

10/19/07

Peter S. Mancini, President
Providence City Council
City Hall
25 Dorrance Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Proposed Comprehensive Plan

Dear Council President Mancini:

We the undersigned Providence neighborhood, community, and business organizations write to urge the City Council not to approve, in any form, the proposed Comprehensive Plan until *all* neighborhood review meetings (charrettes) have been completed. While each of our organizations may have a different vision for the future of Providence, we are united in our opposition to the Department of Planning and Development's (DPD) effort to pressure the Council into passing a new Comprehensive Plan without adequate consultation from the neighborhoods, residents, and businesses who will be directly affected by proposed changes.

According to a May 24th press release from Mayor Cicilline, the nine scheduled neighborhood charrettes "are a critical tool in bringing the public into the city's planning process and are part of my commitment to make municipal government open and transparent." To date, only two of these charrettes have occurred (Blackstone, Hope, Mount Hope and Washington Park/South Elmwood). If the city is serious about receiving community feedback through an open and transparent process then no Comprehensive Plan changes should be adopted until all neighborhood charrettes have been completed and neighborhood feedback is incorporated into a final document.

If the proposed Comprehensive Plan were approved now, the DPD could begin to implement zoning changes based upon this incomplete document and upon the former proposed revised zoning ordinance -- the latter of which this Council declined on November 10, 2005 to consider because the Comprehensive Plan had not been updated. Any such zoning changes -- once implemented and to the extent that they would vest new rights in property owners -- likely could not legally be reversed in the event that later neighborhood meetings indicated that some or all of those zoning changes should not have been made. This would be a blatant violation of the right of affected neighborhoods to have a true voice in the Comprehensive Plan process.

Finally, there is simply no need to rush through the passage of an incomplete Comprehensive Plan that does not have the benefit of public input from affected neighborhoods. According to statements by Associate Director for Statewide Planning Kevin Flynn in a recent *Providence Journal* article (see enclosure), there are no negative legal or financial consequences to the city if the current expired Comprehensive Plan remains in effect.

To restate our position, the undersigned organizations agree that:

- The City Ordinance Committee and the full City Council should not pass, in any form, the proposed Comprehensive Plan until all neighborhood charrettes have been completed.
- The DPD must take into account community feedback received at neighborhood charrettes and incorporate this feedback into any final document.
- There is no need to rush passage of a new Comprehensive Plan as there are no negative legal or financial consequences to leaving the existing expired Comprehensive Plan in place.

If the city's next Comprehensive Plan is to truly be an inclusive document that lays out the vision of "Providence Tomorrow," then it is essential that all affected city residents be given adequate time and the appropriate forum to have a real say in its drafting.

Sincerely,

Sara Mersha, Executive Director
DARE

Raymond L. Watson, Executive Director
Mount Hope Neighborhood Association

Norman Ospina, Co-Chair
Olneyville Neighborhood Association

Xander Marro, Co-Chair
Olneyville Neighborhood Association

William G. Touret, President
College Hill Neighborhood Association

David Cohen
Providence Working Waterfront Alliance

Rochelle Lee
Mt. Hope Neighborhood Land Trust

Greg Gerritt
Summit Neighborhood Association

Kari Lang
West Broadway Neighborhood Association

Rachel Miller, Director
Rhode Island Jobs With Justice

Enc.

cc: All members of the Providence City Council
Mayor David N. Cicilline
Ernest Hutton
Stephen Durkee, Chair, City Plan Commission
Thomas E. Deller, Director, Planning and Development