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Grow Smart Rhode Island Releases Gubernatorial Candidates' Responses to Ten Key Policy Recommendations

York and Carcieri each appear ready to support closely examining property tax reform options and restructuring the Economic Development Corporation.

PROVIDENCE, RI (October 29, 2002) – Both Republican gubernatorial candidate Don Carcieri and Democratic gubernatorial candidate Myrth York appear ready to seriously consider reforming the state's property tax system and to remove real estate responsibilities from the state's Economic Development Corporation, based on the candidates' recent responses to ten key policy recommendations promoted by Grow Smart Rhode Island. Grow Smart today released the two candidates' responses to each of the recommendations and began distributing the full text of the responses in the organization's newsletter, which goes out to an audience of approximately 3000 community leaders and activists. The full newsletter, together with Grow Smart's Candidates' Briefing Book, can be viewed on the web at www.growsmartri.com/news.html.

In addition to reforming the state's property tax system and restructuring the Economic Development Corporation, Grow Smart's recommendations cover such topics as promoting a policy of targeted state investment to designated growth centers, establishing new initiatives to encourage redevelopment of contaminated industrial and commercial sites known as brownfields, addressing key gaps in planning for the future of Quonset/Davisville, and ensuring more affordable housing.

Scott Wolf, Grow Smart's Executive Director, noted that Grow Smart was intent on gaining commitments from the gubernatorial candidates to major reforms in Rhode Island's approach to economic development, taxation and growth management. Wolf added: "An increasing number of Rhode Islanders are realizing that our State sells itself on beauty not brawn, and quality of life, not quantity of asphalt. If we are going to expand economic opportunities for Rhode Islanders on a long term basis and protect the special places that give Rhode Island its unique appeal and character, we need to have a Governor who promotes a wide range of smart growth policies."

Both gubernatorial candidates demonstrate openness to a number of smart growth positions in their responses, although neither made specific commitments on all the issues raised by Grow Smart.

Regarding property tax reform, York pledged to create a long-term plan to enable Rhode Island to move away from its over reliance on property taxes. Carcieri responded similarly, pledging to convene a working group in his administration to address various property tax reform alternatives and propose the most workable options.

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On the topic of transferring the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation's real estate responsibilities at Quonset and elsewhere to another organization, Carcieri endorsed this concept directly, and York pledged to "... look at moving the real estate component out of RIEDC"

Among other noteworthy responses were York's commitment to introduce legislation for a state brownfields tax credit, and Carcieri's conclusion that , "If we are going to have a plan that targets growth and attempts to revitalize the urban centers of our state then we are going to need to develop tax and incentive programs to bring developers back into those regions."

Wolf noted that Grow Smart intends to continue providing policy information to both gubernatorial campaigns and looks forward to working closely with the Governor-Elect and his or her transition team in fashioning a comprehensive agenda to combat urban decay and suburban sprawl.