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Providence: Becoming America's comeback city

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In 1636 a forward minded reformer discovered the land now known as Providence. That independent-minded reformer, Roger Williams, brought with him a band of industrious leaders that set a tone of innovation and ingenuity that continues today.

Over the centuries, Providence has made its mark on the national and global economy - as a leading deep water port, as the manufacturing capital of the world and today, as a design center of excellence.

In recent years, we've struggled with economic recessions, lagging behind our neighbors to the north and south. The impact has taken a toll both in human and financial terms. Just 2 years ago, when I assumed the oath of office of this great capital city, I inherited what I called a "Category 5" storm. I committed then to do all that was humanly possible to right this ship of state. And with the help of our residents, our city workers and unions, our colleges and universities, our health care institutions, we have made great progress and are well on our way to becoming America's comeback city.

This is critically important to the men and women who live and work here, who study here and who build their own economic dream here. With our fiscal footing more sure, we are now in a place where people can have greater confidence and grow.

This city, on the Boston - Washington corridor, is full of opportunity, creative and innovative entrepreneurs and rich natural resources. We are physically located within 500 miles of \$1 trillion of gross metropolitan product and one quarter of the nation's population. Our great quality of life, vibrant intellectual capital (which includes seven colleges and universities including Brown University and Rhode Island School of Design) is attractive and affordable attracts students, innovators and more.

We boast the Northeast's 2nd deepest port, the confluence of two major interstates, the Amtrak and Providence and Worcester rail lines, and a leading airport 10 minutes away. This is a combination of ingredients to support business large and small in the decades ahead.

I know the past has been challenging but I also know better days are ahead.

As the mayor of this capital city, I am committed to preserving the businesses and jobs already here, and am willing to go anywhere that I need to go to bring in new ones. From conventions to new construction, businesses will find the reasons they need to locate in Providence.

Increasing collaboration among colleges and universities, government and industry, institutions and business leaders is underscoring our recognition of our tremendous assets and our ability to leverage them. From the opening up of 22 acres of land in the Knowledge District, along the eds-to-meds corridor, to the construction of the Brown Medical School, to expansion of engineering programs and business centers hosted by area universities, Providence is increasingly attractive to commerce. Companies like Dassault Systemes, Utilidata, HASBRO, Forensic Risk Alliance and Dell

Works have already made us their home...and they continue to grow.

And growth is not just in the IT and life sciences industries.

Johnson & Wales University is a world-renowned culinary arts and hospitality school, in the nation's fastest growing "food capital."

Many who graduate are opening their own restaurants and bakeries, and becoming chefs right in our own backyard. Rhode Island School of Design is turning out inventors and designers, who are putting their skills to work in everything from the \$191 million local creative economy, to the invention of new products to save and improve lives.

In recent months, there has been an increasing effort to examine where this city and state are posed for the future. Led by the media and hundreds of thought leaders, the review shined a light on our weaknesses but also revealed the opportunities are far greater.

I ask you to consider what the opportunities are for your business here, in Providence, in 2013 and beyond.

Thank you and have a safe and wonderful New Year.

Angel Taveras is the mayor of Providence.

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