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1965 ANNUAL REPORT  
CITY PLAN COMMISSION  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

REVIEW OF PLANNING AND PROGRESS

October 1, 1964

through

September 30, 1965

**IN CITY COUNCIL**

**MAY 5 - 1966**

READ:

WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT  
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.

*Vincent Vespa*  
CLERK



## City Plan Commission

EDWARD WINSOR, *Chairman*  
ALBERT BUSH-BROWN    EDWARD J. COSTELLO

JOSEPH A. DOORLEY, JR., *Mayor*  
RAYMOND J. NOTTAGE, *Secretary*

HARRY PINKERSON, *Vice Chairman*  
ROBERT J. HAXTON, JR.    LOUIS A. MASCIA

FRANK H. MALLEY, *Director*  
DIETER HAMMERSCHLAG, *Deputy Director*

Suite 103, City Hall,  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

February 24, 1966

Honorable Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., Mayor  
The Honorable City Council of the  
City of Providence  
City Hall  
Providence, R. I.

Gentlemen:

I am pleased to transmit herewith the Annual Report of the City Plan Commission for the fiscal year ended September 1965.

This past year was marked with several major accomplishments among which was the release of the 1964 Master Plan, presentation of Circulation, Schools and Recreation Master Plans, the preparation of the General Neighborhood Renewal Plan and completion of the Westminster Mall.

The Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the splendid cooperation extended by the various city departments that contributed to the program and planning outlined in this report.

Very truly yours,

EDWARD WINSOR  
CHAIRMAN  
CITY PLAN COMMISSION

EW:MMH

## I. INTRODUCTION

A bird's eye view of Providence would show a city that is the result of the plans of many and the haphazard growth of generations. Every building, every street, every sign is the outcome of someone's action which, if investigated, would usually uncover some kind of "plan" of what should be built. Since it was natural for most individuals and organized groups to have different values and goals, the overall appearance of their projects combined seems to show little forethought at all; Local governments also have reflected a variety of activities and interests. Good plans for one public agency sometimes limit the activities of another. Therefore the need for coordinated planning in our cities has been a major challenge of present urban life.

Needs of the entire city are the concern of Providence's City Plan Commission. While every department of the municipal government must try to serve all the citizens, the Commission and its staff of professional city planners must balance the needs of various public and private interests to produce a compatible LONG-RANGE plan which will assist all. This planning, characterized by its broad scope and time period, is called "comprehensive" or "master" planning.

The physical environment is the prime subject matter of the Plan Commission. However, a basic requirement of all plans and their preparation is that they must be related to people and to their needs and desires. Each planning study must therefore analyze social and economic influences and how they will be affected by future programs.

Independence of the Commission is established by municipal

ordinances made possible by state legislation which designates both the structure and responsibility of the agency. The organization follows the pattern of most of the experienced planning agencies throughout the United States, where non-partisan boards of civic-minded citizens have been particularly valuable in creating and supporting clear goals and programs for city development. Coordination with the Mayor and other branches of city government is assured by membership on the Commission of the Mayor and two Councilmen elected from City Council serving with the five other citizen members who are appointed to five-year overlapping terms.

## II. MASTER PLANNING

### Master Plan

The 1964 Master Plan - "A Guide for Development to the Year 1975" was adopted by the City Plan Commission, presented to the City Council and released to the public in October 1964.

Developed by the Plan Commission staff over a three-year period, it is the first major revision to the City's Master Plan since 1946. Included in the Plan which is presented in a large multi-colored fold out are the goals and planning policies; the summaries of various elements such as land use, transportation, recreation and schools; and the means to achieve the goals. Copies are available from the Plan Commission office.

### Circulation Master Plan

A comprehensive study of the circulation element of the Master Plan was begun during 1964 with a view to updating the City's Master Plan for Thorofares which was first adopted in 1946. The new Circulation Plan evolved through the use of the latest techniques of employing computer operations to forecast highway volumes and in analyzing future highway needs. In addition to including the State and Federal expressway systems, which, incidentally, follow quite closely in final design the plan of 1946, the plan provides a complete arterial street system designed to supplement the expressways within the City. Recommendation of an expenditure of approximately \$12,000,000 over a ten-year period for construction of the major arterial improvements is contained in the proposed plan presented to the Commission by the staff in September 1965. Final review and adoption by Commission is expected early in 1965-66 fiscal year.

