenue Historic District
  22. Trinity Square Historic District
  23. Wanskuck Mill Village Historic District
  24. Wesleyan Avenue Historic District
  25. Parkis-Comstock Amendment Historic District
  26. Elmwood (southern section) Historic District
- 

- Armory - an area surrounding the old Armory and parade ground in the city's west end;
- Downtown - parts of the national register district;
- South Elmwood - the national register district and some adjacent properties; and,
- North Elmwood - an area bounded by Broad Street to the east, Elmwood Avenue to the west, Whitmarsh Street to the North and Moore Street to the south.



- A - ARMORY DISTRICT
- B - COLLEGE HILL DISTRICT
- C - BROADWAY DISTRICT
- D - STIMSON DISTRICT
- E - SOUTH ELMWOOD DISTRICT
- F - NORTH ELMWOOD DISTRICT
- G - DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

<b>PROVIDENCE 2000:                  THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN</b>	
<b>LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS</b>	
City Plan Commission Department of Planning and Development 400 Westminster St. Providence R.I. 02908	<b>3.16</b>

In June, 1988 the State Legislature passed an amendment to the Enabling Legislation (45-24.1) dealing with historic areas. The amendment, among other things, allows cities and towns to specify individual historically significant structures for protection and clarifies the powers and duties of local historic district commissions.

In all historic districts property owners are encouraged to adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation" and the "Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings." Adherence to the standards is mandatory whenever federal funds are applied within the National Register historic districts.

### **Cultural Facilities and Programs**

Cultural facilities in the City of Providence contribute greatly to the quality of life for City residents and residents of the whole state and region. One of the reasons Providence was selected by Newsweek Magazine in February, 1989 as one of America's best places to live and work is the abundance of high quality cultural facilities. Many businesses consider these facilities very important in being able to attract and hold employees. Providence has many cultural facilities for everyone to enjoy. We are indebted to our many educational institutions for adding to the quality of our cultural environment.

**Libraries** - Library services to the public are provided by an innovative private nonprofit organization which receives city, state and private support. The central/main library is located in the downtown area, and nine branch libraries are found in various neighborhoods of the City. This is discussed in greater detail in the community services and facilities section.

In addition to the central and branch libraries, there are fifteen other private and public libraries in the City. Brown University's John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library has a capacity of one and a half million volumes. Famous for rare collections are the Providence Athenaeum, the Annmary Brown Memorial, the John Carter Brown Library and the John Hay Library.

**Theatres/Auditoriums/Civic Center** - There are twelve theatres in the city including the Providence Center for the Performing Art which seats 3,200 people, the Veterans Memorial Auditorium which has a seating capacity of 2,200, and the nationally known Trinity Square Repertory Theatre. The Providence Civic Center which seats 13,500 was opened in 1972 and hosts sports, exhibitions and cultural events. A convention center is proposed as part of the civic center complex and should be completed by 1994.

**Educational Institutions** - In the City of Providence are facilities for seven colleges and universities including: Brown University; Rhode Island School of Design (RISD); Providence College; Rhode Island College; Johnson and Wales University; Roger Williams College; and, The University of Rhode Island Extension. There are several vocational and technical institutions located in the City.

**Museums, Landmarks and Attractions** - In addition to the rich historic and architectural heritage of the City, there are several other cultural attractions of which the City is proud. These include:

- Roger Williams Park - City park with a zoo, bird house, flower gardens and amusements as well as a natural history museum;
- Annmary Brown Memorial - Museum of early printed books and European and American paintings;
- Bell Gallery - Art gallery;
- Museum of Art, RISD - Extensive collection;
- Trinity Square Repertory Company - Resident performing company; and
- Providence Center for the Performing Arts - Theater.
- Veterans Auditorium - Home of the Rhode Island Philharmonic

There are a number of small organizations around the city, including the city and state archives, which could benefit from a central museum.

### *3.10.2 CHANGES IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES*

Various plans and projects have been developed by the state, city, and private organizations concerned with historic preservation. In 1986, the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission completed an extensive review of the City's historic resources titled "Providence: A Citywide Survey of Historic Resources". The document provides an overview of the historical development of the City, an inventory of the historic resources by neighborhood, and a description of the architectural characteristics of the City. In addition to the citywide survey, the RIHPC has developed a series of neighborhood plans summarizing the physical and socioeconomic setting of each neighborhood and its historical development. Each report documents ongoing preservation programs, presents current preservation programs, and ends with assessments and recommendations. The following reports have been developed for Providence city neighborhoods or group of buildings: South Providence; Elmwood; Downtown Providence; Providence Industrial sites; The West Side; Smith Hill; and East Side.

In addition to the RIHPC historical reports, four other action-oriented plans have been developed by the City, and/or the Providence Preservation Society in cooperation with the City. These plans are intended to address critical historic areas under pressure from development, and have specific implementation recommendations. These include the following:

- A Comprehensive Preservation, Development and Urban Design Plan for the Broadway Historic District: This plan was developed in 1986 and was the impetus for the local historic district. The primary recommendations revolved around the creation of a Neighborhood Advocacy Office and the stabilization of the neighborhood through: the installation of period

lights and tree planting to restore the streets historic character; exterior building rehabilitation; acquisition of key parcels of land; various zoning changes; and the implementation of financing mechanisms for rehabilitation.

- Smith Hill Historic Districts Preservation Plan: This plan consisted of an extensive survey and review of historic resources with the purpose of developing a rehabilitation and preservation plan for the neighborhood. Some of the major recommendations were:
  1. Target the Dickhaut Cottages Historic District for immediate action;
  2. Develop aggressive rehabilitation efforts in target areas;
  3. Initiate neighborhood improvement programs;
  4. Increase street tree planting in the neighborhood; and,
  5. Work to increase home ownership by encouraging owners to offer pending sale of their house to current tenants and by matching absentee landlords selling property to interested occupant landlords.
- College Hill: A Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal - 1959 and 1967: This plan was the impetus for preservation in the city and has laid the groundwork for all efforts to date.
- College Hill: A Growth Management Plan: This plan was developed in 1988/89 and has yet to be formally adopted by the City. Major recommendations included in the plan are:
  1. Revise land use and zoning regulation to protect historic buildings;
  2. Introduce the Main Street Program for Thayer Street, and,
  3. Coordinate all zoning, planning and code enforcement toward common preservation, reuse and development goals.

All of these plans need to be carefully reviewed in light of their citywide significance and where appropriate, their goals and objectives should be incorporated into the City's historic preservation and enhancement approach. An appropriate implementation strategy should be developed for each of these plans, and responsibility for implementation clearly designated. Each of these plans need to be evaluated their conformance with this comprehensive plan and to bring them into conformance if necessary. These plans may then be adopted as either part of the Comprehensive Plan series or as Area Plans.

### *3.10.3 CURRENT ISSUES AND FUTURE TRENDS IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES*

The city is at a cross road; how should preservation be pursued in the coming years. As a result, many issues have developed, how we address these issues will determine the direction of the city. These issues are:

- The City of Providence is one of the region's most historically significant communities. Without proper care and safeguards continued development in the City threatens the integrity of historic structures and districts.

- Demolition is counter to the preservation of the city's historic character. However, the reuse of historic buildings can be difficult and expensive. Innovative reuse of historic structures, such as the Masonic Temple, must be investigated. Demolition approval procedures need to be reviewed to insure time to examine options for the reuse of structures.
- Historic residential areas need to be protected from the infringement of institutional uses. Institutions, while required to document their proposed growth plans, are not required to state how historic buildings will be used.
- Lack of code enforcement is a serious problem in terms of protection of historic structures and historic areas.
- The public is often not aware of the positive benefits associated with a strong preservation movement; these need to be made explicit to residents of the City.
- There is no design review mechanism for development citywide.
- There is no clear policy for the disposal of surplus property and the abandonment of public roads. As a result, historic buildings, important street patterns and the scale of neighborhood blocks are often lost.
- Zoning requirements and maps have not been revised since the 1950's and do not relate to historic preservation goals, including land use classifications, height limitations and other factors. For example, in the historic downtown, the current height allowance of 300 feet is out of scale with the historic character of the district.
- Historic preservation in the context of economic development is often a difficult activity. One of the unique attractions of the City of Providence is its rich heritage, which should be explicitly and sensitively evaluated and protected where appropriate.
- Providence's stature as the capital city is at a crossroad, cultural resources need to be protected and expanded. With the development of the convention center, the cultural base of the city needs to be expanded to make Providence more inviting for conventioners.

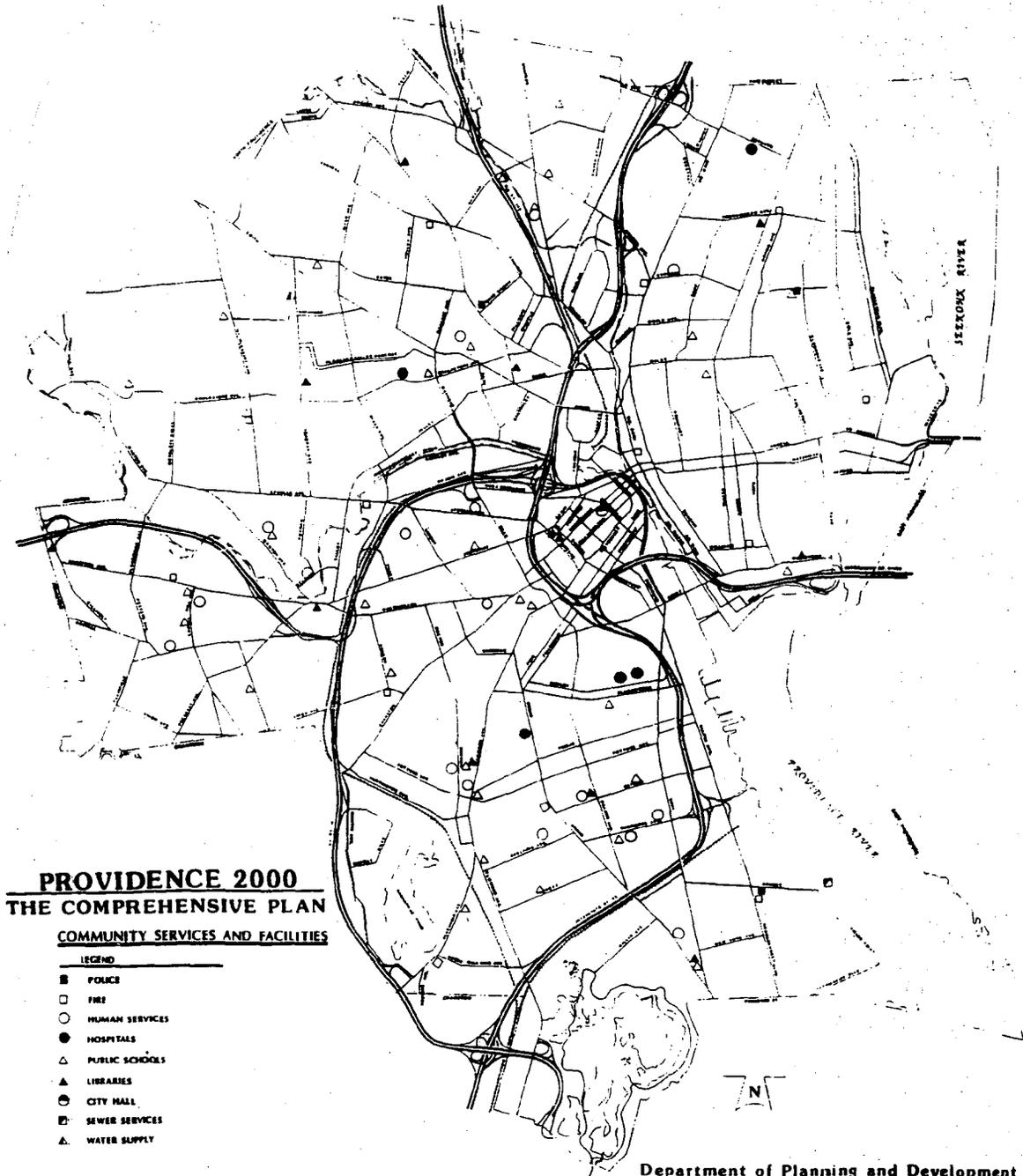
### **3.11 COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

