

= Providence , Rhode Island =

Providence is the capital and most populous city in Rhode Island . Founded in 1636 , it is one of the oldest cities in the United States . It is located in Providence County , and is the third @-@ largest city in the New England region after Boston and Worcester . Providence has a city population of 179 @, @ 154 and is part of the 38th @-@ largest metropolitan population in the country , with an estimated population of 1 @, @ 604 @, @ 291 , exceeding that of Rhode Island by about 60 % , as it extends into southern Massachusetts . This can be considered in turn to be part of the Greater Boston commuting area , which contains 7 @. @ 6 million people . The city is situated at the mouth of the Providence River , at the head of Narragansett Bay .

Providence was founded by Roger Williams , a religious exile from the Massachusetts Bay Colony . He named the area in honor of " God 's merciful Providence " , which he believed was responsible for revealing such a haven for him and his followers to settle . After becoming one of the first cities in the country to industrialize , Providence became noted for its jewelry and silverware industry . Today , the city of Providence is home to eight hospitals and seven institutions of higher learning , which has shifted the city 's economy into service industries , though it still retains significant manufacturing activity .

Once nicknamed the " Beehive of Industry " , Providence began rebranding itself as the " Creative Capital " in 2009 to emphasize its educational resources and arts community .

= = History = =

= = = Settlement = = =

The area that is now Providence was first settled in June 1636 by Roger Williams , and was one of the original Thirteen Colonies of the United States . Williams and his company felt compelled to withdraw from Massachusetts Bay Colony . They were greeted by the Narragansetts on rocks near present @-@ day Gano Street with the greeting , " What Cheer , Netop . " They sought refuge with the Narragansett tribe at a place on the banks of a salt cove , as the chief of the Narragansett , Canonicus , made them welcome . In 1636 , Canonicus gave Williams the large tract of land which became the first nucleus of the colony of Providence Plantation . Williams ' Providence soon became a refuge for persecuted religious dissenters , as he himself had been exiled from Massachusetts . Providence 's growth would be slow during the next quarter @-@ century ? the subsuming of its territory into surrounding towns , difficulty of farming the land , and differing of local traditions and land conflicts all slowed development .

= = = Revolution = = =

In the mid @-@ 1770s , the British government levied taxes that impeded Providence 's maritime , fishing and agricultural industries , the mainstay of the city 's economy . One example was the Sugar Act , which was a tax levied against Providence 's distilleries that adversely affected its trade in rum and slaves . These taxes caused Providence to join the other colonies in renouncing allegiance to the British Crown . In response to enforcement of unpopular trade laws , Providence residents spilled blood in the leadup to the American Revolution in the notorious Gaspée Affair of 1772 .

Though during the American Revolutionary War the city escaped British occupation , the capture of nearby Newport disrupted industry and kept the population on alert . Troops were quartered for various campaigns and Brown University 's University Hall was used as a barracks and military hospital . French troops were quartered in the city 's Market House .

After departing from Newport , French troops sent by King Louis XVI and commanded by the Comte de Rochambeau passed through Providence on their way to join the attack against British forces . The march from Newport to Providence was the beginning of a campaign led jointly by Rochambeau and General George Washington in a decisive march that ended with the defeat of General

Cornwallis in the Siege of Yorktown at Yorktown , Virginia , and the Battle of the Chesapeake .

= = = Incorporation as a city = = =

Following the war , Providence was the country 's ninth @-@ largest city with 7 @,@ 614 people . The economy shifted from maritime endeavors to manufacturing , in particular machinery , tools , silverware , jewelry , and textiles . By the start of the 20th century , Providence boasted some of the largest manufacturing plants in the country , including Brown & Sharpe , Nicholson File , and Gorham Silverware . The city 's industries attracted many immigrants from Ireland , Germany , Sweden , England , Italy , Portugal , Cape Verde , and French Canada . Economic and demographic shifts caused social strife , notably with a series of race riots between whites and blacks during the 1820s .

In response to these troubles and the economic growth , Providence residents ratified a city charter in 1831 as the population passed 17 @,@ 000 .

