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City of East Providence invests in its future through education - by Roberto DaSilva

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In 2021 the city of East Providence celebrated the opening of its new state-of-the-art \$190 million high school. The school was the first in Rhode Island built under a state program that included hundreds of millions of dollars in borrowing that was previously approved by voters. The city paid for just under half the cost of this project, with the remaining balance funded through the Rhode Island Department of Education.

Today, education is still a priority in East Providence. In 2022, voters overwhelmingly approved bonding of \$148 million to fund renovations and additions to Martin Middle School and Waddington Elementary School. At least 48.5% of the cost of these projects will be reimbursed by the state. These two major education investment projects are progressing rapidly with construction already underway at Martin Middle School. The city was also excited to successfully secure a \$340,000 Learn365RI grant, under an innovative education program created by governor Dan McKee and the R.I. Department of Education, with funds received from the federal government. This program is designed to shift learning from the traditional 180 school day model to 365 days of learning through the support of partnerships between municipalities and community-based organizations to expand high-quality, extended learning experiences.

Educational investment in East Providence is not limited strictly to elementary and secondary education investment. The city, in partnership with Roger Williams University, has also launched a workforce training program through a \$350,000 U.S. Dept. of Labor grant. This initiative will support workforce and professional development opportunities for approximately 530 low-to-moderate-income East Providence adults who enroll in certification coursework. These classes will provide certificates in high-demand occupations including medical office assistant and accounting and bookkeeping clerk education. All classes will be taught in East Providence during evening hours by faculty members from Roger Williams University.

Quality education plays an extremely important role in our ability to market East Providence as a top tier location for economic investment. Businesses know that attracting the best candidates to their firms is often reliant on the ability of a community to provide a high-quality public education. A well-trained workforce is also vital for promoting continued economic investment and prosperity. To that end, the city will continue to seek out and participate in efforts to ensure one of the most educated and highly qualified labor forces in the region.

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

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