



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Preserve Rhode Island secures farmer tenant for historic East Providence Philip Walker House

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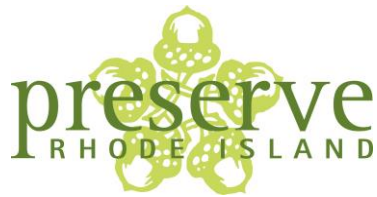
PROVIDENCE, RI – [Preserve Rhode Island \(PRI\)](#), the statewide advocate for historic preservation, is proud to announce an exciting new endeavor at the ca. 1724 Philip Walker House at 432 Massasoit Ave. in East Providence. The house and one-acre lot has been leased to a farmer tenant for the purpose of establishing an urban farm.

Owned by PRI since 1983, the Walker House is the oldest building in East Providence and one of the oldest in the state of Rhode Island. Since PRI's acquisition of the property, it has been used as a study house for students of architectural history and historic preservation, PRI property manager living quarters, and a private residential rental.

For several years, PRI has been actively seeking a creative and productive new use for the property and large front yard. Drawing inspiration from a visit to [Fowler Farm](#) in Mattapan, Mass., and after consultation with the [Southside Community Land Trust \(SCLT\)](#) and the East Providence Planning Department, PRI staff and a team of trustees developed and released a Request for Proposals for farmers in the spring of 2020.

A proposal was accepted from Andrew Cook and Samuel Toler for an initial two to three-year farming plan and residence in the historic house. Andrew, who works for SCLT and coordinates the organization's garden network, brings valuable experience to the site for an agricultural startup. "We're very excited to begin working with this piece of land," Andrew said. "We're hoping to build a healthy ecosystem that produces healthy food, focusing on perennial and native plants. We plan to use permaculture techniques and principles to create a farm that is resilient and adaptable."

Andrew and Sam plan to do land preparation in the fall for vegetable beds and perennial plantings, with vegetable production to start in spring 2021. Initially, crops will be used for distribution to farmers markets and for sale to local restaurants. Andrew and Sam hope to, in the future, utilize the garage on King Philip Road as a farm stand for the community to purchase



locally grown, fresh produce. While the farm does not yet have an official name or signage, local residents will witness a busy transformation of the large front yard in the coming months.

“When Philip Walker died in 1679 his estate included 177 acres of land,” said Val Talmage, executive director of PRI. “By 1891, the farmland associated with the antique dwelling was 96 acres. And by 1960, the land was reduced to the current configuration of just over one acre,” Talmage added. “It’s so exciting that this most significant historic place will once again be a productive farm.”

PRI was particularly struck by Andrew and Sam’s proposal to use permaculture principles and organic methods designed for resiliency, an appropriate complement to the historic Philip Walker House.

PRI is grateful for the support of the East Providence Planning Department and Mayor Bob DaSilva in getting the project started.

“This is an amazing way to utilize the property – our East Providence residents and businesses will benefit from fresh, locally-grown crops,” Mayor DaSilva said.

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