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Robust large and small-scale development continues in East Providence - by Feather and Sherrill

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The city's Planning Department and Waterfront Commission are reviewing many large and small scale new construction and renovation proposals. In the southern waterfront alone, additional potential development could include up to 500,000 s/f of commercial development (including hotel, restaurant, entertainment, as well as office), with 300 to 500 residential units. Job growth in this area could be 200 to 300 employees, not including the seasonal employees of the Waterfront Production/Live Nation Bold Point Park entertainment venue. In the northern waterfront, a developer

has proposed redevelopment of existing buildings for over 100 residential units. An additional developer in the northern waterfront has presented a concept for a mixed office and residential development with 45,000 s/f of high tech commercial, 45,000 of community retail, and 450 residential units, all with shoreline access. Construction is nearing completion on the 83,000 s/f. University Orthopedics, many high-end duplex condos are now occupied and work is nearing completion on the first of three 45-unit apartment buildings at Kettle Point. Public access to the East Bay Bike Path and the Providence River shoreline will follow.

It is encouraging to see private investment in marginal "Main Street" corridors and squares. Public investment and city zoning revisions have also induced this development, in response to the continually improving economy. The Rhode Island Commerce Corp.'s Main Street Improvement Fund has granted the city \$75,000. The funds will be focused near the Warren Ave. intersection with Waterfront Dr. in Watchemoket Sq. The project is aimed at ensuring safe vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access to the waterfront. The draft scope includes wayfinding and branding signs, linkages to existing arts and entertainment businesses, new dedicated pathways to the waterfront, landscaping, and aesthetic lighting. This funding opportunity allows the city to create the environment for a successful arts and entertainment district as well as a safe and inviting entrance into the waterfront.

Taunton Ave., which prior to the construction of I-195, was the main east-west thoroughfare in the city, is also seeing private investment. A developer has proposed redevelopment of a long-term vacant building to include mixed-use second floor residential units and first floor retail.

Another, on a site where a former theatre stood, is also proposing a mix of residential units and ground floor retail. Other businesses that have recently reinvested along Taunton Ave. include an enlarged and updated liquor store/cigar lounge, an established popular bakery, and a sandwich shop, all added to the existing uses including government offices and a library. Improvement of Taunton Ave. to a vibrant mixed-use street, on a transit line, with 24-hour activity has been a long-term goal of the city.

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