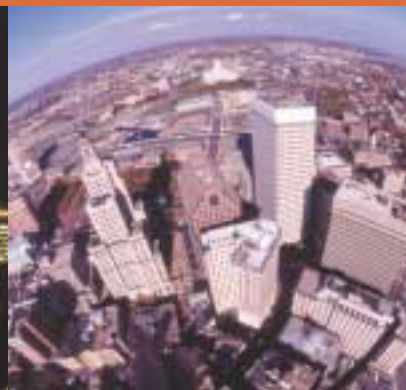




Call to Action

Building Providence's Creative and Innovative Economy



Call to Action: Building Providence's Creative and Innovative Economy

Our Challenge for Change

This call to action has been two years in the making. It is the product of many conversations, workshops, and planning sessions, including input from Richard Florida, PhD, H. John Heinz III Professor of Regional Economic Development at Carnegie Mellon University and author of *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Hundreds of creative people from all disciplines have shaped this document.

Each stakeholder in Providence's future is challenged to participate in the evolution of the city's creative and innovative economy:

- Educators must create climates for learning where young creative minds flourish
- Elected officials must champion the creative economy as our future economy
- Economic development professionals and city planners must focus on retaining and attracting talent, creating jobs and investing in the city
- Universities and hospitals must use their knowledge and intellectual property to build community within and develop the economy of the city
- Investors must invest in businesses from small to large scale; mindful that an investment here has a different risk profile than one in Boston
- Foundations must invest in building the new infrastructure—access to talent and tools—to support the creative economy
- Business must invest in the creativity and capabilities of their workforce
- Citizens must use the universal gift of creativity at work and in the community
- Creative people in all disciplines must work together for the common good of our city

This is a whole-city, all-neighborhood vision.

Vision: Positioning Providence as a Creative Place

Providence is poised to take its place among the leading cities of the future. Cities like ours, with fewer than 200,000 people and vibrant with diversity and authenticity, are the ones that are attracting and holding what Richard Florida calls creative people—a mix of artists, scientists, and other professionals who form an increasingly potent 21st century economic force. Creative people want authentic cities on a livable scale. Talent, authenticity, technology and diversity form the fiery core of the new economic development.

Our city is home to more than twelve institutions of knowledge creation, with clusters of design and business services in its core and an intensifying biomedical research enterprise in the Jewelry District. In order to achieve its destiny, Providence must build on its diverse strengths, from the scientific knowledge inherent in the laboratories of our colleges and teaching hospitals to the vibrant arts culture that pulses in our streets, stages, and studios. This is a whole city, all neighborhood vision. Every citizen has creative potential. Attract, retain and integrate creative people throughout the city—students, immigrants, entrepreneurs and investors—in many types and sizes of creative companies.

As we model the shift from an industrial to a creative economy, we will create jobs and expand the tax base. And, as Providence grows, we will hold and deepen its soul.

Drivers of Providence's Creative Economy

Strengths

- Concentration of design competency at RISD and in design and innovation-based businesses
- Concentration of biomedical research within Brown, Lifespan, Care New England, and Roger Williams Medical Center
- Ethnic neighborhoods with urban design integrity untouched by urban renewal
- Diverse creators in art, science, culture and innovation and the depth of research in our universities
- Accessible networks of power, resources and talent—there are only “two degrees of separation” in Providence
- Tradition of entrepreneurship, rooted in our origins as the crucible of the American Industrial Revolution

Challenges

- Reduce the brain drain and retain the talent resident in our neighborhoods and on our college campuses
- Build a citywide network to connect neighborhood creative people to the creative economy
- Formally organize economic development as a city function and build a network among the partners already doing economic development
- Commercialize research more rapidly and with agility
- Take innovations to scale, facilitating access to capital and more sophisticated talent, especially serial entrepreneurs
- Retain the authenticity and character of our neighborhoods and ensure that their residents have a voice and a role in the creative economy

The Business Case: Creative Economies Are The Future Economies

“What matters to the growth of cities is the ability to attract and retain creative people. The clustering of creative agents in cities fosters the growth of the creative economy.” (Robert Axtell of The Brookings Institute.) According to Axtell, creative agents further propel a cycle that reinforces productivity, to form larger economic units or firms, that then grow and develop themselves and the city where they are located. The city in turn also grows and develops as a location to attract other creative agents.

