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## **Infrastructure investments position East Providence for continued economic growth - by Roberto DaSilva**

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East Providence is investing in public infrastructure to become more environmentally and economically resilient. The city is leveraging municipal funds to obtain grant funding from state and federal agencies to accomplish the goal of supporting existing and future economic growth. Through targeted investments in protecting natural resources and improving recreational and economic opportunities for residents, East Providence continues to be a great place to live, work, and play.

The city is utilizing grant funding from the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank (RIIB) to improve water quality and flood resilience along neighborhoods and roads abutting the upper Narragansett Bay. The city received \$75,000 for improvements to Willett Pond and \$75,000 to flood-proof the Silver Street Pump Station from the RIIB. An additional \$75,000 was also awarded to the city to make water quality and drainage improvements to Beach Rd. in Riverside, which sends runoff into the Providence River. These improvements will capture and treat runoff before entering the water. By taking advantage of funding opportunities like the RIIB's Municipal Resilience Program, the city's capital investments go further to execute projects that increase climate resilience.

Infrastructure improvements to the city's public parks are also being made to support residents' recreational needs and quality of life. The city received grant funding from the R.I. Department of Environmental Management (DEM) to improve Kent Heights Park, a recreational area located in the heart of a residential neighborhood in the center of the city. The city also received two DEM grants to fund splash pads at Pierce Field and Central Park which provide families with access to a safe and fun environment to cool off in the summer. In addition to DEM grants, the city was awarded \$100,000 from the RIIB's Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program to fund field lighting at a new multi-purpose athletic field. This space will provide much needed space for a variety of youth sports.

In addition to improving climate resiliency and quality of life, the city's infrastructure investments are providing an optimal environment for economic growth. The city was recently awarded \$200,000 through the RIIB's Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program for the constructing of a municipal parking lot on Warren Ave. The parking lot abuts an I-195 off-ramp and will provide ample off-street parking to visitors frequenting the amenities located in the city's arts and entertainment district. This district is improved with public art and a mixed-use zoning ordinance that allows a variety of commercial, retail, residential and entertainment uses.

By leveraging city funds to obtain state and federal grant dollars, the city is able to invest in public infrastructure projects that position the city for continued economic growth in a fiscally responsible manner. Public improvements to water quality, drainage, coastal erosion, and public parks make the city more environmentally and economically resilient. East Providence's recent infrastructure investments will provide for a high quality of life and for the protection of natural resources for existing residents and generations to come.

Roberto DaSilva is the mayor of the city of East Providence, R.I..