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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2015

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE  
COMMISSION ACT

Introduced By: Representatives McKiernan, Shekarchi, Lombardi, Carnevale, and  
Almeida

Date Introduced: February 25, 2015

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "STATE AFFAIRS AND  
2 GOVERNMENT" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 64.20

4 URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION ACT

5 **42-64.20-1. Short title.** -- This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Urban  
6 Infrastructure Commission Act."

7 **42-64.20-2. Legislative findings.** -- (a) It is found and declared that Rhode Island's urban  
8 centers serve as centers of economic activity and offer a wide range of cultural and architectural  
9 assets; that these and other assets continue to contribute greatly to the economic and cultural  
10 prosperity of the state's urban centers, the greater metropolitan area, and the state as a whole.

11 (b) It is further found that as cities age they often experience deteriorating infrastructure  
12 and increasing effective tax rates, adversely impacting their ability to retain and attract business;  
13 that the economic future of the suburbs, metropolitan areas, and the state as a whole, rests on the  
14 overall health of the urban areas; and that continued urban decay further threatens Rhode Island's  
15 economic assets.

16 (c) It is further found that creation of an urban renaissance fund is needed to leverage  
17 private investment by providing resources for activities to improve the urban infrastructure from  
18 activities including assessment of abandoned industrial sites to enhance marketability, brownfield

1 projects, urban land assembly and demolition of vacant and abandoned properties, waterside and  
2 streetscape improvement, neighborhood and community "anchor" development and transportation  
3 related projects.

4 (d) It is further found and declared that because Rhode Island's urban communities are  
5 unable to sufficiently invest in local infrastructure supporting statewide economic activities, the  
6 state should play a central role in developing and supporting a targeted urban infrastructure  
7 program.

8 (e) The purpose of this chapter is to create a state urban infrastructure commission (UIC)  
9 to develop a Rhode Island urban renaissance fund.

10 **42-64.20-3. Creation of the commission.** -- There is hereby created and established the  
11 Rhode Island urban infrastructure commission hereinafter referred to as "the commission." The  
12 legislative authority for the commission shall cease as of February 15, 2017.

13 **42-64.20-4. Membership of commission.** -- (a) The commission shall be composed of  
14 ten (10) members as follows:

15 (1) The chairperson of the house finance committee, or his or her designee;

16 (2) The chairperson of the senate finance committee, or his or her designee;

17 (3) The director of administration, or his or her designee;

18 (4) The director of the Rhode Island commerce corporation or his or her designee;

19 (5) Two (2) city and/or town officials from a municipality with two thousand (2,000)  
20 persons per square mile or more based on the most recent U.S. Census appointed by the speaker  
21 of the house;

22 (6) Two (2) city and/or town officials from a municipality with two thousand (2,000)  
23 persons per square mile or more based on most recent U.S. Census appointed by the president of  
24 the senate;

25 (7) The president of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, or his or her  
26 designee; and

27 (8) The president of the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council or his or her designee.

28 (b) The governor shall designate a mayor to serve as chairperson of the commission, and  
29 the vice-chairperson of the commission shall also be designated by the governor from among the  
30 members. In the event of the absence or disability of both the chairperson and vice-chairperson,  
31 the members of the commission shall elect a temporary chairperson by a majority vote of those  
32 present and voting.

33 (c) Should any member cease to be an officer or employee of the unit or agency he or  
34 she is appointed to represent, his or her membership on the commission shall terminate

1 immediately. Any vacancy on the commission shall be filled by the appointing authority in the  
2 same manner as the original appointment.

3 **42-64.20-5. Purposes. --** The urban infrastructure commission is authorized, created and  
4 established to develop a state-supported economic development financing tool known as the  
5 urban renaissance fund and the necessary supporting legislation to assist eligible urban cities and  
6 towns in local economic development projects and activities.

7 **42-64.20-6. Powers. --** The urban infrastructure commission shall develop an action plan  
8 to create and finance an urban renaissance fund. The plan shall include, but not be limited to:

9 (1) The financial and administrative mechanisms necessary to support and spur private-  
10 sector investments in urban communities, with public funds directly linked to private-sector  
11 economic development initiatives;

12 (2) The methods available to use the urban renaissance fund to provide municipalities and  
13 redevelopment agencies access to seed capital to improve urban infrastructure and leverage  
14 private investments, as well as assist communities in upgrading and reinvesting in existing urban  
15 infrastructure (e.g. utilities, roads, sidewalks, sewers), arresting blight and decay, enhancing  
16 municipal tax bases, and positioning urban communities to attract and retain employers;

17 (3) Eligibility requirements, standards, terms and conditions necessary for eligible cities  
18 and towns to receive financial assistance in economic development activities through the urban  
19 renaissance fund;

20 (4) Rules and regulations to address state certified comprehensive land use plans, capital  
21 development plans and operating funds for maintenance of the assets;

22 (5) The criteria and process for selecting and approving projects;

23 (6) A process to monitor and evaluate the state's investments through the urban  
24 renaissance fund; and

25 (7) Alternative funding options to capitalize the fund for these purposes.

26 **42-64.20-7. Meetings -- Hearings -- Committees. --** (a) The commission shall hold  
27 meetings at such other times as it deems necessary. The commission may hold public hearings  
28 from time-to-time on matters within its purview.

29 (b) Each office, board, commission, council, department or agency of state government,  
30 and each political subdivision of the state, shall cooperate with the commission in carrying out the  
31 functions and duties imposed by this chapter.

32 (c) The commission may establish committees as it deems advisable and feasible, whose  
33 membership shall include at least one member of the commission, but only the commission itself  
34 may set policy or take other official action.

1           (d) The commission shall promulgate rules of procedure governing its operations.

2           (e) All meetings of the commission, or any committee of it, at which public business is  
3 discussed or formal action is taken shall conform to the state open meetings laws.

4           **42-64.20-8. Reports. --** The urban infrastructure commission shall issue a report  
5 outlining the findings and recommendations of the commission on establishing and financing an  
6 urban renaissance fund no later than August 15, 2016. Copies of the report shall be submitted to  
7 the governor, presiding officers of the general assembly, each city and town of the state, and  
8 appropriate state departments and agencies regarding the commission's work, including draft  
9 legislation necessary to implement its recommendations. Reports of the commission shall be  
10 available to the public.

11           **42-64.20-9. Severability. --** If any provision or item of this chapter or its application is  
12 held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions, items or applications, and to this end  
13 the provisions of the chapter are declared severable.

14           SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

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RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE  
COMMISSION ACT

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1           This act would create the urban infrastructure commission. The purpose of the  
2 commission is to develop a state-supported economic development financing tool known as the  
3 urban renaissance fund to provide municipalities and redevelopment agencies access to capital for  
4 the improvement of urban infrastructure.

5           This act would take effect upon passage.

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