



RI Historical Preservation
& Heritage Commission

Strategic Plan 2021-2027

(Draft)

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

Table of Contents

	<i>page</i>
INTRODUCTION	2
PLAN OVERVIEW	2
Mission Statement	3
Vision Statement	3
Core Values	3
Cross-cutting Objective	3
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	4
ORGANIZATION CHART (2020)	6
AUTHORITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	7
<i>State Law</i>	7
<i>Federal Law</i>	11
CORE PROGRAM AREAS	12
<i>Survey and Registration</i>	14
<i>Economic Incentives</i>	15
<i>Environmental Review/Resource Protection</i>	15
<i>Communications/Outreach</i>	16
<i>Heritage Program</i>	17
<i>Agency Administration</i>	17
STRATEGIC PLAN AT-A-GLANCE	18
STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: 2021-2027	19
I. <i>Strategic Goal – Identify, Preserve, and Protect Historic Buildings and Archeology Sites</i>	19
A. Objectives	19
II. <i>Strategic Goal – Support Economic Development Through Historic Preservation</i>	21
A. Objectives	21
III. <i>Strategic Goal – Promote State and Federal Historic Preservation Programs and Activities</i>	23
A. Objectives	23
IV. <i>Strategic Goal – Promote Equity and Representation in Historic Preservation and Heritage Programs and Activities</i>	26
A. Objectives	26
V. <i>Strategic Goal – Re-envision State Heritage Programs and Activities</i>	27
A. Objectives	27
VI. <i>Strategic Goal – Enable the Commission’s Mission, Vision, and Core Values Through Organizational Excellence</i>	27
A. Objectives	27

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

INTRODUCTION

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (Commission) is an independent, Executive branch agency of the State of Rhode Island that is charged with preserving the state's historic properties and archeological sites and promoting the cultural heritage of the state's historically diverse people. The agency proactively promotes the importance of historic preservation and heritage in fostering an understanding of the significant contributions they make to the economic and social well-being and quality-of-life in all of Rhode Island's cities, towns, and villages. The Commission advises the Governor's Office, the state legislature, state agencies, municipalities, and quasi-public entities as well as the public-at-large on state and federal historic preservation policies, laws, programs, and activities. Under state and federal law, the Commission functions as a regulatory agency that reviews publicly assisted projects that may affect historic buildings and archeological sites. It also provides a forum for stakeholders and the public-at-large to participate in decisions that affect the state's preservation and heritage programs and activities.

This Strategic Plan was compiled by the Commission's Strategic Planning Committee, the members of which initiated their planning process following appointment by the Commission Chair in December 2018. The Committee included three voting Commissioners; five of the agency's professional staff, and one representative from the State Historic Preservation Review Board. Its work was informed through presentations and discussions at monthly committee meetings as well as the concurrent development of Rhode Island's update to the 2012, federally mandated "Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan (CSHPP)." Included in the CSHPP update process were opportunities for public input in the statewide preservation planning process at three public meetings held in different locations across the state over the course of 2019. The Committee's work was further informed through the concurrent drafting of an update to the 1996 historic preservation component (*Element # 140*) of the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning's *State Guide Plan*. While each of these three plans directly address somewhat different audiences and vary somewhat in format and presentation, all are fully consistent in terms of their purpose and content.

PLAN OVERVIEW

This Strategic Plan document describes: 1) the Commission's makeup and structure; its historic preservation authorities and responsibilities pursuant to state and federal law, and the Commission's self-identified agency mission and vision. It also highlights the core values that undergird the agency's mission and vision statements; and 3) identifies six strategic agency goals for the period 2021-2027. The plan also

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

provides a series of objectives that describe in some detail how and why the Commission looks to satisfy these strategic goals. While it is a public document—and as such, readily available to state agencies, instrumentalities, municipalities, and preservation organization as well as the public-at-large—this Strategic Plan is primarily intended for use by Commission members and staff as an internal agency guidance document.

The Commission’s mission, vision, and core values statements are as follows:

Mission: To preserve and protect historic places; to support state and federal historic preservation and heritage programs and activities; and to recognize and promote the contributions of Rhode Island's diverse population.

Vision: A future where there are more resources available to preserve historic places and celebrate Rhode Island’s diverse cultural heritage so as to advance the state's economy, quality of life, and instill and maintain a sense of pride in the state’s people.

Core Values: **1)** Preservation of historic buildings and areas and archeological sites, as well as the diverse cultural heritage of the state’s people is a fundamental and proper public interest of all Rhode Island communities and citizens; **2)** preservation helps engender progress, growth, and thoughtful new development that contributes significantly to the state’s economy and quality of life; **3)** historic buildings are best preserved by using them; archeological sites are usually best preserved by restricting use to prevent decay or destruction; **4)** preservation goals and objectives are best achieved through public planning processes; **5)** preservation of historic resources relies on the combined commitment and cooperation of state agencies and instrumentalities, municipalities, private organizations, and individual citizens; **6)** preservation must play an active role in addressing the effects of climate change; and **7)** preservation and heritage programs and activities must prioritize equity of representation for all levels of society and practice.

