

Providence River Relocation Project: Creating a Place for Community and Art

Data, Abstract & Project Description

“Awe-inspiring and a renewal in the belief in cities as the center of community” –JN

“Wonderful! One of the most creative and well-executed public festivals I have witnessed. Thank you! The music was sensational and the fires were awe-inspiring. The entire experience was unique, exotic, and all-around fabulous.” –Patty Rust, Dighton, MA

“I am moved to tears. Not since living in Siena, Italy have I felt such a pride and celebration of place. Thank you.” –Sharon P., Cranston, RI

—written in the WaterFire guest books

“I was fortunate while visiting Providence this past weekend to be able to experience... WaterFire. It was wonderful to see people of all ages, ethnic groups, couples, families... strolling along the promenade... I would consider this one of the loveliest spiritual/communal experiences of my adult life. Let this shine as an example of art and government working together to provide a magnificently uplifting experience for all.”

—excerpts from a letter to The Providence Journal from J.C., Queens, NY

“I’ve worked primarily for the traditional gallery audience... It was a refreshing experience to work outside, in the middle of downtown, where people had all kinds of good questions about what I was doing. I think it was as educational for me as it was for them. I’ve been guilty of thinking the ‘public’ wouldn’t understand my work. This gave me an opportunity to see how wrong I was.”

—Cyndi Swanson, Visual Artist, from the Convergence XV Catalog

PROJECT DATA

Project Name: **Providence River Relocation Project: Creating a Place for Community and Art**
 Owner: City of Providence and the State of Rhode Island
 Location: Providence, Rhode Island
 Project Use: Walking; jogging; boating; performances: WaterFire, theatre, music; Convergence sculpture exhibit; gathering: social, educational, religious, civic events

Project Size: 11 acres (immediate park area)
 Total Development Cost: \$60 million Annual Operating Budget: N/A
 Date Initiated: August 1984 Percent Completed by December 1, 2002: 100%
 Project Completion Date: Construction completed in phases, with Waterplace Park first opening in 1994, Memorial Park in 1996, and the southern extension of the park walkway system dedicated in April 2002.
 Programming has been ongoing since 1995.

Application submitted by:

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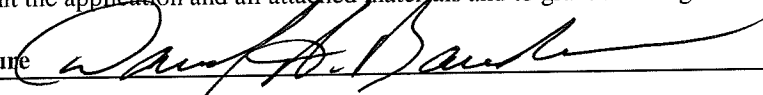
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River Relocation Project Chronology

- October 1982 Robert Bendick, former director of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), William Warner, Architect, and the Providence Foundation apply to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for funding of a Providence Waterfront Study.
- February 1983 The Providence Foundation secures commitment of both Governor Garrahy and Mayor Cianci to support a study of Providence's waterfront. Architect and planner William Warner is asked by the Providence Foundation to develop a plan to reclaim the city's waterfront.
- May 1983 Planning grant from NEA is announced. The Providence Foundation is asked to include in the study a plan to solve the anticipated traffic congestion that would be created in Memorial Square once Capital Center was completed. The plan calls for extending Memorial Boulevard along the Providence River and relocating the Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket Rivers.
- October 1983 The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) conduct an Environmental Assessment for the proposed Memorial Boulevard Extension Project.
- August 1984 A public hearing is conducted in Providence for comment on the four alternatives identified in the Environmental Assessment. The River Relocation Project is selected.
- November 1984 Cost sharing formulas for city / state share of the River Relocation are agreed to by the FHWA, Governor Garrahy, and Mayor Paolino.
- February 1985 Engineering by Maguire Group Inc. (MGI) and design work by William D. Warner Architects and Planners (WDWAP) begins on the Memorial Boulevard Extension (River Relocation Project).
- October 1985 RIDEM announced it would fund Waterplace elements ineligible for highway or walkway funds.
- April 1986 The federal government agreed to fund the river walk system.
- March 1987 Contract awarded to dismantle the World War I monument in Memorial Square and store it for future use.
- May 1987 A veterans ceremony is held at the World War I monument as the last stones are removed. A time capsule is recovered and turned over to a conservator for inspection and preservation.
- April 1988 Ground-breaking ceremonies are held for the relocation of the Moshassuck River and construction of bridges.
- June 1989 Ground-breaking takes place for College and Crawford Street bridges—Contract 4.
- August 1989 The Moshassuck River is diverted to its new channel.
- September 1990 Citizens Bank formally dedicates its new building.
- September 1991 Ground-breaking ceremonies are held for Contract 5. Work includes relocating the Woonasquatucket River and constructing Waterplace.
- May 1993 Contract 6 is awarded for work including constructing Memorial Park, relocating the World War I monument, and completing the Memorial Boulevard Extension.
- November 1993 Opening of Memorial Boulevard to traffic.
- July 1994 Dedication of Waterplace Park
- December 1994 First lighting of WaterFire as part of First Night Providence.
- June 1996 Dedication of Memorial Park, the World War I monument, and the Providence River Waterfront.
- June 1996 The International Sculpture Conference is presented by the Sculpture Center and the Convergence International Arts Festival. WaterFire is expanded to include more of the park.
- July 1996 The Providence Waterfront Festival moves to Waterplace Park.
- May 1997 Gondola service begins on Woonasquatucket and Providence Rivers.
- June 1997 The Liquor Amnii Project, a cultural exchange between artists in Providence and in the republic of Macedonia, takes place in Waterplace and Memorial Parks.
- October 1998 Completion of the handicapped accessible dock facilities for the water taxi service.
- October 1999 Scenes for the NBC television show "Providence" are shot in Waterplace Park.
- August 2001 100th lighting of WaterFire is celebrated by expanding the installation to 100 bonfires.
- April 2002 Opening of riverwalk pathway extension connecting the park to the harbor area.

ABSTRACT

Please answer the questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed directly on the forms. If answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Project Name: Providence River Relocation Project: Creating a Place for Community and Art

Address: 30 Exchange Terrace, Providence, Rhode Island

1. Give a brief overview of the project, including major project goals:

On a cool October evening, the sun had slipped over the downtown Providence horizon hours earlier, but thousands of local families remained spellbound along the Providence River experiencing another WaterFire performance featuring mesmerizing fire sculpture in the river and evocative music. 900,000 people gathered in 2002 to enjoy free and innovative public art along the river enjoying the fruits of the Providence River Relocation Project that transformed an unusable site into a vital living place. We uncovered and moved a neglected urban river, created a new series of river parks, and rebuilt our community through excellent urban design and unique, spectacular art. The new park has made Providence a destination city with a vibrant downtown and a renewed sense of purpose and pride.

Before this project, Providence's downtown lacked an attractive civic place and was cutoff from its surrounding neighborhoods. In 1982 Providence approved a Capital Center Plan to address long-standing issues of elevated railroad tracks and acres of abandoned railroad yards that separated downtown from the State House. While the 1982 plan called for the relocation of the railroad tracks and the conversion of the freight yards into development parcels, the plan did not address the adjacent rivers or existing traffic problems. To the east, the Providence River flowed forgotten under roadway decking between downtown and the historic College Hill neighborhood. Cross town traffic and vehicles from nearby interstate ramps converged creating dangerous traffic patterns and risky pedestrian crossings at "suicide circle" and at "the widest bridge in the world."

Uncovering the river and addressing traffic issues was recommended in the visionary 1983 Providence Waterfront Study, authored by Williams D. Warner, Architects and Planners, and sponsored by the Providence Foundation. Adopted in 1984 by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, the plan was expanded to include the following goals:

- Connect College Hill with the downtown by uncovering and moving the river and building twelve pedestrian and vehicular bridges;
- Create a linear park along the river anchored at the ends by a 4-acre Water Place Park and 2-acre Memorial Park for use as community gathering places and for celebrating the arts;
- Create a multimodal transportation corridor accommodating vehicles, pedestrians, and boats;
- Celebrate the city's founding and its maritime heritage with historic site graphic panels along the river walk.

The \$60 million physical transformation was largely completed by 1997 and features 11 acres of riverfront parks, 1.5 miles of pedestrian river walks, new roads, bridges, and docks. But the story does not end in 1997. More riverfront is being reclaimed and the project's urban design has inspired extraordinary arts events, notably WaterFire and Convergence, as well as scores of other visual and performing arts activities. The Providence River Relocation project has created a community place—a heart for the city and a place cherished by its citizens—a place where WaterFire's flames symbolize their hopes as it illuminates the park that has renewed their city.

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*? (You may wish to consider such factors as effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of the project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues, design quality.)

The Providence River Relocation required unusual collaboration between state, city and federal agencies that normally did not work together as a team. Unique integrated design leveraged transportation money to solve traffic issues while also enhancing urban design, river navigation, pedestrian flow, historic preservation, and park design. RIDOT engineers learned about designing beautiful as well as functional pedestrian bridges. Preservation planners learned about the nuances of traffic flow and turning radii. The Providence experience was so successful that it provided a model for the 1991 federal ISTEA transportation legislation. That collaborative spirit is also the hallmark of maintenance for the new riverfront with the city, the state, and private landowners working together. Convergence and WaterFire are also entirely integrated with the park and celebrate and enhance their urban settings.

