

# PROVIDENCE 2020

may 2006







Mayor of Providence

David N. Cicilline



I hope you find this document as exciting as I do. In the pages that follow you will read about and see images of what our city may become. It is a future built on the best aspects of our past – reconnecting the city to the water, re-linking neighborhoods to the downtown, preserving our great stock of architecture, ensuring that transit serves a critical role in the life of the city, and creating superior public spaces.

The goal of Providence 2020 is to provide a vision for coordinating and integrating the array of development opportunities in Providence. And given the unprecedented interest in our city and the unprecedented opportunities that will open up in the years ahead, a document of this type is critically important at this time.

Providence 2020 details the principles that will guide us in the years ahead. The document spells out the priorities we will seek to achieve as we build and revitalize our city. It helps define where development should take place, what the shape and character of development should be and what goals it should serve. It offers guidance for ways in which development can complement and promote public use and enjoyment of the city from streetscapes, to squares, to parks, to the waterfront.

This is not a detailed blueprint of what Providence will look like in the future. That will unfold over time as projects are proposed and considered. But for those who want to make such proposals, this document provides the necessary guide.

In the end, a vision of the future is only as good as the will to make it happen. I urge those of you inspired by the vision spelled out here, to become actively engaged in helping to realize the full range of potential that lies before us.

Those who built Providence had ambition, but they did more than just dream. We are deeply indebted to those builders of our great city who turned thought into action and vision into reality. This document is dedicated to the continuation of that tradition well into the 21st Century.

David N. Cicilline

A handwritten signature of David N. Cicilline in dark ink.



*The City of Providence would like to thank the many residents and other interested participants who contributed to Providence 2020.*

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## VISION

In the future, Providence will be a waterfront city, where the water, continuous parks, and transit link the Valley to the Bay. Along this spine, downtown will be a premier environment for a great variety of economic activities, with innovative industries, commerce, higher education and medical services, research, retail, culture, and housing for a diverse population. In this century, water may reclaim a role as local transportation, but its primary force will be recreation, amenity, and natural environment.

Providence is a city of great variety, with an historical pattern where residential neighborhoods on the hills overlooked waterfront industry and commerce, (Figures 1-3). As rails and highways pierced the city, each district developed its own personality, one complementing the other. Looking to the future, the character of each district should be celebrated by acknowledging the different strengths so that they continue to complement one another. This approach will build a city with a variety of choices for living, many different destinations for visiting, and investment decisions based on physical and economic competitive advantages, (Figure 4).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

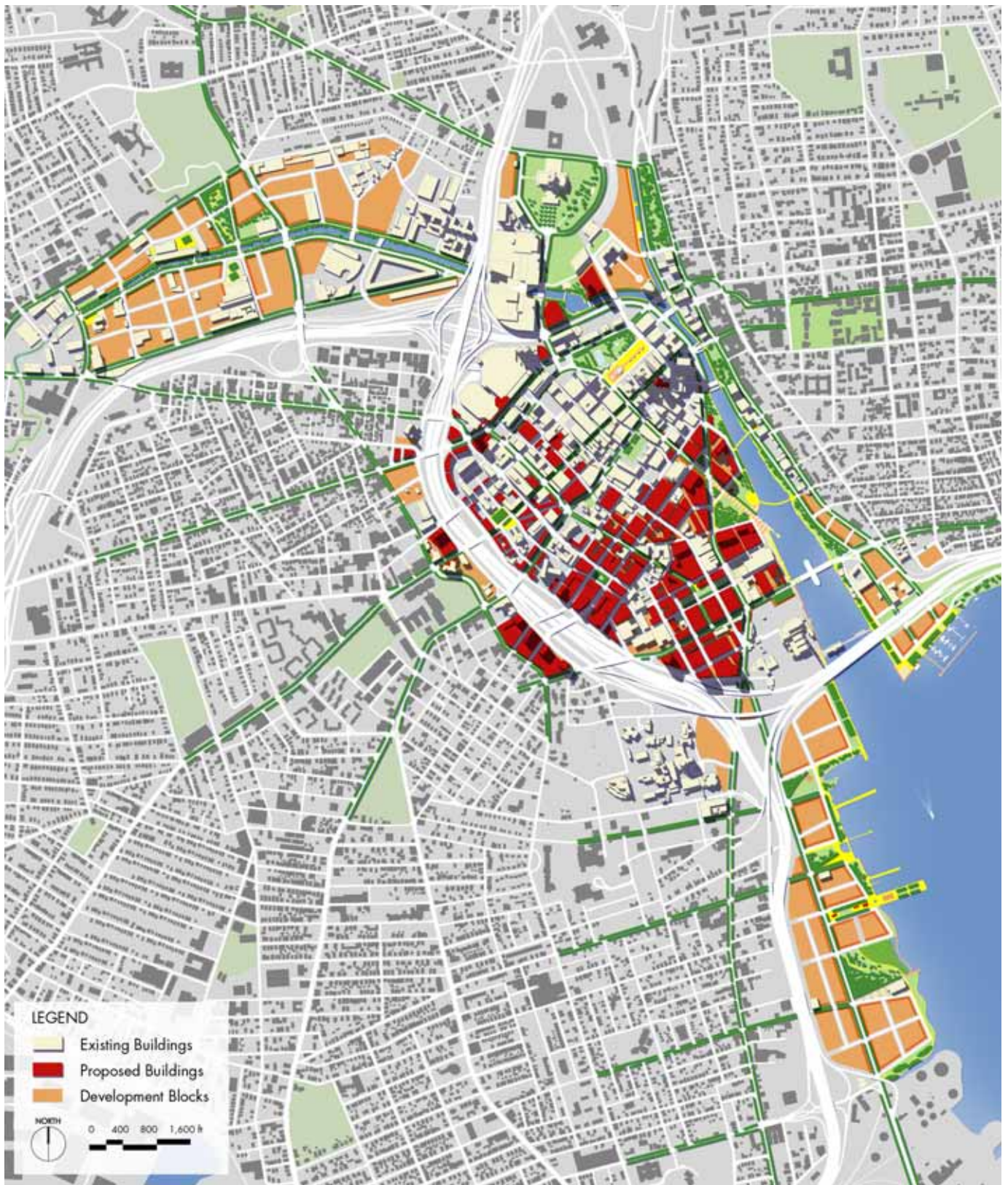


< **FIGURE 1 Study Area** Downtown Providence commands a position on the river valleys and the bayfront.



^ **FIGURE 2** The residential neighborhoods occupy the high ground surrounding the greater downtown.

< **FIGURE 3 Topography** The study area focuses on the low lying land where industrial and commercial activities have traditionally been located. In the future, the mix of uses in this area will become more diverse.



^ FIGURE 4 Vision Plan A continuous spine of waterfront, public access, and transit will connect the distinct districts of Providence. Within each district, new civic spaces and the introduction of new streets in the former industrial districts offer stunning potential for Providence's future.

The continuous waterfront greenway will weave through the different districts that make up downtown Providence: Promenade, Capital Center, Downcity, Jewelry District, and Narragansett Bay. Part of the city's distinct charm is the variety of places in the river valleys and the bay and up on the surrounding hills. Different architecture, uses, and tradition make each area stand on its own merits. The future will depend on the strength of the linear connections along the waterfront and the links to the neighborhoods so that every resident feels ownership of downtown. Over time, the downtown areas will become neighborhoods in their own right, each with its own mix of uses.

Downtown will offer distinct competitive advantages to other locations in the region by offering urban amenities that cannot be found elsewhere. People who choose to live downtown in historic lofts or new apartments and rowhouses will be able to walk to work, shops, or the theater. Events like Waterfire and outdoor concerts on the waterfront parks will draw people downtown to experience the ambiance of the city in the evening. Every downtown district will have a waterfront park that ties that local area into the regional open space network, making it easy to jog or stroll at lunchtime or before or after work. Activities on the water will range from sailing on the bay to fishing in the upper reaches of the rivers. The rivers and the bay can become gateways for environmental education programs in the schools.

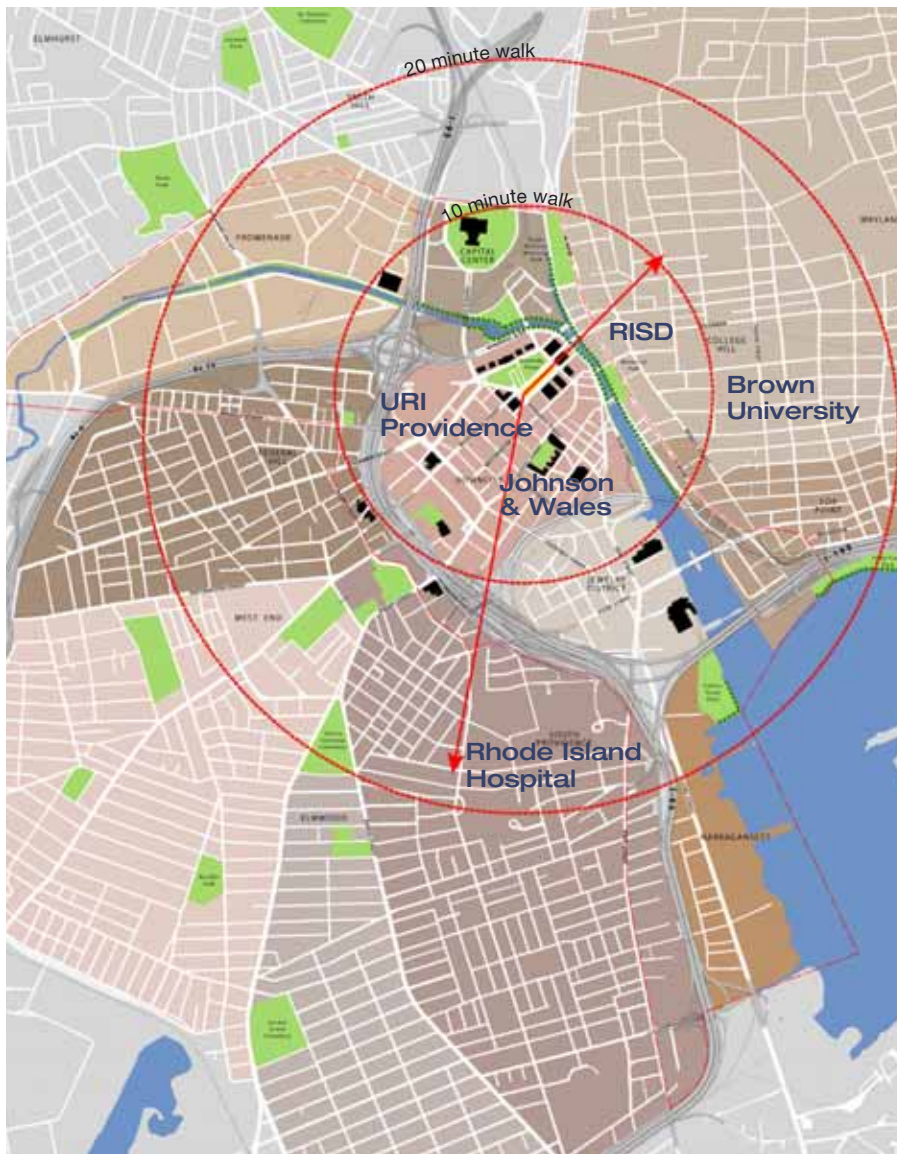
Downtown's unique advantage is the ability to foster face to face interaction. Walkable streets, for which Providence is already well known, will extend into the former industrial districts. With the relocation of Interstate 195 to the south, one will be able to walk easily from a center point around Friendship Street to the Providence Place Mall to the north or to the Point Street corridor to the south, a ten-minute walk in either direction. To reach the neighborhoods, beautiful tree-lined corridors will lead up the hills, making the ten-to twenty-minute walk seem shorter (Figures 5 & 6).

A continuous transit spine will connect Eagle Square to Thurbers Avenue, along the length of the waterfront. In the short term, this may be a rubber-wheel trolley, and over time will become bus rapid transit and if driven by demand, light rail transit. A series of stations spaced about one-half mile apart will serve each district with express service. At a few key locations, intermodal centers could interface with regional RIPTA bus service and provide structured parking. The existing trolley system serves as a feeder system that complements the transit spine. Over time, new routes may be needed to serve downtown neighborhoods.

## SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The Providence 2020 plan sets forth a flexible framework for development integrating and anticipating the actions of the public sector, the private sector, the institutions, and the many non-profit organizations. Seven principles form the foundation for every recommendation in the plan. Within this framework, a great variety of decisions can be made over time to create the richly textured city, while still ensuring a shared vision of the overall outcome. The seven principles are summarized as follows:

1. **CREATE distinctive parks that establish the city's identity, link districts, and are integral to surrounding development**
2. **LINK the Valley to the Bay with transit and a continuous transit spine**
3. **CONNECT each neighborhood to downtown and the waterfront**
4. **CREATE a network of pedestrian friendly streets**
5. **CELEBRATE great architecture**
6. **POSITION each district according to its unique assets to promote diverse mixed-use environments**
7. **DEVELOP shared parking in strategic locations**



< ^ **FIGURE 5 Institutions** Brown University, Rhode Island School of Design, Johnson & Wales University, and the University of Rhode Island Providence campus are all within a ten minute walk of downtown.



< ^ **FIGURE 6 Neighborhoods** The surrounding neighborhoods have traditionally been residential with small commercial areas. The restaurants on Federal Hill, however, are regional destinations.



<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report, Downcity includes all of the area bounded by the Providence River, existing I-195, and Interstate 95. The Narragansett Bayfront includes all the area outboard of Interstate 95 and the future I-195 alignment.

## CONTEXT

Water defines the City of Providence. Lofts, warehouses, and commercial buildings crowd the banks of the Woonasquatucket River and the Providence River. A century ago, the working waterfront shifted from these rivers to the upper reach of Narragansett Bay, which now presents a dramatic opportunity for the future. Most of the residential neighborhoods sit high on the hills overlooking this broad sweeping valley that arcs from Eagle Square on the northwest to Sassafras Point at Thurbers Avenue on the southeast.

Providence has dramatically transformed its image to recognize its many valuable assets. Besides the thread of water that connects all parts of downtown, many of the city's narrow streets find their way down to the water's edge. Wonderful examples of 19th century commercial architecture line the streets of downtown. In other areas, brick warehouses and lofts create a different character in the former industrial districts (Figures 7-12).

The city has long been home to great institutions, such as Brown University, the Rhode Island School of Design, Johnson & Wales University, University of Rhode Island Providence, and the Community College of Rhode Island. All of these institutions have facilities in the downtown area, bringing creativity, knowledge, youth, and culture to the environment. Medical facilities and research form a core component of the city's economy, led by the Rhode Island Hospital and the Women and Infants Hospital.

Downtown Providence celebrates the traditional role of downtown as the center of culture with a broad range of performing and visual arts. Originally conceived as a public art installation, Waterfire is now a beloved civic gathering, renowned around the country as a unique part of Providence's identity. People descend on downtown for theater, music, art galleries, museums, or just to enjoy the many public art pieces found in the city's civic spaces.

With momentum and new leadership, Providence has set a course for positive change that builds on its strengths while envisioning a future that is innovative and exciting. As one part of that effort, this master plan presents a coherent vision for the entire 1,200-acre area defined as Providence 2020. The many previous plans are reconciled and updated to fit within this unifying vision so that priorities can be established for implementation initiatives and public investment. The strategies for implementation will reinforce both the overall vision and the distinctive character of each place. Many entities and individuals have a stake in the future of downtown. The success of this plan will require strong partnerships and the contributions of many entities, working toward a shared future.

## PROJECT NEED

In recent years, the city has experienced a barrage of development proposals for key areas of the downtown. New proposals often exceed existing height limitations, raising the question of where to direct height and density. Meanwhile, other areas languish. Many plans have been developed over the years, but each one focuses on a small territory creating a patchwork without any connections physically or economically (Figures 13 & 14). Questions have arisen about the relative strengths of the housing and office markets. In a city where downtown used to be the job center and the primary tax base, concern exists about the opportunity costs of ongoing residential development and institutional expansion. With so many distinct districts downtown, to which one should prospective investors be directed and where should public investment be targeted? How does the new land created by the demolition of Interstate 195 fit into the overall picture, and how does the location of the new highway alignment affect surrounding uses? (Figures 15 & 16)

Rather than operate in a reactive mode, the city initiated this planning process to celebrate each district while looking at how all the pieces fit together. The city's goal is to direct and shape private investment through consistent policies and targeted capital improvements. A fundamental underpinning of the current planning process has been to include public outreach so that this input can help shape the vision and the recommendations.



^ **FIGURE 7** The restoration of the Providence River began the transformation of the city's image.



^ **FIGURE 8** At the Narragansett Bayfront, access to the water is almost impossible.



^ **FIGURE 9** Downcity is eminently walkable with its narrow streets and historic façades.



^ **FIGURE 10** Civic buildings, such as City Hall, anchor the Downcity.



< **FIGURE 11** Many of the industrial buildings in the Promenade District are underutilized or vacant.



^ **FIGURE 12** The center of the Jewelry District has one-story buildings that do not take full advantage of this valuable location in the city.



< **FIGURE 13 Collage of Previous Plans**  
Previous plans dealt with only pieces of the greater downtown, without considering the connections or the combined potential.

∨ **FIGURE 14 The highways slice through the city, separating neighborhoods from downtown and isolating districts.**



^ **FIGURE 15 Existing I-195 alignment**



^ **FIGURE 16 Future I-195 condition currently under construction:**  
Interstate 195 is being relocated to the south, opening up an opportunity to reconnect downtown districts.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE PROVIDENCE SUNDAY JOURNAL, FEB. 3, 1895.



**A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF PROVIDENCE**

SHOWING THE NEW RAILROAD STATION AND STATE HOUSE

< **FIGURE 17**  
Before the highways, downtown Providence was an integrated, pedestrian-oriented urban environment.



^ **FIGURE 18** In the 1950's, Interstate 195 cut the Jewelry District from the downtown.



^ **FIGURE 19** Interstate 195 has resulted in an isolated urban landscape.

## PROCESS

In the late fall of 2004, the City of Providence engaged the Sasaki team to prepare the plan, including ZHA for economics, Barbara Sokoloff for community planning, and VHB for infrastructure. In discussions with the project team in January 2005, stakeholders identified issues, goals, and ideas during one-on-one and small group interviews with the project team. Interest groups included neighborhood representatives, arts and cultural organizations, real estate developers, large employers, economic development, environmental, institutions, and State and City staff. The Mayor and City Council were also consulted for their ideas and priority issues. Many of the recommendations from the recent charrette (spring 2005) led by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company were integrated into the plan.