In his book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Dr. Richard Florida argues for integrating four interconnected elements as critical for building a creative economy: Talent (brains), technology (research), tolerance (openness and difference) and trees (authentic place). The four elements referenced by Florida are all present in metros with the most robust high-wage economies, such as Austin, Texas. The best indicators of growth are not concentrations of R&D or scientific talent. Without the additional assets of tolerance and authenticity, technology fails to seed economic growth.

Florida's concepts of “tolerance” and “trees” are part of the bedrock that is Providence. While national benchmarking studies give the city high marks for the more elusive attributes of tolerance and “trees,” it lags behind in terms of talent and technology—assets that can be cultivated through focused strategy, targeted investment, and hard work. Places with trees and tolerance can grow and attract talent and technology. However, you can't grow tolerance and trees as quickly as you can talent and technology. With the addition of technology and talent, Providence's destiny as a creative center will be assured.

Robert Leaver in *Achieving Our Providence* defines the power of creativity for all people in the following terms: “In the industrial economy, the hand did most of the work. In the creative economy, the mind directs our hands, more than hands alone, to create economic, artistic or civic value. It is about new combinations. Creativity is a universal gift. Creativity has no bias with regard to class or ethnicity.”

Growing Providence's Five Creative Economy Clusters

Providence's creative economy is powered by five industry clusters:

- € Bio-medical research
- € Knowledge creation
- € Design and business innovation
- € Technology—IT and creative elements
- € Arts and culture

The creative professionals in these clusters represent 18% of the jobs in Providence with 20,000 jobs anchoring another 40,000 jobs in the city, to account for 54% (60,000) of all jobs in Providence.

Two bookend economic clusters are mostly tax-exempt and civic. At one end is knowledge creation from seven colleges and universities and five teaching and research hospitals. The other end is art and culture. The two bookends provide the foundation for the three commercial clusters to flourish.

The presence and interaction of these five clusters is the foundation of the creative economy. The interaction among the disciplines produces new combinations that have economic, artistic and social impact for Providence.

Guiding Principles for Building the Creative Economy

A community compact will be forged and endorsed by the major players integral to the building of the city's creative economy: elected officials, educators, business leaders, economic development professionals, and community leaders. The creative economy, as a working definition, is not the single blueprint for the economy. Rather, it is a major component and provides a useful framework for this compact. The compact will be based on the following nine principles:

1. Creativity is an asset and the universal gift of every citizen, to be cultivated in every city neighborhood
2. Use the clusters of the creative and innovative economy as a significant part of the framework for economic development policy
3. Think regionally; Providence champions the regional creative economy initiative of the New England Council
4. Grow our scientific research; support Brown's goal of growing its research program in computer science, biomedical research, public health, brain science and materials and manufacturing science
5. Capitalize on design; support RISD's vision of becoming an international design center
6. Increase commercial activity in the city, creating a business-friendly city for business and citizens
7. Revitalize neighborhoods through the preservation and reuse of old buildings, encouragement of compatible in-fill development, and promotion of commercial centers in neighborhoods
8. Preserve Providence as an authentic city, with open spaces, bikeways and parks in all neighborhoods
9. Go back to basics, maintaining high-quality city services including public safety, education, affordable housing, and neighborhood retail

Implementation: Five Arching Strategies and a Five-Year Action Plan

There are 52 action projects to be implemented within the next 5 years. Five arching strategies have been used to cluster and integrate the action projects:

- Position Providence as the authentic creative hub in the Southern New England region
- Build a creative community that attracts and retains creative people
- Grow the creative economy with emphasis on the design and business innovation and biomedical research clusters
- Build an integrated infrastructure to build an effective economic development engine and a thriving entrepreneurial climate
- Build quality, authentic places for creative people

The 15 projects for 2003, described below, provide the foundation for subsequent years of effort. The full document, *The Report: Building Providence's Creative and Innovative Economy*,

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includes 37 additional action projects, to complete the five-year plan. Implementation will be a public/private partnership—a network of partners from the civic, not-for-profit, and business sectors working in partnership with the city. The projects start in 2003, but will take several years to complete.

