

SUMMARY of the 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



Legislation Enacted that Affects Local, Regional and Statewide Planning

During the **2025** Rhode Island General Assembly Session, many bills enacted impacted local, regional, and statewide planning. The Land Use & Education Staff of the Division of Statewide Planning (DSP) scans proposed bills for a variety of legislative topics related to planning responsibilities for the Division, the State Guide Plan, and other requirements as the State's Metropolitan Planning Organization. In 2025, 2,594 bills were scanned. This year, 114 planning-related bills were tracked and, of these tracked bills, 40 were enacted as laws. This Summary provides a snapshot of selected enacted bills for general information. Below are the selected bills, accompanied by links to the actual legislation on the Web. The Bills that affect the Division are shown first, then bills related to other state government, housing, and land use regulation follow. Most of the Bills were signed by the Governor and are effective upon passage unless a different time period was stipulated within the Bills themselves. Bills not signed by the Governor but effective without the Governor's Signature are also noted.

DIVISION OF STATEWIDE PLANNING

Approved Resolutions:

- House Resolution No. [6027](#) - 04/01/2025 House read and passed
HOUSE RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE REPORTING AND EXPIRATION DATES AND REQUIRING REAPPOINTMENT OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY THE ENTIRE AREA OF LAND USE, PRESERVATION, DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT, AND REGULATION
 - This resolution extends the reporting and expiration dates for an existing study commission to June 8, 2026, and expires on June 30, 2026. The Division is appointed as a voting member of the Commission.

Approved Bills:

- Senate Bill No. [711](#) & House Bill No. [5310](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND HOUSING AND CONSERVATION TRUST FUND ACT
 - This Act restructures an existing board to 11 members to be appointed by the Governor by December 31, 2026. The (Associate) Director of the Office of Statewide Planning is designated as one of 4 non-voting ex-officio members along with the Director of Department of Environmental Management (DEM), Secretary of the Department of Housing, and the Executive Director of the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation. Supporting this Board in an ex-officio role will be a new responsibility for DSP because the Board has not met in recent times.
- Senate Bill No. [996 SUB A as amended](#) & House Bill No. [6207 SUB A as amended](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- THE STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS FOR A BEVERAGE CONTAINER REDEMPTION, PACKAGING, AND RECYCLING PLAN
 - This Act will study creating a beverage recycling program for RI. The DEM is charged with the primary role of assembling an advisory council and commissioning a statewide needs assessment to determine the infrastructure, policy, and programmatic requirements necessary to support a statewide beverage recycling program. The DEM is also charged with coordination with DSP and the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation on such. An interim report is due by April 1, 2026, and the final report is due December 1, 2026. This role for DSP will compliment ongoing work to update the State Guide Plan 171 [Solid Waste 2028](#).

- Senate Bill No. [1087](#) & House Bill No. [5803 SUB A as amended](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- STATE BUILDING CODE
 - This Act enlarges the existing charge to the State Building Code Commissioner to establish an electronic permitting platform for state & local building permits and municipal planning & zoning applications, by adding applications/permits for DEM, the Department of Transportation and the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC). This is an update to an ongoing project which the DSP and the Office of Regulatory Reform are mandated to assist.

OTHER STATE GOVERNMENT

Approved Resolutions:

- House Resolution No. [5056](#) - 01/15/2025 House read and passed
HOUSE RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE REPORTING AND EXPIRATION DATES OF THE SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO MAKE A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY AND PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REMEDIES TO THE EROSION OF RHODE ISLAND BEACHES
 - This Resolution extended the expiration date of the Legislative Commission to study remedies for the erosion of Rhode Island's beaches to April 23, 2025, to enable submission of a [Final Report](#). The Commission expired on April 30, 2025.
- Senate Resolution No. [174 as amended](#) & House Resolution No. [5477 as amended](#) - 07/03/2025 Effective without Governor's signature
JOINT RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE MAIN STREET COORDINATING PROGRAM
 - This Resolution, passed by both Chambers in June, authorizes the appropriation of the sum of \$500,000 for the formal establishment of a voluntary "Main Street Rhode Island" program through collaboration between the RI Commerce Corporation and Grow Smart RI.

