

Providence

Downcity

Downtown Providence, a.k.a. Downcity, has a multitude of cafés, fashion boutiques, restaurants, pubs, hotels, and unique shops that sell everything from pastries to books to antiques – all set amongst an amazing collection of 19th- and 20th-century commercial architecture.

Important Landmarks

The Arcade (1828) - Westminster St. – National Historic Landmark; Oldest indoor shopping center in the country.

Providence City Hall (1873) - Dorrance St. – Imposing Second Empire style structure designed in the manner of the Louvre.

Shopping and Dining

Westminster Street, Weybosset Street, Washington Street, Empire Street, etc.

Directory

<http://downtownprovidence.com/neighborhood-guide/downtown-directory/>

Capitol Center

RI State Capitol – Designed by McKim, Mead, and White (one of the preeminent architecture firms of the Gilded Age) in 1891. Considered to have the fourth largest self-supported marble dome in the world.

Providence Place Mall – One of the primary shopping centers in the state.

Waterplace Park – Contains a cobblestoned river walk. Dozens of bonfires are lit along river here during WaterFire.

West Side

Federal Hill – Providence's Little Italy. Includes Atwells Avenue, one of the best areas for nightlife restaurants.

Broadway-Armory Historic District – High concentration of Victorian architecture near Broadway and Westminster Street.

Architectural Guide

Can you identify the architectural styles of historic houses on the East Side? Here are typical **character-defining features** and rough dates of popularity. **High Style** houses are closest to the ideal; **Vernacular** houses deviate due to costs or local conditions.

Georgian (1700-1780)

- Popular during the reigns of King George I, II, & III.
- Symmetry; horizontal/vertical alignment of windows.
- Center entry, often with pedimented door surrounds supported by decorative pilasters.
- Windows with small panes (9 or 12) separated by thick wood muntins.
- Classical details, e.g. cornices, pilasters.



Federal (1780 - 1820)

- Refinement of Georgian style.
- Smaller chimneys. Shallower roof.
- Elliptical fanlight over front entry.
- Fewer panes of glass, thinner muntins.



Greek Revival (1825 - 1860)

- Architectural elements from Greek temples.
- Corner boards and wide entablatures.
- Thin muntins with 6-over-6 panes of glass.



Victorian (1840 - 1910)

- A range of elaborate styles spurred by new building technology. Includes:

Gothic Revival (1840 - 1880)

- Asymmetry. Steep roofs. Irregular floor plans.
- Gothic & Medieval details, e.g. pointed arches.



Italianate (1840 - 1885)

- Shallow roofs with large bracketed eaves.
- Narrow windows (often round-topped).



Second Empire (1855 - 1885)

- Spurred by Napoleon III's rebuilding of Paris.
- Mansard roofs. Italianate details. Bay windows.



Queen Anne (1880 - 1910)

- Complex, multifaceted form and roofline.
- Towers/turrets. Tall chimneys. Varied materials.



Colonial Revival (1876- 1955)

- Eclectic mixture of colonial architectural elements.
- Exaggerated details and larger proportions.



Providence

A Brief Guide to the East Side



RI Historical Preservation
& Heritage Commission



Welcome

Providence offers a rich cultural and architectural heritage that stretches back to 1636 when it was founded by Roger Williams as a haven of religious freedom.

Prior to the Revolution, Providence was one of America's largest cities and most important shipping ports. It grew rapidly in wealth and population over the next century as it helped lead the nation in industry as one of America's earliest and most prosperous manufacturing centers.

At the turn of the twentieth century, as the glistening new state capitol was being constructed of white marble, Providence was the wealthiest city in the nation per-capita and a national leader in many important industries ranging from jewelry to woolen goods.

Providence's dynamic past has endowed it with one of the largest and most diverse concentrations of historic architecture in America, along with a nationally recognized restaurant scene, a vibrant art community, world class museums, top notch theatre, great shopping and more.

Benefit Street

Stroll among three centuries of history. Includes **Georgian** (ca. 1700-1780), **Federal** (ca. 1780-1820), **Greek Revival** (ca. 1825-1860), **Second Empire** (ca. 1855-1885), and **Victorian** (ca. 1840-1910) style homes.

Along the way (North to South):

- **Old State House**- Built in 1762, where Rhode Island became the first colony to declare independence on May 4th, 1776.
- **First Baptist Church in America** – Oldest Baptist church in America, established by Roger Williams in 1638. Existing structure built in 1775.
- **Providence Art Club** – Nation's second oldest art club (1880), located in two Georgian style houses on Thomas Street (off Benefit Street). Changing monthly exhibits.
- **RISD Museum** – One of the largest museums in the country with a diverse array of art ranging from ancient to renaissance to modern.
- **Providence Athenaeum** – One of the oldest libraries in the country (1753). Current building constructed in 1838 in the Greek Revival style. Frequent by Edgar Allan Poe in the 19th century as he courted Sarah Whitman. Historic collections. Open to public.
- **Governor Stephen Hopkins House** – Early clapboard house from 1707 with parterre garden. Hopkins was ten times Governor of Rhode Island and signed the Declaration of Independence.
- **John Brown House** – Three-storey Georgian mansion built in 1786 and furnished with fine examples of Colonial antiques and decorative arts. Described by John Quincy Adams as "the most magnificent and elegant private mansion that I have ever seen on this continent." Walking tours of Providence offered here.

The East Side



Rhode Island Historical Society – 110

Benevolent St. – Located in a Federal style mansion built in 1822 and offers changing exhibits on Rhode Island history and architecture. Tues-Fri, 9 am-5 pm; Sun, 1-4 pm.

Roger Williams National Memorial Park – North

Main St. – In front of the Old State House. Site of Providence's original settlement. Has a visitor center that chronicles the life of Rhode Island founder Roger Williams. Daily. 9am – 5pm.

Prospect Terrace Park – Congdon Street –

Victorian-era park offering one of the best views in Providence. A massive 1939 statue of Roger Williams overlooks the city he founded.

Governor Henry Lippitt House – 199 Hope

Street – Italianate mansion built in 1862 with superb Victorian interiors. Home of two Rhode Island governors. May-Oct, Fri, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Tours given on the hour; last tour at 2 p.m.

Shopping and Dining

North/South Main Street – Restaurants, Cable Car Cinema, boutiques, antique shops, etc.

Thayer Street – One of the East Side's premier shopping, dining, and nightlife destinations.

Wickenden Street - Eclectic mix of restaurants, art galleries, antique shops, etc.

Hope Street – Restaurants, bakeries, clothing, bike rentals, gifts.

Wayland Square – Numerous restaurants and a wide range of shops selling wine, home furnishings, cheese, books, clothes, etc.