= = = City Government = = =

From its incorporation as a city in 1832 until 1878 , the seat of city government was located in the Market House , located in Market Square , which was the geographic and social center of the city . The city offices quickly outgrew this building , and in 1845 the City Council resolved to create a permanent municipal building . The city spent the next 30 years searching for a suitable location , resulting in what some historians have referred to as " Providence 's Thirty Years ' War " , as the council bickered over where to site the new building . Finally , in 1878 the city offices moved into the newly completed City Hall .

= = = Civil War = = =

During the Civil War , local politics split over slavery as many had ties to Southern cotton . Despite ambivalence concerning the war , the number of military volunteers routinely exceeded quota , and the city 's manufacturing proved invaluable to the Union . Postwar , horsecar lines covering the city enabled its growth and Providence thrived with waves of immigrants and land annexations bringing the population from 54 @,@ 595 in 1865 to 175 @,@ 597 by 1900 . From the 1890s until around 1951 , a Chinatown existed around the Burrill Street and Empire Street neighborhoods , which were razed under controversy for a highway extension .

= = = Growth and decline = = =

The city 's boom began to wane in the mid @-@ 1920s as industries , notably textiles , shut down . Jewelry manufacturing continued to grow , taking up the slack and employing many of the city 's new immigrants , coming from Portuguese , Italian , Polish , Lithuanian , and Jewish backgrounds . A number of hospitals also opened . The Great Depression hit the city hard , and Providence 's downtown was subsequently flooded by the New England Hurricane of 1938 . Though the city received a boost from World War II , this ended with the war . The city saw further decline as a result of nationwide trends , with the construction of highways and increased suburbanization . The population would drop by 38 % over the next three decades . From the 1950s to the 1980s , Providence was a notorious bastion of organized crime . The mafia boss Raymond L.S. Patriarca ruled a vast criminal enterprise .

= = = Renaissance = = =

The city 's " Renaissance " began in the 1970s . From 1975 until 1982 , US \$ 606 million of local and national Community Development funds were invested throughout the city , and the hitherto falling population began to stabilize . In the 1990s , Mayor Vincent " Buddy " Cianci , Jr showcased

the city 's strength in arts and pushed for further revitalization , ultimately resulting in the uncovering of the city 's natural rivers (which had been covered by paved bridges) , relocation of a large section of railroad underground , creation of Waterplace Park and river walks along the river 's banks , and construction of the Fleet Skating Rink (now the Bank of America Skating Rink) downtown and the 1 @. @ 4 million ft ² Providence Place Mall .

New investment triggered within the city , with new construction including numerous condo projects , hotels , and a new office high @-@ rise all filling in the freed space . Despite new investment , poverty remains an entrenched problem as it does in most post @-@ industrial New England cities . Approximately 27 @. @ 9 percent of the city population is living below the poverty line . Recent increases in real estate values further exacerbate problems for those at marginal income levels , as Providence had the highest rise in median housing price of any city in the United States from 2004 to 2005 .

= = Geography = =

The Providence city limits enclose a small geographic region , with a total area of 20 @. @ 5 square miles (53 km²) . 18 @. @ 5 square miles (48 km²) of it is land and the remaining 2 @. @ 1 square miles (5 @. @ 4 km²) (roughly 10 %) of it is water .

Providence is located at the head of Narragansett Bay , with the Providence River running into the bay through the center of the city , formed by the confluence of the Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket Rivers . The Waterplace Park amphitheater and riverwalks line the river 's banks through downtown .

Providence is one of many cities claimed , like Rome , to be founded on seven hills . The more prominent hills are : Constitution Hill (near downtown) , College Hill (east of the Providence River) , and Federal Hill (west of downtown and is New England 's largest Italian district outside of Massachusetts) . The other four are : Tockwotten Hill at Fox Point , Smith Hill (where the State House is located) , Christian Hill at Hoyle Square (junction of Cranston & Westminster Streets) , and Weybosset Hill at the lower end of Weybosset Street , which was leveled in the early 1880s .

= = Neighborhoods = =

Providence has 25 official neighborhoods , though these neighborhoods are often grouped together and referred to collectively :

The East Side is a region comprising the neighborhoods of Blackstone , Hope (aka Summit) , Mount Hope , College Hill , Wayland , and Fox Point .