After synthesizing a range of issues and developing design studies and alternatives for the study area, the project team met with stakeholders and held two consecutive open house/public meetings in early May 2005. The comments received in these meetings shaped the draft plan, which was reviewed and discussed with stakeholders and the public during another series of public meetings held in mid-June 2005.

## SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The implementation strategy addresses phasing, costs for first phase projects, and roles and responsibilities of the different entities involved. Unlike previous plans, the Providence 2020 plan has looked at the greater downtown area that connects the Valley to the Bay. This larger study area encompasses several distinct districts and sets the goal of distinguishing each district while prioritizing public investment across this broader area (Figure 8). In this way, the public and the private sectors can target development to the appropriate district within the context of a schedule for improvements over a 15-year period. Phasing plans allow the involved stakeholders to focus their efforts, and direct capital budgets and fundraising for the immediate projects. The strength of the plan, however, is its flexibility to accommodate opportunity-driven projects and unforeseen situations within an overall development framework.

Like all great cities of the world, Providence has been shaped by the actions of many different players from the public, private, institutional, and non-profit sectors. In today's competitive economy, these actions must be efficiently directed toward building a shared vision. The city must be perceived as a good place to do business, promoting confidence for investment and streamlining approvals. Expectations should be clear regarding the form and type of development that will be acceptable, with an emphasis on the highest quality architecture that will endure over time to complement this historic city. Public involvement can leverage private investment, achieving fiscal goals for a stronger tax base as well as civic goals for job creation, affordable housing, ease of transit, and open space for citizens.

## Roles and Responsibilities

To achieve the vision laid out in the Providence 2020 plan, leadership will come from the city, the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC), and the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA). The recently instituted Downtown Improvement District will play a growing role in maintaining the quality environment that encourages downtown visitation and investment. A new entity, the Providence Development Corporation, is recommended to provide the geographic focus and ongoing commitment to downtown interests. Under this model, the Providence Development Corporation will become the coordinating entity that brings together the shared interests of the city, the state, the private sector, and the institutional sector.

In Providence, the universities and hospitals are committed long-term stakeholders who benefit directly from the quality of the city as a place to work and live (Figure 9). The institutions provide an economic engine for the City, serving as some of the largest employers and creating the potential for spin-off research and production. Working together as partners, the city and the institutions will be able to increase retention of recent graduates with the prospect of good jobs, opportunities for start-up businesses, and an attractive and interesting place to live. Within the new economy, innovation technologies come out of the research culture of universities and hospitals, but over time, successful businesses grow into production and create the need for jobs at all levels. Community colleges can play a lead role in training the workforce for these jobs.

The non-profit sector in Providence plays a significant role in creating the quality of life in the city today and ensuring its improvement in the future. These entities are committed to a range of issues including the visual and performing arts, environment, open space, and affordable housing, among others. In many cases, these organizations are invaluable in addressing civic issues and extending the capacity of the public sector. By committing professional resources, seeking third-party funding, and advocating for quality of life issues, the non-profit sector is vital to shaping the city and making it livable for all residents.

## Phasing of Projects and Policies

The designation of priority projects for the next five years (2006 to 2010) is driven in part by the schedule of the relocation of Interstate 195, which is expected to be open for traffic in both directions in 2009. Before that time, some work can be done to enhance each district. A primary focus should be on Downcity streetscape improvements that complement private sector investment and enhance connections to the neighborhoods. Another near-term project that would make a significant impact would be improvements to the Woonasquatucket River edge and adjacent streets, which will complement ongoing private sector investment in the area. In the Jewelry District, streets and park improvements outside the right-of-way would help spur short-term investment in this key area. The Narragansett Bayfront represents an important area for the long term growth of the city; in the short-term efforts here should be on land assembly and remediation.

Once the Interstate 195 relocation is complete, a major focus of the second phase (2011 to 2015) will be to repair the fabric of the city with new streets and parks that define development parcels. Enhancing connections will continue to be a major focus, with efforts to implement a bus rapid transit between the Valley and the Bay, the rebuilding of Westminster Street and Cathedral Square, and improvements along the length of Dean Street connecting South Providence, the West End, and Federal Hill across the Promenade to Elmhurst. Ongoing investment in streetscape and parks in the Promenade will create a sense of place to encourage business investment in this area.

Longer term projects (2016 to 2020) will shift the focus to the Narragansett Bayfront, while continuing to provide critical connections with in the other districts. The East and West Service Roads that cut across the top of the hill from the Jewelry District to Downcity and from Federal Hill to South Providence will be targeted for improvements to create gateway streets. Investments in bridges across the Woonasquatucket River will facilitate movement across the Promenade District.

Like capital projects, policies also shape city form. Because changes to policy are necessary to achieve the Providence 2020 vision, these efforts should be a high priority in the next year or two. Streamlining the approvals process centers around updating the Zoning Ordinance, a process that is already underway. The city's approval process should be closely coordinated with the State's regulatory review, which will be largely shaped by the new Providence Special Area Management Plan. Both of these policies must come to terms with the shared goals for economic development and quality urban environments and the incentives and regulations that are used to achieve these goals.

Development incentives are a powerful tool used by both the City and the RIEDC. This close partnership should continue and would be enhanced by a new entity such as the Providence Development Corporation as a central clearinghouse. The Providence 2020 plan underscores the importance of tax increment financing to acquire key land parcels and realize capital improvements, while also providing a strategy and criteria for land acquisition.

Downtown Providence is graced by the Woonasquatucket River, Providence River, and Narragansett Bayfront. A consortium of city, state, and non-profit entities are working together to ensure the protection, conservation and recreational use of coastal and riverfront resources, which will be vital to the success of this waterfront city.





The design and development principles are part of a framework that will guide public improvements and future development over the next several decades. The overall approach is to allow for flexibility to respond to unforeseen changes in the market and technology over time. At the same time, overarching principles for urban form establish a level of predictability necessary to inspire investment. More specific guidelines for individual development projects are embodied in the city's new zoning code, which among other things, establishes performance criteria for the way a building engages the civic realm of the city.

## PRINCIPLES

## PRINCIPLE ONE

### **CREATE distinctive parks that establish the city's identity, link districts, and are integral to surrounding development**

Great parks establish the identity of great cities. Central Park in New York, Grant Park in Chicago, the Common in Boston, and Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia are known widely. In smaller cities, parks can also establish identity, such as Savannah's public squares and the creation of new waterfront parks in Charleston, South Carolina.

These parks are not developed in isolation; They are instead complements to the surrounding city, with urban developments that look out over the parks. The development draws real estate value from the parks because of the views and the physical amenity for residents and workers. At the same time, these same people become the primary champions of park safety, maintenance, and ongoing investment. Urban parks isolated from the watchful eyes of surrounding uses are diminished and become unsafe for many segments of the population.

The greater downtown of Providence is a sweeping arc that includes all the commercial and industrial districts from the Promenade to the Narragansett Bayfront. Highways and rivers separate the districts into a series of quite distinct places, yet every downtown district faces onto either a river or the bay. In the future, Providence will be known for the length and diversity of its waterfront trails. This continuous greenway will pass by formal urban waterfronts, intimate natural habitat areas, and open sweeping viewing areas, connecting to regional trail systems on either end.

## PRINCIPLE TWO

### **LINK the Valley to the Bay with a continuous transit spine**

A convenient downtown transit system provides a realistic alternative to automobile use. Such a system can help connect downtown residents to jobs and services, reducing parking demand and congestion especially at peak hours. In the evening, transit can connect various cultural events and dining. No matter what mode employees use to commute, a transit system facilitates business interaction throughout the day. As infrastructure, a transit line will induce development along its route and especially at key stations, setting the stage for transit oriented development (TOD).

In downtown Providence, a new transit spine will parallel the waterfront greenway, connecting the series of districts and allowing workers, visitors, and residents to travel easily back and forth along the valley and bayfront. Regularly spaced stops will allow convenient pedestrian access to this service. At strategic locations, intermodal stations will provide connections to the regional RIPTA service, to the downtown trolley service, and to parking. By interrelating the transit spine to the spokes that radiate out into the neighborhoods, the surrounding residents will have improved access into downtown and its many destinations.

## PRINCIPLE THREE

### **CONNECT each neighborhood to downtown and the waterfront**

The relationship of neighborhoods to downtown should be based on the demand for special and complementary uses, attractive physical connections, distinctive views, and access to the water. The downtown needs to maintain its preeminence as the center of culture, government, and commerce to attract visits from residents. Based on historical access to the water, a series of avenues lead down from the hills into downtown. These avenues should be active, landscaped, pedestrian-friendly streets that serve as gateways to downtown. Trolley service on key corridors will reinforce the neighborhood-downtown connections. Because water plays a role in every downtown district, surrounding residents should feel connected to a waterfront landing close to their neighborhood. Each of these waterfront landings could feature distinct characteristics, reflecting the local history of the district and the nearby neighborhoods.

## PRINCIPLE FOUR

### **CREATE a network of pedestrian friendly streets**

Identifying a hierarchy of streets establishes priorities for investment, and also orients visitors to corridors that connect one district to another. Providence is known for its pedestrian-friendly streets that calm traffic and allow people to stroll in small groups along historic building façades and under shady trees (Figure 13). While this character is prevalent in Downcity, the industrialized tracts on either side need the positive identity that a great street offers. A network of streets will create more developable blocks while ensuring permeability to the waterfront along public streets.

## PRINCIPLE FIVE

### **CELEBRATE great architecture**

The quality of the architecture defines the unique character of a place and imbues it with meaning. At this juncture in time, Providence has the opportunity to strengthen its core identity through the preservation of historic building stock while advancing its future identity with significant new buildings.

The historic building stock, whether finely detailed commercial buildings, wood frame residences, or massive brick lofts, is irreplaceable in the quality of the architecture, the character they impart, and the distinction offered by the detail and historic tradition. Adaptive reuse of these buildings regenerates them for new uses. In some cases, a specific building is spectacular. In other cases, a group of buildings with similar scale and materials define a character that is worth preserving.

For new infill buildings and larger redevelopment areas, innovative design builds on current design thinking and moves beyond popular trends to create buildings that are uniquely suited to their site, context, and program. Design should respond to prominent locations at the termini of key streets and view corridors, waterfront or corner locations, and relationships to nearby historic or landmark buildings. Special entryways, architectural details, articulation of the building mass, and careful use of materials are elements that create distinctive buildings and can shape the relationship of the building to its context. For taller buildings, the massing should contribute to the form of the overall city skyline.

## PRINCIPLE SIX

### **POSITION each district according to its unique assets to promote diverse mixed-use environments**

Providence will become an interesting and multi-faceted city through the enhancement of the unique attributes of each downtown district: Promenade, Capital Center, Downcity, Jewelry District, and Narragansett Bayfront. These distinct places developed according to their own geography and have always offered different economic advantages. While technology and economies have changed, the character and relative position of each district suggest that development should be directed toward each district's competitive advantage. Although the form, timing, and ultimate character will vary, each district can become a vital mixed-use place offering jobs in close proximity to housing, service retail, and environmental and cultural amenities.

## PRINCIPLE SEVEN

### **DEVELOP shared parking in strategic locations**

The economics of parking make development difficult in Providence, especially where height and density are sensitive issues within the historic context. In the historic Downcity area, many parcels are too small to accommodate parking dimensions, and land assembly is challenging. From an urban use perspective, a development that loads parking at the lower levels can deaden a street. For all these reasons, the city must contemplate public parking strategies where district garages are built in strategic locations and offer shared parking for surrounding uses. Typically parking for office uses, retail, and rental housing can be placed offsite, while parking for residential condominiums tends to be accommodated onsite if possible. Ideally, parking garages should be located close to arrival points from the highways and spaced apart from each other to capture five-minute walk zones (approximately one-half mile apart).





As public spaces, the civic realm represents the long-term structure of the city and its enduring identity. Street networks persist for generations, revealing the original desire lines in the city. By opening up views and providing shared spaces, parks complement the dense use of urban land. Monumental civic buildings punctuate the urban form, while parking structures and transit systems represent major infrastructure that enhances the operation of the city. Together these facets of the urban environment complement private investment that occurs on the intervening blocks. The civic realm is both necessary infrastructure and an amenity that adds value to real estate, while in the long run making the city more desirable for residents, workers, and visitors.

## CIVIC REALM

## PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES

Public spaces embody aspirations for balancing the commercial use of real estate with the need for public gathering areas, quiet respite from hectic activity, and the restorative qualities of natural environments. In downtown Providence, the system of parks will celebrate the water and highlight the character of each distinct district (Figure 20).

Waterplace Park and Riverwalk feature continuous paths along the river that are already an amenity. This concept of continuous public access needs to extend west along the banks of the Woonasquatucket River in the Promenade and south along the banks of the Providence River and Narragansett Bayfront. This greenway will interconnect the larger downtown area.

Providence will become known for its waterfront parks, each a unique destination within the downtown (Figure 21). Each park will have special features and interpretive elements that connect it to its setting and to the surrounding neighborhoods, while also welcoming all residents and visitors into a system of parks. Waterplace Park, the Providence Riverwalk, Collier Park, and India Point Park are the only points of public access in the downtown today. The Roger Williams National Memorial Park and the Gardiner Jackson Park (Memorial Park) between Canal Street and Main Street have a presence on the water as well.

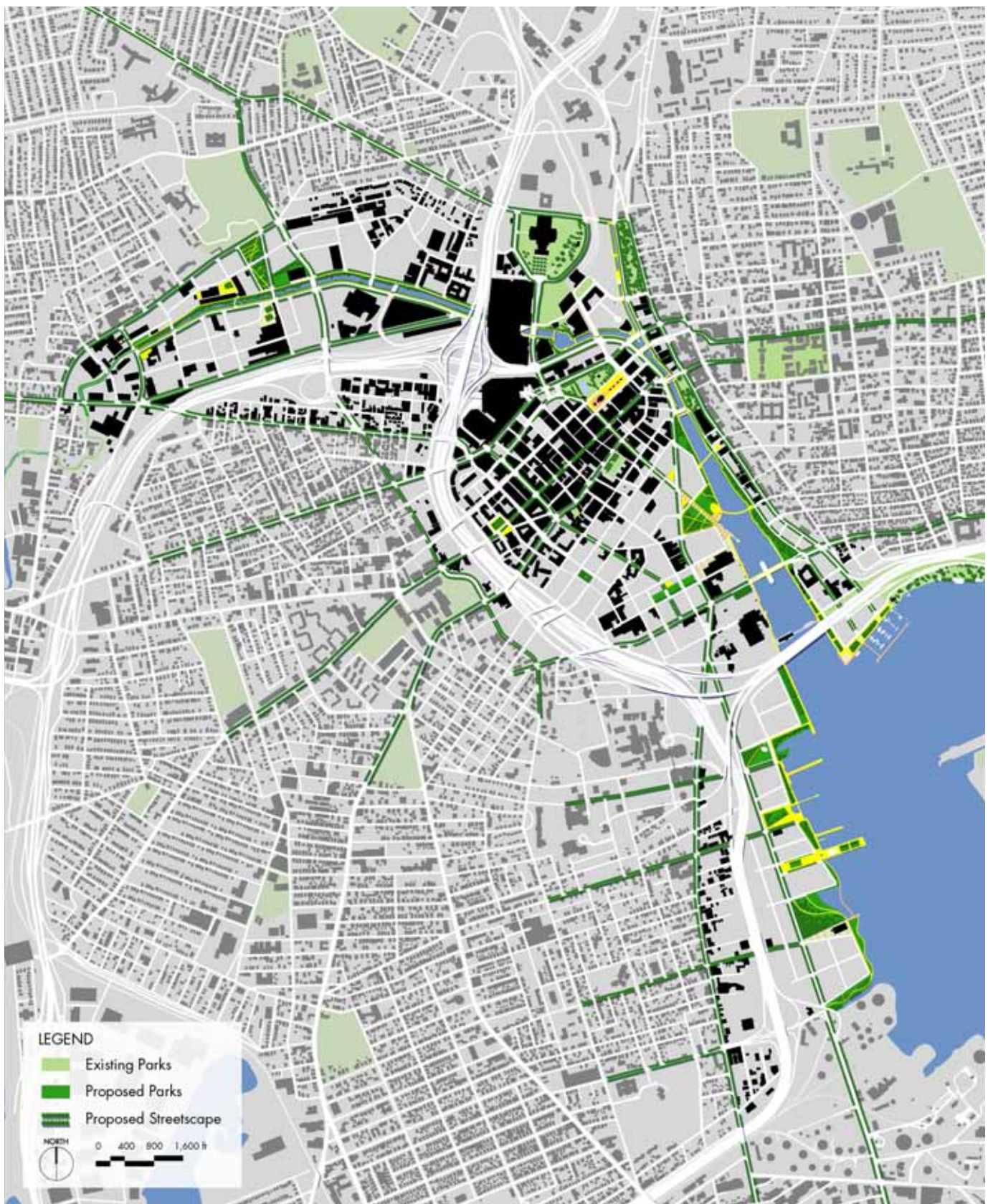
In the future, the existing parks will be complemented by new waterfront parks and continuous public access, including:

- Harbor Landing Park – a major civic gathering space on the Providence River at the convergence of Downcity and Jewelry District streets.
- Providence Riverwalk - extensions to the mouth of the river on the east bank and an extension to Point Street, at a minimum, on the west bank.
- Woonasquatucket River Greenway – improvements to the water's edge and continuous trail systems from Providence Place Mall to Eagle Square and beyond to the city line.
- Narragansett Bay Parks – New waterfront parks at the foot of Blackstone Street, Public Street, Oxford Street, and Thurbers Avenue, and continuous public access from India Point Park to the Providence River and south to Thurbers Avenue.

Waterfront parks naturally should promote the direct use of the water (Figure 22). Programming and improvements to facilitate this use should be designed into each park. Fishing, bird watching, and educational opportunities should be featured on the Woonasquatucket River. The Providence River is already well known for the Waterfire events that draw thousands of people to the water's edge each summer. Small boating and recreational fishing will be appropriate in this urban stretch of waterfront. The Narragansett Bayfront should promote fishing and boating activities. Improvements to existing fishing piers, new piers where appropriate, and the infrastructure to support recreational fishing will enhance this activity. New marinas, community boating, and transient boat slips will promote day-to-day use of the upper bay, although protection from the high velocity zone may be warranted.

