

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021 - 2027



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**RI Historical Preservation
& Heritage Commission**

Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission
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A Big Plan for the Smallest State
The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Executive Summary	7
2. Context for Historic Preservation in Rhode Island	9
3. What We Do: RIHPHC Program Areas	29
4. What We Accomplished: Major Projects, 2012 – 2020.....	48
5. What We’re Planning: Goals and Objectives, 2021 – 2027	57
6. Bibliography and Suggested Reading	72

Section One

Introduction and Executive Summary

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

MISSION STATEMENT

To preserve and protect places of historical, archaeological, and cultural significance as means of illuminating an appreciation for the state's history and heritage among all of Rhode Island's diverse communities.

VISION STATEMENT

Historic preservation and heritage programs play a central role in articulating and fostering a fuller understanding of community, history, and identity. We envision a future in which preserving and protecting historically and culturally significant places and practices increasingly benefits both the state's economy and quality of life in a way that consistently represents, values, includes, and honors all of Rhode Island's diverse communities.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State
The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

INTRODUCTION

A Big Plan for the Smallest State was prepared by Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) staff in accordance with the [National Park Service requirements for a statewide historic preservation plan](#) and in consultation with Commissioners, members of Rhode Island’s preservation community, and the public. The plan provides context for preservation planning; outlines RIHPHC program areas; reviews preservation accomplishments since 2012, when the last statewide historic preservation plan was implemented; and presents five goals for 2021-2027, as identified through public outreach with professional partners and the general public (outlined on pg. 8 and further described in Section 5 on pg. 57).

METHODOLOGY

This revision began in 2019 with an assessment of the 2012 Plan. In order to solicit feedback, the RIHPHC held staff discussions as well as three “Planning for Preservation” public meetings in 2019.¹ In order to reach the RIHPHC’s existing constituency and new audiences, meetings were advertised in local print newspapers, online newsletters, social media platforms at the RIHPHC and its sister organizations, and as part of the RIHPHC’s annual statewide preservation conference program. Each meeting consisted of four professionals, including RIHPHC staff and colleagues in the field, addressing current challenges and issues in their work before participating in audience-driven discussion on big-picture preservation issues. Participants included town planners; local historic district commissioners; directors of preservation societies, land trusts, and community development organizations; historians; archaeologists; owners and managers of historic properties; professors and students; and interested members of the public. Much of the discussion touched upon objectives included in the 2012 Plan, but there was also increased interest in entirely new topics. In particular, there is demand for the RIHPHC to better assess modern and recent past architecture, aid cities and towns whose historic resources are threatened by climate change and sea level rise, nominate properties that represent the state’s cultural diversity to the National Register of Historic Places, and make preservation resources accessible to more Rhode Islanders.

Following the public meetings, RIHPHC staff incorporated input received and revised the draft Plan in October 2020. The draft was approved by the Commission and State Review Board and distributed for comment by preservation stakeholders in December 2020. Upon incorporation of feedback received, this plan was submitted to the National Park Service. Once accepted by the National Park Service, this plan is in effect for the seven-year period from 2021-2027.

¹ Meetings were held in February 2019 at the American-French Genealogical Society in Woonsocket; April 2019 as part of the 34th Annual Statewide Historic Preservation Conference in East Providence; and October 2019 at The University of Rhode Island in Kingston. The locations were chosen to offer a broad geographical range, with varied dates and times to make the meetings accessible to different audiences. Meetings averaged approximately forty participants, and RIHPHC invited comments from participants during the meetings as well as via email.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GOAL ONE: Continue to locate, identify, and evaluate all of Rhode Island’s historic resources

GOAL TWO: Strengthen the opportunities for those who own, care for, and invest in historic properties and archaeological sites to obtain the technical and financial assistance they need

GOAL THREE: Strengthen the protection of historic resources from inappropriate alteration, neglect, demolition, and the effects of climate change

GOAL FOUR: Prioritize equity and representation to ensure that the historic resources we recognize, preserve, protect, and celebrate reflect Rhode Island’s diverse heritage

GOAL FIVE: Increase public understanding of the value of historic buildings, areas, landscapes, archaeological sites, and cultural heritage and the benefits of their preservation

Section Two

Context for Historic Preservation in Rhode Island

A Big Plan for the Smallest State
 The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
 for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

RHODE ISLAND’S GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Rhode Island is the nation’s smallest state, only 1,214 square miles, and is located in the southernmost tier of New England. The land areas of Rhode Island surround Narragansett Bay, a

long and narrow estuary oriented north-to-south that reaches into the state’s land mass some 30 miles. Narragansett Bay is the state’s dominant geographic feature. West of Narragansett Bay, the state’s land rises gradually into the low, gentle hills of the west and northwest. The coastline of Rhode Island (including the bay, its islands, and the southern shore) is over 400 miles long – it has been an overridingly important feature of the state’s historical development and will continue to be an important part of its future development.

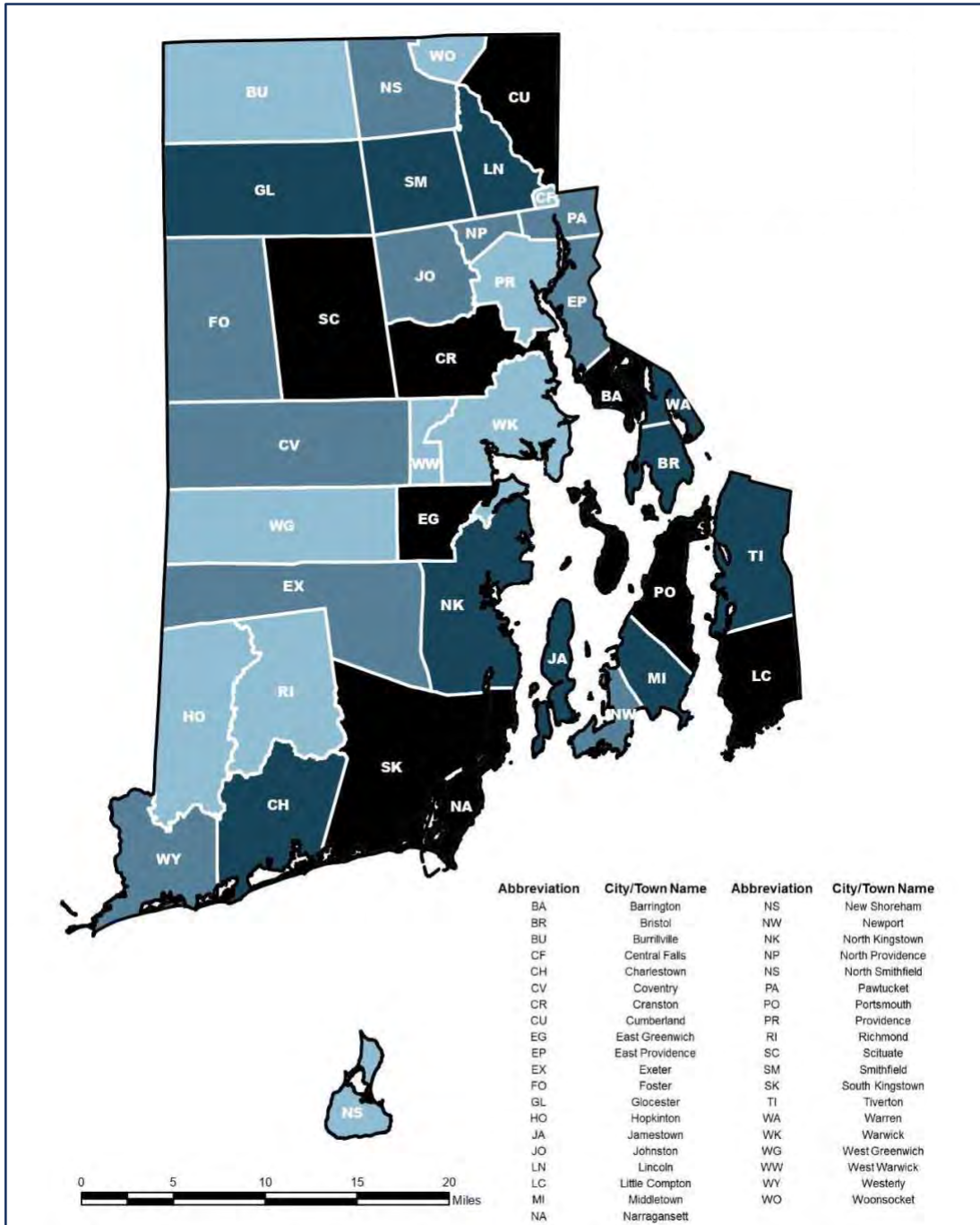


Figure 1: Map of Rhode Island cities and towns. [Image credit: University of Rhode Island]

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

The state's highest point at Jerimoth Hill in Foster is only 812 feet. Although Rhode Island is small, its geography and settlement patterns have considerable variety.

At the head of Narragansett Bay is the city of Providence, its harbor set at the confluence of three rivers. Providence is the state's capital and its economic, educational, and cultural center. North of Providence to the state's border with Massachusetts are the cities and towns of the Blackstone Valley. Once characterized by rural farms and later by the development of industry in factory villages along the Blackstone River, the valley's older town centers and agricultural matrix are now overlaid by suburban development.

The west side of Narragansett Bay developed as a series of small port villages bounded by agricultural settlements from Cranston to Narragansett, which are now characterized by suburban development.

The western upland areas of Rhode Island along the border with Connecticut are still the state's most rural regions. Meager soils, gentle hills, woods, small streams, lakes and ponds characterize this most sparsely settled region of the state. In this area historically developed for agriculture with some rural industry, limited farming remains among the exurban and suburban settlement of the recent past. The largest water body here is the Scituate Reservoir, an impoundment on the North Branch of the Pawtuxet River that provides water to Providence and its environs.

The southern shore of Rhode Island borders the Atlantic Ocean. West of the bay the coast fronts on Block Island Sound while the Rhode Island Sound extends across the mouth of the bay and the eastern coast. The border between mainland and sea is defined by a series of barrier beaches and coastal ponds. Reaching inland from the western coastline is the broad outwash plain of Washington County, usually called "South County" by Rhode Islanders. The state's best soils are located here, and this has always been an important agricultural area. This plain is bounded to the north by the Charlestown Moraine, a long, glacially formed ridge. The moraine region, which is interlaced with ponds, swamps, and streams, drains



Figure 2: Rhode Island's coastline - Moonstone Beach, South Kingstown. [Image credit: Visit Rhode Island]

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

into the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed, supported only sparse settlement historically. Summer resort development has been an important aspect of this coastal area and more recently, year-round suburban settlement has spread in both the coastal plain and the hilly moraine.

East of Narragansett Bay, a series of long peninsulas separated by tidal rivers form the northeast shore. Small ports at Bristol and Warren constitute the oldest and largest village centers here, with most but not all of the remaining territory adapted from farmland to suburban residential development. To the southeast, the gently rolling lands along the Sakonnet River and the ocean coastline gradually rise to the higher land in eastern Tiverton. The rural agricultural character of the countryside has been retained widely in Little Compton and much of Tiverton.



Figure 3: Rural farm in Little Compton. [Image credit: Discover Newport.]

Narragansett Bay contains a range of islands both large and small. The largest and most important is Aquidneck Island; it and neighboring Conanicut are the only islands connected to the mainland by highway bridges. Aquidneck Island is dominated by the city of Newport, which has a varied history as a major colonial port, a Victorian summer resort, home to a large naval installation, and now a tourist center. To the north and east of Newport, the island's long agricultural history is still evident, though suburban development has claimed large areas. Conanicut Island, which is much smaller than Aquidneck, features a central village and a rural hinterland that now supports suburban as well as agricultural settlement. Prudence and Hog Islands to the north have primarily summer communities, and the other smaller islands are not inhabited. Bay islands and the neighboring coastline at the mouth of Narragansett Bay retain a significant built legacy of the nation's harbor defense system.

