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Providence mayor Smiley names Thomas director of economic development

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Cassandra Thomas

Providence, RI Mayor Brett Smiley appointed Cassandra Thomas as director of economic development for the city. Thomas is an experienced professional that brings a community-centric and innovation-driven approach to economic development, focused on creating quality jobs and building a more resilient future for communities.

“In order for Providence to become the world-class city we all know it has the potential to be, we need a strong economic development strategy and Cassandra Thomas is the right person to lead that effort,” said mayor Smiley.

“Together, I am confident we can bring Providence to the next level by tackling the big issues, like expanding and improving our housing stock, and investing in our strengths like our higher learning institutions, our critically acclaimed arts and culinary scenes, and our local talent.”

Thomas’ 20-year career is detailed with high-level project management, workforce development, and economic crisis intervention experiences. As Federal Disaster Recovery Officer (FDRO) for FEMA, Thomas led long-term recovery efforts for Northeastern states battling the economic impacts of COVID-19, also working to develop economic development plans for other communities such as the State of Queensland in Australia, the City of Calgary and the Capital Region in Louisiana. As FDRO they also worked with the Connecticut Department of Housing to develop a new model of wraparound services for shelters, helping people attain the resources necessary to break cycles of homelessness. Thomas also led innovative workforce development projects in communities across the country, supporting tribes in Maine in starting aquaculture projects, and identifying opportunities to develop outdoor recreation and artisanal manufacturing in Vermont.

“Under mayor Smiley’s leadership, Providence is uniquely positioned to thrive and become a regional powerhouse,” said Thomas. “I am excited to join the Smiley Administration and to work with so many talented and dedicated professionals that are focused on building that brighter future for this city.”

In their capacity as director of economic development, Thomas will also help inform and drive the city’s planning, redevelopment and arts, culture and tourism strategy.

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