



CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Angel Taveras, Mayor

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 14, 2014

To: Michael Salomon, City Council President
Members of the Providence City Council

From: Ruben Flores-Marzan, AICP, LPP
Director

Subject: 2013-2014 Annual Progress Report – Department of Planning & Development

The last year was one of change and adaptation for the Department of Planning and Development (DPD). As its new director, I quickly realigned DPD's resources so as to focus on a hands-on, pragmatic approach to the Department's work plan. DPD continues adding value to the City of Providence and its residents in multiple programmatic areas and looks forward to work with the City Council on its many areas of interest. A brief snapshot of the progress the DPD team has made during the last year is provided below.

Infrastructure

- Downtown Circulator/Kennedy Plaza: A \$6.6 million project contract has been awarded and the groundbreaking ceremony will take place on July 15, 2014.
- Pedestrian Bridge: Engineering plans are at thirty (30%) percent complete for each of the three components (west side park, east side park, bridge). Technical subcommittees continue working on advancing the engineering plans and designs.
- Providence Amtrak Station: Conceptual designs were produced for the new intermodal station during the March 14 design meeting. Staff continues working with RIDOT and consultants on these. Station plaza engineering plans very close to been bid ready.
- Luongo Square: Engineering plans are complete (100%). Department of Public works is reviewing the bid documents and as soon as their work is done the project will be ready to go to bid and start construction.
- Fiber Optic/WiFi Grid: DPD staff has met with other City Departments and has drafted an RFP for the development of an integrated fiber optic/WiFi grid to connect existing city-owned telecommunications assets and thus provide an alternative to the Providence community. The RFP has been presented to the Mayor's Office for their review and evaluation.

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IN CITY COUNCIL

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READ
WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.

[Signature] CLERK
ACTING

Transportation/Mobility

- Bike Providence Master Plan: Complete and adopted during November 2013.
- Providence Bike Share Program: DPD staff providing technical and programmatic assistance to the Policy Office for the establishment of a twenty (20) station bike share program. The initiative should become a reality sometime during fall 2014.
- Providence Streetcar: DPD staff submitted a TIGER VI grant application for this project and continues to research viable financing options that will enable for this fixed-guideway transportation project to become a key economic development engine in the future. DOT Secretary Foxx was in Providence last week and Director Flores-Marzan had an opportunity to briefly talk to him and his staff about the project.
- Olneyville Circulator Study: DPD assisted in the final draft, which is currently under review/comment by the steering committee. Final action expected by late summer 2014.

Livability/Place-Making

- Pop-Up Providence: Small-scale urbanism interventions are currently being implemented in downtown with more to follow citywide throughout 2014. Finalizing all contracts with 8 award winners. A U.S. Conference of Mayors award will be presented to Mayor Taveras on July 18, 2014 for this Planning and Development initiative.
- Sans Souci Greenway: With funding approval from the Providence Redevelopment Agency (using Eagle Square TIF funds) DPD staff is working with a consultant (VHB) to advance the design of the greenway, which will run the length of San Souci Drive. DPD staff is also working with NBC and Councilwoman Matos and OHC on this. A final design should be complete by fall 2014 so as to match with the NBC project schedule so that they can help funding the project's implementation. A CDBG application was also submitted to help with implementation costs.

Corridor Planning

- HUD Transportation to Livable Communities Program: Transit-oriented development (TOD) hub plans are being developed concurrently with the TOD district that will be included in the new zoning ordinance. In addition, DPD will work on creating redevelopment plans for these nine (9) hub locations so as to enable intervention by the Providence Redevelopment Agency (PRA). The public art component of the project is being implemented in coordination with the Arts, Culture and Tourism Department for the placement of art on strategic RIPTA bus stop locations.

Neighborhood Planning

- HUD Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant: Finishing up Transformation Plan so as to qualify to compete for the implementation portion of the grant.
- Thayer Street: The study is complete; staff is assisting the community in prioritizing neighborhood enhancement goals, including parking, and in setting up an improvement program.

Regulatory

- Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Rewrite: DPD staff working on a landmarks district and final draft will be referred by the City Plan Commission to the City Council during August 2014. The new zoning ordinance should be ready for adoption by late 2014.

- Providence Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan Update: Statewide Planning granted a time extension until November 2014 to include the newly updated language into the Comprehensive Plan. Once readopted by City Council, the Plan will be consistent with Statewide planning statutes.

Resiliency/Climate Change Adaptation

- Providence Multi Hazard Mitigation Plan: Complete and approved by FEMA in December 2013. Enables the City to compete for federal mitigation funds in the event of natural disasters.
- Providence Sustainability Plan: DPD providing technical assistance to the Office of Sustainability in the preparation of the City's sustainability plan.
- Rockefeller Foundation Resiliency Grant: Grant application was submitted in coordination with PEMA, the Office of Sustainability and the Office of Healthy Communities. Awaiting decision from the Foundation.
- Harbor Management Plan: DPD staff provides support to the Harbor Management Commission. A draft plan is almost (80%) complete and is been circulated for comments.
- Continuity of Operations Planning: DPD staff is working alongside PEMA and other City Departments on this emergency planning/continuity of government operations initiative.

Urban Revitalization

- Inventory of Parcels Suitable for Redevelopment: The digital, mapped inventory is complete. The tool will be used to track progress and study development trends that may result in actionable intelligence for the creation of land policy scenarios.
- Redevelopment Plans (Providence Redevelopment Agency): DPD staff continues to provide direct assistance and support to the Providence Redevelopment Agency on these matters. As such, redevelopment plans for South Street Power Station, Charles Street and the Hospital District have been adopted and/or advanced so as to capitalize on potential redevelopment opportunities. In addition, DPD staff won an EPA remediation award for the American Tourister site.

Economic Development

- Economic Development Task Force: DPD staff providing the Economic Development Department with technical and programmatic assistance to ensure the planning perspective is included in the options being formulated to stimulate the local economy.

Environmental Planning

- American Tourister EPA Grant: DPD staff wrote an EPA remediation grant and just recently won a \$400,000 remediation award.
- Stormwater Utility Phase I Feasibility Study: Consultants and steering committee have been engaged. The effort should be complete in late 2014.
- Gorham Site Remediation Plan: DPD staff submitted a site remediation plan for this property to RIDEM and is waiting for their review/evaluation of the document.

Strategic Planning

- Tax Stabilization Agreements Research: The Department continues to provide technical and advisory support to the Task Force. This is an area that will require additional support so as to enable for it to continuously assist other City departments during 2014 and beyond.

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF): DPD staff continues to explore this option as a viable, sustained funding source for the City's fixed guideway transit-oriented development needs. A TIF district ordinance was presented to the City Council's Ways and Means Committee during spring 2014 and is awaiting action.

Regional Planning

- I-195 Redevelopment Commission: DPD staff continues attending monthly meetings and providing Commission's executive director with supporting technical and advisory services on a per-request basis. This effort should continue for the life of the Commission.

Statewide Planning

- State Rail Plan: DPD provides technical and advisory capabilities to statewide transportation planners to ensure the City's transportation goals are considered during the funding and execution phases of the Plan. This is a continuing multi-year effort.
- Rhode Map RI: As part of the grant agreement, DPD continues supporting the State's planning efforts with technical and advisory services. The work will continue until the requirements of the grant are satisfied.