Block Island, located 12 miles offshore in the Atlantic Ocean, is characterized by a rolling landscape dotted by hills and ponds. It has retained a rural quality that is overlain by summer resort development primarily from the Victorian era.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State
The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

RHODE ISLAND'S HISTORIC RESOURCES

Historic resources are an integral part of nearly every aspect of Rhode Island. They are important to the people of Rhode Island individually – as a home, place of worship, or town hall – and collectively, as our neighborhoods, downtowns, and countryside. Any plans for preservation must take into account the variety of these resources and the uses which they serve. Considered generally, most historic resources can be grouped into categories of residential buildings and neighborhoods, commercial buildings and downtowns, institutional and ecclesiastical buildings, industrial buildings, agricultural buildings and farms, archaeological sites, and landscapes.

- *Residential buildings, neighborhoods, and development patterns*

The historic residential buildings of Rhode Island are an invaluable resource. Constructed over several hundred years, they represent a variety of styles, materials, living arrangements, and settings. Rhode Islanders can choose from a wide range of living situations which suit their interests, tastes, and means – as various as owning a rural eighteenth-century house to renting an urban apartment in a handsome three-decker from the early twentieth century.

Living in a historic house, apartment building, or condominium can have particular advantages. With appropriate rehabilitation, a historic residential building can have many of the amenities associated with new construction. If we can keep this variety of age, style, and construction, and provide guidance and aid in dealing with specific issues such as lead paint, energy efficiency and barrier-free accessibility, we will preserve an important part of Rhode Island's unique character.

Most of Rhode Island's historic houses are located in historic neighborhoods—old villages developed around maritime, commercial and industrial enterprises, urban neighborhoods and suburban plats. A strong reciprocal relationship can benefit homeowners and their neighborhoods. Rehabilitating older houses can preserve and enhance these neighborhoods, and the neighborhoods in turn provide residents with a human-scale environment with convenient access to amenities and transportation routes. Those historic houses built outside of the population centers also play an important role in the identity and sense of place of more rural districts.

Preserving Rhode Island's old houses and neighborhoods pays important dividends— it strengthens the pride of residents in their communities, their concern for and attachment to their neighborhoods, and their willingness to work for improvements. Nurturing traditional walkable neighborhoods and protecting them from threats such as disinvestment or inappropriate development can also promote healthier and more sustainable communities.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

- *Commercial buildings and downtowns*

Rhode Island boasts numerous historic commercial centers of exceptional quality. Providence's downtown, the state's principal commercial center, is composed of a cohesive fabric of substantial and beautiful buildings that tell the story of the economic center of an industrializing region. The state's smaller cities and older towns have important downtown areas as well, often a single main street, lined with the handsome commercial buildings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many of the commercial centers give evidence of the pride their builders took in their towns and in their businesses.

Some city and town centers in Rhode Island display a pattern of disinvestment, dilapidation, and vacancy. As with old factories, commercial buildings may seem to have outlived their usefulness—large-scale, highway-oriented retailing has become the norm—but there is still substantial value to be realized from the preservation of historic commercial centers.

Important components of the retail sector make use of smaller pedestrian-scale commercial buildings. Neighborhood retailing centers make good use of older buildings, and specialty retailers sometimes find a particular advantage in the use of an older building which serves as a signature and becomes part of a marketing program. Several of the state's most interesting village centers, like Wickford Village in North Kingstown or the Town of Warren, have seen this kind of development.

The growth and change exhibited by the most successful of Rhode Island's older downtowns depends to a great extent on the willingness of the community to take a planning approach which deals with a commercial area as a whole, rather than a piece-meal ad hoc approach. This may sometimes include consideration of mixed-use zoning that can allow suitable new uses such as residential to complement and support commercial uses. Good development plans for historic commercial areas can help ensure their economic vitality and visual quality.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

- *Institutional buildings and ecclesiastical buildings*

The state's public buildings and houses of worship have a special place in the appearance of Rhode Island's cities and towns. These buildings are important centers of activity; they are landmarks, often elaborate and impressive, and many times the chief architectural ornament of their area.



Figure 4: Rhode Island State House in a 1917 image.

As a builder, Rhode Island's state government has produced a remarkable collection of buildings. The most important is the monumental State House, designed by McKim, Mead & White and constructed between 1895 and 1904, which serves as the visual and functional center of the state's executive and legislative branches. The state has also built important courthouses, arsenals and armories, police barracks, hospitals, prisons, parks, airports, a university and several colleges.

The state's communities have constructed town and city halls, schools, libraries, police stations, fire stations, and public parks, many of them handsome examples of their kind and all illustrative of the important role of the community in daily life.

The state's long history and the diversity of its population has bequeathed to Rhode Islanders an unparalleled assortment of ecclesiastical buildings—meetinghouses, churches, and synagogues. Beyond their self-evident value to those who use them as houses of worship, these buildings are landmarks for their communities, usually prominently sited. In their variety of age, size, and style, they document the state's history as a haven for all faiths and as a home to immigrant communities from around the world. Religious buildings can also face serious preservation challenges when no longer needed for religious use.

As governmental functions change, public buildings sometimes seem to be a drain on a community's resources. Changes in ownership or use may provide a key to the preservation of such resources. Similarly, demographic shifts may suggest that older religious buildings have outlived their usefulness and no longer justify their costs. But public and ecclesiastical buildings warrant planning and careful forethought before changes in ownership and use are contemplated.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

- *Industrial buildings*

Rhode Island has a long history as a center of industry. Located throughout the state, but especially in the urban centers of Providence, Pawtucket, Warwick, and Woonsocket and in the villages strung along the state's river valleys, old industrial buildings and structures are central to the story of Rhode Island's development. Experience has shown they can also have a role in the state's future economic development.

While some of these industrial buildings and structures are used for their original purposes, many are used by manufacturers of various products, for commercial enterprises, and for warehousing and storage. Many more have now been rehabilitated into multi-unit housing or multi-purpose use. While industrial buildings and structures are often considered obsolete, and large-scale manufacturers are often reluctant to work in a multi-story industrial building, these buildings can be a profitable choice for some. The costs of land and construction for new buildings are high, but space in older buildings is still relatively inexpensive. Renovation of an existing building can have advantages—it often takes less time than new construction and can be staged so that production is not interrupted while work proceeds. Rhode Island has been a pioneer in the reuse of individual mills and industrial complexes with the assistance of state and federal historic preservation tax credits. These creative and comprehensive projects, spread throughout the state, demonstrate how these buildings can become new engines of community revitalization. Many more mills remain, empty or underutilized, but capable of productive service once more.

Rhode Island's old industrial buildings and structures are frequently the site of ground contamination, making them more difficult to use. Developing and implementing effective and appropriate measures to remediate such "brownfields" are successful re-use of these sites.

- *Agricultural buildings and farms*

Farming has been a tremendously formative influence on the Rhode Island landscape and it remains so, despite the precipitous decline in active farmland in the last half of the twentieth century. Although the numbers of Rhode Islanders who farm for a living are few, their numbers are growing as is the amount of land they have in cultivation. Between 1960 and 2000, 50% of the state's active farmland was lost, mostly to suburban development. Nursery stock, firewood, and turf are the state's principal agricultural products; there are some dairy and poultry farms, orchards, and apiaries. Rhode Islanders' interest in sustaining local agriculture is increasing, as well, as evidenced by the growing number of community-supported agriculture farms and by land trusts incorporating agriculture into their plans.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

- *Archaeological sites*

Rhode Island possesses a diverse archaeological record that sheds light on over 10,000 years of local history. Archaeological sites, such as ancient Native American settlements, colonial-era farmsteads, industrial ruins, and shipwrecks are all irreplaceable sources of information. Over 2,500 archaeological sites have been identified within the state thus far, and many more await discovery. The identification, evaluation, and protection of the state's archaeological sites, including those on land and under water, are major goals of Rhode Island's historic preservation program.

Preserving archaeological sites in place is often the best way to save the information they contain for posterity. This is not always a feasible approach, particularly during

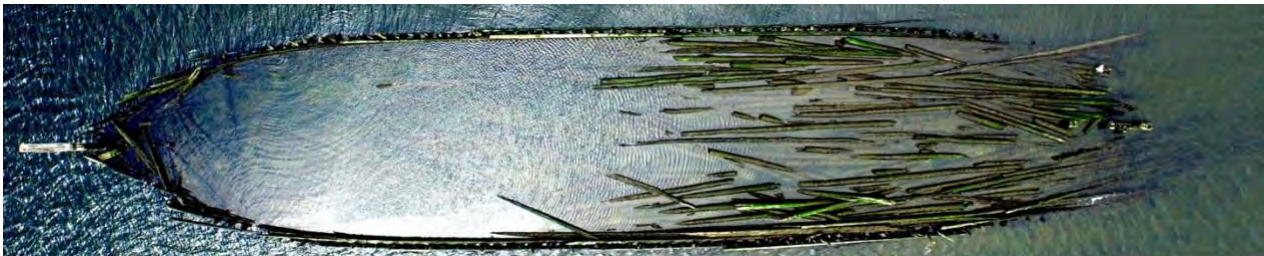


Figure 5: Schooner-barge wreck, Green Jacket Shoal, East Providence.
[Image credit: Glenn Anderson via aerial drone, 2015.]

contemporary development projects or along coastal margins that are eroding in response to sea level rise and storms of increasing frequency and intensity. Archaeological excavation, a systematic process of destruction that aims to maximize the collection of information about past human behavior, often provides a more desirable alternative to unmitigated destruction.

Accordingly, it is critical that archaeologists are educated in current archaeological method and theory, technically proficient in survey and excavation techniques, and competent in reporting. Standards for archaeological investigations are provided by the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Documentation](#) and the RIHPHC's Performance Standards. The RIHPHC requires all archaeology conducted under its review and/or jurisdiction to be performed by archaeologists' work that meets both sets of standards, and issues permits for such work on a case-by-case basis.

RIHPHC archaeological staff also routinely advise other agencies and organizations on the archaeological sensitivity of properties, site preservation options, and appropriate methods of site investigation. As with historic buildings and other above-ground

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

resources, RIHPHC compiles and maintains archaeological site files and reports on behalf of the state.

- *Landscapes*

Despite its small size, Rhode Island has a remarkably varied topography which, combined with centuries of use has produced an extraordinary landscape legacy. The state boasts notable examples of formal landscape design, such as campuses, picturesque garden cemeteries, estates, golf courses,



parks, parkways, and public plazas and open spaces. Vernacular landscapes, such as farmlands, mill ponds and waterways, family cemeteries, and historic roadways, reflect the historic patterns of settlement and daily life. There are also cultural landscapes associated with the historical traditions of specific social groups; this includes those important to Native people, which are often dominated by natural features such as hills, stone outcrops, wetlands and ponds. All these landscapes, which are sometimes referred to as heritage landscapes, document long-standing and ongoing efforts to shape and adapt the natural landscape to a variety of human needs. They are integral to our sense of place.

Figure 6: Although Rhode Island has been intensely developed, the state exhibits a rural character in locations such as Hopkins Hollow in Coventry, which includes a simple church and cemetery. [Image credit: Sky Sabin.]

[Historic landscapes](#) present particular preservation challenges. Those with naturalistic settings or utilitarian character are often taken for granted, and their design or historic significance is not always readily apparent. Historic landscapes may be regarded as simple open space at best, or, at worst, perceived as undeveloped or vacant – land often considered a development opportunity, not a preservation opportunity.

Historic cemeteries are important features in the Rhode Island landscape. The most common type are small family burial plots with relatively few larger community cemeteries, which distinguishes Rhode Island from most of the rest of New England. Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns are home to over 3,600 historic cemeteries, a remarkable number for such a small state. These often are among the oldest cultural resources in a community and contain a wealth of information about local history. Cemeteries are protected under RIGL-23-18 et seq, and many are maintained by community volunteers. However, due to their lack of formalized stewardship, many often suffer from lack of maintenance. With their remote locations, many are little known to the

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

public and poorly documented, though efforts by local advocacy groups, historians, and genealogists have done much to address the latter problem. Improved state regulations have given communities more authority to protect these historic cemeteries, but much more is needed to improve these conditions.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS

From 2019-2020, RIHPHC conducted a strategic planning process concurrently with the preparation of this plan. Members of RIHPHC staff worked collaboratively with preservation professionals to develop a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of historic preservation in Rhode Island. The findings were presented to the Commission for its input during regular public meetings and later informed the goals presented in this plan. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified during the strategic planning process are outlined in the tables below.