The Commission’s mission, vision, and core values, as well as its strategic goals and objectives also reflect the agency’s commitment to the following cross-cutting objective:

Cross-Cutting Objective: *While encouraging efficiencies, collaboration, innovation, and consultation, the Commission strives to ensure that Rhode Island’s historic preservation and heritage programs and activities as a whole reflect the state’s full story, engage all constituencies, and benefit the public-at-large.*

The Commission’s commitment to both efficiency and inclusivity is central to the realization of each of the following strategic goals (i.e., “pillars”) that constitute the essential driver of the plan.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

- I. Identify, Preserve, and Protect Historic Buildings and Archeological Sites;
- II. Support Economic Development Through Historic Preservation;
- III. Promote State and Federal Preservation Programs;
- IV. Promote Equity and Representation In Historic Preservation and Heritage Programs and Activities
- V. Re-envision State Heritage Programs and Activities; and
- VI. Enable the Commission’s Mission, Vision, and Core Values through Organizational Excellence

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Pursuant to state law [RIGL 42-45 *et seq.*], the Commission is comprised of 10 voting members, each of whom is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate. Among these voting members, state law requires “...at least one shall possess the background and qualifications of an historian, one an archaeologist, one an architect or an architectural historian, one a museologist, one an anthropologist, one a landscape historian or landscape architect, and one a representative of a private nonprofit historic preservation organization” [RIGL 42-45-5(a)(1)]. The Commission also includes the director of the department of environmental management; the associate director of administration for planning; the state building commissioner, and the state historic preservation office each of whom shall serve as nonvoting ex-officio members.

The Commission is supported by 15 professional staff representing the disciplines of history, architectural history, archeology, and public administration. The agency’s staff is managed by an executive director, who is appointed by and reports directly to the Commission under state law. The executive director also serves under federal law as the State Historic Preservation Officer, and as such is appointed by, reports directly to the Governor pursuant to the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA).

Rhode Island’s State Historic Preservation Officer is responsible for implementing federal preservation programs and activities in Rhode Island in cooperation with the National Park Service. As a grantee of the federal government, the Commission serves as Rhode Island’s federally recognized State Historic Preservation Office. In this role, the Commission annually receives more than \$620,000 in federal Historic

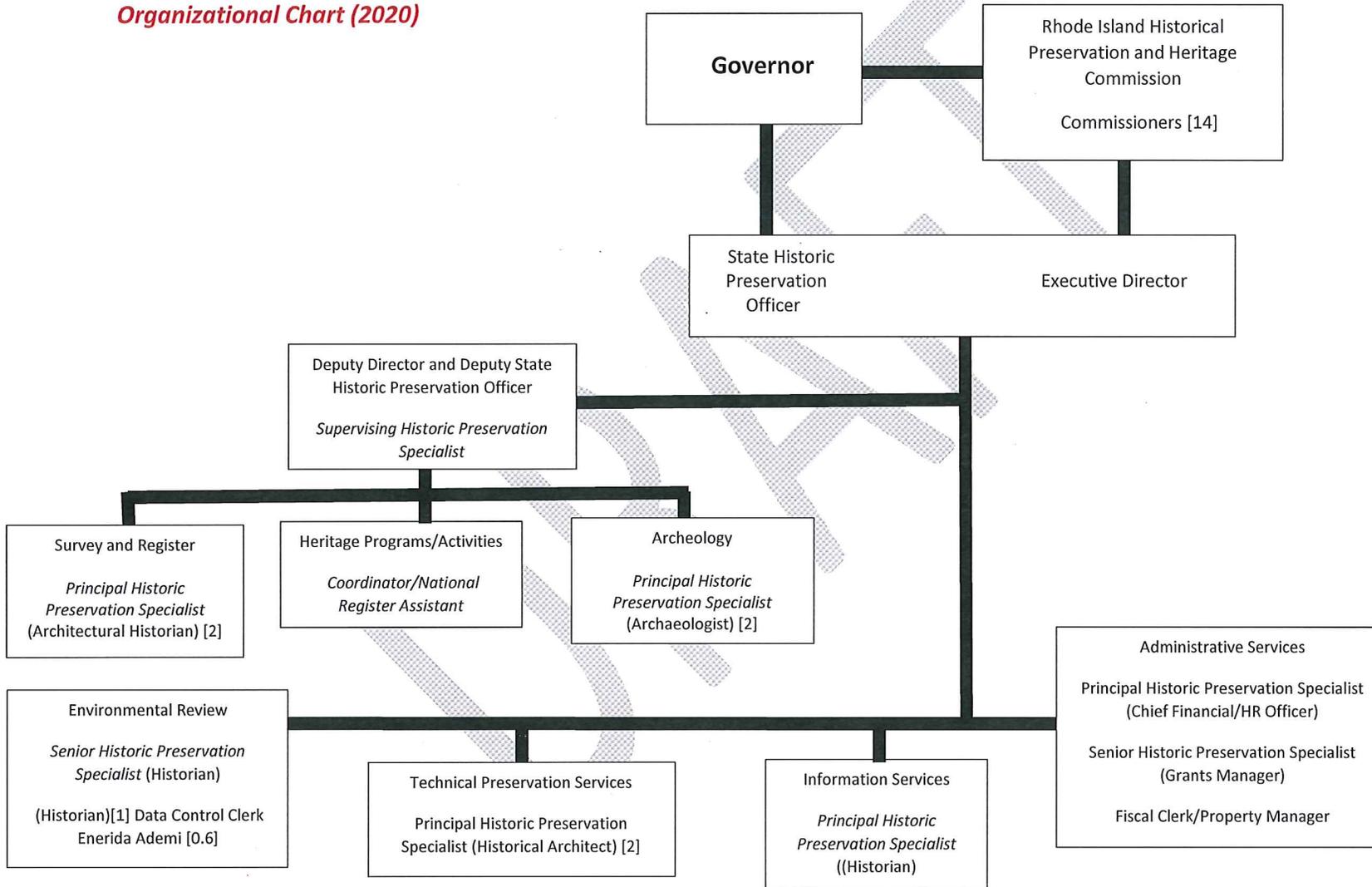
STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

Preservation Fund grant funds to assist in implementing federally mandated preservation responsibilities. Per federal grant requirements, the training and experience of each Commission staff member representing the disciplines of history, architectural history, and archeology must satisfy the requirements of the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards*.