The following section summarizes existing and future conditions of community services and facilities provided in the City of Providence. A map of community facilities and services is shown in Figure 3.17.

#### **3.11.1 EXISTING AND FUTURE CONDITIONS**

##### **Water Supply**

The Providence Water Supply Board serves the City of Providence, Cranston, Johnston, North Providence and portions of Warwick, East Providence, Smithfield and the Kent County



**PROVIDENCE 2000**  
**THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
**COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

- LEGEND**
- POLICE
  - FIRE
  - HUMAN SERVICES
  - HOSPITALS
  - △ PUBLIC SCHOOLS
  - ▲ LIBRARIES
  - CITY HALL
  - SEWER SERVICES
  - ▲ WATER SUPPLY

Department of Planning and Development

PROVIDENCE 2000: THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN	
<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES                  AND FACILITIES</b>	
City Plan Commission Department of Planning and Development 100 Westminster St. Providence R.I. 02908	<b>3.17</b>

Water Authority. The system is one of the country's best in regard to quality. It has a safe daily yield of 89 million gallons. Current daily consumption is about 74 million gallons.

The City of Providence receives its water from a 93 square mile surface water system which includes the Scituate Reservoir (in the Town of Scituate) and five smaller reservoirs. The portion of watershed that includes reservoirs owned by the City is 23.93 square miles, an area greater than the area of the City, itself. The available storage capacity of the Scituate Reservoir is 37 billion gallons at the spillway. The six reservoirs have a total available storage capacity of over 40 billion gallons and a total water surface area of 4,557 acres.

In 1962 the Providence Water Supply Board through its Scituate Reservoir system used approximately 45 million gallons of water daily; the current average usage level is nearing 75 million gallons a day, representing a 67 percent increase in water demand over 27 years. The daily output originally designed for of the plant, 105 million gallons, is often exceeded, and the volume of the water treated during maximum demand has occasionally reached 135 million gallons a day, with current plant capacity of 144 million gallons per day.

Thus, as the demand for water continues to increase, the draft from the reservoir increases and the amount of available water decreases. Although industrial and commercial consumption has decreased slightly, total water consumption is rising and nearing the "safe yield" mark, indicating a continued increase in residential consumption.

The water system does include reserve storage, which would be particularly necessary in the case of system breakdowns or repairs. Three underground concrete reservoirs exist: the Neutaconkanut Reservoir in Johnston, the Aqueduct Reservoir in Cranston and the Longview Reservoir in North Providence. The three reservoirs maintain an overall storage capacity of 1.2 days based on current average daily consumption, and a capacity of 0.7 days based on maximum daily consumption.

Table 3.15 delineates the user breakdown within the retail water system. As shown, from 1986 to 1987, more than 51 percent of the total retail water distribution was used by residential customers. A similar pattern existed in the City of Providence, where almost 48 percent of Providence water users were residential customers. Commercial customers represented almost 17 percent of the total water system, and almost 20 percent of Providence's users. And finally, industrial users comprised roughly 32 percent in the entire water supply system. Ultimately, the distribution of users among the user categories is similar between the City of Providence and the remainder of the retail system, which includes Providence, portions of Cranston, Johnston and North Providence.

The population served by the Providence Water Supply Board is predicted to increase by about 4% by the Year 2000. The Providence Water Supply Board is currently undertaking several studies or programs to include a comprehensive facilities need study; a safe yield study; a demand study; and a water conservation program. Reports from studies will provide input to a Capital Improvements Program which will address future system requirements.

**TABLE 3.15**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF RETAIL USERS - PROVIDENCE WATER SUPPLY BOARD**  
**JULY 1, 1986 TO JUNE 30, 1987.**

	Consumption in Cubic Feet	Percentage of City Total	Percentage of System Total
<b>City of Providence:</b>			
Residential	453,908,257	47.7%	31.7%
Commercial	185,686,716	19.5%	13.0%
Manufacturing	307,902,391	32.3%	21.5%
Hydrants	4,612,350	0.5%	0.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>934,109,714</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>66.5%</b>
<b>TOTAL SYSTEM:</b>			
Residential	738,069,965	NA	51.5%
Commercial	236,159,176	NA	16.5%
Manufacturing	450,866,532	NA	31.5%
Hydrants	6,661,454	NA	0.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,431,757,127</b>		<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Providence Water Supply Board

The Scituate Reservoir watershed is an extremely sensitive and valuable resource, subject to potential contamination from many sources. Protecting the water quality of the Scituate Reservoir and its watershed is of top priority to the City. The recent state legislation enabling property taking by eminent domain for watershed protection is an important step toward meeting this objective.

Based on the population projections for Providence and the strains on the City's water distribution system, the long-term future growth and development of the City of Providence could well be limited or moderated by the availability of water. Water quality could also be a problem if the watershed of the Scituate Reservoir is significantly degraded.

### Wastewater

The entire City is sewered. The wastewater treatment system is primarily owned and maintained by the state's Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC) which was formed in 1982. The NBC owns and is responsible for maintaining and operating the Field's Point Wastewater Treatment Facility; several pumping facilities; forty-five (45) miles of major interceptor lines; all flow regulators; and sixty five (65) combined sewer overflow (CSO) outlets which empty in the Providence River, Narragansett Bay and other surface water resources.

The City of Providence owns and maintains responsibility for all sewers upstream of flow regulators including 260 miles of smaller, feeder lines, and approximately 400 miles of laterals and mains (from the curb to the main).

City maintenance responsibilities include catch basin cleaning, as well as storm drain and combined sewer overflow maintenance. While billings for wastewater services go through the Narragansett Bay Commission, City projects in the wastewater system are funded by the City.

Like most older, metropolitan communities, Providence contains a predominantly combined sewer and stormwater system. Built around the turn of the century, the combined system often cannot meet the demands placed on it. During extended periods of rainfall, millions of gallons of sewage combined with stormwater discharges into the receiving waters of local rivers, because of overflow in the lines, termed "combined sewer overflow" (CSO). Of particular concern are the CSOs which empty into the Providence River in the vicinity of Field's Point, causing significant water quality and aesthetic problems. In order to address these problems, the Narragansett Bay Commission has compiled overflow studies performed by the city and has performed a number of area studies itself. The last area to be analyzed is the downtown; all the programmed studies should be completed by 1991.

The Narragansett Bay Commission, with the full support of the City of Providence, is committed to correcting the CSO problem and has the overall goal of improving the water quality of the local rivers and Narragansett Bay. Based on the findings of the studies, the Commission will prioritize the problem areas to be improved, so as to better comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) water quality standards. All new development and redevelopment projects are required to include separate wastewater and stormwater lines, which will eventually tie into the state's combined interceptors. It is NBC policy, supported by the City of Providence that surface water drainage connections to the wastewater system will be strictly prohibited in the future, unless a combined sewer is the only means for stormwater disposal.

Given the future development predicted for the City of Providence, and its surrounding metropolitan areas, the pressure on the wastewater collection and treatment system can only increase.

As part of the State's Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act, each state and quasi-state agency is required to develop a future plan for the agency. As part of the NBC's submission, the following points were made:

- The NBC maintains authority over all connections to the sewer system including quantity and quality of waste-water discharged to the system.
- The NBC has adopted a formal sewer connection permit application process to monitor and manage development within the NBC service area.

The approval of the sewer connection permits is not automatic, and the NBC is aiming to carefully monitor the expansion of its collection and treatment system. This could temper the development potential of the City in the long-term.

## **Solid Waste Collection and Disposition**

Garbage is collected once a week and rubbish once a month. Approximately 90,000 tons of solid waste materials are sent by Providence each year to a landfill. Solid waste is collected and hauled by a private contractor to the sanitary landfill operated by the Rhode Island Solid Waste Corporation in Johnston.

The capacity of the landfill is limited. The Rhode Island Solid Waste Management Corporation has recommended the construction of three (3) new incinerator plants. A 24-ton-per-day incinerator already exists at Field's Point, on Providence's waterfront. Dormant for roughly six years, the facility is being upgraded in order to meet EPA standards.

In addition to the municipal solid waste collection and disposal program discussed above, a nonprofit citizens organization, Keep Providence Beautiful, was formed in 1982, with the goal of reducing litter in Providence by changing attitudes about litter, encouraging community pride, and by improving public and private cleanup efforts by providing permanent solutions to the litter problem in the City. Education and outreach programs are aimed at neighborhood groups, schools, municipality, and the business community. After four years in operation, the group has noted a 60 percent reduction in litter.

**Recycling** - Every city and town in Rhode Island is required to enact a recycling program in accordance with the guidelines specified by the Ocean State Cleaning and Recycling Program (OSCAR), administered by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. With the mandatory recycling program, the State aims to decrease the amount of refuse dumped at the landfill by fifteen percent, and thus increase its life.