The Providence River Relocation transformed almost 20% of downtown Providence—an amazing urban accomplishment. The \$60 million in public investment in the river relocation has helped stimulate approximately \$1 billion in development along the river. Now the uncovered rivers make a strong connection between the riverbank where Roger Williams founded the city in 1636 and the nearby headwaters of Narragansett Bay. Three areas of the city are now knit together: downtown, the State House, and College Hill. The urban experience in the new parks is now enjoyed daily by residents walking to work, while others picnic, jog, or gather for lunch. Kayaks ply the rivers in the summer and fall. Art students enliven the river walk with student projects. Convergence places scores of monumental sculptures throughout the park along with a myriad of other cultural and artistic activities which build a sense of community ownership. Each year nearly a million residents and visitors from throughout the country gather at the new riverfront to enjoy WaterFire—a unique public art installation that uses the urban environment as its medium as it transforms the city.

Providence is now in the midst of a much-heralded renaissance stimulated in part by the creation of a new urban heart for the city. Providence is now a destination city with a vibrant downtown enriched by the arts and a renewed sense of purpose and pride. The project has created a new type of priceless urban capital – public optimism about what the city can accomplish in the future.

The Providence River Relocation Project is an excellent example of the success that can be achieved when a city is audacious enough to entirely re-invent itself with a commitment to urban placemaking, innovative solutions, and excellence in design, coupled with the conviction that the arts and the community must be woven into the urban fabric of the successful city.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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1. How has the project impacted the local community?

In 1983 when the Providence Foundation began its campaign to reclaim the city's rivers, it faced the following issues:

- The rivers which link Capital Center, College Hill, and downtown together historically and physically were not visible. Of the 2,400 foot riverway between Crawford Street Bridge and Waterplace, nearly 70 percent was covered by bridges, decks, and a building.
- The low clearance of the bridge system and siltation did not permit use by recreational boats or water taxis.
- Historical granite river walls which defined the edge of College Hill were hidden from view by bridge decking.
- Cross-river pedestrian routes were undefined and dangerous because of ill-defined traffic movements.
- The World War I monument served as a confusing traffic rotary and was very difficult to access, hence "Suicide Circle."
- Downtown had no successful civic space that could serve as gathering place for the community.

The River Relocation Project gave the rivers and the city back to the people and organized and channeled the traffic onto a tree-lined boulevard. The project improves pedestrian and automobile access in a series of wonderfully scaled places that are appropriately designed to be part of the city's historic fabric. The project fully integrates architecture, urbanism, and arts programming to make an extraordinary place in the city – a place for living and for human interaction.

Waterplace Park and the RiverWalk are now the host for a myriad of cultural activities and programs. These programs include: the city's signature artwork—WaterFire Providence (a fire sculpture installation that runs for two-thirds of a mile through downtown on selected Saturday nights), Convergence International Arts Festival which sites over thirty large-scale contemporary art works along the rivers banks on an annual basis, exceptional music programming produced by CapitolArts Providence, Trinity Summer Shakespeare Project, and a wide variety of events produced by community non-profit and religious organizations. The architecture and continued programming of the park have provided the heart and soul for the city's renaissance. The cultural programming of the park brings additional positive economic and social impact to the city. Furthermore, the cultural programming is a major factor in the continued maintenance of the park.

WaterFire was designed to appeal to the entire community and to lure them into discovering and taking ownership of the new park and downtown, particularly at night when many cities can become empty. The installation has succeeded to the point of overcrowding. The work also incorporates spiritual aspects of community cohesiveness and public ritual and gives residents a new sense of pride. Remarkably WaterFire has actually changed how visitors behave in the park.

The project has changed the local and national reputation of the city and has encouraged continued economic development in the park area as well as additional urban projects including the extension of the network of walkways and bicycle paths and the river park system, the 5.5 mile Woonasquatucket Greenway restoration project, the relocation of Interstate 195, the creation of Collier Park by the Narragansett Electric Company and the development of the Heritage Harbor Museum on the shores of the Providence River.

2. Describe the underlying values of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project?

Social Values: Two-thirds of a mile of rivers were uncovered and restored for use by the people. 11 acres of open space consisting of rivers and parks were created where none existed before.

Urban Design Values: Transform the then-covered rivers into a major focal spine of the city. Enhance the confluence of the rivers. Provide new bridges with a quality of grace and river traffic accommodation. Provide a clear separation between vehicular and pedestrian use of the river corridor. Improve the setting for the World War I monument and provide historical context for the city.

Water Quality Values: Revealing the rivers and lining them with walkways creates a new public awareness of their value. As a result Citizens Bank formed and funded a group headed by the University of Rhode Island Coastal Center to monitor the river's water quality. A major initiative has begun to reclaim the entire watershed and a 5.5 mile River Greenway is now under construction.

Historic Values: Reestablish the original shoreline at the base of College Hill. Open up to view the 19th century cut granite river walls. Re-establish the traditional presence of water between downtown and College Hill. Create a series of graphic panels about the city's history.

Economic Values: Increase property values along the river corridor. The park area has helped attract nearly \$1 billion of mixed-use development along the river, including a 225-unit apartment building, adaptive reuse of the original railroad station, two office buildings, a hotel, and the \$460 million Providence Place shopping mall.

The park has provided a venue in which the cultural life of Providence is celebrated with all its residents and visitors. The music programming presented by the Providence Parks Department and CapitolArts Providence celebrates the city's diversity and brings the faces of the neighborhoods to the main stage in the center of the city. This programming offers opportunities for the residents of Providence to cross cultural boundaries and build tolerance. WaterFire creates a community celebration on a regular basis during the summer months, bringing thousands into the city and creates measurable economic and social impact. The Convergence sculpture that is on display 365 days a year offers the general public opportunities to experience contemporary art in a welcoming, accessible setting.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (CONTD.)

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate.

Public participation has been the hallmark of the design process dating from the initial 1983 waterfront study that launched the effort. A design advisory committee composed of citizens and agencies participated in the urban design process on a regular basis.

In addition, several public workshops and hearings were conducted. The Providence Foundation established and advertised six public workshops, including locations at neighborhood schools and a major downtown bank lobby. The final workshop was held at the first Providence Waterfront Festival, with over 100,000 in attendance. Models and renderings were displayed and questionnaires distributed. More than 2,000 questionnaires were returned, and some of their suggestions were incorporated into the final plan. One workshop featured a plan of the existing waterfront on a table complete with coffee cans filled with magic markers for folks to sketch their ideas or locate their favorite places along the waterfront.

The new river parks are now popular places for the entire community, from concerts to church services to weddings, from outdoor classes to historic preservation tours, to eating lunch or strolling with the family. The Convergence Festival features many installations and performances by local artists and non-profit arts groups.

WaterFire was specifically designed to engender and build community. The art installation seems to invite strangers to begin conversations among one another. The music presented comes from cultures all around the world and the symbolism of the balanced opposition between fire and water is universal. WaterFire is created each evening by a corps of over 100 volunteers, many of whom dedicate hundreds of hours of their time to the project each year. WaterFire actually incorporates the volunteers, the viewers and the urban site into the artwork, engaging the viewer and breaking down the barrier that often exists between the public and a performance. WaterFire symbolizes the power of a community to act in concert and transform their urban environment and has become a signature piece for the city and its renaissance.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable.

Financing for the project was innovative in that its roadway improvements enabled it to be funded by federal, state, and city agencies. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) accounted for approximately 70% of the funding, including such elements as the boulevard extension, the roadway bridges, and much of the riverwalk system. Under the FHWA independent walkways program, it was demonstrated that major elements of the project qualified for 100% funding, including five pedestrian bridges, a pedestrian concourse under the boulevard, and a significant length of the walkway itself. The City and State funded the construction of the relocated river walls. The planning for the project resulted in the creation of an additional development parcel assessed at \$2.5 million, which helped the City fund its share of the costs. Waterplace Park was funded by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) along with FHWA for the eligible independent walkway elements.

The Convergence International Arts Festival and WaterFire are free public events and both non-profit organizations raise their own funds. Convergence is partially funded by the Providence Parks Department with additional support from corporate sponsors, individual donations, and grants and additional in-kind support from the city.

WaterFire is always presented as a free event, open to everyone. It was initially funded primarily by private donations supplemented by corporate sponsors and in-kind support from the city. As WaterFire has become better known, it has received funding from the state of Rhode Island. WaterFire still depends upon a devoted corps of volunteers and regularly collaborates with other groups and non-profits.

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings?