The Jewelry District describes the area enclosed by I @-@ 95 , the old I @-@ 195 , and the Providence River . The city has made efforts to rename this area the Knowledge District to reflect the area 's newly developing life sciences and technology @-@ based economy .

The North End is formed by the combination of the neighborhoods of Charles , Wanskuck , Smith Hill , Elmhurst , and Mount Pleasant .

The South Side (or South Providence) consists of the neighborhoods of Elmwood , Lower South Providence , Upper South Providence , and the West End .

West Broadway is an officially recognized neighborhood with its own association . It overlaps with the southern half of Federal Hill and the northern part of the West End .

The West Side is a vague term sometimes used to mean the West End , Olneyville , and Silver Lake .

= = Cityscape = =

The city of Providence is geographically very compact , characteristic of eastern seaboard cities that developed prior to use of the automobile . It is among the most densely populated cities in the country . For this reason , Providence has the eighth @-@ highest percentage of pedestrian commuters . The street layout is irregular ? over one thousand streets (a great number for the city 's

size) run haphazardly , connecting and radiating from traditionally bustling places like Market Square .

Downtown Providence has numerous 19th @-@ century mercantile buildings in the Federal and Victorian architectural styles , as well as several post @-@ modern and modernist buildings , located throughout the area . In particular , a fairly clear spatial separation appears between the areas of pre @-@ 1980s development and post @-@ 1980s development . West Exchange Street and Exchange Terrace serve as rough boundaries between the two .

The newer area , sometimes called " Capitol Center " , includes Providence Place Mall (1999) , the Omni Providence Hotel (1993) and The Residences Providence (2007) , GTECH Corporation (2006) , Waterplace condominiums (2007) , and Waterplace Park (1994) ; the area tends toward newer development , since much of it is land reclaimed in the 1970s from a mass of railroad tracks referred to colloquially as the " Chinese Wall " . This part of Downtown is characterized by open spaces , wide roads , and intent landscaping .

The historic part of downtown has many streetscapes that look as they did eighty years ago . Many of the state 's tallest buildings are found here . The largest structure , to date , is the art @-@ deco @-@ styled former Industrial Trust Tower , currently the Bank of America Building at 426 feet (130 m) . By contrast , nearby to it is the second tallest One Financial Plaza , designed in modern taut @-@ skin cladding , constructed a half @-@ century later . In between the two is 50 Kennedy Plaza . The Textron Tower is also a core building to the modest Providence skyline . Downtown is also the home of the Providence Biltmore and Westminster Arcade , the oldest enclosed shopping mall in the U.S. , built in 1828 .

The city 's southern waterfront , away from the downtown core , is the location of many oil tanks , a docking station for a ferry boat , a non @-@ profit sailing center , bars , strip clubs , and power plants . The Russian Submarine Museum was located here until 2008 , after the submarine sank in a storm and was declared a loss . The Fox Point Hurricane Barrier is also found here , built to protect Providence from storm surge , like that which it had endured in the 1938 New England Hurricane and again in 1954 from Hurricane Carol .

The majority of the cityscape comprises abandoned and revitalized industrial mills , double- and triple @-@ decker housing (though row houses , found so commonly in other Northeast cities , are rare here) , a small number of high @-@ rise buildings (predominantly for housing the elderly) , and single family homes . I @-@ 95 serves as a physical barrier between the city 's commercial core and neighborhoods such as Federal Hill , and the West End .

