

# Protecting Our Legacy of Buildings, Places, and Culture: An Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island

## STATE GUIDE PLAN ELEMENT 210

Adopted by the State Planning Council on \_\_\_\_\_ for the period 2021 - 2028

Department of Administration  
Division of Statewide Planning  
One Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02908  
[www.planning.ri.gov](http://www.planning.ri.gov)

RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street  
Providence RI 02903  
[www.preservation.ri.gov](http://www.preservation.ri.gov)

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**Report Number 124**

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An Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island**

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**Abstract**

TITLE: Protecting Our Legacy of Buildings, Places, and Culture: An Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island

SUBJECT: Historic and cultural preservation

DATE: TBD

AGENCY: Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Statewide Planning and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission

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ABSTRACT: This Plan serves as the State’s historic preservation element of the State Guide Plan as called for by § 42-45-5(a)(3)(i) of the Rhode Island General Laws. It replaces the previous historic preservation element of Guide Plan: *Rhode Island Historical Preservation Plan* (1996) as well as the *Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan for the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor* (1990). This historic preservation plan describes the planning process for historic preservation, explains how the state organizes information about historic properties, sets goals, objectives, and policies for preservation, and identifies strategies for putting the plan into action.

**PREFACE**

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires each State Historic Preservation Office to prepare and periodically update a “comprehensive statewide historic preservation plan” for that state. The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) serves as the State Historic Preservation Office for Rhode Island. The RIHPHC has prepared its *Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan* for the period 2021-2027. In addition to a Federal requirement for a state historic preservation plan, § 42-45-5(a)(3) of the Rhode Island General Laws calls for an “element or elements of the state guide plan dealing with plans and programs for the preservation of historic sites and structures;” and, “there shall also be included in such state guide plan a program for preservation of historic landscapes, and state land-use planning which shall consider the impact of land-use on historic landscapes.”

In the past, the State Planning Council simply adopted the RIHPHC’s State Historic Preservation Plan as a State Guide Plan element. While this was an efficient approach, it did have one drawback, RIHPHC’s State Historic Preservation Plan is, understandably, heavily focused on the work of the Commission. In addition, its primary audience is the National Park Service which must approve the plan. Accordingly, some of the material included as well as some of the terminology used is directed to meet the requirements and standards of the Park Service, and may not be as relevant for state and local planning purposes. Therefore, this Plan -- while parallel to and consistent with RIHPHC’s State Historic Preservation Plan -- is framed in a somewhat more state and local context, and in a manner consistent with other elements of the State Guide Plan.

This Plan was compiled by J. Paul Loether, Executive Director the RIHPHC. The Commission provided the final draft of Plan to the Division of Statewide Planning for preparation as an element of the State Guide Plan. The final version as adopted by the State Planning Council was revised and edited by Kevin J. Nelson, Supervising Planner, and was reviewed by Roberta Groch, Assistant Chief, and Meredith E. Brady, Associate Director. The final document was produced for publication by Kim A. Gelfuso, Information Services Technician II.

A full list of reviewers from the RIHPHC, the State Planning Council’s Technical Committee, and the State Planning Council are provided on the following pages. This Plan was adopted by the Council as an element of the State Guide Plan on [REDACTED].

Preparation of the plan was supported by funding from the National Park Service to the Commission, and by State appropriations to both the Commission and the Division. Additional funding for the Division of Statewide Planning was provided by the Federal Highway Administration. Work on this Plan was conducted under *Activity 7: Long-Range Planning* as described in the Division’s Unified Planning Work Programs for FY 2019 and FY 2020.

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## **Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission Members**

### **J. Michael Abbott, AIA**

Mr. Abbott is an architect with over thirty years professional experience with historic rehabilitation and adaptive reuse projects.

### **Tripp Evans, Ph.D.**

Dr. Evans is an Architectural Historian who teaches at Wheaton College.

### **Morgan Grefe, Ph.D.**

Dr. Grefe is the Executive Director, Rhode Island Historical Society.

### **E. Pierre Morenon, Ph.D.**

Dr. Morenon teaches anthropology at Rhode Island College.

### **Kaity Ryan**

Ms. Ryan is the Executive Director of the Norman Bird Sanctuary

### **Clark Schoettle**

Mr. Schoettle is the former executive director of the Providence Revolving Fund.

### **John Smith**

Mr. Smith is the Director of the RISD Museum.

### **Ruth Taylor**

Ms. Taylor is the Executive Director of the Newport Historical Society.

### **Meredith Brady (ex officio)**

Associate Director, Department of Administration, Division of Statewide Planning

### **Janet Coit (ex officio)**

Director, Department of Environmental Management

### **John P. Leyden (ex officio)**

State Building Code Commissioner

### **J. Paul Loether (ex officio)**

State Historic Preservation Officer

### **Jesse Saglio (ex officio)**

President, Commerce RI

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**Jeffrey Davis, AICP**, Vice Chair, RI Chapter of the American Planning Association

**Roberta Groch, AICP**, Secretary, Division of Statewide Planning

**Jamik Alexander**, ex-officio, Federal Highway Administration

**Caitlin Chaffee**, RI Coastal Resources Management Council

**John Chambers**, Fuss and O'Neill

**Megan DiPrete**, RI Department of Environmental Management

**Julian Drix**, RI Department of Health

**Peter Friedrichs, AICP**, Newport Planning & Economic Development

**Carrie Gill**, RI Office of Energy Resources

**Jan Greenberg, PE**, Woodard & Curran

**Nicole LaFontaine, AICP**, North Kingstown – Director of Planning and Development

**Mark Motte, Ph.D**, Rhode Island College

**Jonathan Stevens**, Cumberland – Director of Planning and Community Development

**Michael Walker**, Rhode Island Commerce Corporation

**Jane Weidman, AICP**, Charlestown Town Planner

**Kenneth White**, RI Department of Transportation

**Diane Williamson, AICP**, Bristol – Director of Community Development

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, Vice Chair, Governor's Office

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**Kristen Adamo**, President and CEO of the Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau

**Scott Avedisian**, CEO of the RI Public Transit Authority

**Peter Alviti**, Director, Rhode Island Department of Transportation

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**Marc Pappas**, RI Emergency Management Agency

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**Nicholas Ucci**, Commissioner, Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources

**Carol Ventura**, Executive Director, Rhode Island Housing

**Jeff Willis**, Executive Director, Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council

**Scott Wolf**, Environmental Advocate

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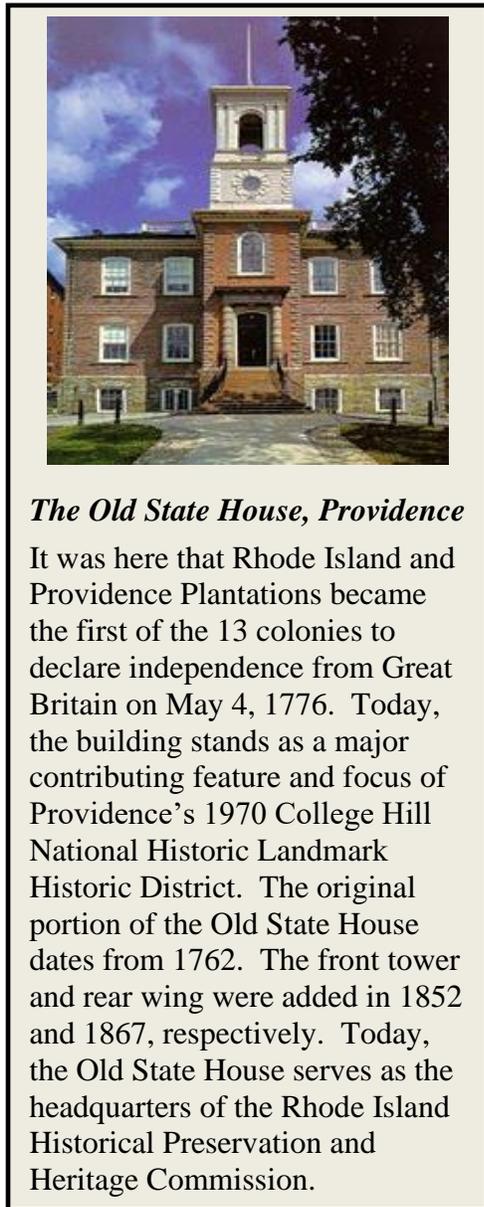
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## **SECTION ONE – INTRODUCTION**

### ***THE STATE-FEDERAL CONTEXT***

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires each State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to prepare and periodically update a “comprehensive statewide historic preservation plan” for that state. The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) serves as the State Historic Preservation Office for Rhode Island. The RIHPHC has prepared its *State Historic Preservation Plan* for the period 2020-2027 (see: [insert a link to the updated CSHP](#)).



### ***THE RHODE ISLAND CONTEXT***

#### **VISION**

*Historic preservation and heritage programs play a central role in articulating and fostering a fuller understanding of community, history, and identity. The State envisions a future in which preserving and protecting historically and culturally significance 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.*

To facilitate the realization of this vision. The Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act calls for historic preservation to be an element of the State Guide Plan; this will be discussed in more detail in Section Three – Planning for Preservation.

The State of Rhode Island also strongly encourages state agencies, municipalities, private preservation organizations, and the public-at-large to engage in historic preservation and heritage programs and activities that are grounded in the principles of relevancy, diversity, and inclusiveness on an ongoing basis.

- Relevancy is achieved when Rhode Islanders feel a personal connection to, and find meaning and value in, historic preservation;
- Diversity is achieved when people of different backgrounds and perspectives actively participate in the process of identifying and protecting the state’s historic properties and celebrating the traditions of all of its historically diverse communities;

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- Inclusion is achieved by intentionally building an historic preservation culture that is welcoming to persons of all ethnic, cultural, religious, and socio-economic groups, is flexible, values diverse ideas, and provides for the meaningful participation of all Rhode Islanders.

### Two Historic Preservation Plans?

Yes and no. Despite some differences in emphases, RIHPHC's *State Historic Preservation Plan* focuses more heavily on the work of the Commission, it is important to note that this State Guide Plan element for historic preservation is based on, and completely consistent with the RIHPHC's *State Historic Preservation Plan*. Unified in vision, both documents provide a framework to guide the work of all municipalities, State agencies, and State instrumentalities<sup>1</sup>, as well as the work of the RIHPHC in their respective historic preservation planning and implementation responsibilities. So too, private preservation and heritage organizations and the public-at-large can use this Plan to measure how projects are serving to achieve the State's historic preservation goals and objectives.

It is important to recognize that historic preservation in Rhode Island is carried out in many ways by many entities acting both collectively and individually, including statewide and local preservation and history organizations, preservation professionals, stewards of historic site museums, and private homeowners, as well as State and local agencies.

This Plan includes:

- historic preservation goals, objectives, and policies;
- strategies that entities may use to help achieve their individual and shared statewide preservation goals;
- guidance for community historic preservation programs and activities;
- an overview and summary of the status of historic preservation in Rhode Island as of 2021;
- a description of the framework and responsibilities into which the preservation efforts of municipal and state entities fit;
- descriptions and examples of what should be preserved;
- identification of challenges and opportunities the state's municipalities, agencies, instrumentalities, and the RIHPHC face as they work together directly and indirectly to preserve and protect historic properties; and
- descriptions of programs that promote the heritage of the state's diverse population.

For more than fifty years, Rhode Islanders have made a significant investment of time, effort, and money in the preservation of historic buildings, districts, structures, and archeological sites,

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<sup>1</sup> A state instrumentality is a quasi-public entity created by, or pursuant to, state statute and operated for public purposes. They are frequently referred to as "quasi-state" or "quasi-public" agencies. Examples of state instrumentalities engaged with historical properties in Rhode Island include, but are not limited to the: Capital Center Commission, RI Commerce Corporation, Quonset Development Corporation, RI Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation, and RI Bridge and Turnpike Authority. Throughout this Plan, the term "State agency" is to be understood as including State instrumentalities as well.

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as well as in the recognition, promotion, and preservation of the state's diverse cultural heritage. The ongoing partnership between the RIHPHC, Rhode Island municipalities, State agencies, preservation and heritage organizations, and individuals, guided by an appreciation for the particular character and quality of the state and its communities, has been and continues to be, a substantial asset to all involved. Individual property owners have purchased and restored historic houses. Investors in commercial properties have rehabilitated and updated older buildings, downtowns, and industrial and commercial properties. The state's public and private colleges and universities have restored and protected many of their important historic buildings; several of these institutions have supported preservation as a whole by developing significant preservation-related academic programs related to archeology, indigenous studies, and historic preservation in general. Likewise, a number of the state's religious congregations have worked individually to preserve and protect their historic houses of worship. Rhode Island's municipalities and State agencies have rehabilitated historic buildings, both large and small, so that they can and do continue to serve the Rhode Islanders, now and long into the future.

Many Rhode Island municipalities and State agencies have, over time, spent scarce public dollars on the preservation of historic buildings and/or the protection of archeological sites. State government entities, such as the Department of Environmental Management, often in concert with private organizations and/or individuals, have also maintained and restored historic community landscapes, including parks, gardens, cemeteries, campuses, farms, residential estates, and lighthouses. The Rhode Island Department of Transportation and the Coastal Resources Management Council have generally met their historic preservation regulatory responsibilities under both state and federal law.

## SECTION TWO – THE CONTEXT FOR PRESERVATION



### ***Avis Block, Wickford***

Front view following the completion of restoration in 2019. Built in 1852, the building serves as a pivotal structure in North Kingstown’s small Village of Wickford’s historic district core.

### ***WHY PRESERVE?***

#### **Continued Use and Reuse Ranks Among the Foremost of “Green” Practices in Rhode Island**

Historic houses have value as dwellings; historical factories can continue to be used for manufacturing or reused for related commercial and non-profit uses. Older commercial buildings can still effectively serve in the marketing of goods and services their own right. Most of Rhode Island’s historical properties are still used today for their original purposes, and they continue to serve those purposes well. Where historical buildings have outlived their original use, usually they can be adapted for new uses. Historic open spaces and cultural landscapes also serve a multitude of continuing uses or adaptive reuses as productive farmland, large and small recreational areas, or conservation preserves that still protect related cultural and/or archaeological as well as natural resources.

#### **Heritage Tourism**

Thousands of tourists come to Rhode Island every year, and heritage tourism is a major economic generator for state government as well as municipalities. Many of those who visit Rhode Island choose the state as a destination because of the

special historic and visual character that tangibly reflects the rich diversity and traditions of the state’s communities. Residents and visitors alike take advantage of touring Rhode Island’s historic cities, small towns, countryside, museums, parks, and golf courses, as well as to participate in special events that take place at historic venues. They spend money at hotels, restaurants, and retail shops, creating both jobs and tax revenues.