Approved Bills:

- Senate Bill No. [626](#) & House Bill No. [5686](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO WATERS AND NAVIGATION -- COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL (CRMC)
 - This Act requires municipalities to maintain an updated list & map of rights-of-way to tidal areas as designated and provided by CRMC in their municipality. The designation of rights-of-ways for tidal areas remains the responsibility of the CRMC.
- Senate Bill No. [1139](#) & House Bill No. [6392](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- OUTDOOR DINING ACT
 - This Act allows food service businesses to provide temporary outdoor dining whenever buildings & other structures used for food service is rendered uninhabitable by casualty fire/flood for 18 months. The Act will sunset on 6/30/27.
- Senate Bill No. [998 SUB A](#) & House Bill No. [6126 SUB A](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO WATERS AND NAVIGATION -- COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
 - This Act reforms the composition of the CRMC from 10 members to 7 members as are appointed by the Governor (with the advice and consent of the Senate) by March 1, 2026.

HOUSING

Approved Resolutions

- House Resolution No. [6322](#) - 05/27/2025 House read and passed
HOUSE RESOLUTION AMENDING THE MEMBERSHIP AND EXTENDING THE REPORTING AND EXPIRATION DATES OF THE SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY HOUSING AFFORDABILITY
 - This Resolution increases membership from 18 to 21 and extended the reporting and expiration dates of the existing Commission to study housing affordability to June 5, 2027, and expires on June 26, 2027.

Approved Bills

- House Bill No. [5076 SUB A as amended](#) - 06/29/2025 Effective without Governor's signature
AN ACT MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE STATE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2026 (MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE STATE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2026)
 - This Act adopts the budget for the State for the next fiscal year with certain Statute amendments included. Most notable is Article 9 relating to housing which changes the Department of Housing to the Executive Office of Housing and

establishes an advisory council on housing and homelessness among other housing-related issues. The original language of bills concerning housing issues following, are presented as adopted, as most were effective before this Act was. All references to the Department of Housing will now mean the Executive Office of Housing

- Senate Bill No. [122 SUB A as amended](#) & House Bill No. [5955 SUB A](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- HOUSING LAND BANK PROGRAM
 - This Act creates the Department of Housing Land Bank Program to be operated by the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation to allow for deposit of title to real estate assets for the purpose of developing residential housing. Municipalities are mandated to review real estate assets owned by or under the control of the municipality and determine which real estate assets are not under current use or planned use and inform the Corporation and the Department by October 1, 2027. An annual update of such list is mandated by October 1st each subsequent year. The Department and the Corporation may work with municipalities to determine if properties listed are appropriate for redevelopment as affordable housing.
- Senate Bill No. [495 SUB A as amended](#) & House Bill No. [5229 SUB A as amended](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING
 - This Act authorizes the establishment of a voluntary Rhode Island Housing Champion Designation Program. Participation would require adoption of certain land use regulations and ordinances which the Department deems necessary to promote the development of housing. It also would require additional training of planning and zoning board members by the Department beyond the training already required for those board members under [§ 45-70](#). Other requirements to participate are the provision of infrastructure necessary for supporting housing such as public water & sewer, sidewalks, bike lanes, and or other infrastructure. Financial tools that incentivize the development of housing, such as adoption of the community revitalization tax relief incentive program and establishment of municipal economic development and revitalization districts may also be required for participation.
- Senate Bill No. [1011 SUB A](#) & [House Bill No. 5956 Sub A](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND HOUSING RESOURCES ACT OF 1998
 - This Act amends the definition of affordable housing to include a provision requiring the Secretary of Housing to develop a four-year pilot program to explore alternative under writing criteria to aid in the development of affordable dwelling units.
- Senate Bill No. [1083 SUB A](#) & House Bill No. [5798 SUB A as amended](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- ZONING ORDINANCES
 - This Act mandates via the Zoning Enabling Act for municipalities to allow attached single-family units, as defined in [§ 45-24-33](#), in residential districts which allow for the construction of two or more units. The number of attached single family units allowed shall be equal to the residential density for the zoning district. **Effective January 1, 2026.**
- Senate Bill No. [1085](#) & House Bill No. [5797 SUB A](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- ZONING ORDINANCES
 - This Act adds the definition of co-living housing to the Zoning Enabling Act. Co-living housing is a specific residential development with units that provide living/sleeping spaces independently rented/ lockable for the exclusive use of an occupant but require the occupant to share sanitary and/or food preparation facilities with other units. The Standard Enabling Provisions for zoning ordinances are amended to add consideration of authorizing community living options such as co-living housing in areas serviced by transit and other services. Co-living housing which meets the applicable requirements of the building and fire codes, may also be allowed in adaptive reuse developments. The conversion of existing dwelling units into co-living housing is not permitted unless authorized by a local zoning ordinance. **Effective January 1, 2026.**
- Senate Bill No. [1088](#) & House Bill No. [5801 SUB A](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- LOW AND MODERATE INCOME HOUSING
 - This Act clarifies that an “approved affordable housing plan” is a plan that is part of a housing element of an approved and unexpired local comprehensive community plan. Numerous other changes were made to the Zoning & Subdivision Enabling Acts to exclude wetland buffers from density calculations, changing pre-application and master plan requirements for comprehensive permits for affordable housing, changing the time periods for the issuance of certificates of completeness, setting standards for the size and forms of affordable units, and revising required findings for decisions. The Act has two effective dates; so, read the Act in full. Section 1 took effect upon passage and **Section 2**

