

Focus on:

Northeast

By Kate Parham

THE REGION MAY BE THE OLDEST IN THE COUNTRY, but pride in its deep-seated roots doesn't stop the Northeast from evolving. Whether it's a bustling metropolis like Manhattan or a charming New England town like Providence, each city possesses its own distinct energy and personality, complete with large convention hotels, innovative restaurants and attractions for the family if they decide to tag along. Producing roughly a quarter of the country's gross domestic product, cities in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island are affordable, exciting and easy to reach.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Perhaps best known for its rich history, higher education and wicked accent, Boston will be a major player in the convention game in the Northeast as the city's long-term infrastructure investment continues. In the past decade, the Logan International Airport received a \$4.4 billion facelift, the \$800 million Boston Convention and Exhibition Center was built and about 5,000 hotel rooms were added to the city. Last year also marked the completion of the country's largest underground tunnel system, or the Big Dig, in Boston—a \$15 billion, 20-year investment.

2012 has been a big year for the city, too. Boston served as one of the port cities of the U.S. Navy and OpSail's commemoration of the Bicentennial of the War of 1812 and Star-Spangled Banner, and Fenway Park, home to the Boston Red Sox, celebrated its 100th birthday in April (as did Boston's Grand Dame, the Fairmont Copley Plaza). The newly renovated and expanded Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum—which has a capacity of 499—opened in June, and if you need one more reason to head to Boston for your next meeting, consider the \$7 million the city spent upgrading the state-of-the-art National Park Service Visitor Center at the 1806 Faneuil Hall landmark, which opened in May.

If you're looking for something more traditional, Boston has three convention centers, each with its own personality. The Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, which opened in 2004, is a flexible, customer-

friendly and technologically advanced convention facility located eight minutes from Logan International Airport and near an Amtrak station. The John B. Hynes Veteran Memorial Convention Center, located in the heart of Boston's Back Bay neighborhood, recently completed a \$30 million update featuring new interior design and technology upgrades. The World Trade Center, located at the Seaport Hotel in South Boston, boasts the largest convention hall of the three.

"Our proximity to the mountains and beaches makes Boston a perfect destination to take advantage of pre- and post-visits following a meeting," says Beth Stehley, vice president of convention services and sales at Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau. Stehley recommends heading out to the Boston Harbor Islands, Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket or the Berkshires for an authentic Boston-area getaway.

Adenike Akintilo, event, meeting and marketing manager for Lutheran Services in America, chose Boston for the group's annual executive retreat this fall, largely due to the event's theme relating to history and heritage. "We felt like Boston had a lot of both," says Akintilo, who booked the Hyatt Regency as the host property. Akintilo plans to do one day of programming at the Harvard Kennedy School and another at the Hyatt. "We plan on doing a history trolley tour followed by dinner at an Italian restaurant in the North End, as well."

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Hartford is known as the Insurance Capital of the World, but a few of the historic town's other features are garnering it a lot of praise. Its proximity to Springfield makes the Hartford-Springfield Metropolitan Area the second most populous region in New England, and it's revered by locals for its dining scene. With more than 40 independent three- and four-star restaurants within walking distance of downtown, there's something for every palate.

A sophisticated city with a small town feel, Hartford only accommodates one large group at a time. "Everyone knows when the group is in town, and they get lots of recognition in the



Manhattan Bridge

FACTS & FIGURES

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Area guest rooms: 35,000
Largest convention center: Boston Convention and Exhibition Center
Exhibit space: 575,000 square feet
Meeting rooms: 84

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Area guest rooms: 1,800
Convention center: Connecticut Convention Center
Exhibit space: 140,000 square feet
Meeting rooms: 23

LEHIGH VALLEY, PENNSYLVANIA

Area guest rooms: 5,000
Convention center: Holiday Inn Conference Center, Allentown
Meeting space: 15,364 square feet
Meeting rooms: 9