As is typical of a SWOT analysis, the framework analyzed both internal and external factors that affect Rhode Island’s historic resources and RIHPHC’s program areas and initiatives. The findings below are summarized by programmatic or thematic area. The information in the following SWOT charts were used to inform specific objectives outlined in detail in Section 5.

- *State and Federal Tax Credit Programs*

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Program’s reputation for effectiveness and efficiency among members of Rhode Island’s legislature	Lack of consistent and direct state funding for historic tax credits	Rebuild Rhode Island tax credits can be pursued as an additional funding source	Loss of state funding for historic tax credit projects
Extensive portfolio of completed projects provides leverage for additional funding and support of historic tax credits	Competition for funding with Rebuild Rhode Island tax credit program, which funds both historic and non-historic development	RIHPHC, developers, consultants, and partners can more aggressively promote historic tax credit success stories	Potential for unfavorable changes to federal historic tax credit program through changes in law or revaluation.
Experienced staff reviewers and track-record of collaboration	Coordination between RIHPHC, developers, and National Park Service can be time consuming	Increasing the inventory of historic buildings listed in the National Register	Differing interpretations of Secretary of the Interior’s Standards by RIHPHC and National Park Service

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

- *State and Federal Regulatory Programs*

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Strong and consistent state statutes and federal laws	Regulatory work is inherently reactive	Tracking potential threats over time could make program less reactive	Potential changes to Section 106 process at the federal level
Ability to interface between programs/project types	Coordination for project reviews of state-assisted projects overseen by other state agencies can be cumbersome	Stronger interface with other state agencies could lead to a better understanding of their assistance and regulatory programs	Lack of coordination with other agencies could lead to poor preservation outcomes
Experienced staff with a strong program track record	Lack of public exposure and understanding of state and federal regulations	Experienced staff could increase education and community outreach	Potential modification to state and federal laws/regulations that are unfavorable to preservation

- *National and State Registers/Landmark Programs*

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Experienced staff with a strong program track record	Public confusion about the program and the difference between National/State Registers, local historic districts, and local designation programs	Build partnerships with academic institutions and sister organizations to raise awareness of the program(s)	Changes to laws/statutes governing the programs
Program is foundational for other RIHPHC programs and Rhode Island preservation initiatives	Capacity of NR staff to take on new initiatives in addition to regular workflow	Make connections between preservation and heritage; survey new resource types, such as Modern buildings	Lack of relevance of the program to Rhode Islanders due to misunderstandings of the program
Program(s) dovetail with historic tax credit projects	Projects are subject to National Park Service approval and timelines	Expand the reach of preservation into different communities	Lack of recapitalization of state historic tax credit funding

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

- *State and Federal Preservation Grants Programs*

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Strong grant programs track records	Dependent on cyclical State budget appropriations and annual federal Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) appropriations	State Preservation Grant program was recapitalized with approval of a new bond issue in 2020; new grants will be awarded in Fall 2021.	Loss or significant reductions to state and federal program appropriations and/or allocations
Programs are popular with municipalities, nonprofits, and the public	Federal funding through HPF often available only for use by Certified Local Government communities	Potential to partner with RI State Council on the Arts for cultural funding pool(s).	Programs need to evolve to remain appealing to state government and other funding sources
Experienced staff with a strong program track record	Late apportionment of annual HPF funds due to late passage of federal budget	Promote HPF funding/grants that constituents can apply for directly (ex. Underrepresented Communities Grants, Save America’s Treasures Grants)	

- *Cultural Landscapes*

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<i>Historic Landscapes of Rhode Island</i> survey publication is a strong foundation	Tendency to focused on designed landscapes vs. vernacular or ethnographic landscapes	Need to expand and update survey publication	Impacts of climate change and/or sea level rise on cultural landscapes
	Vacancy on the Commission for a landscape expert; delays in confirmation of new commissioners	Cultural landscapes can provide additional context for documentation of historic places and cultural heritage	

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

- Climate Change Planning and Mitigation*

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Small state with track record of collaboration among state agencies and nonprofit sector	Policy and mitigation for historic resources are still in the brainstorming stages	Apply preservation survey and documentation experience to creating consistent design guidelines for historic homeowners and municipalities	Inconsistent application of mitigation measures can damage the integrity of historic neighborhoods, buildings, and archaeological resources
Strong advocacy from Rhode Island's federal delegation	Cost of implementation and lack of consistent application	RIHPHC can act as an information conduit and a funding source	Devaluing real estate due to location in flood zones
Robust historic survey and data collection that can be used for multi-disciplinary planning and mitigation	Many surveys and National Register nominations need to be updated in order to be useful; staff capacity to execute	Update historic resource documentation and data to be used as a multi-disciplinary mitigation tool	Environmental impacts to historic resources and cultural heritage

- Heritage Programs*

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Rhode Island's diversity; 40+ years of RIHPHC Heritage Festivals bringing communities together	Understanding of how cultural heritage and historic preservation programs can/do interface	Partnerships with established heritage organizations and greater collaboration between preservation and heritage	RIHPHC's preservation and heritage activities are siloed
RIHPHC's enabling statutes mandate heritage programming	RIHPHC has not clearly defined cultural heritage or intangible heritage	Expanding whose stories and histories are preserved in Rhode Island	State/federal and resources typically applied to tangible resources
Preservation community's expertise in documenting and interpreting	Funding and staff capacity to expand heritage programming	Incorporate cultural heritage into public programming, including annual RIHPHC conference	

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

THE IMPACT OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Since the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, Rhode Islanders have made a significant investment of time, effort, and money in the preservation of historic buildings, areas, landscapes, archaeological sites, and cultural heritage. Individual property owners have purchased and restored historic houses. Investors in commercial buildings have renovated and updated older buildings in our downtowns and industrial properties throughout the state. State and federal agencies have rehabilitated historic buildings so that they continue to serve the people of Rhode Island. Local communities have developed their own preservation programs for the restoration of important community-owned historic buildings. Colleges and universities have restored some of their important historic buildings; several have developed programs for teaching about archaeology and the preservation of historic resources. Religious congregations have supported important restorations of their historic houses of worship. A variety of organizations and individuals have carefully maintained and restored historic landscapes, including parks, gardens, cemeteries, campuses, farms, and estates. Preservation advocates have joined organizations that promote historic preservation and have voted for bond issues which support historic preservation. Rhode Islanders have toured historic buildings and landscapes in their communities and welcomed millions of tourists to the state's historic places each year.

Rhode Islanders' interest in and commitment to historic preservation is long-standing and multifaceted. The belief that the quality of our environment includes the buildings we live and work in; the civic spaces in which we gather; the roads and bridges we travel; and the farms, villages, cities, suburbs, parks, and open space which form the fabric of our daily lives form the foundation of the state's preservation ethos. Just as we work to ensure that our natural environment is conserved, we also work to ensure that our built environment is protected. Our historic buildings and places have important value for the future of Rhode Island.

What kinds of value are there in historic buildings and places? Part of their value will put dollars in the pockets of Rhode Islanders, and part of their value will be gained in improving the quality of life for us all. If we plan for the future with care and appreciation of their value, historic buildings and places will produce an important dividend for the investment Rhode Islanders make in their preservation.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Benefits of Historic Preservation in Rhode Island

USE VALUE

Historic buildings can be used for the same purpose for which they were built. Historic houses have value as dwellings, historic factories can be used for manufacturing, older commercial buildings can still market goods and services. Where historic buildings have outlived their original use, they can be converted to new uses. Historic open spaces serve a multitude of uses as productive farmland, important recreational areas or conservation lands that protect environmental, cultural and archaeological resources.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Historic buildings contribute to Rhode Island's economy in tangible ways. Millions of tourists come to Rhode Island every year, and tourism is an important economic generator for the state. Many of those who visit Rhode Island choose our state as a destination *because* of its special historic and visual character. Travelers seeking cultural and historic attractions drive half of the state's \$6.5 billion annual tourism industry. They come to visit our historic cities; small towns and countryside; our museums, parks, and golf courses; and to participate in special events that take place in historic areas. They spend money at hotels, restaurants, and retail shops, and they create jobs and generate tax revenue.

The rehabilitation of historic buildings is also a significant economic generator for Rhode Island. A 2018 analysis of the economic benefits of historic preservation in the state discerned that rehabilitation "has improved property values, fostered civic beauty, and promoted public education, pleasure, and welfare."² Many historic rehabilitations leverage federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits, which have placed a wide range of historic buildings back into serviceable and taxable use. Additionally, tax credit rehabilitations create jobs and encourage additional private investment in our communities. While tax credit projects are in progress, the state receives the additional benefit of tax on materials, income tax on wages, and business tax from the contractor.³

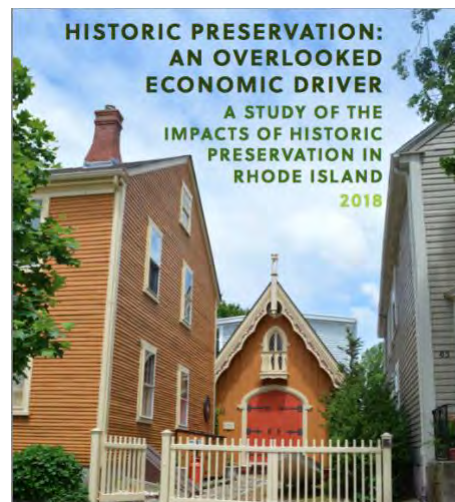


Figure 7: Cover of a study on historic preservation's economic power in Rhode Island, partially funded by a grant from RIHPHC.

² PlaceEconomics. (Newport, RI: PlaceEconomics, 2018): 21.

³ PlaceEconomics, 26.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Everyone who lives in Rhode Island lives in an old town or city, a history of settlement which reaches back three centuries and more. The towns and cities we live in are the product of numerous decisions made by those who lived here in the past—where to live, how to build, how to work, educate children, worship, and travel.

Historic buildings, neighborhoods and places give shape and substance to the communities we live in. The patterns of development that characterize the historic areas of our towns and cities are the patterns with which we still live. And, for the most part, these patterns have made communities which are human-scale, pleasant, and diverse. While this value may be difficult to quantify, it is evident when it is absent.

The preservation of historic buildings and places is important in the protection of community character. Much of Rhode Island's beauty and desirability as a place to live and work depend on its historic buildings, neighborhoods and places.

SENSITIVE PLANNING

On the macro scale, the preservation of historic buildings and areas can assist Rhode Islanders in the growth of their communities. Built-up areas and open space have value as a guide for the future of each community. When existing building patterns are treated as the base from which further development takes place, there is much to be gained. Preserving older neighborhoods is a smaller strain on the community's resources than building new, since infrastructure of community services is already in place and need not be created anew. And using our old buildings instead of creating new ones reduces encroachment on our diminishing farmland and open space.

SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

The preservation of historic buildings and areas can improve the sustainability of future development. By preserving and reusing a historic building, we conserve the energy and physical resources that went into creating it, we avoid expending energy and resources to demolish it and send it to the landfill, and we eliminate the consumption of the new energy and resources needed to build its replacement. Moreover, historic buildings erected before 1920 have been found to be more energy efficient than the buildings that followed them, due to the solidity and durability of their construction, windows that maximize the availability of natural light and ventilation, and features such as high ceilings and shaded porches that reduce summer heat without air

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

conditioning.⁴ Historic buildings also lend themselves to a variety of retrofit measures such as insulation that that can increase their energy conservation.

Historic preservation also plays a critical role in addressing the twenty-first century climate crisis. Especially in Rhode Island, known as the “Ocean State” for its 400 miles of coastline, historic preservation must lend its tools to the broader fight to mitigate the effects of sea level rise, flooding, and the human impacts of climate change both at the coast and inland. The preservation field’s strengths in documentation, research, assessing risk, and analysis of significance will be vitally important in the coming decades, as will learning from the climate change response in related fields.