In response to this, the City of Providence has embarked on an extensive, citywide recycling program designed to significantly reduce the city's solid waste requiring landfill. Residents are required to separate glass, tin, newspaper, aluminum, and plastic soda and milk containers from the rest of their refuse. The recyclable materials are collected in specially designed 15 gallon bins, and are collected with regular trash. The biggest challenge facing the city will be encouraging the participation of the transient student and foreign-speaking community. It is anticipated recycling will reduce solid waste collection by 10% to 15% (8,000 to 12,000 tons per year).

## **Gas and Electricity**

Natural gas in Providence is provided by the Providence Energy Corporation (PEC), a public utility which owns the Providence Gas Company, the North Attleboro Gas Company and the Newport America Corporation. The PEC distributes natural gas to more than 137,000 customers in Providence, Newport and twenty other communities in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Overall the PEC's service area encompasses roughly 360 square miles, and includes a population of more than 696,000 persons.

The natural gas business grew over the past few years due to the recent economic boom in southeastern New England. The average annual number of accounts rose by 16,000, or 13

percent, between 1983 and 1987. Capital expenditures more than doubled over the past four years.

The PEC is planning to expand its distribution of gas by connecting with both Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company and the proposed Champlain Pipeline. This would increase output by 60 million cubic feet per day.

Electricity in the City of Providence is provided by the Narragansett Electric Company and its wholesale affiliate, New England Power. Rhode Island as a whole is an integral part of the New England Power Pool; the electricity resources of the area are pooled in the interests of the consumers in the six New England states.

Over the past few decades Rhode Islanders have consumed more electricity than was produced in state. Narragansett Electric, therefore, plans to "repower" the Manchester Street station in Providence as the most economical and efficient way to increase electricity generation. The expansion of this station also creates the least environmental impact of all the sites under consideration. Reconstruction is scheduled to begin in 1992, with a scheduled completion date in 1995. Part of the "repowering" program will involve converting from oil to natural gas as the energy source for Narragansett Electric's Manchester Street Station. The plant will produce 450 kilowatts when complete. Narragansett Electric is mothballing the South Street generating station.

### **Human Services**

Human services are provided to Providence residents through a combination of state, local and private organizations. These include the State Departments of Human Services, Health and Retardation, Health, Elderly Affairs, and the Institute of Mental Health. Local and other organizations include the Mayor's Drug Taskforce, and private organizations such as the Providence Communication Action Program, a consortium of multi-service centers, United Way, the Urban League and other private organizations.

Funding for these human service programs is from federal, state and private sources; while responsibilities for service delivery often overlaps depending on the location and type of the service provided.

The Providence Department of Planning and Development allocates and distributes Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) from the Federal Housing and Urban Development Agency. CDBG funds are allocated to the Providence Community Action Program, Inc. (Pro-CAP) and to the 11 separate multi-service centers which are organized as a consortium. The City administers Federal Department of Labor funds to support a service AIDES program.

The city, through several departments and support agencies is involved in: substance abuse programs; providing assistance to the elderly and homeless; acting as the City's representative in addressing the AIDS crisis; and, conducting a human services needs assessment.

The Providence Community Action Program, Inc. (Pro-CAP) is a nonprofit private organization that is aimed at fighting poverty at the local level. Pro-CAP provides a variety of services and programs, at different locations in the City and supported by federal, state and private funding. In 1989 it was estimated that at least one in every five city residents received help from a program administered by Pro-CAP. These programs include elderly/handicapped transportation, federal commodities distribution, emergency shelter/interim housing for women and families, weatherization and housing assistance services.

In addition to Pro-CAP there are several other private organizations that deliver human services in the City. There is a consortium of eleven multi-service centers located in the city. Each multi-service center is run independently, with its own Board of Directors, staff and funding/support. The Executive Directors of these multi-service centers all belong to an Executive Director Coordinating Committee, aimed at supporting one another and minimizing overlap. These centers provide services that are specifically required by the local community served by each center. Examples of these services include child care, counseling, information and comprehensive referral for social services, emergency food and clothing, language classes, senior citizen programs, youth programs, adult education programs, nutrition programs, specific health screenings, and general community services such as scouts and cadets. The centers respond as quickly as possible to changing needs, based on changing demographic characteristics of the serviced population.

The multi-service community centers include:

- DaVinci Center for Community Progress;
- Elmwood Community Center;
- Federal Hill House Association;
- Hartford Park Community Center;
- Joslin Community Center;
- Mount Hope Neighborhood Association;
- Nickerson Community Center;
- Silver Lake Annex Center;
- Smith Hill Center;
- Washington Park Community Center; and,
- West End Community Center.

Funding for the multi-service centers is from a combination of the Child Care Food Program, CDBG funds, CSEG funds, VPTA funds, RI Department of Human Services, Legislature Circuits, Department of Elderly Affairs, United Way and fund raising and donations.

On any one funding round, the multi-service centers and Pro-CAP could all compete with each other for funds. Coordination of funding and services provided would strengthen the ability of the service providers to operate in the City.

Other agencies providing human services include the United Way, the Urban League, Vietnam Veteran's Association and the Visiting Nurses Association.

A significant portion of City residents receive some form of public assistance. Twelve percent of the population receive assistance for families with dependent children (AFDC); two percent receive General Public Assistance (GPA); seventeen percent receive food stamps, four percent receive social security insurance, and three percent receive medical assistance.

With the change in the demographic structure of the city, the demands on the human service delivery system is expected to increase significantly.

The critical issues facing City and private social and human service agencies include: the homeless; the changing needs of the new ethnic communities; location of group homes; funding for human and social service provision; affordable housing; adolescent pregnancy and teen parents; substance abuse; and, elderly programs.

Human services programs have adapted and continue to adapt to address these issues. Continued public and private sector fund raising efforts will be necessary to support human service programs, as will expanding the public/private network of agencies and support groups which serve as basic human service providers.

## **Police and Fire**

The Providence Fire and Police Departments share a Headquarters Building at LaSalle Square. In this building are located: the Fire Protection Division, the Emergency Medical Division, the Fire Administrative Offices and the entire Police Department.

**Fire** - The Providence Fire Department has a force of 495 people, with 14 fire stations, 23 companies and 3 rescue units. In addition to the 19,750 square feet of the Headquarters Building, the Providence Fire Department facilities currently includes 14 firehouses throughout the city, the Division of Training facility on Reservoir Avenue, a repair shop and training tower on Dexter Street, a carpenter shop on Chad Brown Street and the Fire Alarm Bureau of Communications on West Exchange Street. Renovations to the 14 fire stations are underway or planned.

Fire fighting equipment includes 15 pumpers, 8 ladder trucks, one air supply wagon, one foam truck, 6 reserve pumpers, 3 rescue ladder trucks, 9 reserve rescue trucks and an emergency lighting truck. Response time to calls is generally good. Some problems result from peak hour traffic and congestion, which makes access difficult.

**Police** - The city's Police Department occupies 28,223 square feet of the Headquarters Building. The Department does not have any precinct stations or branch offices; the entire police protection unit is contained within the Headquarters Building. The Providence Police Department has 440 authorized police officers. The ratio of 2.6 offices per 1000 residents is higher than the average for similar size cities in the U.S. (2.4) and higher than nearby New England cities (2.3). Equipment includes patrol wagons, cruisers, and motorcycles all equipped with two-way radios. Regular patrols are maintained throughout the day within the City.

It has been proposed that the headquarter facility on LaSalle Square to be replaced in the near future by a larger, more modern combined police/fire facility. The existing building is too

small and inefficient and lacks any potential for expansion. The court operations on the third floor sometimes cause security problems in the building. An evaluation of the space needs for the two departments indicated a need to increase the present square footage by roughly 50 percent. A preliminary study has been completed which identifies and analyzes the feasibility of potential sites for a new headquarters facility within downtown Providence. The proposed headquarters facility may contain: the Office of the Commission of Public Safety; the Municipal Court; the Civil Defense Agency; the Department of Traffic Engineering; the Fire Department; and, the Police Department. The new facility is expected to better meet the needs of the city in terms of fire and police protection, and a siting study is currently underway.

### **Hospitals and Emergency Treatment Centers**

There is no City Health Department. However, the City is supportive of the state and private health service initiatives serving city residents. The City's School Department services the School Health Program.

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**TABLE 3.16**  
**HOSPITAL AND EMERGENCY SERVICE CENTERS**

<u>Hospital</u>	<u>Bed Capacity</u>
Butler Hospital	120
Miriam Hospital	250
Women and Infant's Hospital	182 and 120 Bassinets
Rhode Island Hospital	726
Roger Williams Hospital	248
St. Joseph's Hospital (Prov. Unit)	263 and 16 Bassinets
Veteran's Admin. Hospital	353

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There are seven hospitals located in Providence as shown in Table 3.16. There are seventeen nursing homes in the City. Given the City's changing demographic structure, the need for additional elderly care facilities may be necessary in the longer term.

### **Education**

**Public Schools** - There are 30 schools in the City of Providence, which had an enrollment of approximately 19,800 students in the Fall of 1988 school year. The breakdown of grades is shown in greater detail in Table 3.17.

Class sizes are set by contract with the teachers union at an average of 26, and maximum of 29. Teachers are compensated when the number of students exceeds the class size maximum of 26 students. Space at the schools is at a premium and complex arrangements are necessary to ensure all the students are accommodated, with minimum busing, while still addressing mandatory desegregation requirements. Schools follow a feeder pattern from elementary through high school except for magnet programs.

Several different options are available to high school students, depending on their interests and intended career paths. Options include magnet schools, comprehensive high schools, alternative learning programs, and a Classical high school. Elementary magnet programs and an elementary and middle school gifted program are also offered.

Magnets and special purpose schools are designed to attract students by offering specialized programs, often related to specific careers. The intent is to attract students of all ethnic and social backgrounds. Comprehensive schools offer academic programs and a broad range of elective courses.

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**TABLE 3.17**  
**ESTIMATED PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT**  
**Fall 1988**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
Kindergarten/Preschool	1,982
Grade 1 - 6	9,222
Grade 7 - 12	7,465
Other	1,122
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19,791</b>

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Source: Providence School Department

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In the Providence Schools additional demands are placed on the system due to the social and demographic needs. Due to the changes in the population of the City, the role of the School Department has expanded to include a range of social services. With the increase in foreign students, single parent households, dual parent working households, teen pregnancy and the drug problem, the school system has or is expected to provide services in addition to the traditional educational functions. As shown on Figure 3.18 projected age distribution of the population shows a slight increase in the 5 - 11 year age group as well the 12-16 year age group. These figures are based on the 1980 census and should be carefully evaluated when the 1990 census data is available. It will be very important to take accurate census survey on the recent influx of the southeast Asian students, which appears to be characterized by larger families with more school age children than is the norm for Providence.

