

\$10-million bond issue
for sewage treatment
may be sought anew

The Second

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The Providence Journal, Monday, November 27, 1978

Providence officials reject critic's charges of city filth

By BOB WYSS
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — Just how dirty is downtown Providence?

Chester Smolski, the director of urban studies at Rhode Island College, thinks it's quite filthy.

Smolski, in a column in Friday's *Evening Bulletin*, wrote that he has visited 20 cities in the Southeast United States in the last six months and that Providence is dirtier than any of them.

Not surprisingly, not everyone here agrees.

A number of city and civic officials were quizzed this weekend about Smolski's statements. The results:

• Both the city director of public works and Mayor Vincent A. Cianci Jr.'s top aide were not impressed. Ronald H. Glantz, the mayor's aide, said such comparisons are unfair. It would be, he said, like comparing Providence's water system, which is considered among the best in the country, with another community's water.

"Would you rather drink the water in Providence or in Biloxi, Miss.?" he asked.

• Erskine N. White Jr., president of the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, said he believes litter is a serious problem. However, he's not convinced that Providence is in worse shape than other cities. How do you solve a litter problem? "I wish I knew," he replied.

• Several other officials all agreed that downtown is dirty, but they suggested that keeping it clean is not a simple task.

"Rhode Islanders are basically slobs," one city official, who requested anonymity, said. "The best place to see that is down by Haven Brothers Diner any night. People come out of there during the summer and throw things down on the ground, when there are plenty of trash barrels around."

Smolski's assessment was almost as harsh.

• **SMOLSKI FOUND** that the city has more filled-to-overflowing dirty and dented rubbish bins downtown, more urine-stained building entrances and more rubbish-filled planters than other communities.

Daniel E. Healy, public works director, conceded that downtown may be dirty, but said it is only because of construction in progress. It is difficult to maintain streets that are under repair, he said.

Smolski, however, wrote that "downtown was dirty before the construction" and shows little promise that it will not be dirty once the construction is completed.

"I take exception to that," Healy responded. "That's not a realistic assessment, considering what is going on in the area."

James W. Diamond, superintendent of parks, who has had his fights with the city administration, agreed that downtown should be cleaner. He added that his department's responsibility, however, is limited to the parks downtown and the new Westminster Mall, when it is completed.

In September, Diamond sent out a six-man crew with responsibility only for cleaning the downtown parks. Despite being short-staffed, the crew has made a dent in the litter, he said.

• **GLANTZ MAINTAINED** that neither Smolski nor the *Providence Journal* is doing the city or downtown a favor by writing and publishing negative stories about how dirty things are.

"It's very easy to take a city and knock it, rather than to look at it objectively," he said. "There are a lot of things you can say about Providence, compared to other cities in this country. You have to take things as a whole."

Fred Puglia, executive director of the Greater Providence Convention and Visitors Bureau, said visitors considering bringing a convention here have pointedly asked him why the city is so dirty.

There are no simple answers. But Puglia says he tells them that downtown Providence is changing, and that when they bring their convention here in one, two, or three years, the odds are that the city will have tackled the problem successfully.

"Providence took a long time coming to be dirty," he said. "I don't think it is that dirty. I just think certain sections of the city are dirty."

"I see it, everyone else does, too," he added. "We all talk about it. I think eventually people will tackle it."

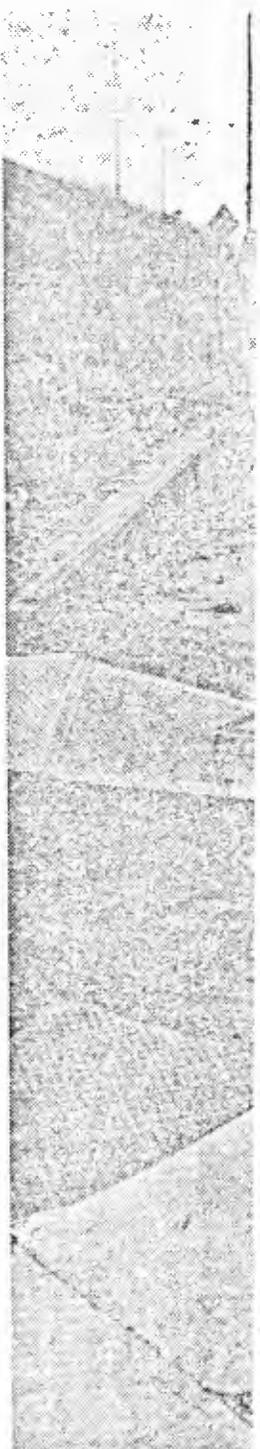
Ron Marsella, whose organization, the Providence Foundation, is affiliated with the Chamber of Commerce, agrees — to a point.

• **"IT IS OBVIOUS** that we have problems," Marsella said, "but a comparison to any 20 other cities is simplistic."

Marsella, whose foundation is committed to a revitalization of downtown, said he is completing a three-year study that concludes that a special public-private partnership to manage the downtown will do much to alleviate the problem.

Smolski, in his article, concurs.

Marsella said the team would be managed by a coalition of government and business officials, who would be responsible for downtown maintenance, services and special promotions.



LITTER is scattered
Main Street, Providence

Stores get

SHIVER ME TIMBERS: Alan Beckwith, 23, braves yesterday's chill and a water temperature near 40 degrees to participate in a race at the Barrington Yacht Club. The water was so cold that it turned to ice when it splashed over the deck. Since this was dangerous, most of the races were cancelled.

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Officials dispute urban expert's report that downtown Providence area is filthy

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About 50 used batteries were stolen last night from the National Waste Co. of 12 Addison Pl., police said. The owner, Kenneth Card, told police that someone cut a chain on the company's front gate and broke into the facility.

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Marsella said the team would be managed by a coalition of government and business officials who would be responsible for downtown maintenance, services and special promotions. The people who would benefit the most, the downtown property owners, would finance the venture, Marsella said.

made, he said. He said the department's four "adult" bookstores and theaters now are before the

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Vandals damage Briggs classrooms

• **ATTLEBORO, Mass.** — Vandals caused an estimated \$2,500 damage to the Briggs Corner School on Oakhill Avenue during the weekend.

According to police, paint was thrown on blackboards, desks, floors and chairs in several classrooms, and on two pianos.

\$1,400 is taken in house burglary

• **WARWICK** — Edward V. Mincarelli of 57 Ashwood Circle reported the theft of about \$1,400, cameras, liquor and other articles from his home shortly after midnight yesterday, police said. Intruders gained entrance through a window on the north side of the house between 8 p.m. and midnight, according to police.

\$100 per person visit

NOTICE

TOWN OF NORTH PROVIDENCE

SECOND QUARTERLY TAX PAYMENT DUE

DECEMBER 1 TO DECEMBER 31