



"To continuously enhance the quality of life in downtown Providence."

DOWNTOWN DIRECTIONS

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE PROVIDENCE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

GREATER METROPOLITAN TRANSIT STUDY UNVEILED

Streetcars and Redesigned Kennedy Plaza Highlighted

In December, Providence Mayor David Cicilline unveiled the results of a year-long effort by Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) and the City of Providence's Transit 2020 initiative. The Providence Metropolitan Transit Enhancement Study, prepared by a consulting team led by HDR Engineering, Inc., proposes expansion on many of the elements recommended by the Transit 2020 study group.

The study proposes improvements and the redeployment of the existing bus system, moving parts of the central hub at Kennedy Plaza outward to four smaller hubs that will encircle downtown. It encourages more public transit commuting by doubling the number of park-and-ride commuter lots. The plan also calls for rapid bus service, which means improvements to move existing buses along faster. One important element, preference for buses at traffic lights, passed at the last session of the General Assembly.

Two components of the study that will have the most impact on downtown Providence are the redesign and reinvention of Kennedy Plaza, and the proposal to build a Providence streetcar system.

According to the study, the redesigned Kennedy Plaza, while still the center of the RIPTA system, will become a vibrant, centrally coordinated gateway to the city of Providence that offers activities, events, and commerce, as well as public transit. First steps include the creation of several new smaller hubs outside of downtown for waiting buses. Also, RIPTA will work with the city to disperse the bus berths around Kennedy Plaza. This will help RIPTA and the city to improve its public space to better serve pedestrians, transit-riders, and those who live and work downtown.

As work is underway to better connect Greater Kennedy Plaza to the surrounding neighborhoods and the rest of the city, efforts are also intended to usher the way for Providence's new streetcar system that will serve as a circulator within a roughly two mile corridor in downtown



Rendering of what the proposed streetcar might look like on Weybosset Street. Source: studio amd.

Providence. A streetcar line within this corridor would connect with existing bus routes and the train station and create connections between the Hospital District and College Hill. This would help people not only get to and from work, school and home, but also offer an easy way to get to events, restaurants, museums, performing arts centers, medical facilities, and key destinations like the Convention Center, the Amtrak Station, and the Dunkin' Donuts Center.

The study claims that there is enormous opportunity for economic development to result from the creation of this streetcar system. A preliminary assessment of the development potential related to the proposed streetcar project estimates 3.0 million square feet of development (but could range from 1.5 – 6.0 million square feet) of vacant and underutilized properties. A significant amount of this development is projected to occur in currently redeveloping areas of the downtown district and the Jewelry District.

To learn more about the study, visit www.ripta.com or www.transit2020.com.

DID Employee Spotlight: Bobby Costa



Chances are likely you've seen Bobby Costa in his bright yellow uniform pleasantly chatting with downtown pedestrians or helping out a confused motorist with directions. As a member of the DID Clean Team for the past three years, he has recently achieved his goal of becoming a Safety Ambassador. "When I started my work with the DID I wanted to be a Safety Ambassador but they told me I was too young. I just kept on asking until they finally gave me the job!"

At 22 years old, Bobby has lived in Providence his entire life. His work with the DID has caused him to really notice the positive changes in downtown, and he takes great pride in the role he plays in these improvements. He most enjoys hearing people comment on how clean downtown Providence is, and how the city has improved. "I really like it when people tell me what a good job the DID is doing and how nice and clean the city is."

DID Board Member Spotlight: Diana Burdett

Diana Burdett has served as an Ex-Officio Board member since the DID's inception in 2005. She is Director of the Providence Intown Churches Association, PICA for short. Since 1974, PICA has operated the city's only downtown food pantry for the needy. This operation recently moved from the Mathewson Street United Methodist Church to the nearby First Universalist Church. The new, larger location allows the food pantry to offer a bigger menu of fresh food.



As a member of the DID Board of Directors, Burdett finds that the work of the DID Clean & Safe Team helps people downtown feel better about themselves. The cleanliness, beautiful flowers and new signage give people a sense of pride. She notes that the DID has had a profound overall effect on making downtown a more inviting place. "Downtown itself has improved tremendously," says Burdett. "Everyone says how wonderful, clean and more inviting it is." While she thinks that it can sometimes remain a challenge to get people to visit downtown, once they venture out and have the opportunity to interact with a DID Ambassador, their perception of the city improves.

Having grown up in Providence, and frequenting downtown as a high school student, Diana still enjoys walking around the neighborhood. She is invigorated to see stores opening on Westminster Street and seeing more people frequenting our various venues.

Among the longest serving members of the Board of Directors, Burdett remains impressed with the commitment of her fellow board members. "These are very busy people and they set aside valuable time every month to be at our board meetings," she says. She also believes that the board represents a good cross-section of downtown to include business owners, entertainment operators, merchants and neighborhood associations.

