

Marsella resigns, promoted downtown

By WILLIAM E. COLLINS

Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — Ron Marsella, a leader of the downtown revival drive as director of the Providence Foundation, and who was among the first to propose that a performing arts center be created at the Ocean State theater, resigned and has started a real estate development business.

However, Marsella said yesterday that he will work six more months with the foundation as a part-time consultant. He said he will devote most of his time to another project he has nurtured: The proposal to raze the elevated railroad tracks downtown and move them to a ground-level pathway just below the State House lawn.

The foundation, an affiliate of the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, was established in 1974 to reverse the trend of downtown decline, and to encourage government and business to work together to make "catalytic" investments to revitalize the city center.

Marsella, who was named director in October, 1975, initiated some of these key projects and was involved in almost all of them.

HE ALSO HAS PLAYED a major role in establishing a close working relationship among city and state government officials and business executives on downtown matters, despite their different interests and objectives.

Mayor Vincent A. Cianci Jr. commented:

"Ron Marsella has been of very great assistance to me in providing the day-to-day linkage to the private sector to allow us to complete so many projects, and to begin others. His ability to cut through

red tape and to get to the bottom line of problems always impressed me."

Cianci added that he is "very glad to learn Mr. Marsella will continue to work with the city on the railroad relocation project."

Marsella's achievements include persuading the state to build a new court facility in downtown Providence, instead of in Cranston as first was planned, and persuading the Rhode Island Association for the Blind, owner of the Arcade, that this downtown landmark should be renovated.

In 1976 the foundation paid an architect to prepare a report on renovations and new management policies needed at the Arcade, and later encouraged the association to give Arcade development rights to Gilbane Properties, a subsidiary of the Gilbane Building Co. These rights were granted two months ago.

Marsella also proposed to B.A. Dario in 1976 that Dario's Ocean State movie theater be converted into a center for the performing arts. The foundation, among other groups, paid for a study to determine if the proposal was practical.

THE FOUNDATION, after difficult, extended negotiations with Dario in which Marsella was closely involved, bought the Ocean State last year. Marsella was closely involved in the negotiations. The center is now owned and operated by a non-profit corporation that is affiliated with the foundation.

Although the city first prepared plans to move the elevated railroad tracks in the late 1950s and dropped the plans in 1965, Marsella reviewed the proposal last year and urged that it be reconsidered.

Marsella, 37, is a Providence native who graduated from La Salle Academy and the University of Rhode Island.

Ron Marsella quits as director of revival agency for downtown

By WILLIAM E. COLLINS

Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — Ron Marsella, who as director of the Providence Foundation has been a leader of the downtown revitalization drive, and was among the first to propose that a performing arts center be created at the Ocean State theater, has submitted his resignation and started a real estate development business.



MARSELLA

However, Marsella said today he will work six more months with the foundation as a part-time consultant, and devote himself exclusively to another project he has nurtured: the proposed demolition of the elevated railroad tracks downtown, and their relocation to a ground-level pathway just below the State House lawn.

THE FOUNDATION, an affiliate of the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, was created in 1974 for the purpose of reversing the trend of downtown decline, and encouraging government and business to work together to make "catalytic" investments to revitalize the city center.

Marsella, who was named director in October, 1975, initiated some of these key projects and was involved in almost all of them. The downtown companies which created the foun-

ation gave him a modest budget and only an executive secretary for assistance, but allowed him to concentrate exclusively on preparing plans for solving the downtown's problems.

Marsella also has played a major role in establishing a close working relationship among city and state government officials and business executives on downtown matters, despite their different interests and objectives.

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MAYOR VINCENT A. Cianci Jr. commented:

"Ron Marsella has been of very great assistance to me in providing the day-to-day linkage to the private sector to allow us to complete so many projects, and to begin others. His ability to cut through red tape and to get to the bottom line of problems always impressed me."

Cianci added that he is "very glad to learn Mr. Marsella will continue to work with the city on the railroad relocation project."

Among Marsella's achievements have been to convince the state to build a new court facility in downtown Providence, rather than at Cranston as first planned; and to convince the Rhode Island Association for the Blind, owner of the Arcade, that this downtown landmark should be refurbished.

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IN 1976, the foundation paid an architect to prepare a report on renovations and new management policies needed at the Arcade, and later encouraged the association to give devel-

opment rights to the Arcade to Gilbane Properties, a subsidiary of the Gilbane Building Co. These rights were granted two months ago.

Marsella also proposed to B.A. Dario in 1976 that Dario's Ocean State movie theater be converted into a center for the performing arts. The foundation, among other groups, paid for a study of the feasibility of this idea.

The foundation, after difficult, extended negotiations with Dario in which Marsella was closely involved, also bought the Ocean State last year. The center is now owned and operated by an affiliated non-profit corporation.

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ALTHOUGH THE city first prepared plans for relocating the elevated railroad tracks in the late 50s, and dropped the plans in 1965, Marsella reviewed the proposal last year and urged that it be reconsidered.

Marsella pointed out to city and state officials that the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) would soon spend millions to refurbish the existing railroad bridges and tracks, and argued that now was the last time for decades that the city and state could realistically propose that the trackage dividing the downtown be removed.

Governor Garrahy and Mayor Cianci subsequently assigned planners to work with FRA planners in a joint study of the proposal, and the chief executives are expected to decide this month whether to recommend to the FRA that the tracks be relocated.

Marsella, 37, is a Providence native who graduated from La Salle Academy and the University of Rhode Island.