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Providence mayor's message: A vision for 2012 and beyond

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It is hard to believe that one year has already passed since my inauguration as mayor. In just one year we have accomplished much to resolve Providence's structural deficit and build a stronger platform for the future. We have also embarked on campaigns to raise the bar on public education in Providence leverage our fast-growing Knowledge Economy.

For 2012, we remain committed to making Providence a most livable city, and we welcome partnerships and ideas from those who are directly affected - including and especially our businesses and Realtors and brokers.

Four months ago, I fulfilled a promise to appoint a cabinet-level director of economic development to coordinate multiple departments in the city: Art, Culture + Tourism, Planning and Development, Workforce Solutions, Inspections and Standards, and Licensing and Vital Statistics. A three-time business owner himself, director James Bennett understands the issues that affect business the most - access to capital, regulatory concerns, and eliminating the impediments to growth.

Jim brings great energy, talent and advocacy to this job, and he has many new ideas for how we can attract and retain businesses in Providence. Our goals include expansion of our working waterfront and 41-foot deep port, development of our emerging Knowledge Economy and the 22-acre Knowledge District, building a pipeline of qualified workers, strengthening our transit systems and supporting legislation that supports business.

Starting in January, Jim and I will be sharing more about our plan to achieve those goals. We invite your continued interest, and you can follow our progress on www.providenceri.com/economicdevelopment and www.opportunityprovidence.com.

Essential to business growth and environmental sustainability is a sound transit system: we've heard that for every \$1 invested in public transportation, \$4 is generated in the economy. The Downtown Circulator project is nearing completion and is improving access in and around the immediate downtown, while we move ahead with a our overarching Transit 2020 plan (www.transit2020.com), to strengthen transit in the Greater Providence metropolitan area. We are on the literal fast-track to building a Street Car network, so that Providence will better connect employees to their jobs, college and university students to jobs and the community, and workers to housing. In early spring, I will be announcing more about our sizeable progress in this area.

In the coming year, you will also hear much more about the work of the I-195 Commission - a statewide group of stakeholders convened to oversee the redevelopment of former I-195 land. At my direction, the Providence members of this delegation will have a strong voice in the development of that land, supporting its use by higher-wage, higher-skilled life science and bio-tech businesses.

Within this emerging Knowledge District, changes are taking place. The Brown Warren Alpert Medical School has opened its doors, high-wage and high-skilled life science and bio-tech companies are cropping up, and more is on the horizon. This confluence of hospitals, R&D, a high

concentration of talented students and entrepreneurs promises growth.

I hope that as we prepare our plans for Providence, you will consider the many significant opportunities we have to offer: proximity to multi-billion dollar markets, access to transportation, quality of life, a bustling port and other transportation. Make 2012 the year you decide Providence is your right choice; and if you have questions, please feel free to share your interests by contacting me at Mayor@providenceri.com.

Angel Taveras is the mayor of Providence.

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