In the 1989-1990 superintendent's budget, the following goals were established; to improve academic performance of each student; to develop student assignment patterns to insure quality integrated education; to enhance social service initiative; to reduce dropout rates; to increase opportunities for parental involvement; to increase the quality of educational services and staff recruitment; to expend external partnerships; restore the schools' facilities; and improved public information.

Additional services offered by the School Department to address changing needs include:

- Counseling;
- Cooperation with community centers in latchkey programs (before and after school care);

- Breakfast and lunch programs;
- Substance abuse programs;
- Dropout prevention programs;
- Parenting skills;
- Day care at Central High School; and,
- Outreach programs throughout the school system with community agencies.

The City's school facilities are in critical need of upgrading. The City of Providence has recently completed a comprehensive facilities needs analysis for the School Department's buildings and grounds. Based on the findings of this study the City School Department in cooperation with the Department of Public Buildings is currently embarking on an extensive facilities upgrading program called "Renaissance 2000" for corrective action for neighborhood schools. Renaissance 2000 is a comprehensive plan for the school system outlining \$107 million worth of improvements to existing facilities. Each school and facility was evaluated and recommendations made regarding extensive exterior and interior rehabilitation. Bonding has been approved in the amount of \$66 million.

Construction on certain projects has begun. The project is expected to take 12 years to implement and should be complete in the year 2000.

The City has developed a unique approach to providing a constituency for education. An Adopt-a-School partnership has been developed with the business community through the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce with the goal of strengthening and enriching education in the Providence public schools. Almost all of the schools in the City have been adopted by a business or agency in the City. This program should be encouraged and expanded where appropriate.

The School Department is embarking on several new initiatives including:

- Support update of a middle school alternative education program;
- Improvement of the management of student enrollment with a computerized system for projections and seat availability;
- Development of a teacher recruitment magnet program to encourage Providence students to pursue teaching as a career and to return and teach in the system;
- Development of a public information program; and,
- Development of programs to address "at risk" students, and expansion of the early childhood literacy program (grades K, 1 and 2).

**Private Schools** - There are sixteen catholic diocesan schools in the City, ten independent private schools, seven private schools serving handicapped students, sixteen educational programs for very young students, two state operated schools and the central vocational-technical facility.

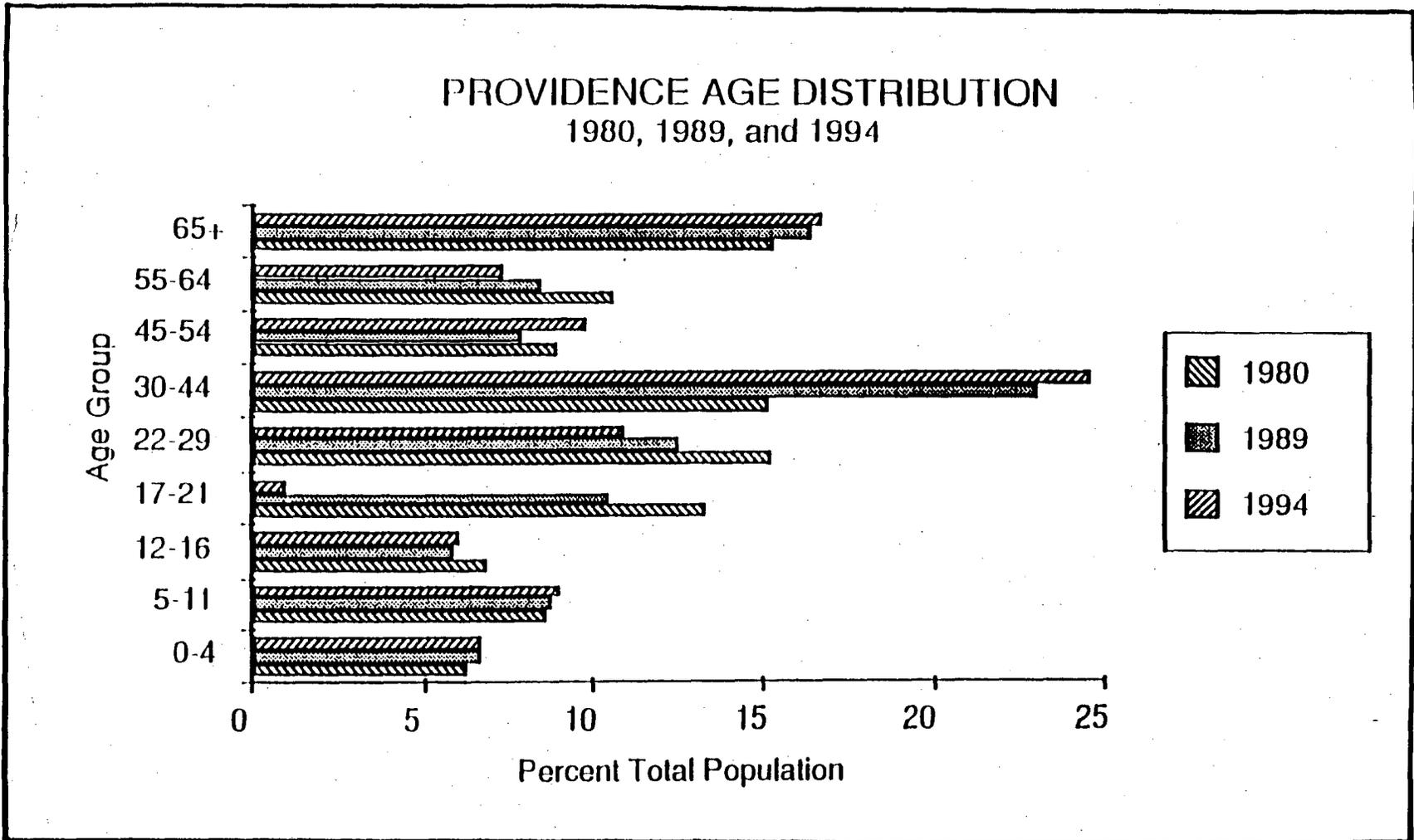


Figure 3.18

The Providence School Department has an excellent relationship with the parochial school system. The City is required by law to provide text books and busing services to these schools. In addition, the City provides diagnostic and nursing services, as well as special education services upon request.

**Colleges and Universities** - There are six major colleges and universities in the City including:

- Brown University
- Rhode Island School of Design
- Providence College
- Rhode Island College
- Johnson and Wales University
- University of Rhode Island, Continuing Education

There are several technical vocational schools located in the City. In total, over 25,000 students are enrolled at these institutions serving communities in Rhode Island and southeastern New England.

### **Library Services**

Citywide public library services are provided through a private nonprofit organization called the Providence Public Library. The Library receives partial funding from the state, the City, and also maintains an active fund-raising program, including private, corporate and foundation/endowment sources. Roughly thirty percent of the total library services budget comes from fund-raising activities.

The central/main library is located in the Downtown, while nine branch libraries are located in neighborhood areas throughout the City. To provide a wide range of services, the nine neighborhood libraries are divided into three clusters, each cluster containing a larger branch and two smaller branches. The cluster concept was developed to provide comprehensive library services under budget constraints. The larger branches provide a variety of programs, special materials and expanded hours. The smaller branches target children and senior citizens, with more limited adult services.

Library services at the smaller branches are limited as a result of funding. Most of the library buildings contain sufficient space for expansion of services in the future, except for the Rochambeau Library, which has been identified for possible expansion or new building construction.

Library services in Providence have a close cooperative arrangement with the schools, through a full-time schools coordinator. Recently, the Library has received increasing demand to augment school library services. The Library hopes to work more closely with the public schools in relation to curricula and collections, as well as project assignments. The Library does work with the public schools in providing preschool activities, such as story hours. This has become necessary due to the changing demographic structure of the City, including increases in single parents, working parents, and the growing ethnic communities (particularly Hispanic and southeast Asian).

An important goal of the Library system is to strengthen the role of the central library as a state and city information and education center, which can contribute to economic development statewide. The central branch library is an important resource for the business community, and the Library plans to develop necessary resources, making the business and academic community more aware of what facilities are available. The Library plans to encourage users to come in to the central branch library and use the facilities on the premises. At present the central branch library resources for in-person use are underutilized.

There are fifteen other private and public libraries in the city, including those at colleges and universities.

### **General Government**

The administrative offices of City Government are housed in at least ten buildings, four of which are leased, located throughout the city. At present space requirements are adequately met for most departments, although there are various discrepancies in the quality of office space and equipment between departments and agencies.

The Police and Fire Departments, however, are in need of improved quarters, in order to operate more efficiently. As mentioned earlier, a new Public Safety Building is planned, to accommodate the space needs of the police, fire, public safety, as well as the Housing and City courts.

Personal and real property owned by the City is the responsibility of the Department of Public Properties. These include buildings, real estate, schools, civic property and any property associated with a city agency. The Department is currently involved with the renovation of the schools, planning of the Public Safety building, renovation of 14 fire stations, and the renovation of four recreation facilities including, the Joslin, Danforth, South Providence, and Zuccolo facilities.

To assist with the development and maintenance of public buildings, the City established the Providence Building Authority, which has the power to float bonds, and does not require a City referendum for securing funding for public projects.

#### ***3.11.2 CURRENT ISSUES AND FUTURE TRENDS IN COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES***

In each of the community services and facilities provided in the City of Providence, there are problems and issues to be resolved relating to current levels of service, and accommodating future demands and community needs.

The following summarizes the issues and problems either discussed in the previous sections, or raised by the public at various public meetings held as part of the plan development process.

- The Providence water supply system is in need of upgrading and improvement in order to

provide adequate service to current and future residents. The Scituate Reservoir, which serves most of the state's population, as well as the City of Providence, is vulnerable to potential contamination, and thus should be a priority for protection.

- The allocation of potable water for industrial uses must be reevaluated given increased residential demand.
- The wastewater system serving the City of Providence needs to address the problem of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) which flow into the Providence River during and after storm events, resulting in extensive pollution in the vicinity of Field's Point.
- Due to the changing demographic characteristics of the City, with increasing numbers of female-headed households, southeast Asian and other ethnic minorities, and elderly residents in the City, the human service delivery system will have to identify the extent of these changes and respond accordingly. This will be difficult given the fiscal difficulties of the federal, state and local governments.
- The existing buildings in which the fire and police headquarters are located are antiquated and do not meet the expansion or safety needs of these two city departments. Many of the fire stations located throughout the City are in need of renovation; and the communications and records equipment for both departments require significant improvement. Currently, the Police Department is located in one central place in the City; with no other stations distributed in the City. With the changing demographic structure of the City, this situation needs to be evaluated for appropriateness. In addition, concern at public meetings was expressed over the perceived lack of police patrols in the neighborhoods.
- Hazardous materials sites throughout the city pose a potential risk to the citizens. Continual evaluation of the city's ability to handle accidents at these sites must be conducted by the Fire Department, including staffing and equipment needs.
- The School system needs to continue its facilities renovation and program upgrading projects, to address the changing needs of City students.
- Evaluate the impact of the pilot program of school based management for possible implementation city wide.
- The public library system is facing a problem in terms of usership particularly at the central location, due to parking, security, and personnel.
- Maintenance of all public facilities has proven to be a problem. Explicit management procedures and maintenance budgets should be adopted to insure regular facility upkeep and modernization.
- Changing demographic conditions create new demands for restructuring public safety services. Outreach and intervention programs in subjects like drug education are increasingly necessary.

