

HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Bristol's historic and cultural resources are central to the Town's identity, shaping the character of its neighborhoods, waterfront, civic institutions, and landscapes. From nationally recognized architecture and archaeological sites to long-standing cultural traditions, these resources help define Bristol's sense of place and contribute to its quality of life and economic vitality. Their continued protection requires thoughtful planning, consistent stewardship, and coordinated investments that support preservation, guide decision making, and ensure that these defining assets remain integral to the community's future.

2016 Comprehensive Plan Implementation Progress

Since adoption of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Bristol has made significant progress in advancing the preservation and protection of its historic and cultural resources. Key accomplishments include:

- **Historic District Re-Survey:** Completed an updated survey and re-evaluation of the Bristol Waterfront National Register Historic District, clarifying boundaries, expanding the period of significance, and identifying previously omitted historic properties.
- **Historic Resource Vulnerability Assessment:** Completed a study identifying the most flood-vulnerable buildings within the Bristol Waterfront Historic District, informing local mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- **FEMA / SHPO Building-Level Resilience Study:** Partnered with the State Historic Preservation Office and FEMA on a study of nine commercial and public buildings in the downtown historic district. The draft report includes building-specific recommendations for flood and hazard mitigation.
- **Historic District Training:** Continued annual Historic District Commission (HDC) and staff training through the RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) Conference and the state-required land use training program.
- **Waterfront and Shoreline Access:** ~~Advanced-Secured~~ public access along the harbor and boardwalk improvements along the waterfront through near-completion of the Bristol Boardwalk, with only the segment adjacent to the Elks property remaining.
- **Town Common Zoning Amendments:** Updated zoning to reaffirm restrictions on residential uses and to support adaptive reuse of former school buildings for community and cultural purposes, consistent with the historic Town Common deed.

- **Adaptive Reuse and Downtown Revitalization:** Supported major rehabilitation projects such as Robin Rug/Bristol Lofts and Unity Park, achieving long-standing goals for adaptive reuse and enhancement of the downtown historic and industrial fabric.
- **Mount Hope Area Preservation:** Advanced preservation of the Mount Hope area in partnership with the ~~Pokanoket Tribe, Mt. Hope Farm, U.S. Forest Service and RIDEM—and other stakeholders,~~ strengthening cultural and historical stewardship of this significant landscape. Approximately 120 acres of open space have been protected **for all** as part of the Mount Hope Community Forest.
- **Designation of the Route 114 Revolutionary Scenic Byway.** Secured state and federal designation of Route 114 as the Revolutionary Heritage Scenic Byway (2021), highlighting the corridor's national historic and cultural significance, and awarded federal funding for upgrades.

Goal HCR-1

Protect, preserve, and celebrate Bristol's historic and cultural resources as defining elements of the Town's identity, character, and future.

Policies

1. Maintain and expand documentation of historic and cultural resources through updated inventories and National Register listings.
2. Integrate historic resource protection into development review, zoning, and long-range planning processes.
3. Promote adaptive reuse of historic and underutilized buildings in ways that retain architectural integrity and contribute to neighborhood vitality.
4. Coordinate preservation efforts among Town boards, commissions, state agencies, and regional partners to ensure consistent policy and decision-making.
5. Safeguard archaeological and culturally sensitive sites consistent with state law and professional standards.
6. **Promote expansion local, state, and federal tax incentives available for historic property rehabilitation and encourage their use among eligible Bristol property owners.**

Goal HCR-2

Foster public awareness, community participation, and cultural vitality that strengthen Bristol's shared heritage and sense of place.

Policies

1. Support investment and programming that sustain Bristol’s cultural institutions, traditions, and community events.
2. Expand interpretation of Bristol’s history through signage, walking trails, and heritage programs on land and water.
3. Collaborate with local and regional organizations to promote heritage tourism consistent with preservation goals.
4. Encourage education, outreach, and volunteer initiatives that engage residents in the stewardship of historic and cultural resources.
5. Ensure the Historic District Commission (HDC) maintains clear and well-defined design standards and an efficient review process that balance preservation objectives with the practical needs of property owners.

Goal HCR-3

Protect Bristol’s historic waterfront resources from sea-level rise, flooding, and coastal hazards while preserving architectural integrity.