== = Climate == =

Providence has a humid continental or humid subtropical climate (Köppen Cfa or Dfa) depending on the January isotherm used , with warm summers , cold winters , and high humidity year @-@ round . The USDA places the city in Hardiness zone 6b , with the suburbs falling in zones 6a ? 7b . The influence of the Atlantic Ocean keeps Providence , and the rest of the state of Rhode Island , warmer than many inland locales in New England . January is the coldest month with a daily mean of 29 @. @ 2 ° F (? 1 @. @ 6 ° C) , and low temperatures dropping to 10 ° F (? 12 ° C) or lower an average of 11 days per winter , while July is the warmest month with a daily mean of 73 @. @ 5 ° F (23 @. @ 1 ° C) , and highs rising to 90 ° F (32 ° C) or higher an average of 10 days per summer . Extremes range from ? 17 ° F (? 27 ° C) on February 9 , 1934 to 104 ° F (40 ° C) on August 2 , 1975 ; the record cold daily maximum is 1 ° F (? 17 ° C) on February 5 , 1918 , while the record warm daily minimum is 80 ° F (27 ° C) on June 6 , 1925 . Temperature readings of 0 ° F (? 18 ° C) or lower are uncommon in Providence , and generally occur once every several years . The year which had the most days with a temperature reading of zero degrees or lower was 2015 with eight days total ; one day in January and seven days in February . Conversely , temperature readings of 100 ° F (38 ° C) or higher are even rarer , and the year with the most days in this category was 1944 with three days , all of which were in August .

As with the rest of the northeastern seaboard , Providence receives ample precipitation year @-@ round . Monthly precipitation ranges from a high of 4 @. @ 43 inches (112 @. @ 5 mm) in March to

a low of 3 @. @ 17 inches (80 @. @ 5 mm) in July . In general , precipitation levels are slightly lesser in the summer months than the winter months , when powerful storms known as Nor 'easters can cause significant snowfall and blizzard conditions . Although hurricanes are not frequent in coastal New England , Providence 's location at the head of Narragansett Bay makes it vulnerable to them .

= = Demographics = =

As of the census of 2000 , the population comprised 173 @, @ 618 people , 162 @, @ 389 households , and 35 @, @ 859 families . The population density was 9 @, @ 401 @. @ 7 inhabitants per square mile (3 @, @ 629 @. @ 4 / km ²) , characteristic of comparatively older cities in New England such as New Haven , Connecticut ; Springfield , Massachusetts , and Hartford , Connecticut . Also like these cities , its population peaked in the 1940s just prior to the nationwide period of rapid suburbanization .

Providence has a racially and ethnically diverse population . In 2010 , White Americans formed 49 @. @ 8 % of the population , including a sizable White Hispanic community . Non @- @ Hispanic whites , historically predominant in the city , were 37 @. @ 6 % of the total population , down from 89 @. @ 5 % in 1970 . Providence has had a substantial Italian population since the start of the 20th century , with 14 % (a plurality) of the population claiming Italian ancestry . Italian influence manifests itself in Providence 's Little Italy in Federal Hill . Irish immigrants have also had considerable influence on the city 's history , with 8 % of residents claiming Irish heritage . The city also has a sizeable , active and important Jewish community , estimated at 10 @, @ 500 in 2012 or roughly 5 % of the city 's population .

In 2010 , people of Hispanic or Latino origin comprised 27 @. @ 8 % of the city 's population and currently form a majority of city public school students. of Providence 's population . The largest Hispanic groups are those having origins in Puerto Rico , Colombia , Bolivia , the Dominican Republic , and Guatemala . Hispanics are most concentrated in the neighborhoods of Elmwood , the West End , Upper , and Lower South Providence . The city elected its first Hispanic mayor in 2010 , Dominican @- @ American Angel Taveras .

African Americans constitute 16 % of the city 's population , with their greatest concentrations found in Mount Hope and Upper and Lower South Providence neighborhoods . Asians are 6 % of Providence 's population and have enclaves scattered throughout the city . The largest Asian groups are Cambodians (1 @. @ 7 %) , Chinese (1 @. @ 1 %) , Asian Indians (0 @. @ 7 %) , Laotians (0 @. @ 6 %) , and Koreans (0 @. @ 6 %) . Another 6 % of the city has multiracial ancestry . Native Americans and Pacific Islanders make up the remaining 1 @. @ 3 % . With Liberians comprising 0 @. @ 4 % of the population , the city is home to one of the largest Liberian immigrant populations in the country .

Providence , like some nearby Massachusetts communities , has a considerable community of immigrants from various Portuguese @- @ speaking countries (especially Portugal , Brazil , and Cape Verde) , living mostly in the areas of Washington Park and Fox Point . Portuguese is the city 's third @- @ largest European ethnicity , (after Italian and Irish) at 4 % of the population ; Cape Verdeans comprise 2 % .