These issues and problems need to be addressed both at the Citywide and the neighborhood level to ensure appropriate provision of community services, facilities and programs.

### **3.12 OPEN SPACE, PARKS AND RECREATION**

Changes in American society have influenced attitudes and life-styles greatly. Specifically, attitudes toward recreation have altered, and emphasis is being placed on the provision of recreational facilities and open spaces.

#### **3.12.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS**

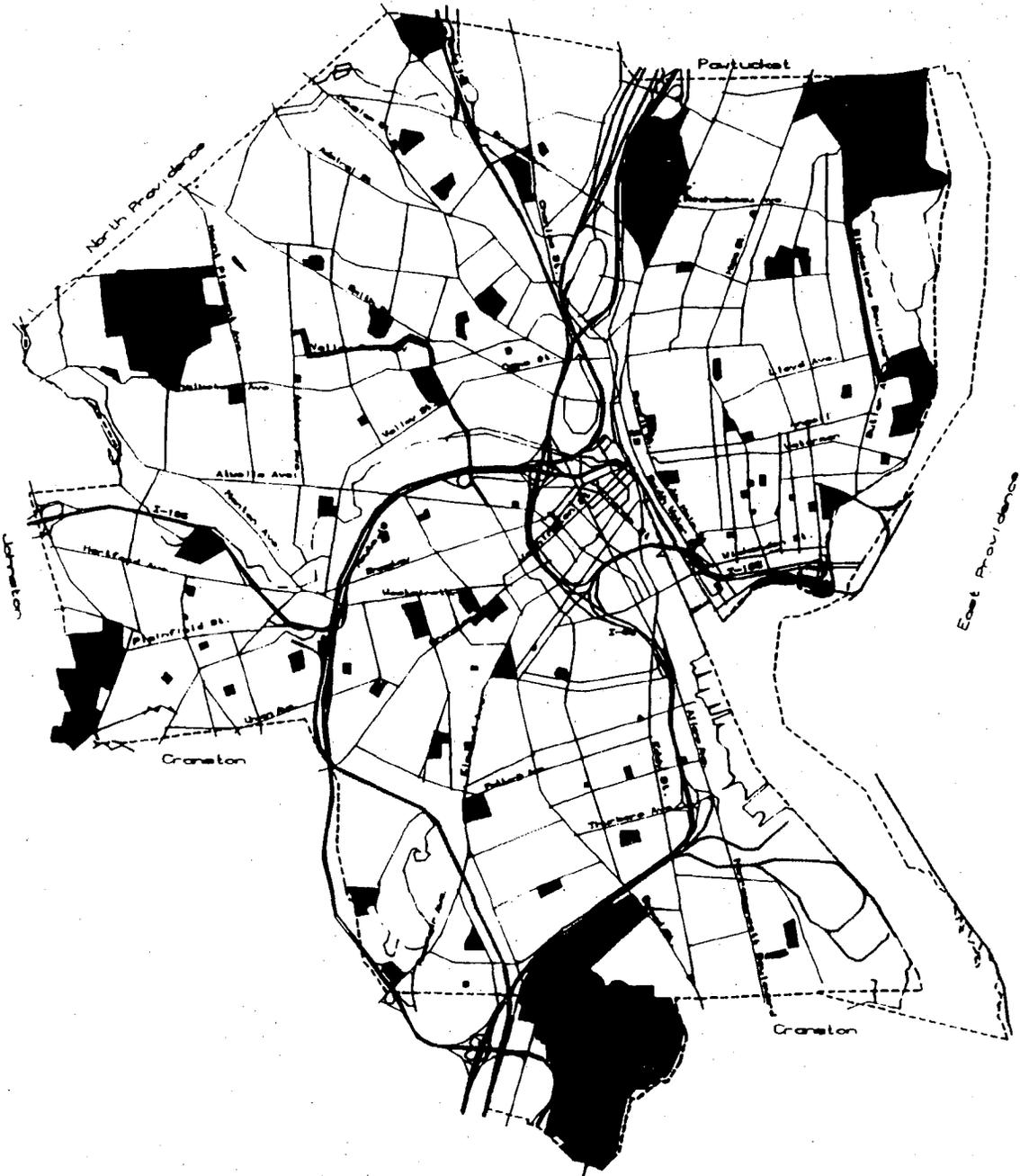
Providence is fortunate to have one of the most diversified public park and recreation systems in New England. In addition to the traditional athletic facilities itemized in Table 3.18, the 1,100 acre city park and recreation system contains the 435 acre Victorian-era Roger Williams Park; 7 miles of boulevards; 2 waterfront parks; public plazas; a municipal golf course; and 28 historic statues.

The total number of city-controlled park, recreation, and open space sites is 148. These 148 sites include school sites, playgrounds, multipurpose athletic sites, plazas, passive green spaces, a golf course, historic sites, pools, and indoor recreation centers. With the exception of a few neighborhoods, where there are specific park and recreation deficiencies, municipal park and recreation facilities are well distributed throughout Providence neighborhoods. A map of parks and open space is shown in Figure 3.19.

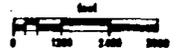
The jewel of the municipal park system is Roger Williams Park. This 435 acre facility, not only serves the City's southside neighborhoods, but is also a statewide recreational resource. Roger Williams Park is one of the few late nineteenth century urban parks that remains largely unchanged from its Victorian prime. The entire park is on the National Register of Historic Places. See Table 3.19 for a listing of the major facilities and park features in Roger Williams Park.

In addition to the municipal park and recreation facilities in the city, Providence is fortunate to have several state and private areas accessible to the general public. Rhode Island College, the State House Grounds, and J.T. Owens Fields are state-owned areas heavily used by Providence residents. Providence is also the home of the state's only national park, the Roger Williams Memorial National Park, which is a passive recreation area, located downtown. Figure 3.19 inserted on next page.

**Existing Management Responsibilities** - Responsibilities for the management of the Providence park and recreation system are fragmented among four city agencies (Table 3.20). In general, the Parks Department has responsibility for maintenance and capital improvements for the majority of sites in the City. School grounds are maintained by the School Department, except for the larger school sites and all of the school athletic grounds which are maintained by the Parks Department. The Public Property Department has a major maintenance role with responsibility for the recreation centers and all of the city's pools.



- KEY:
- Roads
  - Highways
  - Railroads
  - - - City Boundaries
  - Shoreline
  - - - Harbor Line



PROVIDENCE 2000:  
 THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**PARKS & OPEN SPACE**

City Plan Commission  
 Department of Planning and Development  
 400 Westminster St.  
 Providence R.I. 02908

**TABLE 3-18  
 OUTDOOR ATHLETIC FACILITIES AND INDOOR RECREATION CENTERS  
 CITY OF PROVIDENCE**

OUTDOOR ATHLETIC FACILITIES

Basketball Courts	26	Basketball Courts – Lighted	7
Bocce Courts	1	Football Fields	6
Playgrounds	44	Soccer Fields	9
Street Hockey Courts	1	Swimming Pools	7
Tennis Courts	32	Little League Fields	14
Softball Fields	20	Baseball Fields	10
Handball Courts	1	Jogging Tracks	4
Volleyball Courts	3		

INDOOR RECREATION CENTERS

<u>Center</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>
Danforth	Smith Hill
Joslin	Manton/Olneyville
R.F. Kennedy	Elmhurst
Martin Luther King	South Providence
Davey Lopes	South Providence
Zuccolo	Federal Hill

Source: Recreation Department and Parks Department, Annual Reports – 1988

**TABLE 3-19  
 ROGER WILLIAMS PARK FACILITIES AND FEATURES**

Facilities

- Largest Zoo in New England – average annual attendance 425,000
- Museum of History – only one in region
- Casino – 150 events per year
- Temple to Music and Bandstand
- Boathouse
- Betsey Williams Cottage
- Smith Greenhouse complex – open 365 days per year
- New Carousel Building

Features

- |                      |                           |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| • 435 total acres    | • 230 species of trees    |
| • 115 acres of lakes | • 3 formal flower gardens |
| • 10 miles of roads  | • 5 historic bridges      |
| • 9 historic statues |                           |

The Parks Department and the Recreation Department share programming responsibilities for the parks and recreation sites. The Recreation Department is responsible for coordinating all formal athletic permits; running athletic clinics; providing youth recreation activities at the indoor recreation centers and selected outdoor parks; operating a summer lunch program at scores of indoor and outdoor sites; and providing youth and elderly transportation to certain events.

The Parks Department focuses on cultural, artistic, and musical programs primarily geared to adults and primarily in Roger Williams Park. In addition, the Parks Department provides logistical support, such as sound systems and staging, to all of the Downtown and neighborhood festivals each year (see Table 3.21).

**TABLE 3-20  
MANAGEMENT OF PROVIDENCE PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM**

TYPE OF FACILITY	RESPONSIBILITY			
	PARKS DEPT.	RECREATION DEPT.	SCHOOL DEPT.	PUBLIC PROPERTY DEPT.
<b>OUTDOOR</b>				
• Pools		Recreation Programming		Capital improvements, maintenance
• Conley Stadium			Capital improvements, maintenance, athletic programming	
• All other parks, recreation sites, school athletic sites (120 sites)	Capital improvements, maintenance, special events programming	Athletic & recreation programming; summer lunch program		
<b>INDOOR</b>				
• Recreation Centers		Athletic & recreation programming		Capital improvements, maintenance
• School Gyms			Capital improvements, maintenance, athletic programming	

### 3.12.2 CHANGES IN OPEN SPACE, PARKS AND RECREATION

Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan - In June of 1991, the Parks Department with assistance from the Department of Planning and Development (DPD), through the City Plan Commission, developed the "Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan, 1991-1995." The Plan has been approved as Plan Number 1 of the Comprehensive Plan Series of Providence 2000. The Plan addresses the citywide needs in terms of recreation and open space. Included in the Plan is an inventory of the recreation facilities in Providence by neighborhood and ownership.