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

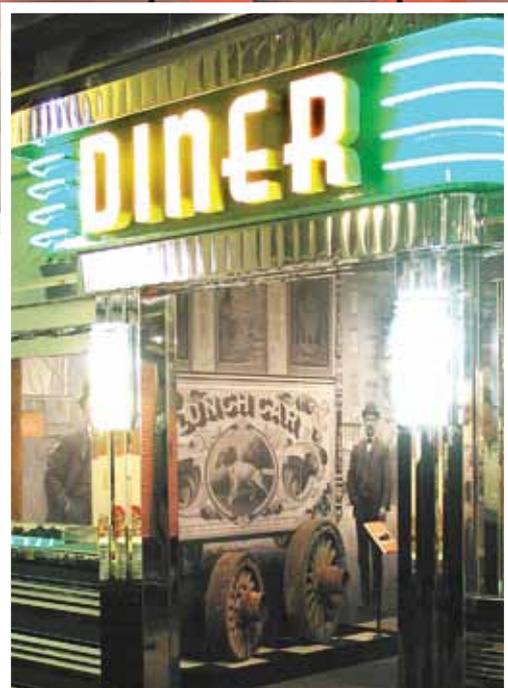
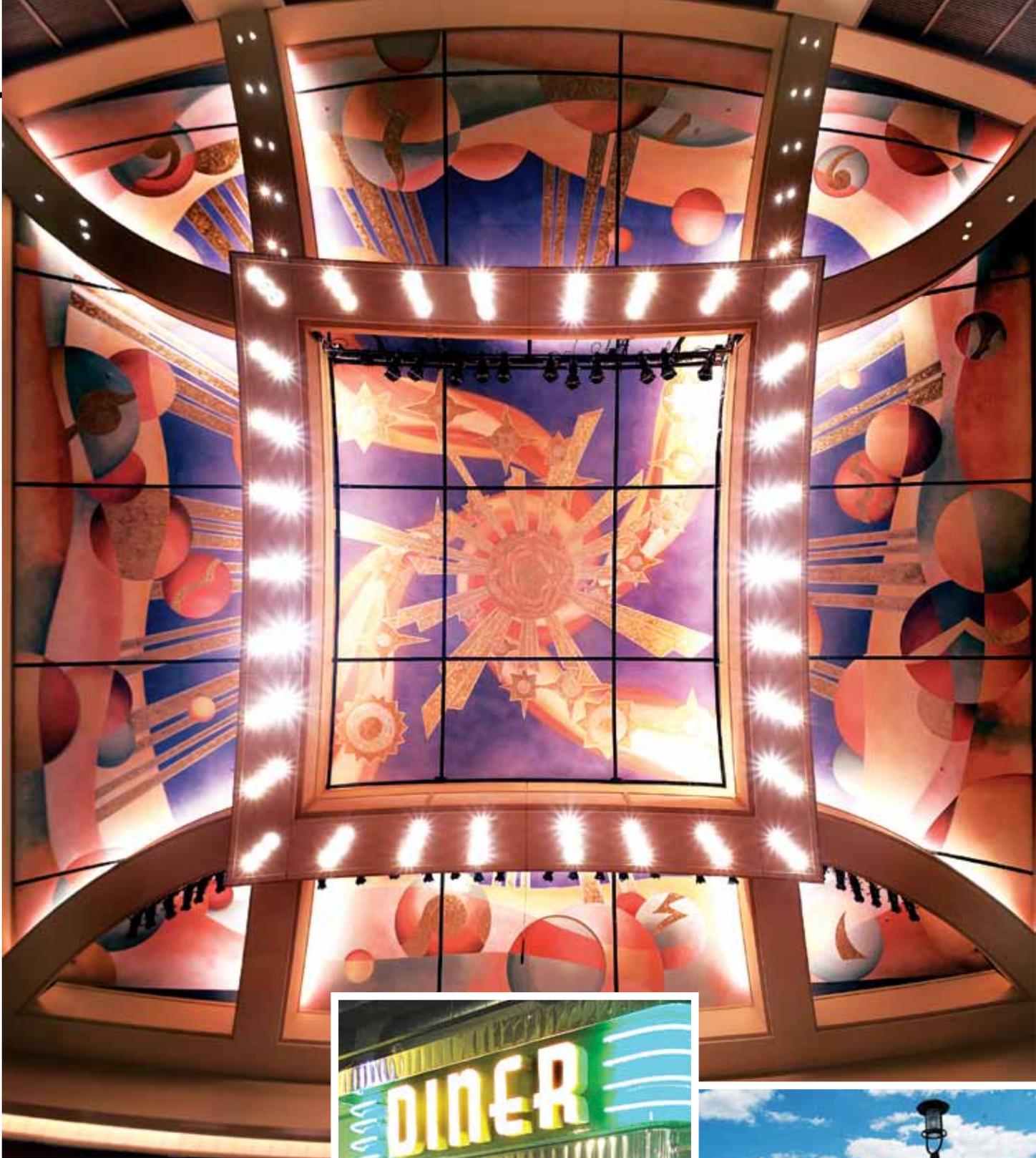
Area guest rooms: 71,000
Convention center: Jacob K. Javits Convention Center
Exhibit space: 760,000 square feet
Meeting rooms: 75