(45-53-3. Definitions & 45-53-4. Comprehensive Permit Procedures takes effect on January 1, 2026.

- Senate Bill No. [1090 SUB A](#) & [House Bill No. 5800 Sub A](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- ZONING ORDINANCES
 - This Act adds that providing for residential development in all or some of commercial district(s) in a municipality with certain objective standards /criteria to be met is a purpose zoning ordinances must address. Municipalities with a population more than 40,000 persons must provide for such residential development in at least 30% of the area in commercial districts. **Effective January 1, 2026.**
- [Senate Bill No. 1092](#) & [House Bill No. 5796 Sub A as amended](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- ZONING ORDINANCES
 - This Act requires that zoning ordinances must provide for residential use options that are not limited to single-family detached structures in areas with public water and sewer capacity in municipalities where at least part of the area is located within the Urban Services Boundary of the Future Land Use Map of State Guide Plan 121, [Land Use 2025](#).

LAND USE REGULATION

Approved Bills

- Senate Bill No. [1084 SUB A](#) & House Bill No. [5795 SUB A](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- ZONING ORDINANCES
 - This Act requires that zoning ordinances stipulate zoning determinations/certificates be issued within 20 days of submission of a written request, increasing it from the current 15 days. The requesting party has the right to appeal the determination made in the response of the Zoning Official pursuant to [§ 45-24-63](#).
- Senate Bill No. [1086 SUB A as amended](#) & House Bill No. [5794 SUB B as amended](#)
AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- LOCAL PLANNING BOARD OR COMMISSION
 - This Act provides amendments to numerous laws; the Comprehensive Planning Act, the Powers and Duties of Planning Boards/Commissions, and the Enabling Acts for Subdivision of Land and Zoning Ordinances. Amendments for affordable housing purposes do not count towards the regular annual limit of 4 amendments for comprehensive plans. Development plan review remains optional and is added to the Powers / Duties of Planning Boards/Commissions. The definitions for Minor and Major subdivisions are changed. Appeals of administrative actions only of the Administrative Officer will go to the Zoning Board of Review. Provisions are added under minor subdivisions for dividing oversized lots. A vacant lot for residential use would be eligible for such a subdivision if; the vacant lot(s) is equal to or greater in lot area than the lot area of at least 50% of the developed residential lots within 200 feet of the lot proposed for subdivision, as confirmed by a professional land surveyor, the lot has access to available water and sewer, or has demonstrated the ability to drill a private well meeting state standards if no public water is available and the suitability and setbacks required for an on-site wastewater treatment system are met, where no public sewer is available. The resulting lots shall not be less than 3,000 square feet in lot size. A lot(s), qualifying for this type of subdivision shall be reviewed under the requirements and procedures set forth in [§ 45-23-38](#), but shall not require zoning relief solely based on the resulting reduced lot area of the newly created lot(s). The Zoning Official is authorized to make Neighborhood Character-based Modifications of equal to or less than 30% of the dimensional requirements of the zoning district on any parcel with a public water and sewer connection for the construction, alteration, creation or structural modification of a dwelling unit. Such modifications are only authorized for dimensional relief from frontage, lot width, and lot depth, up to the average dimensions of the comparable existing built environment and additional standards are set for addressing flood hazard, fresh water or coastal wetlands, and building/fire code requirements for the modifications..

Local Officials should read each Act in its entirety and consult with their solicitors and advise their city/town councils about amendments or other actions needed to bring land development and or other regulations into compliance with the amended laws.

If you have any questions regarding this Summary, please contact either:

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