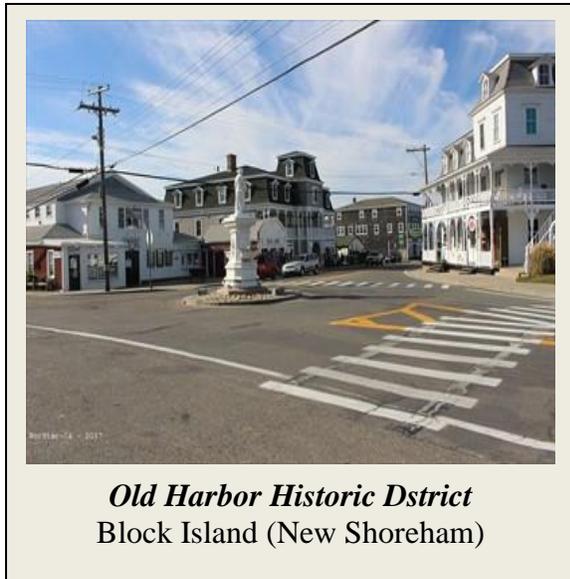


### ***The Breakers, Newport***

The Preservation Society of Newport County owns and operates 11 Gilded Age mansions in Newport, including The Breakers. As a group, these now public museums are one of the largest and most visited heritage tourism attractions in New England.

## Community Character

Everyone who lives in Rhode Island lives in an historic town or city. As political jurisdictions, even Rhode Island's newest communities are more than a century old. Many have a history of settlement which reaches back three centuries and more. The towns and cities 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. When answering similar questions for our families and ourselves today, those decisions are inherently made in the context of the past.



Historic buildings, neighborhoods, places, and the cultural heritages they reflect give shape and substance to the diverse communities Rhode Islanders live in. For the most part, these patterns have established communities which are “human” in scale, humane, pleasant, and varied. While this “quality-of-life” factor may be difficult to quantify, it is very real and readily evident when it is absent. Even by quantifiable standards, the preservation of Rhode Island’s historic buildings, places, and diverse cultural traditions are central to the protection of each community’s character. Much of the state’s beauty and desirability as a place to live in, to work in, or to visit depends on historic buildings, neighborhoods, special places, as well as the state’s diverse ethnic heritages.

## Growth Management

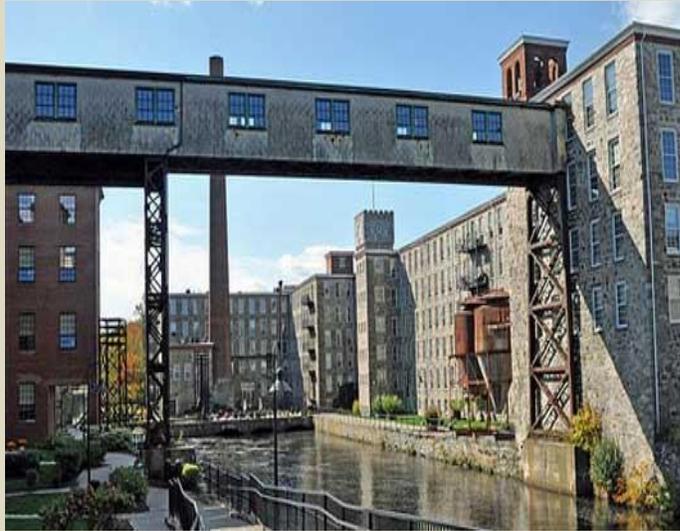
Concentrations of development that characterize the state's towns and cities--the ebb and flow of built-up areas and open spaces--have value as a guide for the future development of each community. When historic building patterns, lifeways, and open spaces are treated as the base from which further development takes place, there is much to be gained. Preserving older neighborhoods is often a smaller strain on a municipality’s resources than building new developments since the infrastructure of community services is already in place and need not be created anew. Additionally, using old buildings instead of creating new ones reduces encroachment on the state’s diminishing farmland and open space.

## Sustainability

The preservation of historic buildings and areas can contribute to the sustainability of our resources. By preserving and reusing a historic building, the energy and physical resources that went into creating it originally are conserved, expending energy and resources to demolish it and send its remains to the landfill are avoided, and the consumption of the new energy and resources needed to build its replacement is eliminated. Moreover, historic buildings erected before 1920 are often inherently as, or more, energy efficient than the buildings that followed them due to the solidity and durability of construction, windows that maximize the availability of natural light

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and ventilation, and features such as high ceilings and/or shaded porches that reduce summer heat without air conditioning. Historic buildings also lend themselves to a variety of retrofit measures that can further increase their energy efficiency.



### *Royal Mills, West Warwick*

Built in 1890 and burned in 1919, the Royal Mills complex endured many additional years of harsh weather and heavy industrial use followed by years of dormant neglect. The buildings shown here were adaptively rehabilitated in 2004 for residential and retail use. The complex's original dam and mill pond now drive a state-of-the-art turbine creating 1000MW hours of electricity per year—enough to power about 100 houses—all without emitting an ounce of greenhouse gas.

### **Property Value Stabilization/Improvement**

Several relatively recent studies suggest that historic designations, especially for properties located in local historic districts, tend to stabilize, and in some cases, increase individual property values at a slightly faster rate than the values of other properties in the same market areas.

### **Education**

The physical aspects of history embodied in historic buildings possess a unique ability to provide 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 historic societies, preservation organizations, colleges and universities, towns and cities, and patriotic and heritage organizations own many of Rhode Island's most significant historic buildings, many of which, such as Touro Synagogue in Newport (see next page), are open to the public and are regularly used as an important part of school curricula and heritage education. As archeological sites such as the Newport Spring Site are excavated (see: <http://www.historicnewportspring.org/history-of-the-site.html>), experts learn more about the past and provide an opportunity to better understand preceding generations.

Apart from direct educational value, there is a broader and even more common value in living and working among historic properties--becoming better informed about Rhode Island's diverse cultural traditions.



***Touro Synagogue, Newport***

Through the early and middle 1700s, Newport rose in prominence and importance as a seaport, taking a leading role in the shipping and mercantile trades of the American Colonies. By 1758, the community’s Jewish population had grown sufficiently that there was a need for a house of worship.

The Congregation, now known as Congregation Jeshuat Israel (Salvation of Israel), engaged Newport resident merchant and sea captain Peter Harrison, who was self-tutored in architecture from reading books and drawings, to design the synagogue. Harrison had already completed designs for Newport’s Redwood Library and King’s Chapel in Boston. Construction began on the “Jews Synagogue” in 1759, while Harrison was overseeing the building of Christ Church in Cambridge, MA, and the Brick Market in Newport.

Touro synagogue was completed in 1763 and dedicated during the Chanukah festival celebrations on December 2 of that year. The ceremony was attended not only by the congregation, but also clergy and other dignitaries from around the colony, including Ezra Stiles, who later became the president of Yale College (now University). Now known as “America’s Oldest Synagogue,” Touro Synagogue was named a National Historic Site in 1946. Today, the building is one of Newport’s and Rhode Island’s most-visited individual heritage tourism attractions.

The well-preserved evidence of the past gives each resident a sense of grounding in time and space. They are surrounded by the places and the cultural traditions derived from people who lived here before them—homes, churches, factories, and stores, lifeways—all of which helps to give Rhode Islanders a sense of living amid an important legacy to which they can add before handing it on to the next generation.

***STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
PRESERVATION STATUTES***

**Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act**

Rhode Island core historic preservation policy is principally codified in the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act (hereinafter referred to as the “State Act” – see: Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) 42-45-1 et seq.), the preamble of which states:

*The general assembly finds that the historical, architectural, and cultural heritage of the state of Rhode Island should be preserved as a part of our life to enrich the experience of present and future generations, and that the continued expansion of urban development threatens the existence of our historical sites and structures.*

The State Act established the RIHPHC as the primary agency for furthering the mission of historic preservation and cultural heritage. Specific responsibilities assigned to the RIHPHC include but are not limited to:

- conducting and updating the statewide survey of Rhode Island’s historic properties and archeological sites;
- maintaining Rhode Island’s State Register of Historic Places;
- preservation planning, including but not limited to, assisting in the updating this element of the State Guide Plan;

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- maintaining an inventory of the state’s historic landscapes<sup>2</sup>;
- permitting responsibilities for archeology investigations on state lands;
- provide State Preservation Grants for the restoration of historic properties to municipalities and instrumentalities, and non-profits when state funding is available;
- administer state-held preservation easements on historic properties in Rhode Island; and
- provide technical preservation services to the public related to preserving historic properties as well as reviewing state-assisted historic rehabilitation projects. (For a detailed accounting of RIHPHC programs and activities, see Section Four.)

Section 42-45-5(a)(2) of the State Act also specifies the following key historic preservation responsibilities that municipalities and State agencies must comply with:

*The state, a city or town, or any subdivision or instrumentality thereof shall not undertake, fund, or license any activity which will encroach upon, damage, or destroy, physically, visual, or environmentally, any site, building, place, landmark, or area included in the state register without first obtaining the advice of the historical preservation and heritage commission... Advisories rendered by the commission on any proposed activity affecting an item on the state register shall be followed unless there are compelling reasons for not doing so. In these cases, a statement of the reasons, together with a copy of the commission's advisory, shall be submitted to the governor for final determination.*

### Historic Area Zoning

Section 42-24.1-2 of the Historic Area Zoning Act enables municipalities to designate local historic district zones where project review and approval by a local historic district commission is required before alterations or demolitions that affect historic properties can proceed. As of 2019, nineteen of Rhode Island's thirty-nine municipalities have such zoning provisions in place<sup>3</sup>. Municipal historic districts are one of the strongest tools available to a municipality for preserving and protecting historic properties within its jurisdiction.

### Antiquities Act of Rhode Island

The Antiquities Act of Rhode Island--RIGL 42-45.1 et seq--includes requirements that must be satisfied by governmental as well as non-governmental entities with respect to the preservation and protection of archeological resources on state lands. The General Assembly also provided for additional protection for the state’s most significant areological sites via Section 42-45.1-10 of the Act. This section allows for the protection such sites by designating them as State Archeological Landmarks; it stipulates:

*Once so designated, no person may conduct field investigation activities, or exploration or recovery activities in the case of an underwater site, without first securing permission from the commission and the express written consent of the landowner.*

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<sup>2</sup> *Historic Landscapes of Rhode Island* (2001)

<sup>3</sup> Rhode Island municipalities with historical area zoning ordinances as of 2020: Bristol, Coventry, Cranston, Cumberland, East Greenwich, East Providence, Glocester, Hopkinton, Narragansett, New Shoreham, Newport, North Kingstown, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Providence, South Kingstown, Warren, and Warwick.

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## Historic Residence Tax Credits

In 1988, the Rhode Island General Assembly, emphasizing that "...preservation of Rhode Island's historic residences enhances an understanding of the state's heritage, improves property values, fosters civic beauty, and promotes public education, pleasure, and welfare," established RIGL Section 44-4.1-1. This statute allows "...cities and towns to provide property tax relief to mitigate against the increased assessment of historic houses when they undergo substantial maintenance or rehabilitation."

## ***FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRESERVATION POLICY***

### **National Historic Preservation Act of 1966**

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA) establishes federal preservation policies and programs. These policies and programs are essentially symmetrical to those established in the RI Historical Preservation Act. The overall Congressional purpose and intent of the NHPA, is stated in the legislation's preamble as follows:

#### ***Preamble to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended***

The Congress finds and declares that:

- (1) the spirit and direction of the Nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage;
- (2) the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people;
- (3) historic properties significant to the Nation's heritage are being lost or substantially altered, often inadvertently, with increasing frequency;
- (4) the preservation of this irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest so that its vital legacy of cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, economic, and energy benefits will be maintained and enriched for future generations of Americans;
- (5) in the face of ever-increasing extensions of urban centers, highways, and residential, commercial, and industrial developments, the present governmental and nongovernmental historic preservation programs and activities are inadequate to ensure future generations a genuine opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the rich heritage of our Nation;
- (6) the increased knowledge of our historic resources, the establishment of better means of identifying and administering them, and the encouragement of their preservation will improve the planning and execution of Federal and federally assisted projects and will assist economic growth and development; and
- (7) although the major burdens of historic preservation have been borne and major efforts initiated by private agencies and individuals, and both should continue to play a vital role, it is nevertheless necessary and appropriate for the Federal Government to accelerate its historic preservation programs and activities, to give maximum encouragement to agencies and individuals undertaking preservation by private means, and to assist State and local governments.

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As the State Historic Preservation Office for Rhode Island, the RIHPHC administers federal preservation programs in accordance with the NHPA.

For Rhode Island’s municipalities and State agencies, the most impactful federal preservation programs and activities established pursuant to the NHPA are:

- identifying significant historic properties and archeological sites through field surveys;
- evaluating, documenting, and listing eligible properties in the National Register of Historic Places;
- implementation of Section 106 reviews for all federally “assisted” (i.e., funded or licensed/permitted) projects;
- private utilization federal tax credits to rehabilitate National Register-eligible, income-producing properties; and
- timely and effective planning for ongoing implementation of federal and state policies designed to protect and preserve historic properties and archeology sites.

One of the most impactful aspects of the NHPA is the “Section 106” review process. This process requires for any federally funded and/or permitted state, municipal, or privately sponsored projects, that the assisting federal agency must, in consultation with the Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Officer, and the project proponent, as well as any impacted federally recognized tribes:

- a) identify any properties or sites that are listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register; and
- b) if such properties or sites may be adversely affected by the project, the assisting federal agency, in concert with the project’s sponsor(s) must in good faith seek to eliminate or mitigate that effect prior to the project going forward.

For example, in Rhode Island, virtually all RI Department of Transportation projects and many Department of Environmental Management and Coastal Resource Management Projects, as well as virtually municipally administered Community Development Block Grant projects are required to comply with the NHPA Section 106 provisions.



**An aerial view of the old I-195 corridor with redevelopment parcels highlighted**

The realignment of the Interstate-195 corridor through central Providence was a RIDOT project begun in 1997 and completed in 2013. Heavily subsidized with federal funds provided through the Federal Highway Administration, a Section 106 review was required. Relocation of the corridor necessitated the demolition of several significant properties listed in the National Register. To mitigate this loss, and to protect National Register properties on either side of the old corridor, all new construction in the resulting vacant right-of-way are required to be reviewed and approved by the Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Officer

***FINANCIAL INCENTIVES – STATE AND FEDERAL PRESERVATION GRANTS, LOANS, AND TAX CREDITS***

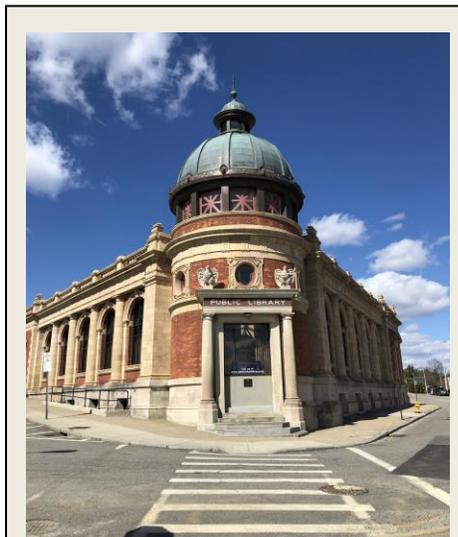
**State Preservation Grants**

The State Preservation Grants (SPG) program is RIHPHC’s largest state-funded grant-making effort. Through this program, grants of up to \$150,000 are competitively awarded for capital (“bricks and mortar”) preservation projects for historic properties and archeological sites owned by Rhode Island governmental agencies or nonprofit organizations including public historic sites, museums, and cultural art centers. The State Preservation Grants Program was created because it was recognized that many significant properties owned by public agencies or non-profit organizations were in need of extensive repairs or restoration but beyond the financial capability of agency or organization.