Unique features of the project:

- Portions of three rivers are relocated in the heart of the City to provide an 11-acre river park and roadway system.
- The entire project was completed without the demolition of a single building.
- Because of the extensive roadway and transportation improvements, approximately 70% of the project cost was funded by the Federal Highway Administration.
- An in-depth coordination and participation effort involving the general public, State and City agencies, and institutions led to unanimous support for the project. The adjacency of a historic district enabled design features to be incorporated on the bridges which transportation agencies would not ordinarily consider eligible for funding.
- The project is classified as a multi-modal transportation project accommodating vehicular, boar, and pedestrian traffic.
- The project served as a model to the writers of the 1991 ISTEA transportation program.
- The project demonstrated that a mature small city can generate a renaissance which attracts residents and assists the "Grow Smart" movement.
- The balanced opposition of fire and water placed in the midst of a modern city is unique and WaterFire's impact is unprecedented.

The Convergence International Arts Festival is a regional success and has expanded to include Newport, Westerly, and Pawtucket. Convergence takes a fresh approach to bringing art and people together in public spaces and their solutions are adaptable to other cities.

WaterFire is a unique work of public art originally created by Barnaby Evans for the Providence river setting. One of his concerns was to create a work of public art that would reanimate downtown and transform how the public interacts with urban space. WaterFire embraces the entire urban site as part of the artwork, including the audience. The design elements that make WaterFire an urban success could certainly be incorporated into other urban settings and WaterFire is working with several other cities to design new projects.

Providence River Relocation Project: Creating a Place for Community and Art

Perspective Sheets

“One of the wonderful things about Convergence is the existence of temporary works of public art. The art is usually here for a year, and then the collection is renewed. Public art that is renewed year after year is a relatively unique idea. It is unlike a museum where the collection is more or less constant.”

—Jay Coogan, Associate Provost, RISD, from the Convergence XV Catalog

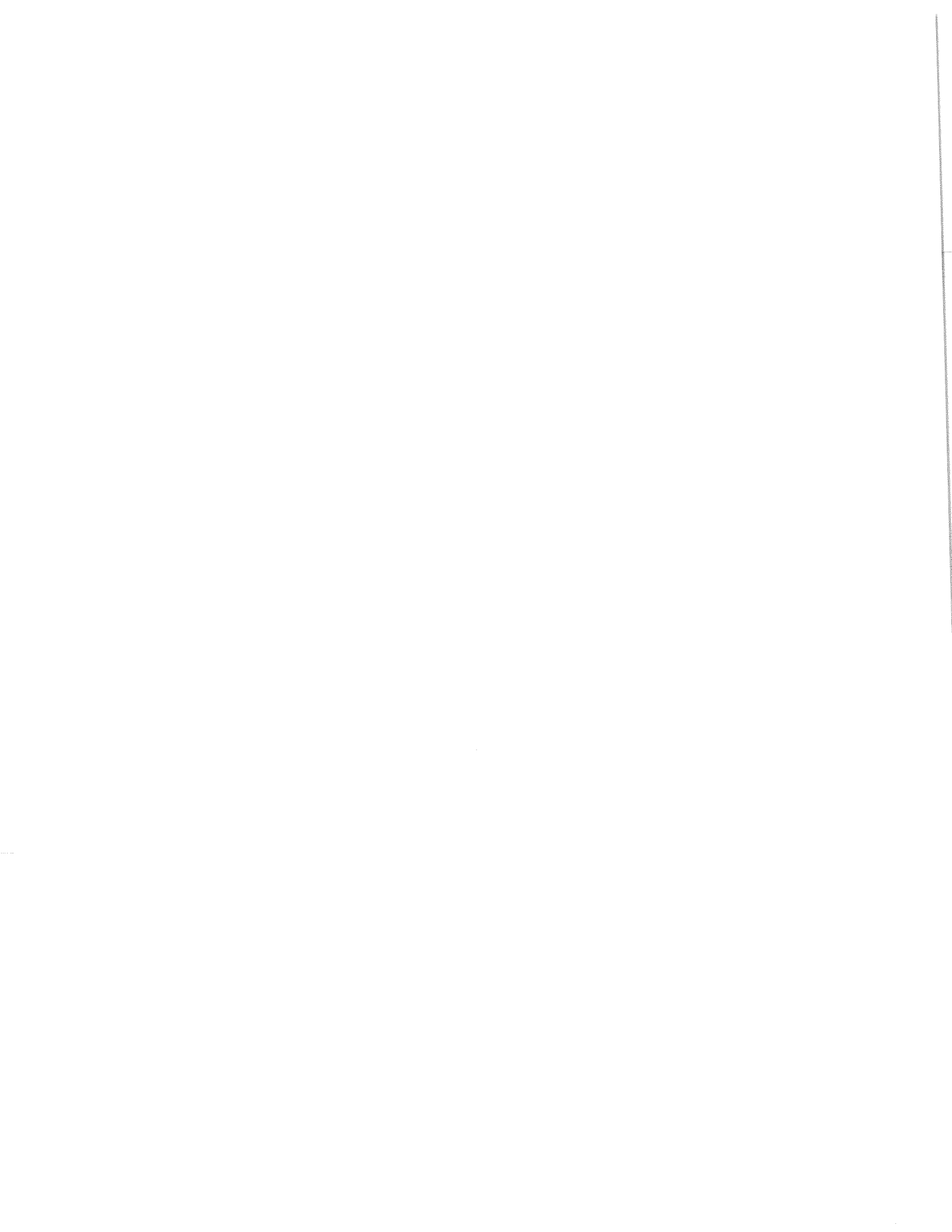
“Was born and raised in Rhode Island, moved away four years ago. What a pleasure it is to come back and see so many people in downtown Providence. People and families of all ages and ethnic groups. That’s what it’s all about.”

“It is wonderful to see Providence re-vitalized! We’ve been gone 37 years and the change is fantastic!”
—Joanne & Bob Beukemer, Gambriel, MD

—written in the WaterFire guest books

“Among the most evocative of quasi-primitive rites anywhere... the magical simplicity and beauty of the crackling fires reflected in the water belie the complex preparations that make WaterFire possible and that add to its charmed and quiet atmosphere... The bateaux-mouches that brighten the Seine at night in Paris don’t have a patch on the communal ceremony that is WaterFire... everyone appeared to stand stock still at WaterPlace Park to listen and gaze at the panorama of firelight against the glittering lights of Providence’s new skyline. Never was a city better named to reflect cultural and artistic freedom than at the moment.”

—The New York Times, July 21, 2000



COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

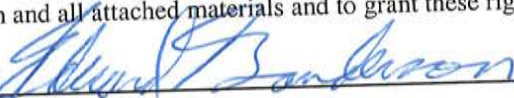
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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name: **Edward F. Sanderson** Title: **Executive Director & Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer**
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1. How did you, or the organization your represent, become involved in the project? What role did you play?

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission made a grant of \$25,000 to the Providence Foundation in 1983 for the Waterfront Study that led to creation of Waterplace Park and the River walks. The Woonasquatucket River, the Moshassuck River, and their combined flow as the Providence River run through the heart of historic Providence. The College Hill National Landmark Historic District lies to the east and the Downtown Providence Historic District lies to the west. RIHPHC had been involved with previous Downtown development planning, such as the Capital Center Development District that includes the Waterplace Park site, and we were convinced that the long-term preservation and revitalization of the historic city was inextricably linked to its future as a desirable urban place. The "re-discovery" of the long-buried waterfront in this colonial seaport town brought together historians and urban designers. As the project moved forward with funding by the Federal Highway Administration, RIHPHC reviewed all aspects of the design in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Consequently, we have been involved in every step of the project from inception to completion. Finally, since the project area is a few blocks from the RIHPHC office, we continue to be closely involved as users.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project.

Major issues for the community included improved traffic circulation; vastly improved pedestrian circulation (including barrier-free travel routes); the creation of new inner city pathways, green space, and water access; and the potential to attract new development to the area. Design issues were debated and resolved in a collaborative process that included the public and representatives of participating agencies (Providence Planning, Providence Foundation, RIDOT, FHWA, RIHPHC, Capital Center Commission, land owners, and the design consultants).

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

RIHPHC was primarily involved in design decision-making. The amount of land available along the waterway was limited and project goals included improved vehicular circulation and development of adjacent parcels of land. Therefore the riverway design had to be well integrated with the adjacent land uses. Funding was not unlimited for the project and design had to recognize fiscal constraints. Finally, while the project borders several very significant historic districts, the project area itself was entirely new construction. The design goal was to reflect elements of the city's historic design without actually trying to replicate it (and create a false historicism).

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

The Providence Riverwalks and Waterplace Park have completely remade this section of Providence from the former congested traffic circles (once known as "Suicide Circle" for pedestrians), decked over river, and sprawling surface parking lots (previously railroad freight yards) into a popular and prized area for strolling, water taxi tours, special events, and emerging development (subject to design regulation). The "Waterfire" event was first held when the riverwalks were barely finished and the general area was a construction area. Thousands of people came and continued to come to Waterfire even when no other attractions existed in order to experience this special urban place. As the area has matured with nearby restaurants and connections to the rest of Downtown, the riverwalks and Waterplace have taken their place as key parts of a revitalizing urban neighborhood. During the same period of development as the river project (1983-2002) approximately \$200 million in private investment has been invested in historic building rehabilitation projects in and around Downtown. This investment reinforces the design quality represented by the riverwalks and Waterplace and represents an ongoing fulfillment of one of the original project goals to revitalize historic Providence. A major new urban shopping mall, Providence Place, forms a somewhat removed western wall to Waterplace; the design of Providence Place was regulated by the Capital Center Commission and RIHPHC to assure its design quality and compatibility with its surroundings. The project has been so successful and universally popular that plans to extend the riverwalks south to Narragansett Bay are already underway.

5. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?

This has been an entirely successful urban design project.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

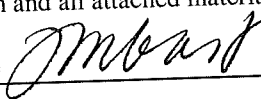
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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

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1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in the project? What role did you play?

As a planner for Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), I became involved in the River Relocation Project in 1983 or 1984, serving on a number of advisory committees and coordinating RISD's response to design issues and construction plans. As a major landowner along what was a dangerous thoroughfare—and the aptly described “suicide circle”—we knew that we would benefit from the planned improvements, and that our support, advocacy, and critical eyes were needed throughout the process.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project.

I think it was clear to just about every constituency that this project would vastly improve the city. The only questions, really, were “Could we afford it” and “Could we survive the construction period”? There were certainly some other issues—the relocation of the World War I monument was one—but in general there was remarkable agreement to move forward.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

As always, there were some design compromises—fewer bridges, materials changes. I organized a group of facilities managers of groups bordering the river to ensure that the “endgame” items that often fall off the budget at the end of a project—like landscaping—were attended to. These companies and institutions, like RISD, understood that following completion they were going to have to “adopt” areas, and to make an effort to keep up with daily maintenance, such as trash pick-up. (RISD has an agreement with the city's Parks Department that lays out the responsibilities of each party daily and seasonally.) RISD has planted the gardens as well.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

All of us involved in the planning of the new riverfront park knew that it would transform the city. It would connect the "East Side" with Downtown and the financial district by replacing uncontrolled vehicle traffic with pedestrian bridges and clearer traffic patterns. The river would be "uncovered"; we would become aware of tides; there would be garden areas and gathering places. It would be a catalyst for all sorts of development. All that has happened.

But we worried about how long it would take for the public to become aware of their new resources, to use the space for events, formal and informal. We figured it would be at least several years—and we discussed RISD's role in that. Our Auditorium along the river would offer indoor space for music and other events—as it has. (As well as—critical item here—bathrooms for WaterFire attendees!) Our artists would—and do—participate in the annual Convergence sculpture festival, and constantly surprise the city with installations year-round.

Even before the construction was done, WaterFire became the event that brought the people to the river. I walked the riverfront in the summer of 1996 at one of the first real public WaterFire with Bill Warner, the architect of the river relocation. It was the night that the Olympic flame came through town. Thousands were at Waterplace and along the river, even in front of RISD, where the granite river wall was still in pieces, tumbling at all angles. And they were clearly not just from the East Side. The music, the smoke, the light—it was quite magical. Everyone was thanking Bill for his foresight and determination. And it was clear that it wouldn't take years for people to come together to the rivers.

5. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?

Surprisingly, I would change very little. If there could have been better planning for the development areas at Capitol Center, so that the lots that are still empty were now livelier, then the whole process of regeneration would have been further along. But I believe that these things will come. There is a change in attitude about the City, since the opening of the rivers—most markedly in the people who have lived in the city all their lives. There was often an "it'll never happen, it'll never work" reaction to the plans. The optimism about the city is the critical transformation.

PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

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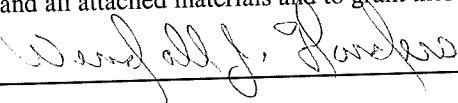
This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name: **Wendall J. Flanders**
Organization: **Rhode Island Department of Transportation**
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1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) brought funding to the table that helped to make it possible to achieve the vast scope of the vision of the Capital Center/River Relocation project. RIDOT was also the major party responsible for the "bricks and mortar" construction of the project, including all the diverse design elements that resulted in the transformation of downtown Providence. The final project included over 11 separate construction contracts with funding from as many as five different sources.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

One of the main objectives/benefits of the project was to create visual and physical linkages between city neighborhoods, the State House area, College Hill and the commercial core of downtown Providence that had formerly been cut off by railroad tracks and highways. The project was also designed/constructed to provide an ordered set of public open spaces, remove the decking covering three rivers, improve access to the new recreational areas in downtown Providence and enhance the setting of bordering historic buildings.

The compilation of the parcels of property necessary to complete this project was a major hurdle. The plan compiled 30 acres of developed land into eleven parcels. All agreed that the private development component would require a concurrent commitment of oversight to ensure proper implementation. The Capital Center Commission (CCC) was established to ensure adherence to development criteria. (RIDOT was a member of the CCC.) Despite the fact that the privately owned land could have been developed under existing zoning regulations prior to creation of the CCC, all landowners agreed to certain design restrictions and land transactions to create the new rail corridor through Providence. This was achieved through a Master Property Conveyance Contract that included 73 land swaps.

PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

3. Describe the project's impact on your community. Please be as specific as possible.

This project achieved the following: Improved and consolidated traffic patterns, including the elimination of "suicide circle" and construction of twelve new bridges; creation of a "Y" shaped landscaped river corridor at the center of the City that also served to connect various sectors; accommodations for boat traffic on the rivers; pedestrian bridges and plaques/graphic panels that explain and celebrate the City's waterfront heritage. Ultimately, 11 acres of urban riverfront parks were created. In addition, over 1-1/4 miles of riverwalks were created and an amphitheater and smaller plazas provide places for various forms of entertainments and performances. As noted on the invitation to the opening of the project, "Capital Center/River Relocation symbolizes the blending of Rhode Island's natural environment, our capital city's renaissance, and public spaces which will be enjoyed by all of our citizens."

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

The project required extensive commitment, compromise and dedication from extremely diverse partners, including federal/state/local agencies, environmental and historic preservation constituencies, the City of Providence and private landowners. What makes this partnering unique is that it occurred before passage of ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991) that included federal mandates requiring the involvement of multiple constituencies in transportation projects. It also ultimately impacted the working relationship RIDOT established with all the partners on future transportation initiatives. As noted, private landowners agreed to the imposition of increased design criteria in order to implement this transformation. There was also extensive public involvement and information sharing to insure the participation and commitment of the residents of both the city and state.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The creation of the Master Property Conveyance Contract, involving 73 land swaps, must be considered a major partnership accomplishment. Structurally, the opening of three rivers for recreation, appreciation and entertainment has been a major success. Improving the traffic patterns and eliminating our version of "suicide circle" has enhanced circulation and improved pedestrian safety within the city. Finally, the reconnection of city neighborhoods, including a major historic area, has generated a more "livable" city. As always, our success has brought some new challenges. The overwhelming statewide interest and response to the WaterFire exhibitions has spawned some parking issues that are currently under review.

PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name: **Sam Shamoon**
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1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

The Providence Department of Planning and Development played several roles during the development of the Providence River Relocation Project. A primary role was to be the key city agency on the technical and design review committees to ensure that various portions of the project were acceptable to city agencies. The Planning Department coordinated the review with local city agencies, including Parks, Traffic Engineering, and Public Works. As the project was completed in phases, the Department coordinated the formal acceptances of the new public spaces and infrastructure by city agencies to ensure ongoing city maintenance of these spaces.

Secondly, the Planning Department represented the city in complex land swaps and land abandonments which were numerous.

Thirdly, recommending and securing the city portion of the project finances fell to the Planning Department, and this necessitated the Department to be the primary lobbying agency with city elected officials. Through a regular schedule of public meetings and hearings, the Planning Department helped to steadily secure the city's "buy-in" to the project as it went through several phases of development during some difficult fiscal times for the city.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

The early Warner plans for the project demonstrated the great potential benefits that might accrue to Providence and its residents. Fundamentally, the project was primarily conceived to "daylight" or uncover downtown rivers and in the design process to develop a better movement of people and vehicles through the area. The riverwalks and public spaces were conceived as beneficial opportunities for viewing the rivers and for residents to gather.

Using the rivers as the primary urban design element in the downtown in a \$60 million project was not an easy sell at all. The rivers were and still are polluted and, as water features, are simply not as compelling as Rhode Island's easily accessible 400 miles of shoreline along Narragansett Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Many people were skeptical of expected benefits. Many believed that the tradeoffs in using public dollars for this project instead of other transportation projects were questionable. The Planning Department helped to forge public support for the project and to resist value engineering the elegant design features out of the project.

PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

3. Describe the project's impact on your community. Please be as specific as possible.

Providence River Relocation is a project where the whole exceeds the sum of its parts. The individual physical changes are wonderful and are beneficial—the new parks, the pedestrian-friendly riverwalks and bridges, the new connections between the downtown and the State House area and College Hill, the smooth flow of traffic, the daylighting of the rivers. And the project has also helped to spur about a \$1 billion of new private investment within a few hundred feet of the rivers. An unforeseen, but welcome, impact has been to raise expectations by the public for equally good design in neighborhood parks.

But the project impact has gone far beyond mere physical transformation. The project has created a place that Providence and Rhode Island residents are proud of and a place where extraordinary free public art occurs and flourishes. Cultural programming by the Providence Parks Department and its non profit partners has breathed life into the park design, provided opportunities to have ownership of the places, and provided wonderful regional and national publicity for the city. The elegant design, the sense of a community place, and the artistic performances—have all combined to change resident's image of Providence and of the possibilities for future city renewal. The project has changed people's attitudes about our city and about what we can become. This renewed optimism and confidence is priceless capital as we go forward to improve Providence.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

The development phase of the project fostered and nurtured new partnerships between the city and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, the Rhode Department of Environmental Management, the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, and the Federal Highway Administration. These relationships have proved to be vital as we continue the progress of improving additional areas around the rivers. The key to these relationships has been a common goal of design excellence and a sensitivity to the city's historical built community.

Since the project's construction completion, the Providence Parks Department has energetically pursued new partnerships for maintenance of the public spaces and for programming. The department has successfully partnered with several businesses, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the state's prison industries to put together a maintenance team for the new public spaces along the rivers. We would be glad to share with other cities how we implemented this maintenance arrangement.

The Parks Department's Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) manages all of the programming in the project's public spaces. The OCA has developed a non-profit wing, CapitolArts, to raise additional private funding to produce diverse arts events and festivals that represent Providence's diverse ethnic and cultural population. OCA also provides technical assistance with scores of non-profits to help them provide programming in the park spaces. By providing modest seed funds and technical assistance for new events, the OCA has incubated programming that has grown into larger independent events, including WaterFire Providence, Trinity Summer Shakespeare, and a Summer Jazz Festival.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

Most Successful Aspects:

- Changing people's attitudes about Providence
- Inspiring design stimulating extraordinary public art
- Strengthening community in a diverse Providence by using the arts to bring people together
- Building community ownership of the project's public spaces
- Building public and private collaborations that are working to extend the project down the Providence River.

Least Successful Aspects:

- Restricting the ability of larger boats to use the rivers due to design tradeoffs in setting bridge clearances
- Not addressing the key pollution issues that affect the river's water quality at certain times.

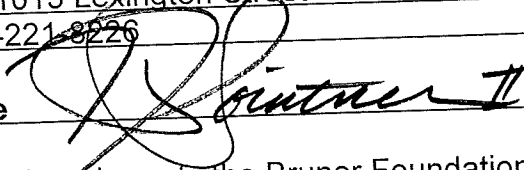
PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

Name: N.J. "Pete" Pointner FAICP, ALA Title: Principal Architect and Planner
Organization: Corporate Services Inc. Telephone: (630-221-8225
Address: 1015 Lexington Street City/State/Zip: Wheaton, Illinois 60187
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Signature



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1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project?

Consulting planner for the preparation of an environmental impact statement and section 4(f) and 106 documentation. Assisted in coordinating the development of the planning and design work by the architect and engineer with the federal, state and local review agencies and the interested and affected public.

2. From your perspective, how was the project intended to benefit the urban environment?

The project was intended to benefit the urban environment by eliminating a flood hazard through the relocation of two rivers which converged beneath the downtown post office, and revitalization of the historic Providence waterfront. Specific beneficial consequences include: establishment of an attractive lineal park which links three areas of historic significance, the downtown, capital center and college hill; pedestrian and vehicular improvements to, from and within the downtown; and the introduction of design features which are a source of pride and identity.

3. Describe the projects impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible.

Project impacts include: a dramatic change in the visual character of the river corridors; provision of activity areas (water place, river walk, overlooks, plazas) which bring the people of the area together as a community; reclamation and clean up of the rivers; enhancement of the land values along the river front; significant improvements of pedestrian, vehicular and bus access and circulation; and, introduction of new water transportation opportunities.

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

4. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

There were constant battles to achieve design excellence which challenged available funding and engineering standards which did not relate to the topography and the cultural and physical context of the area. I helped to structure and then participated actively in the many meetings associated with the project including briefings in Washington D.C. with the Rhode Island congressional delegation seeking funding.

5. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession?

The transferable lessons are that a good project requires: positive leadership, commitment and constructive participation from the political and civic leadership; public support; creative design solutions responsive to the historical, cultural and physical environment of which they are a part; imaginative and multi-source funding strategies; and, an incredible amount of hard work and attention to detail from concept to completion.

6. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The most successful aspect is the beauty, order and seductive attractiveness of the design solution. It is the right fit. Professional associates and friends from throughout the United States have noted their pleasure from visiting the Providence waterfront. The clearance beneath the bridges is the least successful aspect of the project although, through many professional battles, the designers were able to achieve enough height to permit a variety of water craft to pass beneath in spite of efforts to meet more standard engineering criteria.


ARCHITECT PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services. Copies may be given to other design professionals if desired.

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Organization William D. Warner, Architects & Planners Telephone (401) 295-8851
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1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

It was 1982, and the City had approved the Capital Center Plan, which included a major highway interchange that would dump major exit ramp traffic into Memorial Boulevard, and onto the already congested Suicide Circle at Memorial Square. This location was at the north end of over a quarter mile of bridge decking which covered over the Providence River, as it coursed unseen through the center of the City. Something had to be done. A simple solution occurred to me: remove the decking, build the boulevard on the downtown side of the river and a park on the College Hill side, then connect the streets on both sides of the river with graceful bridges like most normal cities do. After many months of presentations and meetings, we were able to convince the City and the State that the simplicity of the concept solved major traffic problems as well as created a river park in the heart of the city.

Not far from the spot where Roger Williams first stepped ashore in 1636, the Woonasquatucket, Moshassuck, and Providence Rivers have been reconfigured, creating a "Y-shaped" landscaped river corridor at the center of the city connecting existing parks and accommodating both boat traffic and a pedestrian walkway. We developed several schemes until the River Relocation Plan was fully defined on November 9, 1983. The solution moved the river out from under the 1940 Post Office and relocated the confluence nearly 100 yards to the east. It would then be possible to extend Memorial Boulevard on solid ground between the Post Office and the river's new confluence.

The river-moving is just part of a major urban revitalization plan that included removing acres of roadway decking and interstate access ramps that obscured the rivers, provided navigational lanes for small craft, improved pedestrian access, clarified traffic patterns and beautified what had previously been an eyesore. Seven distinct new bridges were designed to accommodate vehicles, and five other bridges dedicated for pedestrian use. The bridges collect and distribute traffic from the core of the city and tie it into the interstate system. A four-acre park called Waterplace at the western terminus of the new walkway system contains a visitor center, an amphitheater, a boat landing, a restaurant and several small plazas.

The new bridges have been designed with gentle arches that reflect in the water and allow small boats to pass through. The materials and forms of the bridges harmonize and compliment the historic brick and granite buildings and urban context that line the river corridor.

Pedestrian walkways along the riverbanks have been paved with cobblestones from an old city street, and large granite blocks from a demolished railroad viaduct line the river walls. Local ironworkers have crafted the railings and bollards with tracery reminiscent of the railroad structures once there.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

Many of the functions of design focus on people.

- During the design phase of Waterplace, we held a public workshop featuring William H. Whyte, urban consultant and author of "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces." As a result of his emphasis that success of use is related to multiplicity of access, we provided bridges over the river with stairs at all four of the corners. He also suggested a two-tier amphitheater with the lower ring masonry seating and the upper ring grassed slope for less frequent use.
- A consistent design feature along much of the 1-1/2 mile riverwalk consists of the river on one side and landscaping on the other. An 18-inch high retaining wall serves as a plinth for the planting and creates instant seating for river watching.
- A variety of plazas and overlooks sprinkled along the river walk provide opportunities for performances and exhibits.

ARCHITECT PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project.

The biggest challenge was how to create an emerald-lined necklace along a river that had been covered with asphalt roadway decking for more than a century. By challenging the inefficient way the decking served the vehicles using it led to its demise and removal.

The primary trade-off was, not surprisingly, related to cost. To reduce costs, the State requested that we compromise and use concrete capped steel sheet piling, and not traditional granite for some of the less visible portions of the river embankments. Given the State's enormous financial contribution and the validity of the suggestion, we agreed to the request. At the time, there was considerable fear of jeopardizing the aesthetics of the project.

Unstable soils presented a challenge to the design of new river wall foundations, which were imaginatively addressed by Maguire Group engineers for the project. We coordinated with them to engineer the bridges, walls, roadways, and project phasing to keep the city's traffic moving during the eight years of construction.

4. Describe the way in which the project relates to its urban context.

The jury members of the 2000 U. S. Department of Transportation Awards Program stated it better than could I, when they wrote:

This project is about community enhancement and increased sustainability; it is about maximizing the investments made in existing cities to re-attract residents and businesses. This kind of project could well contribute to the slow down of suburban sprawl.

The project fully integrates architecture, urbanism and arts programming to make an extraordinary place in the city – to provide it a new focus that will serve as an armature for human interaction. This project improves pedestrian and automobile access in a series of wonderfully scaled places that are appropriately designed to be continuous with the city's fabric.

5. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the project's design and architecture.

Strengths of design:

- Recycling of existing components:
 - The existing confluence was relocated and reconstructed stone by stone and capped with the original refurbished railing.
 - A major World War I Memorial had to be relocated to accommodate the relocated rivers. This monument had given its name (Memorial Square) and the only visual identity to the jumble of roads that came together over the rivers. The new park location finally accommodates groups of veterans and others paying tribute.
 - Cut granite stones, some weighing up to 4 tons, were salvaged from the demolished railroad abutments for use in new retaining walls along the riverwalks.
 - 50,000 square feet of paving stones salvaged from a city street repaving project were utilized to pave the riverwalks.
- Walkway system linkage:

The entire Project benefits the urban environment by improving vehicular circulation and providing a landscaped river walk system through the center of the City. The Waterplace portion of the Project enhances the environment by acting as the public "cross-road" for two intersecting park systems one on land and one along the water. The "land" walkway connects the State House, government offices, and the new railroad station to downtown and the Kennedy Plaza bus transportation hub. The "riverwalk" is heavily used as an attractive pedestrian commuter route between the residential east side and the downtown financial district.
- 23 graphic story panels provide a self-guided tour explaining the history of the places along the way.

Weakness of design:

- The fact that Capital Center authorities would grant us only a twenty-foot wide strip of riverfront property has resulted in overcrowding along the riverwalk during such events as WaterFire.

DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

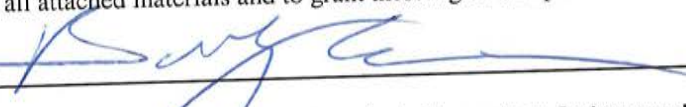
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This sheet is to be filled by a design professional who worked on the project, providing design, planning, or other services.

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1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

Like any new urban infrastructure, Providence's beautiful new riverfront and parks were not yet part of the city's civic and social realm. I created and designed WaterFire with the intention of using a large-scale site installation artwork to revitalize the downtown urban landscape, to bring people to the new parks, to establish new modes of public behavior in urban space, and to create a new sense of civic pride in Providence and its renaissance. WaterFire extends for nearly 2/3's of a mile along the three rivers that form the spine of the new park system. One hundred bonfires illuminate the night and the cityscape, accompanied by music and performances. The fires are tended and refueled by scores of fire-tenders who pass silently over the water in a series of boats from sunset until one in the morning.

WaterFire is designed to impact upon all of your senses at once and its sensuality and sheer beauty can be overwhelming and mesmerizing. The unorthodox materials (fire, water, and music) were designed to bring attention to the revelation of the newly uncovered river and to underscore the beauty of the new parks and the new downtown. The materials are deliberately ephemeral and thus in need of constant renewal making the installation a ritual and a celebration. This keeps the installation alive and vibrant, making each new installation a noticeably different event and forcing us to keep reinventing the work of art each evening. Each evening is collaboration with the visitors who bring the park and the cityscape to life. Fire and water are both understood by all the participants in the park to be symbolic representations of life and thus become a central metaphor for the work of art, but also for the work of revitalizing a city. The music is always unusual, often brand new to the audience, selected from cultures all around the world and from sources both ancient and modern—ranging from Italian grand opera to Malian kora playing, from Native American chants to Gregorian chants to traditional Blues, from Siberian folk songs to experimental or contemporary work from six continents. Many visitors have commented on the spiritual dimensions of the art installation and how it entirely transforms one's expectation and experience of the city to such an extent that it actually changes the public's behavior in the park.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

The scale of WaterFire embraces all of the new park and the three restored rivers. The installation was deliberately designed to have no central focus and to require that viewers perambulate through the park to experience the full work. On this *passeggiata* they discover the beauty of the city and the new park, interact with and engage with their fellow citizens, and encounter the many sculptures that the Convergence Festival carefully sites throughout the park. The episodic nature of the event, where the community is invited to gather together on as many as twenty-five occasions over an eight-month season is a deliberate and considered aspect of the installation. Its occasional absence is an important part of the allure of its presence. WaterFire is about the transformation of urban space and surprises, novelty and change are what keep both it and the city alive. WaterFire actively collaborates with many additional arts groups and community organizations in the city to develop new opportunities for creative partnerships.

WaterFire is created in a public urban site and is always presented without an admissions fee. It is important that the event be a welcoming and inclusive experience for everyone. WaterFire tries to establish a welcoming community that is independent of commercial influences. While we encourage the sale of food, wine and beer, we go out of our way to try to find vendors who are as unusual as the experience and as varied as Providence's diverse community. WaterFire attempts to be an all inclusive work of art incorporating the city, the site, and the audience and making all of them elements of the aesthetic experience. Because of this we try to avoid some of the more commercial activities one might encounter at a more typical urban festival. We also design unusual solutions to routine urban problems (such as litter and aspects of park maintenance, event management and public safety) and integrate the solutions into the experience of the artwork.

By design WaterFire is also a porous event that interacts well with the surrounding civic life of the city from restaurants to theaters to cinemas to concerts to shopping to simply loitering. One is free to arrange one's own schedule and include WaterFire at any point in the evening. Thus it avoids (and can help absorb) the disruptions caused by large numbers of visitors rushing through dinner for an 8:00 curtain or suddenly filling the streets with a temporary exodus of traffic snarling vehicles.

3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design tradeoffs or compromises required to complete the project.

Our cities and our nation's citizens have become unwitting prisoners of their automobiles and victims of a media-created caricature that states that cities after dark are an extremely dangerous place that must be avoided at all costs. As a consequence many of our urban cities are often deserted after dark, which can indeed make them unsafe. Urban design is too often forced into a straitjacket that requires that we design simultaneously for the automobile and prison-like conditions. The new park system is brilliantly designed to balance pedestrian and automobile traffic, but we still need to entice people to leave their cars in the first place. Overcoming the public's resistance to walking in the city after dark has been a major challenge for every city. A successful urban place must involve people and it must achieve sufficient density to assure safety. I designed WaterFire specifically to address these issues and we have been miraculously successful. Indeed we often have too many people coming to the park and have had to develop decoy sites and additional venues simply to keep the density of the crowd within reason.

The usual budgetary challenges and skeptical (indeed incredulous) responses from regulatory agencies were resolved by slowly growing the WaterFire installation as interest developed. The physical site and the WaterFire installation presents design challenges related to the changing tidal levels of the river, limitations on river depth and bridge clearances, flood potential, navigational use and regulations, and a host of logistical issues raised by the unusual and unplanned demands that the event places on the site (such as eight miles of sophisticated audio cabling, hidden speaker systems, and underwater signal and fiber optic installations). A night-time fire sculpture also raises unique public safety, liability and lighting issues. We have managed to achieve solutions to these problems through creative collaboration with a host of city agencies without having to make major compromises to the design.

4. Describe the way in which the project relates to its urban context.

WaterFire is designed to harmonize and complement its urban context. Every detail of the installation and design is reviewed for both its aesthetic impact on the park and the city. The one hundred bonfires echo and amplify the subtle curves of the waterways and reflect the confluence of the rivers. The firelight gently illuminates the details of the park and the restored facades of the surrounding buildings as well as the faces of the crowd. The brazier design and scale is related to the existing park design. We go to great efforts to make the mechanical details of the installation as invisible as possible. The speakers and wires are entirely hidden. High-fidelity music fills the park and riverbank and seems to surround you. You feel entirely engaged and at one with the city and your fellow citizens. It is almost as if the city is an instrument or you have found yourself in the midst of a dream.

The installation is always free and open to everyone and attracts a remarkably wide range of visitors—diverse in age, ethnic background, economic class, and arts sophistication. Everyone seems to come—from grandparents with their grand children to young lovers, from businesspeople in suits to college students, from punk rockers to opera hounds, from single people and couples to entire wedding parties and tour buses. Both the numbers of people and the artwork itself seems to promote public safety and all of downtown has benefited from this effect. Strangers are motivated to speak to one another; the crowd is peaceful and courteous.

One of the strengths of the park design is its many entrances and a wide variety of walking and sitting areas. WaterFire is designed to promote the use of all of these areas and to establish new connections between the park and the rest of the city. One of our goals is to animate as large an area of the adjacent city as possible and we install additional events and attractions outside the park area to increase the impact on the rest of the city. We have modified the existing street and park lighting pattern to emphasize the effects of the firelight and designed a wide variety of lighting solutions to highlight important parts of the city's architecture after dark.

5. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the project's design and architecture.

WaterFire's Strengths: aesthetic unity of design; incorporation of the park and the urban environment into the work of art; absence of commercialism; emphasis on beauty and design; embrace of the entire community; diversity of the crowd and the music; safety and comfort generated at the park; the reclamation of the urban night; a source of identity and pride for the community, economic impact on the city and state.

WaterFire's Weaknesses: too many people attend the installation; inadequate bathrooms; its remarkable success can tend to overshadow other events and projects.

