



keep space

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kris Allard, Im-aj Communications & Design
(c) 508 942-3147

Jo-Ann Ryan, Rhode Island Housing
(w) 401 457-1258

**Dozens Turn Out to Volunteer
for Pawtucket/Central Falls KeepSpace Working Group**

*Residents, Business Owners and Community Groups Will All Work Together to Engage Others
in Creating a Vibrant, Healthy Community*

PAWTUCKET, RI (July 22, 2009) – The Blackstone Valley Visitors Center provided the setting for a recent gathering of enthusiastic area leaders, residents and others interested in working together to build a brighter future for Pawtucket and Central Falls. About 30 community members turned out for the first meeting of the **Pawtucket/Central Falls KeepSpace Community Design Working Group**.

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.

Pawtucket/Central Falls is one of the first four neighborhoods selected through an RFP, which was issued by Rhode Island Housing, the founding partner of KeepSpace. Some of the key partners who are working together on the KeepSpace initiative in Pawtucket/Central Falls 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 Pawtucket, City of Central Falls, Pawtucket Citizens Development Corporation (PCDC), Pawtucket Foundation, Progreso Latino, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, and Realty Endeavors for Affordable Community Housing (REACH).

“I am very proud to say Pawtucket has been, and continues to be, a city on the rebound,” said Pawtucket Mayor James Doyle. “Many of our once-abandoned mills have been transformed into beautiful, mixed-use facilities of commercial, retail, office and residential space. These facilities are once again becoming the centers of commerce and enterprise that are creating a whole new wave of opportunity for people seeking a better lifestyle. KeepSpace now provides Pawtucket with the opportunity and resources to bring this Renaissance to the next level, connecting our initiatives and plans of the recent past with the needs of the greater community and an eye to the needs for a vibrant future.

“Thanks to the hard work and commitment of groups like the PCDC,” added Mayor Doyle, “Pawtucket and Central Falls were selected from more than a dozen proposals to be one of the first four KeepSpace Communities in Rhode Island – and one of the first such Communities in the country.”

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Richard Godfrey, Executive Director of Rhode Island Housing, set the stage for the group's work for the months ahead. "Each one of us here has a passion for our own area of expertise," he said. "KeepSpace is about bringing all that passion together, instead of pursuing projects independently. The KeepSpace philosophy embraces cooperation and collaboration between agencies while involving and listening to everyone who *cares* about what happens in the neighborhood and our state. Each of you here today will play an important role in reaching out to others in the community to create a thriving, lasting KeepSpace Community and a better future for Rhode Island."

Among those who spoke about the initiatives already underway in the area were:

- Alex Sommers, Broad Street Regeneration Initiative Coordinator for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, who talked about the Broad Street revitalization plan,
- Michael Cassidy, Pawtucket Planning Director, who provided an update on the redevelopment of the train depot, and
- Nancy Whit, Executive Director of PCDC, who discussed the affordable homes that have been built in the area, as well as the agency's programs aimed at crime prevention.

Others discussed the positive impact KeepSpace could have on economic development and services for key populations in the community including:

- Bill Siemers, Executive Director of REACH, and Ramon Martinez, CEO of Progreso Latino, who stressed the need to focus on good jobs, noting Rhode Island's 12.1 percent unemployment rate and the impact it is having on neighborhoods, and
- Diane Newman, Executive Director of the YWCA, who articulated the need for services for immigrants, the elderly and youth.

The Working Group will have the task of engaging other residents to create the Community Design Plan, which will incorporate a new potential commuter rail stop and other connectors including Broad Street running from Pawtucket through Central Falls to Cumberland; Cross Street connecting several Pine Street mill complexes to new developments along the Blackstone River; the Blackstone River Greenway and Barton Street. A key ingredient of this KeepSpace Community is adaptability to changing markets and evolving opportunities for transportation, as well as homes to suit various preferences and income levels.

"PCDC and REACH along with many others in this neighborhood, have already made great strides to enhance the community as a whole," added Godfrey. "Much of what they have already accomplished here is in line with the KeepSpace philosophy and elements. Their work toward developing a viable and sustainable community has made this area a natural fit for KeepSpace. Rhode Island Housing is proud to have provided major funding for the work so far and, though KeepSpace, will help secure a healthier more vibrant future for the local community, state and region.

"Imagine all the wonderful work that has already been done here continuing, yet being connected on an even larger scale. A KeepSpace community is thriving *and* connected – children walking to school



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in a safe neighborhood; visitors biking through the neighborhood; workers commuting in and out of the community; attractive streets with local businesses, creating local jobs, serving the residents and visitors; and nice homes that enhance the character of the neighborhood...a connected community where families can thrive for generations. This is what the KeepSpace partners can come together to accomplish here,” Godfrey said.

The other three Communities selected through the RFP process are located in Providence (Olneyville), Cranston 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.

“For our state to remain beautiful and for our economy to be strong and healthy into the 21st 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,” says Godfrey. “In today’s environment, when every dollar counts more than ever, and there are fewer funds available and greater needs, KeepSpace is a collaboration tool to yield better outcomes. 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 or contact Amy Rainone at 401 457-1234.

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