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Area guest rooms: 5,500 rooms
Convention center: Rhode Island Convention Center
Exhibit space: 100,000 square feet
Meeting rooms: 23



Go to rejuvenatemeetings.com/places for more on Northeast destinations.



ROBERT BENSON; GREATER BOSTON CVB; GO PROVIDENCE

NORTHEAST SPECIALTIES. Clockwise from top: The Bushnell performing arts center in Hartford, Conn.; the Boston Harbor; and the Culinary Arts Museum at Johnson and Wales University in Providence, R.I.



Connecticut Convention Center, Hartford



Row, Row, Row
The Charles Regatta, the largest rowing race in the world, is held in Boston every year, but you can get your team working in unison anytime with teambuilding rowing programs through Community Rowing Inc., which plans outings for organizations on the Charles River. Learn more at communityrowing.org.

restaurants and shops,” says Michael Van Parys, president of the Greater Hartford CVB. “When an association has a meeting or convention here, they are always blown away by the uptick in attendance,” says Van Parys.

DeeDee Irby, conference hotel coordinator for Women of Faith Inc., holds one of her 24 two-day events in Hartford every year. “The great location of the city, venue, hotels and our wonderful contacts [makes Hartford a prime location]” says Irby. Because the attendance for Women of Faith events in Hartford pulls from the New England area, Hartford is easily accessible for many attendees. “[It’s] a great city with a small-town feel that’s welcoming and affordable,” says Irby, who confesses that after moving the event to another city, attendees asked that it be moved back to Hartford.

Irby mainly utilizes the Connecticut Convention Center for events, in addition to multiple downtown properties within close proximity. “Walking distance is key to our attendees,” says Irby. “They all have their favorite hotels now and have created relationships with people at the



Women of Faith’s DeeDee Irby is one of this year’s 40 Under 40 honorees. Read more about Irby on [page 47](#) and the rest of the class of 2012 on [pages 44-67](#).

hotels since they visit each year.” Irby also recommends the Riverfront area: “It’s beautiful and you can’t miss Hartford in the fall. The colors are breathtaking.”

Janie Holmes, immediate past president of the International Association Of Ministers’ Wives And Widows, held her first meeting in Hartford this June. “I had an eight-year term and dealt with many visitor bureaus, and I say without hesitation that this one ranks high at the top of the list in being helpful and ensuring a successful meeting,” says the Connecticut native. With nearly 2,000 delegates coming from all over the world, a successful meeting is of utmost importance to Holmes, who admits she was hesitant because most attendees are used to staying in one or two main hotels, something that’s not possible in Hartford. “But the CVB was incredibly helpful with the whole process and just has bent over backwards to accommodate us,” she says.

Holmes selected Hartford because the organization “thought it was a great opportunity for the members to take a look at this part of the country,” she says. For lodging and events, Holmes used the Residence Inn, the Ramada Plaza and the downtown Marriott. “Their proximity to the convention center was great, and we liked the hotels and the staff there and everybody’s willingness to get us there. We were very impressed.”