Because Promenade, the Jewelry District, and Narragansett Bayfront developed as industrial areas, they lack any civic upland parks (Figure 23). The only existing urban parks are found within Downcity, including Burnside Park, the Bank of America Skating Center, Cathedral Square, Grace Square and Freeman Park, and other small plazas and courtyards. In order to create a civic realm in the former industrial lands and to create a sense of place for parts of Downcity, several new parks are proposed to complement surrounding development:

- Heritage Harbor Parks – a series of small open spaces along South Street as a focal point in the Jewelry District.
- Claverick Square – a public square on the hillside between Friendship and Clifford Streets.
- LaSalle and Emmett Square – street realignment to introduce green open space within these intersections.
- Acorn Street Park – a significant open space along the Woonasquatucket River to connect to the neighborhoods to the north.



^ FIGURE 20 Civic Realm Each neighborhood and district will have a landing on the water. With continuous public access, the waterfront will become a regional recreational resource.

Improvements to the parks within downtown Providence will help provide needed connections for regional trail systems, many of which now stop just outside the city. The East Coast Greenway is a bicycle trail between Maine and Florida with gaps in the Providence segment between Pawtucket and Cranston. The East Bay Bike Path is complete through East Providence, but could continue west through Providence. The Pawtuxet River Greenway connects through the city to the Allens Avenue Bikeway extending south to Cranston. Riverfront improvements in the Promenade district are part of the Woonasquatucket River Greenway and the American Heritage River Corridor.

## **GATEWAYS AND THE SEQUENCE OF ARRIVAL**

A well-choreographed arrival into downtown is easy to understand, offers clear signage, and features the best attributes of the city at the gateway locations, (Figure 21). This sequence begins at the regional highway network and leads to the primary street corridors into downtown. While providing excellent access into downtown, these highways separate downtown from the neighborhoods and present many challenging decisions to the visitor trying to reach downtown.

The sequence of arrival into downtown Providence is dominated by the Interstate 95 corridor, which is permeated with many exit and entrance ramps. This highway acts almost like a local road, including both the highway itself and its two parallel service roads.

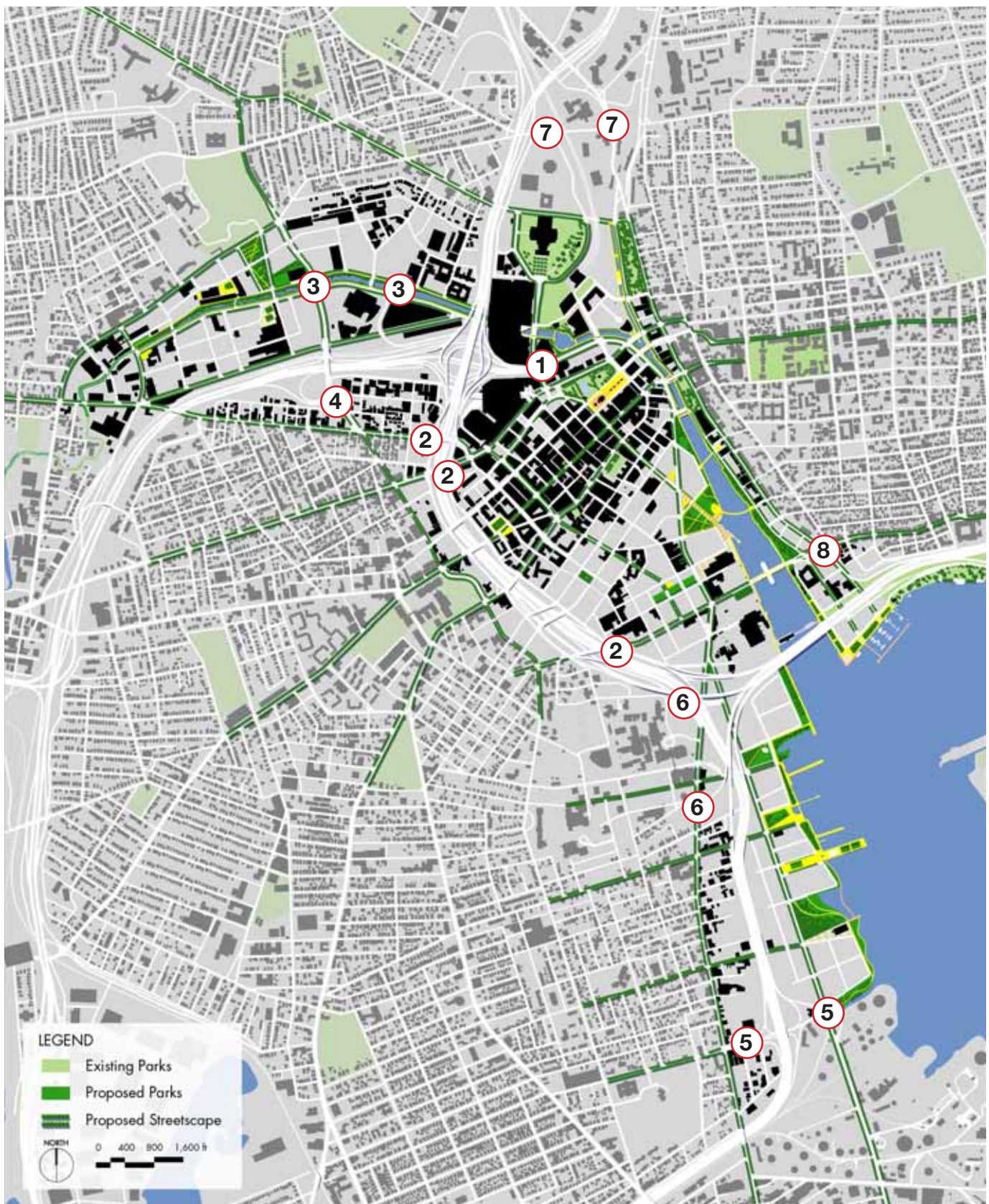
Interstate 195 is a major connection to East Providence and the metropolitan area east of Narragansett Bay, and also serves as the through-route from Interstate 95 east to Cape Cod. The Interstate 195 corridor through the downtown is currently being relocated from an alignment that cuts between Downcity and the Jewelry District to an alignment that falls south of Point Street, between the Jewelry District and Narragansett Bay.

US Route 6/RI Route 10 is another major corridor providing access to the neighborhoods on the west side of the city and the western suburbs. This alignment, which parallels Amtrak's Northeast Corridor along the Woonasquatucket Valley, clearly demarcates the high ground of Federal Hill from the industrialized district in the valley in the Promenade District.

Key arrival points for the different downtown districts are as follows:

1. Capital Center/Downcity - Memorial Boulevard and Francis Street are the primary points of entry for visitors from the full interchange of Interstate 95 and Route 6.
2. Downcity/Jewelry District – Service Road Numbers 7 (Sekell Street) and 8 (Franklin Street) run continuously along either side of Interstate 95 leading to major cross streets; access onto the service roads will occur at Point Street, Broadway (northbound), and Atwells Avenue (southbound).
3. Promenade – Providence Place has a mid-block arrival from Interstate 95 southbound and a gateway location at the Pleasant Valley Parkway intersection for arrival from Interstate 95 north or southbound.
4. Federal Hill/Promenade – Dean Street is the arrival point from Route 6 eastbound.
5. Narragansett Bay – Thurbers Avenue has a full interchange with Interstate 95.
6. Rhode Island Hospital – Borden Street (Interstate 95 southbound) and Eddy Street at Willard (Interstate 195 westbound) will provide direct access from the highway.
7. Capital Center – Orms Street and State Street are gateways from Interstate 95 northbound; Route 246 follows a circuitous route to Orms Street and to Canal Street from Interstate 95 southbound.
8. Fox Point – Point Street at Wickenden Street and Main is the exit from Interstate 195 westbound.

These gateways define the street hierarchy for local access and should be the focus of investment.



^ FIGURE 21 Gateways The Key arrival points from the regional highways to the city streets should be celebrated.

Gateway Points of Arrival ○

## STREET HIERARCHY

In Providence, many streets lead from great distances to the water's edge where commercial activity and transportation were centered. Other streets parallel the waterfront or connect across the hills above the downtown. Many of these primary streets are the gateways into downtown, leading either from the neighborhoods or from the regional highway system (Figure 23). As such the primary streets need signage and consistent streetscape to call attention to their role in orienting visitors to the downtown.

### **Primary streets that serve as gateways and connect neighborhoods to the water are:**

- Thurbers Avenue
- Point Street
- Weybosset Street/Broad Street
- Westminster Street
- Washington Street
- Broadway Street/Fountain/Sabin/Exchange Street/Angell Street
- Smith Street to the Roger Williams National Memorial Park

### **Primary streets that run along the side of the hills are:**

- Dean to Pleasant Valley Street (also leads to water)
- Service Roads 7 (Sekell Street) and 8 (Franklin Street)
- Atwells Avenue/Empire/Chestnut
- Dorrance Street/Francis Street (also leads to water)
- Eddy Avenue
- Benefit Street

### **Streets that directly parallel the water are:**

- North Main Street/South Water Street
- Memorial Boulevard
- Providence Place
- Promenade Street
- Allens Avenue

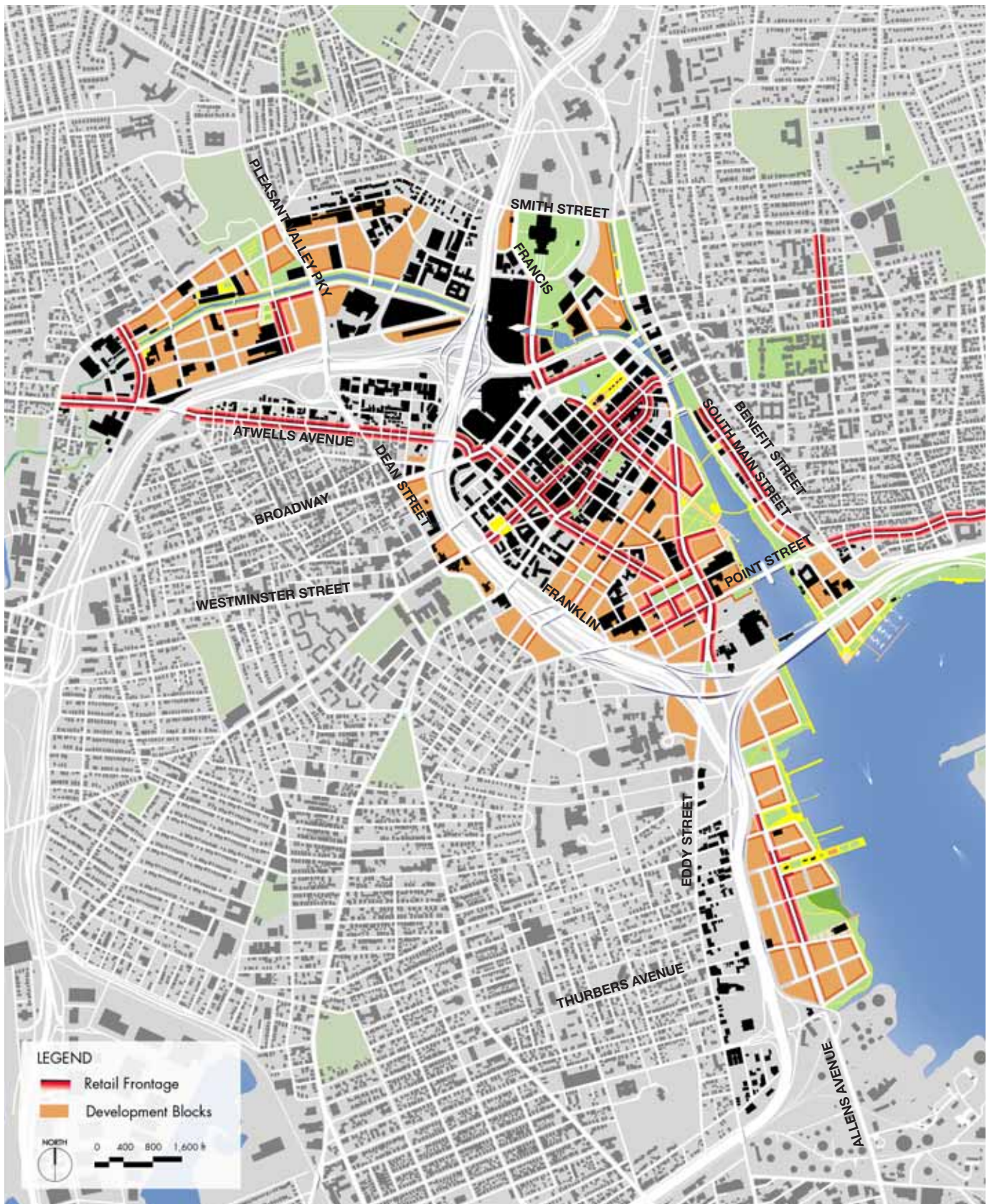
Valley Street/Orms Street and Harris Street are secondary streets that parallel the water in the Promenade district.

The network of streets move cars and pedestrians, and form important social spaces where face to face meetings can occur spontaneously. As well-lit, tree lined corridors, the streets can welcome visitors and orient them on their journey downtown. While the street and block pattern are relatively fixed over time, wide variations can occur within the blocks.

When streets are blocked by highways, rails, or superblock development, the physical connections in the city break down, altering perceptions of the downtown. Occasionally opportunities arise to reconnect the fabric of the city, as in the case of the relocation of the Interstate 195 right-of-way. Where highways and rail corridors remain, heroic attempts are needed to overcome these barriers and strengthen connections between downtown and its neighborhoods. These efforts involve improvements to existing bridges to make them more pedestrian-friendly and where appropriate the introduction of new vehicular and/or pedestrian bridges. Other gateway streets from the neighborhood to the downtown are defined by highway bridges and underpasses including:

- College Street
- Pine Street
- Clifford Street
- Blackstone Street
- Public Street
- Oxford Street

These crossings should be designed to be pedestrian-friendly streets, with active uses along their edges.



^ FIGURE 22 Street Hierarchy & Development Framework  
 Streetscape improvements along key corridors will connect districts to each other, the neighborhoods, and the water. Retail will be concentrated in key locations in each district.

## PUBLIC PARKING

Publicly-financed parking structures create a supply of parking that can be shared among users, supplementing parking that the private sector provides and creating a convenient pool for visitors in the downtown area. Parking structures should be strategically located across downtown, each one serving a walkable zone and complementing key private sector investments. Ideally these are located so that there is a seamless arrival from the regional highway network on to gateway streets and into a parking structure that is close enough to walk to key downtown destinations.

In the tear drop area that includes Capital Center, Downcity, and the Jewelry District, four key sites for initial parking structures would be located at:

1. LaSalle Square – Close to the Broadway entry to the city and serving the area around the convention center and much of Downcity.
2. Garrahy Courthouse – Close to the Friendship and Clifford Interstate 95 gateways and serving both the Jewelry District and Downcity.
3. South of Point Street – Close to the Point Street and Eddy Street gateways and serving most of the Jewelry District.
4. Capital Center - A public garage in the vicinity of the Citizens Headquarters and the Amtrak station would serve the financial district in Downcity, the State House and the lower part of College Hill.

## TRANSIT

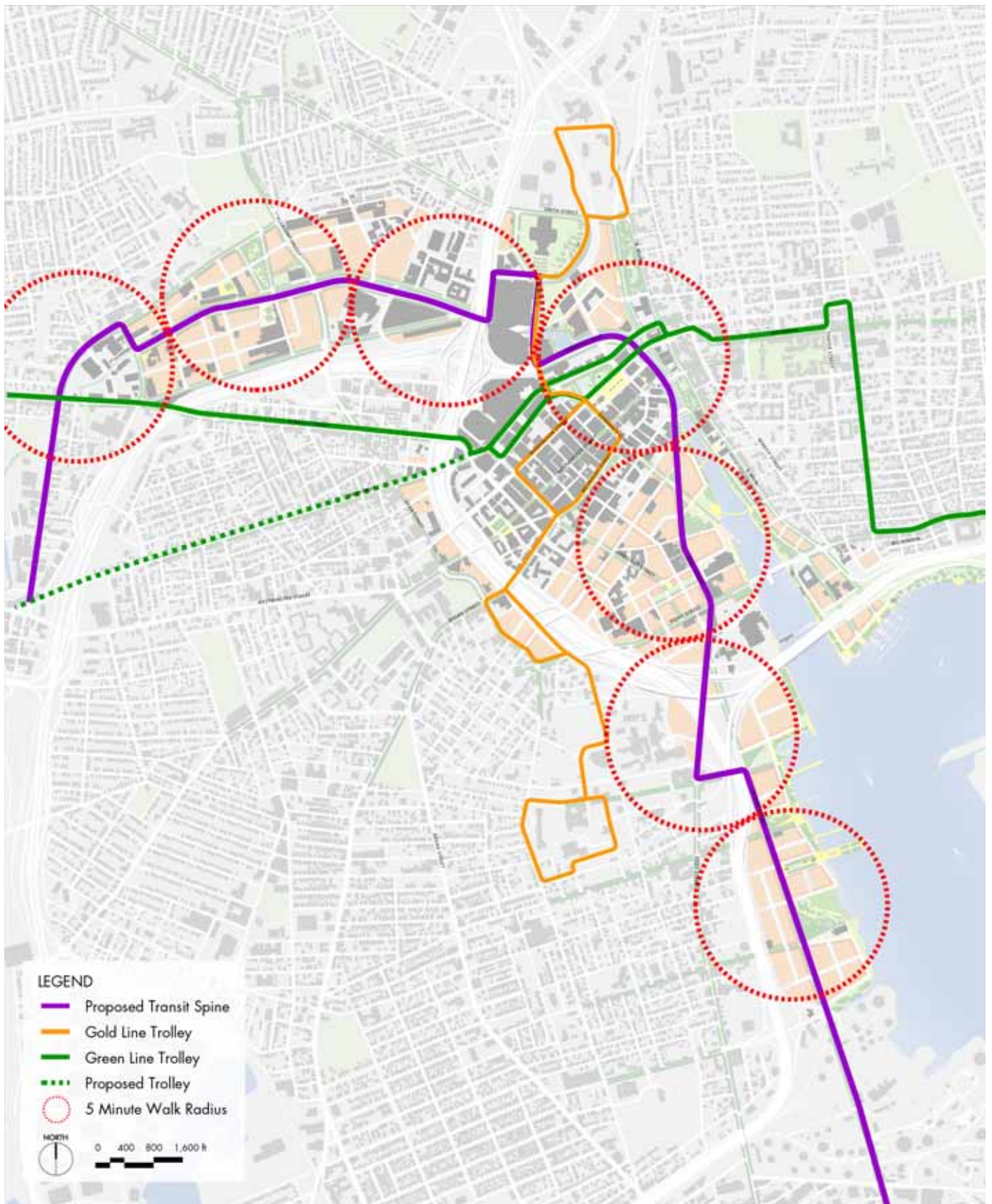
Transit systems represent an investment in infrastructure that leverages private development, just as any utility would. Stations associated with transit are an opportunity to create memorable civic architecture and to create a more desirable location for private development. As a system, transit is typically organized into primary routes and secondary feeder routes that promote connectivity and ridership. Primary routes need to provide express service with frequent headways, and typically require a wider right-of-way to achieve these efficiencies. Transit can evolve over time, which is an important concept in today's funding environment. While RIPTA serves all of Rhode Island, downtown Providence will have a different set of needs that emphasizes local connections, transit oriented development, and reduction in the use of the automobile and its attendant street and parking demands.