(Cross-reference with Resiliency & Climate Element)

Policies

1. Promote resilience measures that preserve the architectural integrity and character of Bristol’s historic waterfront resources.
2. Encourage the use of financial incentives, grant programs, and local support tools to advance preservation-compatible resilience improvements.
3. Foster collaboration among Town departments, state preservation agencies, and community organizations to coordinate district-wide resilience strategies.
4. Increase awareness and public understanding of risks and adaptation options for historic and archaeological resources.

Goal HCR-4

Protect and strengthen Bristol’s historic districts through updated documentation, expanded local protections, and comprehensive preservation planning.

Policies

1. Maintain an up-to-date inventory of historic and cultural resources to inform preservation priorities and regulatory decisions.
- ~~2.~~ Recognize and protect historically significant properties and districts that contribute to Bristol’s architectural and cultural heritage.
2. Ensure that preservation planning reflects the breadth and diversity of Bristol’s historical development, including its maritime, industrial, immigrant, and neighborhood histories.

Goal HCR-5

Preserve and enhance Bristol's scenic and cultural landscapes, including its scenic corridors, to maintain community character and support heritage tourism.

Policies

1. Preserve the scenic and historic character of designated roadways through coordinated planning, design standards, and review.
2. Collaborate with state and regional partners to steward and enhance scenic corridors, including implementation of the Scenic Roadways Stewardship Guidebook and the Revolutionary Heritage Byway Corridor Plan.
3. Promote awareness and appreciation of Bristol's scenic and historic routes through interpretation, marketing, and tourism initiatives.
4. Protect and maintain street trees as defining features of Bristol's historic and scenic corridors, ensuring their preservation as vital components of community character.
5. Promote the reduction of visual clutter within the Local Historic District by encouraging high-quality, coordinated signage, minimizing unnecessary signage, and maintaining streetscape features that reinforce the district's historic character.

Historic and Cultural Resources: National Register Sites and Districts

Bristol's cultural and architectural heritage is nationally recognized through multiple listings on the National Register of Historic Places, the federal government's official list of sites and districts significant in American history, architecture, and culture. These designations affirm the importance of Bristol's resources, make properties eligible for certain state and federal tax credits and grants, and strengthen preservation planning.

The National Register districts and properties identified and mapped in this Plan (see Map HC1) illustrate Bristol's growth from a colonial seaport to a 19th- and 20th-century civic, cultural, and resort community. Although listing on the National Register does not prevent private owners from altering or demolishing a property, it provides a foundation for local stewardship, planning decisions, and funding opportunities. By including these resources within the Comprehensive Plan, the Town affirms that preservation is a priority in guiding land use and development decisions.

National Register Historic Districts

- **Bristol Waterfront Historic District** (*listed March 18, 1975*) – Encompasses Bristol's downtown waterfront core, including Hope Street, Thames Street, and the harbor edge. The district contains a dense concentration of Federal, Greek Revival, and Victorian architecture that reflects Bristol's early settlement, maritime trade, and 18th–19th century prosperity. Today, the district remains the heart of civic, commercial, and cultural life in Bristol.
- **Poppasquash Farms Historic District** (*listed June 27, 1980*) – A large cultural landscape on Poppasquash Neck that includes early farmsteads, Gilded Age estates, stone walls, and shoreline views. The district illustrates Bristol's transformation from agricultural land to a summer retreat for prominent families and retains a distinctive rural and scenic character.

Individually Listed National Register Properties

- **Bristol County Court House, High Street** (*listed April 28, 1970*) – A monumental Greek Revival courthouse built in 1816, symbolizing Bristol's historic role as the county seat.
- **Bristol County Jail, 48 Court Street** (*listed April 24, 1973*) – Constructed in 1828, this austere stone jail is a rare surviving early correctional facility in Rhode Island.
- **Bristol Customs House and Post Office, Hope Street** (*listed May 31, 1972*) – A granite federal building erected in 1858, reflecting Bristol's 19th-century maritime commerce and government presence.
- **Joseph Reynolds House (National Historic Landmark), 956 Hope Street** (*listed May 31, 1972; NHL 1983*) – Built in ~~1700~~ 1698 and significant for its Colonial architecture and role in Revolutionary War history. The house served as

Marquis de Lafayette's headquarters in 1778 while he defended Bristol from the British and he also-visited the Joseph Reynolds House on August 20, 1824, as part of his victory tour of the United States.