Arching Strategy 1: Position Providence as the Authentic Creative Hub in the Southern New England Region

Themes:

Tell the Providence story of creativity, open-mindedness and its unique status as an authentic, quirky place—featuring design, biomedical science, technology, and arts and culture.

Project for 2003:

- Make the creative hub the unifying vision, driving city design, planning and economic development. Execute a marketing campaign that positions Providence as a creative hub in the region.

Arching Strategy 2: Build a Creative Community That Attracts and Retains Creative People

Themes:

Foster a culture of creativity, diversity, art and science for all people. Foster creativity-based education in high school and college; reduce brain drain and attract new talent.

Projects for 2003:

- Establish an Office of Cultural Affairs in city government, open to all creators, serving as a resource and broker for artists, an “aggregator” of projects, and evolve our living public space for public art. Do a cultural audit and provide a common calendar of events.
- Open the Providence Commons, a virtual and physical network of spaces where creative people connect, do business, forge new combinations, and build community.
- Turn pioneers into owners by providing the technical and financial assistance to develop more artists-owned work/live spaces, including artist co-ops, artist trusts, mixed income and mixed use spaces.
- Reduce the brain drain by connecting young people to creative companies and authentic neighborhoods through credit-bearing internships. Conduct further research at the high schools and college level on why there is a brain drain in Providence.
- Invest in emerging creators through a program of creativity grants for emerging creative people in neighborhoods and access to studio space and tools for creators. Develop a learning network among neighborhood creators. Offer internships for neighborhood creative people.
- Take creativity-based educational pilots to scale using the best practices that foster creativity in young learners. Examples include the MET, Times Square, Fortes School, New Urban Arts, AS220 and others. Make creativity education a central part of educational reform in Providence.

Arching Strategy 3: Grow the Creative Economy with Emphasis on the Design and Business Innovation and Biomedical Research Clusters

Themes:

Help diverse types of entrepreneurs to build companies of different scales in the core and other neighborhoods throughout the city, targeting design in the core and biomedical research in the Jewelry District.

Projects for 2003:

- Grow the biomedical industry. Develop a shared vision and strategic plan for biomed-

cal research. Concentrate laboratory facilities in the Jewelry District and hospital area. Work with Brown, Care New England, Lifespan and Slater Biomed by focusing on the laboratory and incubator facility needs of commercial enterprises.

- Forge a win-win strategy between the tax-exempt colleges and hospitals and the city. Take advantage of what colleges and hospitals provide the creative economy: employment, purchasing, investing, research and technology transfer.

Arching Strategy 4: Build an Integrated Infrastructure to support Economic Development and foster an Entrepreneurial Climate

Themes:

Ensure that the city's economic development function and network supports the growth of the creative economy. Foster an entrepreneurial climate composed of diverse investors, entrepreneurs and innovative business-building practices.

Projects for 2003:

- Create a Providence Office of Economic Development that supports the growth of the creative economy. The office grows current business and recruits new business, offering a one-stop shop and operating as a network of partners among entities already doing economic development.
- Increase support for venture formation, doubling funding for the Slater Technology Fund to \$5 million to commercialize more research and forging partnerships among city and state economic development officers and the Slater Centers to help locate new and growing firms in the City.
- Explore the feasibility of hosting a best practice conference in Providence for other cities in the country building creative economies.

Arching Strategy 5: Build Quality and Authentic Places for Creative People

Themes:

Connect creative people to the sense of place in neighborhoods as a way of retaining our authenticity and minimizing displacement.

Projects for 2003:

- Grow Downcity as a creative neighborhood and place. Implement the Business Improvement District (BID) for downtown. Execute the first floor, coordinated arts and retail management program for Westminster Street.
- Revitalize neighborhood centers. Identify and amplify organically evolving nodes of creative energy. Revise zoning to facilitate the development of commercial centers. Use zoning to reinforce the work of neighborhood revitalization.
- Connect creative people to the outdoors. Develop the city's bike-way system to the next level.