TOUR

Fenway Park

Fenway Park, home to the Boston Red Sox, celebrated its 100th birthday in April this year. With 15 private rooms and a 50,000-sq.-ft. meeting space, one of America's most beloved ballparks is a place to consider for meetings and special events during its centennial year. The park also offers two types of walking tours: historical and premium. The premium tour covers the same material as the historical tour (think Pesky's Pole and the fabled Green Monster), but also includes batting practice and field access, which can only be reserved three hours before games played at home.

Discover New York's Capital City

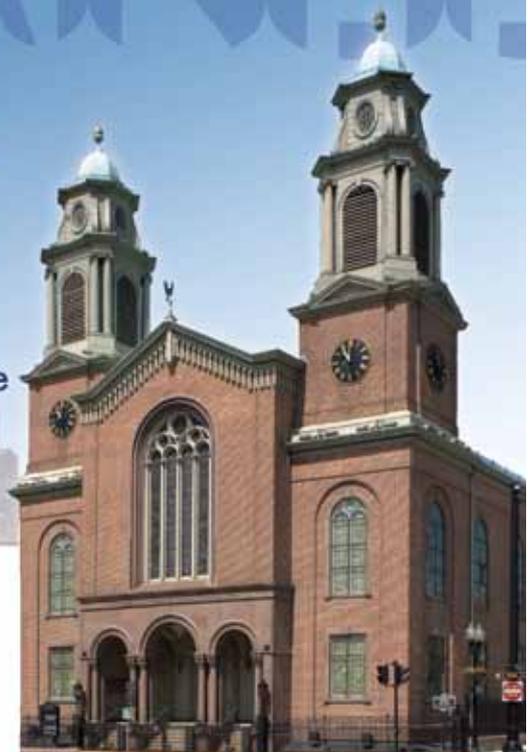
The First Church in Albany was formed in the heart of downtown in 1642, and houses the oldest pulpit in the nation, imported from Holland in 1656.

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Crayola Factory, Easton, Pa.



Holiday Inn Conference Center, Allentown, Pa.

LEHIGH VALLEY, PENNSYLVANIA

Lehigh Valley, which is made up of the three towns of Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton, is Pennsylvania's fastest growing region. Each town is full of personality, with historic downtown districts and eclectic, trendy neighborhoods. "We have locations for each different type of meeting," says Marc Kaminetsky, national sales manager at Discover Lehigh Valley. For example, the newly opened ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks, located on the site of the former Bethlehem Steel plant, is a 65,000-sq.-ft., multiuse performing arts center featuring floor-to-ceiling glass walls offering a view of the plant's iconic blast furnaces.

"The airport is a tremendous asset," says Kaminetsky, referring to the Lehigh Valley International Airport. "It has very convenient flights from hub cities, the lines are never very long, parking is a lot less expensive and there's no tram needed." He also emphasizes the value found at the region's hotels. "The majority of our hotels don't charge for parking and don't have a lot of those hidden fees that major cities tend to hit you with."

Rabbi Rocky Caine, assistant regional director at the National Conference of Synagogue Youth, has held two weekend youth group retreats in the last decade in Lehigh Valley. "Convenience of location, price and availability

[were all selling points]," says Caine, who also looked at Harrisburg, Pa., and New Jersey. One of NCSY's favorite spots in the area is Dorney Park, which provides "phenomenal views," says Caine, after hosting an event on the top of the parking garage at the park. "It was accessible and very clean." Caine also spoke highly of the Discovery Science Center and the Holiday Inn Allentown Center City. "The space was nice, it was clean and the staff was very accommodating," he says.

There are plenty of teambuilding activities in Lehigh Valley, too. Take your group for a ride at the Lehigh Valley Grand Prix, or to learn something new at Sagra Bistro, a restaurant that offers mozzarella cheese making classes and murder mystery dinners. Dutch Springs recreational facility in Bethlehem offers trust exercises, high-ropes courses and an aqua park.