Although the City's Recreation Plan was primarily based on 1980 Census information, the general findings and recommendations remained valid in the 1980's. For example, the Plan determined that the majority of the City's active recreation facilities were not ideally designed for use by adult, female or elderly residents. As shown in a previous section of this Plan, the proportion of minorities in the City is expected to increase to over twenty percent of the total population by 1993. In addition, the number of households is projected to increase, while average household size is expected to decrease between 1980 and 1993. Finally, as the household size

steadily decreases, the number of female-headed households is expected to increase to the year 2000.

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**TABLE 3-21**  
**RECREATION AND PARK PROGRAMMING**

Recreation Department Programs

- Kickball
- Whiffleball
- Nerf Football
- Volleyball
- Table Games
- Pocket Billiards
- Swimming
- Soccer League
- Adult Basketball League
- Scatterball
- Youth Basketball League
- Street Hockey
- Arts and Craft
- Table Tennis
- Checkers
- Adult Flag Football
- Youth Athletic Clinics

Parks Department – Roger Willams Park Programs

- Arbor Day
- Bandstand Music Series
- Temple to Music Series
- Annual Flower Shows
- Christmas Festivals
- Planetarium Shows
- Museum Lectures
- Zoo Education Programs
- Zoo School Tours
- Zoo Special Events

Parks Department – Neighborhood and Citywide Events

- 4<sup>th</sup> of July
- Ethnic/Religious Festivals
- Jazz Festivals

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Source: Providence Parks and Providence Recreation Department Annual Report – 1988

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Based on the Recreation Plan, the City has been developing facilities and programming and redressing imbalances in the provision of recreation facilities for all of Providence's residents. Furthermore, the Plan recommends eliminating the gap in services for senior citizens and the handicapped. In terms of passive recreation, the Plan recommends rehabilitation of a number of existing sites, versus the expansion of active recreation facilities. An important component addressing elderly needs, is Camp Cronin, which is a city run summer camp for the elderly, located at Point Judith in the Town of Narragansett. While this facility is not within the municipal boundaries of the City, it forms an integral part of the recreational opportunities provided to city residents.

State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan - The State of Rhode Island has prepared a number of recreation and open space-related plans which affect the City of Providence. The primary one is the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 1991-1995. The Plan identifies over-usage of the State's urban parks as a significant problem. One strategy for diffusing this concentrated usage is the State's plan to create a major linear park along the Blackstone River.

This planned linear park includes a number of public improvements intended to facilitate usage of the park while redistributing the concentrated populations in existing urban parks. It will serve to link recreation resources within the City as well as throughout the State. Included in the linear park plan are bikeways, camping areas, water-related recreation and archaeological and

historically significant sites. The Park will be identified through the use of signs, visitor centers and landscaping.

In addition, RIDEM is proposing to provide a significant investment in Snake Den Park in Johnston which would offer recreational alternatives to the residents of Providence.

Providence Harbor - Special Area Management (SAM) Plan - The recreational potential of the Providence Harbor and its shoreline is large. The Special Area Management Plan, developed by the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, identifies specific areas of concern and suggests improvements and changes in policy. As the City of Providence prepares its own harbor, waterfront and Port master plans, the State's Harbor Plan will be used as a direct reference, and will be applied in relevant City policies and implementation programs. This will ensure the highest and best use of the area, while guaranteeing public benefit and access.

Bicycle Facilities Policy Document - The Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) published in May, 1985 the "Rhode Island Bicycle Facilities Policy Document". The RIDOT intends to develop the Blackstone Bikeway through portions of the State and to eventually connect the system to the Massachusetts bikeway system. The bikeway would eventually join the Blackstone Linear Park system as well. This linear route will be an important link for the City; it will provide a connection for city residents to the northern and east bay portions of the State as well as various types of recreation facilities, including hiking trails, camping sites and canoeing points.

Both the East Bay and Blackstone Bikeways would join at India Point Park in Providence where they would link up to the Harbor View Bike Path to Downtown Providence and a planned passenger and bicycle ferry that would go to the Bay Islands Park system.

Local and State, Open Space and Recreational Area Bonds - State voters have strongly endorsed efforts to expand open space and to upgrade existing park and recreation facilities at the State and local level. Over \$100 million in funds have been authorized by the voters in November 1987 and November 1989 for these efforts. These funds are allocated not only to state initiatives but to local communities as well. Funds for the local programs must be committed by fiscal year 1992.

**TABLE 3-22**  
**PROJECTED PARK IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM 1988 - 1991**

PROGRAM	CITY FUNDS	STATE FUNDS	OTHER	TOTAL
Neighborhood Parks	\$9,901,667	\$2,548,962		\$12,451,629
Open Space Acquisition	199,755	963,000		1,161,755
Street Tree Program	1,000,000			1,000,000
Roger Williams Park	2,125,108	3,069,000	801,232	5,995,340
Vehicles/Equipment	300,000			300,000
Bond & Interest Costs	1,473,470			1,473,470
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$15,000,000</b>	<b>\$6,580,962</b>	<b>\$801,232</b>	<b>\$22,382,194</b>

**Parks Department Renovation Projects** - Spurred by the State Open Space and Recreation Area Bonds and by the complementary 1987, \$15 million Providence Open Space and Recreational Area Bond, the Providence Parks Department has launched a comprehensive program to renovate park and recreation sites in the city. Table 3.22 illustrates the funding for the current program.

The most ambitious aspect of the program has been the renovation of neighborhood facilities. Sixty-four neighborhood parks are being renovated over a three-year period. In addition, land is being purchased to expand facilities in the city. Canada Pond has been purchased for conservation, as well as a portion of land along Mashapaug Pond. Land along Cadillac Drive in Elmwood has been purchased to meet future recreation needs in that neighborhood.

**Water Place Park, River Relocation** - As part of the Capital Center development, the State is constructing a major new Down-town Park, known as Waterplace Park. This area will feature a basin and waterfall as its focal point and will anchor the northern end of a revitalized and relocated Downtown river system. Key components of this work include relocating the Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck Rivers, uncovering the Providence River, and constructing a River Walkway. This work is being funded by the Federal Highway Authority, the State and the City.

Anchoring the southern end of the revitalized upper Providence Harbor will be a renovated Corliss Landing area and a renovated India Point Park. The renovations at India Point Park have begun and include a new Ceremonial Dock and a new Ferry Dock. The latter presently serves the Block Island Ferry and will eventually serve the State Bay Islands Park System. Other improvements scheduled for completion at India Point include: a Ferry Terminal Building, sea wall renovation, lighting, new walkways, parking, and site amenities.

### *3.12.3 CURRENT ISSUES AND FUTURE TRENDS IN OPEN SPACE*

While the Providence park and recreation system is undergoing the most comprehensive renovation program in its history, there are still issues that need to be addressed:

- Population redistribution from one neighborhood to another, changes in the number of households, and changes in ethnicity affect recreation needs. Facilities and activities for female teens, adults, and families need to be developed.
- Sixty-four neighborhood parks are presently being renovated. There remain several neighborhood parks that have either never received renovation or have remaining unfunded needs from previous renovation programs.
- The need for some small parks, in light of population redistribution, should be addressed. The sale of underutilized park land could be used to fund park renovation programs.
- Ongoing park renovations should consider the flexibility of a site to meet multiple needs. As large plots of land in Providence become scarce, existing athletic areas should be considered for multiple sports use.

- Efforts should continue to identify open space conservation land that may be desirable to purchase as funds become available.
- Remaining renovation needs at Roger Williams Park should be identified and prioritized as funds become available from the 1989 State Environmental Management Bond Issue.
- The most pervasive and challenging issue facing the Providence park and recreation system in the 1990's is maintenance. The fiscal reality of attempting to maintain a large urban park system in Providence will not likely improve in the 1990's. City resources and funds will likely never be totally adequate, particularly since Providence park and recreation sites are heavily used by nonresidents. Non-City funds will need to be identified to supplement the City maintenance budget for parks and recreation sites.
- Encourage the development of an adopt a park program in the City's neighborhoods.

### **3.13 TRANSPORTATION, PARKING AND CIRCULATION**

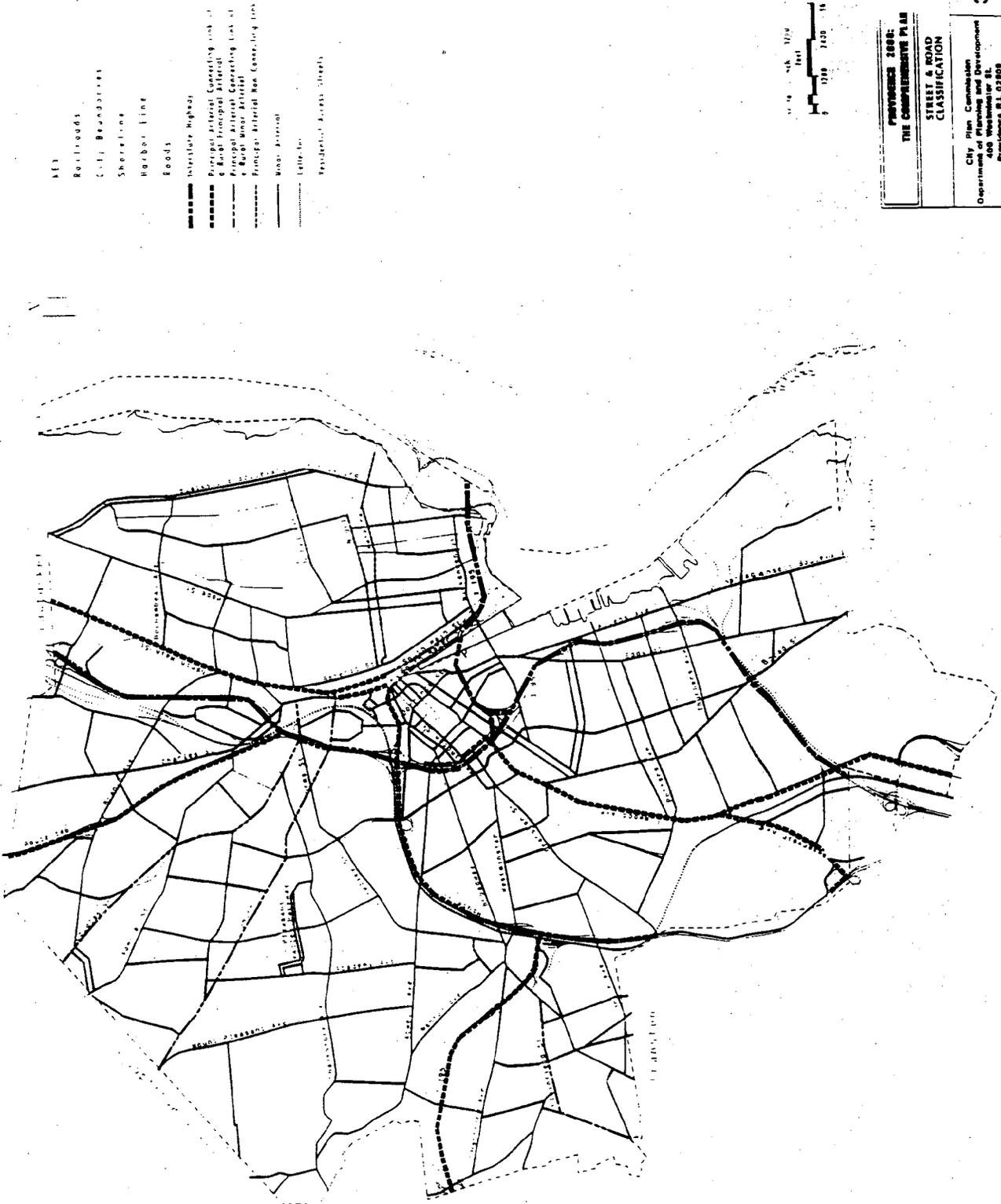
#### *3.13.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS*

**Road Systems** - There are 372 miles of streets and highways in Providence. About 14 miles of these are in the interstate highway system.

