

PART FOUR: PLANNING FOR HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Relevant State Goals and Policies

Every comprehensive plan must be consistent with and embody the state's goals and policies for historic and cultural resources as found in the State Guide Plan and the laws of the state. The goals and policies listed below are intended to provide guidance as to goals and policies important for local comprehensive planning.

The State's Historic Preservation Plan, *Protecting Our Legacy of Buildings, Places, and Culture: An Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island*, is the primary source of goals, objectives, and policies related to historic and cultural preservation issues. Due to the nature of this plan, it is impractical to replicate its extensive list of goals, objectives, and policies here. Please refer to *Protecting Our Legacy of Buildings, Places, and Culture: An Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island*, Section Five: Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Policies, at the Division's website <http://www.planning.ri.gov>.

Preserve historic buildings, districts, and archaeological sites.

[Land Use 2025: Rhode Island's State Land Use Policies and Plan, LUP 24, page 2-10](#)

Excellence in community design: communities that are high quality, energy efficient, safe, healthful, distinct, diverse, and aesthetically pleasing; communities that are rich in natural, historical, cultural, & recreational resources; communities that provide abundant economic opportunities.

[Land Use 2025: Rhode Island's State Land Use Policies and Plan, Goal 3, page 5-10](#)

Preserve and enhance special districts and special places, supporting particular uses and resources.

[Land Use 2025: Rhode Island's State Land Use Policies and Plan, Goal 3, Objective 3B, page 5-10](#)

Invest in arts and culture to build on Rhode Island's identity as a cultural destination.

[Rhode Island Rising: A Plan for People, Places and Prosperity, Goal 3, Policy 3, page 76](#)

Enhance and preserve historic and other aspects of neighborhoods and communities which add identity and character.

[State Housing Plan \(2000\), 1-2-3 Stabilizing and Protecting Existing Areas, Policy B, page 1.2](#)

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

[Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, RIGL section 42-45-1](#)

The preservation of structures of historic and architectural value and historic cemeteries, wherever located within a city or town, are declared to be a public purpose, and any city or town

council has the power by ordinance to regulate the construction, alteration, repair, moving, and demolition of these structures within the limits of the city or town.

Historical Area Zoning, RIGL section 45-24.1-1

It is declared to be the policy of the state to join with the federal government, private patrons, and institutions and professional organizations concerned with the arts to insure that the role of the arts in the life of Rhode Island communities will continue to grow and will play an ever more significant part in the welfare and educational experience of our citizens.

Rhode Island Council on the Arts, RIGL section 42-75-1

Other Relevant Documents

Before beginning assessment of existing conditions, needs, and trends, and before developing new goals, policies and actions, communities should review other state and local plans and other documents that are relevant to planning for historic and cultural resources, including:

- Local historic and cultural preservation plans that may be available;
- State historic resource surveys for each city and town, available at <http://www.preservation.ri.gov/survey/publications.php>; and
- Other historic and cultural preservation resources available through the [Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission](#)

Stakeholders to Include

In addition to the general public, when discussing how best to plan for historic and cultural resources, municipalities may benefit from involving:

- The Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission.
- Local historical society and preservation groups;
- Representatives from local museums, cultural institutions, and sites;
- Members of the local arts community;
- Preserve Rhode Island; and
- Owners of historic buildings and homes.

Making Connections Throughout the Plan

Relationship to land use

A community's historic and cultural resources contribute to the character of a community. It is important to be sensitive to the setting of these resources and how new development, especially in areas that directly abut historic districts, archaeological sites, scenic view corridors, etc., may impact the character that these resources provide to the community.

Relationship to natural resources

Some aspects of historic and cultural resources may be closely linked with natural resources, especially as they relate to scenic areas and view corridors. Communities should consider

opportunities for combining efforts to protect and preserve natural resource areas with historic and cultural resources. Areas with high natural resource value and historic or cultural value should be considered of particularly high value in protection and preservation efforts.

Relationship to economic development

Rhode Island's rich cultural and historic resources contribute significantly to its economy in a wide variety of ways. Places with a rich sense of history and culture directly draw tourists and contribute to the local economy. Adaptive reuse of older buildings for new purposes, such as mill buildings for residential lofts and artist live-work space is another example of the ways in which preserving historic resources can ignite economic development.

Standards and Guidance for Historic and Cultural Resources

Standard 4.1 Identify historic and cultural resource areas and sites (such as, but not limited to, historical buildings, landmarks, and scenic views).

- a. Include one or more maps showing:**
 - i. Properties or districts listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places; and**
 - ii. Locally designated historic districts established through the zoning ordinance.**
- b. Include clear identification of the name of each mapped resource area or site.**
- c. (*Recommendation*) Include other resources that the community has identified as significant such as known properties that meet the eligibility criteria for listing on the State Register of Historic Places but have not yet been listed and cultural assets, such as theaters, museums, and galleries.**

Municipalities may map the historic and cultural resource areas and sites to best suit their needs, but the map must clearly identify the resources. One method many municipalities have found useful is to number each feature on the map, and include a separate list keyed to each number.

The following sources should be considered as resources for information:

- The RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, including State Survey Overviews for each city and town in Rhode Island available at <http://www.preservation.ri.gov/survey/publications.php>.
- Discussions with local historic preservation groups or stakeholders.

Standard 4.2 (*Recommendation*) Include a description of the significant historical and cultural resource areas and sites that exist within the community.

