

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY TASK FORCE

June 1 2021

Dear Mayor Elorza, Council President Igliazzi, and City Councilors:

The Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force (ESTF) respectfully submits to you our annual priorities and the report from the Office of Sustainability on the City's Annual Sustainability-related Achievements.

We first want to commend Director Leah Bamberger and the Office of Sustainability – Rob Hart and Emily Koo – on the breadth and depth of work accomplished this team in 2020. As we are all aware, 2020 was a challenging year, which for City staff not only included a pandemic, but also working remotely and reduced hours. Emily and Rob both joined the team in 2020, and both hit the ground running with this important work, as you can see in the enclosed report.

While we may be beginning to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, unfortunately the threat of climate change continues to loom large for our City. Earlier this year, in its annual list of most endangered properties, the Providence Preservation Society listed the entire city as under threat from climate change. The time to act is now.

Luckily, the City already has a blueprint for next steps that was developed in partnership with community members in Providence – the Climate Justice Plan. And in 2020, the Office of Sustainability aligned the metrics and goals of the original Sustainability Plan and the Climate Justice Plan to ensure transparency, alignment, and action on both plans simultaneously. We support continued action by the City – across departments – to implement the priorities of these Plans to address our climate justice and other sustainability needs in line with the input from communities – particularly frontline communities of color.

To this end, we applaud the City Council's recent passage of the Sustainability Ordinance, sponsored by Councilor Anthony – and the Mayor's quick signing of the ordinance into law. This ordinance codifies the goals of the climate justice plan into city policy, ensuring that it will outlive this current Administration and current staff priorities. It also codifies what already exists – an Office of Sustainability, not just a single director position. It also makes important changes to our Task Force – renaming us the Sustainability Commission, and explicitly adding new members from youth led organizations and from environmental justice communities. While we officially welcomed our second member from the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee in 2020, we recognize the need to codify the role of both youth and environmental justice communities through ordinance.

However, much still needs to be done. For example, despite support from community members and the business community, the Building Energy Reporting Ordinance has still not passed out of Committee. This commonsense policy would require large buildings to report their annual energy usage through a simple online

IN CITY COUNCIL
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THE SAME BE RECEIVED.
[Signature] CLERK

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY TASK FORCE

reporting tool. You can't manage what you don't measure – and this policy helps building owners identify buildings that need additional energy efficiency investments and helps increase transparency for the small businesses shopping around for rental space in larger buildings who need to better understand what their monthly bills could look like. The Office of Sustainability already runs a voluntary program for building owners – it is time to make it mandatory. The ordinance received letters of support from over 150 Providence residents from every Ward in the City, as well as from the Steelyard, Truthbox Architects, and the Providence Foundation. We urge the City Council to pass the Ordinance without weakening amendments immediately.

We also respectfully encourage you to work with our Task Force as you develop future environmental related policies – we would love to be additional support for this important work! Our membership includes residents from Wards from across the City and people from many backgrounds. We manage our public meetings to encourage the public to participate and to connect with the work and priorities of the City, while also sharing their priorities and goals. To this end, we commend Councilman Goncalves for working with the Task Force and the Office of Sustainability in late 2020 on his resolutions on Composting and on Environmentally Preferred Purchasing. Both of these are leading to and building on important work in departments across the City and were strengthened through public engagement.

The City has no time to lose. With our beautiful location on the water, and crisscrossed by rivers, we are especially at risk as waters continue to rise. Our communities have unequal access to tree canopy, which provide natural cooling as the weather warms. Our building stock is historic and beautiful, and also in need of energy efficiency and other upgrades. And while our city is the heart of this state, we need better mobility infrastructure (for biking, walking, and public transit) to connect us to the places and services people need here.

We thank you for the areas where you have shown leadership and look forward to partnership to continue to strengthen our City through implementation of the Climate Justice Plan.

