Live It Up! in Downtown Providence

The best restaurants. The latest trends. The hottest shows. Where are you? Naturally, you’re in downtown Providence.

In order to expand the downtown customer base and increase sales and retail occupancy rates, we recently launched a new marketing campaign with a group of partner organizations. The group, guided by Providence-based marketing firm Advertising Ventures, Inc. designed a new logo and brand that highlights our neighborhood’s cutting-edge shopping, dining, residential and cultural scenes.

The DID made an important contribution by providing financial support for the redesigned downtown website: www.providencedowntown.com. Coordinated by Providence-based graphic designer Laura Mullen of Pinpoint Studio with support from Schwadesign and Square Factor, the new site allows visitors to easily find downtown destinations through an interactive map, cultural links and a page that features local recommendations. Much of the website content is also reflected in print with a complementary map and business directory, available at downtown hotels, visitor centers and other locations.

On November 13th, we celebrated the new campaign with a launch event at the Providence Performing Arts Center. While the bright new “Live It Up” logo appeared in full color on the marquee outside the theater, images from the campaign’s web and print components were revealed inside. Guests were treated to unique foods from eclectic downtown eateries such as Cuban Revolution, Gracie’s, Murphy’s Deli, taza caffe, 10 Steak & Sushi and Trinity Brewhouse. Campaign partners include The Providence Foundation, Downtown Merchants Association, Downtown Neighborhood Alliance, Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, Providence Tourism Council, Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau, Cornish Associates, Arts & Business Council of RI, and the City’s Department of Art, Culture & Tourism.

RETAIL UPDATE

More than 40 exciting new businesses have opened downtown within the past two years, with salons, galleries, home furnishings stores and eateries now lining our streets. Here are some of the latest:

NEW STORES

Clover (boutique), 233 Westminster
Jimmy John’s Gourmet Deli, 127 Weybosset
Queen of Hearts (boutique), 186 Union
Pinelli’s Downtown Deli, 82 Weybosset

COMING SOON!

eno Fine Wines, Peerless Building
As downtown Providence experiences a resurgence of round-the-clock office, residential, retail and entertainment activity, the community has expressed concern about unacceptable late-night behavior in and around nightclubs. The Downtown Improvement District is taking a lead role in addressing this issue. Along with other organizations, Frank LaTorre, Director of Public Space for the DID, has organized a Hospitality Resource Partnership guided by Jim Peters of the Responsible Hospitality Institute (RHI). This non-profit organization, founded in 1983, facilitates networks that create safe and vibrant places to socialize. By collaborating with hospitality establishments such as nightclubs and bars along with residents, security professionals and others, RHI develops a process for planning, managing and policing dining and entertainment districts. Providence’s Hospitality Resource Partnership sponsors include the City of Providence, the Downtown Merchants’ Association, the Downtown Neighborhood Alliance, the Jewelry District Association, The Rhode Island Foundation and The Providence Foundation.

The DID and the City of Providence are collaborating to repair downtown sidewalks where bricks are damaged or missing. Rather than adding patches of asphalt (as had been done periodically in the past), the crews are matching the bricks as closely as possible. Pedestrian safety is a priority, so if you see a sidewalk in need of repair, please contact us. Weather-permitting, the crews will take care of it. In addition, the State Department of Transportation is embarking on a major sidewalk replacement project on portions of Washington, Westminster and Weybosset streets. The DID has worked closely with the State and the City to assure that the project will start in this spring.

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The four-phase process is already underway. This summer, RHI hosted an initial community orientation, sharing information about national issues that are relevant to our community. In September, stakeholder representatives participated in roundtable sessions on economic development, community issues, safety and hospitality. After identifying current trends, problems and resources, they reconvened in November to establish an action plan. In the fourth and final phase of the process, they will oversee the plan’s ongoing implementation and will continue building consensus. Action items include improving safety through community policing in Hospitality Zones, ensuring consistent enforcement.

To get involved with this process or to find more information, please call Frank LaTorre at 421-4450.

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Downtown Improvement District

Creating a Safer Late Night Environment

Responsibility in downtown Providence begins with safety. Earlier this year, the City of Providence, along with the Providence Police Department, the Downtown Improvement District (DID) and other agencies, organized the Downtown Safety Team, a group of volunteers dedicated to improving public safety in the downtown area.

The Safety Team, which includes members from the City of Providence, the Providence Police Department, the Downtown Improvement District, and other downtown stakeholders, meets regularly to discuss safety issues and plan actions to address them. The team’s efforts include regular patrols, public education and awareness campaigns, and partnerships with other organizations to coordinate efforts related to safety.

The Safety Team has already made some notable achievements. For example, they have helped to improve lighting in some high-risk areas, worked with local businesses to implement security measures, and collaborated with the City of Providence to enhance public safety measures.

The Safety Team continues to work towards creating a safer, more welcoming downtown for all residents and visitors. They invite anyone who is interested in joining their efforts to contact them at (401) 421-4450 or by email at info@providencedowntown.com.

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Downtown Safety Team Leader: Tim Hamlin

Safety Team Leader Tim Hamlin hails from Oklahoma, but he’s lived in the Providence area for about 13 years. With plenty of restaurant customer service experience and his uncanny ability to relate to all types of people, he was well-prepared for his role at the DID. He finds working outdoors and helping people downtown extremely rewarding, and he appreciates his wonderful group of team members.

Next time you see him riding the Segway or standing by the mobile information cart, please thank him for his hard work!
ON A ROLL: NEW DID MOBILE INFORMATION CART

In early October, we unveiled our brightly colored mobile information cart which allows us to share up-to-date information with the public. The Safety Guides who staff the cart are dressed in their signature yellow uniforms and have been specially trained by Phyllis Blanchette, Visitor Services Manager for the Providence Warwick Convention and Visitors Bureau. The cart is filled with materials from downtown businesses, attractions and activities and is capped by a 7’ awning with a spectacular Richard Benjamin photo of Providence’s skyline. It has already become a fixture at special events downtown with our crew answering questions, giving directions, and sharing marketing materials with both visitors and locals.

Reminder: Call the DID hotline (401) 421-4530 twenty-four hours a day to report litter, graffiti or other non-emergency problems downtown.

STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT: One Building At A Time

The Providence Preservation Society Revolving Fund, Inc., a non-profit corporation founded in 1980, has introduced its newest initiative to help the downtown business community. The Storefront Grant and Loan Programs offer incentives for property owners and merchants to improve their storefronts through matching grants of up to $5,000 and short-term loans of up to $25,000. To supplement the financial programs, the Revolving Fund also offers free technical and design assistance from staff and affiliated architects. Working with merchants, they develop new storefront designs, project goals, timelines and cost estimates.

Lisa Milano, Program Manager, expects to stimulate a wide variety of design improvements such as exterior painting, signage, window repair, awnings and minor storefront rehabilitations. Since merchants have limited time and resources, she recognizes that this kind of program can really help make design realistic and affordable for them.

The Storefront Improvement Program can be coordinated with Providence Economic Development Partnership’s matching grant program. For more information, please visit PEDP’s website: www.providenceri.biz.

For property owners, the Revolving Fund also offers Development Loans which provide gap financing of up to $1 million for comprehensive building rehabilitation, as well as Façade Improvement Loans of up to $250,000.

For Revolving Fund applications and guidelines, contact Clark Schoettle or Lisa Milano at (401) 272-2760 or visit: www.ppsrf.org.