The Providence metropolitan area , which includes Providence , Fall River , Massachusetts , and Warwick is estimated to have a population of 1 @, @ 622 @, @ 520 . In 2006 , this area was officially added to the Boston Combined Statistical Area (CSA) , the fifth @- @ largest CSA in the country . In the last fifteen years , Providence has experienced a sizable growth in its under @- @ 18 population . The median age of the city is 28 years , while the largest age cohort is 20- to 24 @- @ year @- @ olds , owing to the city 's large student population .

The per capita income , as of the 2000 census , was \$ 15 @, @ 525 , which is well below both the state average of \$ 29 @, @ 113 , and the national average of \$ 21 @, @ 587 . The median income for a household was \$ 26 @, @ 867 , and the median income for a family in Providence was \$ 32 @, @ 058 , according to the 2000 census . The city has one of the highest rates of poverty in the nation with 29 @. @ 1 % of the population and 23 @. @ 9 % of families living below the poverty line

in 2000 , the largest concentrations being found in the city 's Olneyville , and Upper and Lower South Providence areas . Poverty has affected children at a disproportionately higher rate , with 40 % of those under the age of 18 living below the poverty line , concentrated in particular west of downtown in the neighborhoods of Hartford , Federal Hill , and Olneyville .

=== Crime ===

Compared to the national average , Providence has an average rate of violent crime and higher rate of property crime per 100 ,000 inhabitants . In 2010 , there were 15 murders , down from 2009 's 24 . In 2010 , Providence fared better regarding violent crime than most of its peer cities : Springfield , Massachusetts , a city with approximately 20 ,000 fewer residents than Providence , reported 15 murders in 2009 (i.e. , the same number of homicides as Providence , but a slightly higher rate per capita) ; New Haven , Connecticut and Hartford , Connecticut , cities with approximately 50 ,000 fewer people than Providence , reported , respectively , 24 and 26 murders in 2010 , significantly higher murder rates per capita than Providence . The police chief asserted that Providence 's violence was not stranger to stranger , but relationship driven . The pattern of violent crime was highly specific by neighborhood with vast majority of the murders taking place in the poorer sections of Providence , such as Olneyville , Elmwood , South Providence and the West End .

== Economy ==

By 1830 , Providence had manufacturing industries in metals , machinery , textiles , jewelry , and silverware . Though manufacturing has declined , the city is still one of the largest centers for jewelry and silverware design and manufacturing . Services , in particular education , healthcare , and finance , also make up a large portion of the city 's economy . Providence also is the site of a sectional center facility (SCF) , a regional hub for the U.S. Postal Service . Since it is the capital of Rhode Island , Providence 's economy additionally consists of government services .

Prominent companies headquartered in Providence include Fortune 500 Textron and United Natural Foods , Fortune 1000 Nortek Incorporated , privately held engineering firm Gilbane , and GTECH Corporation , who recently moved their world headquarters to downtown Providence . Citizens Bank , the 15th largest bank in the country , is also headquartered in Providence . Another company whose origins were in the city is Fleet Bank . Once Rhode Island 's largest bank , it moved its headquarters to Boston , Massachusetts , after acquiring Shawmut Bank in 1995 . Before its acquisition by Bank of America , Fleet merged with BankBoston to become New England 's largest commercial bank .

The city is home to the Rhode Island Convention Center , which opened in December 1993 . Along with a hotel , the convention center is connected to the Providence Place Mall , a major retail center , through a skywalk . The Port of Providence , the second largest deepwater seaport in New England , handles cargo such as cement , chemicals , heavy machinery , petroleum , and scrap metal . Providence is also home to some of toy manufacturer Hasbro 's business operations , with headquarters remaining in Pawtucket .

=== Top employers ===

According to the City 's 2014 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report , the top ten employers in the city are :

== Government ==

As the state capital , Providence houses the Rhode Island General Assembly as well as the offices of the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor in the Rhode Island State House .

Providence 's city government has a mayor -council form of government . The Providence City

Council consists of fifteen city councilors , one for each of the city 's wards . The council is tasked with enacting ordinances and passing an annual budget . Providence also has probate and superior courts . The U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island is located downtown across from City Hall adjacent to Kennedy Plaza .