Providence contains a number of major road networks with statewide and regional significance. Interstate 95 runs north/south while Interstate 195 runs east/west. And a number of secondary and smaller routes run through the City which are utilized by interstate traffic, particularly to Massachusetts and Connecticut. A recent connection, the Civic Center Interchange connects the Capital Center to I-95, RI 195, and RI 10. That interchange also affords much better vehicle access to Downtown Providence, and has reduced some traffic on local streets downtown. Providence's strategic location at the head of Narragansett Bay is the reason why it was an early focus or hub of the road and railway system.

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) has classified the highway and street systems throughout the state based upon the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) standards. This "functional classification" of streets and highways focuses on the various functions that roads serve. Generally the two basic roadway functions are: access to property and travel mobility. Most roads perform both functions, but in varying combinations. This relationship ultimately determines the functional classification of a particular road. The three classifications - local, collector and arterial reflect the access/mobility relationship as described below. Figure 3.20 shows the major arterial routes in the City. In general roadways are classified according to the following criteria: local, emphasis on land access function; collector, relatively even balance between land access and through traffic; and arterial, emphasis on a high level of mobility for through movement.

Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan  
 July 1993



In urban areas (as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census) such as Providence, the functional system is broken down as follows:

1. Principal Arterial Street
  - a. Interstate
  - b. Connecting link of a rural principal arterial
  - c. Connecting link of a rural minor arterial
  - d. Other principal arterial (non-connecting link)
2. Minor Arterial Street
3. Collector Street
4. Local Street

RIDOT also has identified those road networks which receive federal aid for improvements as outlined in "Federal Aid Systems." New listings of federally-funded improvement recipients are published relatively regularly. But generally, Interstates 95 and 195 receive federal aid, as do Routes 1, 1A, 10, 146, 44, 7, 14, 6, and RI 195. In addition, a significant number of smaller "urban routes" receive federal aid for road improvements.

A number of federal and state roadway improvements currently are programmed for Providence. These are prioritized in the Highway Improvement Program and Plan, published by RIDOT in July, 1987. These improvements will respond to many of the existing deficiencies for both through-city traffic as well as interstate travel. As development in Providence, particularly, residential activities, increases, demands on the existing road networks will intensify. Therefore, improvements and upgrading are necessary to facilitate inner-city vehicular traffic.

**Other Modes of Transportation** - The City of Providence contains all forms of transportation, for both people and cargo. As described earlier the city contains two major interstate highways, as well as a number of major routes. The highway system carries traffic through the State of Rhode Island to Connecticut and Massachusetts, and has a regional significance in terms of highway travel and transport.

The City of Providence maintains an active Port, equipped to handle thousands of tons annually from all over the world. The Port of Providence is the second largest deep water port in New England. It has become an important regional distribution center for imported automobiles, lumber and petroleum products. In addition the Port has serviced, and could service again, cruise ships and other water-related recreational facilities, including docking and mooring. Port development is covered in Section 3.8 of this plan.

Rail service to the port area serves the Municipal Wharf, the Providence Gas Company and a number of other industrial businesses, facilitating freight train traffic of more than 2,000 railroad cars per year in the area. Active Providence and Worcester Railroad lines cross Allens Avenue at several points and run along its center. The Railroad currently is planning to upgrade portions of these lines to improve overall service to and within the area.

The industrial waterfront is linked to the Atlantic Ocean, 27 miles away, by a navigational channel in the Providence River. The channel provides safe passage for deep draft vessels, and

has been manually widened over the years. In the early 1970's the channel was deepened to 40 feet below mean low water from Narragansett Bay to Fields Point, and to 35 feet below mean low water from Fields Point to Fox Point. This allows deep draft ocean vessels to use the dock north of Fields Point.

Waterside access from the channel to the port area is provided by two types of facilities. The Municipal Wharf serves ships containing general and bulk cargo, while privately owned piers located north of the Municipal Wharf serve ships and barges carrying petroleum or other bulk cargo. The Municipal Wharf provides six berths varying in depth from 35 to 40 feet, deep enough for current shipping needs. The pier area north of the Municipal Wharf provides seven usable berths ranging in depth from 21 to 37 feet.

Providence rail commuters and travelers are served by an extensive Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and Amtrack system. The present train station was constructed as the first element in the Capital Center project. The Providence bus station, while unfortunately no longer located in the downtown, provides service throughout the state and the region. The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) provides city and state residents with regular bus service into Kennedy Plaza. Kennedy Plaza was redesigned in the early 1980's as an auto restricted zone, to separate bus traffic and bus users from regular downtown traffic.

Providence is the hub of RIPTA bus service and is well served by RIPTA routes (see Figure 3.21). Bus ridership is currently about 54,000 per day throughout the RIPTA system with about 30,000 riders going to and from downtown Providence every day. Overall ridership has declined from about 18,500,000 (annually) in 1984 to 15,700,000 in 1988 (a 15% loss). It is expected that increased downtown economic activities and continued population growth throughout Providence will help in attracting more people to use bus service.

RIPTA has 253 buses and operates them at an average cost of \$3.03 per vehicle mile. The system cost per passenger is \$0.91 and costs are covered by the State (46%), the Federal Government (22%) user fees and miscellaneous sources (32%). The bus fleet has been, and will continue to be modernized through the purchase of new vehicles. All buses now are equipped with radios, and the next major capital investment of the system will be new and upgraded facilities for bus storage and maintenance, and for the RIPTA Transportation Department. These improvements will be made in the Elmwood Garage where the current facilities are.

The Bonanza Bus Company, which provides intercity bus service, recently moved its terminal from downtown to Smithfield Avenue just off of I-95. In its new location the terminal will provide free parking for 250 cars, and there will be a shuttle bus service from it to Kennedy Plaza downtown. The old downtown terminal site will be redeveloped for convention center use.

Providence is ten miles north of T.F. Green Airport in Warwick, Rhode Island. The proximity of the state airport via I-95 provides airfreight as well as tourism potential for the City of Providence. In addition to the state airport in Warwick, Providence is in close proximity to two smaller airports: one in Smithfield/Lincoln and one at Quonset Point, in North Kingstown, Rhode Island.

Travel by water may also be part of the overall transportation system. A terminal for water transportation to the Bay Island Park is planned in Fox Point Park, and a water taxi from Downtown to communities along the bay is being examined.

The state Department of Transportation and the Department of Environmental Management, Division of Planning and Development, have prepared a plan for the Blackstone River Bikeway, a nineteen-mile bicycle route planned from the City of Providence to the Town of North Smithfield. According to the Planning Study and Preliminary Design Draft Report, published in June of 1987, the Blackstone Bikeway would link with the East Bay Bicycle Path at the Interstate 195 bridge in Providence. The East Bay Bicycle Path is a fourteen-mile bikeway from Providence to Bristol. Thus bicycle travel throughout the State of Rhode Island will be enhanced and will go through portions of Providence.

Pedestrian access in Providence is one of its special characteristics. Many individuals walk to work, students walk to schools and neighborhoods enjoy pedestrian access to local community areas. All traffic studies and transportation plans should include elements providing for ease of pedestrian movement.

**Parking** - Providence is a city whose basic development pattern was established long before automobile and truck traffic became prevalent. It is therefore a city into which parking must be fit, rather than one that was developed with parking in mind from the outset. The downtown area is where parking is viewed to be in particularly short supply; but residential neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas outside of downtown also face parking problems.