The proposed transit concept for downtown Providence will link the Valley to the Bay along a spine that runs generally along Valley Street, Providence Place, Memorial Boulevard, Eddy Street, and Allens Avenue (Figure 23). Service along this route could begin with a rubber-wheel trolley and could evolve into a bus rapid transit system, with the ability to override traffic signals, dedicated lanes where possible, and digital information at stops to keep riders informed (Figure 25). The suggested route includes some of the wider thoroughfares in the city, but further study will be required to establish the exact route.

Spaced at approximately one-half mile intervals, transit stops will serve a five-minute walk zone in the downtown. Stops would be targeted for Olneyville, Eagle Square, Acorn Street, the Foundry, Washington Street near Kennedy Plaza, Ship Street, the Rhode Island Hospital, and Oxford Street. A certain number of these stops could serve as intermodal centers, with transfers to the regional RIPTA buses and public parking structures. Spaced every mile, possible intermodal locations would be at Olneyville, near Kennedy Plaza, near Rhode Island Hospital, and near Thurbers Avenue. Many of the regional bus riders that are not destined for downtown could transfer at one of the outlying intermodal stations.

The Providence trolley system, LINK, puts the city ahead of many of its counterparts by offering short haul trips across downtown and servicing key destinations (Figure 26). The Green Line connects Eagle Square to Kennedy Plaza via Atwells Avenue, running past the Dunkin' Donuts Center, and the Convention Center. To the east, the Green Line continues on via the bus tunnel to Thayer Street and south to Wickenden Street. The Gold Line connects the State House area, Providence Place Mall, Kennedy Plaza, Downcity, and the Rhode Island Hospital.

Many residential areas will be within a ten-minute walk of the proposed transit spine. Additional trolley lines may be necessary over time, however, to provide better service to some downtown neighborhoods, particularly in the west end. Through a connected system, businesses and residents will be able to move back and forth through the downtown districts. Regional riders will be able to join the system and local residents will have access through the trolley system that feeds into the transit spine.



^ FIGURE 23 Transit A transit spine will link each district along the valley and the bay, with a series of stops that pick up a five-minute walk radius. The transit could begin as rubber wheel trolleys and evolve into bus rapid transit or light rail. Intermodal stations will provide parking and interface with the existing trolley system.





The economic development strategy for the City of Providence centers around strengthening the tax base, making jobs available for all workers, and promoting Smart Growth, which involves compact mixed-use districts integrated with public transit. In building a sustainable economy for the future, the city is looking to build on the strengths of entrepreneurs and institutions, focusing on knowledge, creativity, and innovation. Providence's competitive advantages are built around the following five industry clusters, which were identified in the 2003 report, "A Report: Building Providence's Creative and Innovative Economy":

1. Arts and culture
2. Knowledge creation
3. Biomedical science
4. Creative and information technology
5. Design and business innovation

## DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

“Buzz” is happening around Providence. This is largely due to major public and private projects that have and continue to transform the City. These initiatives coupled with the strength of the regional economy demonstrate that “something is happening in Providence.” Recent initiatives include:

- Two buried rivers that run through the downtown were uncovered and reconnected within the city’s historic downtown;
- The elevated rail line that cut through the city’s downtown was buried and the land reclaimed for civic spaces and quality development sites;
- The Capital Center project created civic improvements and development opportunities in a previously dilapidated area;
- Waterplace Park created a new civic space in the center of the City;
- Providence Place Mall made the city a regional retail center; and,
- The planned relocation of Interstate 195 will reconnect Downcity to the Jewelry District.

The question from a market standpoint is whether this “buzz” can be leveraged to transform and grow the economy (Figures 24 & 25).

## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

As the capital of Rhode Island and the center of the State’s economy, the Providence/New Bedford/Fall River Metropolitan Statistical Area (Providence MSA) contains over 1.5 million people and includes most of the State of Rhode Island and part of southeastern Massachusetts. As of the 2000 census, Providence was the 40th largest metropolitan area in the United States. The average annual growth rate for the MSA is 4.8 percent, which is just lower than the metropolitan growth rate for Stamford (6.6 percent), Boston (6.2 percent) and Worcester (5.8 percent). The relatively small Manchester/Nashua MSA (13.3 percent) is growing fastest and the metropolitan areas for Hartford and Springfield are lagging at two percent or less.

Providence is the second largest city in New England with 177,300 residents in 2004. The population of the city is increasing in diversity. From 1990 to 2000, the population increased by eight percent, fueled largely by the growth in the Hispanic population, which more than doubled.

As would be expected for a college town, Providence’s population has a higher concentration of persons of 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years old, as compared to national averages. Among the top 50 metropolitan areas in the United States, however, Providence’s share of 25 to 34 year olds was low. Providence ranked 42nd among the nation’s 50 largest metro areas in its share of population aged 25 to 34, and this cohort is declining faster in Providence than the national average.

In the new economy the challenge will be to attract the young, talented workers in the 25 to 34 year old cohort. They are needed for jobs, they are mobile, and, often, looking to set down roots. At the same time, workforce training will be imperative to ensure that diversity and population growth are an economic asset.

## ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Providence is functionally part of the Boston Metro economy, which is one of the strongest economic regions in the country. It also participates in the Northeast Economic Region, which is a global economic force. The city is home to seven colleges and universities and functions as the health services center for the state. Regional highways, Amtrak, and the T.F. Green Airport, which was remodeled in the mid-1990s, provide excellent access. Providence is within a 45-minute car or train ride to downtown Boston and within a three-hour car or train ride to New York City.

As of 2002, the Providence Metro Area contained over 26,000 businesses and approximately half a million private sector jobs. In 2004, over 23 percent of all of the private sector jobs in Rhode Island were located in Providence. According to the 2000 Census, eleven percent of employed Rhode Islanders worked in Massachusetts up from 9.7 percent in 1990. As compared to the national average, the state has a higher share of its employment in the manufacturing, finance, educational services, healthcare and accommodation and food service industries.

Education is a dominant employment cluster and critical to fostering the Providence’s “creative economy.” It is also seen as a vehicle for inner city workforce development and technology commercialization. Increasingly, Brown, Lifespan and CARE New England are seeding Rhode Island’s biomedical cluster. Rhode Island’s high wage jobs information, management of companies and finance, insurance and real estate are concentrated in Providence County, where 60 percent of the state’s education service jobs are found.

While Rhode Island's private sector employment growth rate was on average lower than most of the New England states between 1992 and 2002, Rhode Island did not experience dramatic private sector employment gains and losses during this period. Rhode Island's relatively low employment growth rate was more a function of not capitalizing on the late 1990s boom and less about losing jobs as a result of the recession.

A major factor cited compromising Rhode Island's ability to compete for jobs is high taxes. In a January 2004 publication by Ernst & Young entitled "Total State and Local Business Taxes: A 50-State Study of the Taxes Paid by Business in FY 2003", Rhode Island ranked 9th in business taxes per employee. Massachusetts ranked 27th in business taxes per employee. Economic development publications recommend that the state's competitiveness can be improved by reducing the government's reliance on property taxes and reducing some state taxes. A report by the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City states that the combined state and local tax burden on electric utilities in Rhode Island is estimated to be approximately three times the state and local tax burden in Massachusetts.

## POSITIONING THE ECONOMY

Providence is bringing art and science to the market. The creative and innovative industry clusters identified in the 2003 report are arts and culture, knowledge creation, biomedical science, creative and information technology, and design and business innovation. These clusters represent 20,000 jobs in Providence, which is 18 percent of the total number of jobs. The presence of the 20,000 jobs anchors another 40,000 jobs, indicating that 54 percent of the economy is creativity-driven.

The two clusters that bookend the industry clusters are mostly tax-exempt and civic. At one end is knowledge creation from seven colleges and universities and five teaching and research hospitals. At the other end is art and culture. These two bookend clusters provide the foundation for the three commercial clusters to flourish.

The presence and interaction of these five clusters are the foundation of the creative economy. The interaction among the disciplines produces new combinations that have economic, artistic and social impact for Providence.

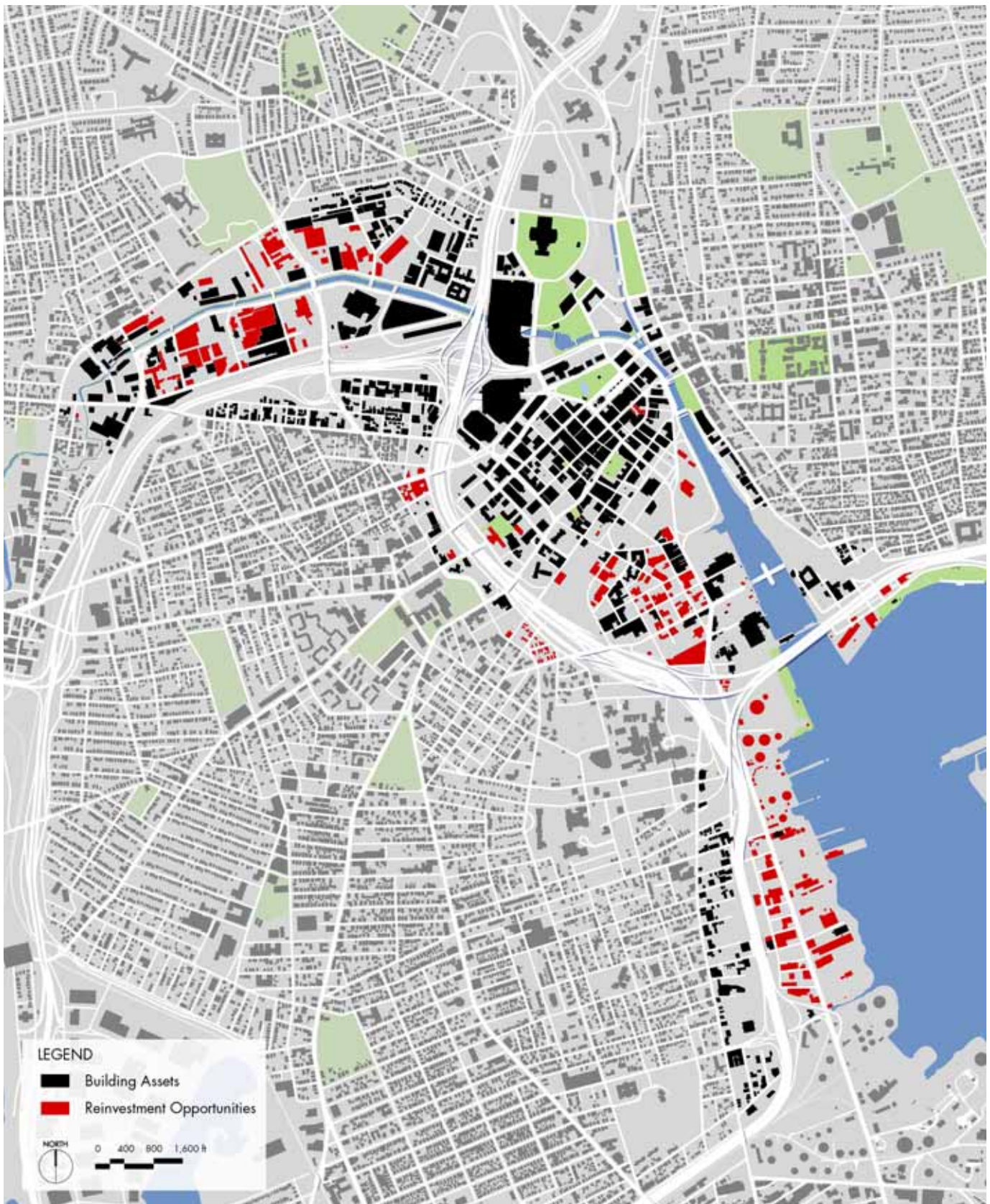
**1. Arts and culture** – This bookend cluster combines some commercial with mostly non-profit industries. There are performing arts organizations emerging such as Black Rep and established ones like the Providence Performing Arts Center. The cluster includes thousands of individual artists in many neighborhoods, including animators, filmmakers, and fashion designers. Arts and culture are the cultural street scene, music of the world's cultures and the third places like cafés and bars (after home and work) that are fundamental to city life. Public artists create the larger public aesthetic ground in the city for art and culture to flourish. Creative workers crave a vibrant artful street scene to rest, have fun, and network with others. Further, people want to visit and be part of these artful experiences: cultural tourism.

**2. Knowledge creation** - The seven colleges and universities are storehouses and creators of knowledge. The colleges' buying power is an economic force. Combined they are the largest private employer in the city. Their presence ripples in the economy; restaurant patronage and attendance at arts events would pale without the places of knowledge in the city. Places of knowledge serve as an entrepreneurial engine, since they produce research that is commercialized into products for the market, seed new economic clusters such as biomedical science, help solve business and technological problems in entrepreneurial start-ups, and provide jobs for graduates who become creative workers and entrepreneurs.

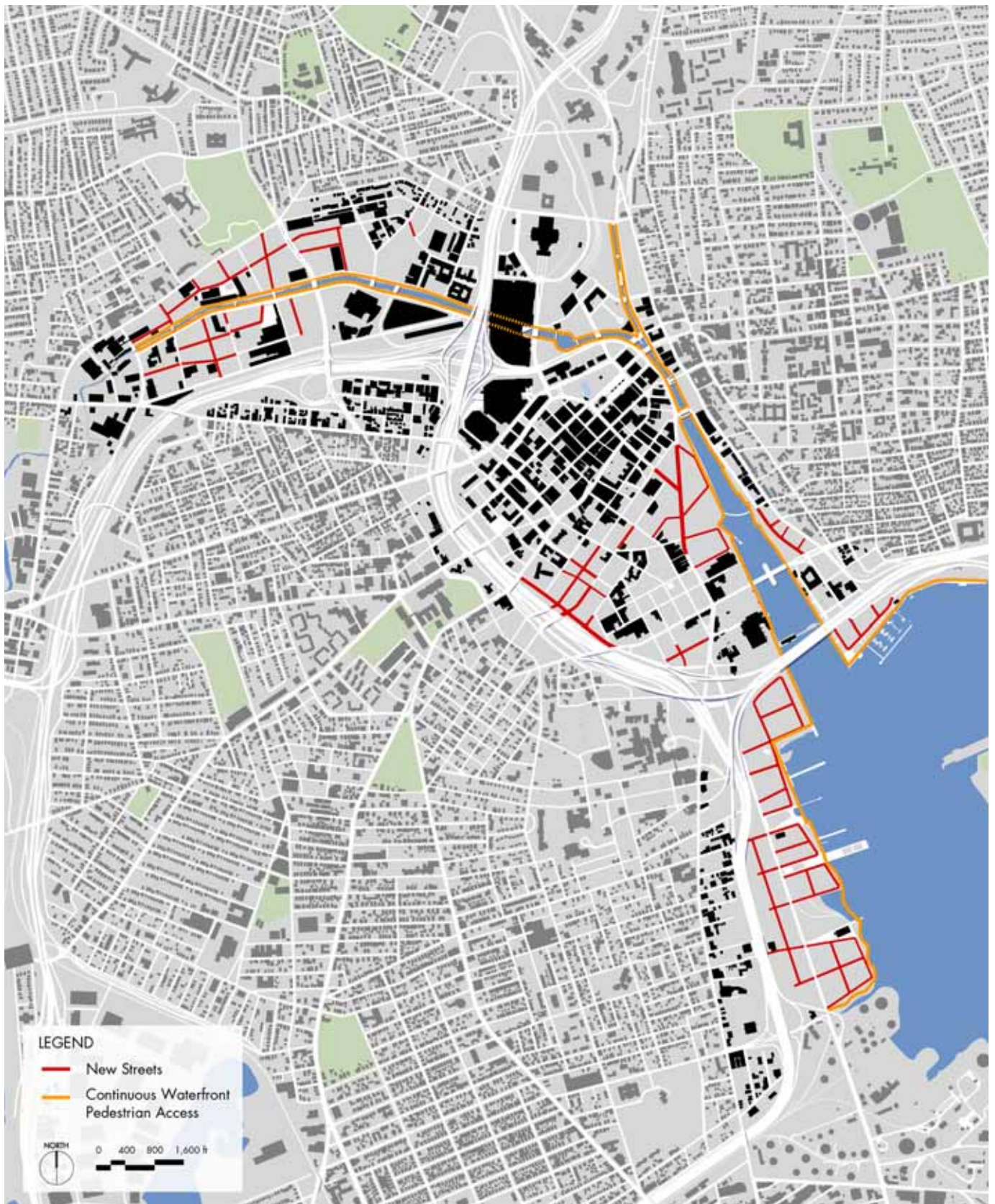
**3. Biomedical science** - New breakthroughs in pharmacology, treatment and medical devices are in this cluster. The federal government invests \$100 million per year in Providence hospitals and Brown Medical School to develop breakthrough solutions in medicine. Lifespan and Care New England employ 750 medical researchers on major projects. This number is up by 500 workers in the past three years.

**4. Creative and information technology** - This technology cluster is where art and science converge in new products and new applications such as digital imaging and smart processes. Creators include programmers, web artists, and software engineers.