David N. Cicilline finished his term as mayor in 2010 , eight years after taking office as the first openly gay mayor of an American state capital . Providence was the largest American city to have an openly gay mayor , until Sam Adams took office in Portland , Oregon , on January 1 , 2009 .

The city 's first Latino mayor was elected in 2010 , Angel Taveras , who assumed office on January 3 , 2011 . Jorge Elorza succeeded him on January 5 , 2015 .

= = Education = =

= = = Postsecondary = = =

The flagship campuses of five of Rhode Island 's colleges and universities are in Providence (city proper) :

Brown University , an Ivy League university and one of nine colonial colleges in the nation .

Johnson & Wales University

Providence College

Rhode Island College , the state 's oldest public college .

Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)

In addition , the Community College of Rhode Island (DOWNCITY and LISTON campuses) , Roger Williams University (Providence campus) and University of Rhode Island (Providence campus) have satellite campuses in the city . Between these schools the number of postsecondary students is approximately 44 @, @ 000 . Compounded by Brown University 's being the second @-@ largest employer , higher education exerts a considerable presence in the city 's politics and economy .

= = = Private and charter schools = = =

Several private schools , including Moses Brown , the Lincoln School , and the Wheeler School , are in the city 's East Side . La Salle Academy is located in the Elmhurst area of the city near Providence College . The public charter schools Time Squared Academy (K @-@ 12) and Textron Chamber of Commerce (9 ? 12) are funded by GTECH Corporation and Textron respectively . In addition , the city 's South Side houses Community Preparatory School , a private school serving primarily low @-@ income students in grades 3 ? 8 . There are two separate centers for students with special needs .

= = = Public schools = = =

The Providence Public School District serves about 30 @, @ 000 students from pre @-@ Kindergarten to grade 12 . The district has 25 elementary schools , nine middle schools , and thirteen high schools . The Providence Public School District features magnet schools at the middle and high school level , Nathanael Greene and Classical respectively . The overall graduation rate as of 2007 is 70 @. @ 1 % , which is close to the statewide rate of 71 % and the national average of 70 % . Rhode Island also operates two public schools in Providence . The Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center is public high school that offers individualized curriculum and real world learning to more than 800 students from around the state . The Rhode Island School for the Deaf is a critical , strategic and responsive educational center with a commitment to educational excellence for children who are deaf or hard of hearing .

= = Culture = =

Much of Providence culture is synonymous with Rhode Island culture . Like the state , the city has a non @-@ rhotic accent that can be heard on local media . Providence also shares Rhode Island 's affinity for coffee , as the former has the most coffee / doughnut shops per capita of any city in the country . Providence , like many other towns , is also reputed to have the highest number of restaurants per capita , many of which founded and / or staffed by its own Johnson & Wales University graduates .

Providence has several ethnic neighborhoods , notably Federal Hill and the North End (Italian) , Fox Point (Portuguese) , West End (mainly Central American and Asians) , and Smith Hill (Irish with miscellaneous enclaves of other groups) . There are also many dedicated community organizations and arts associations located in the city .

The city gained the reputation as one of the most active and growing gay communities in the Northeast ; the rate of reported gay and lesbian relationships is 75 % higher than the national average and Providence has been named among the " Best Lesbian Places to Live " . The former mayor , David Cicilline , won his election running as an openly gay man , making him the first openly gay mayor of a U.S. state capital . Former Mayor Cianci instituted the position of Mayor 's Liaison to the Gay and Lesbian community in the 1990s . Providence is home to the largest gay bathhouse in New England .

During the summer months , the city regularly hosts WaterFire , an environmental art installation that consists of about 100 bonfires that blaze just above the surface of the three rivers that pass through the middle of downtown Providence . There are multiple Waterfire events that are accompanied by various pieces of classical and world music . The public art displays , most notably sculptures , change on a regular basis .