***East Greenwich Town Hall***

Built in 1804–05 for use as the Kent County Court House, this building also served until 1854 as one five regular, rotating meeting locations for Rhode Island’s General Assembly. Ownership of the property was transferred from the State to the Town of East Greenwich in 1974. Since then, it has served as the municipality’s primary Town government building. In 2016, the Town received a State Preservation Grant for \$150,000 to replace the building’s deteriorated slate roof surfaces.



***George S. Burns Building, Pawtucket***

Located at 13 Summit Street, the Burns Building was originally constructed for use by the U.S. Post Office in 1896. Awarded a \$150K 2016 RIHPHC State Preservation Grant to complete masonry and window repairs, the building has been listed in the National Register since 1975.

Created in 2002 and funded by state bonds, lawmakers and voters

believed it to be 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. Additionally, preserving these historic landmarks — theatres, museums, concert halls, art centers, libraries, town halls—contributes to the quality of life in Rhode Island, supports the state’s tourism economy, and ensures that Rhode Island’s arts, culture, and civic facilities continue to inspire new generations. An additional benefit is that 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.

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

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facilities grant program operated by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. Between 2015 and 2017, the Commission distributed the \$5 million raised by the bonds through a competitive grant program for restoration of historic buildings used as museums, cultural art centers, and public historic sites throughout the state.

However, lack of regular funding for the SPG 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 on a continuing basis.

### Historic Preservation Loan Fund

The RIHPHC's 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. 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 may be made to individual property owners, or to municipalities and preservation organizations which, in turn, lend to property owners, such as the Providence Revolving Fund. Borrowers must grant the RIHPHC an easement that ensures the continued preservation and maintenance of each rehabilitated property. To date, RIHPHC has leveraged this fund to provide nearly \$9 million in low-interest loans to over 130 borrowers.

### Certified Local Government Grants

The Certified Local Government (CLG) Program is a formal partnership between the National Park Service, the RIHPHC, and Rhode Island municipalities through which municipalities demonstrate their commitment to historic preservation and, in turn, receive access to funding opportunities and technical assistance from the National Park Service and the RIHPHC. The program helps communities fund a wide range of activities, including identification and evaluation of significant historic and archaeological properties, the nomination of eligible



In 2019, the Town of Gloucester, one of Rhode Island's 18 federally designated Certified Local Governments, received a \$250,000 grant from the National Park Service's Historic Revitalization Subgrant Program to launch a preservation and economic-development program targeting the Chepachet Village area, shown here to the left.

properties to the National Register, historic preservation plans, rehabilitation specifications and construction, and certain education-related activities such as the development of public education materials.

To qualify for CLG status, a community must have a historic district zoning ordinance and a qualified historic district commission. CLG communities may participate in the nomination of

**Historic Coastal Communities  
and Flood Hazard:**

**A Preliminary Evaluation of Impacts to  
Historic Properties**



Browning's Beach Historic District after Hurricane Sandy, South Kingstown, R.I., photo credit: G. Abbink 2013

Prepared by  
Youngken Associates  
for  
Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission  
and  
City of Newport, Rhode Island  
August 31, 2015

CLG projects in Rhode Island can include a broad range of preservation-related studies, such as the one depicted above. Completed on behalf of the City of Newport's CLG program in 2015, *Historic Coastal Communities and Flood Hazard* assessed the impacts of ongoing climate change on historic properties throughout the Narragansett Bay area.

properties to the National Register of Historic Places, and are eligible to apply for federal grants for survey and planning projects. Eligible projects for CLG grant funding include 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. As of 2020, eighteen Rhode Island municipalities have been designated as Certified Local Governments<sup>4</sup>. Pursuant to federal law, a minimum of 10% percent of Rhode Island's annual federal appropriation for historic preservation programs and activities is reserved solely for use by CLGs. Each CLG is eligible to compete annually for CLG Program funding to assist with historic preservation projects (see: [http://www.preservation.ri.gov/local/local\\_grants.php](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/local/local_grants.php)).

Municipalities, State agencies, and nonprofits interested in obtaining detailed current information on applying for state grants or loans for historic preservation projects in Rhode Island should contact the RIHPHC at 401-222-2678, or visit the agency's website at <http://www.preservation.ri.gov/>.

Federal matching pass-through grants are also available to municipalities and State agencies through the RIHPHC when such funding is appropriated by Congress. These grant funds can be used for a wide variety of survey, planning, archeological projects, educational projects, and preservation-related disaster relief, as well as projects designed to rehabilitate historic properties.

<sup>4</sup> The 18 municipalities are: 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.

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## Federal Historic Preservation Fund

Rhode Island’s municipalities, State agencies, and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for competitive funding assistance available from time-to-time for a variety of activities funded through federal Historic Preservation Fund grant programs including, but not necessarily limited to, Save America’s Treasures; African American Civil Rights; Disaster Recovery; Under Represented Communities; and Historic Revitalization Grants (see: <https://www.nps.gov/preservation-grants/>).

Municipalities, State agencies, and nonprofit organizations that own properties listed in the National Register as being of “national level of significance” or properties that have been designated by the Secretary of the Interior as National Historic Landmarks are also eligible to apply for federal restoration grants-in-aid directly from the National Park Service when such grants are available (see: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/save-america-s-treasures.htm>).



Historic view of *Marble House, Newport*

Designated a National Historic Landmark in 2006, this major Newport tourist attraction received a \$500,000 matching Save America’s Treasures Grant in 2019 to assist with roof restoration.

Municipalities, State agencies, or nonprofits interested in obtaining detailed current information on the availability of federally funded grants for historic preservation projects in Rhode Island should contact the RIHPHC at 401-222-2678, or visit the agency’s website at: <http://www.preservation.ri.gov/>.

## Other Federal Preservation Grants Administered/Supported 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. This latter program is specifically designed to proactively encourage historic properties related to the nation’s diverse ethnic groups be identified and nomination for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

## Additional Private Sources of Grants

RIHPHC maintains an evolving list of grant-making public agencies and non-profit organizations that fund preservation, education, archival, and planning activities on its website (see: [www.preservation.ri.gov/grants/other\\_sources.php](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/grants/other_sources.php)).

## State and Federal Historic Rehabilitation 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. Federal tax incentives come in the form of a tax credit taken against 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-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.

Rhode Island established a state income tax credit for substantial certified rehabilitations of income-producing historic buildings in 2002. 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 in 24 communities. Fifty-seven projects representing private investments 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.

While Rhode Island municipalities are not eligible to take direct advantage of historic preservation tax credits programs currently



***Norman Bird Sanctuary, Middletown***

This historic barn was adapted for reuse by the Norman Bird Sanctuary, and now provides space for classrooms and cultural/environmental programming on the first floor and a natural history museum on the second floor. Built about 1850, the Sanctuary received a \$10,000 matching grant from the 1772 Foundation to complete the last phase of a multi-year restoration project.



Originally built c. 1885, the rehabilitation of Westerly's ***Lanphear Livery***, also known as the Holdredge Garage, was completed in 2016 at a total cost of \$5 million. Originally designed and used as a livery stable, today the building includes three commercial spaces, one office space, and four residential apartments. The project was financed, in part by a combination of federal (\$1 million) and state (\$1.125 million) historic rehabilitation tax credits, and generated 64 local construction-related jobs.



***Lymanville Mill, North Providence***

The mill complex was built in North Providence in 1884 for the Lymanville Company, which occupied it until 1957. Virtually abandoned and extremely deteriorated by the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the reuse of this old mill complex as market-rate housing was completed in 2018. All 108 of the new residential apartments in the rehabilitated building were already fully tenanted prior to the building being fully reopened. Financing for the \$28 million reuse project was leveraged by a combination of both state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits.

sponsored by either the state or federal governments, they can and should promote the use of these programs—individually or combined—as a means of effectively leveraging increased private-sector investment in their communities and supplementing their long-term tax base. They can do so first and foremost by ensuring that eligible, but underutilized historic commercial or industrial properties are listed in the State or National Registers. In doing this, municipalities lay the groundwork necessary to make private-sector rehabilitation and/or adaptive reuse of historic income-producing properties feasible as well as more attractive and likely. For these reasons, it is advantageous for municipalities to become familiar with these programs.

With respect to state historic rehabilitation tax credits, the RIHPHC continues to review all projects for compliance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. However, since 2019, the funding and application processes for these state tax credits have been administered directly by Commerce Rhode Island's Rebuild Rhode Island program. Through this program, successfully completed projects can receive up to a 20% tax investment credit for all eligible rehabilitation work. The federal rehabilitation tax

credit program is administered by the National Park Service in coordination with the RIHPHC. The amount of project credit available under this program equals 20% of the qualifying expenses of the rehabilitation; it is only available to properties that will be used for a business or other income-producing purposes; however, to qualify, the building proposed for the credit needs to be listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register, either individually or as a contributing part of an eligible historic district. All federal tax-credit work has to meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. Applications for federal rehabilitation tax credits are initially filed for review and comment with the RIHPHC, and then forwarded to the National Park Service for final review and approval.

Finally, it is important to note that state and federal rehabilitation tax credits can be, and often are, utilized together for the same project, effectively creating a total tax credit value of up to 40% for all qualifying expenses. For detailed, current information describing the application process for state historic rehabilitation tax credits or federal rehabilitation tax credits through the RIHPHC see: <https://commerceri.com/rebuild-applications/> and <https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives/before-you-apply.htm>.



Pre-rehabilitation view



Post-rehabilitation view

***Stillwater Mill***

5-7 Main Street, Burrillville, RI

Built: c. 1911

**Combined state/federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit project**

Completed: 2010

Qualified Rehabilitation cost:

**\$13,395,961.00**

Total Project Value: **\$18,000,000.00**

Original use: **Industrial/Vacant**

New Use: **Affordable Housing – 47 Units**

**Project Summary:** By reusing an abandoned mill complex located on a polluted brownfield site, the project stands today as a beacon for revitalizing Rhode Island’s many underutilized mill villages. The Clocktower Apartments were built by a nonprofit developer. They include both affordable and market-rate one-, two- and three- bedroom units, and were built with geothermal heating and cooling, recycled materials, and low-consumption plumbing fixtures.

**Local Historic Residence Tax Credits**

Chapter 44-4.1 of the Rhode Island General Laws authorize municipalities “to provide property tax relief to mitigate against the increased assessment of historic houses when they undergo substantial maintenance or rehabilitation.” The RIHPHC is a primary source of technical assistance and training to local historic district commissions and local planning staffs.

Workshops are given regularly at the request of the local commissions to provide essential training for new members and serve as a refresher course for veteran members.

## **SECTION THREE – PLANNING FOR PRESERVATION**

State agencies, municipalities, and private preservation organizations, all have a role in preservation planning, and ultimately, implementation. Effective preservation planning and programming must take into account not only the entity’s own missions, responsibilities, goals, and objectives, but state and federal preservation laws and regulations, and the statewide goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan, and programs developed and implemented by the RIHPHC (see Section Four).

### ***A System of Reciprocal Planning in Rhode Island***

Rhode Island has a reciprocal system of land use planning whereby the State sets broad goals and policies through the State Guide Plan and municipalities express local desires and conditions through the development of local comprehensive plans. Local comprehensive plans serve as the basis for land use regulation and establish an implementation program for achieving each community’s stated goals. All local land use decisions must be consistent with the local comprehensive plan, making the comprehensive plan an important tool in the implementation of State policy. To ensure that local plans are in line with the policies presented in the State Guide Plan, local comprehensive plans are reviewed by the State for consistency. Once approved, comprehensive plans become binding on State agencies by requiring conformance of their programs and projects to the comprehensive plan.

The [\*State Guide Plan\*](#) (SGP) is actually a number of individual plans covering an array of topics. The [\*State Planning Council\*](#) is responsible for approval of all elements of the SGP, and the Division of Statewide Planning is responsible for its maintenance. The elements of the SGP are intended to guide not only governmental entities at all levels, but also non-government entities (such as preservation and heritage organizations) as well as tribes and the public-at-large. It contains individual elements for land use, greenspace, housing, and transportation that often directly involve the state’s historic resources. Rhode Island’s land use plan is the most comprehensive of these, as it provides an overarching pattern for the state’s growth and development through integrated land-use management.

A key feature of the State’s land use plan<sup>5</sup> is its focus on preserving the distinction between Rhode Island’s historic urban centers and neighborhoods and their rural surrounding areas. To maintain this traditional pattern and encourage sustainable development, the land use plan has identified an Urban Services Boundary that separates the state’s more urbanized areas, where the infrastructure is well-established, from the largely rural areas (see: [www.rigis.org/datasets/urban-services-boundary](http://www.rigis.org/datasets/urban-services-boundary)).

Another key feature is “growth centers”. These are areas that municipalities are encouraged to identify for higher levels of development and redevelopment. The purpose is to encourage

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<sup>5</sup>As of the adoption of this Plan, the State’s land use plan is *Land Use 2025*. It is currently being updated and will be replaced by *Land Use 2040*.

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development that is contiguous to existing development to minimize governmental fiscal impacts and environmental impacts. The overall goal is for the State and municipalities to concentrate growth inside the Urban Services Boundary and within growth centers in rural areas.

It is important to note that in addition to this Plan and the State land use plan, other elements of the State Guide Plan such as, the economic development plan and housing plan all contain goals and policies that support historic preservation. While RIHPHC is the primary State agency responsible for historic preservation activities, several other State agencies have significant responsibilities as well. This will be more fully examined in the pages that follow.

While the State sets overall historic preservation goals and policies, and the RIHPHC provides an array of programs and initiatives, a keystone for historic preservation is the state's cities and towns. It is at the local level that land use decisions are made which will both directly and indirectly impact historic preservation.

### ***Municipalities***

The Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act (RIGL, 45-22.2 et seq.), requires municipalities to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan which frameworks the intent of its residents for determining the future development and conservation of their community. These plans express a community's civic goals, and identify strategies, actions, and a timetable to reach them. The Comprehensive Planning Act specifically requires that comprehensive plans include:

Historic and cultural resources identification and protection. The plan must be based on an inventory of significant historic and cultural resources such as historic buildings, sites, landmarks, and scenic views. The plan must include goals, policies, and implementation techniques for the protection of these resources. (§ 45-22.2-6(b)(5))

State statute also requires that a municipality's zoning ordinances be consistent with its comprehensive plan.

