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Mayor's message: Providence's new zoning ordinance

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Sixty years ago, the model of urban planning followed that of suburbs nationwide: Americans began to move out of the city centers into suburbia. Large lots and setbacks, increased space for parking and deference to the automobile prevailed, but today, that trend has turned around sharply. Young students and older retirees, families with young children and business leaders are finding home in the city is exactly the right mix of quality of life, housing, recreation and work.

This week, I signed into law the first comprehensive overhaul of Providence's Zoning Ordinance since its last general amendment in 1994, elements of which dated back to the early 1950's. This new zoning ordinance aligns itself with the city's newly adopted and visionary comprehensive plan, and makes development easier to navigate and progress.

I was proud to be joined by city council president Solomon, members of the city council and members of the city's plan commission and department of planning and development. The signing of this landmark ordinance signaled the end of an 18-month collaboration between the city's planning department and other departments, residents, business owners, developers, institutions and stakeholders, and an 8-year process to align the city's comprehensive plan with an updated zoning ordinance.

Providence is a great, award-winning city, and the adoption of this zoning ordinance means it will continue to be great and fulfill its vision for 21st century development. The signing of that bill aligned regulation with vision, and importantly marked the completion of a major priority in my 20-point economic development plan, "Putting Providence Back to Work." It stands as a great example of public-private collaboration for other initiatives in the future."

The impact will be seen in more vibrant and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, in buildings that fit our historic city patterns, and a common sense approach to regulations that will ease the process for those who build within our city. The staff of the Providence planning department deserves tremendous credit for their insightful work throughout the process," said Christine Malecki West, AIA, and chair of the city plan commission.

"The zoning ordinance provides a set of land use and development regulations, organized by zoning district. The zoning map identifies the location of the zoning districts, specifying the land use and development requirements affecting each parcel of land within the city," said Christine Malecki West, chair of the city's plan commission.

The highlights include: revisions to existing ordinance including district standards, use permissions, processes, and development standards. It streamlines the development process. It allows for high-quality mixed use development where appropriate and helps better preserve, strengthen and protect the historic pattern of development central to the character of the city. It also includes many changes to the zoning map, such as geographic boundaries of current zoning districts, consolidation of existing districts and creation of new ones.

The zoning ordinance goes into effect on December 24, and is online at http://providenceri.iqm2.com/Citizens/Detail_LegiFile.aspx?Frame=&MeetingID=2469&MediaPosition=&ID=4631&CssClass.

Angel Taveras is the mayor of Providence.

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