The city is also the home of the Tony Award @-@ winning theater group Trinity Repertory Company , the Providence Black Repertory Company , and the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra , as well as groups like The American Band , once associated with noted American composer D. W. Reeves . Providence is also the home of several performing arts centers such as the Veterans Memorial Auditorium , the Providence Performing Arts Center , and the Providence Festival Ballet . The city 's underground music scene , centered on artist @-@ run spaces such as the now @-@ defunct Fort Thunder , is known in underground music circles . Providence is also home to the Providence Improv Guild , an improvisational theatre that has weekly performances and offers improv and sketch comedy classes .

= = = Sites of interest = = =

Providence is home to an 1 @,@ 200 @-@ acre (4 @.@ 9 km2) park system , notably Waterplace Park and Riverwalk , Roger Williams Park , Roger Williams National Memorial , and Prospect Terrace Park , the latter featuring expansive views of the downtown area as well as a 15 @-@ foot tall granite statue of Roger Williams gazing over the city . As one of the first cities in the country , Providence contains many historic buildings while the East Side neighborhood in particular includes the largest contiguous area of buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the U.S. with many pre @-@ revolutionary houses . The East Side is also home to the First Baptist Church in America , the oldest Baptist church in the Americas , founded by Roger Williams in 1638 , as well as the Old State House , which served as the state 's capitol from 1762 to 1904 . Nearby is Roger Williams National Memorial . DOWNCITY Providence is home to the fourth @-@ largest unsupported dome in the world (the second @-@ largest marble dome after St. Peter 's Basilica in Rome) , as well as the Westminster Arcade , which is the oldest enclosed shopping center in the U.S.

The main art museum is the Rhode Island School of Design Museum , which has the 20th @-@ largest collection in the country . In addition to the Providence Public Library and the nine branches of the Providence Community Library , the city is home to the Providence Athenæum , the fourth oldest library in the country . Here , on one of his many visits to Providence , Edgar Allan Poe , met and courted a love interest named Sarah Helen Whitman . Poe was a regular fixture there , as was H. P. Lovecraft (who was born in Providence) ; both of them influential writers of gothic literature .

The Bank of America Skating Center , formerly the Fleet Skating Center , is located near Kennedy Plaza in the downtown district , connected by pedestrian tunnel to Waterplace Park , a cobblestone and concrete park below street traffic that abuts Providence 's three rivers .

The southern part of the city is home to the famous roadside attraction Nibbles Woodaway (also known as the " Big Blue Bug ") , the world 's largest termite , as well as the aforementioned Roger Williams Park , which contains a zoo , a botanical center , and the Museum of Natural History and Planetarium .

Another well known site is the very famous Providence Biltmore Hotel located downtown near Kennedy Plaza . A historic location that was built in 1922 , the hotel is still a very popular site for travelers going in and out of the state every day . It was also added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 .

== Sports ==

The city is home to the American Hockey League team Providence Bruins , which plays at the Dunkin ' Donuts Center (formerly the Providence Civic Center) . From 1926 to 1972 , the AHL 's Providence Reds (renamed the Rhode Island Reds in their last years) played at the Rhode Island Auditorium . In 1972 , the team relocated to the Providence Civic Center , where they played until moving to Binghamton , New York , in 1977 .

The city has two rugby teams , the Rugby Union team Providence Rugby Football Club , and the Semi @-@ Professional Rugby League team The Rhode Island Rebellion , which play at Classical High School . In 2013 the Rebellion finished the USA Rugby League (USARL) regular season in third place . Their playoff run took them to the USARL Semi @-@ Finals , the first time the Rebellion made the playoffs in its short three @-@ year history .

The NFL 's New England Patriots and MLS 's New England Revolution play in Foxborough , Massachusetts , which is situated halfway between Providence and Boston . Providence was formerly home to two major league franchises : the NFL 's Providence Steam Roller in the 1920s and 1930s , and the NBA 's Providence Steamrollers in the 1940s . The Rhode Island Auditorium also hosted won 29 of the 49 boxing fights of Rocky Marciano .

