

# DOWNTOWN DIRECTIONS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PROVIDENCE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

## PROMISES KEPT! PROVIDENCE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT RENEWED

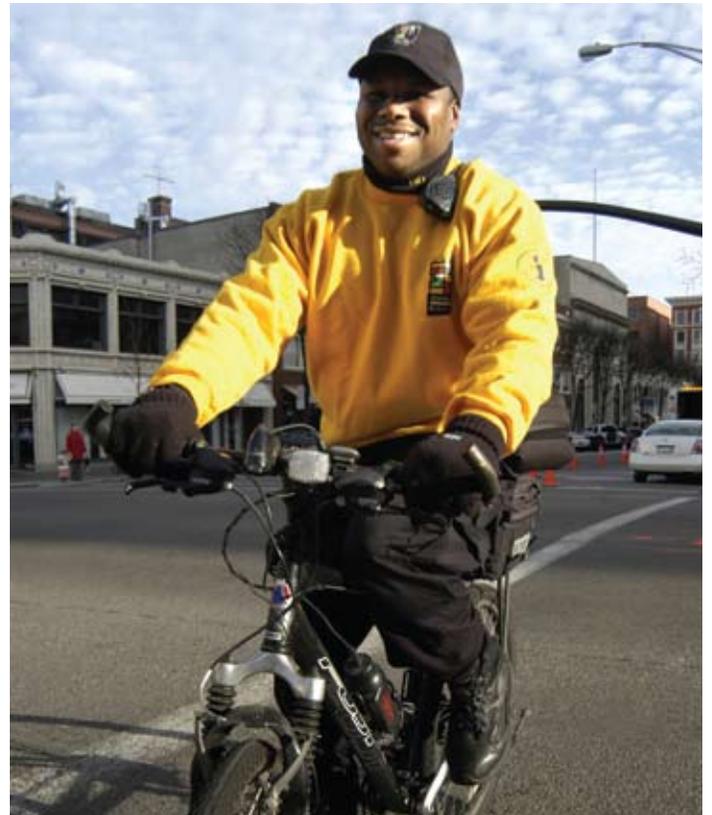
We are pleased to announce that downtown property owners overwhelmingly agreed to renew the Providence Downtown Improvement District (DID). The DID approval represents owners of more than 88% of taxable assessed valuations within the district, far exceeding the Rhode Island state law requirement of approval from 60% of assessed valuation.

Soon to enter its fourth year of operation, the DID has clearly met its goals of:

- Increasing property values and business investment downtown.
- Providing a cleaner and better maintained downtown.
- Providing a safer downtown.
- Communicating with the public about its services.
- Providing projects and programs to strengthen and improve the quality of life in the downtown community.

According to David M. Feehan, President of the International Downtown Association (IDA), an international organization with 650 members that guides the creation of vital and livable downtown centers, "Providence downtown leaders can be justifiably proud in achieving such a high percentage of affirmative votes to renew their business improvement district. This is an affirmation of the great work being done by the DID, and the overall success this group has achieved in making downtown Providence one of the most successful downtowns in the Northeast."

In collaboration with the private sector and local and state government, the DID has played a strong role in decreasing retail vacancies, increasing property values, encouraging investment and improving the appearance and comfort within the district. We look forward to continuing to provide the same high level of service into the future.



## PROVIDENCE POLICE DEPARTMENT PRESENTS **CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO DID**

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, Mayor David N. Cicilline joined Police Chief Dean M. Esserman, members of the Providence Police Department, residents and various community organizations to celebrate community policing. Frank LaTorre, Director of Public Space for the DID, was nominated by District One Lieutenant Michael Figueiredo to receive a Community Partner Award, acknowledging the DID's commitment to working closely with the Providence Police Department in matters of importance to the community. Nine community police stations have opened in Providence, including a substation at Kennedy Plaza and another one on Weybosset across from the Providence Performing Arts Center.

## BOARD FEATURE: TOM NILES

Tom Niles has been an active member of the DID Board of Directors for more than a year. In that time, he has met extraordinary people whose accomplishments often go unnoticed. He is extremely proud of the DID's world-class seasonal plantings, and is astonished by the statistics maintained on both the Clean and Safe programs, including litter and graffiti reduction, vehicular and pedestrian requests for assistance and security responses.

Tom graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a BS in Civil Engineering in May of 1983, and began working two weeks later as a Management Trainee for Gilbane Building Co., assigned to the Fleet Center office tower, (now Bank of America at Kennedy Plaza). He stayed on as a Field Engineer and Assistant Project Engineer through the opening of the tower the following year. He lived in Providence during the early and mid 1980's, when the old train Station was really the end of downtown to the north, the Capital Center was a "no-man's" land, and the Statehouse beyond appeared to be unreachable. Despite that fact, he thought that Providence was a wonderful place to live. In 1985, Gilbane moved him to Boston to work on several projects, including Harvard Medical School New Pathways Facility and 745 Atlantic Avenue, an office tower across the street from South Station. Although living in Boston, he served in the Rhode Island Army National Guard as a Company Commander until 1991, and he maintained close ties with friends in the area. Business brought him back to Providence with the GTECH headquarters opportunity in late 2002.