These circulation facilities have been coordinated and integrated with the R. I. Statewide Comprehensive Transportation and Land Use Planning Program which has been in operation since the spring of 1964. In this connection Mayor Joseph A. Doorley, Jr. is a member of the Policy Committee and the Director is Vice Chairman of the Technical Core Committee of the Statewide Planning Program.

#### Master Plan for Schools

Developing the Master Plan for Schools as part of the overall Master Plan continued during the 1964-65 fiscal year. The Commission's role with respect to schools is in recommending location, size and type of facility based upon population, need and financial ability. Close coordination is maintained in this regard with the Providence School Department.

This new Master Plan for Schools, the first major revision since 1951, was outlined to the City Plan Commission by the staff in September 1965. Adoption of the Commission is expected early in the 1965-66 fiscal year.

The staff recommendation, projected over a fifteen to twenty year period calls for the constructing, in various sections of the City, twelve new elementary schools ranging in size from 350 pupils to 750 pupils; the retention of ten elementary schools; major additions mostly in library and cafe-gym-torium and playground facilities to five schools; and the gradual phasing out of 25 older structures. With completion of the program the City's school inventory is expected to be twenty-seven elementary, eight junior high, one vocational and four senior high schools. Included in the latter two categories are the new Classical High School and the Central Vo-

ational School which are within the James L. Hanley Education Center.

Recreation Master Plan

Another element of the City's Master Plan, Recreation, was also under extensive study by the Commission staff during the year. Basic goals and proposals for recreation sites and facilities were presented and discussed by the City Plan Commission at several of its meetings. Now under final review, the Plan is expected to be reviewed in final form and adopted by the Commission in early 1965-1966.

III. PROJECT PLANNING  
AND  
COORDINATION

Westminster Pedestrian Mall

Substantial completion of the Westminster Mall, a major proposal of the Downtown Master Plan, was seen at the end of the fiscal year. The project undertaken by the City in 1964 after several years in planning was financed through a partial grant from the Federal Government under the Accelerated Public Works Act and a contribution from the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce.

Design coordination was undertaken by the project staff with construction and engineering supervision being handled by the City's Public Works Department.

The project was originally scheduled for completion just prior to the Christmas Shopping season of 1964. However, a preliminary injunction obtained by an abutting property owner caused a serious setback. This action necessitated a temporary curtailment of plans and a coordinated effort on the part of the City's Law Department, Public Works Department, City Plan Commission and many private organizations and citizens to adjust the plan for the mall to fit this court ruling. Work on only the underground utilities was permitted which pushed completion off until the fall of 1965.

The legal obstacle was resolved by cutting back the length of the mall one block and securing releases from abutting property owners, lessees and tenants. Work on the final phase of the mall and construction of the Union Street extension began on April 19th. Dedication ceremonies were held on August 31, 1965.

### Mount Hope Redevelopment Project

The results of a review and survey of Federal assistance programs revealed that the City might be eligible to receive a \$2,340,000 federal grant for urban renewal in a 64 acre area adjacent to the Lippitt Hill Redevelopment Project due to the construction by the City of the new Lippitt Hill School. This grant of federal funds ( $\frac{3}{4}$  of project cost) would be met by the City's non-cash credit of \$780,000 ( $\frac{1}{4}$  of project cost) which represents 80% of the cost of the new school and recreation facilities.

The project, designated Mount Hope Redevelopment Project, is an area where considerable blight exists and which lends itself very well for rehabilitation. Initial data for the project was assembled by the Commission staff during the spring, and after Commission action the Providence Redevelopment Agency submitted on September 17th the Survey and Planning Application to the Housing and Home Finance Agency Regional Office in New York. An early reply is expected from the federal agency.

### General Neighborhood Renewal Plan

The staff of the City Plan Commission proposed and submitted to the Commission in September a draft of a General Neighborhood Renewal Plan for the Federal Hill-South Providence Neighborhoods - an area encompassing nearly 2,000 acres in the City's most densely populated sections.