The city 's defunct baseball team , the Providence Grays , competed in the National League from 1879 through 1885 . The team defeated the New York Metropolitans in baseball 's first successful " world championship series " in 1884 . In 1914 , after the Boston Red Sox purchased Babe Ruth from the then @-@ minor league Baltimore Orioles , the team prepared Ruth for the major leagues by sending him to finish the season playing for a minor league team in Providence that was also known as the Grays . Today , professional baseball is offered by the Pawtucket Red Sox , the AAA affiliate of the Boston Red Sox , which plays in nearby Pawtucket . Most baseball fans ? along with the local media ? tend to follow the Boston Red Sox .

Major colleges and universities fielding NCAA Division I athletic teams are Brown University and Providence College . The latter is a member of the Big East Conference . Much local hype is associated with games between these two schools or the University of Rhode Island .

Providence has also hosted the alternative sports event Gravity Games from 1999 to 2001 , and was also the first host of ESPN 's X Games , known in its first edition as the Extreme Games , in 1995 . Providence has its own roller derby league . Formed in 2004 , it currently has four teams : the Providence Mob Squad , the Sakonnet River Roller Rats , the Old Money Honeys , and the Rhode Island Riveters . Providence is also home to the headquarters of the American Athletic Conference (The American) .

== Infrastructure ==

== Health and medicine ==

Providence is home to eight hospitals , most prominently Rhode Island Hospital , the largest

general acute care hospital in the state . It is also the Level I Trauma Center for Rhode Island , Southeastern Massachusetts and parts of Connecticut . The hospital is in a complex along I @-@ 95 that includes Hasbro Children 's Hospital and Women and Infants Hospital . The city is also home to the Roger Williams Medical Center , St. Joseph Hospital For Specialty Care (a division of St. Joseph Health Services Of Rhode Island) , The Miriam Hospital , a major teaching affiliate associated with the Alpert Medical School of Brown University , as well as a VA medical center .

The Rhode Island Blood Center has its main headquarters in Providence . Since 1979 , the Rhode Island Blood Center has been the sole organization in charge of blood collection and testing and distribution of blood products to 11 hospitals in Rhode Island .

= = = Transportation = = =

Providence is served by air primarily by the commercial airfield T. F. Green Airport in nearby Warwick . General aviation fields also serve the region . Because of overcrowding and Big Dig complications in Boston , Massport has been promoting T. F. Green as an alternative to Boston 's Logan International Airport .

Providence Station , located between the Rhode Island State House and the downtown district , is served by Amtrak and MBTA Commuter Rail services , with a commuter rail route running north to Boston and south to a recently opened station at T.F. Green Airport and Wickford Junction . Approximately 2400 passengers daily pass through the station .

I @-@ 95 runs from north to south through Providence while I @-@ 195 connects the city to eastern Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts , including New Bedford , Massachusetts , and Cape Cod . I @-@ 295 encircles Providence while RI 146 provides a direct connection with Worcester , Massachusetts . The city commissioned and began a long @-@ term project , the Iway , to move I @-@ 195 in 2007 not only for safety reasons , but also to free up land and to reunify the Jewelry District with Downcity Providence , which had been split from one another by the highway . The project was estimated to cost \$ 610 million .

Kennedy Plaza , in downtown Providence , serves as a transportation hub for local public transit as well as a departure point for Peter Pan and Greyhound bus lines . Public transit is managed by Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) . Through RIPTA alone Kennedy Plaza serves over 71 @, @ 000 people a day . The majority of the area covered by RIPTA is served by traditional buses . Of particular note is the East Side Trolley Tunnel running under College Hill , the use of which is reserved for RIPTA buses . RIPTA also operates the Providence LINK , a system of tourist trolleys in downtown Providence . From 2000 to 2008 , RIPTA operated a seasonal ferry to Newport between May and October . In 2016 SeaStreak began operating the Providence - Newport ferry route . RIPTA began a rapid bus service called the R Line in June 2014 .

= = = Utilities = = =

Electricity and natural gas are provided by National Grid . Providence Water is responsible for the distribution of drinking water , ninety percent of which comes from the Scituate Reservoir about ten miles (16 km) west of downtown , with contributions coming from four smaller bodies of water . Drinking water in Providence has been rated among the highest quality in the country .

= = Sister cities = =

As of 2008 , Providence had three official sister cities :

Praia (1994)

Florence (2002)

Santo Domingo (2004)