



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

Old State House 150 Benefit Street Providence, RI 02903

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September 25, 2025

Via email: ntoth@bristolri.gov

Nicholas Toth, MPA
Planner/HDC Coordinator
Town of Bristol - Department of Community Development
235 High Street
Bristol, RI

Re: RIHPHC Opinion
125 Hope Street
Bristol, RI

Dear Mr. Toth:

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) is providing an update to our review of the proposed project at 125 Hope Street in Bristol. You initially inquired about this project via email on March 12, 2025, to which our office replied on April 2, 2025. Since that time, the RIHPHC has received additional information and is updating your office of our findings.

As you are aware, the building at 125 Hope Street, known as the Herreshoff House and Model Room, is a contributing resource in the National Register-listed Bristol Waterfront Historic District. The owner proposes to demolish the house and construct two new single-family residences on the property.

Since April, RIHPHC staff have visited the property, met with the project team, and received the CRMC Preliminary Determination Request. In our prior letter, we stated that “without a scope of work and associated cost estimate for meeting the flood resistant construction provisions of the building code, we cannot conclude that demolition is the only prudent and feasible solution.” In response, we have received the “Addendum to Flood Plain Survey” and “Architectural Evaluation” which includes a more detailed scope of work; costs of floodplain insurance and reconstruction were discussed during the site visit and meeting. Additionally, more selective demolition has occurred which has revealed structural issues and wood rot at selected locations. Hazardous material assessments have shown that the roofing and siding are both asbestos shingle which are in poor condition, and asbestos was found within the windows.

The “Architectural Evaluation” analyses the existing building and what would be required for it to meet building code. The building is located within the floodplain, and if it were to be made habitable it would undergo a “substantial improvement,” which would then require it to meet the National Flood Insurance Program criteria. While there are variances for historic properties

which our previous letter mentions, the owner does not want to seek a variance given the location, type of floodplain/risk of flood, existing structural deficiencies, and the cost of flood insurance which would make homeownership infeasible. The required upgrades to meet code would include elevating the structure approximately two feet, removal of sheathing and insertion of steel members to augment the existing framing, and replacing windows with hurricane-rated units. Given the condition of the siding and roof, these features would require full replacement, and it is difficult to find a suitable replacement for historic asbestos shingle (see National Park Service *Preservation Brief 16*). The result would be a completely new exterior envelope, improved structure, and elevated building. This would essentially be a reconstruction of the building on a higher basement. The reconstruction would still result in an adverse effect to the historic district. Given these factors, it is the RIHPHC's opinion that there are no prudent and feasible alternatives to the demolition.

These comments are provided in accordance with the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Act and Rhode Island General Laws. If you have any questions, please contact RIHPHC Restoration Project Manager Roberta Randall at Roberta.randall@preservation.ri.gov or me at jeffrey.emidy@preservation.ri.gov.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Emidy
Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer