



keep space

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Dozens Turn Out to Volunteer for First KeepSpace Working Group**

*Residents, Business Owners, Church and Community Leaders Will All Work Together to Engage Others in Creating a Vibrant, Healthy Community in Cranston.*

CRANSTON, RI (Jun. 8, 2009) – The Rockefeller Library in the heart of Cranston Print Works corporate headquarters provided the setting for a recent gathering of enthusiastic area leaders, residents and others interested in working together to build a brighter future for Cranston. About 30 community members turned out for the first meeting of the **KeepSpace Community Design Working Group** – the first of its kind in the state and in the nation.

**KeepSpace: *where neighbors meet, people work, children play***, is a groundbreaking, collaborative initiative that will create vibrant, healthy communities throughout Rhode Island. Each community will incorporate all of the KeepSpace core elements: good homes, a healthy environment, strong commerce, sensible infrastructure, positive community impact and integrated arts, culture, recreation and religion.

The Cranston Print Works/Knightsville area of Cranston is one of the first four neighborhoods selected through an RFP, which was issued by Rhode Island Housing, the founding partner of KeepSpace. Some key partners who are working together on the KeepSpace initiative in Cranston include Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC), Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), Rhode Island Division of Planning (RIDOP), City of Cranston, Cranston Print Works and Cathedral Development Group, Inc.

“Cranston is a unique and special place to live and work. Rare in this day and age, Cranston has maintained its own special character and a sense of connection between our residents, churches, and local officials,” said Cranston Mayor Allan Fung in his welcome remarks. “It is fitting that this neighborhood, which includes one of our treasured historic landmarks, Cranston Print Works, has been selected from numerous proposals to be one of the first four KeepSpace Communities in Rhode Island – and one of the first such Communities in the country. We are very excited that KeepSpace will restore this beautiful, historic area and make its assets more connected and accessible to the community as a whole.”

Richard Godfrey, Executive Director of Rhode Island Housing, set the stage for the group’s work for the evening and the months ahead. “KeepSpace is about working together with partners. Instead of state, city and private entities pursuing projects independently, KeepSpace represents a new policy of cooperation and collaboration. A key part of the KeepSpace philosophy is involving and listening to everyone who *cares* about what happens in the neighborhood. So each of you is now officially a KeepSpace partner. You play an important role in creating this KeepSpace Community – where neighbors meet, people work and children play.”

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KeepSpace  
Jun. 8, 2009  
Page 2

“Instead of building new neighborhoods on the limited green space we have left in Rhode Island, we are focusing on *rebuilding* Rhode Island *by rebuilding traditional neighborhoods*,” noted Godfrey. “This neighborhood already has so many incredible assets – historic landmarks, a bike path, a beautiful river, an active community – that have become disconnected through the development of small pieces and roadways. KeepSpace will bring them all back together to create a strong community. By creating an integrated design that takes into account the needs of the residents, businesses and city, we can create a beautiful, connected neighborhood that will thrive well beyond the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

The Working Group will have the task of engaging other residents to create the Community Design Plan, which will incorporate the Cranston Print Works site, Knightsville Square, The Sprague Mansion, the bike path, churches and local social and educational groups as parts of a walkable, healthy and vibrant neighborhood. Another key goal is to connect the Pocasset River – a natural gem that offers beauty, recreation and clean energy potential but is practically hidden to area residents.

“Imagine this area thriving and connected – children walking to school in a safe neighborhood; families walking to church on Sunday and biking through the neighborhood on the bike path; a Main Street with local businesses, creating local jobs; and an opportunity to support your neighbors by purchasing from their small, local stores. The homes here would enhance the character of the neighborhood and residents would have access to this park-like river area right behind us. Good jobs, less traffic, beautiful homes that people can afford to keep...a connected place where families can thrive for generations. This is what KeepSpace can do here,” Godfrey said.

Following introductory remarks, the Working Group immediately started sharing ideas and visions for the KeepSpace Community. Among those at the meeting who expressed excitement over KeepSpace’s unique ability to respect the neighborhood’s rich history and the local culture, were representatives from St. Ann’s and members of St. Mary’s parishes, whose traditions are firmly rooted in the Knightsville neighborhood. Others, including local businesses owners, and key leaders from the schools, the library and the Chamber of Commerce, shared their enthusiasm for what KeepSpace is going to mean for the local economy.

The other three neighborhoods selected through the RFP process are located in Providence (Olneyville), Pawtucket/Central Falls and Westerly, where similar Working Groups are being formed.

Rhode Island Housing founded KeepSpace and has already committed supporting staff, an Advisory Committee seat and funding for the Community Engagement and Design processes, as part of its commitment to the first four Communities. Additionally, in an effort to ensure better outcomes statewide, Rhode Island Housing has established the KeepSpace principles as a priority for its funding decisions.

“By helping to develop KeepSpace Communities, Rhode Island Housing is fulfilling its mission of ensuring that all people who live and work in Rhode Island can afford a safe, healthy home,” says



KeepSpace  
Jun. 8, 2009  
Page 3

Godfrey. “In today's environment when every dollar counts more than ever, when there are fewer funds available and greater needs, KeepSpace is a collaboration tool to yield better outcomes.

“For our state to remain beautiful and for our economy to be strong and healthy into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must come up with innovative solutions to meet our housing, environmental and workforce needs. KeepSpace offers an integrated long-term solution and provides a framework within which all agencies can coordinate resources. By developing viable and sustainable Communities, we are investing in our neighbors, in our environment, and in our state. Together, we *can* build a better future for Rhode Island.”

As the work proceeds, members of the Working Group will also be reaching out to other members of the community as resources and for input and feedback. Public meetings will be held and publicized for community input and feedback.

For more information on KeepSpace or to get involved in the community design process, visit [www.KeepSpace.org](http://www.KeepSpace.org) or contact Amy Rainone at 401 457-1234.

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