EDUCATIONAL VALUE

The historic built environment offers a direct and tangible connection to the past, which makes them an important educational resource. Some historic buildings are used directly in the educational process. The state's historical societies, preservation societies, colleges and universities, towns and cities, and patriotic organizations own many of Rhode Island's most significant historic buildings. Many are open to the public. Students visit these historic buildings and study the buildings themselves, their collections, and the lives of the people who used the buildings in the past. As archaeological sites are excavated, experts learn more about the past and improve our understanding of the generations which preceded us.

Apart from such direct educational value, there is a broader and even more common value in living and working among historic buildings and areas. The well-preserved evidence of the past that surrounds all Rhode Islanders gives each resident and the state as a whole a sense of location in time and space. We are surrounded by the places made by people who lived here before us— their homes, churches, factories, stores—and this helps to give each of us a sense of existing along a continuous line of human occupation. We live in the midst of an important legacy to which we can add before it is handed on to the next generation.

⁴ Technical Preservation Services. “Energy Efficiency.” <https://www.nps.gov/tps/sustainability/energy-efficiency.htm> (accessed October 28, 2020).

A Big Plan for the Smallest State
The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GREATER EQUITY AND REPRESENTATION

Historic preservation professionals and organizations should acknowledge social, racial, gender, and economic inequalities and work to address these issues within the field. While the early decades of the preservation movement were rooted in the preservation of the dominant culture, the field has evolved over the decades. A twenty-first century approach demands consideration of places and stories significant to communities of color and Indigenous groups, women, LGBTQ+ people, low-income families and individuals, and people living with disabilities. The use value and economic benefits of historic preservation in Rhode Island are well-documented, but firmly establishing equity as a core preservation value will require sustained analysis of past practices, evaluation of implicit biases, outreach to communities of color, diversification of the Commission itself, and a strong commitment to representation in the historic preservation field. The preservation of buildings, streetscapes, neighborhoods, histories, and cultural heritage will be most impactful when communities are engaged with the process of preservation and the benefits are accessible to all Rhode Islanders and each Rhode Islander.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State
The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

RHODE ISLAND'S CORE PRESERVATION VALUES

Rhode Island's statewide historic preservation plan establishes the following principles to guide and inform our decisions while we work towards achieving the goals outlined in this plan:

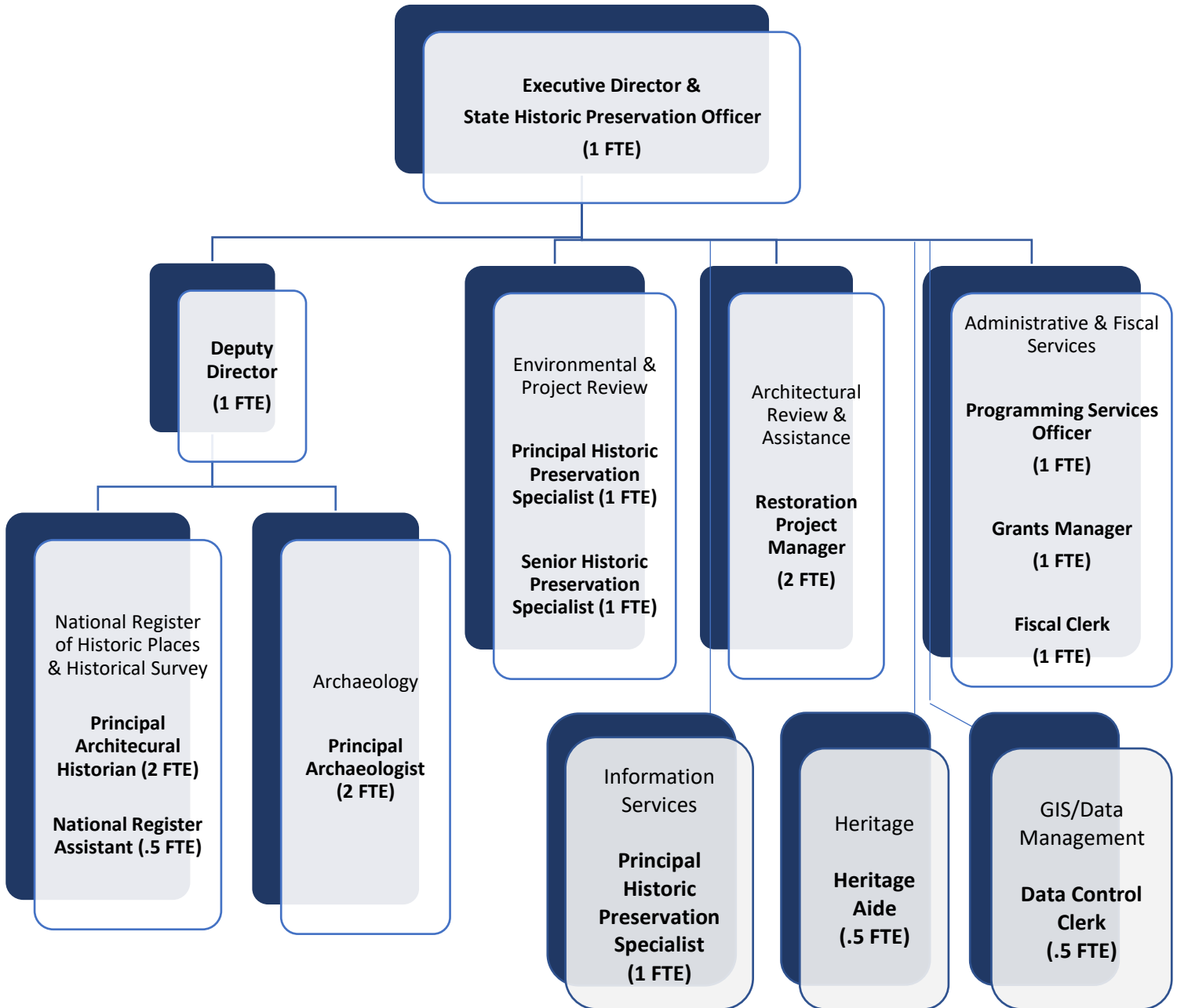
1. The preservation of historic resources is of fundamental public interest, a proper and desirable exercise of the state's authority and leadership, and the legitimate concern of its communities and its citizens.
2. The preservation of historic resources can be a tool to engender progress, growth, and thoughtful new development. Preservation has been proven to contribute significantly to Rhode Island's economy.
3. Historic resources are best preserved by using them, either for their original purpose or by adapting them for a new use. For some special categories of fragile historic resources, most notably archaeological sites, preservation is best achieved by restricting their use to protect them from decay or destruction.
4. The adaptive reuse of historic buildings, a form of recycling that preserves the embodied energy in existing building materials, is good for the environment.
5. The preservation of historic resources is best achieved when it is integrated into public planning processes rather than when it takes place in opposition to those processes.
6. Preservation relies on the commitment and effort of private property owners, businesses, non-profit organizations, developers, public entities, and users of historic places. Cooperation and mutual support among these different parties are important for successful preservation.
7. Historic preservation must be an active component of Rhode Island's critical fight against climate change and sea level rise.
8. The historic preservation field in Rhode Island must prioritize equity and representation at all levels of practice.

Section Three

What We Do: RIHPHC Program Areas

A Big Plan for the Smallest State
 The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
 for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

RIHPHC Staff Organizational Chart



A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

RIHPHC PROGRAM AREAS AND ACTIVITIES

The RIHPHC is the state agency for historic preservation and heritage programs, established by the State Historic Preservation Act in 1968 following the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The NHPA sets federal policy for preservation, which the RIHPHC carries out by operating the statewide historic preservation program that identifies and protects historic buildings, districts, structures, objects, and sites. The NHPA also authorizes the Historic Preservation Fund, through which the RIHPHC receives annual federal appropriations to carry out its preservation activities. The Commission also develops and carries out state-funded programs to document and celebrate the cultural heritage of Rhode Island's people.



A Big Plan for the Smallest State
The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

IDENTIFICATION, DOCUMENTATION & REGISTRATION

Statewide Survey

Preservation begins with an awareness of historic places and an understanding of their condition and significance. The identification of historic places serves as the basis for all other preservation efforts. In Rhode Island, a statewide survey of historic properties created and maintained by the RIHPHC provides that foundation. Since this survey began in 1968, the RIHPHC has used fieldwork and photography to compile data about properties of historical or archaeological interest in every city and town. The survey now constitutes the principal inventory of the state's extant historic resources.

RIHPHC survey reports include a concise history of a community, neighborhood, or special topic; an inventory of related places of historical interest; and recommendations for the future of these resources, which may include listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The selective inventories of resources in these reports are supplemented by the more inclusive survey files maintained by the RIHPHC. Although the RIHPHC completed survey reports for historic buildings in every community in the state by the 1990s, efforts continue to supplement, update, and refine the survey files with additional information.

While buildings are the largest and best-covered category of properties, the RIHPHC survey seeks to be comprehensive and thus includes a wide range of resource types such as neighborhoods, engineering and military structures, outdoor sculpture and monuments, watercraft, designed and vernacular historic landscapes, traditional cultural properties, terrestrial and underwater archeological sites, and Native American archaeological sites. [Survey reports are digitized on the RIHPHC's website](#), and copies of individual survey files are available by request.

In addition to surveying the built environment, the identification of the state's archaeological sites, on land and under water, are major goals of Rhode Island's historical preservation program. Archaeological surveys have been conducted throughout the state, concentrating especially on the lands bordering Narragansett Bay and Rhode Island Sound, which have a uniquely rich history of human occupation from ancient times.

National Register of Historic Places

Evaluation is an essential corollary to identification in the preservation planning process. It allows for the assessment of the historical significance and integrity of resources and thereby helps to determine what properties should be prioritized for preservation. The RIHPHC's most widely used tools for evaluating historic properties are the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Created by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and maintained by the National Park Service, the National Register is the federal government's official list of properties that are significant in American history and worthy of preservation. To meet the criteria for listing in the National Register, a resource must be associated with a significant aspect of local, state, or national history and retain its historic character. The evaluation and listing of properties in the National Register is a two-step process with the first level of review occurring at the state historic preservation office and the second at the National Park Service.



Figure 8: Narragansett Indian Church (1859), listed in the National Register in 1973 as a contributing resource to the Historic Village of the Narragansetts in Charlestown Historic District, Charlestown, RI. [Image credit: John M. Miller, via Society of Architectural Historians “Archipedia.”]

Listing properties in the National Register can be initiated in a number of ways, including by owners, by the federal government for federally owned properties, by tribes for properties on tribal lands, by the local community, and by the RIHPHC. Applicants for listing typically employ architectural historians or archaeologists as consultants to complete the research and documentation that the National Register nomination requires. However, applicants who wish to prepare the nomination themselves can obtain guidance from the RIHPHC staff. RIHPHC staff also occasionally prepares nominations internally.

In addition to staff-level review, National Register nominations are considered by a State Review Board (SRB) composed of professionals in the fields of American history, architectural history, architecture, archaeology, and other disciplines. Established as a committee of the Commission in October 2017, the SRB is composed of Commission members and colleagues in the field. The SRB considers properties on both a preliminary basis - to provide non-binding guidance on eligibility before a nomination is prepared - and a final basis, where completed drafts of nominations are formally voted on prior to transmittal to the National Park Service for final review and listing in the National Register upon approval.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

More than 21,000 properties in Rhode Island have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, most of them included in 188 historic districts. Many more properties are eligible for listing. The variety of Rhode Island properties listed in the National Register demonstrates the state's rich architectural, historical, and archaeological heritage. National Register properties are located in every Rhode Island community. Every city and town in the state has at least one National Register historic district, and some communities have many more. A complex analysis of the State and National Register listings, which would identify the types of properties represented in Rhode Island's documentation, has not yet been completed.

