

# Petition to Bury Waterfront Power Lines in Providence & East Providence at [www.friendsofindiapointpark.org](http://www.friendsofindiapointpark.org)

More than 715 people from all 39 RI cities and towns have signed the petition, as of 10/23/13.

**We call on Governor Chafee, Providence Mayor Taveras, and East Providence Mayor Briden to make every effort to complete the project of burying the high voltage power lines that run from the Providence River power plant to East Providence. With most of the funds raised, this project has been delayed far too long. Both cities and the State need the economic and environmental benefits it will bring to the Capital Region for generations to come.**



If left above ground, the power lines will be highly visible and unwelcoming for people entering the City from the Bay, suggesting an industrial backwater, rather than the lively waterfront attraction that has been proposed for the Shooters site above.

## BACKGROUND

Now more than ever, Rhode Island needs an economic boost. Burying the power lines will dramatically upgrade the Providence-East Providence waterfront for economic development and public use, just as waterfront parcels are becoming available for development in both cities, and the State is considering an exciting proposal for the Shooters site above. Proximity to high-voltage power lines depreciates property values by up to 30%, according to multiple studies, and the electro-magnetic field of high-voltage power lines poses risks for nearby residents and the public.

The **\$17.2 million raised and designated** for burial (none of it to come from either city's budget) represents **90%** of National Grid's 2007 cost estimate for the project. That estimate will increase when updated, but the funds raised will also increase when National Grid updates the interest accrued on the \$5.8M it set aside for burial in 2004 and the regional grid's contribution to the project. **Use it or lose it:** If not used for burial, the accumulated funds will dissipate with no comparable large scale benefit for the region.

Over ten years, this project has won the support of many city and state politicians, including Governor Chafee and Mayor Taveras, both City Councils, and more than 35 city and state groups, including waterfront developers, professional, labor, and environmental organizations, and 10 neighborhood groups in different parts of Providence.

Meanwhile, the project has stalled because neither the cities nor National Grid have made it a priority to complete it. It is time for action.

For more information, contact [info@friendsofindiapointpark.org](mailto:info@friendsofindiapointpark.org), or see 1-page fact sheets on the Overview, Economic Benefits of Burial, Funding Update, Support for Burial, and Chronology, as well as photos, a map, and statements of support. at [www.friendsofindiapointpark.org](http://www.friendsofindiapointpark.org).





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## **State-Level Support for Burying the Power Lines on the Providence-East Providence Waterfront**

### **STATE GOVERNMENT OFFICERS AND AGENCIES**

Burying these wires will help maintain public safety and preserve property values (as well as) insure that this urban waterfront park will remain a place of serenity and recreation for future generations.

**Governor Lincoln Chafee**, 7/30/05 (then Sen. Chafee)

Rhode Islanders will have to live with this decision for the next several generations. Burying the power lines will enhance one of the most attractive parts of our capital city, and provide increased opportunities for tourism growth and economic development in the surrounding area.

**Lt. Gov. Charles Fogarty**, 12/6/03

Burial of the power lines is most consistent with good planning practices. The Program recommends that the Energy Facility Siting Board [EFSB] consider and encourage feasible and prudent means to effect an undergrounding alternative as being more supportive of the State Guide Plan.

**RI Statewide Planning Program** Advisory Opinion, 1/30/04

The proposed project [overhead relocation]...would have a negative impact on the aesthetic value and consequently on the recreational value of India Point Park and Bold Point Park and the Providence and Seekonk Rivers....India Point Park serves as a neighborhood park, an East Bay Bikepath amenity, and a public access point to the Providence River and Narragansett Bay....[DEM programs] provide all Rhode Island residents...this aesthetic and this recreational opportunity [which] runs contrary to the reconstruction of overhead wires from India Point to Bold Point.

**RI Dept. of Environmental Management** Advisory Opinion, 1/30/04

WHEREAS, The presence of electromagnetic fields emanating from the E-183 transmission line could create concern among potential investors, developers and residents; and WHEREAS, The high voltage transmission lines serve the reliability of the entire state and the region;...RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives hereby respectfully requests the [PUC and National Grid] to favorably consider those proposals containing provisions for burial of the E-183 transmission line...

**RI House of Representatives Resolution**, passed, 62-0, 1/29/04

### **UNIVERSITY, LABOR, MEDIA & NON-PROFIT LEADERS**

The relocation of the power lines remains a key element in the urban revitalization of the Providence waterfront...this investment is in the best interests of our community, our city and our state.