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

Rhode Island Historical Preservation
and Heritage Commission
Organizational Chart (2020)



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

AUTHORITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

State Law:

The full authorities of the Commission under state law are codified in the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act (RIHPA) at Section 42-45, *et seq.* of the Rhode Island General Laws (RIGL). In the preamble to the RIHPA, the state's General Assembly succinctly noted the RIHPA's foundational concept:

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

Nearly all of the specific powers and duties of the Commission are defined in the following subsections of 42-45-5 of the RIHPA:

(a) *The commission shall:*

- (1) *Establish criteria for evaluating historical, architectural, or cultural sites, buildings, places, landmarks, or areas so as to determine their value in terms of national, state, or local importance and to adjudge their worthiness for inclusion in the state register;*
- (2) *Compile, maintain, and publish a state register of historical, architectural, and cultural sites, buildings, places, landmarks, and areas which shall be revised every two (2) years. 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, visually, 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. The commission shall advise the party proposing an activity affecting any item in the state register of its opinion in writing, together with any maps, drawings, photographs, or material necessary to explain or support its advisory. If a written advisory is not given within sixty (60) days of receipt of notice of a proposed activity, the commission shall be deemed to approve the proposal. If more than sixty (60) days are needed to evaluate a proposed activity and render an advisory, arrangements for a reasonable extension shall be made by the commission and the party proposing the activity. 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;*

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

- (3) (i) 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.

(ii) 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. To assist in preparation of those elements of the state guide plan dealing with the preservation of historic landscapes, the commission shall prepare and maintain a statewide inventory of historic landscapes.
- (4) Prepare statewide plans or programs for the preservation of sites or structures included in the state register which shall list the methods, practices, and procedures to be used in preserving or according recognition to sites or buildings. The plans or programs shall be a part of the state guide plan;
- (5) Cause to be prepared plaques or markers made of some suitable material to be erected on, or affixed to with the permission of the owner, in a conspicuous place, those sites or buildings determined worthy of inclusion in the state register;
- (6) Acquire or receive, by purchase, gift, or otherwise, with the approval of the governor in the case of a gift and in accordance with chapter 6 of title 37 in other cases, land or any interest in land and/or buildings which have been designated in the state register for the purpose of preserving the land and/or buildings; hold and maintain them, and give custody of the acquisitions for the purpose of preserving, maintaining, or exhibiting them to qualified nonprofit organizations with due regard for the interest of the state and the public in the property;
- (7) Grant or loan funds to towns or cities or private groups of funds made available therefor by the state or federal government, for the purpose of acquiring, restoring, relocating, or otherwise preserving land or buildings designated in the state register;
- (8) Receive on behalf of the state such grants or loans as may be made by the federal government or by private persons or groups for the purposes of this chapter, and it shall be the designated agency of the state in applying for these grants;
- (9) Inventory and catalog all buildings, sites, objects, and artifacts of historical, architectural, or archaeological interest which are within the custody or jurisdiction of the departments and agencies of state government. This inventory and catalog shall include buildings, ruins, and other structures, monuments, paintings, photographs, flags, furniture, clothing, military equipment and uniforms, archaeological materials, and all other articles of historic, architectural, or archaeological interest. All departments and agencies will assist the commission in making this inventory and catalog. The commission shall inform each department and agency of those items contained in the inventory which are within its

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

custody or jurisdiction by furnishing copies of the catalog or an extract thereof to each department and agency concerned. Copies of all amendments to the catalog, or extracts thereof, shall also be furnished to each department and agency concerned;

- (10) Advise the department and agencies of state government of the appropriateness, suitability, proper procedures, and other safeguards which should be observed in preserving, displaying, or using items contained in the catalog of articles of historic, architectural, or archaeological interest. When notified of any proposal to physically alter, change the location or method of storage, or change the manner of utilization or public accessibility, or to otherwise significantly affect any item listed in the catalog, the commission shall advise the responsible agency in writing, accompanied by any maps, drawings, photographs, or other explanatory material necessary. If a written advisory is not given within sixty (60) days of receipt of a notice of proposed action, the commission shall be deemed to approve the proposal. If more than sixty (60) days are needed to evaluate a proposal and render an advisory, arrangements for a reasonable extension shall be made by the commission and the department or agency concerned. Advisories given by the commission in accordance with this section shall be followed by the department or agency concerned 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 determination;*
- (11) Survey the use or occupancy of all state-owned buildings or sites which are of historic, architectural, or archaeological interest. The commission shall make recommendations to the director of administration concerning the appropriate use and availability of public access of each building and site, so that these may be utilized and displayed in a manner in keeping with their historic, architectural, or archaeological value;*
- (12) Appoint a state review board from among its own members and such other persons as it may desire, one of whom shall possess the background and qualifications of an historian, one of whom shall be an architect or architectural historian, and one of whom shall be an archaeologist as required by the office of archaeology and historic preservation in the national park service. The state review board shall approve nominations to the state and national registers of historic places, approve the removal of properties from either register, and otherwise act in an advisory capacity to the historical preservation and heritage commission;*
- (13) To implement a state-owned historic properties program, to provide technical assistance to agencies with jurisdiction over historic properties, and review proposed alterations to state-owned historic properties; the commission shall develop in conjunction herewith the educational materials to implement these programs;*
- (14) To reorganize the operation of and assume the supervisory responsibility for the following structures: the old State House, Benefit Street arsenal, Stephen Hopkins house (Providence), Bristol court house (Bristol), Kent County court house (East Greenwich). For purposes of this subdivision, the commission shall appoint from its own members a historic sites division which shall implement the duties of this subdivision;*