Listing in the National Register or the State Register – a parallel program that includes all properties listed in the National Register as well as additional sites determined to be significant to Rhode Island's heritage – can also make a property eligible for federal and state assistance programs and other important financial incentives at the community level, such as property tax benefits (see Financial Incentives, pg. 30). Resources that meet the National Register criteria are afforded special consideration during government-sponsored projects to avoid damage or alteration (see Project Review, pg. 32). To facilitate the evaluation of historic properties during the planning process, those that are not listed can be determined eligible through a consensus determination of eligibility by the government agency and the RIHPHC.

As is the case with the statewide survey, the passage of time requires an ongoing evaluation of National Register listings. For example, many National Register historic districts include properties that are within the district boundaries but are designated "non-contributing" because they were not yet 50 years old at the time the district was listed. If those properties have since acquired significance, nominations may be amended to change their status to "contributing," affording those properties the benefits and protections that come with National Register listing. Other nominations may include buildings that have been significantly altered or demolished since the time the nomination was prepared, warranting boundary adjustments or, in rare cases, delisting.

The RIHPHC began digitizing National Register nominations around 2010, and [completed nominations are now available on the RIHPHC website](#). The website also includes a "Historic Property Search" tool which provides information about a property's National Register status, inclusion in a National Register historic district, architectural style, and historic and current functions.

State Register of Historic Places

The RIHPHC also maintains a State Register of Historic Places, which employs the same criteria as the National Register. All Rhode Island properties listed in the National Register are automatically listed in the State Register. Additionally, all National Historic Landmarks in

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Rhode Island, properties determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register by the National Park Service, and Rhode Island Archaeological Landmarks designated by the Commission are determined listed in the State Register. Properties can also be listed in the State Register if they are located within a local historic district and they:

- Are more than fifty years old;
- Relate to a broad theme of the community's history or serve as a good example of a type, style, or method of construction; and
- Possess sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its historical significance
- Receive approval by the RIHPHC Executive Director

Locally fabricated State Register of Historic Places markers are available for purchase through the RIHPHC.

State Archaeological Landmarks

In addition to listing in the National Register or the State Register, archaeological sites and underwater historic property may be designated as State Archaeological Landmarks (RIGL 42-45.1-10). The State Archaeological Landmark designation restricts field investigation activities or exploration or recovery activities in the case of an underwater site. In order for above ground or underwater investigation of a State Archaeological Landmark to take place, interested parties must receive both a permit from the RIHPHC and written permission from the property owner. The RIHPHC retains the authority to delist State Archaeological Landmarks if a site no longer retains significance.

REGULATORY REVIEWS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Tax Credits

The federal government provides tax credits for substantial certified rehabilitations of income-producing historic buildings. Assisted by these tax credits, private investors have undertaken hundreds of rehabilitation projects in Rhode Island. In addition to preserving important buildings, these projects create jobs, provide needed housing, revitalize our main streets and older neighborhoods, and develop properties for office and commercial use or reuse.

Federal tax incentives come in the form of a tax credit taken on the owner's income tax equal to 20% of rehabilitation costs. The RIHPHC processes applications for the credit, and final certifications are issued by the [National Park Service](#). In order to qualify, properties must be listed in the National Register, depreciable (i.e. used in trade or business or income-

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

producing), and not an owner-occupied residence. Additionally, rehabilitation costs must exceed the adjusted basis of the building or \$5,000, whichever is greater, and the rehabilitation must be completed within 24 months, or in phases up to 60 months.

Rhode Island established a state income tax credit for substantial certified rehabilitations of income-producing historic buildings in 2001. Administered by the RIHPHC, the program stimulated historic rehabilitation activities across the state with 237 projects completed and placed in service over eight years representing \$1.3 billion total tax credit value in 24 communities. The program was suspended in 2008 and reinstated in 2013 to allocate unused tax credits from the previous program. As of Fall 2020, 57 new projects representing private investment of \$700 million received state tax credits between 2013 and 2020. RIHPHC continues to process applications and manage projects under both the federal and state tax credit programs. Additionally, the state has created the “Rebuild Rhode Island” tax credit program with special criteria for historic properties. This program is administered by the [Rhode Island Commerce Corporation](#).

Easements

The RIHPHC has the statutory authority to accept contributions of partial interest in real property for conservation purposes for a term, or in perpetuity (RIGL 39-34). The Preservation Easement Program was established to preserve and protect cultural resources including buildings, archaeological sites, and land areas and currently includes 143 current easements. The Commission considers easements for buildings listed or eligible for listing in the National Register, including those that contribute to the significance of a historic district and requires easements on all properties receiving State Preservation Grant funding from RIHPHC. The Commission will also consider accepting easements on historically important land areas and archaeological sites if the property is listed or eligible for listing in the National Register. Evaluation of potential easement donations is guided by the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards; grantors are required to fund an endowment equal to 5% of the appraised value of the property. The RIHPHC maintains files on all properties on which it holds an easement. The RIHPHC must approve work at properties with easements, prior to the work beginning, and monitors easement properties for compliance.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

State Preservation Grants

The State Preservation Grants (SPG) program is RIHPHC’s largest grant-making effort. Through this program, grants of up to \$150,000 are competitively awarded for capital preservation (bricks and mortar) projects at public historic sites, museums, and cultural art

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

centers located in historic structures in Rhode Island. The State Preservation Grants Program was created in 2002 because state lawmakers and voters recognized that many significant properties owned by public agencies and non-profit organizations need extensive repairs or restoration; that it is essential to preserve landmarks that embody our heritage; and that arts, culture, and civic organizations face unique challenges in updating their historic facilities for new audiences and programs. Preserving these historic landmarks—theatres, museums, concert halls, art centers, libraries, town halls—contributes to the quality of life in Rhode Island and ensures that our arts, culture, and civic facilities continue to inspire new generations.

The program was created in 2002 and is funded by state bonds. A multiyear period without funding lasted from 2008-2014. In 2014, the voters of Rhode Island approved the Creative and Cultural Economy Bonds, which provided \$5 million for a historic preservation grant program operated by the RIHPHC and a \$30 million cultural facilities grant program operated by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. The cultural facilities grant applications and projects were also reviewed by RIHPHC staff. Between 2002 and 2008, State Preservation Grants were awarded to non-profits occupying historic sites, and in 2014 the program expanded to include cultural arts centers and historic public buildings. The Commission distributed the \$5 million raised by the bonds from 2015 to 2017. In 2020, Governor Gina Raimondo's state budget recommendations included a proposal for a \$1 million bond to recapitalize the State Preservation Grants program.

The SPG program is also a boost to Rhode Island's economy. Through its matching requirements, the program stimulates broader support and participation in historic preservation projects statewide. Most SPG-funded projects are completed by Rhode Island-based contractors, who have received over \$3 million for their work on these projects since 2015.

Following the success of the 2014 bonds and subsequent grant rounds, the Commission anticipates future collaboration on funding initiatives with the State Council on the Arts. However, lack of funding for this program outside of the state bond process presents an ongoing challenge for the stewards of Rhode Island's historic places, who are unable to anticipate the availability of grants at regular intervals.

Certified Local Government Grants

The Certified Local Government Grants program is an annual, federally-funded program that helps communities fund a wide range of activities, including identification and evaluation of significant historic and archaeological properties, the nomination of eligible properties to the National Register, historic preservation plans, and certain education-related activities. (See "Certified Local Governments (CLG) and Local Regulations" page 36).

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Grants Managed by RIHPHC

RIHPHC receives operating funds from the National Park Service through an annual Historic Preservation Fund grant. RIHPHC has also obtained funding for special projects from other NPS Grant programs, including the National Maritime Heritage Grant Program and the Underrepresented Communities Grant Program.

Other Sources of Grants

RIHPHC maintains a list of grant-making public agencies and non-profit organizations that fund preservation, education, archival, and planning activities on its website:

www.preservation.ri.gov.

Loans

The Historic Preservation Loan Fund, authorized by Rhode Island voters through a bond issue in 1985, is a \$2 million revolving loan fund for historic preservation projects. To date, RIHPHC has leveraged this fund to provide nearly \$9 million in low-interest loans to over 130 borrowers. The purpose of the program is to preserve properties listed in the State Register of Historic Places by providing [low-interest loans](#) to public, non-profit or private owners. Loan money may be used for needed restoration work, or for acquiring and rehabilitating an endangered historic property. Loans are made to individual property owners, or to municipalities and preservation organizations which, in turn, lend to property owners. Borrowers must grant the RIHPHC an [easement](#) that ensures the continued preservation and maintenance of each rehabilitated property.

PROJECT REVIEW

The RIHPHC operates both federal and state programs related to historic preservation and reviews actions by federal and state agencies that may have an impact on historic resources. The [project review](#) of federal and state activities is carried out under the authority of the [National Historic Preservation Act](#) and the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act.

By virtue of its role under these federal and state regulations, the RIHPHC reviews approximately one thousand projects per year, large and small, to ensure that impacts on historic places are minimized. The types of projects reviewed include highway construction, housing rehabilitation, and community development, among many others. The RIHPHC has established close working relationships with government officials at all levels, including state and federal agencies and local municipalities, to ensure that consideration for the protection of historic resources is incorporated into the early planning process for government projects.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

The RIHPHC and other agencies seek information and opinions from the preservation community concerning regulatory activities and serve as sources of information and guidance in return. Though the state historic preservation office is given a primary responsibility in the federal regulatory process, the involvement and support of the larger preservation community are critical to the overall effectiveness of the regulatory process.

National Historic Preservation Act

Federal regulations, most notably those established by [Section 106](#) of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800), require federal agencies to identify and address potential impacts to significant historic resources (those listed or eligible for listing in the National Register) that might be caused by proposed undertakings under their jurisdiction. This applies to direct agency undertakings and those that are carried out by other entities with federal funding or federal permits. The agency or its designee carries out this review process in consultation with the RIHPHC, the tribal historic preservation office, and other agencies or organizations as appropriate, to ensure that sufficient efforts are made to identify historic resources in project areas, to evaluate them for National Register eligibility, to assess potential impacts, and to avoid or lessen the damage that may result from them. Throughout this review process, the consulting parties are directed to consider the input of groups and individuals that may have an interest in the affected resources and the project outcomes.

Standardized procedures are used to assess project impacts and develop appropriate responses. The Project Review system utilizes the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties](#) and is based on three premises:

1. Every project referral should be reviewed so that possible impacts to historic resources can be evaluated.
2. Efforts should be made to preserve all historic resources which have been evaluated as significant.
3. Existence of extraordinary problems or an overwhelming public benefit of a particular project also should be considered during Commission reviews.

The RIHPHC Project Review Coordinators receive and track project referrals and consult with the RIHPHC files to determine whether enough information has been collected to identify historic properties within a proposed project area. As appropriate, the Project Review Coordinators are authorized to issue findings that no historic properties are located within a project area, or that a project will have no effect on historic properties. Once sufficient information is gathered and consultations are made, the Project Review Coordinators recommend to the Executive Director whether the project will have an adverse effect on historic properties and whether the adverse effect can be avoided or minimized. When there is

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

the potential for the effect of a project to be adverse to historic resources, the Project Review Coordinators work with the project applicants and their consultants to develop means to avoid adverse effects. Where adverse effects are unavoidable, means are sought to mitigate the adverse effects through design review, documentation of resources which may be destroyed, data recovery at archaeological sites, and other means. Mitigation measures must meet standards for Historic Preservation Projects established by the Secretary of the Interior.

Projects that may involve archaeological sites are routinely referred by the Project Review Coordinators to staff archaeologists. Other staff, including historians, architectural historians, or historical architects, may be involved in project review as needed.

Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act

The Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act ([RIGL 42-45-5\(a\)\(2\)](#)) requires a comparable preservation review for state and local projects and state-permitted activities.

Regulations adopted by the RIHPHC ([530-RICR-10-00-1-1.5](#)) serve as rules for the implementation of the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act and specifically govern the project review process at the state level.

