

Historic Preservation State Guide Plan Element #210

The RIHPHC prepared its Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for the period 2020-2027: the updated plan, *Protecting Our Legacy of Buildings, Places, and Culture: An Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island*, can be found [here](#). 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 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.

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.

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.

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;
- 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 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;
- 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 RIHPHC'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, RIHPHC 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, RIHPHC 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.