The Division of Statewide Planning offers a series of Guidance Manuals to assist in the development of comprehensive plans. Guidance Handbook #4: Planning for Historic & Cultural Resources explains the standards that must be met for a comprehensive plan to satisfy the above requirement, and supplies an array of ideas for setting goals, policies, and actions to fit each individual community's needs. Many of these plans have been developed with the participation and advice of the RIHPHC staff. There are also a number of State-approved community comprehensive plans that serve as useful examples of integrating historic preservation planning into the comprehensive plan. Among these is the Town of Bristol's, an excerpt of which is highlighted on the following page.

Comprehensive plans are intended to integrate all of their components into an internally consistent whole. Therefore, the historic importance of resources often found in commercial Main Street districts, neighborhoods, schools, landscapes, archeological sites, and historic landscapes should be factored into all elements of the comprehensive plan, and then reflected in municipal zoning and other local regulations.

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Note: actions of city and town government which could have an impact on historic resources usually require review by the RIHPHC pursuant to State and/or federal preservation laws and regulations.

### *Town of Bristol Comprehensive Plan*

**Goal 2. Continue to protect the historic and cultural resources that link Bristol's PAST with the vision for Bristol's FUTURE.**

**Policies to achieve Goal 2:**

- A. Define, promote and protect elements of each part of Bristol's cultural heritage including its cultural and historic institutions.
- B. Continue to update and expand the local and National Register of Historic Places and Districts.
- C. Incorporate historic resource protection and planning within the overall community planning and development review process. Identify and protect historic, cultural and natural landscapes, plantings and features within Bristol.
- D. Coordinate the historic preservation and planning policies of the various branches of local and state government.
- E. Monitor the archeological resources in culturally sensitive areas in a manner consistent with state law and with standards of good archaeological practice.

### **Local Historic Preservation Tools**

The state enabling legislation for **local historic district zoning** focuses on buildings and structures and emphasizes the architectural aspects of the regulatory review. Local historic districts are composed primarily of buildings, but many also include historic open spaces such as parks and commons, historic roadways, historic waterfronts, and other historic landscape elements that can be subject to commission review. Local historic district zoning is one of the most effective tools a community can use to protect its historic character. Almost half of Rhode Island's communities have adopted this protective mechanism. Local historic district zoning empowers the local community to protect its significant historic resources.

**Historic district commissions** review and approve exterior alterations and new construction, which is one of the most effective forms of preservation regulation. Local commissions are made up of residents who have volunteered their services; they provide a invaluable local perspective to the regulatory process. However, in some larger communities, such as Newport and Bristol, historic districts 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 process as well as the principles and techniques of historic property reviews. (see: [www.preservation.ri.gov/local/local\\_zoning.php](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/local/local_zoning.php)).

Broader **design review authority**, which is most commonly found in the state's downtowns and business districts, can also guide building alterations and new development so that they are compatible with the existing historic building fabric and historic character of the neighborhood.

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The Town of Portsmouth and City of Providence are two examples of municipalities in Rhode Island that have such design review authority in place (see respectively: <https://www.portsmouthri.com/198/Design-Review-Committee> and <https://www.providenceri.gov/planning/downtown-design-review-committee-ddrc/>). Such reviews often focus on historic buildings, though there are a few significant exceptions where historic district zoning 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 (see: <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE45/45-23/INDEX.HTM>).

Unfortunately, most municipalities provide only a limited degree of protection (or no protection at all) for archaeological sites or historic landscapes with their regulations for subdivision and development review. RIHPHC is available to assist communities in developing regulatory protection for these scenic and cultural resources under development and design review ordinances.

**Regulation of historic burial grounds** is subject to municipal authority under the State's cemeteries law, RIGL 23-18 (see: <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE23/23-18/INDEX.HTM>). The law authorizes cities and towns (many which have cemetery commissions) to regulate ground disturbance within 25 feet of a cemetery, cemetery relocation, as well as the treatment of previously unidentified burials that are discovered. The law also applies to ancient burials of the Narragansett and other Indian tribes.

### *State Agencies*

Pursuant to several State statutes, e.g., RIGL 42-45-5(a)(2), all State agencies have an obligation to take the preservation and protection of historic properties and archeological sites into consideration in the implementation of their programs and activities. By the nature of their missions, activities, or property holdings, a number of State agencies are often involved in working with historic properties.

For State agencies that directly administer State-owned properties listed in, or eligible for listing in, the State or National Registers of Historic Places (e.g., the Departments of Environmental Management, Transportation, and Administration), including preservation components as part of their agency's planning and regulatory processes is vitally important. State agencies that regularly fund or regulate projects involving historic properties that are not State-owned (e.g., RIDEM, Commerce RI, RI Housing) should ensure that their policies and practices for doing so are consistent with the established and approved State and federal historic preservation policies described in this State Guide Plan Element. A good example of such a practice is provided by the regulations of the Coastal Resources Management Council (see: 650-RICR-20-00-1 § 1.2.3, Areas of Historic and Archaeological Significance, page 109)

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Some agencies, such as the Rhode Island Agricultural Lands Preservation Commission, take historic and archeological resources into account in project scoring and selection. In accordance with the State's established policy of identifying and preserving its historic resources, State agencies that administer State-owned properties listed in the State Register of Historic Places should also review and, if necessary, update their inventories of those properties at least once every three years, and then forward copies of those updates to the RIHPHC. In working toward this end, a good starting place is the RIHPHC's *Rhode Island: State-Owned Historic Properties* inventory, print copies of which are available from the RIHPHC.

### ***Rhode Island State Agencies Typically Involved in Implementing State and/or Federal Preservation Policies on a Regular Basis***

**The Department of Environmental Management (DEM)** is the steward for many of Rhode Island's most important historic sites, buildings, and landscapes. DEM is the funding source for the State's programs for public parks, recreation areas, and open space, and is the principal planning agency for all issues associated with outdoor recreation, agriculture, environmental conservation, and many aspects of environmental regulation (<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/planning/>).

**The Department of Transportation (DOT)** is responsible for road work and transportation planning, many of which have impacts on historic resources. Information regarding individual transportation-related projects is found in the Transportation Improvements Program (<http://www.dot.ri.gov/projects/>).

**Rhode Island Housing** operates programs to promote the creation of housing and to support home-ownership among Rhode Islanders (<https://www.rihousing.com/>).

**Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC)** regulates development in the coastal zone where many historic properties and archaeological sites are located (<http://www.crmc.ri.gov/>).

**Rhode Island Commerce Corporation**, primarily through its Rebuild RI program, provides tax credits for building rehabilitations and constructions that may involve or affect historic properties (<https://commerceri.com/rebuild-applications/>).

**Rhode Island State University System** administers and manages numerous properties listed or eligible for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

**The Department of Administration's (DOA) Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance** is responsible for managing and maintaining an asset portfolio of 1800 buildings statewide.

**The Division of Statewide Planning (a division within DOA)** serves as the staff for the State Planning Council, is responsible for reviewing various projects for consistency with the State Guide Plan, and assists cities and towns in meeting their obligations for comprehensive planning (<http://www.planning.ri.gov/>).

Underwater and coastal resources in the coastal communities fall under the jurisdiction of the State, and requests for project permits in these areas are reviewed both the Coastal Resources Management Council and the RIHPHC; if the projects are federally funded or licensed, projects are also subject to Section 106 review by the RIHPHC.

*Native American Tribes*

Native American Tribes play an integral role in the historic preservation efforts that take place in Rhode Island on an ongoing basis. The only Native American tribe Federally recognized in Rhode Island is the Narragansett Indian Tribe<sup>6</sup>. The Narragansett Tribe maintains the 1,800-acre Narragansett Indian Reservation in Charlestown but many archeological sites associated with the Tribe are scattered throughout the state. It is imperative that any preservation planning and activities sponsored or reviewed by municipalities, State agencies, or private organizations respect, acknowledge the expertise of, and collaborate proactively with the Narragansett and the other nearby tribes in the preservation their ancestral historic properties in Rhode Island.

*Non-Governmental Organizations*



*Nelson W. Aldrich House, Providence*

Since its 1974 donation by the heirs of William W. Aldrich (U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, 1953 to 1957), the Nelson W. Aldrich House has served as the headquarters of the Rhode Island Historical Society. The house, built in 1822 in the city’s fashionable East Side, was designated as a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior in 1976.

There are more than 100 historic preservation and heritage organizations in Rhode Island with an estimated total membership well in excess of 25,000 (see Appendix II). Excepting local historic district commissions, these are primarily private entities. These organizations are effective local advocates for historic preservation and heritage; they frequently make use of information and technical assistance from the RIHPHC and, in turn, often distribute that information through their programs. Among these historic and preservation organizations, a handful maintain professional staffs, substantial property ownership, and sophisticated programming, such as the Rhode Island Historical Society, the Newport Historical Society, the Providence Preservation Society, the Newport Restoration Foundation, and the Preservation Society of Newport County.

Most historic preservation and heritage organizations in Rhode Island are small associations administered by volunteers. These groups are often devoted to the history and artifacts associated with a single community, sometimes serving as stewards and interpreters of an important historic property in their town.

Some of the state’s larger communities have specialized preservation organizations as well, such as the Providence Revolving Fund (which provides loans and technical assistance to historic

<sup>6</sup> The Mashantucket Pequot Tribe and Mohegan Tribe--both headquartered in eastern Connecticut--and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), both headquartered in southeastern Massachusetts, are other Federally recognized tribes that have traditionally been associated with Rhode Island lands. Another tribe, the Nipmuc Tribe, is also associated with the Rhode Island area; is not recognized federally but is recognized by Massachusetts.

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property development projects in Providence. Preserve Rhode Island is a private, nonprofit preservation entity that advocates for historic preservation on a statewide basis. There are also some preservation-minded community development corporations that support and carry out affordable housing development projects, many of which are in historic neighborhoods. These organizations have frequently worked to preserve historic resources through rehabilitation and reuse.

Groups devoted to the protection and conservation of natural resources and open space likewise have been playing an increasing role as preservation partners, especially with respect to historic landscapes and archaeological sites. They can be found among the 45 land trusts in Rhode Island which operate in all but four of the state's 39 municipalities, the local conservation commissions that serve in 30 communities, and organizations such as the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and The Nature Conservancy.

Historic preservation in Rhode Island also has partners in the state's academic community. For example, historic preservation is included as an academic discipline at both Roger Williams University and at Salve Regina University. Rhode Island College and Brown University also offer professional training in archaeology through their anthropology departments. The Public Humanities Program at Brown University provides training in the areas of historic site research and interpretation, while the Community Partnerships Center at Roger Williams University and the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) both provide coursework in architecture and planning architecture; RISD's Department of Interior Architecture provides specialized education in the



Post-rehabilitation exterior view

Post-rehabilitation interior view

### *South Street Station, Providence*

The South Street Station (former Narragansett Electric Lighting Company Power Station) is an historic electrical power generation station built in stages from 1912-1952 at 360 Eddy Street in Providence. Following the station's decommissioning as a power generating plant in 1995 and listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 2006, the building sat vacant and decaying until 2017 when supported by state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits, it was entirely renovated at a cost of \$220 million. Re-opened as part of the South Street Landing project, occupancy of the now state-of-the-art is now shared by, [Brown University](#), [Rhode Island College](#), and [University of Rhode Island](#) which had supported the rehabilitation of South Street Station for their eventual use.

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adaptive reuse of existing buildings. Additional partners also include the Landscape Architecture and Art History departments at the University of Rhode Island, the Environmental Studies and Urban Studies and History programs at Brown University, Providence College, Rhode Island College, and the Marine Archeology program at the University of Rhode Island.

Other notable professional and avocational organizations that contribute to preservation in Rhode Island, include the American Institute of Architects (Rhode Island Chapter), the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Planning Association, the Rhode Island Marine Archaeology Project, Grow Smart Rhode Island, and the New England Chapters of the Vernacular Architecture Forum and the Society for Industrial Archeology. (For a more complete listing of private entities engaged in historic preservation in Rhode Island, see Appendix II.)

**SECTION FOUR – THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL  
PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION**

***Background***

The RIHPHC was created in 1968 to help 1) ensure the preservation and protection places of historical, archaeological, and cultural significance in Rhode Island; 2) foster greater appreciation for the state’s diverse history and heritage; and 3) to support economic development throughout the state. The Commission consists of fifteen members, ten of whom serve in a voluntary capacity. The ten public members, who represent various history, archeology, and architecture-related fields, are appointed by the Governor. Five members serve ex officio: the director of the Department of Environmental Management, the director of the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, the associate director of Administration for planning, the State Building Commissioner, and the State Historic Preservation Officer. The Commission employs a staff that includes historians, architectural historians, archaeologists, and architects. As previously noted, the RIHPHC is the agency designated by law to operate Rhode Island’s statewide historic preservation program that identifies and protects historic buildings, districts, structures, and archaeological sites.

Additionally, as Rhode Island’s designated State Historic Preservation Office, pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, the RIHPHC reviews and updates Rhode Island’s official statewide historic preservation plan submitted to the National Park Service. Approval by the Park Service of this plan qualifies the state for receiving certain federal grants. Both the *State Historic Preservation Plan*, and this State Guide Plan element are intended to provide a policy and operational framework to guide the development and implementation of historic preservation and heritage programs and activities by municipalities, State agencies, preservation organizations, and the public-at-large. In implementing these goals and objectives, the RIHPHC embraces the set of implementation principles listed on the following page.

***Identification, Documentation, and Registration***

**The Rhode Island Statewide Historic Property Survey**

Preservation begins with an awareness of historic places and an understanding of their condition and significance. When done correctly, the identification of historic places serves as the basis for all other preservation efforts. In Rhode Island, the statewide survey of historic resources, 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 historic or archaeological interest in every city and town.

Each RIHPHC survey report includes: 1) a concise history of a community, neighborhood, or special topic; 2) an inventory of related places of historic interest; and 3) recommendations for the future preservation 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 more inclusive survey files maintained by the RIHPHC. While buildings are the largest and

best-covered category of historic 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, watercraft, designed and vernacular historic landscapes, traditional cultural properties, terrestrial and underwater archeological sites, and Native American archaeological sites. Although the RIHPHC completed survey reports for every community in the state by the late 1980s, efforts continue to supplement, update, and refine those survey files with additional and/or more up-to-date information. Survey reports are available on the RIHPHC's website at [www.preservation.ri.gov/survey/publications.php](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/survey/publications.php); copies of individual survey files are available from the RIHPHC by request.

In addition to surveying the built environment, the identification, documentation, and evaluation of the state's archaeological sites--on land and underwater--are major goals of RIHPHC's historic 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. The RIHPHC also prioritizes the survey of cultural landscapes, which include designed, vernacular, and ethno-historic landscapes.