Tom's role at The Procaccianti Group is to direct and manage TPG Development, LLC, which is a subsidiary focused on acquisitions and new mixed-use developments throughout the country, mainly in urban centers. His primary objective is to identify opportunities for expansion or adaptive reuse of any of the 80 properties presently owned by TPG, including hospitality, mixed-use projects or land parcels. TPG applies the principals of New Urbanism and sustainable development to

achieve available density where infrastructure already exists. They also identify and pursue new acquisition opportunities that provide the critical mass to activate urban centers and create value for stakeholders.

TPG's new 360 foot tall tower addition to the Westin Providence includes approximately 11,000 SF of pedestrian level retail (including Fleming's Prime Steakhouse), 6 levels of parking for 163 parking spaces and storage dedicated to residents, 8 levels with 200 new hotel rooms and suites and 17 levels (floors 16 – 32), with 103 private residences. The new hotel rooms opened in late July, and the residents began to move in last November. With 200 additional guestrooms, more dining and retail, and hundreds of new downtown residents, Tom is confident that the Westin will activate downtown streets with entertainment, dining and retail options. He also hopes that the new hotel additions will help the Rhode Island Convention Center reach out to more prospects and significantly increase events throughout the year. The bridge connections from the Providence Place Mall to The Westin, from The Westin to The RI Convention Center, and now the Convention Center to the Dunkin' Donuts Center, will also attract visitors year-round.

Tom believes that "with strong organizations like The Providence Foundation, the Downtown Improvement District and with concerned and focused neighborhood groups like the Downtown Neighborhood Alliance, the potential of the area from Emmett Square to LaSalle square and the rest of the Downcity is unlimited." He hopes that "working together with City and State officials, TPG and other real estate owners can attract great corporations and retailers from outside of Rhode Island and New England to make Providence their headquarters or key corporate location."



## ONGOING DID PROJECTS

### Sidewalk Repair

The DID is partnering with the Providence Department of Public Works to detail areas in the district where bricks should be repaired. We will have more specific information soon.

### Planting and Beautification

After our successful 2007 season, we are now planning a phase two that will increase the number of hanging baskets, planters, and open planting areas. More details will be shared this spring.

### Grant for Trash Barrels

The DID received a \$20,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the City of Providence for fiscal year '08, running from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008. Using those funds, the DID will purchase 30 new trash receptacles, specially designed for this project by Providence's own Steelyard. The Department of Public Works will install the new cans to replace 30 brown plastic receptacles that are still on our downtown sidewalks. We thank them for their cooperation and also appreciate the support of the Mayor, City Council, and members of the Administration who helped to get this application approved.

### Clean Team:

- The Clean Team has been busy throughout the fall and winter, doing daily litter patrol and the regular broom sweeping detail. Every day, Team members empty the 90 trash receptacles that were installed by the DID, totaling over 47,000 lbs. of trash each month.
- During inclement weather, the Clean Team has shoveled snow from all curb cuts in the district. The DID has also reminded property owners to shovel the sidewalks surrounding their property to make them safe for pedestrian passage.
- As usual, the Clean Team continues to remove hundreds of handbills each month, and handles touch-up painting of street furniture.

### Safety Guides:

- During the Bright Night festivities on New Year's Eve, Safety Guides staffed the DID information cart to answer questions and assist visitors.
- The Safety Guides also continue to work closely with the Providence Police Department's foot and vehicle patrols to keep the streets safe for residents and visitors.

## URI Child Development Center: Educating Children In the Heart of the City

The liveliest group can often be seen throughout the work week in downtown Providence, laughing, playing, and exploring. They're not convention-goers or college students, but rather, they are the thirty-six three to five-year-old students enrolled in the high quality University of Rhode Island Dr. Pat Feinstein Child Development Center, located on the first floor of the Shepard Building. The Child Development Center follows the three main missions of the University: teaching, research, and service to the community. Since September 1996, when the program first opened, the Center has offered children and their families full and half-day programs, Monday through Friday. This is a true asset to the downtown community, and employees of Bank of America, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Rhode Island School of Design, Johnson & Wales, and other companies have enrolled their children in the program.

Part of the University of Rhode Island Human Development and Family Studies Department, the Center is the second laboratory school for students in the University's Early Childhood Program, training over 75 pre-service teachers annually. The Center is licensed by the State of Rhode Island and accredited through the National Association of Education of Young Children (NAEYC). With five full-time teachers (certified in early childhood education) and eight teaching assistants, the program has a safe and appropriate 4:1 student to teacher ratio. One third of the spots are reserved for children of URI students, who receive Lillian Feinstein Scholarships covering full tuition.