**5. Design and business innovation** - Jobs include graphic and industrial design, marketing, PR and intellectual property lawyers.



^ FIGURE 24 Investment Opportunities In the former industrial districts, many buildings are one story with little character and suggest opportunities for investment and redevelopment in the future. Red color shows buildings that were identified as having little regeneration value.



^ FIGURE 25 New Street Networks The introduction of new streets will create a street and block structure of walkable districts, while creating new real estate addresses.

## MARKET POTENTIAL

To move forward, the economic clusters need to drive real estate decisions that are positive for the city. The market for office, housing, and retail uses is a function of current supply, vacancies, rents, and other factors.

### Office Potential

Market potential for office uses exists; the question is whether the downtown can effectively compete for the businesses generating job growth. At an average of 250 square feet per employee, new office-inclined jobs have the potential to demand 3.5 million square feet of office space. This space would be targeted to the core commercial businesses of the city, the entrepreneurial market, medical/laboratory space, and headquarters facilities.

The city cannot accommodate future demand for office space without new construction. From a planning perspective, it is not unreasonable to plan for 500,000 to 1,000,000 square feet of office space between now and 2015. To achieve this level of development the following initiatives must be implemented:

- Public parking development to reduce developer capital costs and monthly parking rental rates
- A transit system that effectively reduces the need for all employees to have cars and creates value to the downtown location
- Land assembly assistance and land write-downs to reduce capital costs in order to create competitive rents
- A downtown district where Class B/C or inexpensive commercial office space can be marketed
- Areas within the downtown where large floorplate, “horizontally configured,” buildings can be developed effectively
- City or quasi-public control of the land created by the relocation of Interstate 195
- Incentive packages to encourage businesses to locate downtown

### Residential Potential

There are approximately 1,300 new or planned market rate units in the Study Area. The number of households in the downtown will grow tremendously in the next couple of years. Where the Valley to the Bay districts were once relegated to commercial and industrial uses, downtown is becoming an increasingly mixed-use neighborhood.

The downtown can support an additional 900 to 2000 residential units, net of the units under construction and/or planned for the Study Area. A range of housing products (condominiums, rental units, lofts, apartments, and row houses) and price points are necessary to realize this level of absorption. The constraint in the market is not the demand for downtown Providence but the amount of land available to develop product. The need for remediation on some of the more open tracts of land, such as the Narragansett Bayfront, suggest that large-scale, stick-built residential construction is unlikely.

The residential market is responding to ongoing investment by the public, institutional and private sectors in downtown’s renewal. Residential investors also are capitalizing on Rhode Island’s aggressive historic tax credit program that taken together with the federal tax credit results in writing down capital costs by half. As housing costs rise in Boston, the Providence market taps into the larger regional demand. With this depth and a market willing to support rental rates over \$2.00/sf, a number of new residential projects are planned including the Cornish Development and One Ten Westminster in Downcity; Parcels 2, 6, and 11 at Capital Center; and Metro Lofts and 383 West Fountain just west of Interstate 95.

Conventional market analysis bases all housing demand on household growth. This methodology fails to address inadequacies in the existing marketplace. In many urban environments, there is demand for certain housing types, but there is no product. To create a stronger market, a greater range of housing types will draw those households that are more likely to have an urban lifestyle. Approximately one-quarter of the households in the Providence Metro Area are in lifestyle segments that squarely align with downtown living. It is likely that a majority of the households moving to Providence from Massachusetts and other states are coming from urbanized areas.

## Retail Potential

With a super-regional shopping center (Providence Place), an eating, drinking and entertainment complex, and the emergence of street level specialty shopper's goods, downtown Providence has a very healthy retail economy (Figure 26). Providence Place occupies 1.3 million square feet, and approximately 333,400 square feet of additional street level retail is located in Downcity. (Commercial Market Analysis for Coordinated Arts and Entertainment Management Program Providence Downcity, Urban Marketing Collaborative, 2003).

Population growth within a 15-minute drive time, which approximates the Primary Trade Area, will create demand for additional retail. Downtown can capitalize on the increase in demand for apparel, books, and other specialty retail, as well as eating and drinking demand. Many consumers come to Providence to shop and dine, with approximately 44 percent of downtown retail sales derived from visitors residing outside of the city.

Taking into consideration residential growth and demand within downtown and the population outside of the 15-minute drive time area and visitors, the study area can likely support between 73,400 and 96,500 square feet of retail between now and 2015. Of that space, resident demand alone can likely support between 17,000 and 24,000 of shoppers goods stores and 34,000 to 43,000 square feet of additional eating and drinking space.



^ FIGURE 26 Street level retail has been growing in the last several years.

## BUILDING HEIGHTS

The regulation of building heights is the interface between the goals of the civic community regarding urban design and the environment and the goals of the real estate community for market-based financially feasible projects. Recommended changes to the existing building height regulations will fine tune this relationship to expedite development in key areas, while maintaining a more careful attention to context in areas where historic preservation, jobs, and residential neighborhoods are at stake. Enforcement of height regulations in all levels of review is essential to avoid real estate speculation.

The strength of the real estate market in downtown Providence has generated a number of proposals for new projects. Many of these are pushing beyond the height limitations in the existing Zoning Ordinance and seeking variances through the Zoning Board of Review. The intent of the Providence 2020 plan and the city's new form-based Zoning Ordinance is to provide clearer expectations regarding building heights and density, including design review and a process for density incentives.

The goals of the building height recommendations are as follows:

1. Create an interesting skyline for the downtown
2. Respect Providence's historic scale and unique character and preserve historic building stock
3. Create a more transparent development review process that minimizes land speculation and land banking
4. Promote great architecture by tying height bonuses to urban design goals
5. Encourage low-scale infill development throughout the downtown.

Regulating buildings according to the number of stories will help reconcile civic goals with real estate pro formas. Measurements using feet are the most precise manner of regulating height but these sometimes produce unintended consequences in the building floor-to-floor heights and/or the construction techniques. The development community measures projects by the value of the floor area, which is translated into the number of stories for a given site area. Setting rules based on the number of stories will allow for greater variety in specific heights while generally guiding building bulk and massing.

Zones of height should broadly shape the skyline of the city. The current patchwork of zones reflects an urban design intent that is out of scale with individual projects and is not producing the desired outcomes (Figure 33 - Existing Zoning Height Limits). Many urban design principles can be achieved by shaping development massing within the lot lines through the use of guidelines and incentives.

The building height regulations that shape the city skyline also affect the value of land and drive development decisions. Where the zoning heights are unrealistically low and variances are common, many investors tend to speculate on a limitless potential and land bank property in vacant lots or surface parking. Similarly excessive heights can drive up the value of the land, even if there is no market. Given a limited market, a few isolated tall buildings can absorb all of this potential when the civic goal is to create development-lined active streets. To make desirable projects feasible in sensitive zones, the city should consider publicly financing parking rather than allowing greater height.

The base height in each zone will allow many projects to move forward. Projects seeking greater height, and thus having more impact, would be rewarded with height bonuses if they met specific design and development criteria that ensured a better fit within the fabric of the city.

Proposed Height Limits

The existing heights are shown in Figure 28 and the recommended heights are shown in Figures 27 & 29. The skyline will continue to emphasize the traditional financial district and the more recent gateway area near the Convention Center as the pinnacles of height with 24-story buildings. A series of transitional zones will step down and wrap around the core of Downcity and the Jewelry District. These historic parts of the city will maintain their distinctive character with a base height limit of 8 stories that reaches out to the lower part of the riverfront. Capital Center and the Narragansett Bayfront east of Allens Avenue will also have a base height of 8 stories. As it passes by the heart of downtown and along the waterfront, Interstate 95 will be a dramatic corridor with 12- to 16-story buildings lining its edges. The outer reaches of the downtown, including Promenade, Fox Point, and Atwells Avenue, are recommended for a base height of six stories to maintain the unique character of these districts and encourage the distribution of development.

In all cases, the following guidelines should apply to height and massing:

- Maintain a consistent street wall, whose height relates to the width of the street (approximately 1:1 ratio). Upper levels of the building should step back from the street wall façade.
- On primary or important streets, blank façades, and in particular parking decks, are not allowed, but instead active uses that engage the street are encouraged.
- Parking should be placed at the center of a block and wrapped with development, or placed underground, or have an active retail use on the ground level.

Density and height bonuses for a maximum of up to a 25% increase in the number of floors would be given in exchange for one or more of the following elements:

- Waterfront public access
- Lower heights along the waterfront edge
- Lower heights along a neighborhood edge
- Inclusion of dedicated arts uses (galleries, studios, etc.)
- Inclusion of affordable housing
- Active ground floor uses such as retail, artist galleries, restaurants, daycare, or other civic uses

- Preservation of historic structures onsite
- Provision of public parking on or offsite
- Provision of publicly accessible open space onsite or in a proximate downtown location.
- “Green” building and site design

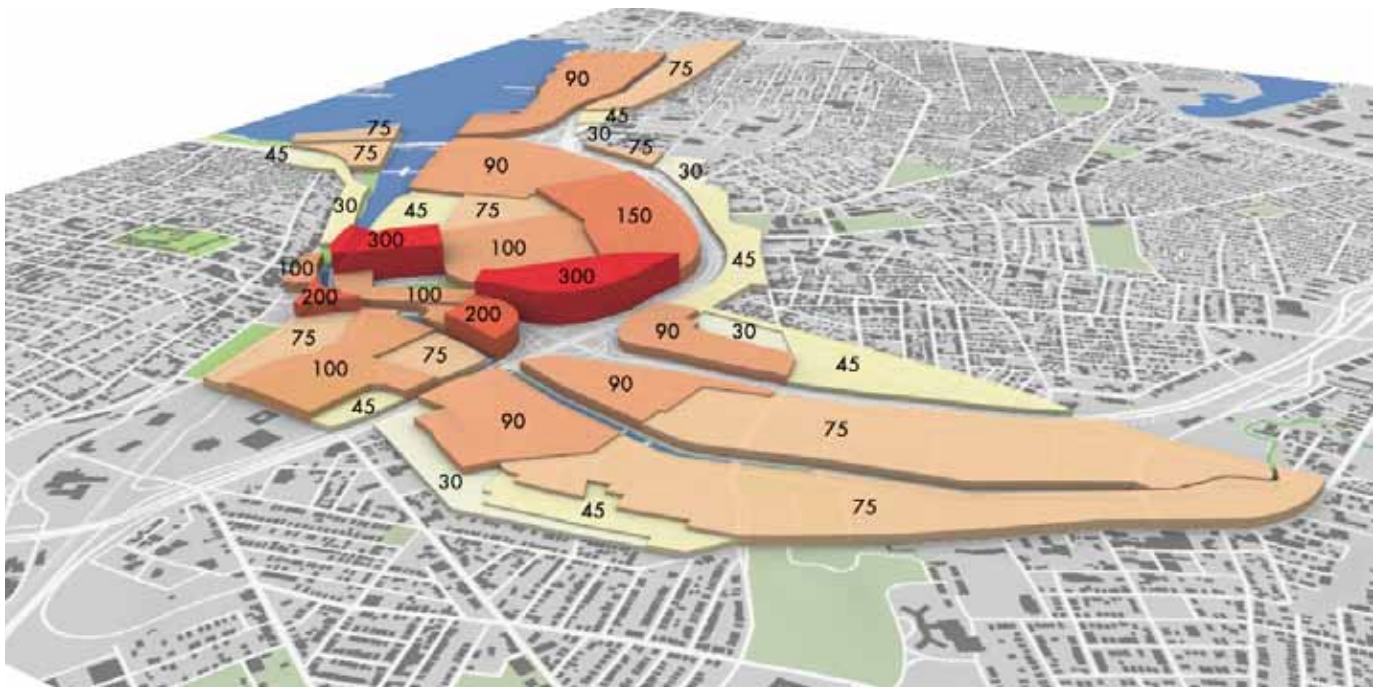
The relationship between the base height zones and the maximum allowed height with bonuses is as follows:

Base Height Limit	Max. with Bonuses
24 stories	30 stories
16 stories	20 stories
12 stories	15 stories
8 stories	10 stories
6 stories	8 stories
4 stories	5 stories

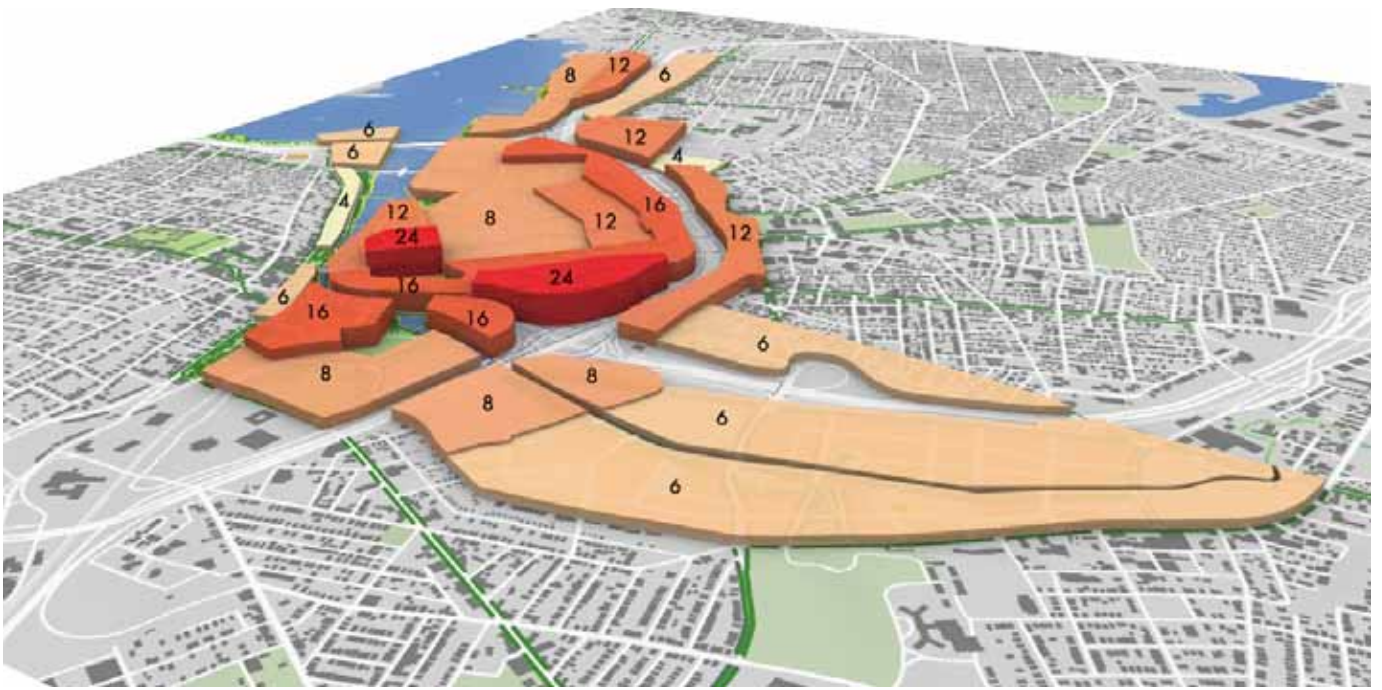
All projects that request height bonuses will require development review and would be expected to meet the design criteria outlined above to ensure a positive contribution to the civic community.



^ FIGURE 27 Proposed Building Base Heights in Stories



^ FIGURE 28 Existing Building Height Limits (in feet)



^ FIGURE 29 Proposed Building Base Height Limits (in stories)  
 Building heights should be measured in stories rather than feet, with higher buildings encircling the historic areas.





## OVERVIEW: PROVIDENCE 2020

Providence 2020 embraces several key districts that each have a unique historic development, urban character, and competitive advantage for new development (Figure 35). The Valley and the Bay have traditionally been the employment center that drove the economy and the tax base for the rest of the city. In the future, the economic lines are likely to be more blurred, with each of these districts serving as important locations for job growth and developing a sense of neighborhood with a residential component. Within the geography of the greater downtown are four primary districts (Figure 30):

- Promenade
- Capital Center/Downtown
- Jewelry District
- Narragansett Bayfront

## DISTRICT CONCEPTS

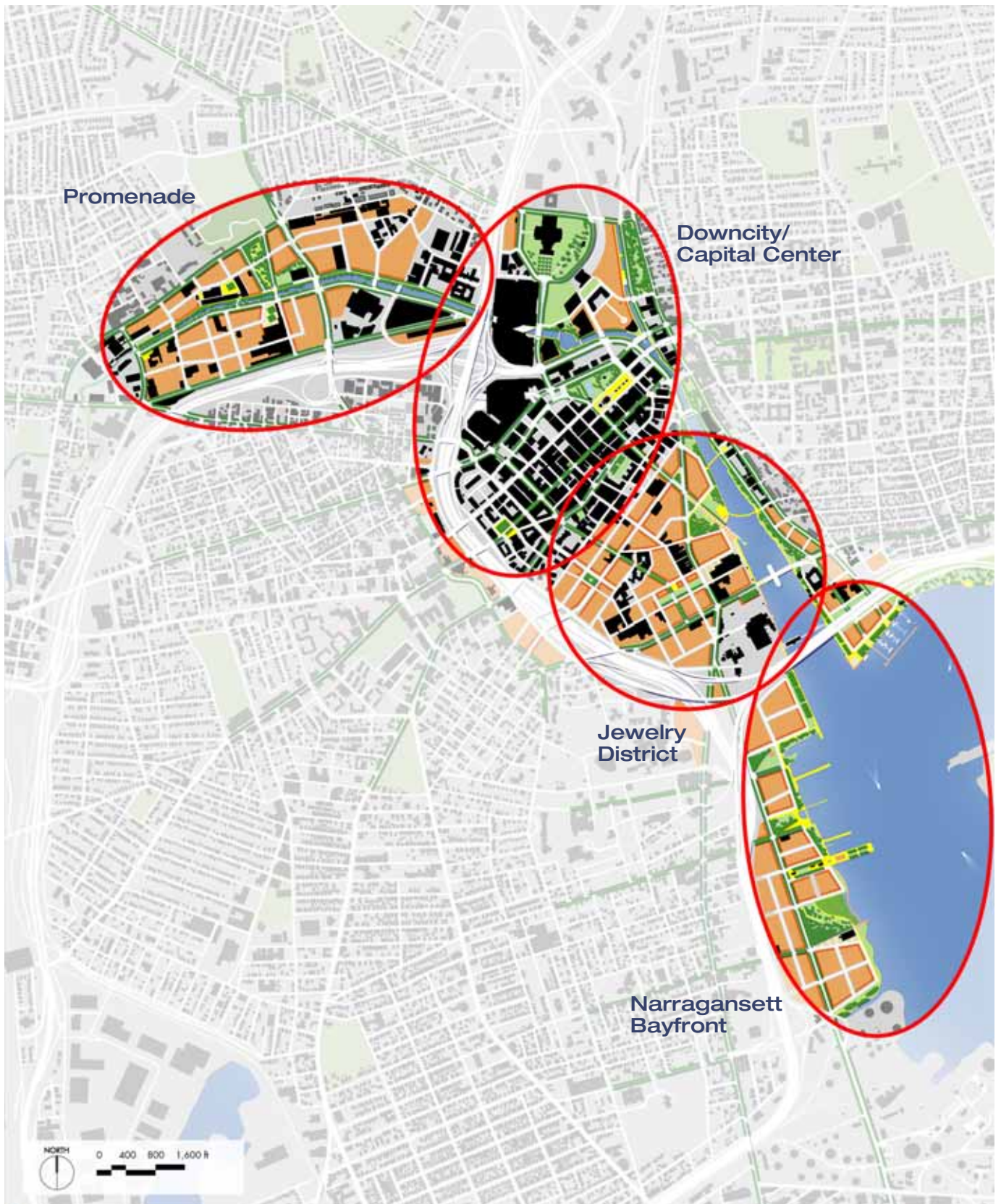
**Promenade** – a former industrial district extending from Eagle Square to the Foundry along the length of the Woonasquatucket River.