***RIHPHC Historic Preservation Implementation Principles***

1. The preservation of historic buildings and areas, as well as the diverse cultural heritage of the state's people 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 buildings and areas and archeological sites 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 buildings and areas 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 notable archaeological sites, preservation is best achieved by restricting their use to protect them from decay or destruction.
4. The preservation of historic buildings and areas and archeological sites is best achieved when it is integrated into public planning processes rather than when it takes place in opposition to those processes.
5. The preservation of historic properties and the diverse character and heritage of Rhode Island's people relies on the combined commitment and effort of state agencies, state instrumentalities, municipalities, private citizens, businesses, non-profit organizations, and public entities. Cooperation and mutual support among these different parties are key to the preservation of historic resources and culture.
6. Historic preservation must be an active part of Rhode Island's critical fight against climate change and sea level rise.
7. Historic preservation and heritage programs and activities in Rhode Island must prioritize equity and representation at all levels of society and practice.

## The National Register of Historic Places

Evaluation is an essential second step following identification in the preservation planning process. It provides for the assessment of the historical significance and integrity of resources, thereby determining what properties should be prioritized for preservation. One of the RIHPHC's most widely used tools for evaluating historic properties is the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (see: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/36/60.4>).



*Old Slater Mill, Pawtucket* (historic view)

Pawtucket's Old Slater Mill was the first listing in the National Register of Historic Places when the Register was created in 1966. It was also designated in 1966 as a National Historic Landmark, the nation's highest form of historic property recognition. As of 2020, fewer than 2,600 properties across the nation have achieved this recognition.

Created by the National Historic Preservation Act, and administered 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 National Register Criteria for National Register listing, a property must be associated with a significant aspect of local, state, or national history and retain its historic integrity and 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 followed by review and listing by the National Park Service's Keeper of the National Register.

Listing properties in the National Register can be initiated in several ways, including by owners, by a local community, or by the RIHPHC. Applicants for listing typically

employ architectural historians, historians, or archaeologists as consultants to complete the research and documentation that the National Register nomination process requires. However, applicants who wish to prepare the nomination themselves can obtain guidance from the RIHPHC staff. RIHPHC staff also occasionally prepares nominations internally.

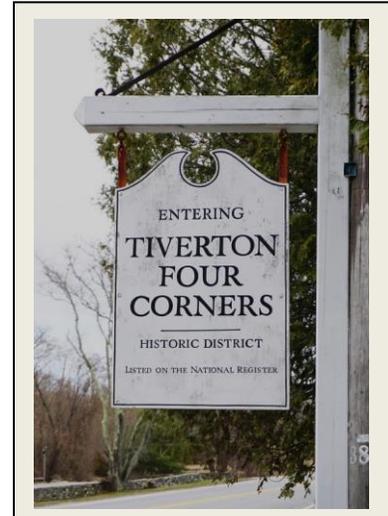
National Register nominations are also considered by RIHPHC's State Preservation Review Board (SPRB) composed of professionals in the fields of American history, architectural history, architecture, archeology, landscape architecture or history, and other disciplines. Established as a committee of the Commission in October 2017, the SPRB 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 State Historic Preservation Officer for approval and submission to the National Park Service's Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places for final action.

As of 2021, more than 21,000 properties in Rhode Island have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, with more properties definitely eligible. Most are in one of the state's 188 National Register historic districts. The variety of Rhode Island properties listed in the National Register demonstrates the state's rich architectural, historical, and archaeological

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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.

Listing in the National or State Registers can also make a property eligible for federal and state assistance programs and may also trigger other important financial assistance at the community level, such as property tax benefits (see “Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits,” page 14). Resources that meet the National Register criteria are afforded special consideration during government-sponsored projects to avoid damage or alteration (see: “RIHPHC Regulatory Reviews,” page 30). To facilitate the evaluation of historic properties during the Section 106 planning process (see page 30), those that are not listed can be determined eligible through a consensus determination of eligibility by the involved federal agency and the Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Officer.



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. Some districts 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.

Virtually all nomination documents are available on the RIHPHC website (see: <http://www.preservation.ri.gov/register/>). 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.

### **The State Register of Historic Places**

The RIHPHC also maintains a State Register of Historic Places that uses the same eligibility 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 Rhode Island, properties considered eligible for inclusion in the National Register by the National Park Service, and Rhode Island Archaeological Landmarks designated by the Commission are considered listed in the State Register.

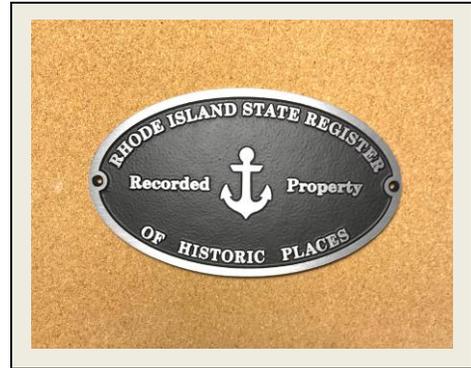
Properties can also be listed in the State Register if they are located within a local historic district and they:

- 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,

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- style, or method of construction; and
- Possess enough integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its historic significance.

Locally fabricated State Register of Historic Places markers--shown here on the right--are available for purchase through the RIHPHC.



### State Archaeological Landmarks

In addition to listing in the National Register or the State Register, eligible on-land and underwater archaeological sites may be designated as State Archaeological Landmarks (see: [RIGL 42-45.1-10](#)). The State Archaeological Landmark designation precludes unpermitted field investigation activities, or exploration or recovery activities in the case of an underwater site. For on-land or underwater investigation of a State Archaeological Landmark to take place, interested parties must receive both approval from the RIHPHC and, if the property is privately owned, written permission from the property owner. The RIHPHC retains the authority to delist State Archaeological Landmarks if it determines that a site no longer retains enough significance or integrity to satisfy designation criteria.

### *Historic Property Preservation Easements*

The RIHPHC has the statutory authority to accept contributions of partial interest in real property for conservation purposes in perpetuity. The Preservation Easements Program was established to preserve and protect cultural resources including buildings, archaeological sites, and land areas. The RIHPHC considers accepting easements for buildings listed or eligible for listing in the National Register, including those that contribute to the significance of a historic district. The agency will also consider accepting easements on important historic properties and archaeological sites if the resource is listed or eligible for listing in the National Register. Evaluation of a potential easement donation is guided by the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*. Donors are required to fund an endowment equal to 5% of the appraised value of the property. Easements are required by the RIHPHC for all historic properties rehabilitated using state or federal grant funds administered by the agency.



***Southeast Light, Block Island***

The RIHPHC's initial Southeast Light easement was established when the lighthouse was transferred by the U.S Coast Guard to the Block Island Southeast Light Foundation in 1991. Built in 1874, the entire building was moved back approximately 100 yards to save it from loss due to extensive erosion of the nearby ocean bluffs. Southeast Light was designated as a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior in 1997.

***RIHPHC Regulatory Reviews***

The RIHPHC reviews actions by federal and State agencies that may have an impact on historic resources. This process of reviewing federal and state activities is carried out under the authority of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and Section 42-45-5(a)(2) of the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act.

By virtue of its role under these federal and State regulations, the RIHPHC reviews approximately 1,200 large and small projects per year to ensure that adverse impacts on historic properties are avoided or mitigated. The types of projects reviewed include, but are not limited to, highway construction, housing rehabilitation and community development, Coastal Resource Management Council permits, projects assisted by federal agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management, the U.S Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Aviation Administration, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and U.S. Navy and Coast Guard among 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 early in the planning processes for government projects.

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

**Preservation Duties of the RIHPHC**  
Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act or RIGL 42-45 identify, review, and provide recommendations for activities undertaken, funded, or licensed by RI municipalities or State agencies which might encroach upon, damage, or destroy--physically, visually, or environmentally--any site, building, place, landmark, or area included in the State register.

***Initiating Project Review Consultation with the RIHPHC***  
The RIHPHC encourages agencies and applicants for federal and state assistance to initiate consultation for Section 106 or state-law based project review during preliminary project planning well before designs are finalized. Early consultation enables adequate time to successfully complete reviews well in advance of construction and will facilitate permit or funding approvals. When planning to submit a project for review, note that by law the RIHPHC is allowed 30 days to respond to requests.

To initiate project review with the RIHPHC, submit the following information:

- Cover letter that includes the project location (address and Plat/Lot), a statement of the project purpose and need, project description, a list of federal and/or state funding/permitting sources, and information regarding the current and historic use of the property;
- Map(s) clearly indicating the project area and/or limits of ground disturbance;
- Project plans;
- Clear photographs of the affected resource(s);
- If the project will impact a historic property, include a discussion of how the impact can be avoided or minimized.

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## Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

More than half the RIHPHC's annual workload consists of regulatory reviews. Federal regulations, most notably those established by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800 et seq.), require federal agencies to identify and address potential impacts to significant historic properties (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, tribal historic preservation offices, and other agencies or organizations as appropriate, to ensure that sufficient efforts are made to: 1) identify historic resources in project areas; 2) evaluate them for National Register eligibility; and 3) assess potential impacts, and to avoid or mitigate the damage that may result from them. Throughout this review process, the consulting parties are directed to consider the input of other groups and individuals that may have an interest in the affected resources and the project outcomes.

Standardized procedures and criteria are used by the RIHPHC to assess project impacts and develop appropriate responses. The process 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 project also should be considered during Commission reviews.

The RIHPHC Project Review Coordinator (PRC) receives and tracks project referrals and determines whether enough information has been collected to identify historic properties within a proposed project area. As appropriate, the PRC is authorized to issue findings that no historic properties are located within a project area. Once enough information is gathered and consultations are made, the RIHPHC PRC recommends to the Executive Director/State Historic Preservation Officer whether the project will have an adverse effect on historic properties and whether the adverse effect can be avoided or mitigated. When there is the potential for a project to adversely affect historic resources, the PRC works with the project applicants and their consultants to develop means to avoid adverse effects. Where adverse effects are unavoidable, alternative means are sought to minimize those effects through design review, documentation of resources which may be destroyed, data recovery at archaeological sites, and/or other means. Mitigation measures must meet the Historic Preservation Standards and Guidelines established by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. Projects that involve known or potential archaeological sites are routinely referred by the RIHPHC's PRC Coordinator to staff archaeologists. Other staff, including historians, architectural historians, landscape architects or historians and/or historic architects may be involved in project review as needed.

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## **The Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act**

The Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act requires a review process comparable to the federal Section 106 process for state and local projects and state-permitted activities (see: RIGL 42-45-5(a)(2)). Regulations promulgated by the RIHPHC pursuant to the Act (see: 530-RICR-10-00-1-1.5) serve as rules for the implementation of project reviews.

As the 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 are required to be given an opportunity to participate in the process. The review process must be completed prior to the issuance of any non-federal license or state permit. Projects are subject to review under federal and/or state regulations if they are funded or assisted by the state or federal government or that involve a state, federal, or municipal historic property.

## ***Preservation Planning***

### **State Guide Plan Element for Historic Preservation**

As previously noted, the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act requires that the RIHPHC “Assist and advise the department of administration and other appropriate agencies designated by the governor in preparing that element or elements of the State Guide Plan dealing with plans and programs for the preservation of historic sites and structures.” The RIHPHC collaborates directly with the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning to formulate the Historic Preservation element the State Guide Plan which then must be adopted by the State Planning Council after a public hearing. This element is intended to encourage, promote, and offer guidance in the preservation of historic resources and community character by municipalities, State agencies, and other parties within the context of new public and private development throughout the state.

### **Federal Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan**

Each year the RIHPHC receives over \$620,000 in federal funds provided through the National Park Service to assist the state in implementing federally mandated historic preservation programs in Rhode Island. One of these mandates is that the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of the RIHPHC prepare a Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan (SHPP). To that end, every seven years the RIHPHC undertakes a statewide planning process that examines historic resource conditions and preservation practices across the state. The process of developing the SHPP includes the RIHPHC proactively seeking input from the public, preservation professionals, owners of historic properties, American Indian tribes, federal and state agencies, local governments, academics, and a pantheon of nonprofit partners. The planning process can take up to two years and is detailed. To ensure that the final product is consistent with nationwide as well as statewide planning goals, the federal government sets minimum requirements for these planning efforts.

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### ***Collaboration with other State Agencies, Municipalities, Non-governmental Organizations, and the Public-at-large***

All of these entities have an important role to play in preserving the state's historic resources, either indirectly as funding or licensing agencies for others' actions, or directly as owners of historic properties. By the nature of their missions, State agencies are consistently involved in preservation decisions and collaborate with RIHPHC:

- RI Department of Environmental Management
- RI Department of Transportation
- RI Housing
- RI Coastal Resources Management Council
- RI Commerce Corporation
- RI Division of Statewide Planning

The RIHPHC includes *ex officio* seats for representatives from the state's Division of Statewide Planning and Department of Environmental Management, as well as the State Building Inspector, Commerce RI, and the State Historic Preservation Officer.

### ***Collaboration with Native American Tribes***

The State of Rhode Island strongly encourages state agencies, municipalities, preservation organizations, and the public-at-large to proactively coordinate with Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) as well as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to ensure the preservation of historic properties associated with ancestral tribal lands. THPOs as well as the SHPO play a critical role in reviewing the impacts of proposed undertakings on ancestral tribal lands that are listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places. As noted in federal regulations 36 CFR § 800.4(c)(1), THPOs are recognized as having special interest, knowledge, and religious and cultural significance to their respective expertise in identifying properties of traditional tribes. The Rhode Island SHPO and several Southern New England THPOs in immediately adjacent portions of Massachusetts and Connecticut commonly work together to identify, study, and preserve cultural resources that are located on non-tribally owned, ancestral lands throughout the state.



#### ***Historic Village of the Narragansett Tribe, Charlestown***

The raised, circular stone platform shown above is a contributing structure in this historic district, which encompasses all 5,600 acres (23 km<sup>2</sup>) of the tribe's reservation in Rhode Island. The district was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

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As of 2021, the only federally recognized tribe headquartered in Rhode Island is the Narragansett Indian Tribe (see: <http://narragansettindiannation.org/>). However, several federally recognized tribes headquartered in Massachusetts including the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head, Aquinnah and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, as well as the Mohegan Tribe and the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, both of which are headquartered in Connecticut, and also a number of non-federally recognized tribes also have significant interests in terms of ancestral lands located in Rhode Island.

### ***Supporting Local Preservation – Community Outreach and Education***

The RIHPHC organizes and/or provides support for occasional training workshops for members and staff of local Historic District Commissions and works 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 and staff from individual municipalities, as well as State agencies, working on specific preservation issues or general concerns.

### **Annual Statewide Preservation Conferences**

The RIHPHC organizes 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 primary programming theme. 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.

### **Archaeology Month**

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

### **The “Rhody” Awards**

Beginning in 1993, 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 co-hosted the awards with Preserve Rhode Island. These awards were renamed “The Rhody Awards for Historic Preservation”. RIHPHC works in partnership with Preserve Rhode Island to invite awards nominations from the public, select awardees, research their accomplishments, and present an annual awards ceremony.

