



REENTRY FACILITIES: “A TALE OF THREE CITIES AND MORE”

July 2010 was the groundbreaking of a \$4.1 million reentry facility described by board members of the Brotherhood of Corrections as a “private prison”. Many Rhode Islander’s still perceive this project to have been done in an insidious fashion. The majority of the Silver Lake Community of Providence were totally unaware of what the small yet powerful delegation of representatives wearing hard hats and touting shovels were doing that summer day, at the soon to be new location for formerly incarcerated reentering our society. The celebrities in mention were none other than Congressman Ciccilini, then former mayor of Providence, Rhode Island Housing Resource Commission Chairwoman Jeanne Cola, Open Doors Executive Director Solangel Rodriguez, Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury DonTangherlini, RI Department of Corrections Director A.T.Wall, and Rhode Island Housing Executive Director Richard Godfrey. (details,photos, and cost amounts highlighted on our website www.asc-ri.org) “ Reentry Fast and Furious a National Agenda” page.

The headquarters for the multimillion dollar nonprofit, “ Open Doors” would soon be recognized by Fall 2010 as a, “ tale of three cities” . Although the ground breaking ceremony received little to no media coverage by fall of 2010 , as a community activist, I engaged the first meeting with the City of Cranston Chief of Police, Senator Bea Lanzi, myself, and the Executive Director Solangel Rodriguez. We formally meet in the Mayors chambers regarding the facilities agenda, and community safety issues. Residents of both Cranston and Johnston knew that bus

lines ran directly through areas of their cities from 485 Plainfield St. Providence. Areas of in these cities would soon be inundated with formerly incarcerated in transit to and from this facility.

It was at this meeting that I presented the tough questions to director Solangel Rodriguez regarding community safety and operations at her facility, as did the senator and Police Chief. (see Cranston Herald article pdf on our website www.asc-ri.org).

It is in the opinion of the Alliance for Safe Communities that many of the answers to our questions were half-truth responses at best.

In regards to no pedophile or violent offenders on the premise: It was reported on local news media upon opening the re-entry facility that within the top ranks of staff working with this vulnerable population was a registered level 3 highest risk sex offender currently on probation until 8/2015. Former convicted pedophile priest Daniel Azzarone was kept employed when Open Doors facility was relocated to Plainfield St. Silver Lake. A kindergarten ,and daycare were just yards from this facility and an elementary school just blocks away. The school bus stop was just feet from the entrance of Open Doors facility. Residents were outraged and rightly so.

Although the facility was not supposed to be co-ed it has come to the Alliance attention that female visitors are common and frequent the 19 apts. for overnight stays as well.

In regards to notification to property owners and residents: I personally interviewed both, who stated they were unaware. A petition with 170 signatures of residences and business owners reflected their concerns. A Community Meeting organized with Congressional, Senate, and Representative candidates and some 70-80 residents proved to be futile when the Director of Open Doors was allowed into the restaurant with police escorts to attend. The reason being that there was public notification in the Cranston Herald and the premise was a public property. Residents raised their questions and concerns to

be met with ridicule and insults by Open Door staff, director, and support from those who accompanied them.

In regards to surveillance cameras placed for community safety purpose around the building. The only surveillance cameras, along with a security gate that became functional months after the facility was opened, were only involved in the security of monitoring the safety of staff and visitor vehicles.

Since Open Doors debut other issues of concern have evolved that impact far beyond Providence, Cranston, and Johnston.

In November 2011, Target 12 Investigators revealed the hiring of exconvicts to drive RIPTA "RIDE VANS", transporting elderly and disabled statewide. It was revealed the relationship with RIPTA, CEO Charles Odimgbe and Open Doors was the "root" of this debacle. Public outrage, with senators input, myself, and the RIPTA board derailed what could have led to disaster.

In Spring of 2012 an Open Door resident was reported in the media and on a Providence Police report, to have been drunk and disorderly during the night and had attempted to set the building on fire. Significant damage occurred to two floors which required contractor "SERVE PRO" to be contracted to repair.

In Spring of 2013 Robert Taylor arrested in Narragansette and arraigned for murdering and dismembering his mother gave police upon arrest his last residing address at 485 Plainfield St. "OPEN DOORS". He had also been charged with stealing from a local Narragansette church.

The question begs as to what type of supervision is going on at this facility.

The reality for all Rhode Islanders to grasp is that this multimillion dollar facility not only changed the quality of life for Silver Lake Providence, Cranston, and Johnston, but has the ability to impact all of Rhode Island, whether fiscally or by its impact on safe communities.

Next month Alliance for Safe Communities will cover the final part of this three part segment on reentry of formerly incarcerated into our communities. Rhode Islanders will be given an opportunity to see how reentry should unfold on the

State grounds of the Adult Correctional Facility rather than their backyards and what entities are obstructing this from playing out.