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Be a part of a metropolitan revolution in Providence

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There's a metropolitan revolution underway, according to Brookings Fellow and author Jennifer Bradley who was in Providence a couple of weeks ago as the keynote speaker at a Providence Preservation Society Meeting at Brown University.

Bradley asserts that power and geography of innovation is shifting to cities and metropolitan areas as they emerge as vanguards of policy innovation and action. Fifty years ago residents fled to the suburbs but today that exodus is reversing, as more and more people want to live where they work. And workplaces, focusing on an innovation economy and creating an ecosystem of thinkers, researchers, and diverse skill sets, are taking transformative steps to grow jobs and remake the economy. Often colleges and universities drive those innovative economies and proximity is everything as workers and firms share ideas and work in collaborative spaces.

The concept has taken root across the nation in growing enlivened cities, like Austin, Denver, New York... and Providence. The focus on Rhode Island's capital city of Providence comes naturally in our small state, and we've a long and successful history of entrepreneurship.

The LINK is the latest and most significant vehicle to support that new economy. Located at the nexus of Brown University, Rhode Island School of Design and Johnson & Wales University, it is positioned to generate both competitive and cool spaces where ideas can be shared and grow. The educational institutions coupled with Rhode Island's strong health care systems and research initiatives are spawning some of the fastest growing entrepreneurs in the country.

The LINK's 19 acres were reclaimed following the relocation of I-195. It was a massive infrastructure project that represents a commitment to enlivening the city and cultivating new jobs. Today with its 17 pad ready parcels, The LINK is readying to reach out to interested developers, investors, businesses and institutions. We encourage you to check the website: www.195district.com to get all the exciting details.

Over the past 18 months, the 1-195 Redevelopment Commission and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation have been working to set the stage and to remove obstacles to development. With master environmental permitting, flexible zoning, new streets, sidewalks and updated or new utilities, The LINK has cleared the way for proposals to receive preliminary selection within 90 days, and be approved within the next 90 days. While there will be some target dates and milestones for proposals to be submitted, we are taking a page from colleges and universities and are setting up a "rolling admission" system to receive proposals.

In the meantime, the land won't be sitting empty. Where infrastructure construction is complete, temporary art installations will be popping up- part of The LINK's effort to spark imaginations and activate the space. We put out a call for creative ideas for temporary installations and the response was fantastic - floating grasses, birdhouses, sculptures and arches will grace the space come spring. They'll serve as a testament to Providence's creative spirit and community commitment

within a trendy small city, between New York and Boston, where young professionals, tech savvy entrepreneurs, artists, and students thrive.

Bradley notes there are key ingredients for a metropolis revolution; a will for creativity and innovation among private, nonprofit and institutional entities, strong regional institutions, collaboration among other emerging cities, and political will. The LINK has all of those- and more. Get ready for the revolution.

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