**Providence's
Community Leaders
Think the
Creative Economy is
Our Future**

Sixty-three community leaders in health care, higher education, arts and culture, business, and various Providence neighborhoods responded to a community survey on the city's creative economy. Their responses prompted three conclusions:

1. The creative economy is pivotal to Providence's next economy.
2. Of the 5 clusters, concentrate on the commercial side of design and innovation and biological and medical research.
3. Invest in amenities that attract and retain the "creative people"

How We Must Work Together

As referenced in the full document *The Report: Building Providence's Creative and Innovative Economy*, the creative economy will **not** be built through study, but through action learning and effective partnerships. The next five years requires focused action and doable projects.

Building the creative economy is a collaborative enterprise requiring the imagination, creativity and commitment of artists, scientists, business people, educators, community leaders, and all other stakeholders. It is network of doers. Sign up. Collaborate. Creativity is the responsibility of everyone. Fiercely own the distinct contribution of your creative discipline. Fiercely figure out what you have in common with another "stranger." If you are a scientist, partner with an artist to discover what you can do together. Do the opposite as well where the artist is the primary inquirer. Take up this call to action: Where will you make a difference?

Where We Must Act In 2004 and Beyond

Thirty-seven projects define the next five years of focus for building the creative economy of Providence. Herein are 27 representative projects.

Arching Strategy 1: Positioning Providence as the Authentic, Creative Hub in the Southern New England Region

- Launch "Design Providence" to promote and sell high quality design products from Providence
- Develop an enhanced cultural tourism program

Arching Strategy 2: Build a Creative Community the Attracts and Retains Creative People

Support for artists and other creators

- Grow more risk taking places like AS220 where artists own the space; formalize Capital Arts as an incubator of public artists
- Support immigrant and neighborhood creative people by establishing neighborhood incubators of creativity
- Provide "creativity grants" for emerging creators
- Develop Providence as a capital of independent rock and music of the world
- Develop a formal collaboration between universities and arts organizations
- Develop tools and process for accessing cultural resources in the city, e.g., cool place locator, gay guide and soulful places

Reduce the Brain Drain

- Provide more opportunities for Providence residents to attend local colleges
- Create student welcome wagon to connect creative students to Providence
- Develop a freshman faculty process to educate them on the brain drain
- Develop a summer jobs program in creative businesses and neighborhoods for high school seniors and college freshman
- Make neighborhood libraries into creativity centers
- Continue research on student and immigrant artists and other creators

Develop more creative people

- At the high school level, promote project based and contextual learning—the Met

School model—to strengthen student links to Providence. Operating premise: a stronger sense of local place creates loyalties to the city

- Extend the project-based, contextual learning (the MET School model) to colleges

Arching Strategy 3: Grow the Creative Economy Using Diverse Entrepreneurs and Sizes of Business

Target Cluster 1: Biomedical Research

- Attract a large pharmaceutical company
- Encourage physical expansion of biomedical research and bioscience industry in South Providence and Jewelry District

Target Cluster 2: Design and Innovation

- Launch an urban design center co-developed by RISD, URI and Brown
- Develop a network of design incubators patterned after RISD's and Bryant's Business and Design Entrepreneurship Center
- Spotlight RISD's full spectrum of design tools for all applications such as graphics, product and urban design

Arching Strategy 4: Build and Integrated Infrastructure for Economic Development and Foster an Entrepreneurial Climate

Increase Investment Capacity for Creative Companies

- Create an angel investor tax credit
- Develop an early stage venture capital fund
- Promote Providence to Boston venture capital companies

Build a System for Developing More Entrepreneurs

- Build a creativity institute co-developed by RISD and Brown
- Develop university and community based incubators for entrepreneurs combining the resources for the Center for Design and Business and Urban Ventures

Arching Strategy 5: Build Quality Places for Creative People

- In partnership with the educational and medical institutions, investigate the feasibility of locating buildings with multiple uses in the neighborhoods beyond the downtown and Jewelry District

"In the creative economy, the mind directs our hands, more than hands alone, to create economic, artistic or civic value. It is about new combinations. Creativity is a universal gift. Creativity has no bias with regard to class or ethnicity."

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