As a primary consulting party, the RIHPHC coordinates the consideration of historic preservation concerns on state undertakings. Other public and private groups, as well as interested individuals, also have the opportunity to participate in the process. The review process must be completed prior to the issuance of any license or permit.

Projects are subject to review under federal and/or state regulations if they are funded or permitted by the state or federal government or occur on state, federal, or municipal property.

PLANNING

Collaboration with State Agencies

Other state agencies have important roles in preservation planning as well, both directly as owners of historic properties and indirectly as funding or licensing agencies for others' actions. By the nature of their missions, five agencies in particular are consistently involved in preservation decisions and collaborate with RIHPHC:

- The Division of Planning in the Department of Administration serves as the staff for the State Planning Council, administers the Intergovernmental Review Process, and assists cities and towns in meeting their obligations for comprehensive planning.
- The Department of Environmental Management is the steward for many of Rhode Island's significant historic sites, buildings, and landscapes; is the funding source for

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

the state's programs for public parks and open space; and is the principal planning agency in the state for all issues associated with outdoor recreation, agriculture, environmental conservation and many aspects of environmental regulation.

- The Department of Transportation is responsible for road work and transportation planning which have impacts on historic resources and also administers the federal transportation enhancements program.
- The Coastal Resources Management Council regulates development in the coastal zone where many historic buildings, districts and archaeological sites are located.

The Commission includes ex-officio seats for representatives from the Division of Planning and the Department of Environmental Management, as well as the State Building Inspector and Commerce Rhode Island.

Collaboration with Native American Tribes

State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs and THPOs) play critical roles in reviewing the impacts of proposed undertakings on historic properties that are listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places. There are, however, differences regarding their expertise and jurisdiction. SHPOs direct programs approved by the National Park Service (NPS) to coordinate and support public and private efforts within their respective states to identify, evaluate, and protect historic and archaeological resources. THPOs are officially designated by federally-recognized Indian tribes to direct programs that are similarly approved by the NPS, and assume some or all of the functions of SHPOs on tribal lands. THPOs are recognized as having special knowledge and expertise in identifying properties of traditional religious and cultural significance to their respective tribes. SHPOs and THPOs often work together to identify, study, and preserve cultural resources that are located off tribal land.

The RIHPHC also routinely affords THPOs ten business days to review and comment on archaeological permit applications prior to approval. When an archaeological survey will concern, or have the potential to concern, Native American cultural resources, RIHPHC initiates this review by sending THPOs the subject application attached to an email specifying the review deadline. RIHPHC considers all THPO comments received via email before the deadline, while retaining exclusive authority to issue archaeological permits at any time.

Strategic Planning

In November 2018, the RIHPHC established a committee to guide and formulate a strategic plan for the agency. Led by the RIHPHC Executive Director and composed of RIHPHC staff and preservation partners representing diverse viewpoints in the field, the committee has addressed current issues facing the RIHPHC using the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses,

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Opportunities, Threats) framework. Topics of discussion have included RIHPHC mission and vision statements, the evolving role of RIHPHC's heritage programming, the potential impacts of the climate crisis on historic preservation in Rhode Island, and new technologies such as the implementation of a Geographic Information System (GIS) for historic property data. The topics and approaches discussed by the Strategic Planning Committee have dovetailed with, as well as directly influenced, the goals in this statewide historic preservation plan. Committee work and the creation and adoption by the RIHPHC of the agency strategic plan are expected to conclude before the end of winter of 2020/2021.

State Guide Plan Element #140

Preservation's integral role in state government, as established by the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act, is supported by the historic preservation element of the State Guide Plan. Developed and maintained by the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning, the State Guide Plan as a whole serves to guide government agencies at all levels within the state. The plan includes sections that address [Land Use](#), Greenspace, Housing, and Transportation that directly impact the state's historic resources. The overall goal of the historic preservation element of State Guide Plan Element #140 is to acknowledge the broad value of preservation and ensure--in accordance with established state and federal policies--the preservation of historic resources and community character in its design objectives for public and private development. The RIHPHC collaborates directly with the Statewide Planning Program to formulate the historic preservation component for State Guide Plan Element #140. Last updated in 1996, a revised version of Element #140 is slated to be released by early 2021.

SUPPORTING PRESERVATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Certified Local Governments (CLG) and Local Regulations

The Certified Local Government (CLG) Program is a partnership between the National Park Service, the RIHPHC, and Rhode Island municipalities through which communities demonstrate their commitment to historic preservation and, in turn, receive access to funding opportunities and technical assistance.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

To qualify for CLG status, a community must have a historic district zoning ordinance and a qualified historic district commission authorized to review exterior changes to buildings within an identified zone. Eighteen Rhode Island cities and towns have met this requirement and achieved this certification.⁵ Local historic district zoning is one of the most effective tools a community can use to protect its historic character. Close to half of Rhode Island's communities have adopted this protective mechanism.



Figure 9: A 2019 CLG grant to the City of Pawtucket funded a professional Conditions Assessment of the Pawtucket Public Library's Sayles Building (1899).

The state enabling legislation for local historic district zoning focuses on buildings and structures and emphasizes the architectural aspects of the regulatory review. Local districts consist primarily of buildings, but many also include historic open spaces such as parks and commons, historic roadways, historic waterfronts, and other landscape elements that can be subject to commission review.

Some local districts also include cemeteries; whether in a local historic district or not, the treatment of historic cemeteries is subject to town regulation under the state cemeteries law (RIGL 23-18). This applies to ancient burials of the Narragansett and other Indian tribes as well. The law authorizes the cities and towns (many of which have cemetery commissions) to regulate ground disturbance within 25' of a cemetery, cemetery relocation, and the treatment of previously unidentified burials that are discovered.

Archaeological resources are not typically included in local historic district review. Many towns provide a limited degree of protection for archaeological sites with their regulations for subdivision and development review. Similarly, historic landscapes may also receive some regulatory protection as scenic and cultural resources under development and

⁵ Bristol, Coventry, Cranston, Cumberland, East Greenwich, East Providence, Glocester, Hopkinton, Narragansett, New Shoreham, Newport, North Kingstown, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Providence, South Kingstown, and Warwick are designated Certified Local Governments.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

design review ordinances. Many resources in the coastal communities fall under the jurisdiction of the state and are under the review of the CRMC and the RIHPHC.⁶

Local historic district zoning empowers the local community to protect its significant historic resources. Local commissions are made up of residents who have volunteered their services. They bring a local perspective to the regulatory process. In some larger communities, commissions can rely on trained staff from the planning department for support. In all instances, the operation of the local commissions benefits when the members are well-equipped through training and/or experience in regulatory procedure and the principles and techniques of historical reviews.

Historic district commissions review and approve exterior alterations and new construction, which is one of the most effective forms of preservation regulation. Design review, which is most commonly found in downtowns and business districts, can guide building alterations and new development so that they are compatible with the existing historic building fabric and historic character of the neighborhood. These regulations are generally focused on historic buildings, though there are a few significant exceptions where design review also protects historic landscapes and archaeological features.

Development review generally applies to new construction projects including subdivisions. Some communities incorporate a review for potential impacts to significant archaeological sites as well as other historic resources in this regulation. This can provide an important mechanism for the identification and protection of archaeological sites at the local level.

In addition to the annual conference, the RIHPHC organizes and/or provides support for occasional training workshops for members and staff of local Historic District Commissions. We work with partners on developing curricula for and making presentations at formal workshop events. RIHPHC staff members also offer advice to individual local Historic District Commissions working on specific issues or general concerns.

CLG communities are eligible to apply to the RIHPHC for small planning grants awarded annually. The CLG grants program funds a variety of municipal preservation activities including the development of public education materials, National Register nominations, and plans and specifications for building restoration. Roughly \$60,000 in federal funding is available annually for these grants, which are typically awarded in the spring and must be completed within about 15 months.

⁶ CRMC permits are not limited to underwater activity and include historic properties adjacent to coastal areas.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Local communities are authorized to provide some property tax benefits to owners of historic buildings, and a few do so. Some communities have made this local tax benefit a cornerstone of their preservation program.

Comprehensive Municipal Plans

Each community in Rhode Island plans for its future by developing, writing, and adopting a [comprehensive plan](#). These plans express a community's civic goals and outline the strategies a community has identified to reach those goals. Included in each of these plans is the community's plan for the preservation and management of its historic resources, both publicly and privately-owned. The plans are developed under the review of the Statewide Planning Program. Most of these plans rely on the RIHPHC survey reports and National Register inventory as a starting point for planning. RIHPHC regularly reviews and comments on the historic preservation elements of municipal comprehensive plans.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Annual Statewide Preservation Conference

For the last 35 years, the RIHPHC has organized the state's annual historic preservation conference. Each April more than four hundred preservation professionals, volunteers, and students from around Rhode Island and southern New England gather for a full day of workshops, panel discussions, and tours, kicked off by a presentation by a nationally recognized keynote speaker. Each conference has a theme that informs much of the programming. RIHPHC works with the American Institute of Architects/Rhode Island and the Rhode Island chapter of the American Planning Association to provide professional development credits to architects and planners.

Beyond the educational content, the conference provides an opportunity to network, share ideas, and socialize.



Figure 10: Presented jointly with regional and national Latinx cultural heritage organizations, the 2018 Statewide Preservation Conference addressed contemporary issues in Latinx historic preservation.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Archaeology Month

The Rhode Island Archaeology Month program, launched by the RIHPHC in 2015, runs annually in October. This program features a series of free events that provide the public with opportunities to learn about our state's rich archaeological heritage directly from the professional and academic researchers who are making the latest discoveries.

Rhody Awards

Beginning in 1993, the RIHPHC has presented annual State Historic Preservation Awards to honor individuals, organizations, and projects for their contributions to the preservation of Rhode Island's historic resources. Since 2009, RIHPHC has partnered with Preserve Rhode Island (PRI) to host the awards. These awards were renamed The Rhody Awards for Historic Preservation. RIHPHC and PRI invite awards nominations from the public, select awardees, research their accomplishments, and present an annual awards ceremony each fall.



Figure 11: Rhody Award recipients from the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport, RI. [Image credit: Joyce Gervasio.]

Heritage Program



Figure 12: Performers at the 2019 RIHPHC Heritage Day Festival, held at the Pawtucket Armory Arts Center.

The Rhode Island Heritage Commission was founded on July 1, 1977, in recognition of the need to cultivate and preserve the pride of the diverse cultural heritage of Rhode Islanders. In 1995, the Heritage Commission was merged with the

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission. For the past 43 years, the RIHPHC has supported and maintained a state heritage program by sponsoring and coordinating an

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

annual Rhode Island Heritage Festival, and by promoting heritage festivals, seminars, conferences, symposiums, and publications of other public agencies and nonprofit organizations. The RIHPHC provides grants for Rhode Island heritage activities, projects, and programs sponsored by nonprofit organizations and municipalities when the appropriate funds are available and authorized by the legislature.

Preservation Expertise and Public Engagement

RIHPHC provides preservation expertise to government agencies and non-profit organizations. Members of the staff serve on numerous boards, commissions, committees, and working groups. As public servants, RIHPHC staff members are often invited to make presentations at other organizations' public programs. They are featured speakers at national and state conferences, meetings of local historical societies, local tour programs, and more. Staff members support university programs in architecture, historic preservation, history, archaeology, and public humanities as speakers and critics. RIHPHC regularly hosts interns who assist staff in various program areas, thereby offering on-the-job training to future preservationists.

Social Media and Online Resources

RIHPHC has hosted an agency website since 1999. Our website, www.preservation.ri.gov, compiles a wide array of public information about State and Federal preservation programs, preservation news, public meetings, preservation law, grants and funding opportunities, archaeology, resources for owners of historic properties, and heritage programs. RIHPHC maintains an active [Facebook](#) account and has recently created Instagram and YouTube accounts to share information about historic preservation and heritage programs.