**Downcity/Capital Center** – the traditional city center with government, financial, and retail services bounded by Interstate 95 on the west and the current alignment of Interstate 195 on the south.

**Jewelry District** – a former industrial zone south of Downcity that is rapidly converting to residential, research, and other office uses in the shadow of the city’s major institutions, with opportunities for stronger connections to Downcity once Interstate 195 is relocated to the south.

**Narragansett Bayfront** – the 20th century working waterfront of the city extending from India Point Park to Thurbers Avenue with a mix of water-related and non-water related industrial uses, small businesses, vacant land, and limited public access.

High on the hills around this arc of downtown are the many residential neighborhoods and the small commercial districts that serve them. While Providence 2020 focuses on the transformation of the downtown, the purpose of the overall effort is to make downtown a more desirable destination that is well connected to all of the city’s neighborhoods. Within each district, the opportunities for economic development, civic places, and access are described and a summary of capital projects is presented. The Implementation Strategy puts each of these projects into the context of the larger downtown revitalization efforts.



^ FIGURE 30 Downtown Districts Within an overall development framework, the distinguishing character of each district will be celebrated and used as a springboard for different types of economic development.

## **PROMENADE: A PLACE FOR INNOVATION**

### **Economic Development**

Promenade will become a center for innovation, where jobs range from research to production (Figure 31-35). With loft and other urban housing in the district, people will find it easy to walk to work. Many may choose to live and work in studio space that gives them maximum flexibility. The smaller one- and two-story historic brick buildings will be well-suited for rehabilitation by the small entrepreneur. More established businesses may desire the larger spaces and excellent highway visibility offered by the Foundry complex. Businesses will prize this location, in clear view of the Statehouse, but with better value than the more central Downcity and Jewelry Districts. From Interstate 95 and Routes 6/10, access into the district is direct with gateways at the top of the hill on Dean Street and in the valley on Providence Place.

The retail stores at Eagle Square will provide an anchor at one end of the Promenade, and the higher density Foundry complex with its mix of offices and residential units will anchor the other end. In the center, a dynamic place will focus around the new Acorn Street landing, the Paul Cuffee School, and the adaptive reuse of historic buildings on Acorn Street. The limited service retail in the district should be concentrated primarily in the area near Providence Place and Acorn Street. The courtyards and small public plazas in and around these mill buildings will become the focal point for cafés and small shops that serve the local population of residents and employees. In order to preserve existing small businesses and encourage start-up companies, public participation in an incubator building or incentives may be necessary.

### **Civic Places**

As a recreational and natural resource area, the Woonasquatucket River will become the central amenity for residents and workers alike. The banks of the river could balance areas of natural habitat with more open areas along the vertical stone wall sections and in key overlook points. Along each edge of the river greenway, continuous paths for pedestrians and bicyclists will connect Eagle Square to the Providence Place Mall and beyond.

Residents of the surrounding Smith Hill, Elmhurst, Valley, and Federal Hill neighborhoods will be able to take advantage of the resources offered by the Woonasquatucket River greenway, new waterfront parks, additional job opportunities, and local shops. A large green park on the north side of the river will complement the Paul Cuffee Charter School, extend to the neighborhoods, and serve as the local landing on the waterfront. On the south side of the river, open space could be more urban in character with active plazas that engage the surrounding development.

### **Access**

Providence Place will become the primary spine of the Promenade District, providing a continuous link for transit, automobiles, and bicyclists moving between Eagle Square and the heart of downtown. The streets parallel to Kinsley will distribute traffic, while the intersection with Dean Street will provide the primary vehicular gateway.

The presence of transit as part of the overall spine linking the Valley to the Bay will require careful consideration of the use of the right-of-way, but will enhance development and connectivity. Transit stops located at the Foundry, near the Acorn Street/Dean Street area, and at Eagle Square will each serve a five-minute walk zone. In the center stop near Acorn/Dean, an intermodal facility could provide structured parking to encourage people to transfer modes to get to Downcity and other downtown destinations.

Dean Street/Pleasant Valley Parkway will continue to be the main vehicular crossing point in the Promenade, linking the neighborhoods on either side and serving as a key route into downtown via Atwells Avenue for cars, bicycles, and pedestrians. As such, the character of this important corridor needs to be modified to transform it into a great urban street rather than a highway segment or an arterial boulevard. The character of the corridor should be consistent from Dean Street to Raymond Street. The speed of traffic should be slowed sufficiently to make this a pleasant passage for pedestrians.

The reconfiguration of intersections can transform the character of a corridor making it more pedestrian-friendly. By removing the free right lanes at the intersection with Providence Place, pedestrians would have a better chance of crossing at this point. At the top of the hill, the highway ramps to and from the Route 6/10 highway should be organized into a signaled intersection on Dean Street, allowing pedestrians to cross and significantly slowing the speed of vehicles at this gateway location. Consideration should be given to greater pedestrian and bicycle access on the Dean Street viaduct, which could involve reconfiguration of the dedicated exit ramp along that structure.

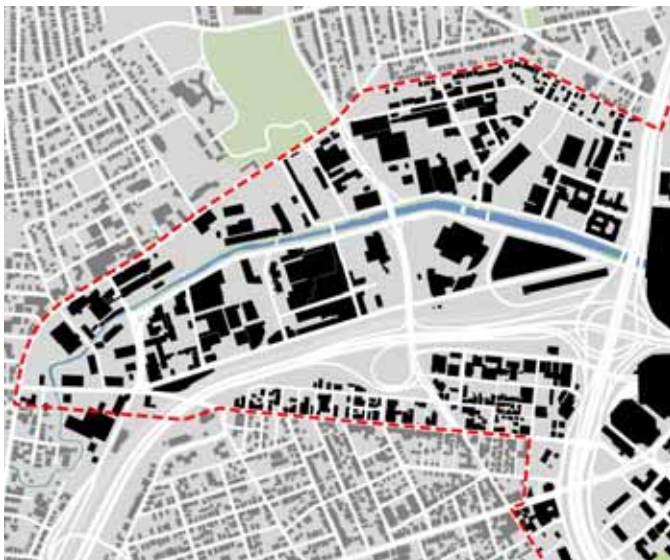
The network of streets in the Promenade will give people more choices for circulation, including two-way streets and more strategic placement of important bridges. Through-traffic for automobiles and trucks could be directed to Harris Avenue and the Valley Street/Orms Street corridor, leaving Kinsley as a local two-way road and a transit corridor. The introduction of small public streets into former industrial areas will provide needed real estate addresses while ensuring a highly permeable and walkable district. A new bridge crossing on the Acorn Street alignment will enhance local movement across the river at this key location. Similarly, the Bath Street Bridge would be more effective if aligned with Bath Street. Pedestrian access across the river will be enhanced by renovation of the old railroad bridge just west of Acorn Street.



^ FIGURE 31 The Foundry is a landmark in the Promenade District.

## Summary of Promenade Implementation Projects

- Woonasquatucket Riverfront edge improvements
- Providence Place and Promenade Street streetscape
- Dean Street streetscape and intersection improvements
- Bath Street Bridge
- Acorn Street Bridge
- Promenade internal street network
- Acorn Street parks
- Transit spine
- Business incubator or incentives packages



^ **FIGURE 31 Promenade Framework** Innovative businesses will benefit from a unique mixed-use environment along the banks of the Woonasquatucket River, upriver from Downcity.

< **FIGURE 32-33 Existing Conditions** The river and the adaptive reuse of the best buildings establish the character of the district, yet opportunities for infill development along a network of new streets is extensive.



^ **FIGURE 34 Proposed Woonasquatucket River** Restoration of the neglected riverfront will open up opportunities for bicycling, fishing, bird watching, and small boating, all within view of the Statehouse.

< **FIGURE 35 Proposed Civic Realm** The Acorn Street Parks will connect neighborhoods to the water and provide a civic heart for the district.

## **DOWNCITY/CAPITAL CENTER: ANCHOR FOR THE CITY**

### **Economic Development**

Downtown and Capital Center together form the economic engine for downtown, and serve as the cultural center for the city (Figures 37-41). The relocation of the river, burial of the Northeast Rail Corridor, and new parks and development have gone a long way toward mending the rift caused by historic barriers. With well established development frameworks, the primary opportunity in this part of downtown is strategic infill development with a mix of uses and parking.

The diversity of uses found in Downtown and Capital Center reflect the best aspects of typical downtowns. The seat of state and city government is complemented by academic institutions, financial enterprises, hospitality, and cultural venues ranging from the galleries and cafés to the regional draws of the convention center and Dunkin' Donuts Center. Regional retail came back to the downtown with the development of Providence Place and more recently the traditional "main street" retail is returning to Downtown in the form of restaurants and independent shops.

The adaptive reuse of historic buildings in Downtown provides new housing opportunities, while proposals for new residential towers in the traditional financial district and in Capital Center will create additional choices for those wishing to live downtown. Students bring life to the streets of any downtown, and the introduction of RISD dormitories on the west bank of the Providence River will achieve this. The project, which involves the adaptive reuse of the Old Hospital Trust building, will include 500 beds and the main library for the institution. Johnson & Wales also has an objective to increase their residence halls in Downtown. In the future, an urban grocery store will contribute a significant amenity for residents and students living in the area.

Besides housing, other Current projects downtown attest to the value of this address, with its historic character, central location, and diversity of uses. Hospitality uses include the conversion of the never-completed Masonic Temple office building to a hotel, the expansion of the Westin Hotel, and the repositioning of the Holiday Inn. The Dunkin' Donuts Center has been acquired by the RI Convention Center Authority and will undergo a \$65 million renovation. The new GTECH headquarters will help bolster the downtown as a preeminent location for businesses.

### **Civic Places**

Downtown and Capital Center encompass some of the most important civic places in the city and the key strategy will be to maintain and conserve these over time. These civic places include both public buildings and open space, which are often related to each other. The proposed Harbor Landing Park will create a landing at the foot of Dorrance Street and will join Downtown and the Jewelry District.

The Statehouse commands the large lawn at the top of the hill, leading down through parkland to the riverfront promenades and open space of Waterplace Park and the Riverwalk. Kennedy Plaza is framed by City Hall and the Federal Courthouse, and is a center of activity with bus riders, ice skating, and one of the largest green spaces in the downtown. Although this park provides a gracious setting for surrounding buildings, including the Providence Biltmore and the former railway buildings, programmed events and other activities will make this park more inviting for day-to-day use. Similarly, Roger Williams National Memorial Park represents an important open space yet lacks a committed constituency to provide a sense of ownership, a situation that will be improved by new development on the remaining Capital Center parcels.

The charm of Downtown lies in the small plazas and incidental spaces that provide relief to the compact building form. Westminster features these small but valuable spaces at Exchange Street and Snow Street. Cathedral Square, which is now hidden, will return to its former prominence once Westminster Street is reconnected between Empire Street and Franklin Street (Service Road Number 8).

Like most New England cities, the convergence of angled streets creates "squares," which once were important spaces but over time have become dominated by the automobile leaving very unfriendly pedestrian spaces. As suggested in Duany's recent plan, the redesign of LaSalle Square and Emmett Square can reclaim these important gateways, which anchor the Fountain/Sabin corridor adjacent to the Convention Center and the Dunkin' Donuts Center.

The civic life of Downcity and Capital Center is carried out in a number of other public buildings and landmark structures, which distinguish this part of downtown from all other districts. The public library, the courthouses, government buildings, theaters, universities, churches, convention center, and Dunkin' Donuts Center attract people into the city on a daily basis, often within historic buildings that are architectural landmarks. While privately owned, the Arcade is a distinctive publicly accessible space that has been open since 1828 and constitutes one of the city's most unique features.

## Access

Downcity and Capital Center are the focal point for all transportation in the city and the state, including an Amtrak Station, statewide RIPTA bus service, the local RIPTA trolleys, and excellent highway access and visibility.

The introduction of a transit spine on Memorial Boulevard will complement the existing public transportation systems by facilitating access between the Valley and the Bay. Along this spine, new intermodal centers south of the Jewelry District and in the Olneyville area could become transfer points for RIPTA passengers that are not headed for downtown Providence, thereby alleviating some of the intensity of transit operations currently found in Kennedy Plaza.

For people arriving from the regional highways, a key gateway will be the Memorial Boulevard and Francis Street intersection. Improvements to LaSalle Square will help orient people arriving via the Broadway and Atwells Avenue exits from the highway.

Orientation for pedestrians and local traffic downtown will be easier with investment targeted to a hierarchy of streets. These investments will be in the form of streetscape improvements, wayfinding and signage, and will pay particular attention to architectural details on new development.

A series of east-west streets have traditionally linked the neighborhoods to the west to Downcity and the water. These include Weybosset/Broad Street, Westminster Street, Broadway to Sabin/Fountain, and Atwells Avenue, which converges into LaSalle Square. Washington Street connects

across the downtown to the neighborhoods on the east and west (Figure 56). Streetscape improvements, bridge enhancements, and new development along these streets need to focus on creating active, pedestrian-friendly streets. The reconnection of Westminster Street will reinstate this street as one of the primary addresses in the city, anchored by the cathedral at the top of the hill and by the financial district next to the water.

Many streets connect across the fabric of Downcity, but a few of them stand out as through-connectors between districts. Empire Street/Chestnut Street will become the primary street cutting across the side of the hill and extending through the Jewelry District. This street corridor is anchored by LaSalle Square on one end and Point Street on the other. Closer to the water, Francis Street/Dorrance Street will connect the Statehouse directly to the Harbor Landing on the Providence River (Figure 57). Also anchored by the Statehouse, Exchange Street leads directly to the heart of the financial district. Memorial Boulevard sweeps around the edge of the river, connecting the Valley to the Bay. This broad right-of-way, which is currently dedicated to automobile traffic, will need to take on a more balanced role in the future. This street can become one of the great transit streets in America, drawing pedestrians who will use the system and creating an environment that links the riverfront more closely to Downcity.

## Summary of Downcity/Capital Center Implementation Projects

- Downcity street improvements (Emmett and LaSalle Squares, Weybosset Street improvements, two-way street conversions)
- Westminster extension and Cathedral Square
- Bridge and streetscape improvements to west side (Atwells Avenue, Broadway, Washington Street, Weybosset/Broad Street)
- Public parking at LaSalle Square
- Municipal annex building at LaSalle Square
- Transit spine



^ FIGURE 37 Streets Infill development needs to complement the historic streets and architecture of Downcity



^ FIGURE 36 Dorrance Street Connection From the civic heart of Downcity, the streets will lead down to the site of the old port at Harbor Landing Park.

< FIGURE 38 Existing View The relocation of I-195 will reconnect Downcity to the lower riverfront.



^ FIGURE 39 Proposed Harbor Landing Park  
A new Harbor Landing Park will join Downcity and the Jewelry District at the riverfront. The other end of the axis is anchored by the existing Kennedy Plaza in Downcity's civic heart.



^ FIGURE 40 Proposed Plan Stronger street connections and infill development will tie the edges of Downcity to the adjacent neighborhoods.



^ FIGURE 41 Existing Conditions

## JEWELRY DISTRICT: CENTER FOR KNOWLEDGE CREATION

### Economic Development

The Jewelry District will become one of the premier locations in the city with a rich mix of uses and dynamic 18-hour environment (Figure 42-49). Development in this area will be spurred by the relocation of Interstate 195 and opening up the riverfront. Providence will become known as a center for knowledge creation, building on the economic engine of the universities and hospitals, which are the largest private employers in the city. In order to create a diverse and interesting place, the office, research, and academic uses must be balanced with residential service retail uses to support these activities.

With close proximity to hospitals and universities, the district will offer jobs related to biomedical research, technology, academic administration, pharmacology, medical devices, professional services, and design. Over time, reinvestment may intensify the current operations of Brown University, Johnson & Wales, Rhode Island Hospital, and Women and Infants Hospital in the district while also seeding commercial uses that derive a benefit from proximity to these institutions.

The district is within an easy walk of Downcity with all of its commercial, retail, and cultural activity. Access to the riverfront will become seamless thereby creating an attractive amenity for employees and residents. New residents in the area are likely to span the economic range, including empty nesters that want the benefits of an urban environment as well as younger graduate students, medical residents, and research and service employees that work in the district. Retail should be concentrated around the parks and along the major corridors of the relocated Dyer Street and Point Street, where visibility will be the best. The narrower through-streets such as Chestnut will be prime locations for smaller independent restaurants, cafés, and shops.

Many of the most historic buildings in the Jewelry District have already been renovated. Over time, many of the other blocks with one-story buildings may become desirable areas for private reinvestment to achieve higher density. New housing types might include lofts, apartments, and rowhouses to create choices and deepen the market. New research, academic, and office buildings should complement the scale and massing of historic buildings, while reflecting the innovation that occurs inside their walls.