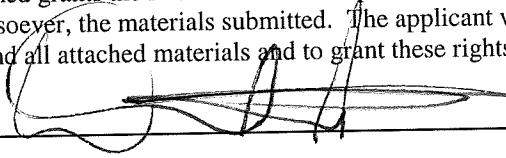
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1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

As a weekly architectural/urban-design columnist for the *Providence Journal*, I have covered the conception and construction of Waterplace Park and Providence River Park since 1990, and its use by the public since its first phase opened in 1994. I have written about the design of the riverfront and about the problems faced by planners seeking to find attractive uses for it during a period when much of the land along half of the river project has been vacant. When WaterFire first emerged, I wrote many columns about its character as both a work of art and a use of public space. In writing scores of columns about the riverfront and WaterFire, I have interacted extensively with Bill Warner, the architect of the riverfront, Barnaby Evans, the creator of WaterFire, and the many other officials, civic leaders, planners, artists, and people of all sorts who have worked together on what became both the symbol of a city's renaissance and an internationally known phenomenon of art and architecture.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on your community. Please be as specific as possible.

Waterplace Park and the river walks along the Providence River were the physical features of the multifaceted downtown Providence revival effort that first sparked hope among the public, which had seen many plans for renewal come and go, that it might finally be able to feel good about their city. People walking along the riverfront said things like "This can't be Providence," or "This is Venice," or "This is Paris." Much of the riverfront cut through land targeted for commercial office development, but except for a small number of buildings erected before the RI banking crisis, not much was happening along the rivers, lovely as they were. The city worked hard to attract people to the area with musical concerts and the Convergence Festival filled the park with public sculpture, but it was not until WaterFire began that the riverfront started to grow as a civic space in the public consciousness. Slowly but surely, WaterFire brought more and more people down to the riverfront.

I probably attended all but three or four WaterFires during its first several seasons. Early on, I would run into lots of people I knew in the development, planning, design and academic communities. We would express our joy that so many Rhode Islanders were coming downtown. The riverfront was like an Italian piazza, we would say. After two or three years of WaterFire, it started attracting not only the sort of folks from suburban Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts who never came downtown, but people from around the country and even around the world. All who come, whether they were from around here or elsewhere, know they are participating in a unique civic phenomenon, a "happening." WaterFire kept adding venues for dancing, musical performances and art work designed, ironically, to draw people *away* from the river walks, which were becoming so crowded as to verge on the unmanageable. And yet, I have neither seen nor heard about any uncivilized action during a WaterFire, let alone anyone arrested for any crime or public disturbance. Even the litter is minimal, given the crowd size.

As WaterFire took hold as a symbol of the Providence renaissance, it seemed to pull people together not only for the event itself but as a community. Rhode Islanders became proud of their capital city for the first time in a long time, perhaps since the '50s when people used to shop regularly downtown and enjoy the bustle of the urban center. Public pride in the downtown Providence renaissance was important because the public then supported efforts to expand aspects of the renaissance - such as public tax subsidies for the Providence Place mall - that might otherwise have faced more resistance. The mall, combined with the obvious attractions of the riverfront and WaterFire, has made living downtown a popular lifestyle, and has put additional pressure on developers to build apartments. Downtown achieves genuine animation only on Waterfire nights or on nights featuring an unusual number of unrelated theatrical, artistic, sports, social or other events downtown. It is mostly WaterFire and the riverfront (which now includes Providence Place mall) that are fueling the broader idea of downtown renaissance, and turning it into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

However useful the riverfront and WaterFire have been in generating a real renaissance, the basic fact is that they are a perfect recipe for a sensual urban experience that everyone can enjoy, and for an incredible diversity of reasons. WaterFire and its river setting have turned downtown Providence into a remarkable place. Anyone can enjoy it, and for free. People love it, people of all sorts, coming downtown again and again, week after week, year after year. So far as I know, there's nothing anything like it anywhere in the world. It has made Providence, and the whole state of Rhode Island, a much happier place, a much better place with a much brighter future.

OTHER PERSPECTIVE

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them?

Every architectural project of major scope undergoes "value engineering" in which certain amenities get lopped off between design and construction. I am not familiar with any major asset that was lost in this case. Perhaps some lighting fixtures, electrical outlets, water fountains and other such things were installed to lesser standards to save money, I don't really know for sure.

There is frankly nothing having to do with WaterFire itself that strikes me as a compromise or a trade-off. Perhaps allowing certain more carnival-type food vendors was a trade-off, but I am not much bothered by it. The only problem of which I am aware has been WaterFire's popularity, which on occasion has made the river walks so crowded as to be, for some, unpleasant. But that has spurred the WaterFire organization to develop off-site venues for music, dance and other events designed to draw off the river walk crowds, and that has added to WaterFire's overall attraction and made it a more comprehensive downtown event. I can't argue with that.

There is one trade-off that troubles me. After two or three years, the sheer number of people viewing WaterFire from their own personal canoes, kayaks, rowboats and motorboats gave rise to concerns for safety and overcrowding near the fires and the Coast Guard, RI DEM and WaterFire decided to close the river to private traffic while the bonfires were lit. WaterFire has sought a system that would allow a limited number of non-motorized boats on the river and I am hoping that such a program can be developed to once again allow people to experience the event from the surface of the river, which is a unique vantage point compared to the view to be had from the embankments.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

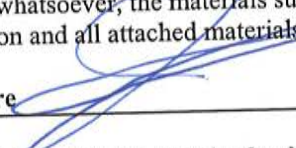
I believe that WaterFire and its setting within the riverfront has been the linchpin of the Providence renaissance, which I seriously believe would be struggling to maintain its credibility otherwise. And the renaissance has been instrumental in creating hope for a city that had been heading downhill economically since even before the Great Depression, and which is the capital of a state that has been down on itself psychologically for almost as long. More than any other aspect of the city's history and civic development in recent decades, the riverfront and WaterFire have created a bridge between a downcast past and the hope for a smiling future as a more vibrant city is better placed to make a serious attempt to solve its more complicated and longstanding social and economic problems. If there is an aspect to this remarkable phenomenon that may be called "least successful," it is that it has not brought progress fast enough, either in solving the city's deeper problems or in spurring new building projects on the un-built land along the rivers. I think recent political changes offer brighter prospects for both. WaterFire and Waterplace have transformed a city long known for its historical architecture into a city whose sense of place improves the lives of all its citizens.

OTHER PERSPECTIVE

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1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

Although, we were not involved with the development of Waterplace Park, we did develop the 1.3 million square foot shopping center located directly across from Waterplace Park. Providence Place was designed to enhance the architecture surrounding the Capitol. The featured glass enclosed atrium spans the Woonasquatucket River and the riverwalk pedestrian path and provides shoppers with a spectacular view of Waterplace Park. During the construction of Providence Place, additional WaterFire braziers were installed. When the braziers are lit during WaterFire events, a dramatic path is created, linking Waterplace Park and Providence Place.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on your community. Please be as specific as possible.

From an eyesore filled with railroad tracks and empty dirt lots, a jewel known as Waterplace Park has emerged. Waterplace Park and its many uses have had a tremendously positive impact on the community.

Because of its location and architecture, Waterplace Park has become a desirable venue for diverse events including Shakespeare in the Park, Convergence Festival, Jazz concerts and WaterFire Providence. Through these events, with WaterFire in particular, Waterplace Park has become a destination, attracting over one million people to the Downtown Providence area annually. These visits translate into hundreds of millions of dollars for local businesses. Given its close proximity, Providence Place has directly seen the impact of events held at Waterplace Park, particularly during WaterFire events when mall restaurants and retailers see a tremendous increase in traffic and sales.

In a more general way, the business community has come together to support events held in the park so that it continues to be a popular destination. This support includes media, services and financial contributions.

OTHER PERSPECTIVE

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them?

N/A

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

Most successful aspects: The environment in the area has improved tremendously. With restored riverbanks flanked by beautiful landscaped areas, walking paths and an amphitheater, Waterplace Park has been host to individuals and events alike. The beauty and configuration of the park has been an integral piece of the revitalized downtown area providing a unique and inviting space utilized by residents, students, workers and tourists.

Waterplace Park and the events hosted there have come to symbolize the Providence Renaissance. Many scenes for the NBC hit show "Providence" were shot at Waterplace Park.

Waterplace Park and WaterFire have been a catalyst to bring area residents and tourists to the downtown Providence area, ultimately boosting the local economy.

Least successful aspect: With an increased volume of people in the area, comes additional traffic and parking needs. Local garages are filled to capacity and there are considerable waits at area restaurants. Through experience, planning and additional manpower, these concerns have been addressed and minimized.

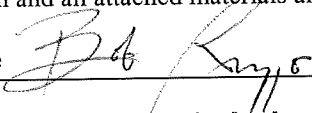
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1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

CapitolArts Providence has been involved in programming Waterplace Park and the RiverWalk since 1996 when the parks first opened. CapitolArts Providence is a 501c3 non-profit organization whose mission is to nurture, develop, and present diverse contemporary arts programming in public spaces that are affordable and accessible to all. 90% of the programming produced by the organization takes place in Waterplace Park and along the RiverWalk. These programs and events include the The Providence Waterfront Festival, CapitolArts Jazz Festival, the Providence World Music Festival, and Convergence International Arts Festival. These events are produced through a unique partnership with the Providence Parks Department, Office of Cultural Affairs, of which I am also the Director.