Sincerely,

Sue AnderBois, Chair, Environmental Sustainability Task Force
Julian Drix, Vice-Chair, Environmental Sustainability Task Force
Amelia Rose
Catherine van Amburgh
Carlos Garcia Quijano
Jesus Holguin
Priscilla de la Cruz
Vatic Kumba



CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Jorge O. Elorza, Mayor

2020 Providence Office of Sustainability Annual Report

Prepared for the Providence Environmental Sustainability Task Force by the Office of Sustainability to be presented to the City Council and Mayor pursuant to Chapter 2, Section 45 of the Code of Ordinances.

Collaborative Governance, Accountability, and Racial Justice

Priority Targets and Metrics

- By 2025, the Office of Sustainability is actively partnering with frontline community organizations on every major initiative using a collaborative governance model.
- By 2030, the Office of Sustainability and the REJC have advanced from the “Involve” stage to “Collaborate” stage on the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership.
- By 2025, all City staff are trained upon hire and have continuing education on racial equity, anti-racism, environmental racism, environmental justice, and implicit bias.
- Diversity hiring target to shift municipal workforce to be more reflective of the community.

2020 Accomplishments

- The ESTF welcomed its second member from the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee.
- Office of Sustainability and the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee launch Green Justice Zones.
- City’s CIP includes \$1 million of dedicated funding for climate resilience investments in Green Justice Zones to go towards projects decided by the community that support climate resilience. The City worked with the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee to identify community priorities.
- City passes a Resolution requesting that the City commit to transforming into an anti-racist institution that prioritizes investment and supports structures in alignment with the Just Providence Framework and the City’s Climate Justice Plan.
- The City of Providence established various community-led groups to prioritize equity and justice in City decision-making processes including an Anti-racist Committee as part of the Human Relations Committee, African American Ambassadors Group (AAAG), and Latino Ambassadors Group.
- In collaboration with the AAAG, the City of Providence removed “Plantations” from the City’s official name and launched a truth-telling and reconciliation process.
- The City engaged an independent consultant to conduct a comprehensive operational, financial, and personnel review of the Public Safety department. The goal of the review is to identify cost-saving efficiencies and use the savings to invest in prevention-first models of safety and justice.

- The Office of Sustainability applied for and received a grant from the Urban Sustainability Director's Network to provide collaborative governance technical assistance to the AAAG based on the REJC's experience.

Climate Preparedness

Priority Targets and Metrics

2020 Accomplishments

- City's CIP includes over \$10 million of funding in projects that will help Providence be more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Projects include:
 - Investments in green infrastructure and complete streets via the Department of Public Works.
 - The Parks Department will be making improvements to green spaces to manage stormwater runoff, mitigate the urban heat island effect and support community resilience and social cohesion.
 - The Department of Public Property will receive funding to make critical investments in the Fox Point Hurricane Barrier and explore options to mitigate flooding at the Atwells Avenue Fire Station.
- The Office of Sustainability, with guidance from the ESTF, drafted an ordinance to codify the goals, targets, and strategies within the Code of Ordinances.
- The Office of Sustainability, with guidance from the ESTF, drafted revisions to the Sustainability section of the Comprehensive Plan to codify the goals, targets, and strategies within the City's regulatory structure for land-use planning.
- The Office of Sustainability continued efforts to explore a solar plus battery storage microgrid system at PCTA, the City's primary emergency shelter.
- The SustainPVD Fair went virtual in 2020 with the theme, "Building Community Resilience at Home." Thirty-six (36) events were held over the course of six (6) days, with a total reach of 13,865 and total engagement (likes/comments/shares) of 620 based on Facebook Live Analytics. The week-long calendar of events established new relationships with artists, performers, and community organizations, with a focus on kid-friendly and Spanish language engagement.
- Phase I of the Providence river dredging project from Waterplace Park to the Pedestrian Bridge was completed. Approximately 22,000 cubic yards of road silt and sand were removed from the bottom of the river, improving boating access, habitat, and flood resilience. Planning for Phase II, which will dredge from the pedestrian bridge to the Fox Point Hurricane Barrier, was also completed in 2020.