### Civic Places

The strategic location of new parks will create a sense of place and orientation for the district. Three distinct parks will create an amenity for three distinct sections of the Jewelry District: the hillside; the historic core, and the riverfront. Along the riverfront, the parks and walkways will connect Downcity to the Jewelry District and beyond to Narragansett Bay.

At the waterfront, the Harbor Landing will become a major gathering space for civic events in the life of the city, and will bring together Downcity and the Jewelry District in a single vital point at the edge of the Providence River. Located at the convergence of Dorrance Street and Ship Street, the five-acre park will complement Kennedy Park on the Dorrance Street axis and connect to the Chestnut Street corner at the upper end of Ship Street. From this landing, Waterfire boats can launch their evening activity, and summer concerts will occur. The park will feature public art that exhibits the work of RISD and other local artists and can also host more temporal art installations and shows.

New development will derive tremendous value from the views over Harbor Landing and out to the riverfront and the bay. In order to heighten its civic and highly accessible character, the park should have a continuous frontage on the relocated Dyer Street. The shape of the park maximizes the amount of park frontage and the benefit to surrounding parcels.

In the historic core of the Jewelry District, a series of parks will create a setting for new investment and provide a sense of identity. Bordered by Elm Street and South Street, these quiet parks are one block off the busy Point Street corridor (Figure 46). As a series of green spaces (1 ¼ acres total area), these new parks will connect the Children's Museum on the upland end to the Heritage Harbor building on the waterfront end. Walkways adjacent to the Heritage Harbor building will link these interior parks to the riverfront parks.

Higher on the hill, a public square will create a focal point for new development in the area. Set within the former Interstate right-of-way, this 1 ½ acre park will serve as a gathering place for residents in the area and nearby Johnson & Wales students. From this high point, people will be able to walk to the water along Friendship or Clifford Streets and may turn off onto Ship Street to reach the Landing. Embedded in the neighborhood, it will be one block above Chestnut Street along the Green/Claverick corridor.

All three of these proposed parks in the Jewelry District will define the surrounding areas, creating identity and amenity, while providing a distinguishing address. They are each carefully scaled to complement existing and future development. Each one will take on a unique identity fitting for its location: one a waterfront landing, one a hillside square, and one a series of interior parks linking historic buildings and institutions.

## Access

As a focal point in the city, the Jewelry District will be accessible from many modes and directions. In the future transit will become a viable choice. For vehicles or pedestrians, local streets will connect it to College Hill, Downcity, Narragansett Bayfront, and the neighborhoods on the hills to the west. The district will have excellent highway visibility and access.

The proposed transit spine will cut through the heart of the district along Eddy Street to the relocated Dyer Street and on to Memorial Boulevard. A transit stop near Ship Street will allow an easy five-minute walk to any location in the district, complementing proposed intermodal stations at Kennedy Plaza and Rhode Island Hospital.

Point Street will be the gateway into the district from Interstates 95 and 195 and from College Hill and South Providence. As one of the few streets that crosses all the barriers, it should balance vehicular and pedestrian use. Point Street will also be the gateway onto the continuous service road on the west side of Interstate 95, from which visitors will be able to turn east to the water or west to the neighborhoods. Besides Point Street, the bridge crossings will be on Clifford, Pine, Weybosset/Broad, and Westminster, which in the future will lead east to the water as it once did.

Eddy Street will become the primary route between the research activities in the Jewelry District and Rhode Island Hospital. As it passes under the Interstate 195 ramps and the Interstate 95 corridor, the roadway will require dramatic lighting and generous sidewalks to make it usable for pedestrians. In the intervening areas, active development should be encouraged if possible.



^ FIGURE 42 Existing view across the Jewelry District

As a through-road Chestnut Street will connect across the side of the hill to Empire Street in Downcity. Along the waterfront, a continuous corridor from Eddy Street to the relocated Dyer Street to Memorial Boulevard will link the Jewelry District to Downcity. To the south Allens Avenue will pass under Interstate 195 to the Narragansett Bayfront. A pedestrian bridge from Harbor Landing to South Water Street, will connect the Jewelry District to College Hill and also provide more continuous waterfront access between downtown and Fox Point.

## Summary of Jewelry District Implementation Projects

- Garrahy public parking
- Harbor Landing Park
- Claverick Square
- Heritage Harbor Parks
- New streets within Interstate 195 right-of-way
- East and West Service Road streetscape
- Providence River pedestrian bridge



^ FIGURE 43 Jewelry District Development Potential The Jewelry District lies at the intersection of Downcity, College Hill and the hospital.



^ FIGURE 44 Development Framework With the relocation of I-195, the Jewelry District will become the center for knowledge creation, with institutional expansion balanced by private research and residential lofts.



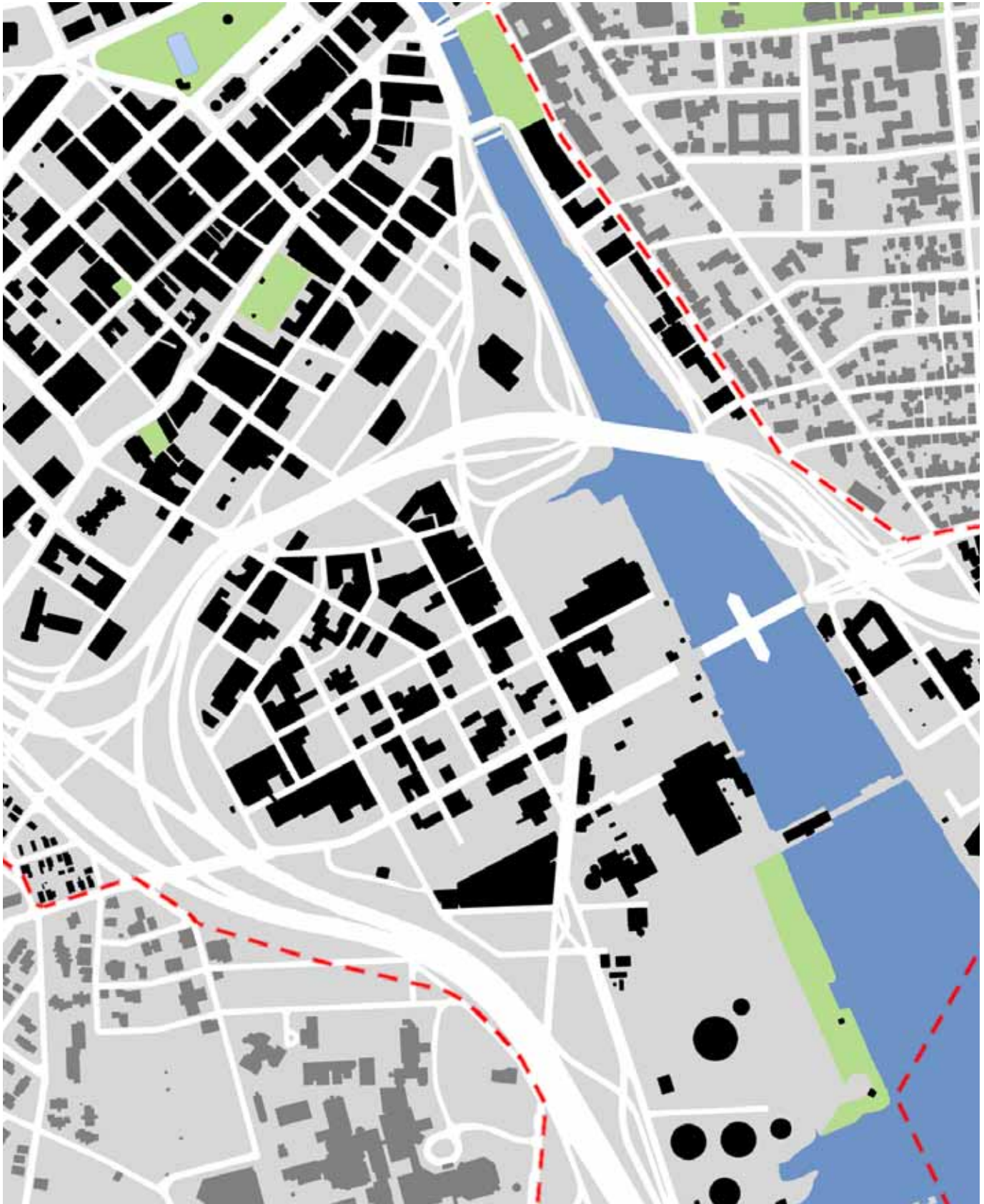
^ FIGURE 45 Proposed South Street Parks  
The South Street Parks create an internal focus in the heart of the district for new infill development.



^ FIGURE 46 Proposed Plan The repair of the highway right-of-way must reconnect Downcity and the Jewelry District with a pattern of streets and blocks.



^ FIGURE 47 Existing Conditions



^ FIGURE 48 Existing Site Conditions



^ FIGURE 49 Existing Site Conditions

## NARRAGANSETT BAY: THE BAYFRONT

### Economic Development

The Bayfront sweeps around the head of Narragansett Bay from Thurburs Avenue (Sassafras Point) to India Point (Figure 50-56). Competitive advantages are the spectacular waterfront views, excellent highway visibility to all points, good access, and the potential for waterfront amenities of parkland and continuous public access. Since there are only three historic warehouse buildings of any significance, Narragansett Bay is one of the best locations in downtown for larger footprint buildings and the creation of entire new neighborhoods or urban campus settings.

Economic development in this district will transform the underutilized portions of the harbor to more productive and active uses. While elements of the working waterfront may remain, new development will create opportunities for housing and office headquarters that command spectacular views. Medical research in urban campus settings will benefit from proximity to the Rhode Island Hospital and Brown University. The district is large enough to accommodate ongoing use for flexible light industrial uses especially on the upland side of Allens Avenue. Given the district's unique position, a hotel with conference center facilities may be appropriate overlooking the waterfront and one of the district's many public open spaces. Retail in the area should be limited to destination restaurants and small cafés and shops to serve the local residents and employees.

Providence's working waterfront zone, which extends from the ProvPort facilities at Fields Point around to Fox Point, is more extensive than the current demand for port activities. Many of the port uses are essential for the regional economy, such as energy imports and storage. A few of the other uses are important water-dependent activities that should be accommodated along the waterfront, including tug boat facilities and marine ship repair. In planning for the port, however, the consolidation of industrial waterfront uses would free up valuable waterfront land that is currently underutilized. While these efforts must address land ownership and compatibility of uses, every effort should be made toward the efficient use of the precious resource of the water's edge. Based on the findings of the 2000 Narragansett Landing study, the ProvPort facilities, which feature better bulkheads and deeper waters, could accommodate additional water dependent uses.

The transformation of the Bayfront will certainly require the relocation of a number of noxious uses that are not water dependent, including the asphalt plant, the vacant oil storage sites that are the highly contaminated, the hazardous waste transfer facility, and the adult entertainment. The key to redevelopment of many of the other properties will be remediation and assembly into larger parcels. A concerted effort will be necessary to change the perception and the actual physical environment before private investment will occur at any scale.

Each project must contribute to achieving the longer range vision of continuous public access and public landings at the foot of each street that passes from the neighborhoods under the highway. The Providence Piers project will begin to demonstrate the potential of the area, including adaptive reuse of a warehouse building, artist studios, a new water taxi/trolley station, and proposals for mixed uses. Initial projects such as these, however, must set aside land for continuous public waterfront access, even though in the short term there is nothing to connect.

### Civic Places

For years the industrial waterfront has hemmed in the upland neighborhoods of South Providence and Fox Point/College Hill precluding access to the waterfront. With the construction of Interstate 195 in the 1960s, industrial uses were relocated to Allens Avenue to create India Point Park. More recently, Collier Point Park was developed by the Narragansett Electric Company. Both of these parks are relatively isolated and lack strong connections to neighborhoods or other active uses.

In the future, the interrelationship of development and civic places will be essential along the Bayfront to ensure that all citizens are welcomed to the waterfront, that new development provides activity in adjacent parklands, and that the open space creates an attractive amenity to encourage private investment.

The distribution of parks along the waterfront will ensure that each neighborhood has their own proximate landing on the bay. Each park will have a distinctive character and programming tailored to its size and location, with all parks designed to welcome visitors and residents from the neighborhood, the city, and the region (Figure 59). In addition to India Point Park, landings are envisioned for the foot of Blackstone Street, Public Street, Oxford Street, and Thurburs Avenue.

Collier Point Park is already a spectacular overlook with benches, picnic area, tower, docks and a boat landing. Just across the mouth of the Providence River, Fox Point will complement Collier Point with a broad promenade that wraps the point connecting India Point Park to the Providence River walkways. Marinas along the water's edge could host community sailing and private moorings, which would promote casual weekday and evening use of the water. A public pier would help protect the marina and encourage fishing while allowing long views back toward the city skyline. Promenades along the water's edge and street edge will bracket shaded parks, lawn areas, and more active plazas at the street ends and at the point.

This series of civic places will be linked by the continuity of a linear park along the water's edge. This continuous public access will vary along its length, with formal esplanades and more informal trails or boardwalks passing along a softer more natural shore condition. Existing public piers could be restored for fishing and viewing platforms. The historic state pier at the foot of Bay Street is currently used for marine ship repair, but at some future date could become a significant public place in the city, with views up and down the bay, docking for tall ships, and stories of immigrant arrival interpreted in the design.

## Access

The Bayfront will be well-served by transit and regional highways. Major streets will connect it into the downtown to the north and a few smaller streets penetrate the highways to connect the waterfront to the neighborhoods.

The west side of the Bayfront will be served by the transit spine running along Eddy Street, Blackstone Street, and the length of Allens Avenue with a series of stops that serve the hospital and new waterfront development within walking distance of the neighborhoods west of the highway.

The primary access from Interstate 95 will be at the full interchange with Thurbers Avenue. The Rhode Island Hospital will be directly served with a westbound Interstate 195 exit and a southbound Interstate 95 exit. The Interstate 195 exit to Main Street and Point Street will provide access to the local streets leading to Fox Point.



^ FIGURE 50 Collier Point Park is a window onto the water today.

## Summary of Narragansett Bayfront Implementation Projects

- Narragansett land assembly and remediation
- Eddy Street underpass
- Allens Avenue streetscape
- Civic parks at Oxford, Public, and Thurbers Avenue
- Continuous Bayfront public access
- Narragansett Bayfront internal streets, streetscape and park improvements



^ FIGURE 52 Proposed Framework  
Narragansett Bayfront. The Narragansett Bayfront represents the long future of the City with vast underutilized tracts of prime waterfront land.

▽ FIGURE 51 Existing Conditions



^ FIGURE 53 Existing View to the South. A series of new waterfront parks at the foot of each connection under the Interstate will create windows on the water threaded together with continuous public access.



FIGURES 54-56 Access to the waterfront, mixed uses and well defined public spaces are key elements of the proposed Narragansett Bayfront





The strategy for implementation breaks down the overall vision into specific projects that can be implemented over time by specific entities. The priority public projects for the future are determined by a number of criteria, including the ability to leverage or complement private investment, the possibility of funding, and/or the ability to build on current momentum in one area to create a cohesive sense of place. In many cases, the schedule for the Interstate 195 highway construction dictates phasing of projects that fall within the former right-of-way. Cities are not built by any one entity, but instead are the amalgamation of many actions by different sectors and involved stakeholders. For downtown Providence to be successful, the future will involve congruent actions by the private sector, the institutional and non-profit sectors, and the public sector. Since cities and regions are functioning in a highly competitive environment to attract investment, the concerted efforts of all involved must be focused on a broadly shared outcome.

## IMPLEMENTATION

# PRIORITY PROJECTS

A number of public and private projects in downtown Providence are already funded, in design, or in construction, creating notable change within the next year or two. In order to establish priorities for public projects, priorities have been established, considering short-term priorities (1 to 5 years), mid-term priorities (6 to 10 years), and longer-term priorities (11 to 15 years). In general, the short-term projects can occur immediately, while the mid-term projects tend to hinge on the relocation of the Interstate 195 traffic to the new highway alignment. The longer term projects represent more ambitious goals, yet in many cases preliminary work may begin sooner, such as land assembly, feasibility studies, or funding requests.

The current schedule for the Interstate 195 relocation project is as follows:

- Summer 2005 – Start construction of Interstate 195 at India Point Park (includes replacement of 54-inch sewer line, construction of new pedestrian bridge and tunnel for access to park)
- Fall 2007 - Vehicles will start traveling eastbound on the highway
- Fall 2009 - All movements will be completed on the new highway
- Winter/Spring 2010 – Demolition of the old highway
- 2009 to 2010 - Rebuilding of city streets in old right-of-way; redevelopment on private parcels

# CURRENT PROJECTS

## Public Lead

- Providence Piers water transit/trolley connection
- Jewelry District waterfront parks
- Garrahy public parking
- Downcity street improvements (Emmett Square, LaSalle Square, Weybosset Street improvements, two-way street conversions)
- Dunkin’ Donut Center renovation

## Private Lead

- RISD library and residence hall adaptive reuse
- GTECH headquarters
- Providence Piers adaptive reuse
- Westin Hotel expansion
- Foundry parking and expansion

## Years 1 to 5

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### **Public Lead**

- Public parking and municipal annex at LaSalle Square (TIF District)
- Bridge and streetscape improvements to west side (Atwells Avenue, Broadway, Washington Street, Weybosset/Broad Street)
- Trolley extensions to west side neighborhoods
- Heritage Harbor Parks in Jewelry District
- Woonasquatucket Riverfront edge improvements
- Providence Place and Promenade Street streetscape
- Ongoing Narragansett land assembly and remediation

### **Private Lead**

- One Ten Westminster and Cornish Development residential projects in Downcity
- Residential development in Capital Center, including Waterplace Condominiums, Capital Cove rental units, and the Residence at the Westin
- Providence City Center on former Gulf gas station site
- Metro Lofts and 383 West Fountain residential projects west of Interstate 95
- Mill rehabilitation for residential and commercial development in Promenade
- Hilton Providence Hotel and Residences
- Institutional and private investment in Jewelry District, including Women & Infants Hospital addition

## Years 6 to 10

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### **Public Lead**

- Dean Street streetscape and intersection improvements
- Westminster Street and Cathedral Square
- New streets in former Interstate 195 ROW
- Harbor Landing Park (195 ROW)
- Claverick Square (195 ROW)
- Providence River pedestrian bridge
- Eddy Street underpass improvements
- Fox Point esplanade
- Acorn Street parks
- Promenade internal streets and streetscape
- Promenade business incubator
- Bus rapid transit system along transit spine

### **Private Lead**

- Ongoing infill in Downcity and Jewelry District, including South Street Station
- Ongoing redevelopment in Promenade
- Downcity grocery market

## Years 11 to 15

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### **Public Lead**

- Sekell and Franklin Service Road streetscapes
- Acorn Street Bridge
- Bath Street Bridge
- Woonasquatucket pedestrian bridge
- Allens Avenue improvements
- Narragansett Bayfront parks
- Light rail transit system along transit spine, if warranted

### **Private Lead**

- Redevelopment along Narragansett Bayfront

## POLICY PRIORITIES

A number of policy initiatives must be pursued at the state and local level to improve downtown, encourage the best development, and to realize the recommendations in the Providence 2020 plan (Figure 64). These policies range from regulatory strategies to funding strategies, and address the need for a new entity to oversee downtown development.