This partnership allows for creative solutions to funding challenges. CapitolArts partners with corporate sponsors and granting agencies in order to raise the funding necessary to produce programs of exceptional musical and artistic quality. The events presented in Waterplace are multi-generational, multi-cultural, and reach people from all social and economic backgrounds. There has been a conscious effort to program the park with acts that truly represent the community but come from a national pool of performers. Artists participating in these programs go on to perform at Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, festivals throughout the country, and museums and sculpture gardens across the globe. This is unique for a city of Providence's size of approximately 175,000 people.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on your community. Please be as specific as possible

The River Relocation project has provided an unprecedented opportunity for creating cultural connections through public events in the City of Providence. Organizations including Waterfire Providence, Trinity Repertory Company, and the International Gallery provide a wide range of cultural activities. CapitolArts creates programming that reflects the diversity of the city. The park serves as the cultural center, a place to come together as a community - to share artistic experiences that build cultural connections. These events offer occasion for the local community to congregate within the heart of the city and to take pride in the revitalized energy that the city has enjoyed through the renewal of the Providence River Parks. It is the diverse arts programming that draws the public out of the neighborhoods and into the city by creating a safe and enjoyable environment. The continued presence of the community in these public spaces demonstrates that the people of Providence have responded to the revitalization with a true sense of ownership in their city and its urban parks.

Convergence International Arts Festival celebrated its 15th Anniversary in 2002. It was in 1996 that the sculpture installations that are part of the festival were moved into downtown. This move coincided with the opening of the RiverWalk and the International Sculpture Conference. The sculpture show is changed on an annual basis, allowing the public to rediscover the parks each year. The work is carefully sited so to inform the environment and architecture around it. The parks provide the City of Providence with a public sculpture exhibition of contemporary works of art from artists across the country. The sculpture stands as a year-long reminder that Providence is a city that embraces its public space and celebrates the arts as part of everyday life.

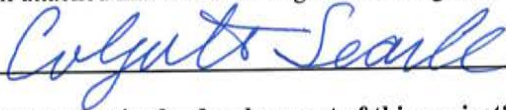
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1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

None. The only role I play is that of frequent participant and admirer.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on your community. Please be as specific as possible

WaterFire and the beautifully redesigned Providence waterfront have become a point of pride, not only for Providence, but for the entire State. Prior to WaterFire, the recently redesigned waterfront was beautiful, but devoid of people. WaterFire has so captured people's attention, imagination, and delight that people make a special effort to come see it, feel it, smell it, and hear it, not once, but many times. The magic of WaterFire is that it is all encompassing. The installation takes advantage of curves in the river to lead people further along. The row of flickering flames emphasizes the contrast between the dark water surface and the dramatically lit structures. The danger and fascination of fire are evoked by the smoke and crackling flames. In other words, it engages and heightens all the senses, making the viewer aware of his/her surrounds as never before.

OTHER PERSPECTIVE

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them?

I did not participate in the process. I understand that the original art installation required numerous local, State, and Federal permits. WaterFire's success generated such large numbers of pedestrian, boaters, and cars to the city that it soon became clear that greater constructive collaboration and coordination among different governmental agencies, the private sector and WaterFire would be necessary in order to maintain health and safety for the event, as well as the rest of the downtown area. A harbor ordinance was developed to deal with the speed and number of boats allowed during WaterFire celebrations. New circulation routes were designed to allow somewhat smoother flows through the City, while allowing smaller street closings for adjacent ancillary events, such as dance demonstrations, street mimes, and food vendors, which were generated by WaterFire. Controls are now in place to keep it from becoming too much of a good thing.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The piece is remarkable rich in layers of meaning and symbolism. It may be understood and enjoyed by everyone on many levels: from simply a series of fires floating on the water with music playing, to the strong tensions evoked by two mutually incompatible forces of fire and water in close juxtaposition. The vulnerability of the views balanced just above the water with the ephemeral smoke and sparks rising in the air, counterbalanced by the heavy stone walls along the river, leads to multiple readings of the art work itself as well as a better understanding nature within the urban environment.

Its weakness (and strength) is that it has brought together large numbers of volunteers and donors and therefore relies upon continued participation.

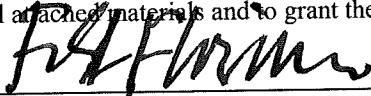
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1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

My involvement in the Providence River relocation was marginal. I was one of the three original architects that conceived the idea of the relocation. It was William Warner who singularly masterminded the project. I had no involvement in the creation of WaterFire which is the brainchild of Barnaby Evans. I have been involved in the rebuilding of Providence for the past twenty years through writings, buildings and speaking engagements.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on your community. Please be as specific as possible.

I am writing about two specific projects that coalesced over the years into an inseparable phenomenon: William Warner's vision of moving two rivers and Barnaby Evans' vision of elevating the river relocation project into a spectacle of extraordinary beauty, emotive power and magic. Neither project over powers the other, there is a confluence of separate and distinct parts that cannot be surpassed. The scale of the projects is also significant. It is urban and human at the same time. Together, both projects return a sense of place to the aging center of Providence.

The response of the community was overwhelming. Each lighting of WaterFire draws tens of thousands of people to the center of the city. Where there was no life in the evening there is now a joyous and festive gathering of people of all ages. The economic and social benefits to the community have yet to be determined. One aspect however has clearly emerged. The new rivers together with the lighting of WaterFire have become the symbol of the rebirth of Providence. There is a new sense of pride amongst its citizens that no one could have imagined fifteen years ago.

OTHER PERSPECTIVE

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them?

I am in no position to respond to this question.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

Its most successful aspect, aside from its artistic achievement, is its ability to draw people back into the city core at night. This is particularly significant for a mid-sized North American city that suffered the rampages of urban renewal and the exodus of its inhabitants. The return of people to the city center is key to the re-building of our mid-sized cities. The Providence River relocation project together with WaterFire touches the human soul and the human spirit. Paul Claudel in his essay "The Stream" speaks about the intrinsic need of people to gather, to mingle, to be together. He suggests there is an inexplicable elixir that makes people want to be together. Providence's Waterplace / WaterFire is in my judgment the epitome of this phenomenon. Lyon, France, is the only other example that I know of that enjoys a similar success with the rebirth of its old city center.

I cannot think of an unsuccessful aspect of this project. WaterFire needs to be nurtured for Providence's renewal to continue.

OTHER PERSPECTIVE

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1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

Other than occasional feedback of how the relocation of the rivers, creation of the River Walk, and WaterFire have impacted my business, I have had no role in the development of WaterFire.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on your community. Please be as specific as possible.

The impact of the new River Walk, the parks and events such as WaterFire and Convergence have had on the Providence community is, quite simply, VERY POSITIVE.

Most urban American cities lack the focused yet restful aspect that piazzas, small parks and open gardens offer Europeans and other urban centers around the world. The recent rebuilding of the area around the Woonasquatucket, Moshassuck and Providence Rivers created an open space that was designed for pedestrian traffic. Getting people to use this attractive space and the adjoining parks and plazas in an automobile oriented society was definitely a challenge. The active arts community here in Providence has devised several venues such as Convergence, Raku-Rhode-o and First Night – Providence to entice the public into the city and encourage them to use these spaces.

The first WaterFire took place during a First Night celebration in the mid nineties. It was then as it is now, a mesmerizing event that somehow touches the soul of almost every viewer. Intended as a sculptural piece to engage the viewer in a meditative way, WaterFire became a strong success in making people feel comfortable and safe while being in the urban setting of Providence.

An example of WaterFire's impact is shown in the attendance it drew on September 15th 2001, just four days after the world was shocked by the terrorist attacks on the United States. At a time when people were terrified of travel and congregating at public events WaterFire proved to be a catharsis in drawing an unusually large number of visitors seeking a sense of community.

OTHER PERSPECTIVE

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them?

The only trade off in the development of WaterPlace Park, The River Walk, Mall and other new buildings in the Capital Center project is the loss of the open space that provided one the sprawling vista from College Hill on the East Side of Providence to the hills in Johnston, and the exceptional sweep of the beautiful Rhode Island Capital building and across the historic East Side from Interstate 95.

With this loss have come vast improvements at ground level. There have been improvements in vehicular traffic patterns, pedestrian walkways, public transportation and elements like WaterFire and Convergence that now draw tourists and conventioners to the City of Providence.

I played no part in any of this decision making.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

Except for the traveler who is trying to get from Federal Hill to College Hill on a WaterFire night and needs to maneuver through a maze of crowded streets and pedestrian traffic – there are no unsuccessful aspects of the project. We all benefit in some way and on many levels. We benefit aesthetically, spiritually, in a community sense and for those of us with businesses in close proximity to the River Walk and it's hosts of events like Convergence and WaterFire, financially as well.