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## **Our city will continue to answer the bell to meet new challenges - by Roberto DaSilva**

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Hardships prepare ordinary people for extraordinary results. As we begin 2022 dealing with the continued impacts from COVID-19, East Providence remains resolute in providing economic opportunity for our residents. Over the past two years since the pandemic surfaced, East Providence has become more resilient than ever. Our city has taken prudent action to adapt during these volatile times, which has resulted in a stronger, local economy. At this point, East Providence is experiencing robust growth in its housing market with over 1,000 new residential units either under construction or recently permitted. A considerable number of these new units are affordable housing

options that are desperately needed.

In addition, we are seeing new businesses opening in East Providence on a weekly basis. Many of these ventures are local restaurants, which are already contributing greatly to our community's vibrancy. A majority of these new, local dining establishments feature a diverse range of cuisines and flavors that are entirely new offerings to our city.

Perhaps the most significant positive development to our local business landscape is the resurgence of manufacturing in East Providence. Our city has a long-established manufacturing legacy, which was always a major source of good paying jobs. Although the total number of jobs in this sector have declined over the years, the total wages associated with the manufacturing industry remain very high and represent a significant segment of East Providence's employment base.

As the pandemic took hold during the latter half of 2020, we have seen many formerly vacant industrial buildings now become fully occupied. These buildings, totaling nearly 700,000 s/f of space, are now home to firms that are now choosing to expand operations domestically rather than having to rely on the international supply chain. Also, these firms are responding to changes in consumer spending patterns that favor buying durable goods versus services that have required new distribution facilities to satisfy demand.

A few notable examples of companies either relocating or expanding in East Providence include Quick Fitting Holding Company LLC, AQUASGROUP, ZOLL Medical Group, BSM Pump Corp., Nexans American Cable, Fulcrum Speedworks and Enotap LLC located in Phillipsdale Landing along with International Pipe Fittings and Future Foam Inc. These firms now occupy newly-renovated facilities located in East Providence's historical industrial corridors located on Waterman Ave., Commercial Way and Narragansett Park Dr. Each of these areas have excellent accessibility to nearby highways and primary state roads. Further, all of these locations have access to full-service municipal water and wastewater utilities.

Fortunately, East Providence's staff has been able to accommodate this surge in industrial development. We often receive very positive feedback from companies regarding the interaction with the planning department, building inspector's office and the city's fire plan review division. This strong level of customer service results in a quick permitting process that results in timely building occupancy.

As we look forward to 2022, East Providence will continue to answer the bell to meet new challenges and capitalize on future opportunities.

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