Section Four

What We Accomplished: Major Projects and Initiatives, 2012 - 2020

A Big Plan for the Smallest State
The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED, 2012-2020

Rhode Island's previous statewide historic preservation plan, *Saving for the Future*, laid out five goals:

- Goal 1: Locate, identify, and evaluate all of Rhode Island's historic resources.
- Goal 2: Strengthen the opportunities for those who own, care for, and invest in historic properties and archaeological sites to obtain the technical and financial assistance they need.
- Goal 3: Strengthen the protection of historic buildings, areas, and archaeological sites from inappropriate alteration, neglect, and demolition.
- Goal 4: Build better communities through historic preservation.
- Goal 5: Increase public understanding of the values of historic buildings, areas, and archaeological sites and the benefits of their preservation.

Since the plan's publication in 2012, the RIHPHC and its partners – local communities, non-profit organizations, and other state agencies – have worked together to advance each of these goals. Highlights of our collective accomplishments from 2012-2019 are presented on the following pages.

What We Accomplished: Major Projects and Initiatives, 2012-2020

GOAL 1



Goal 1: Locate, identify, and evaluate all of Rhode Island's historic resources

National Register spotlight:

From 2012-2019, RIHPHC processed 49 National Register nominations, consisting of 27 individual properties, 12 historic districts, and 10 amendments to existing nominations.

As a result, over 700 historic resources were listed, including industrial complexes, churches, schools, farms, grand country estates, and modest housing.



Survey spotlight:

With grant funds from the National Park Service, RIHPHC partnered with the R.I. Black Heritage Society and the R.I. Historical Society to survey the history of 20th century African-American civil rights in Rhode Island.

Implemented a marker program for State Register properties, with cast aluminum markers (*below*) fabricated locally in Lincoln



Digitized statewide survey reports, the first comprehensive list of State Register properties, and all National Register nominations.

Header image: Historic rendering of the Prospect Heights Housing Project in Pawtucket, the most intact public housing development in Rhode Island.

The Pawtucket Housing Authority constructed Prospect Heights between 1941 and 1942 to house low-income families in the years following the Great Depression. Prospect Heights was listed on the National Register in 2015.

What We Accomplished: Major Projects and Initiatives, 2012-2020

GOAL 1



Goal 1: Locate, identify, and evaluate all of Rhode Island's historic resources

Header image:

Listed on the National Register in 2019, the **State Home and School for Dependent and Neglected Children Historic District** (*below*) represents the experience of children in state care during the 19th and early 20th centuries



**National Register spotlight:
Kay Street-Catherine Street-Old Beach
Road Historic District Additional
Documentation (2018) Newport, RI**

The amendment to this nationally significant historic district included a complete reinventory of nearly 800 properties and a new statement of significance, which places masterworks of American architecture by McKim, Mead & White (*above*), Richard Morris Hunt, and regionally significant architects in the context of Newport's evolution as a storied resort.

Listed in 2019, the Samuel Clarke Farm in Richmond includes a c. 1691 gambrel roof house, numerous agricultural outbuildings, and 40 acres of land.

Strength in collaboration:

A 2018 partnership with the RI Black Heritage Society and funding from a National Park Service grant resulted in an **amendment to the College Hill National Register Historic District** in Providence.

The amendment documents churches, residences, businesses, and places of political organizing significant to the African-American and Cape Verdean communities of College Hill.



What We Accomplished: Major Projects and Initiatives, 2012-2020

GOAL 2



Goal 2: Strengthen the opportunities for those who own, care for, and invest in historic properties and archaeological sites to obtain the technical and financial assistance they need

Reviewed 73 tax credit projects for a \$689,760,153 total value of completed projects

Tax Credit Spotlight: **South Street Landing (2015-2017)** ***Providence, RI***

CV Properties leveraged an innovative public-private partnership and the support of historic tax credits to convert the Classical Revival South Street Station (*header image*) into a state-of-the-art nursing facility for Rhode Island College, the University of Rhode Island, and Brown University.

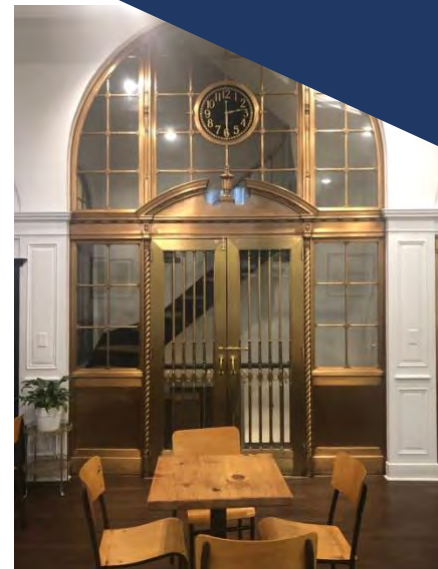
Masonry was cleaned and repointed, massive round-arch window sash were installed, and significant interior features – like the voluminous turbine hall – were retained and integrated into the design.

Now called South Street Landing, the spectacularly reimagined power plant is a catalyst for the revitalization of Providence's historic Jewelry District.



Tax Credit Spotlight: **Providence Arcade (2008-2013)** ***Providence, RI***

A landmark project completed in 2013 utilized Federal tax credits to create 48 micro-apartments on the upper floors of the Providence Arcade (*above*), one of the city's earliest and best examples of the Greek Revival and the nation's first indoor shopping mall, while retaining 17 storefronts on the ground level.



Restored bronze doors (*above*) in a retail space at 32 Custom House Street, a tax credit project, in downtown Providence.

What We Accomplished: Major Projects and Initiatives, 2012-2020

GOAL 2



Goal 2: Strengthen the opportunities for those who own, care for, and invest in historic properties and archaeological sites to obtain the technical and financial assistance they need

Awarded 57 State Preservation Grants totaling \$4.9 million to museums, cultural art centers, and public historic sites in Rhode Island

Return on investment:

Each State Preservation Grant awardee provides RIHPHC a **preservation easement** ranging from 10-25 years in duration on the funded property.



Grant Spotlight: **Pawtucket Public Library (2016)** ***Pawtucket, RI***

The City of Pawtucket leveraged a \$106,239 State Preservation Grant to complete critical repairs to the Burns Building (1896-1898) dome room windows, flashing, and rubber roofing to eliminate water infiltration.

Approximately 800 – 1,200 residents visit the Pawtucket Public Library daily.

In 2013, administered \$1.8 million in Hurricane Sandy recovery grants. 20 total projects included six historic landscape restorations and two archaeological surveys.

Loan Spotlight: **Restoration of Ashton Mill workers' housing (2012-2019)** ***Cumberland, RI***

RIHPHC provided a \$350,000 loan to support the restoration of 19th century workers' housing at the 1860s Ashton Mill village in Cumberland.

The project included installation of new roofs, restoration of wood windows, and retention of historic floor plans, resulting in 53 new low income apartments.

The RIHPHC loan was repaid in full in 2019

Header image: National Historic Landmark and RIHPHC grant recipient Southeast Lighthouse on Block Island.

What We Accomplished: Major Projects and Initiatives, 2012-2020

GOAL 3



Goal 3: Strengthen the protection of historic buildings, areas, and archaeological sites from inappropriate alteration, neglect, and demolition

Planning activities

In 2018, RIHPHC established a Strategic Planning Committee composed of Commissioners, colleagues, and RIHPHC staff to support the agency's policy-based activities.

In 2019, RIHPHC began a comprehensive update to the historic preservation element of the State Guide Plan. While historic preservation elements had been included in the past, the update enables the integration of RIHPHC's current mission and goals with statewide planning objectives.



The RIHPHC reviews all federally-funded projects in the state, including transportation projects designed and constructed by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), to ensure that they do not adversely impact historic resources. In response to unprecedented federal funding to the RIDOT and their desire to reduce permitting times for projects, the RIHPHC worked with RIDOT to establish a staff position for a dedicated RIDOT Project Review Coordinator.

Archaeology firsts:

In 2019, the Salt Pond Site (RI-110) in Narragansett was designated as the first State Archaeological Landmark

Header image:

The Washington Bridge is a Classical Revival-style, reinforced concrete arch bridge spanning the Seekonk River between Providence and East Providence used for vehicular traffic from 1930 to the 1990s. After it was replaced, the bascule portion of the bridge was rehabilitated and restored for use as an award-winning linear park and segment of the East Bay Bike Path.

What We Accomplished: Major Projects and Initiatives, 2012-2020

GOAL 4



Goal 4: Build better communities through historic preservation

Approved the certification of new Certified Local Governments (CLGs) in Narragansett and Coventry.

18 of Rhode Island's **39 cities** and towns are CLGs.

Header image:

Main Street, Chepachet Village Historic District, Gloucester, RI.



CLG Grants

Between 2012-2019, CLG grants from RIHPHC funded National Register nominations - including four plats in Cranston's Edgewood Historic District (*above*) - development of historic district commission standards, and conditions assessments and master plans for historic resources.

CLG status qualifies a community to apply for annual small grants from RIHPHC and makes them eligible for a variety of financial and technical assistance from the National Park Service.

National news

In 2019, a Rhode Island CLG was one of only nine successful applications to the National Park Service's Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant program.

The Town of Glocester received \$250,000 for restoration projects in the town's Chepachet Village Historic District - the largest NPS grant in Rhode Island history!

RIHPHC regularly offers statewide historic district commission training and assistance with projects

What We Accomplished: Major Projects and Initiatives, 2012-2020

GOAL 5

Pride in Preservation

ANNUAL RHODE ISLAND STATEWIDE HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONFERENCE



Goal 5: Increase public understanding of the values of historic buildings, areas, and archaeological sites and the benefits of their preservation

Between 2012-2019, hosted eight statewide preservation conferences in different cities and towns across the state

Annual conference themes:

- 2012: Heritage in America's Great Outdoors, Woonsocket/North Smithfield
- 2013: Preservation Works, West Warwick
- 2014: Pride in Preservation (above), Warren
- 2015: Sticks and Stones, Glocester
- 2016: Building & Preserving South County, North Kingstown/Exeter
- 2017: Economics of Historic Preservation, Westerly/Charlestown
- 2018: Encuentro: Latino Heritage and Historic Preservation (below), Providence
- 2019: Preservation, Recreation, and Sport, East Providence

Public events

RIHPHC hosts an annual heritage festival, Archaeology Month, and the Rhody Awards for Historic Preservation in partnership with Preserve Rhode Island



#RIHPHC

New social media channels make RIHPHC more accessible than ever




**The Rhody Awards
for Historic Preservation**

Section Five

What We're Planning: Goals and Objectives 2021 - 2027

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

MISSION STATEMENT

To preserve and protect places of historical, archaeological, and cultural significance as means of illuminating an appreciation for the state's history and heritage among all of Rhode Island's diverse communities.

VISION STATEMENT

Historic preservation and heritage programs play a central role in articulating and fostering a fuller understanding of community, history, and identity. We envision a future in which preserving and protecting historically and culturally significant places and practices increasingly benefits both the state's economy and quality of life in a way that consistently represents, values, includes, and honors all of Rhode Island's diverse communities.

COMPREHENSIVE GOALS, 2021 - 2027

The goals outlined in section five represent an expansion of those outlined in the 2012 Plan. Inherent in historic preservation is a sense of consistency with the past, and the RIHPHC's core mission and vision have evolved rather than dramatically changed. The defined goals for 2021 – 2027 reflect both an institutional stability and targeted efforts to address new challenges and the demands of a new decade, notably increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field and applying historic preservation tools to planning for and mediation of climate change and sea level rise. Therefore, while the stated goals of this plan closely resemble previous plans, it is the entirely new objectives that bridge the gap between our agency's past and future. This shift was influenced by both internal and external demands – as identified through staff brainstorming, public meetings, and written comments – for preservation in Rhode Island to incorporate these topics into preservation practice. The goals align with and support the agency's mission and vision statements, outlined above, which were revised in 2020 as part of an internal strategic planning process.

The goals outlined in this document represent big-picture, long-term goals with a broad focus. Staff will use this plan and reference these goals to guide policy and program planning, to set priorities, and to inform their decision-making. Specific projects will be outlined in the RIHPHC's Annual Work Plan, compiled collaboratively by staff each fall as part of the annual Historic Preservation Fund grant application process. Every activity to be included in the Annual Work Plan will be responsive to one or more of the State Plan objectives.