Basically, rehabilitation is the prime urban renewal technique to be employed with very limited clearance. Proposed are eight urban renewal projects to be undertaken over a period of eight years. Seven are Title I projects and one a Code Enforcement Project.

The plan is scheduled to be reviewed by the Commission, approved by the City Council and submitted to the Housing and Home Finance Agency in October 1965. With approval of the City Council, survey and planning applications for the first priority project and the Code Enforcement Project will be submitted in early fiscal year 1965-66.

#### IV. PLANNING TOOLS AND ACTION PROGRAMS

##### Civil Defense Study

In October 1964, the City of Providence was designated by the Stanford Research Institute and the State of Rhode Island Civil Defense Council to participate in a "50 city" demonstration project in community fallout shelter planning. The study, financed entirely with Federal Government funds, was undertaken by the City Plan Commission and an outside consultant.

The scope of the project was the assignment of people to shelters already designated as to location, suitability and capacity. The results of the study completed in June produced a great deal of population data which will be of immeasurable value to the staff in future planning.

##### 701 Data Bank

The consolidation into a single source of the various statistical data which have been and are constantly being collected by the several city departments was one of the recommendations of the recently completed Community Renewal Program. Basically, the recommendation was for the establishment of a Central Records Office wherein the data would be assembled, stored, analyzed, put on computer cards and recording devices, and made available to all departments and agencies of the City government.

Included with the application for a planning grant for the data bank study was also an application for a planning grant for carrying out a photogrammetric and mapping survey to generate up-to-date uniform City base maps utilized in all general planning, and

also funds to assist in developing master plan elements for circulation, schools, recreation and neighborhood analysis.

Planning the establishment of such a data bank was the purpose of a project for which federal assistance has been sought under the Housing Act of 1949, as amended. An application was filed by the City Plan Commission with City Council approval with the Federal Government in early summer. As of the end of the fiscal year, no determination had been made by the federal agency.

#### College Hill Republishing

Since the initial publishing of the College Hill Report (A Study in Historic Preservation) several years ago, there has been a great demand for copies from interested agencies and organizations throughout the country. In that the City did not feel it should spend municipal funds for a reprinting none was made. However, this past year as a result of an amendment to the National Housing Act the federal government will pay 100% of the cost of reprinting, with the staff supplying the necessary supervision.

In June an application was filed with the Housing and Home Finance Agency for a \$16,595 grant for the reprint which would include an updating and review of progress made in restoration since the report was first published.

#### Study of Federal Assistance Programs

With the recent passage by the Congress of amendments to the Federal Housing Act and the enactment of other so called social legislation, the Commission staff undertook, at the request of the Mayor, a careful survey of all Federal Government financial assistance programs to determine if the City was availing itself of as much federal assistance in all aspects of municipal operation as possible.

This review survey has proven most helpful in planning not only for urban renewal programs, but in developing the City's Capital Improvement Program and will be a continuing program.

#### Zoning Revision Study

Work continued during the year on the Zoning Revision Study which is being financed largely by a Federal Urban Planning Assistance Grant. Begun in June 1964, the study is scheduled to produce by June of 1966 the first comprehensive revision of the City's Zoning Ordinance since 1951 and the second since zoning was introduced to Providence in 1923.

The staff includes two full time attorneys experienced in zoning. From time to time outside consultants are engaged, and for planning work the regular staff of the Commission is employed.

So that the future needs of the City might be reflected in the revision, the project staff has conferred with many local organizations concerned with zoning, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the American Institute of Architects.

Among the proposals receiving consideration are zoning of residences based upon density rather than dwelling type, a special zone for hospitals and colleges which occupy large areas of land, regulation of industries by performance standards, and a revision of administrative procedures particularly those concerning variances and special exceptions. So that the new techniques proposed may be implemented, a revision of the State Enabling Statute is being prepared for introduction into the 1966 General Assembly.

