

Population density has its good points

Many of us love and long for the wide-open spaces, especially when coming from this crowded Northeastern part of the nation. Whenever time and money allow, we seek quiet and serene spaces to get away from the rush and confusion of our crowded landscape.

Yet as idyllic and desirable as these open spaces may appear to be, there is still one major advantage that the crowded parts of our region have that must not be overlooked — that of opportunity.

Because people and places are close together, this means that if one loses a job, one can still live at home and get another position close by. In a crowded region if one cannot find a dentist, doctor, car dealership or whatever, the likelihood is that there will be opportunity to find a comparable service or product nearby.

This is a major selling point for Providence.

In the early days when faculty positions opened up at Rhode Island College we had to sell the idea of locating in Providence. We would always mention the great libraries in Boston or even New York where research could be conducted. In today's market for faculty positions, with hundreds of applicants for one position, it is not necessary to use this point to persuade new faculty to come here.

Proximity is still a major strength for this crowded part of the nation. We must remember that Rhode Island has the second-highest population density in the nation, with close to 1,000 people to every square mile of land. It is followed closely by Massachusetts and Connecticut, the third and fourth ranked states, respectively.

What this means is that all kinds and types of opportunities are close by, located primarily in our cities. Of the 195 cities in the country with more than 100,000 residents, 10 are in these three states. (None of the large cities are in the three northern New England states.) Connecticut's largest city, Bridgeport, with a population of 142,000 and home of the P.T. Barnum Museum, is just over a two-hour drive from Providence.

Boston, 20th city in the nation with 574,000 residents, is home to museums, colleges, shops, history and numerous points of interest that make it one of the most attractive cities in the country. Worcester, also a one-hour drive from Providence, is the second-largest city in New England at 170,000 residents. It is home to the father of rocketry, Robert Goddard, with the Goddard Museum located at Clark University, where he was educated and taught.

Providence is the third-largest city in New England with a population of 160,000. Just under two hours from Providence is the fourth city of the region, Springfield, Mass., with 157,000 people. It is home of the Basketball Hall of Fame, this being the founding city of the sport in 1891.

After Bridgeport, fifth largest, come the next four cities of the region — all in Connecticut: Hartford, capital city of 140,000 and home to Mark Twain for 17 years and Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The houses are next to each other. The seventh city of the region, New Haven, with 130,000 residents, is home to Yale University, which is more than 60 years older than Brown Univer-

sity. Waterbury, population 109,000, is a major brass manufacturing center and home to a glider soaring center. Stamford, with 108,000 residents, is home to the Bartlett Arboretum and the branch of the Whitney Museum of American Art from New York City.

Home to the largest, free, folk festival in the country — which drew a crowd of 250,000 this year for its festivities the last weekend of July — is Lowell, with 103,000 residents. It ranks as the 10th-largest city in New England and is just a one-hour drive from Providence.

True enough, the wide open spaces may bring solitude and a brief respite from the crowded and sometimes hectic area of southern New England. The real discoveries, however, are the excitement, understanding and appreciation of our past and a sense of who we are. They are there with their opportunities: Visit and learn from them.

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