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

- (15) *To promote heritage by sponsoring and or coordinating heritage festivals; conducting and/or sponsoring heritage seminars, conferences, and symposiums; publishing scholarly and popular works relating to the social, political, and cultural development of the state; coordinating programs with other private or public groups or agencies which will meet the cultural needs of Rhode Island's citizens; observing important events in the state's history with suitable celebrations; and funding projects and programs of public or private groups or agencies which relate to the heritage of Rhode Island and its people;*
- (16) *To conduct a training course for newly appointed and qualified members and new designees of ex-officio members within six (6) months of their qualification or designation. The course shall be developed by the chair of the commission, approved by the commission, and conducted by the chair of the commission. The commission may approve the use of any commission or staff members or other individuals to assist with training. It shall include instruction in the following areas: the provisions of chapters 25-15, 42-46, 36-14 and 38-2; and the commission's rules and regulations. The director of the department of administration shall, within ninety (90) days of the effective date of this act [July 15, 2005], prepare and disseminate training materials relating to the provisions of chapters 42-46, 36-14 and 38-2; and*
- (17) *Submit within (90) days after the end of the fiscal year an annual report to the governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, the president of the senate, and the secretary of state of its activities during that fiscal year. The report shall provide: an operating statement summarizing meetings or hearings held, including meeting minutes, subjects addressed, advisories rendered under subdivision (a)(2), advisories rendered for activities to be undertaken by departments and agencies of the state under subdivision (a)(10), studies conducted, policies and plans developed in order to assist other state agencies in preparing elements of the state guide plan, plans or programs developed for the preservation of sites or structures included in the state register, and any other programs administered or initiated including any assistance or training provided agencies with jurisdiction over historic places; a consolidated financial statement of all funds received and expended including the source of the funds, grants or loans to towns, cities or private groups, a listing of any staff supported by these funds, and a summary of any clerical, administrative or technical support received, and a summary of any land or interest in land and/or buildings received during the fiscal year; a review of the inventories compiled as required in subdivisions (a)(2), (a)(3)(ii), and (a)(9); a summary of performance during the previous fiscal year including accomplishments, shortcomings and remedies; a synopsis of any legal matters related to the authority of the commission; a summary of any training courses held pursuant to subdivision (a)(16); a briefing on anticipated activities in the upcoming fiscal year; and findings and recommendations for improvements. The report shall be posted electronically as prescribed in § 42-20-8.2. The director of the department of administration shall be responsible for the enforcement of this provision.*

In addition to the authorities and responsibilities duties cited above, the Rhode Island Antiquities Act [RIGL § 42-46-1, et seq.] authorizes the Commission to prescribe rules and issue permits for the identification, preservation, excavation, study, and exhibition of the state's archeological resources, to wit:

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

Before conducting field investigations on any land owned or controlled by the state, its agencies, departments, or institutions, or on the bottoms of navigable waters within the state's jurisdiction in the territorial seas, or any property designated as a State Archeological Landmark, parties must secure an antiquities permit from the Commission. In addition, when a state or municipal agency undertaking may affect an archeological property and archeological survey or data recovery is required, and antiquities permit may be issued as part of the Commission's advisory authority.

As suggested above, subsection 42-45.1-10 of the RIHPA also authorizes the Commission to designate eligible properties as State Archeological Landmarks.

Federal Law:

Like the RIHPA, the NHPA was based on a series of legislative findings as to why Congress determined that historic preservation is important to the nation. These included the following four foundational concepts codified when the NHPA was enacted in 1966:

- (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) 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;*
- (4) 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.*

The historic preservation responsibilities and programs of the Commission in its role as the State Historic Preservation Office under federal law are essentially consistent with its duties and responsibilities under state law. In accordance with the provisions of the NHPA [54.U.S.C. 302303(b)], they include:

- (1) in cooperation with Federal and State agencies, local governments, and private organizations and individuals, direct and conduct a comprehensive statewide survey of historic property and maintain inventories of the property;*

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

- (2) *identify and nominate eligible property to the National Register and otherwise administer applications for listing historic property on the National Register;*
- (3) *prepare and implement a comprehensive statewide historic preservation plan;*
- (4) *administer the State program of Federal assistance for historic preservation within the State;*
- (5) *advise and assist, as appropriate, Federal and State agencies and local governments in carrying out their historic preservation responsibilities;*
- (6) *cooperate with the Secretary, the Council, other Federal and State agencies, local governments, and private organizations and individuals to ensure that historic property is taken into consideration at all levels of planning and development;*
- (7) *provide public information, education, and training and technical assistance in historic preservation;*
- (8) *cooperate with local governments in the development of local historic preservation programs and assist local governments in becoming certified pursuant to chapter 3025;*
- (9) *consult with appropriate Federal agencies in accordance with this division on— (A) Federal undertakings that may affect historic property; and (B) the content and sufficiency of any plans developed to protect, manage, or reduce or mitigate harm to that property; and*
- (10) *advise and assist in the evaluation of proposals for rehabilitation projects that may qualify for Federal assistance. and development.*

CORE AGENCY PROGRAM AREAS

The following six core program areas are reflected in the Commission's staff-level organizational structure:

Survey and Registration:

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 historical 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 historical interest; and 3) recommendations for the future preservation of these

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

resources, which may include listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The selective inventories of resources in these reports are supplemented by the more inclusive survey files maintained by the Commission.

Although the Commission completed survey reports for every community in the state by the late 1980s, a concerted effort continue to supplement, update, and refine those survey files with additional and/or more up-to-date information is necessary. While buildings are the largest and best-covered category of historic properties, Commission surveys seek to be comprehensive and thus includes a wide range of resource types such as neighborhoods, engineering and military structures, outdoor sculpture, watercraft, designed, vernacular, and indigenous historic landscapes, traditional cultural properties, “mid-century moderns,” and terrestrial and underwater archaeological sites.

The Commission maintains a State Register of Historic Places that uses the same eligibility *Criteria for Evaluation* as the National Register. Any 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 State Archaeological Landmarks designated by the Commission are automatically 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 1) are more than fifty years old; 2) relate to a broad theme of the community’s history; 3) serve as a good example of a type, style, or method of construction; and 4) retain enough integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its historical significance.

