Colonial Providence was born on the East Side along the Providence River, but with both the success of the mercantile trade and the industrial revolution, the small city expanded west. With the advent of technology, Providence became a bustling manufacturing town. The metal machinery, textiles, silverware and jewelry industries all flourished due to the extensive railroad network. By the late 19th century, Providence was the transportation hub of southeastern New England and attracted a variety of industrialists, bankers and businessmen to its downtown.

The 20th century was an era that started with optimism, followed by the harsh reality of the depression and, ultimately, a transition for downtown. Providence was one of the wealthiest cities in the U.S. in the early 1900s. The opening of cultural and social hubs, like the Providence Biltmore Hotel, provided Rhode Islanders a place to gather and celebrate in style. This era also saw the creation of Providence’s modern skyline with new Art Deco structures, now icons of this prosperous time in Providence’s history. The Great Depression, as well as other recessions in the mid-20th century, shuttered those once thriving businesses and halted building activity downtown. As a result of preservation efforts, many architecturally significant buildings from Providence’s past still stand today, refashioned to fit the needs of 21st-century organizations.

Today, downtown Providence is a vibrant mix of nationally recognized arts and cultural institutions, top-ranked restaurants, world-renowned universities, creative industries, financial and legal firms, and locally owned businesses earning the city the name, “The Creative Capital.” Preservation and an appreciation for architecture and history are a constant thread in this neighborhood’s story.
**Trinity Repertory Company**

250 Washington Street

The Tony Award-winning Trinity Repertory Company is one of the last resident acting companies in the U.S., performing in one of Providence’s oldest historic venues. The former Eddy Majestic Theater was opened by local investors in 1922, adding the Empire Street building in 1954. The first billetts, William Fugate, stressed the library’s important role in community service. This tradition continues as MPS’s services are still making the library and its resources accessible to all. MPS’s services are still evolving into an internationally recognized educator with several campuses in the United States.

**Providence Public Library**

150 Empire Street

Founded in 1873, the Providence Public Library (PPL) opened at its present Washington Street location in 1906, adding the Empire Street building in 1954. The first billetts, William Fugate, stressed the library’s important role in community service. This tradition continues as MPS’s services are still making the library and its resources accessible to all. MPS’s services are still evolving into an internationally recognized educator with several campuses in the United States.

**Benefit Church**

300 Weybosset Street

One of the oldest churches in Rhode Island, Benefit Church was originally purchased, renovated, and now operates three mixed-used buildings. AS220 Providence Performing Arts Center at 220 Weybosset Street and has since opened the historic Benefit Church, a former church and former synagogue, as a new mixed-use building.

**Providence Performing Arts Center**

220 Weybosset Street

Weybosset Street was once a bustling street in Providence’s commercial district. Today, the street is home to several cultural institutions, including the Providence Performing Arts Center.

**Johnson & Wales University**

280 Washington Street

Johnson & Wales University is a world-renowned leader in experiential education, with degree programs in arts and sciences, business, culinary arts, education, hospitality, engineering, and design. The university has a strong focus on practical, real-world experience, and students work on projects with industry partners to gain hands-on experience.

**The Arcade**

65 Weybosset Street

Built in 1832, The Arcade is the nation’s oldest existing indoor shopping mall and is National Historic Landmark. Designed by Russell Warren and James Budd, the Arcade is notable for its classical design, including a banking and checking office.

**Industrial Trust Company Building**

Popularly known as the “Superman Building” because of its resemblance to the Superman Daily Planet building in the comic series, the Industrial Trust Co. Building is the tallest—at 429 feet tall—and the most iconic in the Providence skyline. Completed in 1927, it is a reminder of downtown’s industrial heyday.

**Custom House**

125 Weybosset Street

A historic symbol of industry and the role of the river in shaping the economy, the Custom House was completed in 1837. It was home to the Federal District Court, Post Office, IRS, Steamboat Inspectors, and U.S. Customs. The building, occupying the Federal Government. It was converted to office space for the Bank of Commerce in 1947. The building is an excellent example of Greek Revival Architecture.

**Memorial Park**

South Main Street

This sculpture-filled park pays homage to people who gave their lives during wars and conflicts around the world.

**RI Holocaust Memorial**

The RI Holocaust Memorial pays tribute to “all that we have lost and all that we have learned” from the atrocities of World War II. The memorial was designed by Luigi Fiduccia. It is a memorial wall, a “monument in stone,” and a place of reflection.

**Market House**

1 Market Square

Completed in 1773, the Market House served as a market and town hall for Colonial Providence. Over the years, the Market House witnessed two of the largest natural disasters to hit Providence, the Great Gale of 1835 and the Hurricane of 1838. The Great Gale brought an 11-foot storm surge, which destroyed the Market House, as it was one of the only buildings to remain standing. The Hurricane of 1838 was the largest recorded hurricane to affect downtown Providence, remembered through hurricane markers located downtown today. President Abraham Lincoln delivered a famous speech in the Market House in 1865, ahead of the Civil War.

**Providence City Hall**

230 Market Street

Though the area around this building was once a hub of industry, Providence City Hall now serves as a culture center. The building was designed by architect Paul Cret and completed in 1925. The memorial features a large statue of a lion, a symbol of strength and courage.

**Grace Episcopal Church**

300 Weybosset Street

Among the banks and businesses of downtown Westerly Street, Grace Episcopal Church is an oasis for the working neighborhood, with the bells ringing every day on the half hour. The church was founded in the late 19th century.

**Sheepdip Building**

50 Weybosset Street

The Sheepdip Building was once the home of the Providence Chamber of Commerce, with the Biltmore Hotel, the Providence RI Hotel, and the Providence Biltmore Hotel.

**River Walk**

On a warm summer night, the River Walk is a perfect place to enjoy the river and the surrounding architecture.

**Historic Buildings and Structures**

- Providence Biltmore Hotel
- Providence Bank
- Providence City Hall
- Grace Episcopal Church
- Benefit Church
- Market House
- Rhode Island State House

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