MERCANTILE BUILDING OPENS!

AS220 has put the finishing touches on its latest downtown historic preservation project. Located right next to AS220 at the Dreyfus on Washington Street, the Mercantile Block is a top-to-bottom rehabilitation of a turn of the century building, encompassing more than 40,000 square feet on 4 floors.

This restoration is breathing new life into a blighted, nearly vacant structure. The mixed use complex now offers 22 residential studios on the top two floors for artists, while the second floor houses arts-related work spaces. At the street level, existing tenants, Clark the Locksmith and The Stable (formerly Wheels), have moved into upgraded storefronts with attractive signage. After receiving the final certificate for occupancy in December, the AS220 Community Print Shop and AS220 Labs recently moved upstairs, along with non-profits such as College Visions and Rhode Island Council for the Humanities. A ribbon-cutting ceremony for the building will be planned in the spring.

According to AS220 Development Manager Lucie Searle, “Having completed the restoration of 3 downtown Providence buildings, AS220 regards the DID as a key partner in helping us breathe new life into our historic core; and we particularly look forward to working with the DID in bringing vibrancy and animation to the new and very improved Martha Street!” Please call 401-831-9327 for more information about available commercial units, work spaces, or residential studios, and visit as220.org for photos and floor plans.

NEW SYSTEM FOR TRACKING AND REPORTING CLEAN & SAFE WORK

We are using a new system to track and report on our clean and safe work downtown. With software from Eponic Corporation, we can now manage, report and analyze data more effectively and efficiently. Details of our clean and safe work are maintained on an online monthly report that is categorized by cleaning, hospitality and safety highlights. Each of these categories includes field observations, accomplishments and initiatives. Charts and graphs display clean and safe statistics item-by-item, along with photographs that illustrate our work and accomplishments.

Eponic Corporation is the developer of software and management solutions specifically for business improvement districts, which Block-by-Block is now using in communities throughout the country.

To view reports for October and November 2010 visit: providencedowntown.com.
HOSPITALITY RESOURCE PARTNERSHIP COLLABORATES WITH NEW STATE POLICE TASK FORCE

Frank LaTorre, Director of Public Space for the DID and co-founder of the Hospitality Resource Partnership, recently announced that the Rhode Island State Police Underage Drinking and Nightclub Safety Task Force is now a member of the collaboration.

State task force members now partner with the Providence Police to make unannounced visits to nightclubs, investigating operations while they are in full swing. Members of the state police are responsible for checking on underage drinking violations, while the fire marshal checks on issues of overcrowding. In addition, the Department of Business Regulations makes sure that licenses are in order. During a recent nightclub visit, 32 people were cited for underage drinking and the club owners were cited for numerous license violations.

The HRP welcomes the support of this new ally in our continued efforts to ensure the vibrancy of downtown nightlife through safety and lawful compliance.

PARKING ADVISORY COMMITTEE: UPDATE

A key piece of our Joint Economic Initiative is a multi-point strategy to improve downtown parking. The DID has formed the Downtown Parking Advisory Committee (DPAC), which is chaired by Frank LaTorre, DID Director of Public Space.

The committee, which is comprised of 25 stakeholders, meets on a regular basis. We have collaborated with the city departments of Planning & Development and Traffic & Engineering to create and install new signs directing drivers to nearby parking lots. A new website devoted to information about downtown parking is also under development, and is expected to launch this spring. Marketing efforts emphasizing downtown parking as customer friendly, plentiful, and affordable will soon be underway as well.

The DPAC's mission is to create partnerships to ensure that exemplary customer service, operations, ease of access, availability, maintenance, marketing and planning occur in all facets of the downtown parking experience. The committee's vision statement commits to creating a customer service oriented parking system that will be responsive to a variety of parking related needs and users including visitors, employers, employees, residents and property owners, and will be supportive of downtown development goals.

Summing all this up, Frank LaTorre said, “Our work is all about creating a customer oriented parking system that is very user friendly for all surface lot, garage and an on-street parking experiences.”

OFFICE MARKETING COMMITTEE: UPDATE

In October and November, The Providence Foundation and Downtown Improvement District held joint office marketing meetings with strong representation from the DID board, the local brokerage community, and economic development organizations. At the first meeting, we reviewed the materials that we currently use to promote the downtown office sector and discussed better ways to connect with regional site selectors. Our partners later presented details about their current business outreach efforts, such as the launch of the city’s opportunityprovidence.com website, the creation of the Chamber’s knowledge economy packages, and the launch of risitelocator.com, a statewide real estate database. Several steps are being taken to ensure that the downtown office sector will be better positioned within those city, state, and Chamber marketing programs in the future.

We will follow up on the meetings by reviewing the data that we’ve already collected, surveying brokers about site selection factors, and determining how we can best use risitelocator.com for downtown. Moving forward, we also plan to highlight recent legislative changes and permitting advances in our marketing materials. If you have recommendations or are interested in joining this committee, please contact The Providence Foundation at (401) 521-3248.

PLEASE SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESSES!

While we plan to continue mailing our printed newsletters throughout the year, we want to get in touch with our downtown stakeholders on a regular basis via email. To be added to our list, please send your updated contact information to Robin Remy: rremy@providencedowntown.com. Thank you!
NEW BUSINESSES

Regus opens in downtown Providence

In early January, a new concept in office and work-space rental opened downtown. Located on the 7th floor at 10 Dorrance Street, Regus offers fully furnished, equipped and staffed offices, business support services, and meeting facilities.