Lehigh Valley is also home to a number of factories and sites worth visiting. Headquartered in Nazareth, Pa., five miles from Lehigh Valley, is the world-famous Martin guitars factory, with tours offered Monday through Friday. And if attendees are bringing children, a trip to the Crayola Experience in Easton is a perfect fit. Visitors encounter more than a dozen hands-on activities and learn how Crayola crayons and markers are made. Two other options for off-site trips are the



Shuttle Around Town
Take the complimentary Star Shuttle in Hartford to get around town. The shuttle runs a continuous 13-minute route around downtown, connecting the Connecticut Convention Center with hotels, train stations, restaurants and parking garages.



MEET

Albany, New York

From Joyce Meyers Ministries and Assemblies of God to the United Methodist Conference, Albany has hosted religious conferences small and large. Whether your meeting is for 15,000 attendees, like Joel Osteen's, or 15 committee members, like the Seventh Day Adventists', the CVB is ready and willing to help with destination marketing information and digital destination guides. Here are some tips from the CVB for your next meeting:

Set up a welcome table at the hotel, convention center or the Times Union Center arena to ensure the greatest number of attendees will see and use it.

During the event, utilize the registration assistance offered by the Albany Volunteers.

Make use of the special information packets and Albany welcome bags developed specifically for attendees, including shopping and dining coupons, specific attraction brochures and more.

Let the CVB help you find the perfect keynote speaker. The Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith held its meeting at the Albany Marriott Hotel and used Carolyn McLaughlin, President of Albany's City Council, as its speaker. "It was the perfect choice to welcome this group because of her Christian faith and knowledge of the group's values," says Gina Mintzer, director of sales for the Albany County CVB.

If you've got a larger group, take advantage of the transportation committee, a group made up of NYS Department of Transportation, local police, traffic and safety, state police, fire department, Capital District Transportation Authority and the Albany Parking Authority to ensure substantial ground transportation or movement during normal Albany rush hours.

Meeting facilities used within the destination include the largest hotels, such as the Albany Marriott Hotel, The Desmond Hotel and Conference Center, the Holiday Inn Albany and the Hotel Albany (soon to be Hilton Albany).

Other venues utilized by religious groups include the Empire State Plaza Convention Center (81,000 square feet) and the Times Union Center (17,000 seats).



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PROVIDENCE THE CREATIVE CAPITAL

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Places NORTHEAST

Just Born Candy Company (makers of Peeps, Mike and Ike, and Hot Tamales), headquartered in Bethlehem, and the Mack Trucks assembly plant in Allentown.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

As the most populous city in the United States, New York City remains the nation's biggest draw for people who want to take care of business and have a little fun, too. The energy, vibrancy and diversity of New York City is an iconic draw offering a multitude of possibilities, from small meetings and in-house hotel conferences to large conventions and trade shows. New York provides groups with thousands of options, low transportation costs and easy access.

"New York's the center of the universe," says Jaelyn Bernstein, president and partner at Empire Force Events. "Business revolves and evolves here. It's a destination people want to go to." When Bernstein is planning a meeting or special event in New York, she often opts for the Ellis Island Immigration

Museum. "In order to get to Ellis Island, you have to take a ferry from Battery Park, so you get to see a lot of the city from the water, which accomplishes something very New York." Bernstein also recommends the skyline-sweeping rooms at Top of the Rock Observation Deck.

There are plenty of new lodging and events options in New York. By year's end, New York will have approximately 90,000 hotel rooms throughout the five boroughs, and 7,000 more rooms in the pipeline, according to Christopher Heywood, vice president of communications at NYC and Company. "The number of hotels has tripled, offering excellent opportunities for meeting planners with options at every price point," he says.

New hotels, including Hyatt 48 Lex and the Conrad New York, open this year, and many more are undergoing renovations in order to be competitive with the new inventory. The massive, glass-enclosed Jacob K. Javits Convention Center has been undergoing renovations since 2009, and is currently installing

the largest green roof in the Northeast. The facility has 1.1 million square feet of meeting space after the nine-phase expansion added exhibition, pre-function and outdoor space.

