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Downtown
IMPROVEMENT
District

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“To continuously
enhance the quality
of life in downtown
Providence.”

DOWNTOWN DIRECTIONS

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE PROVIDENCE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

NEW LIFE FOR ONE OF DOWNTOWN'S OLDEST STRUCTURES: EASTERN SECTION OF BENJAMIN DYER BLOCK

With painstaking attention to detail, architect Americo Mallozzi has guided the restoration of the Benjamin Dyer Block's eastern half. Phase one of this project, involving the exterior and ground floor renovations, is expected to be completed this fall. Interior renovations to the upper floors, which will feature 10 to 15 apartments along with office space, will follow later.

The Saki's name will remain on the building at 199 Weybosset, but the new restaurant will bear little resemblance to the pizza house that occupied the corner space for almost 29 years. "I envision this as a European style cafe," says Dionisios 'Dennis' Sampalis, who owns the building with his wife, Vasso. "We will offer a restaurant and bar with Greek and Italian food, along with outdoor seating." The new restaurant space boasts high ceilings, magnificent natural lighting and a mezzanine built for a bar overlooking the dining area.

Built as 4 connected rowhouses in 1820, the original block stretches from Mathewson to Clemence Streets. The stone-trimmed, brick structure with mansard roof has been reconstructed, and the historic moldings, wainscoting, and beamed ceilings have been restored. Along with bank loans and private funding, this project has been supported by a loan from the Downcity Fund, administered by the Providence Revolving Loan Fund for exterior improvements.



FINANCIAL DISTRICT PROPERTY AND BUSINESS OWNERS WORKING TO ENHANCE THE DOWNTOWN EXPERIENCE

Property and business owners in the Financial District have been meeting with City Councilor John Lombardi, the DID and The Providence Foundation to strategically identify matters of common interest, build stronger community identity and ultimately enhance the downtown experience. The meetings have focused on neighborhood security, aesthetic issues and infrastructural improvements such as sidewalks, roads, lighting and parking. If you would like to participate in these meetings, contact Frank LaTorre, DID Director of Public Space at (401) 421-4450.

DOWNTOWN PARKING PROGRAM: DEVELOPING A CUSTOMER-FRIENDLY SYSTEM

A key piece of our Joint Economic Initiative is a multi-point strategy to improve downtown parking. During the Spring 2010 Conference on Strategic Planning for Parking and Transportation Operations in Providence, Mayor Cicilline recognized the Downtown Improvement District (DID) as "a major partner in making downtown parking easier for the user and changing negative perceptions that exist."

Our recent accomplishments include:

Providing input into the city's downtown parking study.
We've been working consistently with key staff from the city and civil engineering firm Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) to offer recommendations for the downtown parking study, allowing us to participate actively in community meetings.

Maximizing the number of on-street parking spaces downtown.
We are working with the city parking administrator to complete a field survey of on-street parking. As a result, new spaces have been identified, and 28 new meters have been added with more planned. Our advocacy efforts to promote safe parking conditions have also resulted in better maintenance of meters and the installation of No Parking/Tow Zone signs around the Dunkin' Donuts Center.

Improving the customer experience.
A comprehensive customer oriented parking system is in progress. In May, more than 120 parking attendants participated in a customer service training that we hosted with Block-by-Block and the Providence Warwick Convention and Visitors Bureau. These attendants are now implementing new approaches into their everyday work, answering questions about the area and providing customers with our downtown maps and dining guides.

We've completed an initial field survey for new parking signage that will feature the international 'P' symbol for parking to easily direct people to parking facilities. We are also meeting with parking managers regularly to encourage them to establish fair pricing practices for special events.

Formation of a downtown parking task force.
We will begin to meet with city officials and downtown parking operators on a regular basis to discuss day-to-day problems and opportunities, as well as long term parking issues. The city's parking administrator has agreed to co-chair the downtown parking advisory committee with us.

Formation of a singular city parking authority.
We continue to advocate for the establishment of a single city parking authority.

MAJOR SIDEWALK RECONSTRUCTION BEGINS



After more than 3 years of advocacy by the DID and The Providence Foundation, major repairs to heavily-used sidewalks have begun. Earlier this summer, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) awarded a \$1.3 million contract to Hartford Site Construction for reconstruction of badly deteriorated sidewalks on Washington Street from Eddy to Empire, on Westminster Street from Mathewson to Empire and two sections of Weybosset from Richmond to Empire. Also included in the project will be new trees, tree guards and bike racks along the reconstructed expanses. RIDOT estimates that the bulk of work will be completed early this winter, with some finishing touches planned for next spring.

RIDOT's Acting Deputy Chief Engineer, Bob Smith, has appreciated the DID's involvement in this project. We made sure that funds remained earmarked, and encouraged engineers, designers and state agencies to communicate regularly with impacted property owners.

DID EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: PORFIRIO LOPEZ



Porfirio Lopez embodies the adage of “do what you love and you will love what you do.” An avid gardener at home, he brings this zeal to his work on a daily basis as a member of the DID Clean Team focusing on special projects. “I love this job. I take pride in my work and make sure that things are done the right way. I like knowing that I help to make a cleaner and more beautiful city that people like to visit.”