Community and Environmental Health

Priority Targets and Metrics

- By 2035, reduce childhood asthma-related Emergency Department visit rate to 10 per 1,000 children and by 2050, reduce the rate to less than four per 1,000 children.
- By 2035, direct emissions in frontline communities are reduced by 20% and all are eliminated by 2050.
- Prioritize tree plantings in frontline communities, low-canopy areas and where heat island index is high so residents can experience the cooling (electricity savings), air pollution, and water filtration benefits.
- Pursue pavement reduction strategies and implement green infrastructure projects to improve water quality, stem stormwater flow, and reduce flooding.
- Reduce lead exposure, targeting frontline communities (Increase Cast Iron Water Main Replaced/Relined to 144 Miles by December 2030.)

2020 Accomplishments

- City announced \$2.5 million to develop green school yards at 4 to 6 schools with funding from the City's Capital Improvement Plan.
- The Office of Sustainability and the Planning Department continued to meet with port-area community groups, businesses, state agencies, and other stakeholders to help build relationships and share information.
- The Port was selected for an EPA Community-Scale Toxics Monitoring Grant. Under this program, RIDEM will characterize air emissions and affected populations. Air monitoring stations will be installed at five locations to help RIDEM lead a comprehensive study of air pollution at the port.
- The City released an RFP for planning and design services for a Behavioral Health and Social Service Diversion program. The goal is to design an alternative response to behavioral health calls the police department receives.
- The City's Parks Department joined partners to launch the Providence Stormwater Innovation Center, which will study and maintain green infrastructure to improve water quality in Roger Williams Park. The Center will work to shape best practices in stormwater management throughout southeastern New England, provide future opportunities for community engagement, and highlight the critical role that green infrastructure will play in Rhode Island's urban communities.
- The Department of Health, the DEM Division of Forest Environment, and American Forests partnered with the CAPA Strategies Heat Watch program to map ambient air temperatures and heat index in neighborhoods in Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls, and East Providence. Outlying areas in Burrillville and Narragansett were also mapped as contrast to urban areas. The results showed temperature differences of up to 12 degrees across city neighborhoods depending on land use and tree coverage. Maps and report available here: https://osf.io/wu9v7/?view_only=1b5c811777f546bdb808088bfa24735b
- Beginning in 2020, the City is a core stakeholder in a collaborative process to create a comprehensive and equity-focused vision and action plan for Providence's urban forest. The process is being led by the Providence Neighborhood Planting Program (PNPP) (<https://pnpp.org/pvd-tree-plan/>), The Nature Conservancy, and the City of Providence. Building

off of the City's 2019 Climate Justice Plan and its "Just Providence" framework, the PVD Tree Plan will combine an equitable and inclusive engagement process, meaningful community-led decision making and models of collaborative governance, and multi-stakeholder dialogue, in order to develop long-term sustainable approaches to health, resilience, equity, and quality of life in our city. The plan will also pilot Youth Tree Stewardship Initiatives to gather feedback and provide community-based stewardship to trees in low-canopy neighborhoods.

- Tree planting numbers: In FY 2020, the City had a net gain of 20 trees (628 trees planted, 608 trees removed).
- The City of Providence maintained its collaboration and partnership with Healthy Babies Bright Futures throughout 2020 on efforts related to reducing neurotoxic chemical exposures. This included contracting with the Audubon Society of Rhode Island to document and codify the chemical-free practices of the City's Parks Department and developing the content for the Pesticide Free PVD community education campaign.
- Continued to support the Providence Lead Poisoning Prevention Coordination meetings, where partners share progress and accomplishments, discuss cases and questions, and coordinate services and activities to increase lead safety, promote lead-safe housing, and protect the City's children and families from lead exposure.

Clean Energy

Priority Targets and Metrics

- 100% of municipal buildings' electricity will be renewable by 2030.
- Local generation accounts for 30% of supply.
- Increase percentage of clean energy assets in Providence owned by frontline community organizations and individuals.

2020 Accomplishments

- City of Providence approves a Community Choice Aggregation plan that will bring more affordable and greener electricity to Providence residents.
- The Office of Sustainability participated in the RI Office of Energy Resources stakeholder meetings related to expanding access to community solar in Rhode Island and advocating for increasing requirements for community solar to include low- to moderate-income residents. The stakeholder meetings helped inform the development by the Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) of "[Community Outreach and Solar Equity: A Guide for States on Collaborating with Community-Based Organizations](#)".