Our goals, objectives, and strategies for 2021-2027 are presented on the following pages.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

1

GOAL ONE: Continue to locate, identify, and evaluate all of Rhode Island’s historic resources

2

GOAL TWO: Strengthen the opportunities for those who own, care for, and invest in historic properties and archaeological sites to obtain the technical and financial assistance they need

3

GOAL THREE: Strengthen the protection of historic resources from inappropriate alteration, neglect, demolition, and the effects of climate change

4

GOAL FOUR: Prioritize equity and representation to ensure that the historic resources we recognize, preserve, protect, and celebrate reflect Rhode Island’s diverse heritage

5

GOAL FIVE: Increase public understanding of the value of historic buildings, areas, landscapes, archaeological sites, and cultural heritage and the benefits of their preservation

GOAL ONE:

Continue to locate, identify, and evaluate all of Rhode Island’s historic resources

Objective A: **Update and expand RIHPHC’s statewide historic property survey data** to ensure that survey data remains a useful tool and expand access to more Rhode Islanders. The RIHPHC will continue to document the full range of historic properties by location, period, type, and association. A comprehensive update of the statewide survey data will also provide an opportunity to **prioritize the identification of Modern, post-WWII and recent past architecture and landscapes, and resources significant to underrepresented communities and update critical documentation of historic places threatened by climate change and sea level rise.**

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Work with cities and towns to provide technical and financial assistance for updating historic property and archaeological site surveys.
2. Promote the use of Certified Local Government (CLG) grants for eligible municipalities to update and maintain historic property and archaeological site surveys. Provide special consideration for CLG grant applications that address the effects of climate change and/or sea level rise.
3. Encourage the use of National Park Service Underrepresented Communities and Certified Local Government grants by eligible organizations.
4. Explore and implement new survey technology, including but not limited to GPS, GIS, and digital survey forms.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Objective B: Continue to **nominate eligible properties and archaeological sites to the State and National Registers of Historic Places**, and **expand visibility of the program(s)** through the use of community workshops, publications, social media, and direct outreach.

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Continue to evaluate and document the significance of historic properties and archaeological sites using the State and National Register Criteria for Evaluation.
2. Promote the use of historic district nominations and Multiple Property Listings as the most efficient vehicle for listing associated historic resources.
3. Evaluate Rhode Island's existing historic district documentation and complete targeted updates. Address nominations from the 1960s through 1980s that do not contain complete inventories or mapping up to today's standards in order to respond to frequent demand for National Register information from preservation partners, municipalities, and property owners.

Objective C: **Expand the use of the State Archaeological Landmark designation**, first used in 2019, to identify, evaluate, and designate eligible archaeological sites pursuant to Rhode Island General Law 42-45-1.

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Develop state regulations for assessing eligibility of potential State Archaeological Landmarks.
2. Promote the availability of this designation to stewards and owners of archaeological properties in Rhode Island.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Objective D: In complement to significant buildings, districts, and archaeological sites, **identify and evaluate cultural landscapes**, geographic areas, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Identify and evaluate previously undocumented designed or vernacular historic landscapes, as well as ethnographic landscapes in Rhode Island.
2. Nominate properties previously identified as eligible to the State and National Registers.

Objective E: Design, establish and maintain a **fully functional, in-house Geographic Information System (GIS)**.

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Obtain state-of-the-art hardware and software necessary to create and administer a comprehensive in-house GIS system and to complete system data-layer updates on a regular basis.
2. Continue to provide staff training and professional development in the use of GIS.
3. Update and expand current RIHPHC historic property data-layer information.
4. Share GIS data-layer information with other Rhode Island state agencies, municipalities, and the National Park Service.

GOAL TWO:

Strengthen the opportunities for those who own, care for, and invest in historic properties and archaeological sites to obtain the technical and financial assistance they need

Objective A: Continue to **provide outstanding technical review and support** for owners rehabilitating historic properties, and **efficiently review completed applications for projects** involving properties listed in, or eligible for, the State and National Registers in accordance with the provisions of state and federal law.

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Educate the legislature and preservation partners about the value of funding for state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credit programs.
2. Proactively educate property owners about availability of the state's "Rebuild Rhode Island" rehabilitation tax credit program to owners of income-producing historic properties.
3. Track in-progress state and federal rehabilitation tax credit projects and review applications within 30 days of receipt of complete information.
4. Ensure that proposed work for all rehabilitation tax credit projects meets the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation.
5. Coordinate as necessary with the Department of Revenue's Division of Taxation and the Department of Administration's Budget Office with respect to project financial information.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Objective B: Enforce and **monitor historic property easements** held by the RIHPHC.

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Establish and maintain a new system for routinely monitoring historic properties on which the RIHPHC holds easements.
2. Ensure that any work performed at said properties is approved by RIHPHC staff as specified in the terms of the easement and the applicable Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
3. Review requests to perform work on historic properties subject to an RIHPHC easement in a timely manner in accordance with the terms of the easement.

Objective C: **Assist municipalities** with the protection of local historic properties and archaeological sites.

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Encourage and assist local communities in adequately identifying and documenting their historic properties and archaeological sites.
2. In cooperation with the Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission, promote and support the protection of local burying grounds designated as "historical cemeteries" pursuant to Rhode Island General Law 23-18-10.1.
3. Provide technical assistance to municipalities in the creation of new local historic districts, establishment of demolition delay ordinances, and other local protection mechanisms.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

4. In cooperation with the Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission, promote and support the protection of local burying grounds designated as “historical cemeteries” pursuant to Rhode Island General Law 23-18-10.1.
5. Provide technical assistance to municipalities in the creation of new local historic districts, establishment of demolition delay ordinances, and other local protection mechanisms.
6. Provide local, regional, or statewide workshops for local historic district commissions and municipal planning department staff on pertinent Rhode Island state laws, procedural requirements of state and federal programs, demolition delay ordinances, preservation planning, and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
7. Develop and make available local historic district commission training webinars.

GOAL THREE:

Strengthen the protection of historic buildings, areas, and archaeological sites from inappropriate alteration, neglect, demolition, and the effects of climate change

Objective A: **Collaborate with state agencies** to promote the preservation and protection of historic properties owned or affected by state agency programs or activities, and **ensure ongoing compliance** with RIHPHC’s state enabling legislation and required state, federal, or agency-specific planning documents.

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Update and publish RIHPHC’s inventory of state-owned properties listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Identify state-owned properties that are eligible for listing in the State Register of Historic Places.
2. Identify, review, and provide recommendations for activities undertaken, funded, or licensed by state agencies that might encroach upon, damage, or destroy – physically, visually, or environmentally – any building, site, area, or landmark included in the State Register of Historic Places.
3. Complete an update to the 1996 “State Guide Plan Element #140” for the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning by the end of fiscal year 2021.
4. Every three years, review all sections of the RIHPHC’s state enabling statute (Rhode Island General Law 42-45) to ensure RIHPHC compliance with all state-mandated responsibilities. At that time, review and recommend appropriate updates if necessary.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

5. By 2027, update the *Statewide Historic Preservation Plan* (this document) in accordance with the requirements of the National Park Service, the *State Historic Preservation and Heritage Guide Plan Element* for the RI Division of Statewide Planning, and the RIHPHC Strategic Plan prepared in accordance with the internal policies of the RIHPHC.
6. Complete all project review conducted pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act within 30 days of receipt of a completed project application.
7. Record and track all project reviews in the RIHPHC's project review databases in a timely manner.
8. Guide tax credit process through meetings and site visits with applicants and projects teams to ensure proposed projects. meet

Objective B: **Collaborate with Native American tribes** to promote the preservation and protection of historic properties.

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Serve as a liaison with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Narragansett Tribe regarding tribal historic properties.
2. Establish and maintain communication between RIHPHC heritage activities and cultural programs for all tribes with ancestral lands in Rhode Island.
3. Recognize the special expertise of tribes in the identification, evaluation and nomination of tribe-related historic properties for listing in the State and National Registers.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Objective C: Apply professional expertise and reallocate existing resources to enable RIHPHC, preservation partners, municipalities, and property owners to **work together to protect historic resources from climate change, natural disasters, and human-made disasters:**

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. In partnership with statewide experts on the topic, complete a prioritized risk-assessment analysis to determine which Rhode Island historic properties and archaeological sites in are most threatened by climate change, sea level rise, and river-based flooding.
2. Collaborate with state agencies, municipalities, and relevant non-profit organizations to update comprehensive historical and archaeological surveys of historic properties, particularly in high risk areas (See also: Goal One, pg. 50), and implement disaster preparedness plans for historic properties, districts, and areas.
3. Distribute current technical preservation information regarding climate change and disaster preparedness -including, but not limited to, the National Park Service's 2019 "Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings" – to other Rhode Island state agencies, municipalities, and preservation organizations.
4. Incorporate criteria to incentivize the undertaking of climate change-related survey, documentation, and disaster preparedness projects with funds from Certified Local Government grants for qualifying municipalities. (See also: Goal One, pg. 50).

GOAL FOUR:

Prioritize equity and representation to ensure that the historic resources we recognize, preserve, protect, and celebrate reflect Rhode Island's diverse heritage

Objective A: Take proactive, concrete steps to **contribute to the diversification of the historic preservation field** and the operations of the RIHPHC.

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Work with the Governor's office to ensure that the RIHPHC Commission and State Review Board are diverse and representative of the demographics of Rhode Island, and prioritize the appointment of women and/or people of color.
2. In consultation with community members, identify, survey, evaluate, and nominate properties that represent the history and cultural heritage of underrepresented communities to the State and National Registers.
3. Promote participation by state agencies, municipalities, and nonprofit organizations in the National Park Service's Underrepresented Community grant program.
4. Increase coordination between the RIHPHC's historic preservation and heritage programming, promotion of events and opportunities, and coordination of the identification of properties eligible for listing in the State and National Registers.
5. Encourage Certified Local Government grant projects that will promote the recognition of resources associated with people of color and other underrepresented groups.

A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

Objective B: **Build and improve RIHPHC's Heritage program.**

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Revise 40+ year old statutory program requirements to reflect current program objectives, in addition to staffing and budget realities.
2. Increase participation in the annual Rhode Island Heritage Festival by further expanding and developing programming.
3. Act as a statewide clearinghouse for information about, and the promotion of, Rhode Island heritage-related festivals, events, symposia, etc.
4. Increase permanent RIHPHC Heritage staffing from one half-time FTE to one full-time FTE and one half-time FTE by 2027.
5. Establish and maintain a state-funded, annual grant assistance program for Rhode Island heritage organizations.
6. Terminate RIHPHC's role as a fiscal agent and funder of insurance for private Rhode Island heritage organizations.
7. Coordinate with the RIHPHC's Historic Preservation program in support of the identification, evaluation, and National Register listing of properties related to Rhode Island's cultural heritage.

GOAL FIVE:

Increase public understanding of the values of historic buildings, areas, landscapes, archaeological sites, and cultural heritage and the benefits of their preservation

Objective A: **Provide opportunities for public education, training, and networking** related to historic preservation and heritage in Rhode Island.

Strategy

To accomplish this objective, preservationists in Rhode Island will:

1. Continue to sponsor and organize Rhode Island’s Annual Statewide Historic Preservation Conference.
2. Continue to sponsor and organize Rhode Island’s Annual Heritage Day Festival.
3. Continue to develop and provide interactive in-person and web-based educational training opportunities for Rhode Island historic district commissions and municipal planning support staff.
4. Continue to support and promote national and statewide historic preservation recognition programs and events, including but not limited to Historic Preservation Month, Black History Month, Archaeology Month, and Historic Cemetery Restoration and Awareness Day.
5. Continue to sponsor, organize, and promote an annual historic preservation awards program recognizing individuals and projects that have made outstanding contributions to the preservation of Rhode Island’s properties.

Section Six

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A Big Plan for the Smallest State
The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

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A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

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A Big Plan for the Smallest State

The Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan
for Rhode Island, 2021-2027

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