**Presidents Paxson of Brown, Bowen of Johnson & Wales, & Maeda of RISD**, Letter to Providence Mayor Taveras, 9/10/13

Chattanooga, Louisville, and San Antonio have buried shoreline wires, transforming what were once industrial backwaters into highly successful waterfront attractions that draw millions of people.

**RI Building Trades Council**, Michael Sabitoni, Letter to Mayor, 3/18/13

The case for burial is more compelling today than ever because of the emerging economic development potential of this waterfront area. This signature urban waterfront, which 10 million travelers a year pass through on their way to and from Cape Cod, is clearly one of the State's underutilized economic assets.

**Save the Bay**, Jonathan Stone, Exec. Director, Letter to EFSB, 8/22/11

The whole state would benefit, economically through enhanced tourist appeal, and from individual citizens' enjoyment of India Point Park and Corliss Landing Park, in Providence, and Bold Point, in East Providence.

**Providence Journal** editorial, 6/12/08

**35 CITY & STATE ORGANIZATIONS** have written letters of support, including the Conservation Law Foundation, Sierra Club, Greenways Alliance, RI Tree Council, and RI Chapter of the American Institute of Architects  
**ONLINE PETITION** signed by more than 715 people from all of RI's 39 cities and towns.



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## Burying Waterfront Power Lines Will Boost Property Values & Economic Development

The high-voltage power lines on the Providence and East Providence waterfronts are a conspicuous impediment to the two cities capitalizing on their location at the head of Narragansett Bay. Other cities have shown that burying wires has been critical to transforming industrial waterfronts into **vibrant public destinations** like the Providence Riverwalks.

Now more than ever – with both cities and the State desperate for economic game-changers – it’s time to use the **\$17.2 million** in funds designated for burial. The State has authorized and the two City Councils have approved a surcharge (costing 20 cents a month max. for the average ratepayer) to fully fund the project. If not used for burial, these funds will dissipate, without resulting in similar lasting benefits. None of these funds will come from the cities’ budgets.

### HIGHER PROPERTY VALUES

**Proximity to high-voltage power lines lowers property values by as much as 30%**, according to multiple studies in the US and Canada, as reported in the *Journal of Real Estate Literature* and elsewhere. Developing the I-195 parcels in Providence and waterfront property in East Providence is crucial to the two cities’ economic futures. If the wires remain above ground, they will be clearly visible from many of these parcels, as indicated below, and will thus reduce the property values and economic benefits of these developments.



The above ground waterfront power lines (solid yellow line) will be highly visible from projected development parcels in Providence and E. Providence, reducing their property value.

Three waterfront developers in **Providence** (Churchill and Banks, the RI Seafood Festival, and Bowl Arts, which has proposed developing the Shooters site) have written letters urging burial because it “will be a major asset to the Providence Waterfront and the redevelopment of the new 195 land parcels,” and “will pay dividends in the form of travel and tourism.”

In **East Providence**, the wires and looming towers are highly visible from the new Tockwotton Home, which has long advocated burying the wires, as have East Providence planners, who understand the importance of burial for marketing other nearby waterfront parcels.

### ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF UPGRADED WATERFRONT

In **Providence**, the Riverwalks, greatly enhanced by the removal of overhead utility lines, have created an attractive public space for Waterfire, which brings invaluable buzz to downtown Providence, draws more than a million visitors a year, and adds \$70 million to the City’s economy. Burying the waterfront wires would similarly upgrade the Shooters site, where the State is considering a proposal for a public attraction with an amphitheater, marina, and restaurant.

**Chattanooga, Louisville, and San Antonio** and other mid-size cities have buried shoreline wires and transformed industrial backwaters into highly successful waterfront destinations that draw millions of people.

**CHATTANOOGA** buried high-voltage power lines in its riverfront parks, upgraded the area, and now hosts a million people a year at festivals featuring music, arts, wine, boat races, and parades.

“**Burying utility lines is critical** to the overall enjoyment of great public spaces.” – *Jim Bowen, RiverCity Company, Chattanooga*

**LOUISVILLE** buried high-voltage wires and created Waterfront Park, which draws 1.5 million people to over 100 events a year: boat races, concerts, and festivals of fireworks, wine tasting, hot air balloons, etc.

“Waterfront Park has transformed a blighted industrial area into a **popular gathering spot.**”  
-- *NY Times*

**SAN ANTONIO** buried utility lines on its Riverwalk, which draws about 5 million people a year to restaurants, boat rides and festivals, making it one of the **top tourist attractions in Texas.**