PROVIDENCE TO EXPLORE FEASIBILITY OF CULTURAL AUTHORITY

The City of Providence Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, with support from the Rhode Island Foundation, has selected AMS Planning & Research to explore the feasibility of creating a Greater Providence Cultural Authority. The goal is to help centralize, strengthen, and coordinate cultural activities in the downtown arts and entertainment district, as outlined in Creative Providence, the city's community-wide cultural plan.

All downtown stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the planning process and more details will follow once the planning team is in place. For more information about the Cultural Authority and Creative Providence cultural plan, visit www.creativeprovidence.org.

KEEPING DOWNTOWN SIDEWALKS CLEAR OF SNOW

A message from Colonel Esserman, Chief of the Providence Police Department and Frank LaTorre, Director of Public Space for the DID

Thanks to your continued support, the DID has been working hard, taking downtown Providence to a new level of safety and cleanliness. This is an ongoing cooperative effort of the DID, the Providence Police Department, property and business owners, residents, students and visitors.

This winter season, we want to make certain all sidewalks are passable and safe after each snowfall. We will continue our work of making downtown Providence safer, more welcoming, and easier for pedestrians to navigate throughout the year. The DID will continue to shovel pedestrian crossings at medians and handicap accessible cut-outs on sidewalks at every intersection. However, overall success relies upon the full cooperation of the private property owner to make the sidewalks safe and passable.

According to City Ordinance Section 23-13, property owners are responsible for shoveling snow from the sidewalks in front of private property. Any snow that is taken from privately owned property, commercial driveways or parking lots cannot be plowed onto the sidewalk, roadways or any public property. It must be kept on the private property or trucked away.

Most of our downtown property owners are in full compliance with this ordinance – you have our thanks. If you notice any problem areas that should be brought to our attention, please call the DID office at (401) 421-4450.

CLEAN & SAFE SUMMARIES

September 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009

Clean Team Removed:

Trash (in lbs.)	197,919
Graffiti Tags	1,929
Stickers/Handbills	931

Clean & Safe Team Assisted/Performed:

Pedestrian Assistance	4,468
Property/Business Contacts	2,913
Motorist Assistance	14
Passive Panhandling	351
Aggressive Panhandling	176

HOSPITALITY RESOURCE PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTS DELAYED BAR & NIGHTCLUB CLOSING PILOT PROGRAM

On October 29th, the Rhode Island State Legislature passed a bill proposed by the Hospitality Resource Partnership (HRP), in which the DID is an active participant. This new legislation will create a six-month pilot program for the delayed closing of bars and clubs in Providence, a move aimed at eliminating public-safety problems created by thousands of patrons pouring onto city streets after the weekend 2 a.m. closing.

The bill allows the City of Providence Board of Licenses to grant a one-hour extension on closing time to bars and clubs on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and the Sunday nights before Monday holidays. Bars and clubs will be allowed to remain open until 3 a.m., but for that final hour will be prohibited from serving alcohol and admitting any new patrons.

A launch date for the pilot has yet to be established. However, with the cooperation of key downtown nightclub owners, the city of Providence is hard at work on its strategy for implementation. This collaborative effort between business owners, local city and legislative leadership, and the HRP brings to focus the alignment of the DID and HRP purposes. Frank LaTorre, Director of Public Space for the DID explains, "The DID and HRP complement each other, making downtown Providence a safe, vibrant and attractive place to live, work and socialize."

Downtown IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

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Providence, RI

40 Fountain Street
2nd Floor
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 421-4450
www.providencedowntown.com

DID AND THE PROVIDENCE FOUNDATION FORM DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

The findings of a study conducted by Urban Place Consulting for the Providence Foundation and the results of board retreats held by both the Providence Foundation and the Downtown Improvement District concluded that there could be value to having the two organizations work even closer together. The Providence Foundation and the Downtown Improvement District have been discussing a closer relationship between the groups for the purpose of creating a stronger voice for downtown, maximizing the resources within both groups and increasing efficiencies.

Over the last several months, the leadership of both groups has developed a joint venture to focus on downtown's greatest need: economic development, particularly in increasing the occupancy rate in downtown office buildings. The boards

and the staff have formulated a detailed action plan that addresses areas where the Foundation and DID can have the most influence and can complement the efforts of the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, the city of Providence and the state.

Thirteen action areas have been identified, with the Foundation and the DID taking a lead role in seven. A copy of the joint initiative can be obtained online: www.providencedowntown.com or by calling The Providence Foundation office at (401) 521-3248.

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



Left: Members of the DID Clean Team helped to hang wreaths on downtown lightpoles before the Providence Preservation Society Holiday Festival in December. For tickets to the PPS 2010 Winter Bash on February 6th at 100 Westminster, visit www.ppsri.org.