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## **Mayor Angel Taveras's message: Providence is economic and cultural hub**

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One of the fun parts of being mayor is when I get to be part of the renaming of a street or intersection. This rarely occurs, and when it does it's always to honor a much-loved civic leader. So I was pleased recently to rename the intersection of Weybosset and Mathewson Sts. in the Arts & Entertainment District as PPAC Sq., in honor of the Providence Performing Arts Center's great contribution to our city's cultural life.

PPAC Sq. is also the centerpiece of a construction project more than a decade in the making. The Downtown Providence Traffic Circulation Improvements Project will improve Providence's Arts & Entertainment District, enhance the streetscape and recreate two-way traffic on two main thoroughfares in downtown.

Two other streetscape and roadway enhancement projects currently underway in Providence will provide significant enhancements in three of our city's neighborhoods: the West End, Olneyville and historic Federal Hill.

The construction projects, which are being paid for with a combination of federal, state and city funds, will repave roadways and sidewalks, upgrade traffic signals and signs, and install ornamental lights, trees, planters, a bike lane, bike racks and other public amenities throughout the city.

We are restoring two-way traffic on Weybosset and Empire Sts. for the first time since the 1970s, and significantly reconfiguring and enhancing the area of Weybosset St. in front of the PPAC Sq.

In PPAC Sq., a dedicated drop-off lane will be installed in front of the landmark arts venue, and the historic tower of the comfort station will be restored and relocated to a new median island in the center of Weybosset St. Streets and sidewalks in the square will be replaced, and 25 new trees, granite planters, bike racks, ornamental bollards, new benches, and ornamental streetlights installed.

In the West End and Olneyville, improvements will include the installation of new ornamental lights along Westminster St., the planting of new trees on Manton Ave. and in Olneyville Sq., sidewalk reconstruction and the installation of a new median island and traffic signal upgrades at the intersection of Westminster and Cranston Sts.

The city's third major construction project will upgrade and coordinate the traffic signals and add a striped bike lane in each direction on Broadway, repave Broadway and the intersection of Pocasset Ave. and Plainfield St., and replace existing sidewalks in poor condition.

The improvements to PPAC Square and all of the streetscape and roadway improvements have been enthusiastically received by Providence's business community and arts-and-culture organization as a way to provide improved access to our city's world-class arts and cultural activities for resident and visitors alike.

My administration will continue to work with our community stakeholders to position downtown

Providence as a competitive arts, business and residential center for New England. Providence is the economic and cultural hub of R.I., and it's vitally important that we make visiting, working and living in Providence even better.

Angel Taveras is the mayor of Providence.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540