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Governor Carcieri, RIDOT, RIEDC and city release I-195 surplus land report

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The office of governor Donald Carcieri, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), the Rhode Island Economic Development Corp. (RIEDC), and the city of Providence have released the "Rhode Island Interstate 195 Relocation Surplus Land: Redevelopment and Marketing Analysis." This report builds on plans for the land that will be opened up once the old I-195 is removed as part of the Iway project.

"The relocation of the old I-195 has created a tremendous economic development opportunity for the state and the city of Providence," said governor Carcieri. "With 36 acres of prime real estate available for commercial, residential and leisure activities, the development of this land will transform the city, continue to build upon our partnerships between education and business, and create jobs and strengthen our urban economic base."

The report makes recommendations for redevelopment of the parcels of land that transform Providence and its riverfront. These parcels comprise 36 acres of new land in the Jewelry District, Old Harbor, Fox Point, and College Hill on either side of the Providence River north of the Fox Point Hurricane Barrier.

"When the Iway is fully open and the obsolete portion of I-195 comes down Providence will have an entirely new look," said RIDOT director Michael Lewis. "New streets will be built and old ones reconnected, giving DOWncity opportunities for growth and expansion that haven't been available in decades."

The report points out three main objectives that will come from the re-use of the land: an increased tax base, economic development which will attract industries and jobs to the area, and urban revitalization. This will include waterfront access, park land, and a reconnection of old neighborhoods that were once sliced apart but will now come together again once the construction of the Iway is completed.

"With the relocation of Interstate 195, the tear in the fabric of downtown will be repaired, and a new vibrant neighborhood can grow in the city," said Thomas Deller, AICP, director of the Department of Planning and Development for the city of Providence.

While the completion of this revitalization project is several years in the making, the effects of this renewal can already be seen. The removal of Interstate overpasses has brightened areas that were once dark. Academic institutions have expressed interest in owning various pieces of land which will create a new landscape as well as bring jobs to the Ocean State.

"The relocation of I-195 represents a premier opportunity for Rhode Island to create a new hub of high-wage job growth with significant office and commercial space in the Jewelry District," said RIEDC interim executive director Michael Saul. "Years from now we will look at our capital city's new

skyline and see proof that the relocation plan was a transformative opportunity for Rhode Island's economy."

RIEDC will be taking the lead in the disposition of the land and the marketing of the parcels to local, national and international companies. The report will be used as an informational guide in the disposition process. While the report is not a new master plan for the area, it will focus activities that may affect implementation such as best use, zoning, and land sale.

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