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## Heritage Programs and Activities

The Rhode Island Heritage Commission was founded as an agency separate from the Historical Preservation Commission on July 1, 1977. It was established by then Governor John Joseph Garrahy in recognition of the need to cultivate and preserve and promote the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Rhode Islanders. In 1995, the Heritage Commission was merged into the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission.

In accordance with RIGL Section 42-45-5(a)(15), the RIHPHC has maintained a state heritage program that:

- sponsors and coordinates an annual Rhode Island Heritage Festival
- promotes other organizations' heritage festivals
- conducts seminars, conferences, and symposiums
- develops and promotes heritage-related publications of its own as well as those of heritage nonprofit organizations.



### *2020 Annual RIHPHC Heritage Festival*

A folk dance as performed by the Colombian American Cultural Society and choreographed by Nader Molina Figueroa. The RIHPHC's annual Heritage Festival brings together organizations and individuals from throughout Rhode Island to celebrate the state's historically diverse groups and their traditions.

The annual Heritage Festival continues to be one of the state's major annual events, regularly drawing between 400-500 attendees. It includes numerous exhibitors and performers representing the full range of the state's heritage organizations. When funding is available, the RIHPHC also provides grants for Rhode Island heritage activities, projects, and other heritage-based programs sponsored by nonprofit organizations and municipalities.

## Addressing Climate Change

Rhode Island is nicknamed the "Ocean State" for good reason. Roughly a third of the total surface area of the state is comprised of water, and the state has over 400 miles of shoreline, as well as numerous riverine systems. A high proportion of the state's historic building stock is located around Narragansett Bay's shoreline or its relatively low-lying adjacent areas, or along the numerous rivers that feed into the Bay. For these reasons historic preservation in Rhode Island, in both the short and long terms, faces significant challenges resulting from irreversible, ongoing climate change.

RIHPHC is both sponsor and serves as a "clearing house" for state, federal, and local information related climate-change preservation issues and strategies, such as *Historic Communities and Flood Hazards* and the National Park Service's *Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. RIHPHC has also created and made available



**SECTION FIVE – GOALS, OBJECTIVES,  
STRATEGIES, AND POLICIES**

**Defining Our Terms**

“Goals”, “policies”, “objectives”, and other terms are used in a wide variety of ways, sometimes interchangeably, and sometimes meaning very different things to different people. As an element of the State Guide Plan, the following standardized definitions are used.

**Goal:** The end or ideal that is desired over the long-term. It is a state or value toward which an effort is directed even though it may not necessarily be attainable. Goal statements are broad in scope, long-term in nature, but not vague.

**Objective:** Like a goal, an objective is an end toward which an effort is directed. An objective, however, is measurable and attainable. Objectives are stated in more narrow and specific terms than goals and may be set within definite time periods and establish or function as performance measures. For the purposes of this Plan, objectives are to be reviewed in detail every seven to fourteen years.

**Strategy or Action:** Strategies and actions set forth the specific steps to be taken to further the advancement toward a goal or objective. For the purposes of this Plan, the success of strategies are to be assessed every seven years and updated as necessary.

**Policy:** Policies are intended to guide decisions and courses of action toward implementing a plan. Policies are not an endpoint, but set forth the acceptable and recommended procedures for attaining goals and objectives.

**Goal 1: Protect and Preserve all of Rhode Island’s Historic Properties**

**Objective 1A: Locate, identify, document, and evaluate Rhode Island’s historic properties.**

**Strategy 1.1:** Update and expand the statewide surveys of properties eligible for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places, prioritizing updating data about historic places threatened by and sea-level rise, riverine flooding, and other aspects of climate change.

**Strategy 1.2:** Conduct targeted updates of Rhode Island’s existing historic district documentation. (Note: Rhode Island frequently utilized historic district nominations in the early days of the National Register program; many of the nominations from the 1960s through the 1980s do not contain complete inventories or mapping meeting contemporary standards. Frequent demand for National Register information from preservation partners, municipalities, and property owners necessitates an evaluation and update of existing data.)

**Policy 1.1:** Encourage collaboration with municipalities and provide technical and financial assistance to cities and towns that are updating historic property and archaeological site surveys.

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**Policy 1.2:** Promote the use of federal Certified Local Government Program grants for eligible municipalities to update and maintain historic property and archaeological site surveys.

**Policy 1.3:** Promote the use of National Park Service Underrepresented Communities grants programs by Certified Local Governments, federally recognized tribes, and eligible community organizations.

**Policy 1.4:** Prioritize the identification of post-World War II resources, which may include previously overlooked examples of Modern, Postmodern, and recent past architecture and landscapes.

**Policy 1.5:** Evaluate and document the significance of historic properties and archeological sites using the State and National Register Criteria for Evaluation.

**Objective 1B: Enroll eligible properties and archaeological sites on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.**

**Strategy 1.3:** RIHPHC will continue to nominate eligible properties and archaeological sites to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

**Strategy 1.4:** Expand the visibility of the State and National Registers of Historic Places enrollment program via social media, community workshops, publications, and direct outreach so as to increase the number of enrollments.

**Policy 1.6:** Encourage more widespread use of historic district zoning. Use of historic district nominations as the most efficient vehicle for listing multiple associated historic resources in a single effort.

**Objective 1C: Expand the use of the State Archaeological Landmark designation by identifying, evaluating, nominating, and designating eligible archaeological sites pursuant to Rhode Island General Law 42-45-1.**

**Strategy 1.5:** Develop regulations, standards, and guidelines for assessing eligibility of potential State Archaeological Landmarks.



Unlike *CCRI's Knight Campus in Warwick*, many notable examples of post-World War II "modern" architecture in Rhode Island remain to be documented and registered.



The internationally significant *Salt Pond Site* in *Narragansett* is the first officially designated State Archeological Landmark in Rhode Island. It was established as such in 2019.

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**Objective 1D: Identify, document, and evaluate historic and cultural landscape properties that reflect significant interactions between humans and natural resources, including wildlife or domestic animals associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or that exhibits other cultural or aesthetic values.**

**Strategy 1.6:** Update the RIHPHC's *Historic Landscapes of Rhode Island* survey publication.

**Policy 1.7:** Focus on identifying, documenting, and evaluating previously undocumented historically significant vernacular and ethnographic cultural landscapes.

**Objective 1E: Create and maintain a clearinghouse of information related to historic and cultural preservation.**

**Strategy 1.7:** As the State's primary agency for historic and cultural preservation, provide RIHPHC with state-of-the-art hardware and software necessary for a comprehensive in-house, GIS-system operational capability and the ability to complete in-house GIS system data-layer updates on a regular, ongoing basis, and sufficient staff training.

**Strategy 1.8:** Proactively share RIHPHC GIS data-layer information with other RI State agencies, municipalities, the National Park Service, and the public-at-large.

**Policy 1.8:** Make the updating and expansion of the current RIHPHC historic property data-layer information a priority.

**Goal 2: Retain community character through preservation of local heritage by the protection, restoration, and reuse of historic and cultural resources**

**Objective 2A: Strengthen the opportunities for those who own, care for, and invest in historic properties and archeological sites to obtain the technical and financial assistance they need.**

**Strategy 2.1:** As the State's primary agency for historic and cultural preservation, RIHPHC will:

- a. provide technical review and support for owners rehabilitating historic properties;
- b. complete timely regulatory reviews of all applications for projects involving properties listed in or eligible for the National and/or State Registers of Historic Places;
- c. complete timely reviews of applications for state and federal rehabilitation tax credit projects within 30 days of application receipt;
- d. promote the availability of Rebuild RI rehabilitation tax credits to owners of income-producing historic properties;
- e. ensure that historic rehabilitation project work under RIHPHC review complies with the Secretary's Standards and Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties;
- f. monitor in-progress state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credit projects;
- g. coordinate as necessary with the RI Department of Revenue's Division of Taxation and the Department of Administration's Budget Office with respect to state tax credit project financial information;

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- h. strongly encourage state agencies and municipalities and nonprofit organizations to establish policies and programs designed to proactively manage, preserve, and protect historic properties that they administer/own.

**Strategy 2.2:** Encourage municipalities to designate eligible areas as additional historic zones.

**Strategy 2.3:** Encourage additional municipalities to become eligible for and to actively participate in the federally sponsored Certified Local Government Program.

**Policy 2.1:** Support continued funding for state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credit and historic property grants programs.

**Objective 2B: Ensure the long-term protection of historic properties.**

**Policy 2.2:** Utilize RIHPHC Historic Property Preservation Easements whenever possible.

**Strategy 2.4:** Ensure that complete requests from property-owners to perform work on historic properties are reviewed in a timely manner in accordance with the terms of the easement.

**Strategy 2.5:** Ensure that any work performed on property for which the RIHPHC holds a preservation easement complies with the terms of the easement.

**Strategy 2.6:** Develop and implement a regular compliance monitoring schedule for all historic properties on which the RIHPHC holds preservation easements.

**Objective 2C: Protect historic buildings, areas, and archeological sites from inappropriate alteration, neglect, and demolition.**

**Strategy 2.7:** Integrate the conservation and preservation of historic and cultural resources in local the economic development and revitalization plans.

**Strategy 2.8:** Adopt municipal ordinances and regulations creating historic districts, historic district commissions, design review standards, and development review standards that protect historic buildings, areas, and archeological sites.

**Policy 2.3:** All State agencies will, to the extent fiscally feasible, maintain, restore, and reuse existing historic State-owned buildings rather than construct new buildings.

**Strategy 2.9:** Identify State-owned properties that are eligible for listing, but not currently listed, in the State Register of Historic Places.

**Strategy 2.10:** Update and publish RIHPHC's inventory of State-owned properties listed in the State Register of Historic Place at least once every two years.

**Policy 2.4:** All programs and activities of State agencies shall make every effort to protect historic buildings, areas, and archeological sites from inappropriate alteration, neglect, and

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demolition. When such protection is not feasible, the State agency sponsoring the program or activity will coordinate with the RIHPHC to explore options and ensure proper documentation.

### **Objective 2D: Protect historic buildings, areas, and archeological sites from the effects of climate change and natural disasters.**

**Strategy 2.11:** Complete a prioritized risk-assessment analysis to determine which historic properties and archeology sites in RI are most endangered by the effects of sea-level rise and riverine flooding.

**Strategy 2.12:** Work with RI State agencies, municipalities, and owners of historic property to develop and implement historic property disaster preparedness planning.

**Strategy 2.13:** RIHPHC will continue to distribute the most current technical preservation information regarding climate change and disaster preparedness, including but not limited to the National Park Service's 2019 *Guidelines for Flooding Adaptation*, to other RI State agencies, municipalities, and preservation organizations.

**Strategy 2.14:** Modify the annual RIHPHC's Certified Local Government grant application criteria to incentivize the undertaking of climate change and disaster preparedness projects.

### **Goal 3: Rhode Island communities and neighborhoods will be healthy, accessible, and diverse, with historic properties and areas serving as community keystones**

#### **Objective 3A: Strengthen local preservation efforts.**

**Strategy 3.1:** As the State's primary agency for historic and cultural preservation, RIHPHC will:

- a. encourage and assist local communities in adequately identifying, documenting, and protecting their historic properties and archeological sites;
- b. in cooperation with the Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission, promote and support the protection of local burying grounds designated as "historic cemeteries" pursuant to RIGL 23-18-10.1;
- c. provide technical assistance to municipalities in the creation of new local historic districts, establishment of demolition delay ordinances, and other local protection mechanisms;
- d. sponsor an increased number of local, regional, or statewide workshops for local historic district commissions and municipal planning staff on pertinent RI laws, state and federal preservation programs procedural requirements, demolition delay ordinances, preservation planning, the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, etc.;
- e. develop and make available to local district commission a series of training webinars;
- f. encourage currently ineligible municipalities to identify and establish eligible local historic districts and apply for designation as a Certified Local Government.

**Goal 4: Ensure equity and representation in historic preservation and cultural heritage**

**Objective 4A: Actively engage people reflecting all ethnic and socio-economic groups, as well as genders, found in Rhode Island.**

**Strategy 4.1:** As the State’s primary agency for historic and cultural preservation, RIHPHC will:

**Provide diversity within the Commission**

- a. proactively work to diversify the administration and staffing of the RIHPHC so that it better reflects the diverse characteristics of the people of Rhode Island;
- b. work collaboratively with the Governor’s Office to ensure that Commission membership is gender balanced and includes at least two qualified persons of color by 2024;
- c. work collaboratively with the Chair of the Commission to ensure that the State Historic Preservation Review Board is gender balanced and includes at least one qualified person of color by 2024;
- d. work collaboratively with the State of Rhode Island’s Division of Human resources to establish maintain agency staffing that includes a qualified minority candidate to fill at least one of the next two vacant agency staff positions;

**Engage the Narragansett and other Native American tribes**

- e. work with the Narragansett and other Native American tribes to promote the identification, preservation, and protection of historic properties, and maintain an ongoing liaison with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Narragansett tribe regarding tribal historic properties;
- f. establish and maintain an ongoing liaison between the RIHPHC Heritage Program and cultural programs for all Rhode Island tribes;
- g. acknowledge the special expertise of tribes in the identification, evaluation, and nomination of tribe-related historic properties and their eligibility for listing in the State/National Registers of Historic Places.

**Include underrepresented communities**

- h. proactively identify, document, and register properties related to Rhode Island’s diverse ethnic communities in the state’s historic preservation programs;
- i. reach out to communities whose culturally significant properties and archeological sites may be underrepresented in surveys or in the National and State Registers and collaborate with those communities on identification and evaluation of such properties;
- j. promote participation by State agencies, municipalities, and private organizations in the National Park Service’s historic-resource grants program for eligible properties associated with underrepresented-communities;
- k. coordinate RIHPHC’s Historic Preservation and Heritage Programs in such a way as to help identify National/State Register-eligible properties related to Rhode Island’s diverse communities and cultures.

**Improve the RIHPHC Cultural Heritage Program**

- l. revise 40+ year old statute requirements to reflect current program purposes and realities;
- m. terminate RIHPHC’s role as a fiscal agent and paying for insurance for private RI heritage organizations;

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- n. further expand and develop programming for, and participation, in the annual RI Heritage Festival;
- o. act as a statewide clearinghouse for information about, and the promotion of, RI heritage-related festivals, events, symposia, etc.;
- p. increase permanent RIHPC Program staffing from one half-time FTE to one full-time FTE and one half-time FTE;
- q. establish and maintain a modest, state-funded, annual grant-assistance program for private RI heritage organizations;
- r. proactively coordinate with the RIHPC's Historic Preservation Program in supporting the identification, evaluation, and listing of properties related to Rhode Island's diverse cultural heritage.