Created by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA), and administered by the National Park Service, the National Register is the federal government’s official list of properties that are considered 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 is 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. In addition to staff-level review, National Register nominations are 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. More than 21,000 properties in Rhode Island have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Most are in one of the state’s 188 National Register historic districts. As of 2020, more properties are definitely eligible. The variety of Rhode Island properties listed in the National Register demonstrates the state’s rich architectural, historical, and archaeological heritage. National Register properties

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

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.

In addition to listing in the National Register or the State Register, eligible terrestrial and underwater archaeological archeology sites may be designated as State Archaeological Landmarks [RIGL 42-45.1-10]. State Archaeological Landmark designation requires field investigation activities, or exploration or recovery activities in the case of an underwater site to receive a permit from the Commission prior to starting any physical work. For on-land or underwater investigation of a State Archaeological Landmark to take place, interested parties must receive both approval from the Commission and, if the property is privately owned, written permission from the property owner. The Commission 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.

Economic Incentives:

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.

The federal government provides also 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.

State Preservation Grants (SPGs) are the Commission'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 ("bricks and mortar") projects at public historic sites, museums, and cultural art centers located in historic structures in Rhode Island. The State Preservation Grants Program was created because state lawmakers and voters recognized that many significant properties owned by public agencies and non-profit organizations need extensive repairs or restoration; that it is essential to preserve landmarks that embody our heritage; and that arts, culture, and civic organizations face unique challenges in updating their historic facilities for new audiences and programs. Preserving these historic landmarks—theatres, museums, concert halls, art centers, libraries, town halls—contributes to the quality of life in Rhode Island. Supports the state's tourism economy, and ensures that Rhode Island's arts, culture, and civic facilities continue to inspire new generations. The program was created in 2002 and is funded by state bonds. A multiyear period without funding lasted from 2008-2014. In 2014, the

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

voters of Rhode Island approved the Creative and Cultural Economy Bonds, which provided \$5 million for a historic preservation grant program operated by the RIHPHC and a \$30 million cultural facilities grant program operated by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. 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. SPGs boost Rhode Island's economy as a whole. Through its matching requirements, these grants stimulate broader support and participation in historic preservation projects statewide, and can spur additional development investment projects. 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. However, lack of reliable regular funding support for SPGs 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.

The Certified Local Government Grants program is an annual, federally funded program that helps eligible communities fund a wide range of activities, including identification and evaluation of significant historic and archaeological properties, the nomination of eligible properties to the National Register, historic preservation plans, and certain education-related activities. Ten percent of Rhode Island's annual, federal Historic Restoration Fund (HRF) appropriation is reserved for CLG grants. The balance this appropriation (roughly \$560K) is utilized by to support the agency's federally mandated preservation programs. From time to time, the Commission also administers 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.

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

Environmental Review/Resource Protection:

The Commission operates both federal and state programs related to historic preservation that review "undertakings" (projects) by state-and-federal-government entities and their subdivisions that may have an impact on historic resources. This process of reviewing all federal and state undertakings related to historic buildings and archeological sites is carried out pursuant to the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act [RIGL 42-45-5 et seq.] and Section

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

106 the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended [54 U.S.C. § 306108]. By virtue of its role under these state and federal laws, the Commission reviews approximately 1200 projects per year to ensure that impacts on historic places are minimized or mitigated. The types of projects reviewed include but are not limited to highway construction, housing rehabilitation and community development, Coastal Resource Management and federal agency project permits, including the numerous permits required for archeological investigations pursuant to the provisions of the Rhode Island Antiquities Act. The Commission has established close working relationships with government officials at all levels, including state and federal agencies and local municipalities, and national and state and local preservation organizations to ensure that consideration for the protection of historic resources is incorporated into the early planning process for state and federal government projects impacting historic properties and archeological sites.

The Commission also holds preservation easements on more than 110 Rhode Island properties. These easements, some of which are perpetual and some others from 10 -50 years in duration, require that any work on a property other than routine maintenance receive prior written approval from the Commission. All work performed on easement properties must be compliant with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Archeology and Historic Preservation*.

Communication/Outreach:

The Commission currently maintains an agency website at <http://www.preservation.ri.gov/>, and an agency Facebook page found at <https://www.facebook.com/rihphc/>. that provide extensive information on the agency's historic preservation programs and/or activities. The agency also sponsors a statewide 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 annual conference has a theme that informs much of the programming. Beyond the educational content, the conference provides an opportunity to network, share ideas, and socialize. In addition, the Commission 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 who attend the conference. In addition to the annual conference, the Commission organizes and/or provides support for training workshops for members of local Historic District Commissions and/or the municipal government staffs that support them.

Rhode Island Archaeology Month program, initially launched by the Commission in 2015, runs annually each October. This program features a series of free events that provide the public with opportunities to learn about our state's rich archaeological heritage directly from the professional and academic researchers who are making the latest discoveries. Beginning in 1993, the agency 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, the Commission has co-sponsored these awards with the statewide preservation nonprofit Preserve Rhode Island. The Commission also regularly distributes technical and event information related to historic preservation to public and private entities throughout Rhode Island, and works directly with the several of state's higher education institutions to provide regular student-intern agency training opportunities. Communication and outreach activities specifically related to the Commission's Heritage Program are noted below.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

Heritage Program and Activities:

The first Rhode Island Heritage Commission was founded as 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, 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. For the past 25 years, in accordance with Section 42-45-5(a)(15) of the Rhode Island General Laws, the Commission has maintained a state heritage program that sponsors and coordinates an annual Rhode Island Heritage Festival; promotes other organizations' heritage festivals, conducted seminars, conferences, symposiums, and developed and promoted heritage-related publications of its own as well as those of heritage nonprofit organizations. 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 cultural heritage organizations. When funding is made available by the General Assembly, the Commission also provides grants for Rhode Island heritage activities, projects, and other heritage-based activities sponsored by state nonprofit organizations and municipalities. The Heritage Program also maintains its own Facebook page to assist in its ongoing role as a clearing house for information on historical cultural events and activities throughout the state.

