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Mayor's message: Putting Providence back to work

April 11, 2013 - Rhode Island

Late last month, I released a report that presents the roadmap to improving the business climate, infrastructure and human capital in Rhode Island's capital city of Providence. That report, "Putting Providence Back to Work," is a 20-step action plan to put our city residents back to work and jumpstart the economy of our city.

For us to succeed, our economy must be built on the success of a broad range of industries and sectors - not just one or two industries, and it is a recognition that we are part of a much greater area than our city limits - that our success improves opportunities here in our city and strengthens the fiber of our state and New England region.

In my action plan, I have pledged to take swift action and know it is only possible if we work together. Nothing will change minds about our capital city as much as continuing our evolving track record of success.

At my presentation before a standing-room only group at the Providence Foundation, I outlined five immediate steps my administration will pursue to grow our economy. They are: freezing our commercial tax rate, fixing the city's permitting process, removing barriers to redevelopment, developing on surface parking lots citywide, and reinventing Kennedy Plaza in the heart of the downtown.

A concentrated effort in these five areas - and another 15 measures - will show we are serious about improving our economic climate and putting people back to work. The 22-page economic development plan can be found on our website, www.providenceri.com.

Other steps we will be taking provide targeted operational support to small businesses, and reimbursing main street businesses in every neighborhood, for their storefront improvements.

We will also work with Providence's community development organizations to rehabilitate foreclosed properties and create an up-to-date database of available and developable properties across the city.

One of the most important things we can all do is improve the way we view our great city, and its important role in the regional economy. I will be launching a regional marketing campaign that invites visitors to "Come to Providence," and enjoy the city's acclaimed restaurants, museums, parks, zoo, festivals, theaters, shops and arts events. It will also encourage them to learn more about and partner with our significant and growing knowledge economy, R&D sectors and thriving bio-science community.

Since taking office in 2011, we have worked closely with the City's labor unions, retirees, tax-exempt organizations and other stakeholders throughout the state, to successfully tackle the \$110 million

deficit. Next month, we are scheduled to complete a municipal pension reform that has been described as an unprecedented example for other cities to follow.

Through hard work and shared sacrifice, we have saved Providence from collapse and built a solid fiscal foundation upon which we are ready to grow our city's economy. To find the full report, visit <https://www.providenceri.com/efile/4353>.

Angel Taveras is the mayor of Providence.

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