### **Goal 5: Residents of Rhode Island will be knowledgeable about our historic buildings, areas, archeological sites, and cultural heritage**

**Objective 5A: Provide ongoing educational programs and training related to historic preservation and heritage in Rhode Island both for the preservation community and general public.**

**Strategy 5.1:** As the State's primary agency for historic and cultural preservation, RIHPC will:

- a. continue to sponsor and organize Rhode Island's Annual Historic Preservation Conference.
- b. continue to develop and provide on an ongoing interactive in-person and web-based interactive educational/training opportunities for Rhode Island local historic district commissions and municipal planning staffs;
- c. 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, and Archeology Month;
- d. continue to sponsor, organize, and promote an annual historic preservation awards program recognizing individuals and rehabilitation projects that have made outstanding contributions to the preservation of Rhode Island's properties.

### **Goal 6: Rhode Island's ethnic heritages and cultural traditions will be preserved for future generations**

**Strategy 6.1:** As the State's primary agency for historic and cultural preservation, RIHPC will:

- a. continue to sponsor and organize Rhode Island's Annual Heritage Festival;
- b. continue to support and promote national and statewide historic and heritage recognition programs and events, including but not limited to Black History Month.
- c. proactively identify historic properties that more fully represent the state's historic diverse ethnic groups and communities;
- d. work with the Governor's office to increase the number of Commissioners representing the state's historically diverse ethnic groups and communities.

**Keeping the RIHPHC up to date**

The RIHPHC is tasked with ensuring ongoing compliance with federal and state program and planning requirements in the RIHPHC's state enabling statute and Historic Preservation Fund Grants Manual; RIHPHC will comprehensively review these requirements at least once every two years.

RIHPHC will, every three years, review and recommend, if necessary and/or appropriate, updates to the RIHPHC state enabling statute.

RIHPHC will complete updates to the federally mandated Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan, the state mandated State Guide Plan element for historic preservation and heritage, and the agency's Strategic Plan no later than December 31, 2027.

## **APPENDIX ONE – AN OVERVIEW OF RHODE ISLAND HISTORY**

In April 1524 Giovanni da Verrazano sailed into Narragansett Bay and dropped anchor near what is now Newport, Rhode Island. Verrazano's visit was the first recorded contact between Europeans and Native Americans living around Narragansett Bay. His narratives describe Indian culture before European colonization altered Native American lifeways. Verrazano's two-week visit was a critical moment in Rhode Island's history. It began the process of European exploration and colonization that dramatically changed lands that had been Native American for more than 12,000 years.

The Native Americans that Verrazano described in 1524 were either Narragansett or Wampanoag. They were horticulturists, growing legumes and corn, supplementing this diet with hunting, fishing, and the gathering of nuts, berries, and other plants. Verrazano described extensive clearings and an open woodland uncluttered by today's common mixture of briars, poison ivy, and immature undergrowth. The landscape had been formed by generations of Native American people alternately burning, planting, and harvesting domestic and wild plants. Burning maintained the soil's fertility, and created open areas where blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries grew in abundance. The practice of moving fields and burning the growth created a mosaic of environments that provided browsing areas for deer and a diverse habitat for other animals used for food and clothing.

This horticultural way of life and rich estuarine environment described by Verrazano had emerged from thousands of years of cultural and environmental change. Native American people had lived in the area for at least 12,000 years prior to Verrazano's visit. Over these millennia substantial changes occurred in the physical environment and in the way Native American groups used the land. By 15,000 B.P. (before the present) the glacial ice sheet began to melt and retreat to the north, beginning the process of transformation from a colder, open spruce woodland environment to a warmer deciduous one. The release of glacial meltwater caused sea levels to rise, transforming a freshwater environment to a saltwater one. The modern estuarine environment was fully formed 3,500 years ago. During most of this period Native Americans were hunter-gatherers, maintaining their livelihoods from riverine and estuarine resources. Between 2,700 B.P. and 800 B.P. domestic crops such as corn, beans, squash, and pumpkins were introduced from the south.

Archaeologists commonly divide the 12,000 years prior to Verrazano's visit into time periods that correspond to cultural and environmental changes. Our understanding of these years is only partially based upon data from Rhode Island. Archaeological sites dating from 5000-6000 B.P. are very rare in Rhode Island. Sites dating after 2,500 B.P., however, are more abundant. Data from these sites have made important contributions to understand the history of Native Americans in Southern New England.

### ***PALEO-INDIAN PERIOD, 12,500-10,000 B.P.***

This period represents the earliest arrival of humans into the northeast following the retreat of the last glaciation. By 13,500 B.P. the southern extent of the ice front stood along the northern boundaries of Connecticut and Rhode Island, opening most of the state to colonization by tundra

flora. The plant community provided food for animals such as caribou, mammoth, and mastodon so that by 12,500 B.P. the region could support small bands of Paleo-Indian people.

At this time, the land mass of southern New England was much more extensive and the landscape very different. Narragansett Bay was a system of freshwater rivers, with the coastline location 80 miles southeast of Providence. Block Island would not have been an island, but rather a high prominence on an otherwise level coastal plain. The environment was changing rapidly. As the ice continued its northward retreat, more temperate plant communities were established, and greater inundation of coastal areas occurred. By 12,000 B.P. tundra vegetation had given way to spruce, birch, jack pine, and red pine, and the large mammals such as mammoth and mastodon were replaced by elk and caribou. The characteristic Paleo-Indian artifact was the fluted point, part of a tool kit designed to be quickly portable for hunting migratory animals. Paleo-Indians probably moved in small hunting bands that followed migratory animals, taking advantage of other wild foods along the way. Because the Paleo-Indian environment was changing rapidly, dependable fish runs, tidal mud flats, and other long-term predictable locations of food resources were unestablished. The Paleo-Indians adapted to this environment by living in small groups and following the moving herds of animals.

### ***ARCHAIC PERIOD, 10,000–2,700 B.P.***

Broadly defined, the Archaic Period marks a change in environment, adaptation, and artifact styles. The period extends to the first use of clay-fired ceramics and is divided into four sub-periods corresponding to environmental and cultural changes.

- ***EARLY ARCHAIC PERIOD, 10,000-8,000 B.P.***

During this period, plant communities became more complex. The deciduous forest moved north, and by 9,000 B.P. oak was established in Rhode Island. Sea levels were still rising and had just begun to form Narragansett Bay. The environment was becoming more stable, diverse, and predictable, and the Native American subsistence base broadened to take advantage of these new conditions. With the decline of the migratory animals that had characterized the Paleo-Indian period, groups began to develop a stronger sense of territory and became more committed to their local environments. In fact, fewer exotic lithics, indicative of extensive regional exchange, occur at Early Archaic sites. Instead, greater use is made of local quartz and quartzite.

- ***MIDDLE ARCHAIC PERIOD, 8,000-6,000 B.P.***

During this period the deciduous forest became well established. By 6,000 B.P. the 20 percent oak isopoll had moved into southern New Hampshire and Vermont, and southern New England was characterized by an oak-hemlock forest. Sea levels continued to rise. By 7,500 B.P. saltwater had advanced into the lower West and Sakonnet Passages of the bay; by 6,250 B.P. the West Passage was nearly flooded, although much of the upper bay's western side and all of the Sakonnet River Valley were still land.

The settlement system became more elaborate, the range of activities increased, and sites became more specialized. Further evidence suggesting that the period represented an elaboration of the

earlier tendency to focus on local resources is suggested by continued emphasis upon local stone materials.

- *LATE ARCHAIC PERIOD, 6,000-3,700 B.P.*

During this period essentially modern conditions for vegetation emerged and Narragansett Bay fully developed. Rates of sea level rise tapered off considerably from 17mm/yr. at 12,000 B.P. to less than 3mm/yr. by the end of the period. Although by 4,750 B.P. the west side of the upper Bay remained unflooded and Dutch Island was still attached to Conanicut Island, by 3,500 B.P. the saltwater cove at the juncture of the Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket Rivers had been formed.

Sites of this period reflect the mast forest environment and stabilizing estuarine environment. Grinding implements indicate greater reliance on vegetable foods—seeds, nuts, berries, and roots. Deer was the major game animal. Fishing was important, with weirs established at prominent migratory locations. Toward the end of the period, shellfish appear in coastal sites. Sites occur in a variety of local environment settings, and the local use of stone materials continues with little reliance on outside exotic lithics. Mortuary sites are recorded for the first time, with cremation burials occurring just outside of Rhode Island in the Taunton River drainage at the Bear Swamp and Wampanucket sites.

- *TERMINAL ARCHAIC PERIOD, 3,700-2,700 B.P.*

This period is culturally dynamic, with regional population movement hypothesized, related either to population growth or migrations from the west. Characteristic of this period are stone bowls shaped from steatite, known commonly as soapstone. While seasonality and the use of coastal and interior resources continued to be an important factor in this period as in preceding periods, the use of these heavy cooking vessels implied reduced mobility. Regionally, Rhode Island was an important soapstone production center, with quarries located in what is now Cranston, Johnston, and Providence. Soapstone was used for ceremonial and utilitarian purposes, and the material occurs as grave goods in cremation burials on Conanicut Island and in refuse middens throughout the state.

### ***WOODLAND PERIOD, 2,700 B.P.–1524 C.E.***

This period begins with the use of clay-fire ceramics. It is the period best documented by radiocarbon dating. Of the approximately seventy-five Rhode Island sites that have been radiocarbon dated, the majority date to this period. Regionally, horticulture was adopted, and domestic plants integrated into the hunting, gathering, and fishing subsistence base.

The extent of change in Native American land use prior to Verrazano's visit in 1524 is poorly understood, but the general strategy of seasonal movement from interior wintering areas to coastal summering areas and the use of domestic crops he observed had probably persisted for some time. Large nut storage pits at a site in North Kingstown dating back to 2000 B.P. suggest a preadaptation to maize horticulture. The prominent place of corn, beans, and squash in seventeenth-century Narragansett mythology and calendrical ritual suggest a long, albeit

undocumented traditional involvement in maize cultivation. Thus far, the only documented use of maize in Rhode Island is from a Contact Period component at Fort Ninigret in Charlestown. In southern New England the earliest date is 1200 C.E., from Martha's Vineyard. The evidence for any early or widespread reliance on maize is overwhelmingly negative. Understanding the emergence of horticulture is a critical research question in this region.

In addition to probable changes in subsistence and economy with the emergence of horticulture, mortuary practices also change with the apparent abandonment of cremation burials in favor of multiple and single primary interments.

When Verrazano visited in 1524, he described a Native American land system based upon seasonal movement. Approximately 120 years later, Roger Williams elaborated upon Verrazano's narrative, observing that Native American families would establish garden plots along the coast in the summer and come together in the winter in sheltered inland areas. Although seasonality was probably the basis of Native American land use since at least the Middle Archaic, what Williams and Verrazano described was not what existed throughout Native Americans history.

Apart from the emergence of horticulture after 2700 B.P., climatic variations may have affected the abundance of various plant and animal species that in turn could have altered subsistence and settlement practices. Marine temperatures for example, have fluctuated, affecting the abundance of shellfish. After the early Archaic, ocean temperatures began to warm until they became warmer than today at the end of Terminal Archaic. Temperature then began to cool, reaching a low point around 1000 C.E., after which the water warmed steadily to present levels. These fluctuations as well as variations in land temperatures and precipitation must have affected settlement strategies, perhaps even negating the need to "winter-over" during the Terminal Archaic.

An understanding of this basic but complex and changing relationship between environment and culture through millennia of Native American history is fundamental. The history of Native Americans is sometimes written as if the emergence of horticulture were inevitable—a goal that was achieved after thousands of years of experimentation, diversification, and climatic amelioration. Such was not the case. In fact, for many cultures the introduction of maize, beans, and squash led to increased disease and lower nutrition levels. Given the bountiful resources of the Narragansett Bay Basin, the Native Americans of southern New England may not have relied heavily on domestic crops. Evidence from North Kingstown of large storage facilities for wild foods around 2000 B.P. shows a technological capability to store large quantities of food. The move to horticulture would have been a minor and perhaps reversible technological step.

### ***EUROPEAN DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION, 1524-1636***

This period begins with Verrazano's written observations of his exploration in Narragansett Bay and ends with Roger Williams' settlement at Moshassuck [Providence] in 1636. This is the period when the first substantial effects of Europeans contact were felt by New England tribes: disease, the beginnings of land encroachment, and the resultant ecological and cultural alteration of the land. Native Americans living around Narragansett Bay, the Wampanoags and

Narragansett, were little affected by the Europeans until 1616, when a severe epidemic decimated Native Americans living along the coast from Maine to Cape Cod, including the Wampanoags. Although the Narragansetts were physically unaffected by the epidemic, the catastrophe stimulated an intensification of their religious practices and increased their power and influence throughout the region. The Pokanoket band of Wampanoags led by Massasoit, also known as Ousamequin, provided critical aid to the colonists on the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay. In this initial stage of European contact, the power and prestige of Rhode Island's Native American population was increased.

After 1620, European settlers increasingly influenced Native American culture and drew Native Americans into aspects of their socioeconomic system. One illustration of this is the way that European commercial practices modified the status and use of wampum, cylindrical shell beads made from quahog and whelk. Wampum was rare and exceedingly valuable outside the coastal Indian settlements. The Europeans noted its value and transformed the cylindrical shell beads from a purely ceremonial to a secular commodity, using the wampum produced in southern New England as a form of currency to purchase furs from interior Native American groups. With the burgeoning demand for wampum, local Native Americans were induced to produce the beads for Europeans; concurrently, wampum fueled the Atlantic fur trade and helped to promote and sustain the success of early European traders and colonists.

### ***EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT, EXPANSION, AND INDUSTRIALIZATION, 1636 - PRESENT***

Rhode Island Native Americans began to feel serious and irreversible effects of European colonization in the 1630s. The Narragansett sachem Miantonomi's 1641 oration to the Montauk of eastern Long Island urged Native Americans to unite against the colonists and recalled the less stressful, more bountiful days prior to European colonization. Miantonomi noted the loss of Native American lands and the transformation of the landscape from one which supported Native American horticulture to one that could not. The United Colonies arranged to have Miantonomi killed shortly after making that speech. The older sachem, Canonicus, also died in the 1640s. The loss of both sachems and subsequent ascendancy of several sachems marked an apparent splintering of tribal leadership and a breakdown in the long-standing practice of rule by dual sachems. The proliferation of sachems following the deaths of Miantonomi and Canonicus was encouraged by colonial trading and land acquisition activities, and it reduced the ability of the tribe to reach consensus on matters of land sale, colonial trade relations, and intertribal affairs. Moreover, Narragansett males were involved in a variety of tasks that were tied to the colonial economy: they produced wampum, carried messages to Plymouth, tended colonial cattle, and built stone walls for colonial settlers.