Agency Administration:

The Commission's programs, activities, and staff are internally administered by a management team of three: an Executive Director/State Historic Preservation Officer (ED/SHPO); a Deputy Director/Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer (DD/DSHPO), and a Chief of Operations (CO). The ED/SHPO is responsible for the overall oversight of all state and federal programs and responsibilities, and the direct supervision of eight employees. The DD/SHPO directly supervises three employees; he/she is primarily responsible for overseeing the Commission's Survey and Registration Programs and archeology activities, and provides direct staffing support for the State Historic Preservation Review Board. The DD/DSHPO is delegated full signature authority for all state and federal actions in the absence of the ED/SHPO. The CO oversees the development and day-to-day management and fiscal compliance requirements and policies related to both the agency's state and federal budgets; he/she also oversees all of the agency's in-house human resource functions, policies and activities, and serves as the agency's liaison with the Division of Human Resources in the state's Department of Administration.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

STRATEGIC PLAN AT-A- GLANCE

MISSION STATEMENT

To preserve and protect historic places; to support state and federal historic preservation and heritage programs and activities; and to recognize and promote the contributions of Rhode Island's diverse population.

VISION STATEMENT

A future where there are more resources available to preserve historic places and celebrate Rhode Island's diverse cultural heritage so as to advance the state's economy, quality of life, and instill and maintain a sense of pride in the state's people.

CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVE

While encouraging efficiencies, collaboration, innovation, and consultation, the Commission strives to ensure that Rhode Island's historic preservation and heritage programs and activities as a whole reflect the state's full story, engage all constituencies, and benefit the public-at-large.

GOAL I

Identify, Preserve, and Protect Historic Buildings and Archeological Sites

GOAL II

Support Economic Development Through Historic Preservation

GOAL III

Promote State and Federal Historic Preservation Programs and Activities

GOAL IV

Promote Equity and Representation In Historic Preservation and Heritage Programs and Activities

GOAL V

Re-envision State Heritage Programs and Activities

GOAL VI

Enable the Commission's Mission, Vision, and Core Values through Organizational Excellence

COMMISSION CORE VALUES: 1) Preservation of historic buildings and areas and archeological sites, as well as the diverse cultural heritage of the state's people is a fundamental and proper public interest of all Rhode Island communities and citizens; 2) preservation helps engender progress, growth, and thoughtful new development that contributes significantly to the state's economy and quality of life; 3) historic buildings are best preserved by using them; archeological sites are usually best preserved by restricting use to prevent decay or destruction; 4) preservation goals and objectives are best achieved through public planning processes; 5) preservation of historic resources relies on the combined commitment and cooperation of state agencies and instrumentalities, municipalities, private organizations, and individual citizens; 6) preservation must play an active role in addressing the effects of climate change; and 7) preservation and heritage programs and activities must prioritize equity of representation for all levels of society and practice.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: 2021-2027

I. Strategic Goal -- Identify, Preserve and Protect Historic Buildings and Archeological Sites

A. Objectives

1. Update Statewide Historic Property Surveys:

- a. Build upon RIHPHC's proven track record of excellence in survey by updating and expanding the statewide surveys of properties eligible for listing in the State and National Register of Historic Places. While still valuable and frequently used by staff and the public, existing RIHPHC survey data is now approximately 40 years old. Updating and expanding the statewide survey will ensure that survey data remains a useful tool for all Rhode Islanders in the decades to come;
- b. Prioritize the identification of post-World War II resources, which may include previously overlooked examples of Modern, Postmodern, and recent past architecture and landscapes and update critical data about historic places threatened by climate change and sea level rise;
- c. Encourage collaboration with municipalities and provide technical and financial assistance to cities and towns that are updating historic property and archaeological site surveys;
- d. Promote the use of federal Certified Local Government Program grants for eligible municipalities to update and maintain historic property and archaeological site surveys; and
- e. Promote the use of National Park Service Underrepresented Communities grants programs by Certified Local Governments, federally recognized tribes, and eligible community organizations.
- f. Update and revise as necessary the Commission's 1989 inventory publication, *Rhode Island: State-owned Historic Properties*; and
- g. Update and revise as necessary the Commission's 2001 inventory publication, *Historic Landscapes of Rhode Island*.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

2. State and National Registers of Historic Places:

- a. Continue to identify, document, evaluate and nominate eligible properties and archaeological sites to the State and National Registers of Historic Places;
- b. Evaluate and document the significance of historic properties and archeological sites using the State and National Register Criteria for Evaluation;
- c. Promote the use of historic district nominations as the most efficient vehicle for listing associated historic resources; and
- d. Evaluate Rhode Island's existing historic district documentation for targeted updates. (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 up to today's standards. Frequent demand for National Register information from preservation partners, municipalities, and property owners necessitates an evaluation of existing data.)

3. State Archaeological Landmarks

- a. Expand the use of the State Archaeological Landmark designation, first used in 2019, and identify, evaluate, nominate, and designate eligible archaeological sites pursuant to Rhode Island General Law 42-45-1; and
- b. Promulgate regulations and standards and guidelines for assessing eligibility of potential State Archaeological Landmarks.

4. State Archeological Field Investigation Permits

- a. Ensure that archeological field investigations are submitted, reviewed, and permitted as required by the provisions of RIGL 42-45.1-5.