While not required, it could be useful to include descriptions of the community's significant historic and cultural resources both individual properties and historic districts or areas. The descriptions should highlight the significance of the resource to the community, including any special or unique characteristics. It is important to remember that officially designated resources and resource areas may not encompass all of the community's significant historic and cultural

assets. When determining what is significant to the community, it may be helpful to review the following list:

- Residential dwellings, neighborhoods, etc. that include examples of locally significant or distinctive building traditions and styles;
- Commercial districts, marketplaces, and individual buildings;
- Mills, factories, industrial complexes, etc., as well as locally significant industries and traditional occupations and skills;
- Institutional districts and individual buildings (e.g., schools, churches, etc.), especially those that may be architecturally significant;
- Roadways, bridges, pedestrian footpaths and trails, railroad tracks, canals, waterways and landing areas, and airports and airfields;
- Landscapes, farm complexes, barns, etc.; and
- Community landmarks (natural or human-made), battlegrounds, gardens, parks, scenic views, cemeteries, burial grounds, etc.

Standard 4.3 (*Recommendation*) Assess issues related to historical and cultural resources such as discussing any current or potential future threats to the community's significant historical and cultural resources.

The following guiding questions may assist in this assessment:

- Are any historic or cultural resources threatened due to encroachment of human activities, unintended land use conflicts or physical disturbance, or rapid physical deterioration?
- What is the likelihood that the identified historical/cultural properties are currently, or will be in the future, affected by inappropriate land uses or other human activities?
- Are there any policies or activities currently in effect that adversely impact the community's historic or cultural resources?
- Are any inconsistencies, competing priorities, or conflicts evident between the protection of historic and cultural resources and the other elements of the comprehensive plan?
- Are there opportunities for coordination with other elements of the comprehensive plan?

Standard 4.4 (*Recommendation*) Identify any existing local programs related to the preservation of historical and cultural resources such as a local historic district ordinance.

Consider the following guiding questions:

- Does the community have any historic districts? If so, how well are the districts preserving the community's historic and cultural resources?
- Is the community currently carrying out any measures to manage or protect the resources that it has identified as significant?

Standard 4.5 Include goals that embody the state's goals for historical and cultural resources and policies to support each goal.

To determine the goals and policies that will best protect significant historical and cultural resources, municipalities should consider the following guiding questions:

- What are the community's priorities for the preservation of its significant resources?
- What is the current level of protection for resources that the community has deemed significant?
- Are there any significant buildings, sites, view corridors, archaeological sites, etc. that may experience a threat over the next twenty years?

SAMPLE GOALS

- Our community will protect and promote all of its significant historic and cultural resources.
- The historic buildings, districts, scenic views and corridors, and other areas that contribute positively to our community's character will be preserved for future generations.
- Our community will be characterized by historic neighborhoods that meet the needs for families of varied income levels.

SAMPLE POLICIES

- Discourage the demolition of historic buildings and structures and encourage their adaptive use and renovation.
- Enhance access to resources for arts and cultural organizations.
- Promote and encourage understanding of the community's unique history through its cultural and historic sites.
- Build and foster neighborhood vitality through increased access and diversified cultural participation.
- Protect and preserve historic and cultural resources through using of design standards, zoning controls, easements, and other tools.
- Encourage the use of state and federal historic tax credits for adaptive reuse of historic structures by private developers.
- Maintain a database of parcels within local historic districts and Special Flood Hazard Areas on projected sea level rise and coordinate with property owners on strategies to protect historic assets in town.
- Coordinate with the RIHPHC to identify options and resources to assist owners of historic buildings to flood-proof or elevate their property while preserving the historic integrity of the property and district.

Standard 4.6 Include implementation actions within the Implementation Program that address the protection of historical and cultural resources.

When determining the best implementation actions for preserving historic and cultural resources, communities should consider the following guiding questions:

- Have historic and cultural resources been identified and documented adequately for use by decision-makers and the public?

- What can be done to strengthen the role that historic and cultural resources play in our community?
- What tools and techniques for preserving our community's cultural heritage are available and how can the community use and promote the use of the appropriate tools and techniques?
- What measures are currently being used to manage or protect resources? How can these measures be better supported?
- How do the municipality's regulatory policies benefit or hinder adaptive reuse of historic structures?
- What mechanisms could be introduced for the protection of scenic views and vistas, archaeological sites, cultural resources, etc.?
- Do existing municipal regulations, such as zoning and land development regulations, need improvement so that our resources will be better protected?
- Are the proposed actions sufficiently specific and detailed to be meaningful?
- Are there sufficient actions to make progress toward achieving the goal(s)?

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Appoint a committee to study the possibility of designating additional historic districts that will be protected by zoning regulations.
- Establish historic districts for [identify areas].
- Evaluate local historic districts for possible expansion, consider the designation of additional districts and consider different levels of historic district controls for individual districts.
- Create, fund, and staff a Historic District Commission to advocate and oversee resource protection as an integral part of the planning process.
- Create incentives for property owners to renovate and preserve their historic properties.
- Develop a program to encourage local merchants to preserve and protect historic features of Main Streets buildings.
- Adopt a demolition delay ordinance.
- Obtain a Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission designation as a Certified Local Government (CLG) and apply for CLG grant funding.
- Establish local incentives and guidelines for historic property owners who voluntarily propose to elevate an historic structure above base flood elevation or otherwise flood-proof their property.