While the relationship between the indigenous tribes and colonial Rhode Islanders was sometimes mutually advantageous, it was predominantly tense and fragile. Massasoit had maintained a delicate harmony between the English and the Pokanokets, but following his death in 1661 his sons, Wamsutta, and then Metacom, or Philip, came under increasing pressure to relinquish territory to the colonists. The relationship had begun to deteriorate in the 1650s, and it finally collapsed with the outbreak of King Philip's War in 1675. While the Wampanoags were at the center of the initial hostilities, the Narragansetts attempted to stay out of the conflict but

were invaded by the United Colonies under the pretext of forcing the Native American sachems to return Wampanoag war refugees. The United Colonies and their Native American allies militarily defeated the Wampanoag and Narragansett tribes in 1676. Surviving Native Americans were sold into slavery, moved west, or settled with the Niantic.

Following King Philip's War, the Pokanoket and Narragansett lands were settled, and the formation of Rhode Island towns proceeded. Most towns began as agricultural settlements based on subsistence family farms. Within a few years, many farms were able to produce a surplus which could be sold, and in the southern part of the state some large commercial farms were established with labor supplied by Native American and African slaves. Merchants exported the agricultural products of the hinterland in the initial phase of development of a complex maritime trading network. Rhode Island's access to the ocean was unsurpassed among the New England colonies, and contributed to the rise of maritime trade. By 1774, twenty-nine towns had been established, of which two-thirds bordered Narragansett Bay or Block Island Sound. The importance of the bay is reflected in the establishment of numerous coastal fortifications, lighthouses, and life-saving stations in Rhode Island.

Maritime commerce grew robust in the eighteenth century, led by Newport and Providence and supported by smaller coastal and interior towns. Among the mainstays of shipping were the coastal carrying trade—which transported local produce from port to port along the Atlantic seaboard—and the so-called West Indies “triangle” trade. The staple West Indian products of sugar and molasses were brought to Rhode Island to be converted into rum at shore-side distilleries. The rum was shipped to the coast of Africa where it was traded for slaves, who in turn were shipped to the West Indies to work on the sugar plantations. Other important maritime activities included ship building and manufacture for export of lime, iron goods, and spermaceti candles. The single most lucrative form of commerce involved the importation of manufactured goods from England and Europe, but this also required the greatest investment in ships, warehousing, and cargoes. Thus, this type of trade was generally carried on in conjunction with the coastal or triangle routes.

The Revolutionary War altered trade patterns and reduced the socioeconomic supremacy of Newport in Rhode Island. Providence, however, emerged with its ships, fortunes, and merchant fleet intact. Profitable trade was conducted with China, South America, the West Indies, and Europe. Rhode Islanders exported local provisions to South America; they sent Oriental tea and textiles and South American rum, tobacco, and coffee to Europe; they trade Iberian specie to China; and they imported European manufactures, Baltic naval stores and iron, and Oriental goods for domestic consumption. Smaller ports also prospered in trade and fishing, including Bristol, Warren, East Greenwich, and Wickford.

Capital accumulated through maritime commerce facilitated the state's industrialization. While maritime prosperity was reaching its height in the late 1780s and the 1790s, merchant Moses Brown organized a company to manufacture cotton textiles in Pawtucket. Under the direction of Samuel Slater, water-powered factory spinning of cotton yarn commenced on December 20, 1790, and the American Industrial Revolution began.

During the first decades of the nineteenth century other merchants began to divert funds from

maritime to industrial enterprises. Roads and turnpikes were laid out, facilitating the movement of goods between hinterland and port and providing access to water-power sites in the interior. During the early nineteenth century, mills were established throughout the Blackstone and Pawtuxet River Valleys and along the state's other waterways. This industrialization had its roots in maritime commerce. Rhode Island merchants provided the capital, managerial ability, and transportation and marketing services which were fundamental to the industrialization of much of the state. Cheap, efficient transportation and the development of steam-powered factories were crucial to the growth of manufacturing. The introduction of railroads and steam engines in the middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century released mills from their dependence on water-power sites and increased their manufacturing capacity. Large steam-powered mills were established in Blackstone and Pawtuxet River Valley communities as well as in areas that lacked good hydraulic power, such as Bristol, Newport, and, especially, Providence.

The Civil War triggered a full-scale expansion of established manufacturers nationwide. Base-metal industries in Providence and elsewhere earned profits producing rifles, steam engines, and machinery. At the same time, the war provided incentives for the rapid expansion and mechanization of industries which had developed at a slower pace before 1860. The textile industry was one of these. During the Civil War, cotton was in short supply, and some mills were forced to close though cotton production remained an important part of the state's economy. However, wool was available and woolen goods were in great demand, and the Atlantic Delaine, Riverside, and Wanskuck Mills were three of the more prominent woolen or worsted manufactories established during or immediately after the war.

Industrialization modified the state's landscape and dramatically altered social and economic life. Some interior towns, such as Lincoln, North Smithfield, and Burrillville, were transformed from rural areas dominated by the family farm into amalgamations of manufacturing villages, most of which produced textiles. Before industrialization, the common unit of settlement in these towns had been the family farm, connected to coastal markets by poorly constructed roads. By the end of the nineteenth century, the countryside was dotted with mill villages and larger urban centers, linked by railroads, and most Rhode Island residents no longer worked the land, but lived in urban settings and worked in factories. The poorer quality agricultural lands in the interior were increasingly abandoned while a smaller number of farmers established dairy, poultry, and vegetable farms on the better lands to supply the large urban markets. With the urban industrial economy generating wealth and more leisure time for many, the state's shoreline experienced a wave of resort development. The preeminent resort community was Newport, which initially housed its summer visitors in boardinghouses and hotels, but became best known for its elaborate "cottages," private summer houses built by many of the country's wealthiest businessmen. The coastal resorts also catered to the middle ranks of society with large hotels, boardinghouses, and more modest cottage residences.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Rhode Island became home to immigrants from England, Ireland, Scotland, French Canada, Italy, and many other countries. Generally finding work in mills or factories the newcomers brought their religion, language, and culture to the towns or neighborhoods they settled. The history of many ethnic groups may be traced in the surviving churches, social halls, and houses in the communities inhabited by these immigrants.

During the twentieth century, the center of the nation's textile industry moved from the northeast to the south. As early as the 1890s Rhode Island businessmen were aware of southern gains in the textile industry; indeed, Rhode Islanders were among the important investors in southern mills. The firm of Providence millwright Frank P. Sheldon designed dozens of southern mills and local firms produced the machinery to equip them. In 1880 the south produced only 1/16 of the nation's cotton goods; by 1910 it was producing almost a third; and by 1923 nearly half.

A variety of causes has been suggested for New England's decline as a textile manufacturing center, including climate, antiquated physical plants, and labor costs, all of which undoubtedly played a part. New England cotton profits declined alarmingly in the years 1910-1914 but the stimulus to production created by World War I helped to hide the seriousness of these problems until plants began to close. The reorganization of the firm of B.B. & R. Knight (originators of the famous "Fruit of the Loom" label) in 1926 and the abandonment by the American Woolen Company of two Providence mills in 1928 dramatized the frail health of Rhode Island's textile economy.

The depression of the 1930s exacerbated the poor condition of the state's economy, with cutbacks, closings, and shutdowns of factories widespread and frequent. World War II invigorated the economy, with the still active manufacturers producing a variety of goods for the federal government. The war effort led to the renovation of the old system of coastal fortifications, the expansion of the U.S. Navy's facilities in Newport and the construction of new facilities such as the Quonset Point Naval Air Station and Davisville Advanced Supply Depot. These military installations, concentrated around Narragansett Bay and on the Bay Islands, remain as a legacy of this era.

In the decades after World War II, automobile-centered suburbanization had a pronounced effect on Rhode Island's physical development and demographic evolution. Urban core areas lost population as families left the cities, encouraged in their migration to the suburbs by the construction of new highways and the upgrading of old roads. Commercial and other businesses followed, much of it to the suburbs in the immediate proximity of Providence. In the 1960s, a counter movement back to urban areas began which has led to the revitalization of old and decaying neighborhoods.

In the following decades, the adaptation of former commercial and industrial buildings for new service industries, offices, and residential units spread through the urban centers, providing tangible continuity with the state's history. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, suburban growth continued in some rural towns, but at a far slower rate than earlier decades, and the cities continued to gain back population, with Providence remaining the dominant center.

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## **APPENDIX TWO – LINKS TO HISTORICAL PRESERVATION AND CULTURAL HERITAGE ORGANIZATIONS AND TO ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

### **Major Rhode Island and National Historic Preservation Websites**

[Grow Smart Rhode Island](#)

[Historic New England](#)

[John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor](#)

[Narragansett Indian Tribal Historic Preservation Office](#)

[National Park Service: Historic Preservation](#)

[National Trust for Historic Preservation](#)

[Preserve Rhode Island](#)

[Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission](#)

[Rhode Island Historical Society](#)

[Rhode Island Marine Archeology Program](#)

### **Town and City Historic Preservation and Cultural Heritage Websites**

[Barrington Preservation Society](#)

[Block Island Historical Society](#)

[Bristol Historical Society](#)

[Burrillville Historical & Preservation Society](#)

[Blackstone Valley Historical Society](#)

[Center for the Arts and Culture of the Americas](#)

[Charlestown Historical Society](#)

[Coventry Historical Society](#)

[East Greenwich Historical Preservation Society](#)

[East Providence Historical Society](#)

[Foster Preservation Society](#)

[Glocester Heritage Society](#)

[Historic Warren Rhode Island](#)

[Hopkinton Historical Society](#)

[Johnston Historical Society](#)

[Little Compton Historical Society](#)

[Middletown Historical Society](#)

[Newport Historical Society](#)

[Newport Restoration Foundation](#)

[North Kingstown Historic Genealogical Society](#)

[North Smithfield Heritage Association](#)

[Pettaquamscutt Historical Society](#)

[Portsmouth Historical Society](#)

[Preservation Society of Newport County](#)

[Preservation Society of Pawtucket](#)

[Providence Preservation Society](#)

[Richmond Historical Society](#)

[Scituate Preservation Society](#)

[Smithfield Historical Society](#)

[South County History Center](#)

[Westerly Historical Society](#)

[West Greenwich Historical Preservation Society](#)

[Woonsocket Historical Society](#)

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## Cultural Heritage Websites

[1696 Heritage Group Consulting](#)

[1772 Foundation](#)

[African Alliance of Rhode Island](#)

[Alliance Francaise of Providence](#)

[American-French Genealogical Society](#)

[American Heritage Committee - Daughters of the American Revolution](#)

[Argentinos en Rhode Island](#)

[Armenian Historical Association of RI](#)

[Arte Latino of New England](#)

[Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor](#)

[Cape Verdean Museum](#)

[Cape Verdean Heritage](#)

[Center for Southeast Asians](#)

[Colombian American Cultural Society Inc.](#)

[Dorcas International Institute of RI](#)

[Eastern Medicine Singers](#)

[ECAS Theatre](#)

[Elliniki Yperiphania Greek Pride of RI - Folk Dance Troupe](#)

[Filipino-American Association of Newport](#)

[German American Cultural Society of RI](#)

[Grupo Arcoiris of RI Performing Arts](#)

[Guatemalan American Association of RI](#)

[Guatemalan Center of New England](#)

[Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology](#)

[Herreshoff Marine Museum](#)

[Hmong United Association of Rhode Island](#)

[India Association of Rhode Island](#)

[India Museum of Heritage Society](#)

[Italian American Historical Society of RI](#)

[Italo American Club of RI](#)

[Korean American Association of RI](#)

[Langston Hughes Community Poetry Reading](#)

[Laotian Community Center of RI](#)

[Liberian Community Association of RI](#)

[Museum of Newport Irish History](#)

[Museum of Primitive Art and Culture](#)

[Nuestras Raíces: The History of Latinos in Rhode Island](#)

[Oasis International \(serving the African immigrant community\)](#)

[Portuguese Americans in RI](#)

[Progreso Latino](#)

[Puerto Rican Institute for Arts & Advocacy](#)

[Puerto Rican Professionals Assoc. of RI](#)

[Quisqueya en Accion](#)

[Peace Flag Project](#)

[RI Association of Chinese Americans](#)

[RI Black Heritage Society](#)

[RI Black Storytellers](#)

[RI Bolivian-American Association](#)

[RI Day of Portugal](#)

[RI Irish Famine Memorial](#)

[RI Historical Society](#)

[RI Indian Council](#)

[RI Irish American Heritage Society](#)

[Rhode Island Latino Arts](#)

[RI Puerto Ricans: Empowered & United](#)

[RPM Voices of Rhode Island \(in the African American choral tradition\)](#)

[RI Swedish Heritage Association](#)

[Scandinavian Women's Chorus of RI](#)

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[Stage of Freedom \(promoting Black Rhode Island life and culture\)](#)

[Tomaquag Museum](#)

[Turkish American Cultural Society of RI](#)

## Websites for Additional Sources of Information

### Archaeological Resources

Information in the RIHPHC survey on archaeological sites and places important in Indian cultural traditions can be found at [www.preservation.ri.gov/archaeology](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/archaeology)

Information on Rhode Island underwater archeological sites can be found at [www.preservation.ri.gov/archaeology/underwater.php](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/archaeology/underwater.php)

### Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness

[Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings](#)

[Historic Coastal Communities and Flood Hazard](#)

[\*Newport Historic District Commission Policy Statement and Design Guidelines for Elevating Historic Buildings\*](#)

### Funding Sources

[Providence Revolving Fund](#)

### National and State Registers of Historic Places - Listed Properties in Rhode Island

These reports are on file at the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission and via download at [www.preservation.ri.gov/register/riproperties.php](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/register/riproperties.php)

### Project Reviews

[Procedures for Registration and Protection of Historic Properties of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission](#)

### Rhode Island State Historic Property Surveys

Municipal and statewide reports are on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission and via download at [www.preservation.ri.gov/survey/publications.php](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/survey/publications.php)

**APPENDIX THREE – PREPARING AN EFFECTIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN: QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

The following questions can help begin the process of gathering the information needed to prepare an effective historic preservation plan.

1. Identification of historic resources
  - What historic resources exist within our jurisdiction?
  - Where are they located?
2. Documentation
  - Have the identified resources been adequately documented and evaluated?
  - Are there resources (or groups of resources) which have not been adequately identified, documented, evaluated?
3. Preservation activities
  - What preservation activities have already taken place?
  - How effective have they been?
  - Are any preservation activities in process?
4. Threats
  - How and in what way are the community's historic resources threatened?
5. Goals and Actions
  - In what fashion do our historic resources relate to the past and future development of the community?
  - What are the community's goals for its historic resources?
  - Are the goals and objectives consistent with statewide goals and objectives for historic preservation established by the historic preservation element of the State Guide Plan and the RIHPHC's Historic Preservation Plan?
  - To what extent is preservation part of the community's overall plan for its development?
  - How will the community achieve its goals? Through which specific actions?
  - Who are the parties responsible for implementation (private, public, local, state)?
  - How can preservation be integrated into other aspects of planning? (such as housing, taxation, zoning, open space, site plan review, etc.)
6. Schedule
  - Given the identified resources and the present level of preservation activity, which strategies and actions are most important / most urgent?
  - What is a realistic schedule for implementing the actions?