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Providence has been called many things over the years, from the "Beehive of Industry" to "The Renaissance City" and now, the "Creative Capital." The new nickname fits the city with a vibrant arts scene and large community of talented chefs (some of whom are James Beard award nominees). Home to Ivy League Brown University, the Rhode Island School of Design, and Johnson and Wales University, Providence is truly a college town: smart, stylish, passionate and creative.

With an intimate, small-town feel, you can easily walk from venue to venue without feeling overwhelmed. And yet, there are all the amenities of a metropolis: great restaurants, noteworthy hotels, shopping and fascinating attractions like the Trinity Repertory Theater Company, where Oscar-



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nominees Richard Jenkins and Viola Davis got their starts.

Joe Gattozzi, head of technical and special events for the Boston Church of Christ, has held eight events in Providence, most recently a marriage enrichment weekend in March, which had more than 350 attendees. "The city itself was a big draw, as there's a lot of great dining options within walking distance of downtown hotels," says Gattozzi. "But for us, we like to do things in Rhode Island because we're tax-exempt for room tax. As a church, as long as we run a master bill, we can save the 13 percent room tax."

The ease of accessibility was another factor. "It's right off the highway, and since we draw most participants from the New England area, it's very easy for members, no matter where they're coming from." Gattozzi used the Renaissance Hotel for his most recent meeting. "They're my favorite Providence hotel," he says. "The staff is terrific, they go out of their way to make participants feel welcome and taken care of, and it's

relatively new, so everything is updated and nice." Gattozzi also recommends the Westin, which is connected to the convention center. And "the CVB is awesome," says Gattozzi. "They're very quick to get RFP responses, and very good at coordinating everything."

In the summer time, Gattozzi loves taking guests to WaterFire on Saturday evenings, a work of art with more than 80 sparkling bonfires along the three rivers of downtown Providence. Visitors can also stroll along the paths of Waterplace Park, where there's music, vendors and food. If you're running an event, you can even sponsor a fire.

Jean Plotkin, Labs21 conference manager, came away with a great impression of the city after planning a meeting in Providence. "Everyone we worked with, from the Providence Warwick Convention and Visitors Bureau to the Rhode Island Convention Center to the local businesses, treated us with incredibly personalized attention, like we were their only clients," she says. "We took attendees over to [the universities] for off-site

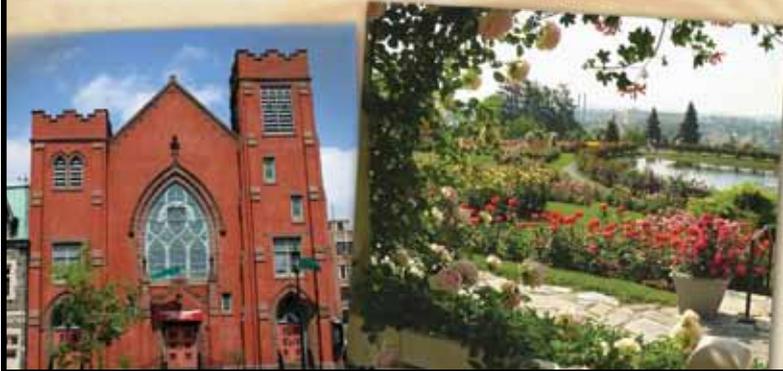
tours of the school's laboratory facilities, [which] were fantastic, but the drives were particularly interesting, as we got to see a lot of the historic homes along the way. The conference staff also headed over to Federal Hill for dinner one night. I definitely recommend that other groups go there at least once during their stay."

Plotkin was also pleased with the city's sustainability efforts. "Our conference focuses on green high-tech facilities, so it's important for our event to walk the talk," she says. "The Rhode Island Convention Center has green hospitality certification, and our event managers helped us build more sustainable elements into our catering and operations." She also liked that Providence is a foot-friendly city with a good public transit system and it's welcoming for families. "[About] a quarter of our attendees brought family with them and made a vacation out of the trip," she says. "With so much to do in Providence, and with Boston and Newport so close by, it was easy for them to see other sights while in the area."

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