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RhodeMap RI project seeks to build a better Rhode Island

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The State of Rhode Island has struggled to regain its economic footing over the last five years and although there have been marked improvements since the 2008-2009 recession, there is still a long way to go in improving the State's economy and providing for a better quality of life and economic opportunity for the full spectrum of residents of Rhode Island. As a means of making Rhode Island a better place to live, work and play, the state has initiated an ambitious study that will address the issues affecting Rhode Island and where we as a state, will be positioned for a more vibrant future. This study, which is being funded through a grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), has set an ambitious goal of laying out a 20 year plan for our State and developing a road map for success and opportunity.

RhodeMap RI, as the study is called, is a coordinated and forward-looking effort by the state to make Rhode Island a better place to live and work by mobilizing state and community assets in a whole new way. Through RhodeMap RI, the state seeks to strengthen its economy, meet current and future housing needs, and plan for future growth through the development of a plan that will include strategies for transportation, land use and environmental protection. Over the two years required to complete the study RhodeMap RI will focus on six key areas; economic development, housing, growth centers, social equity, community engagement and technical assistance and capacity-building.

The project, which is being coordinated by the State Division of Planning, and which the City of East Providence has been an active participant, will seek to build consensus among businesses and non-profit organizations, governmental agencies and voters, newcomers and long-term residents of the State to consider the critical question: how should the State as a whole, plan for its future? At the end of the RhodeMap RI project the state will have a new housing plan addressing the housing needs of all Rhode Islanders, a new economic development plan that will provide a unified vision and framework for the state's economic development efforts, and a growth centers plan that will help the state's communities determine where and how future development should happen within their borders.

The end result, will be to create a "road map" for success and prosperity that will lead to a better quality of life for residents, a more competitive environment for business growth and expansion and a state that is in a better position to thrive in the coming decades.

Developers and other parties who are interested in learning more about the economic development activities occurring in East Providence are encouraged to visit the city's website at www.eastprovidence.com or the City's Waterfront District website at www.eastprovidencewaterfront.com.

James Moran is the economic planner for East Providence, R.I.