5. Historic Cultural Landscapes

- a. Identify, document, evaluate, and register eligible properties that reflect significant interactions between humans and natural resources, including the wildlife or domestic animals therein that associated with a historic event, activity, or person or that exhibiting other historic cultural or aesthetic values;

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

- b. Focus on identifying, documenting, and evaluating previously undocumented historic vernacular and ethnographic cultural landscapes; and
- c. Update RIHPHC's *Historic Landscapes of Rhode Island* survey publication; expand to include resources highlighted in **b.** above.

6. RIHPHC Historic Property Preservation Easements

- a. Develop and implement a regular compliance monitoring schedule for all historic properties on which the RIHPHC holds preservation easements;
- b. Ensure that any work performed on a property for which the RIHPHC holds a preservation easement complies with the terms of the easement; and
- c. Ensure that complete requests to perform work on historic properties are reviewed in a timely manner in accordance with the terms of the easement.

7. Geographic Information System (GIS)

- a. Acquire state-of-the-art hardware and software necessary to provide RIHPHC with comprehensive in-house, GIS-system operational capability and the ability to complete in-house GIS system data-layer updates on a regular, ongoing basis;
- b. Provide expanded staff training in the use of GIS hardware and software;
- c. Update and expand current RIHPHC historic property data-layer information; and
- d. Proactively share RIHPHC GIS data-layer information with other RI state agencies, municipalities, the National Park Service, and the public-at-large.

II. Strategic Goal -- Support Economic Development Through Historic Preservation

A. Objectives:

1. Technical Preservation Assistance

- a. Continue to provide outstanding technical review and support for owners rehabilitating historic properties;

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

- 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 in accordance with the provisions of federal/state laws;
- c. Proactively support continued funding for state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credit programs;
- d. Promote the availability of Rebuild RI rehabilitation tax credits to owners of income-producing historic properties;
- e. Complete reviews of complete applications for state and federal rehabilitation tax credit projects within 30 days of application receipt;
- f. Ensure that historic rehabilitation project work under RIHPHC review complies with the Secretary's Standards and Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties;
- g. Monitor in-progress state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credit projects;
- h. Coordinate as necessary with the RI Department of Revenue's Division of Taxation and the Department of Administration's Budget Office with respect project financial information;
- i. Ensure projects comply with the most current provisions of Archeology and Historic Preservation: The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines;
- j. Complete all project reviews conducted pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation or the RI Historic Preservation Act within 30 days of receipt of a complete project application; and
- k. Record and track all project reviews in the RIHPHC's project review databases in a timely manner.

2. Historic Preservation Grants and Loans

- a. Establish a regular and reliable source of state funding for the Commission's State Preservation Grant's Programs (SPG);
- b. Ensure that all SPG grant projects are completed on a timely basis in a manner that complies with all provisions of the Commission/grantee Funding Agreement and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties;
- c. Review and, if necessary, revise SPG program regulations on at least a triennial basis;
- d. Support efforts to significantly increase annual federal Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) allocations to State Historic Preservation Offices;
- e. Promote the use of reserved, federal HPF Certified Local Government (CLG) grant funding by eligible Rhode Island municipalities;

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

- f. Promote the use CLG grants to address preservation issues related to protecting historic and archeological properties from the adverse effects of climate change;
- g. Fully comply with all federal requirements pertaining to the Commission's annual, \$600,000+, federal HPF grant-funding Agreement with the National Park Service;
- h. Encourage the broader use of the Commission's Historic Preservation Loan Fund for the restoration of historic properties by eligible entities.

III. Strategic Goal -- Promote State and Federal Historic Preservation Programs and Activities

A. Objectives:

1. Collaboration with Municipalities, Other State Agencies, and State Instrumentalities

- i. Promote the preservation and protection of historic properties owned or affected by other state agency programs or activities;
- j. Update and publish RIHPHC's inventory of state-owned properties listed in the State Register of Historic Place at least once every two years in accordance with the provisions of Section 42-25-5(a)(2) of the Rhode Island General Laws;
- k. Identify state-owned properties that are eligible for listing, but not currently listed, in the state register of historic places;
- l. Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and or RIGL Section 42-45 *et seq.* identify, review, and provide recommendations for activities undertaken, funded, or licensed by Rhode Island municipalities, state agencies or instrumentalities which might encroach upon, damage, or destroy--physically, visually, or environmentally--any site, building, place, landmark, or area included in the state register;
- m. Update the 2001 "State Historic Preservation Element #140" for the RI Division of Statewide Planning by the end of fiscal year 2027;
- n. Ensure ongoing compliance with RIHPHC federal and state program and planning requirements in the RIHPHC's state enabling statute (RIGL 42-45) and Historic Preservation Fund Grants Manual stipulations, comprehensively review these requirements at least once every two years;

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

- o. Every three years, review and recommend to the General Assembly updates if necessary to the RIHPHC state enabling statute (RIGL 42-45 et seq.); and
- p. Complete updates to the RIHPHC's federally mandated Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan, state mandated State Guide Plan Element for Historic Preservation and Heritage, and agency Strategic Plan no later than December 31, 2027.

2. Climate Change Resiliency Planning and Disaster Preparedness

- a. Complete a comprehensive, prioritized risk-assessment analysis to determine which RI historic properties and archeology sites are most endangered by climate-change related sea-level rise and riverine flooding;
- b. Work with state agencies, instrumentalities, municipalities, and non-profit organizations to update comprehensive historical and archeological surveys of historic properties, particularly in high risk areas;
- c. Work with RI state agencies and municipalities, and historic property owners to develop and implement historic-property disaster preparedness planning projects/activities;
- d. Continue to distribute current and new 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;
- e. Modify the annual Certified Local Government grant application criteria to incentivize the undertaking of climate change and disaster preparedness projects; and
- f. Assist the state's congressional delegation in developing federal, climate-change-related legislation in support of the preservation and protection of historic properties and archeological sites.