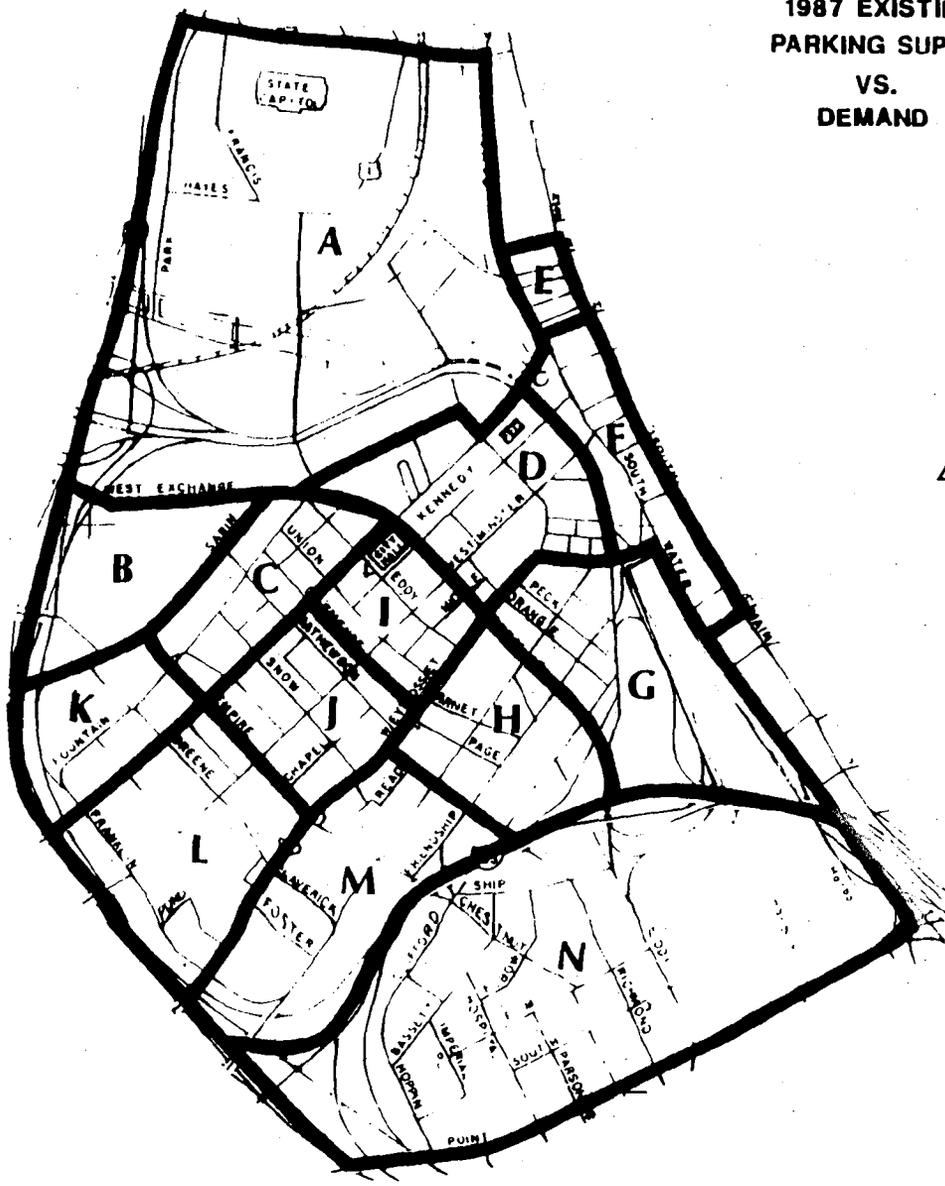
Outside the downtown area parking is accommodated by zoning requirements and on-street parking regulations. In the future this policy will continue, with adjustments planned in both zoning requirements (for example, more off-street, on-site spaces required for business uses) and on-street regulations. On-street parking along arterials and at key intersections can seriously reduce the capacities of those arterials and intersections. On-street parking regulations will serve to allow these arterials and intersections to operate as designed, and as coordinated with zoning and redevelopment activities to provide more off-street spaces to replace or enlarge the numbers of any on-street spaces lost.

Over the past four years, the Providence Department of Traffic Engineering has increased the number of parking meters citywide from 650 to more than 1000. This has been done to optimize the available on-street parking space. It has been accomplished by rescinding some outdated and unnecessary parking regulations, and increasing the amount of existing curb space available for parking (curb space formerly prohibiting parking).

It is City practice now to provide short-term meters in the downtown at reasonable competitive rates (fifty cents per hour), thereby encouraging all-day employees to park in off-street lots or garages on the edge of downtown. In connection with parking reform, the City also anticipates improved traffic circulation, especially in the downtown area, from the replacement of traffic control equipment in more than 100 signalized intersections citywide, funded by the federal/state municipal signal program.



1987 EXISTING  
PARKING SUPPLY  
VS.  
DEMAND



A -	2,607	H -	1,086
	561		634
	+ 2,046		+ 252
B -	541	I -	97
	670		894
	- 129		- 787
C -	1,196	J -	1,334
	1,058		1,039
	+ 138		+ 295
D -	514	K -	338
	4,249		263
	- 3,735		+ 75
E -	136	L -	821
	113		1,547
	+ 23		- 726
F -	484	M -	988
	710		463
	- 226		+ 525
G -	2,153	N -	
	543		
	+ 1,610		

**TOTAL ALL ZONES**

12,295
12,944
- 649

**LEGEND**  
 000 - Supply  
 000 - Demand  
 000 (+) Surplus or  
 (-) Deficiency

Source:  
 Downtown Parking Garage  
 Marketing Study  
 June 1987

PROVIDENCE 2000:  
 THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**DOWNTOWN PARKING STUDY**

City Plan Commission  
 Department of Planning and Development  
 100 Westminster St  
 Providence RI 02908

3.22

### 3.13.2 CHANGES IN TRANSPORTATION

The City of Providence is experiencing major development. Along with new construction and development, new streets as well as improvements to existing roadways are essential to facilitate both access to specific sites and through-traffic. As described previously, the state DOT is in the process of making substantial improvements to the interstate highway system as well as to smaller routes. Ramps for Interstates 95 and 195 are being designed, constructed and relocated. Major resurfacing projects for Routes 146 and 10 are soon to commence. And reconstruction is planned for the Point Street and the Henderson Bridges in the City.

The Capital Center project represents the largest redevelopment project in the State's history. The project includes the relocation of the Woonasquatucket and the Moshassuck Rivers, as well as roadway improvements and new construction including Memorial Boulevard, the redesigned Francis Street overpass to the State House, the extension of (the existing) Exchange Street to the State House, and the Civic Center interchange for Interstate 95. Figure 3.10 in the Economic Development Section delineates the entire Capital Center project and downtown and shows these transportation improvements.

In the public meetings held to review the comprehensive plan, pedestrian circulation was an issue identified as needing improvement. Such facilities as sidewalks, new access ways, and covered arcades were identified as desirable to promote pedestrian circulation.

In some parts of the City it is very appropriate to provide pedestrian facilities. For example, as an extension of the Capital Center project, the City of Providence and the State of Rhode Island are involved in revitalizing the Promenade Center area of Providence. Located along the Woonasquatucket River, this area is bounded by Atwells Avenue, Valley Street, Prescott Street, West Park Street, Interstate 95 and Harris Avenue. This revitalization district is intended to allow and encourage pedestrian traffic in the area and facilitate vehicular traffic through the area. This, in turn is expected to aid in prompting private redevelopment of property in the area.

In some parts of the City pedestrian needs must be balanced with vehicle access needs. As an example, the Westminster Pedestrian Mall is now open to vehicular traffic. While the Westminster Mall will still provide for, and attract substantial pedestrian activity, it is being opened to vehicles in an attempt to revitalize the old retail district part of downtown, to improve the commercial environment, and to improve downtown traffic circulation. The intention is to increase visibility of, and access to, the buildings and establishments in the area, to retain existing businesses and offices, and to attract new ones.

Two studies were conducted which directly relate to the City's road network. First, a special committee was creating a Signage Plan for the City to facilitate access and visibility of points of interest, government buildings and historic sites within Providence. The second study deals with downtown lighting. This study will provide a plan for a properly lighted and safe downtown environment, to encourage night activity in Downtown Providence.

In the downtown area parking has to be handled differently because needs are much more intense, owing to the density of development. A 1987 study identified an existing demand of 12,944 parking spaces downtown (including the Capital Center, but excluding the Jewelry District). If existing buildings were fully occupied, as is planned, demand would increase to 14,581 spaces, indicating a deficit of 649 spaces considering existing building occupancy, and a deficit of 2,286 spaces, considering full building occupancy. If the year 2000 parking demand is considered, with new building and parking facilities that are planned, the deficit increases to 4601 spaces. Of those spaces 720 are now being built in the Capital Center on Parcel 5.

These additional facilities for parking have been recommended in the downtown parking study. These are a Fountain/Mathewson Site with 605 spaces, a site by the Garrahy Courthouse with 910 spaces, and a site in the Jewelry District with 375 spaces. These would account for 1890 new parking spaces, leaving a deficit of 1991 spaces by the year 2000 if all projects now envisioned are built and occupied by then. The Outlet Garage is being refurbished and will continue to provide 350 parking spaces downtown.

By the year 2010 the demand for downtown parking will have increased. Additional projects for parking must be considered. Specific projects should be evaluated in the next several years to meet the deficit. It is possible that enhanced public transportation will help to reduce some of the parking demand by the year 2010, so both modes of transportation should be considered in attempting to refine the estimate of needed parking spaces.

### *3.13.3 CURRENT ISSUES AND FUTURE TRENDS IN TRANSPORTATION*

There are a number of issues that must be faced in the coming years to address transportation, parking and circulation in the city.

- The roadway system in Providence barely satisfies the current transportation needs in the City. The new development proposed and under construction raises a real concern about the impacts of increased traffic and parking problems in downtown.
- A number of large-scale roadway improvements are necessary to meet growing demands on the roads. These include both operations and management improvements as well as physical capacity expansion improvements. A major rehabilitation of I-195 (the Providence River Bridge) will be undertaken. The final location of the highway will have a major impact on the city.
- Providence has a history of turning its back on the waterfront. In order to reverse this trend, the city should emphasize pedestrian access to the waterfront and discourage development or intensification of roadways abutting waterfront areas.
- Pedestrian improvements are increasingly desired by Providence residents and workers. Such improvements are needed to link changing and newly developing areas, and to encourage walking as a mode of transportation and as a leisure time activity.
- Mass transit systems are constantly threatened by budgetary cuts and other potential funding

problems.

- Signage throughout the City is outdated and somewhat disorganized. Road networks are confusing. The City should enlist the help of private property owners and employers to address these issues.
- Parking remains as one of the most significant problems throughout the City. In the neighborhoods, parking occurs on small side streets and often impedes the flow of traffic. Throughout smaller commercial areas, parking turnover is slow, or parking is not readily available for quick-stop shopping. In the downtown, the supply of affordable parking may not meet future needs.
- An updated traffic study should be performed to identify potential problem areas throughout the City, but with particular attention paid to the downtown, and adjacent neighborhoods, where downtown workers tend to park their cars all day.
- Citywide parking needs should be refined from previous studies, to assess existing and future parking problems and to recommend possible solutions. To further address the parking needs in Providence, incentives for utilizing the transit system, along with new parking facilities, should be actively pursued.
- Future development should be encouraged to concentrate in areas in which roadway improvements are occurring or are planned.
- Alternatives to driving, including water transit, light rail, walking, biking, and other means of commuting, should be encouraged through a cooperative campaign involving authorities from the City, the state, the business community, and the private transit companies.
- Street abandonments are disruptive, disturbing the traffic flow and the potential for future development. Any request for a street abandonment must be carefully reviewed to determine its impact on present and future land use and traffic flow. Street abandonments should be discouraged, particularly in the downtown.

No.

CHAPTER AN ORDINANCE	No.  A7 ORDINANCE
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CITY OF PROVIDENCE  
 DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

Approved by the City of Providence:  
 A. Johnson

IN CITY COUNCIL  
SEP 15 1994

FIRST READING  
REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON  
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT  
RENEWAL & PLANNING

*Richard L. Clerck*  
CLERK

THE COMMITTEE ON

URBAN REDEVELOPMENT  
RENEWAL & PLANNING  
PROVIDENCE, R.I.

Approves Passage of  
The Within Resolution Ordinance

*Barbara L. Quinn*  
11/25/94  
Clerk

SEP 7 9 37 AM '94  
HG: HW

FILED

*Councilman Bellon and Councilman Rollins (By request)*