The program values play as the process for learning, and its director, Deb Morelle, hopes that students leave with strong social skills, content knowledge, and a love of learning. A typical day involves activity time, a group meeting where the students sing or play games, a snack, and rest time. The children usually go outdoors twice a day, and they do plenty of free activities such as exploring the city looking for flags,



visiting the farmers market in Kennedy Plaza, and watching Johnson & Wales students decorating cakes at Johansson's Bakery in the Arcade.

Ms. Morelle says that she "loves being in downtown Providence," and because of the school's location, "adults are aware of the needs of children." Her children are a noticeable part of the downtown community, and they contribute to the diversity of the city. The teachers often point out the city's architectural highlights as the classes visit the Providence Public Library and the parks in and around downtown, such as Burnside Park, the World War I Monument, and the new park on Westminster and Union, directly across the street from the school. In a sense, the entire downtown neighborhood has become an extension of the classroom.

The school accepts donations, and the children find creative ways to play with a variety of "leftover" materials. Any businesses interested in supporting the school should contact Joanne DiBello, Director of Marketing and External Relations for the Alan Shawn Feinstein Center of Continuing Education: jdb@uri.edu.

## CLEAN & SAFE SUMMARIES

October 1st through December 31st 2007

### Clean Team:

Trash Removed (in lbs): 77,425  
Graffiti tags removed: 567  
Stickers/ handbills removed: 205

### Combined Clean & Safe Team:

Pedestrian assistance: 3817  
Property/business contacts: 1213  
Motorist assistance: 987  
Passive panhandling: 768  
Aggressive panhandling: 75

*The DID mourns the passing of Jerry A. Sansiveri, managing partner of local public accounting firm Sansiveri, Kimball & McNamee, L.L.P. Jerry was a long standing supporter of downtown and one of the founders of the DID. We appreciate his years of service to the community.*

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## DID WELCOMES COMPANIES LOCATING AND EXPANDING OFFICES DOWNTOWN

With new companies moving into our neighborhood and expanding, we recognize that downtown Providence is a great location for a variety of office operations.

**Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB)** recently moved eighty employees into its new downtown office in the Westminster Square building at 10 Dorrance Street. The firm, which focuses on integrated civil, environmental, and transportation planning and engineering, had been housed in its former office outside downtown for more than ten years. When it began to outgrow the building, VHB searched for a larger space in Providence that could accommodate its needs. According to Alan Clapp, P.E., “the company wanted to stay in the capital city, and 10 Dorrance is an ideal fit. It offers 20,000 sq. ft. on one level, and has nearby parking. Our new office is in the middle of a viable, active downtown neighborhood, and we’re in close proximity to mass transit options and major clients and partners like RIDOT, RIDEM, architects, attorneys and developers.” Employees have had a favorable response “to the move,” and they’re enjoying amenities like banking, shopping, and dining within walking distance. About 20% take the bus or carpool to work, and that number is expected to grow.

**Andera, Inc.**, a computer software company servicing the banking industry nationwide, started a few years ago at 204 Westminster Street. It recently doubled its office space within the building to accommodate its growth to 40 employees.

**Studio AMD** just purchased a 3,700 sq. ft. office condominium at 333 Westminster Street and will be moving downtown this spring. The company, which currently has an office in Pawtucket and another in Tampa, FL, provides architectural design and multimedia services, along with architectural illustration and animation tours for projects around the world. According to Richard Dubrow of Studio AMD, they are very excited to move into downtown Providence.

In the same building at 333 Westminster, **Newport Collaborative Architects, Inc.** has doubled its office space by purchasing another condominium floor. This full-service architectural company established an office here a few years ago, and it continues to grow in downtown.

The law firm of **DarrowEverett LLP** opened an office in the Turks Head building about a year ago, and has already doubled in size. The firm’s partners expect to lease more space in the near future.

**The Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council**, an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of efficient, equitable government in the state, just relocated its office to 86 Weybosset Street.

Part of the DID’s mission is to create a downtown in which all types of office companies can thrive. We welcome these companies, and will continue to work on fulfilling this mission.

## HOSPITALITY RESOURCE PARTNERSHIP RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION

In January, Mayor David N. Cicilline received the Outstanding Achievement Award for Public/Private Partnerships at the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ three-day conference in Washington, DC. The award recognized his leadership with the Hospitality Resource Partnership (HRP), which was formed in collaboration with the DID in January, 2007 to address issues of underage drinking and

late-night traffic. The pilot programs, which ran from May 24<sup>th</sup> through June 16<sup>th</sup>, and later from September 1<sup>st</sup> through December 15<sup>th</sup>, introduced twelve extra roving police officers on Friday and Saturday nights. We congratulate the Mayor on his receipt of this prestigious award, and we will continue our partnership to improve the late-night environment downtown.