3. Local Government Assistance

- a. Assist municipalities with the protection of local historic properties and archeological sites;
- b. Encourage and assist local communities in adequately updating historic properties and archeological sites surveys;

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

- c. In cooperation with the Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission, promote and support the protection of local burying grounds designated or eligible for designation as “historical cemeteries pursuant to RIGL 23-18-10.1;
- d. Provide technical assistance to municipalities in the creation of new local historic districts, establishment of demolition delay ordinances, and other local protection mechanisms;
- e. Sponsor local, regional, or statewide workshops for local historic district commissions and municipal planning department staff on pertinent RI state 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;
- f. Develop and make available to local district commission a series of training webinars; and
- g. Encourage currently ineligible municipalities to identify and establish eligible local historic districts and apply for designation as a Certified Local Government pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

4. Community Outreach and Education

- a. Provide public-at-large educational, training, and convening opportunities related to historic preservation and heritage in Rhode Island;
- b. Continue to sponsor and organize Rhode Island’s Annual Historic Preservation Conference;
- c. Continue development and, as necessary, implementation of virtual public meeting/conferencing capabilities;
- d. Provide ongoing in-person and web-based interactive educational/training opportunities for Rhode Island local historic district commissions and municipal planning department support staffs;
- e. Continue to provide a regular web-based news publication on the Commission’s ongoing historic preservation and heritage programs and activities;
- f. Work with State of Rhode Island’s Division of Information Technology to update the format, structure, and content of the Commission’s website;
- g. Proactively 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; and

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

- h. Continue to collaborate with the statewide preservation nonprofit Preserve Rhode Island in sponsoring, organizing, promoting an annual statewide historic preservation awards program that recognizes individuals and rehabilitation projects that have made outstanding contributions to historic preservation in Rhode Island.

IV. Strategic Goal -- Promote Equity and Representation in Historic Preservation and Heritage Programs and Activities

A. Objectives

1. More Effective Inclusion of Underrepresented Communities in Commission Programs and Activities

- a. Proactively identify, document, and register properties related to Rhode Island's diverse ethnic communities in the state's historic preservation programs;
- b. Reach out to communities whose culturally significant properties and archeological sites may be underrepresented in surveys or in the National and/or State Registers and collaborate with those communities on the identification, evaluation and registration of such properties;
- c. Promote participation by state agencies, municipalities and private organizations in the state's and National Park Service's historic-resource grants programs for State and National Register-eligible properties associated with underrepresented-communities;
- d. 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.
- e. Work with the Narragansett Tribe and other Native American tribes with ancestral lands in Rhode Island to promote the preservation and protection of tribal historic properties;
- f. Proactively maintain ongoing liaison and cooperation with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Narragansett tribe regarding tribal historic properties; and
- g. Continue to acknowledge and respect 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.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

V. Strategic Goal – Re-envision State Heritage Programs and Activities

A. Objectives

1. RIHPHC Heritage Program and Activities

- a. Before the end of state fiscal year 2022, develop and submit to the Governor’s Office recommendations for revising Rhode Island’s 40+ year old statutory Heritage Program requirements [RIGL 42-45-5(a)(15)] to reflect current program goals and budget and staffing realities;
- b. Terminate RIHPHC’s archaic function as a public fiscal agent for private RI heritage organizations;
- c. Further expand and develop programming for, and constituency participation in, the annual RI Heritage Festival;
- d. Become a more effective and inclusive statewide clearinghouse for the proactive distribution of information on RI heritage-related festivals, events, symposia, etc.;
- e. Increase permanent RIHPC Program staffing from one half-time FTE to one full-time FTE and one half-time FTE;
- f. Establish and maintain a modest, state-funded, annual grant-assistance program for private RI heritage organizations; and
- g. Continue to coordinate with the RIHPHC’s Historic Preservation Program in the identification, evaluation, and listing of properties related to Rhode Island’s diverse cultural heritage.

VI. Enable the Commission’s Mission, Vision, and Core Values through Organizational Excellence

A. Objectives

1. Agency Organizational Equity and Diversity

- a. Collaborate with the State of Rhode Island’s Division of Human Resources to diversify Commission staffing to better reflect the state’s demographic diversity (by SFY 2024);
- b. Ensure that the State Historic Preservation Review Board better reflects the state’s demographic diversity (by SFY 2024);
- c. Work with Governor’s Office to ensure voting membership of the Commission better reflects the state’s diversity (by SFY 2024).

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2027

2. State and federal Statutory/Regulatory/Policy Compliance

- a. On an ongoing basis, ensure that Commission programs and activities comply with all applicable State of Rhode Island and federal laws, regulations, and policies;
- b. At least once every three years, review and, if appropriate, recommend modifications to the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act; and
- c. On an ongoing basis, provide review and comment to appropriate federal agencies on any proposed revisions to the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act or any related federal regulations or historic preservation policies.

3. Agency Staffing

- a. Complete a comprehensive review and draft updates for all agency staff job classifications/descriptions and submit to the state's Division of Human Resources for review and processing by the end of State Fiscal Year 2021; and
- b. Complete a comprehensive review and proposed upgrading agency job based on comparative analyses with comparable historic preservation/heritage agencies in other states, as well as positions requiring comparable skill levels and responsibilities in Rhode Island state government; submit upgrade requests to the state's Division of Human Resources for review and comment by the end of SFY 2021.

4. Training

- a. In accordance with the provisions of the Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Act [42-45-5(a)(16)], develop and implement a standard orientation/training module to familiarize newly appointed voting and *ex officio* Commission members with the responsibilities, duties, and procedures of the Commission.
- b. Develop and implement a standard orientation/training module for newly appointed members of the State Historic Preservation Review Board; and
- c. Proactively support professional development of Commission staff on an ongoing basis.

DRAFT

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