Kiley Kirkpatrick, New England Area Operations Director has said, “We’re extremely pleased to open our first Rhode Island location in the heart of the financial district in downtown Providence. Our clients have long been requesting a location here, and with its close proximity to City Hall, the Federal Building and the State Court House the center is ideal for businesses in the legal, financial, services and IT industries.”

The Dorrance Street location includes a client-driven mix of offices and common areas, including a kitchen, open business center, and conference room. It has an advanced communications system with network access and IT and administrative support. Clients can utilize Regus’ full menu of business services on a pay-per-use basis.

Jasiel F. Correia II and Alec Mendes, partners of The Find It Networks, are excited about renting a Regus office. They said, “As a young company, we were looking for the right amenities for the right price. We’re impressed with the location, and we hope to use facilities in other Regus spaces in Boston, New York, and DC.” Regus operates more than 1100 business centers in 500 cities throughout 85 countries. For more information, visit www.regus.com.

OFFICE

Konnessi LLC: 10 Greene Street. A web development and strategies company has relocated from its office in Federal Hill to an upgraded, expanded space. Founded last year, they have a variety of clients in the legal, financial and hospitality fields.

RETAIL & RESTAURANTS

Centro: A sophisticated, modern Italian restaurant in the Westin serving breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. 1 West Exchange Street

The Dorrance: An elegant restaurant offering lunch, tapas at night, and cocktails. Open for special events! 170 Westminster Street

Proonto Cafe: Coffee and sandwiches. 129 Weybosset Street

Providence Inner City Arts: Performance space and arts cafe, known as Westminster Roots Cafe. 276 Westminster Street

The Salon: New bar featuring a laid-back atmosphere with picnic tables. Enjoy s’mores, pickle back shots and PBJ sandwiches. Play ping pong upstairs or dance all night downstairs. 57 Eddy Street

Small Point Cafe: A cozy new Downcity coffee shop. 232 Westminster Street

We want to continue highlighting new businesses in future newsletters! Please call (401) 621-6122 to let us know about companies moving into downtown.

MAJOR LEASE RENEWED

Hinckley, Allen & Snyder, LLP: 100 Westminster

The law firm will remain in its current space, occupying 42,000 square feet on the 14th and 15th floors of the building. The 20-story 100 Westminster has a newly renovated lobby, remodeled elevators and several ground-floor amenities including Au Bon Pain and Fed Ex Office.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW ACCOUNTING MANAGER: Robin Remy

Our new accounting manager, Robin Remy, brings a strong background in business administration and accounting, along with a personal enthusiasm for the DID’s mission. “The work of the Providence DID strongly aligns with my personal beliefs. I care about public spaces being well maintained and inviting,” she explains.

While working at another non-profit organization on Smith Street, she says “I began driving through downtown to avoid the highway traffic jams. I was first captivated by the colorful planters and hanging baskets along Memorial Boulevard. It’s amazing how those simple touches of nature among the concrete and asphalt would lift my spirits.”

Now that she works downtown, Robin is happily experiencing all that downtown has to offer. “I take the bus to work every day so that I can walk the city. I love watching the City Year youth in Burnside Park in the morning, and the daycare children on their afternoon walks. The architecture is wonderful and I’m looking forward to discovering even more about the neighborhood.”

We are thrilled to welcome Robin to our team!
CLEAN & SAFE SUMMARY
August 1 through November 30, 2010

Clean Team Removed:
- Trash (in lbs) 127,872
- Graffiti Tags 554
- Stickers/Handbills 1,006

Clean & Safe Team Assisted/Performed:
- Pedestrian Assistance/Safety Escorts 215
- Property/Business Contact 2,748
- Motorist Assistance 8
- Passive Panhandling 407
- Aggressive Panhandling 267

STREET FURNITURE ADDS AN ARTISTIC TOUCH
You may have noticed new trash receptacles and bicycle hitches gracing the area around Kennedy Plaza. We worked with the Steel Yard again to produce some unique and captivating designs for these items, including the current concept, which was inspired by the Providence skyline at night. Artists Nate Nadeau, Tim Ferland, Jason Nutini and Alex Wynn are responsible for this most recent series of twelve receptacles. Alex participated in the Steel Yard’s Weld to Work workforce training program, and Tim Ferland worked on the downtown Providence trash receptacle project in 2006. For more information about the Steel Yard, visit: thesteelyard.org.

KEEPING DOWNTOWN SIDEWALKS CLEAR OF SNOW
Once again, we want to make certain that all sidewalks are passable after each snowfall this winter. The DID will continue to shovel handicap accessible cut-outs on sidewalks at every intersection so that pedestrians will be able to cross streets safely. Individual owners are also responsible for shoveling snow from the sidewalks in front of their properties. When snow is removed from sidewalks, commercial driveways or parking lots, it must be kept on the private property or trucked away.

Most of our downtown property owners are in full compliance with the city’s ordinance, and we appreciate your cooperation. If you notice any problem areas that should be brought to our attention, please call the DID office at (401) 421-4450.