Low-carbon and Sustainable Transportation

Priority Targets and Metrics

- By 2035, increase the number of employers in Providence offering RIPTA's EcoPass to their employees from 50 to 200.
- By 2035, 11% reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMTs) and by 2050, 20% reduction in VMTs.
- Increase in public transit ridership in Providence.
- NEW: Increase miles of total bike lanes, targeted in frontline communities.

2020 Accomplishments

- City unveils Great Streets Plan. Following a year-long, robust community engagement process, Great Streets establishes a framework for public space improvements to ensure that every street in Providence is safe, equitable and sustainable. Informed by insights generated from thorough analysis of crash data, traffic calming requests, and housing and transportation figures, the plan outlines a bold vision for the future of Providence's largest public asset, its streets.
- Public Property installed three new ChargePoint Dual-Port Level 2 charging stations that will provide 24-hour accessible electric vehicle charging for up to six vehicles at the City's Public Safety Parking Garage.
- The Division of Statewide Planning participated in the EPA funded [Port of Providence Truck Count and Assessment Study](#), which provided key data and analysis about the types of trucks, volume, and turning movement of truck traffic at the Port. This will aid the state and the City in developing policies to reduce pollution and ease congestion.
- RIPTA received a \$5 million federal grant to replace 15 diesel buses with 15 electric buses. This will help improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The new buses are expected to be acquired and in service by 2022.

Housing and Buildings

Priority Targets and Metrics

- By 2035: 48% of residential heating and 45% of commercial converted to heat pumps.
- By 2040, reduce low-income energy burden to <5%. (Low-income energy burden is the percent of income that low-income households are spending on energy).
- Increase the energy savings (MMBTUs) for low-income households in Providence.

2020 Accomplishments

- The City released a draft [Anti-displacement and Comprehensive Housing Plan](#). The final plan was released in early 2021 and the Office of Sustainability is working to ensure the Climate Justice Plan goals and strategies are incorporated in the implementation and operationalization of the plan.
- The Building Energy Reporting Ordinance was planned for a March 2020 release, yet this was put on hold by the COVID-19 Pandemic. In the fall, the Office of Sustainability prepared for an early 2021 introduction of the Ordinance.
- The City added two new members to the RePowerPVD:
 - Johnson & Wales University (Three buildings totaling 356,256 Gross Square Feet)
 - Rising Sun Mills (95,676 Gross Square Feet)
- The Office of Sustainability participated in stakeholder meetings for the Heating Sector Transformation Initiative in Rhode Island. Led by the Office of Energy Resources (OER) and the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers (DPUC), this effort is intended to advance Rhode Island's development of a cleaner, more affordable and reliable heating future, and engage public and private sector partners in the identification of economic, energy, and environmental opportunities and challenges posed by our state's heating sector. A final report that was released in 2020: <http://www.energy.ri.gov/HST/>
- In response to the pandemic, the Public Utilities Commission issued a moratorium on electricity and natural gas shutoffs. As of March 19, 2021, the moratorium was extended to June 25, 2021.

The extension applies to customers currently unemployed and receiving unemployment compensation; recipients of the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program; households that meet the definition of elderly or handicapped; households that include seriously ill customers as certified by a doctor; and households with children younger than 2 years old. There was also a moratorium on evictions.

Local and Regenerative Economy

Priority Targets and Metrics

- Develop and implement a range of Zero Waste strategies by 2033; reduce waste and improve monthly residential recycling rate
- Meet annual targets of 10% of City spending in municipal purchases of goods and services from state-certified women-owned enterprises and 10% of City spending in municipal purchases of goods and services from state-certified minority-owned enterprises as outlined in City ordinance.
- Increase number of enterprises in Providence that are democratically controlled and operated by their own workers.

2020 Accomplishments

- In partnership with Healthy Babies Bright Futures, the Office of Sustainability and the Purchasing Department advanced research towards the development of an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing policy.
- Throughout 2020, the Office of Sustainability continued to lead with education surrounding the plastic bag ban, visiting or reaching out by phone to retailers not in compliance. The City has not issued any violations or fines and intends to proceed with the formal enforcement process in 2021.