Porfirio's responsibilities include planting and landscaping, power washing, graffiti removal, and handbill and sticker removal. He has lived in Providence since 2002 and became a U.S. citizen 5 years ago. He has placed an important emphasis on his children's education, and he is proud that his daughter will start college at Pine Manor this fall, and his son is continuing his studies at CCRI.

PLEASE SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESSES!

While we plan to continue mailing our printed newsletters throughout the year, we'd like to get in touch with our downtown stakeholders on a regular basis. Please email your updated contact information to Rose Durette: rdurette@providencedowntown.com to be added to our list.

RIPTA & THE CITY INITIATE THE PROVIDENCE CORE CONNECTOR STUDY

As we described in the winter 2010 newsletter, Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) continues to partner with the City of Providence to examine the feasibility and cost of improving transit within the city's central core, connecting downtown with the College Hill and Upper South Providence neighborhoods. The study will examine options for connecting the significant educational, medical, employment and cultural destinations in this corridor with the central bus hub in Kennedy Plaza and rail services at the Providence Amtrak station.

Members of the public are encouraged to attend one of three community open houses in September to help plan how transit might improve mobility and strengthen downtown neighborhoods. The downtown meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 23 from 12:30 to 2 PM at The Commerce Center, 30 Exchange Terrace. It will be an informal drop-in open house, with a brief formal presentation at 1 PM. For more information, visit: www.ripta.com.

CLEAN & SAFE SUMMARY

May 1 through July 31, 2010

Clean Team Removed:

Trash (in lbs)	128,116
Graffiti Tags	743
Stickers/Handbills	931

Clean & Safe Team Assisted/Performed:

Pedestrian Assistance	2,746
Property/Business Contact	1,947
Motorist Assistance	7
Passive Panhandling	348
Aggressive Panhandling	107

MOVING FORWARD: JOINT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Earlier this year, the DID and The Providence Foundation formed a Joint Economic Development Initiative to grow office employment downtown. A 13 point program has been developed and is moving forward.

Since the approval of the initiative last spring, we have:

- Created and distributed marketing materials promoting downtown as an office location.
- Updated information on location factors and maintained an inventory of available space.
- Started developing a customer friendly parking system.
- Launched the design accelerator study, which is looking at ways to grow the local design industry.
- Participated in the mayor's committee on permitting, which has allowed businesses to obtain tenant improvement permits much faster.
- Supported transit and Greater Kennedy Plaza improvements.
- Assisted with research and advocacy on taxation issues.

With these efforts already underway, we are inviting people to participate in committees that will work on marketing, city taxation policies, and the formation of a company visitation program, with a special focus on state office retention. We will also recommend strong economic development efforts and partnerships to the new city administration.

For more information about the Joint Venture and to volunteer for a committee, call Dan Baudouin, Executive Director of The Providence Foundation at (401) 521-3248.

We need your help in addressing these issues, and we will share more details on this topic during the year.

SPECIAL FOCUS: FINANCIAL SECTOR

As we move forward with our Joint Venture focusing on economic development, we will work diligently to make downtown an attractive place to invest in. We recognize that financial companies are already concentrated downtown, with several recently choosing to locate and/or expand here:

- TD Bank just announced its expansion into Rhode Island, planning to open 4 branches here this fall, including an 11,000 square foot branch and management office for its Rhode Island operations at 180 Westminster.
- KPMG is consolidating its Rhode Island operations, moving 38 employees from its tax processing department in East Providence into its office at 100 Westminster where 38 employees in the auditing department already work.
- In 2009, Webster Bank opened its Massachusetts/ Rhode Island headquarters at 100 Westminster Street. The growing company, based in Waterbury, CT has more than 181 branches in four states including 13 in Rhode Island. The Providence office now has 26 employees, including 13 who moved from the Swansea, MA office.
- In December 2008, Washington Trust relocated its Providence branch to a renovated 3,100 square foot space at 156 Westminster Street, in the heart of the Financial District. The branch offers a state-of-the-art ATM that images check deposits along with an electronic queuing system that allows customers to check in before visiting the customer lounge.

NEW BUSINESSES

Downtown is experiencing a retail resurgence! These shops and restaurants are bringing a new level of sophistication to the district, giving people even more reasons to explore the neighborhood at lunchtime, after work, and on weekends.

COMING SOON

DCi Outlet
(opening October 2010)
Gift items priced below \$10
275 Westminster Street

Modern Love
(opening October 2010)
Sister store to Queen of Hearts,
featuring shoes and accessories
220 Westminster Street

Sura
(opening 2010)
Korean cuisine and Sushi bar
232 Westminster Street

Zop
(opening October 2010)
Apothecary and body shop
featuring hand-crafted items
186 Union Street

RECENTLY OPENED

Asian Bistro
(spring 2010)
Chinese, Japanese and Thai
restaurant
123 Dorrance Street

Centro
(summer 2010)
Italian restaurant in the Westin
One West Exchange Street

City Girl Cupcakes
(spring 2010)
Bakery
99 Weybosset Street

Souper Bowls
(summer 2010)
Soups, salads, sandwiches
and wraps
45 Weybosset Street

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