



DOWNTOWN DIRECTIONS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PROVIDENCE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

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

In February 2005, the Providence Downtown Improvement District (DID) was established with the purpose of insuring the vitality of the business, residential and arts districts in Downtown Providence. District property owners collectively decided that the DID priorities are:

- **Safety**
- **Maintenance**
- **Communications/Marketing**
- **Special Projects**

The DID programs enhance existing city services within the area bounded by Memorial Boulevard, Citizens Plaza, the Providence River, Route 195 and Route 95.



“Textron’s Board of Directors was having a major meeting when our building got tagged with graffiti just two days before people were flying in from all over the country. The Downtown Improvement District’s Clean Team came right down and removed every bit of graffiti from the exterior of the building and pressure washed the area as well. They did a great job and we are very grateful.”

Fred Butler

Vice-President and Corporate Secretary of Textron



The DID set goals to increase property values and business investment downtown.

In the last 3 years, the following sample measures of success have been achieved:

- 30% increase in downtown real estate values in the last three years.
- Retail vacancy has declined from 27% to 14%.
- 3 new hotels are under construction.
- 100 new residential condominiums are being developed.
- More than 50 new retail, restaurant and service businesses have located downtown.

The DID provides a cleaner and better maintained downtown

To effectively address the many issues of cleanliness and maintenance downtown, the DID has implemented a multi-dimensional approach consisting of sidewalk cleaning and trash collection, graffiti removal, the maintenance of green space, and the removal of stickers and handbills. The DID Clean Team has:

- Collected over 459,883 pounds of trash.
- Removed 4,500 square feet of graffiti.
- Planted 22 new street trees.
- Implemented the first phase of a new Master Landscape plan.
- Continued to care for and maintain 500 downtown tree wells.
- Installed 90 new trashcans and emptied them regularly.
- Removed 2,690 stickers and handbills blighting buildings and street fixtures.

The DID provides a safer downtown

The mission of the DID safety program is to support the police department, property owners and tenants in overall crime prevention efforts and reduction in neighborhood street disorder, while offering a customer service orientation to pedestrians. DID safety guides have a visible on-street presence seven days a week, which has greatly improved the perception of safety downtown.

Since February 2005, the DID Safety Team has improved safety and community relations downtown by:

- Providing assistance to pedestrians 17,140 times.
- Providing assistance to motorists 5,151 times.
- Riding over 9,600 miles per year on bicycles, and 1,500 miles per year on the Segway vehicle throughout downtown.
- Addressing panhandling issues 3,287 times.
- Responding to property and business owners 8,526 times.
- Contacting the Providence Police Department 168 times resulting in numerous felony and misdemeanor arrests.
- Helping to decrease crime rates downtown, continuing a multi-year trend.

"As a property owner and manager of over \$30 million of assessed value in downtown Providence, I am pleased to tell you of my satisfaction with the accomplishments of the DID. There has been a tremendous improvement in the look of downtown and the feeling of pedestrian safety, thanks to the "yellow jackets." I strongly support the DID's renewal, mainly because I can't imagine downtown without it!"

Joseph DiBattista, Hallmark Properties, Inc.

Downtown IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

40 Fountain Street – 2nd floor
Providence, RI 02903
PH (401) 421-4450
FX (401) 421-4417
www.providencedowntown.com

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“In the 40 years I have been coming to work downtown, I have never seen the place as clean and attractive as it is today. The Downtown Improvement District deserves all the credit in the world for their work, each and every day.”

*Charlie Meyers,
owner of Metro Park lots*

“The planting on Westminster Street has created a wonderful atmosphere, something that customers have noticed and have been pleasantly surprised by. Many thanks to the DID for all the hard work and care that has gone into making Providence look and feel so beautiful.”

*Michael Chmielewski,
studio proprietor, Design Within Reach*

The DID communicates with the public about its services

When the DID was introduced in 2005, it was the first and only program of its kind in Rhode Island. While people immediately noticed the Clean Team and Safety Guides on the streets wearing bright yellow uniforms, they wondered about how the DID was funded, what its goals were, and how they could get involved with the organization. Early DID communications efforts answered the public’s questions, but the initiatives have evolved to support larger community-wide marketing programs. Recent DID marketing activities include:

- Creating and distributing fact sheets containing general information and contact numbers.
- Publishing *Downtown Directions* newsletters three times a year, informing property owners, merchants, and other stakeholders about current and ongoing projects.
- Contributing to the broader downtown “Live It Up” campaign, which has leveraged significant investment from merchants, companies, and non-profit organizations.
- Designing and printing downtown dining guides, and distributing collateral materials throughout the neighborhood.
- Producing the first website to focus on downtown Providence: www.providencedowntown.com. Prominently featuring a subpage for the DID, the site is a major component of the collaborative downtown Live It Up! campaign, and provides up to date information about local attractions, stores, restaurants and services.
- Introducing an information cart for downtown events, managed by Safety Guides.
- Creating and installing aluminum signs on light poles featuring the DID logo and website.



BEFORE



AFTER

The DID provides projects and programs to strengthen and improve the quality of life in the downtown community

Leveraging the resources of DID funds with public and private resources, the DID engages in special projects to enhance the public safety, visual beauty and economic vitality of downtown.

Hospitality Resource Partnership (HRP)

The DID initiated a partnership with the Mayor's office to form a unique collaboration of stakeholders to create a safe yet vibrant nighttime atmosphere in which to socialize downtown. This collaboration includes business and property owners, security personnel including the Providence Police, residents and community groups, as well as nightclub owners. Action plans are being initiated to deal with the problems of underage drinking, overcrowding in clubs, rowdiness on the streets and the rapid dispersment of vehicles out of the city at nightclub closing time, for the betterment of residents and visitors alike.

Audit results

The CPA firm Lefkowitz, Garfinkel, Champi & DeRienzo, P.C. has completed fiscal audits for the first 2½ years of the DID existence through June 30, 2007. According to the auditors the DID is fiscally sound, and the fiscal proceedings meet accounting standards.

Sidewalk Repair

Representatives of the DID, the City of Providence and RIDOT, are working together to improve sidewalk conditions. While minor sidewalk repair is ongoing, two major projects for sidewalk reconstruction are planned for the next two years.

Master Landscape Plan

The DID invested over \$55,000 to design and implement a Master Landscaping Plan for downtown with three major components:

- * 90 new flowering hanging baskets on decorative poles.
- * 23 steel and concrete planters placed throughout downtown.
- * Planting five large open areas.

To leverage this investment, a comprehensive program that encourages both private and public sector participation is in place.



A Vision for the Future

As the DID approaches the end of its three year term, and in its consideration for renewal, the DID Board has established the following core values:

- Serve the long-term best interests of the downtown district and property owners.
- Provide value to the rate payers.
- Build and encourage community.
- Conduct business with integrity in an honest, fair and transparent fashion.

The DID proposes to maintain its current services and evaluate new services to achieve the following:

- Provide a clean and safe downtown.
- Attract new residents and businesses.
- Make downtown aesthetically attractive.
- Provide superior quality of life to residents, employers, visitors and students.