### Streamlining the Approvals Process

One of the City's major objectives is to streamline the approvals process. Toward this end, the Mayor appointed the Providence Zoning Commission in 2004 and charged it with revising the Zoning Ordinance. In the summer of 2005, the Commission issued a draft Zoning Ordinance that revamps the approach to zoning with a more form-based code. The process for review of this new ordinance involves stakeholder input, public hearings, and review and approval by the City Plan Commission and the City Council. Height recommendations from the Providence 2020 plan will be taken into consideration in establishing the height limitations in the new Zoning Ordinance. The city also grants building permits and occupancy permits as the project progresses.

In the proposed Zoning Ordinance, Downcity and the Jewelry District fall within the Downtown (D) District; the Promenade falls within the Business Mixed Use (BU) District; and the Narragansett Bayfront falls within the Business Waterfront (BW) District. Significant projects are defined as Land Development Projects that have specific review processes and exceed the following thresholds within the Providence 2020 B and D Districts:

- Building greater than 50,000 gross square feet
- Site area greater than two acres
- Parking of more than 150 spaces
- Phasing that involves two or more phases

Development Plan Review will be required for all new development and changes to exterior façades in the Providence 2020 B and D Districts as well as use variances, zoning map amendments, and institutional uses. Colleges and Hospitals will continue to be required to prepare an Institutional Master Plan.

With the new zoning in place and municipal input in an updated Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) being prepared by the Coastal Resources Management Council, clear expectations can be established for the development community to apply a consistent set of criteria. Ongoing collaboration will be essential to ensure that these two regulatory processes at the state and city levels have shared objectives for the downtown including:

- Economic development of underutilized industrial areas.
- Creation of quality urban environments.
- Enhanced environmental conditions through brownfields remediation, best practices for urban development within the watersheds, continuous public access that provides recreational waterfront use, access to the water, and interpretive information about natural systems.

Since the city largely relies on incentives and the State Coastal Resource Management Council largely relies on regulations, the requirements of both the zoning program and the SAMP should be closely tied to what is financially feasible and physically achievable for the private developer.

### Coordinated Development Incentives

A variety of development incentives are available at the federal, state, and local levels. Most federal incentives are administered by the state. The city and the state work together to deliver these incentives, and need to continue to streamline this process. Ideally, an entity focused on the downtown area would facilitate delivery of applicable programs within this focused geography, since the state is charged with economic development for the broader region and the city has responsibility for the broader municipal jurisdiction.

The city is able to facilitate development in a number of direct and indirect ways:

- **Zoning** - Density bonuses and other zoning waivers are currently used, yet the ad hoc use of these tools leads to an unpredictable real estate market. Through the City's new zoning and the Providence 2020 plan, the more even application of density bonuses tied to specific actions will continue to serve as a development incentive.
- **Parking** - Parking waivers, negotiated parking ratios, and public financing of parking structures are all key incentives for development especially where heights are limited and land parcels are small.

- **Land and Capital Improvements** – Through Tax Increment Financing, the city can partner with the private sector to realize public improvements that enhance development and/or contribute to the project feasibility in the case of land acquisition and write-down and parking.
- **Tax Abatement** – Tax abatement is negotiated on a project-by-project basis and improves the financial feasibility of private projects, typically by forgiving taxes in the short-term and imposing a schedule for a gradual increase over a ten-year period. Unlike Tax Increment Financing, however, abatements do not provide the city with the funds to make short-term public improvements.

The State administers a number of federal and state programs including:

- **Historic Tax Credits** – The combination of the Federal and state programs currently writes down half of eligible improvement costs in Rhode Island for adaptive reuse of certified historic structures. This incentive has been a major impetus behind the revitalization of downtown Providence to date, and ongoing support is essential.
- **Low Income Tax Credits (Federal)** – The federal low income housing tax credit program is the primary means of directing private capital towards the creation of affordable rental housing. The state administered tax credits provide developers of low income rental housing with a benefit that is used to offset a portion of their federal tax liability in exchange for the production of affordable rental housing. To qualify for tax credits, the proposed development must involve minimum levels of affordable housing and be new construction or substantial rehabilitation of existing residential units.
- **Industry Incentives** – The state has a 10 percent investment tax credit for “qualified taxpayers.” “Qualified taxpayer” firms must: (1) be in the wholesale, finance, insurance, real estate or selected service industries; and (2) generate more than half of their revenues from out-of-state sales and/or sales to the federal government. The state has a 10 percent Research and Development Property Credit for the construction, reconstruction, or acquisition of property for the use of research and development in the experimental or laboratory sense. Tax credits are available on the basis of employment to firms qualifying for enterprise zone tax credits.
- **Grants** – Direct grants for brownfields remediation, economic development, open space, and transportation are all benefits that enhance private investment.

## Tax Increment Financing Strategy

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) establishes the base tax assessment for real and personal property within a certain district at a base date when redevelopment begins. The base taxes continue to flow into the city’s general fund, while the increment in taxes is used to finance infrastructure projects that will leverage private investment, such as land acquisition, streetscapes, utility infrastructure, parking structures, municipal facilities, and parks. In accordance with RIGL 45 – 33.2, the City Council approves the project plan for the TIF.

The city is considering an important TIF district in the Downcity area generally bounded by Route 6, Washington Street, Dean Street, and Exchange Street. The plan for this area will be consistent with the Providence 2020 plan and with the previous Duany plan, and will define in more detail the need for economic development within this area and the specific improvements recommended, including reconfiguration of LaSalle and Emmett Squares, improvements to Mathewson, Fountain and Sabin Streets, public parking, and a municipal annex.

## Land Acquisition Criteria

In moving forward, the City should allow the private sector to lead in land assembly and reinvestment wherever possible. Where redevelopment is unlikely to go forward without significant environmental remediation, such as in the Narragansett Bayfront, the city may need to become involved in land assembly and site preparation, minimizing exposure to liability in all cases and working with partners if possible. Control of the land in the Narragansett Bayfront may be necessary since significant transformation is required and a number of incompatible uses must be relocated before redevelopment is likely to go forward. In the Jewelry District and the Promenade, redevelopment is likely to occur incrementally with the private sector taking the lead.

Upon the completion of the new Interstate 195 alignment, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) has been slated to dispose of the land within the former right-of-way. Legislation is pending, however, to constitute the Providence Development Corporation, which would assure responsibility for disposition, with a representative board of state, city, and civic representatives.

Although a negotiated purchase is preferred in all cases, eminent domain may be needed in strategic locations to achieve public purposes. Key parks recommended in the Providence 2020 plan are sited within the state highway right-of-way for Interstate 195 and will need to be negotiated as part of the land disposition along with local street rights-of-way. Where other park areas are suggested (Heritage Harbor Parks, Acorn Street parks, Claverick Square, and Narragansett Bayfront), ideally these should be carried out as part of a larger redevelopment strategy where the private sector acquires the land and integrates parks and development to create civic spaces.

## Coastal and Riverfront Resources

The Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) is a state agency with regulatory functions, responsible for the preservation, protection, development, and where possible restoration of coastal areas. The CRMC currently is developing an update to the Providence Harbor Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) covering 24 miles of shoreline within the cities of Providence, Cranston, East Providence, and Pawtucket, a jurisdiction that encompasses all the waterfront areas in the Providence 2020 plan. The SAMP, which is being advanced in concert with the municipal governments, has the following objectives, all of which are compatible with the Providence 2020 plan:

- Improve the economic, social, and environmental resources of the working waterfront
- Attract major developers with more predictable and efficient permitting
- Provide recreation and access to the water.

The CRMC has a regulatory authority that includes all of the areas within 200 feet of any coastal feature, including the tidal portions of the Woonasquatucket River (up to the Rising Mill Dam in Olneyville) and the Moshassuck River, which extends north from the Providence River. Within the Capital Center District the minimum setback is 20 feet for creating public access.

In 2001, the Woonasquatucket Watershed Action Plan was completed to coordinate efforts and focus resources for the improvement of this ecological system. This plan was sponsored by Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and included community groups, local municipalities, state and federal agencies, and major universities. Projects undertaken through this program include greenway trails, signage, riparian buffer restoration, and environmental remediation of brownfields.

Further improvements along the Woonasquatucket River in the Promenade would enhance the Greenway Project, which involves a continuous 5.7 mile walk and bike trail linking downtown to Olneyville and beyond to Manton. Depending on the edge condition of the river within the Promenade, some sections of riverbank could have a natural riparian buffer, while other areas, especially those with more vertical stone walls, could provide overlooks and interpretive signage. The riverfront improvements need to be developed in concert with a comprehensive look at the larger section that includes Providence Place and Promenade Street in order to balance vehicular, transit, and recreational trail use, and natural features.

## DOWNTOWN ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A number of key players will play a leadership role in realizing the objectives of Providence 2020. Equally important will be the invaluable partnership of many other stakeholders from other involved public agencies and the private, institutional, and non-profit sectors. In order to provide a geographic focus and a sustained advocacy for downtown, this report recommends the creation of a new entity, the Providence Development Corporation. A proposal for this entity has been debated in the Rhode Island legislature and will require ongoing discussion to fine tune various aspects of the organization.

## City of Providence

In relation to the recommendations for Providence 2020, the City of Providence has the overall responsibility to plan for the downtown and to regulate development through the Zoning Ordinance. The city also takes responsibility for economic development, community development, and project planning, design, implementation, and ongoing maintenance of parks and streetscapes. The city provides incentives for private development, and partners with the non-profit and private sector on special projects involving greenways, brownfields, and the Interstate 195 relocation.

Within the Providence 2020 study area, the following boards, committees, and commissions will have specific responsibilities in relation to regulating development:

- **Director of the Department of Planning & Development** (DPD Director) will conduct pre-application reviews for development in the Downtown District, Land Development Projects, and projects involving incentives; and the DPD Director will issue certificates of conformance for projects in the Downtown District, in order for projects to receive Building Permits.
- **Director of Inspections and Standards** is charged with the interpretation and enforcement of the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, and in particular for the issuance of Building Permits and Certificates of Occupancy for projects that are in conformance with the provisions of the Ordinance.
- **City Plan Commission** is charged with reviewing development proposals for conformance with the Zoning Ordinance and consistency with the goals of the city's comprehensive plan. The City Plan Commission carries out the Development Plan Review and specifically reviews Land Development Projects and may grant available adjustments, modifications, and incentives where warranted.
- **Capital Center Commission** governs development within the Capital Center Special Development District, including granting of waivers.
- **Downcity Design Review Committee** is charged with reviewing development within the Downcity (D-1) District, including alterations to storefronts, parking structures, service and loading dock areas, or other projects referred by the Director of Planning and Development under the Development Plan Review process. This committee may grant Transfer of Development Rights in the Downcity

District and waivers related to development in the Downtown District not covered by the Capital Center Commission and the Historic Commission.

- **Providence Historic District Commission** regulates alteration, repair, construction, demolition, or removal of any exterior structure and site within any Historic District and is responsible for issuing Certificates of Appropriateness and waivers in historic districts, some of which fall within the Providence 2020 B and D Districts.
- **Zoning Board of Review** rules on variances, special use permits and may refer matters to the City Plan Commission, the Historic District Commission, or other boards as appropriate.

Within the Providence 2020 downtown area, a number of entities are involved in streetscape and open space development and management:

- **The Board of Park Commissioners** establishes policy related to parks, reviews the Park Department operations, and enters into leases and agreements.
- **The Superintendent of Parks** and the superintendent's staff implement policy, develop park renovation plans, manage park design and construction, oversee the maintenance and programming divisions in the Parks Department, oversee leases and agreements, and manage fiscal and personnel operations for the Parks Department. **The City Parks Department** is responsible for 11 downtown parks, city street trees, and other playgrounds, athletic fields, fitness trails, and community gathering areas in the city.
- **The Recreation Department** is responsible for operating and programming recreation centers, pools, and water parks in the City.
- **The Department of Art, Culture and Tourism** takes an active role in artistic and cultural programming in the city's parks.
- **Department of Planning and Development** takes primary responsibility for planning streetscape improvements and new parks and works with the Parks and the Public Works Departments on design and implementation.

The Providence Redevelopment Agency owns the State Pier on the Narragansett Bayfront and leases it to Promet.

## State of Rhode Island

As the capital city, Providence has a special focus for the State of Rhode Island and its programs. In particular, the Economic Development Corporation, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation play key roles, as summarized below:

- **The Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation** (EDC) is responsible for administering employment incentives.
- **The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission** administers state and federal historic tax credits.
- **The Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation** administers the federal low income housing tax credits.
- **The Rhode Island Division of Taxation** administers the tax incentive programs for arts.
- **The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management** (RIDEM) administers State grants to acquire and renovate open space and parks.
- **The Coastal Resource Management Council** regulates development within 200 feet of the coastal zone.
- **The Rhode Island Department of Transportation** (RIDOT) is responsible for the relocation of Interstate 195 and the disposition of land within the former highway alignment.

## Downtown Improvement District

The Downtown Improvement District (DID) is a private non-profit entity that was initiated in 2004 with a focus on clean and safe programs for the Downcity area. The Providence Foundation, which took the lead in developing enabling legislation and implementing this new entity, continues to play a role in overseeing its operations. In Rhode Island, improvement districts require approval from the majority of landowners within the district boundaries, who are then charged an additional assessment.

In other cities, improvement districts often grow to take on additional roles such as research and data management for the downtown and special events and marketing. Other parts of the Providence 2020 downtown area may warrant separate improvement districts as they become more established, such as the Jewelry District and the Promenade.

## Providence Development Corporation

The proposed Providence Development Corporation follows a model that has been successful in a number of other cities. Entities that are focused on downtown development are able to provide leadership where it is most needed, complementing municipal and state agencies that have a much broader set of responsibilities. Advocacy for downtown is essential and takes many forms, including private civic and/or business organizations such as the Providence Foundation, the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, or the Reading RiverPlace Corporation; or Business Improvement Districts such as the Center City District in Philadelphia or the Kansas City Downtown Council/Community Investment District. Development corporations, however, have greater capacity to implement projects, which otherwise may be difficult to mobilize. Examples are the Hudson Park Conservancy and the spin-off entities of the Empire Development Corporation in New York, and the East Baltimore Development Corporation in Baltimore.

Key attributes of a successful development entity are the following:

- Geographic focus
- Political independence
- Clear vision of the future
- Continuity of leadership
- Businesslike approach
- Ability to build partnerships and to negotiate
- Steady funding stream
- Knowledge and skill sets related to development (finance, design and construction, fundraising, promotion and marketing, etc.)

The proposed Providence Development Corporation (PDC) would have a geographic focus similar to the boundaries of the Providence 2020 plan. They would be able to acquire and dispose of land, carry out capital improvement projects, and enter into public/private development agreements. The PDC would take the lead in packaging TIF and state economic development incentives in partnership with the city and the state EDC. The exact make-up of the board for the Providence Development Corporation has not yet been determined.

## Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) is an independent authority serving transit needs throughout the State of Rhode Island. RIPTA operates buses that connect to almost every town in the state, and in 1999 instituted the Providence LINK, a system of trolleys serving the downtown Providence area. RIPTA also offers seasonal water transit service to Newport.

RIPTA will play a leadership role in any future investment in transit systems. Federal funding and a recommitment to transit as infrastructure will be required to initiate new trolley routes in the short term or to implement bus rapid transit or even light rail transit in the long term.

## Non-Profit Organizations and Other Partners

The current momentum in the City and the commitment to the quality of the urban environment in Providence would not be possible except for the committed work of many different organizations and individuals. In realizing the goals of the Providence 2020 plan, ongoing partnerships will be essential, involving:

- **Providence Foundation** – This non-profit private entity provides a needed forum for business, civic, and institutional leaders to convene and discuss the future of the city and its needs. The Providence Foundation has played a leadership role in initiating the relocation concept for Interstate 195 and the implementation of a Downtown Improvement District, among other actions.
- **Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce** – The Chamber is a membership organization that advocates for and provides services to member businesses, which are located in downtown, the city, and the region.
- **Providence Economic Development Partnership** – This city non-profit agency is charged with economic development programs developed and implemented in partnership with the private sector.
- **Rhode Island Economic Policy Council** – Representatives from business, labor, higher education, as well as the Mayor and the Governor sit on the non-profit private council, which provides research and analysis and develops new initiatives for economic development. The council is jointly funded by the private sector and the State of Rhode Island.
- **Coastal Resources Management Council** – The CRMC is in the process of updating its Providence Harbor Special Area Management Plan, which will affect development throughout much of the Providence 2020 study area.
- **Open Space and Environmental Organizations** – The Parks Department considers private non-profit partners key to its ability to operate parks, including the Capital Arts, the Woonasquatucket Watershed Association, and the Friends of India Point Park, among others.
- **Cultural Organizations** – Cultural organizations, that have a major stake in the success of downtown, will continue to develop a committed constituency among new downtown residents and metropolitan residents who are interested in theater, visual arts, history, music, public art, and architecture.
- **Universities and Hospitals** – The institutional sector will continue to provide an economic engine for downtown Providence as some of the largest private sector employees and initiators of research and other spin-off economic activity in the city. The expansion of institutions into new downtown districts such as the Jewelry District and Narragansett Bayfront will provide the anchor to attract other private investment that desires proximity to healthcare and higher education.
- **Neighborhood Associations** – These associations are the voice of the residents in the many surrounding neighborhoods as well as the Downcity and Jewelry Districts.
- **Community Development Corporations** – The local Community Development Corporations (CDC) provide professional expertise in the delivery of affordable housing through application of a number of financing programs to achieve both home ownership and rental housing for residents below the average income level.