#### Capital Improvement Program

Each year the City Plan Commission and the Finance Director review and prepare a Capital Improvement Program for the City cover-

ing five fiscal years. The program is essentially a method for centralizing the various requests from the several departments for capital funds for municipal improvements. Determination of priorities is based upon the following:

- 1) The function of the project and its urgency.
- 2) Relationship of project with other municipal projects.
- 3) Availability of funds.

The 1965-71 Capital Improvement Program represents a departure from the format and method of preparation used in previous years. This year's program was developed with a view to keying all functions and project into federal and state financial assistance programs and into a Data Bank.



## ZONING STUDY STAFF

Durward W. Caudill, Project Director

Associate Planner

Sidney Clifford, Jr.

Assistant Planners

Rajinder N. Chanda\*  
F. A. DiQuattro, Jr.\*

Planning Aide

David W. Shaw\*

\* Resigned during fiscal year

Summary of Action on Petitions  
Referred from City Council

1964-1965

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Total No. of Referrals</u>	<u>No Objection</u>	<u>Recom- mended Denial</u>	<u>No Action</u>	<u>In Accord with CPC Recommen- dations</u>	<u>Opposite to CPC Recommen- dations</u>	<u>Died in Committee</u>	<u>No Action</u>
Zoning Amendments	31	13	17	1*	16	5**		10
Abandonment of Streets	21	16	3	2	12	1**		8
Sale or Lease of City-owned property	20	10	8	2	2	1		17
Redemptions of Tax Title Property	12	12			12			
Miscellaneous	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>—</u>		<u>—</u>
<b>Total</b>	88	55	28	5	46	7		35

\* Petition withdrawn

\*\* Granted by Council following CPC recommendation for denial

Summary of Action on Referrals from  
the Zoning Board of Review  
through September 30, 1965

<u>Total No. of Referrals</u>	<u>City Plan Action</u>		<u>Zoning Board Action</u>		
	<u>No Objection</u>	<u>Recom- mended Denial</u>	<u>In Accord with CPC Recommen- dation</u>	<u>Opposite to CPC Recommen- dation</u>	<u>No Action</u>
165	82*	84*	106	2** 48***	10#

\* One petition was in two parts

\*\* City Plan Commission approved petition, Zoning Board Denied same

\*\*\* Number of changes granted by the Zoning Board following City Plan Commission staff recommendations for denial

# Five petitioners withdrew application

Summary of Action on Referrals from  
Committee on Urban Development, Renewal and Planning#  
through September 30, 1965

<u>City Plan Action</u>			<u>Action of Building Department</u>		
<u>Total No. of Referrals</u>	<u>No Objection</u>	<u>Recom- mended Denial</u>	<u>No Objection</u>	<u>Recom- mended Denial</u>	<u>No Action</u>
66	65*	1	54		12*

\* Two petitions outside the jurisdiction of the Downtown Plan.

# Resolution 541, approved November 3, 1961 requires referral to the City Plan Commission of all applications for building permits within the area of the Downtown Master Plan for review as to conformity, and for report to the Committee on Urban Development, Renewal and Planning. In the event of conflict with the Downtown Master Plan the Ordinance provides a 60-day period for an attempt to resolve or avoid such conflict.

EXPENDITURES AND APPROPRIATIONS  
OF THE  
CITY PLAN COMMISSION

	<u>Expenditures</u>	
	<u>1963-1964</u>	<u>1964-1965</u>
ITEM 0 Personal Services (Salaries)	\$131,833.07	\$151,516.58
ITEM I Services other than Personal (Printing, transportation, misc. fees, etc.)	17,622.12	6,935.90
ITEM II Materials and Supplies (Stationery, office supplies, etc.)	1,016.69	1,486.74*
ITEM III Special Items (Insurance for Models)	85.36	77.96
ITEM V Equipment (Office furniture, books, maps and charts)	<u>1,149.02</u>	<u>3,086.63**</u>
 TOTAL		
Expenditures	\$151,706.26	\$163,103.81
Appropriations	<u>167,751.64</u>	<u>176,960.94</u>
Balance Returned to General Fund	\$ 16,045.38	\$ 13,857.13

\* \$550.00 transferred from Item I

\*\* \$845.00 transferred from Item I