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KeepSpace Attracts National Attention for Rhode Island *Officials Tour Pawtucket/Central Falls KeepSpace Community*

Pawtucket, RI (Jun. 14, 2010) – A team of officials from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) visited Rhode Island last week to get a first-hand look at **KeepSpace: *where neighbors meet, people work, children play***, a groundbreaking collaboration to create sustainable, connected communities throughout the state. The group represented the newly formed **New England Sustainable Communities Partnership**. In 2009, HUD, EPA and DOT formed the partnership, pledging to ensure that housing and transportation goals are met while simultaneously protecting the environment, promoting equitable development, and helping to address the challenges of climate change.

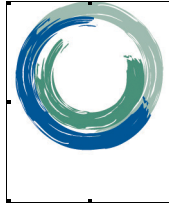
With a mission that parallels that of KeepSpace and impressed by the continued success of the Rhode Island initiative, which was launched in 2007, the group toured the Pawtucket/Central Falls KeepSpace Community. The tour provided an example of how unprecedented partnerships have begun to build upon and integrate the work of state, municipal and community-based partners and create communities which encompass all of the KeepSpace elements: good homes; a healthy environment; strong commerce; sensible infrastructure; positive community impact; and integrated arts, recreation, culture and religion.

“The philosophies of the KeepSpace initiative are in line with the national sustainable communities initiative,” said Kristine Foye, HUD New England Deputy Regional Director. “We applaud Rhode Island Housing for being forward thinking by creating more collaboration to build a better, sustainable Rhode Island.”

Following the tour, the group joined representatives from Rhode Island Housing, Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC), Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), LISC, City of Providence, Grow Smart Rhode Island, Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, Rhode Island Council of Land Trusts for their quarterly KeepSpace Advisory committee meeting, which included a presentation and roundtable discussion of the federal partnerships’ goals and the types of resources that may be available for initiatives like KeepSpace. The well-attended meeting provided an opportunity to discuss ideas about sustainability in Rhode Island and throughout the country. One official explained that part of their ongoing mission is to identify opportunities for future collaboration and bring in new partners on the federal, state, local and non-government levels.

“What continues to garner national attention for KeepSpace are the results that arise from the coming together of partners who may never have worked together before, from the agency level to those on

[where neighbors meet, people work, children play](#)



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the ground – and all with a common, holistic goal of creating sustainable, healthy communities.” said Richard Godfrey, Executive Director of Rhode Island Housing, a founding partner of KeepSpace. “In bringing together varied perspectives, areas of expertise, concerns and input, issues are resolved collaboratively. It’s not always easy. But we’re learning from each other, focusing on our own areas *and* on the big picture. Working together we achieve more beneficial outcomes at lower cost.

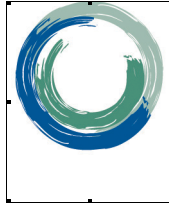
“We cannot look at homes or the environment in a vacuum, nor can we view communities as one small area, confined by invisible borders. Good homes require good jobs nearby. A 21st century community can only thrive if it considers how it connects to and interacts with its neighbors and key metro and regional centers,” added Godfrey.

“The HUD/DOT/EPA Sustainable Communities Partnership can learn a lot from the KeepSpace program about how our agencies can work together to help communities grow and redevelop in more sustainable ways,” said Rosemary Monahan, Smart Growth Coordinator, EPA of New England. “We were very impressed with the breadth of experience that’s represented in the KeepSpace partnership, and with the results they’ve been able to achieve so far. The opportunities that we saw in Pawtucket for transit-oriented development around the proposed train station are exciting, as is the work to develop a bike trail along the Blackstone River. We applaud KeepSpace for their work to provide affordable homes and transportation choices while protecting and restoring the environment.”

“KeepSpace is closely aligned with federal sustainable communities initiatives. In fact, Rhode Island has been ahead of the curve in that we have been working for three years now on this initiative to create lasting, integrated, energetic communities where homes and jobs are as valued as transportation, infrastructure and the environment,” said Kevin Flynn, Associate Director of the Rhode Island Department of Planning, a founding partner of KeepSpace. “Every one of us is equally committed to making this work. We’re proud to be recognized for our tireless efforts.”

Led by a team of community partners working together through KeepSpace, including representatives from Rhode Island Housing, Pawtucket Citizens Development Corporation (PCDC), Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, and the Pawtucket Foundation, the tour provided the history of the area, as well as a first-hand look at how, through KeepSpace, these partners and others are working to address the neighborhood’s economic, social, environmental, recreational and housing needs.

Along the tour, the group was briefed on the Community’s green infrastructure strategies, with special emphasis on expanding and improving access to the Blackstone River as a means of transportation and recreation; as well as a bike path that will soon connect Providence and Pawtucket with bike paths in neighboring communities, including Woonsocket and Bristol. Long-term plans call for a permanent bike path that will extend north through the rest of Pawtucket and Central Falls, connecting to an existing bike path in Cumberland. In addition, the tour highlighted the Community’s “Emerald Necklace” concept – identifying underutilized green spaces and linking them together with existing green space to create one cohesive network.



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“KeepSpace is bringing new energy to Rhode Island,” says Jan Reitsma, Executive Director of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. “Together we have built a structure that is producing real results from every angle.”

For more information on KeepSpace or to learn about becoming a KeepSpace partner, visit www.keepspace.org or contact Amy Rainone at 401 457-1256 or via email at arainone@keepspace.org.

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