

Planning Committee Site Recommendation for GA 2020

A site selection team of Jan Sneegas, Director of General Assembly and Conference Services, Don Plante, General Assembly Meeting Planner, and Katherine Allen, Planning Committee member, visited three cities that submitted proposals to host General Assembly 2020: Richmond, VA; Atlanta, GA; and Providence, RI.

After very careful consideration of each city, weighing relative merits and how each city reflects our values and needs (including but not limited to physical accessibility, economic justice, racial justice, and fiscal stewardship) the **Planning Committee recommends Providence as the site of GA 2020.**

Physical Accessibility

The Rhode Island Convention Center and The Dunkin Donut Arena, while not ideal, are accessible to people with mobility impairments. Hotels and dorms are in close proximity to the convention center.

Economic Justice

Providence is one of very few East Coast cities that is still relatively affordable in the current seller's market. The city is economically depressed with higher unemployment rates, lower per capita income and lower median household income than the national average.

Our meeting in Providence in 2014 was the third largest in GA history drawing nearly 4800 attendees, even though our room block was severely curtailed due to labor disputes at two contracted hotels. Those labor disputes have been settled. Five new hotels are being built in the city that will provide 618 new rooms in 2020. Guaranteed room rates for 2020 range from \$179 - \$199. A major consideration in the choice for Providence is the 300+ dorm rooms at Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design that provide a very economical option for our people (rates in 2014 averaged \$50 per night).

The geographic rotation of General Assembly increases economic accessibility. The proximity of Providence to the largest geographic concentration of Unitarian Universalists makes it more economically accessible to a very large number of people who will not have to pay expensive transportation costs to attend GA. In 2020 GA will have been in every other region since last being in the New England Region in 2014.

Racial Justice

Demographics of Providence (according to Cubit, 2017) are 40.2% Hispanic, 35.9% White and 13% Black.

Providence offers opportunities to engage the Association in further work around the Thanksgiving Business Resolution (2016) and the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery (2012). The 400th anniversary of the landing of the Mayflower will be in 2020 when we are in Providence less than 60 miles from the landing site. This fortuitous timing creates a unique opportunity to further our work as individuals, congregations, and an Association around our history in this story of domination and dehumanization.

Other Sites

Richmond, VA, was ultimately unable to guarantee the number of hotel rooms needed without requiring shuttling. The GAPC adopted a policy after GA 2008 in Fort Lauderdale that due to sustainability priorities and responsible fiscal stewardship, cities that required shuttling would be considered only if other options did not exist.

Atlanta, GA, is in the Southern Region which is also the site of GA 2017. The convention center in Atlanta has serious accessibility concerns with only one small passenger elevator going down to the general session and exhibit hall level. The freight elevator opens onto the back dock so doesn't provide a good remedy. Atlanta was much more expensive for ancillary services (one gallon of coffee at the convention center is \$150).