

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY TASK FORCE

April 2019

Dear Mayor Elorza, City Council President Sabina Matos, and Members of City Council:

The Environmental Sustainability Task Force respectfully submits to you our annual report and priorities for 2019. We look forward to discussing these with each of you over the coming weeks and continuing to work with you & your staff to achieve our shared goals.

As you are undoubtedly aware, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – comprised of the world's top climate scientists – released an urgent report at the end of 2018, warning that unprecedented changes will be needed within the next *twelve years* in order retain the possibility of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Above 1.5 degrees, the risk for catastrophic drought, flood, heat, and other impacts dramatically rises.

And this is having – and will continue to have – serious ramifications for Providence. From the draft Climate Justice Strategy presented to the Task Force by Leah Bamberger at our January 2019 public meeting, we saw maps showing the effects of sea level rise on parts of Providence – particularly communities of color, who are already bearing an unequal share of the burden of environmental stressors in their communities. We also saw that while our temperatures increase, so too do the number of days in our mosquito season (16 days longer per year than in the 1980's) and the frequency of extreme weather events.

As a City, we have seen some strong statements come from City Hall pertaining to climate and environmental justice. Mayor Elorza signed an Executive Order committing Providence to carbon neutrality by 2050, and the City Council passed a resolution & the Mayor joined with 406 other mayors in committing to uphold the Paris Climate Agreement after our current President pulled the United States out of the Agreement. We have also seen bold leadership from the Sustainability Office in their support for the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee (REJC) and centering sustainability efforts on frontline communities of color.

Given the need for “unprecedented” action & the City's own climate mitigation aspirations, this is a time when we should be seeing bold, concrete action and support for this work. We are very grateful & supportive of the plastic bag ordinance that was passed on Earth Day. **However, the plastic bag ban is the only binding sustainability -related ordinance passed by the Council & signed by the Mayor in approximately a decade.**

Further, the Office of Sustainability recently saw the departure of one grant-funded staffer, and another will be sun-setting at the end of this fiscal year. Between January 2019 and the start of FY 2020, the staff of the Sustainability office will have been halved.

Our major priority for 2019 is to see the City act on climate change mitigation & adaptation. This can take many forms:

- Expanded financial support for staffing in the Office of Sustainability

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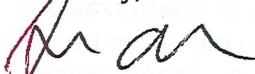
- This includes additional staffing, commensurate with the urgency of the need to support resilience and climate action.
- Adoption by City Council & the Mayor of the Climate Justice Strategy being finalized by the Office of Sustainability in partnership with the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee (REJC):
 - The draft Climate Justice Strategy – and we are fully supportive of City Council & the Mayor acting with deliberate speed to adopt these recommendations. Rather than re-create a series of recommendations, we want to voice our support for this effort.

We kicked off a series of public meetings to garner public input & excitement on climate change strategies with a presentation in November by former-Mayor and City Councilor of Cambridge Henrietta Davis, who spoke to the Task Force and a room of approximately 30 stakeholders about her experiences drafting, passing, and enforcing climate & energy-related ordinances in Cambridge. In January, we discussed the draft Climate Justice Strategy, again to a roomful of additional stakeholders. Several of you have attended these conversations – and we are grateful and inspired by your engagement. We will continue with these types of public meetings – giving residents of Providence the opportunity to engage with City Hall on sustainability related issues – **and encourage you to join the conversation.** We will invite you to these conversations & will also plan to send regular updates on the outcomes – **we also welcome your input and feedback on topics you'd like to see us dig in on.**

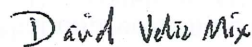
We will also continue to work to draw in more participation & increased engagement from across the City. We currently have several open slots on the Task Force that we are looking to fill – and will present to you nominations for additional members that are mindful of our role in building support for advancing climate change strategies within the City.

We want to thank you in advance for your renewed focus on these issues. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with any of us. We know that we have amazing leaders across the Council and in our Mayor – and we do not have any time to waste.

Sincerely,



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