

10-25-2012

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Public Affairs, Roger Williams University, "Community Partnerships Center to Support Revitalization of State's Main Street Corridors" (2012). *Featured News Story*. 44.

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Community Partnerships Center to Support Revitalization of State's Main Street Corridors

University with partner with Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation on community development initiatives in Providence, Woonsocket



October 25, 2012

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – Rhode Island Gov. Lincoln D. Chafee today announced a formal partnership between the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation and Roger Williams University to provide business support and other community revitalization efforts within the state's core urban communities. The partnership was celebrated at a State House event today attended by Gov. Chafee, University President Donald J. Farish, Providence Mayor Angel Taveras, Woonsocket Mayor Leo Fontaine and Paul McGreevy, special assistant to the governor at RIEDC.

"A key economic development priority of my administration is the revitalization of Rhode Island's urban communities, especially our main streets in Providence, Woonsocket, Pawtucket, Central Falls and West Warwick," Governor Chafee said. "By engaging our educational institutions, we can begin to more actively utilize the skills and expertise of the excellent educational institutions within Rhode Island and also tap into the bright minds of our students for the good of the state's economy."

Providence and Woonsocket are the cities selected for pilot programs for RIEDC and the Community Partnerships Center at Roger Williams University, with a focus on revitalization efforts on Broad Street in the South Providence and Elmwood neighborhoods as well as Downtown Woonsocket along Main Street. For the RWU students engaged in these neighborhoods, the experience will provide a setting in which they gain “real-world” technical experience through ongoing curriculum-based projects.

“The opportunity to partner on these revitalization projects illustrates precisely what we intended when we launched the Community Partnerships Center,” President Farish said. “For local leaders in these communities, it means expertise and assistance in solving critical issues; for our students, it means engagement in real-world projects with the chance to build relationships and gain job-ready skills that will distinguish them in the eyes of future employers.”

At the State House event, Mayor Taveras cited the University’s support in helping to Providence and cities in Rhode Island on community and economic development projects.

“The City of Providence is delighted to take part in this initiative, partnering students with government and nonprofit agencies to provide free technical assistance to the business owners along Broad Street,” Mayor Taveras said. “Our small businesses are the backbone of our economy, providing jobs for residents, services and goods for the community, and quality of life to our neighborhoods. This program – the first of its kind in Rhode Island – will give students hands-on learning experience while supporting the hard work of these small businesses.”

Mayor Fontaine noted the importance of project’s timing, coming during an economic climate that has forced cities and towns to cut the types of funding that often drive revitalization and community development work.

“I am very grateful to Roger Williams University for providing the City of Woonsocket with this extraordinary opportunity to benefit from the expertise and energy of its faculty and students,” Mayor Fontaine said. “The City has put in place a broad and deep cooperative effort with dedicated organizational partners and active community involvement to deal with the many discrete challenges posed by our Main Street area.

“We have relied upon several outside sources of help, and I am pleased that this step with Roger Williams is potentially the longest term and most in-depth partnership to date. My administration is determined not to have any more studies on the shelf – we are looking to take concrete actions supported by good thinking, and thus, this practical involvement on the part of Roger Williams is invaluable and essential.”

Work is currently underway in both cities, with students from the Mario J. Gabelli School of Business at Roger Williams University reaching out to local business owners on Broad Street in Providence and students from the University’s historic preservation, community development and business programs engaged in the Main Street area of Downtown Woonsocket.

For a summary of the City of Providence, [click here](#). For an overview on the CPC’s work in Woonsocket, [click here](#).

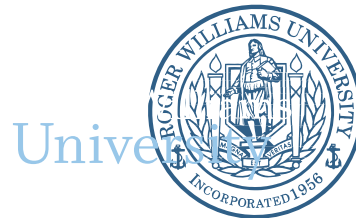
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