- **Longfield / Charles Dana Gibson House, 1200 Hope Street** (*listed July 17, 1972*) – A Gothic Revival estate built in 1848, later the home of illustrator Charles Dana Gibson.
- **Mount Hope Farm / Governor William Bradford House, Metacom Avenue** (*listed May 2, 1977*) – A Colonial-era farmstead and residence with deep roots in Bristol's 17th-century history, later expanded with farm buildings and open landscapes. George Washington visited the property in September of 1790 when he met with then Senator William Bradford.
- **Mount Hope Bridge, Route 114** (*listed January 3, 1976*) – A 1929 suspension bridge linking Bristol to Portsmouth, notable as an example of early 20th-century bridge engineering.
- **Blithewold, Ferry Road** (*listed June 27, 1980*) – A turn-of-the-century estate with a grand mansion and nationally significant gardens, emblematic of Bristol's role as a summer colony for wealthy families.
- **Bristol Ferry Lighthouse, Ferry Road** (*listed February 25, 1988*) – An 1855 stone lighthouse built to aid navigation in Mount Hope Bay, part of Bristol's maritime heritage.
- **Benjamin Church Home / Benjamin Church Home for Aged Men, 1014 Hope Street** (*listed September 22, 1983*) – An Italianate institutional building constructed in the 1870s as one of the earliest elder care homes in the nation.
- **Juniper Hill Cemetery, 24 Sherry Avenue** (*listed June 3, 1998*) – A landscaped 19th-century "rural cemetery" featuring winding drives, funerary art, and mature trees, part of the garden cemetery movement.

Bristol Waterfront Historic District Re-Survey

In 2023–2024, the Town of Bristol completed a comprehensive Re-Survey of the Bristol Waterfront Historic District (BWHD), which was originally listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. The re-survey was conducted by Kathryn J. Cavanaugh, Historic Preservation Consultant and Brent Runyan, Runyan Heritage Associates and funded through a Certified Local Government (CLG) preservation grant. This was the first full re-evaluation of the district since 1978, and it provides the most current and detailed assessment of Bristol's historic resources.

The study documented a total of 1,132 resources within the district, including buildings, sites, structures, and objects. Of these, 813 were identified as contributing resources that retain historic integrity, while 278 were classified as non-contributing, and 41 were identified as needing further evaluation. The re-survey also assessed integrity issues, boundary inconsistencies, and gaps in the district's original 1975 nomination.

The re-survey revealed several important findings relevant to historic preservation and future planning in Bristol:

- **Previously Omitted Properties:** The survey identified 56 historically and architecturally significant properties that were not included in the 1978 inventory list but are located within the district. These include residences along Bay View Avenue, the St. Michael's Church Bell Tower, the outbuildings of Linden Place, and St. Elizabeth's Church. Although not currently listed, these resources meet the criteria for National Register eligibility and warrant consideration for stronger protection.
- **Boundary Discrepancies:** The survey confirmed that the 1975 nomination contained mapping and documentation inconsistencies that left several historic areas outside the district boundary. For example, historically significant properties on Washington Street, Bay View Avenue, Bay Street, and Walley Street were excluded despite their contribution to Bristol's historic character.
- **Expanded Period of Significance:** The re-survey established that the district's period of significance extends from 1680 through 1974, reflecting not only Bristol's colonial and early maritime heritage but also the town's industrial growth and mid-20th-century community development.
- **Emerging Themes:** The study identified opportunities to broaden the scope of Bristol's documented history to include additional narratives of industrial development, immigration, and the New Goree neighborhood. Incorporating these themes into future preservation planning will support a more comprehensive understanding of Bristol's heritage.
- **Potential New or Expanded Districts:** The study also identified areas that could warrant expansion of the existing district or establishment of new historic districts. These include a potential Northern Hope Street Historic District extending beyond the current National Register boundary, and a potential Wood Street / "New Goree" Neighborhood District.

This recent historic resource re-survey recommends that the Town of Bristol update and expand its historic district documentation and protections to reflect new findings. Suggested actions include updating the National Register nomination, aligning local and national district boundaries, evaluating potential new districts, and advancing more diverse preservation efforts.

Bristol Historic District Commission

The Bristol Historic District Commission (BHDC), established in 1987, safeguards the Town's historic development patterns, architectural character, and cultural landscapes. Its jurisdiction includes 619 properties, most within the Bristol Historic District, with 35 individually designated for review due to their exceptional historical or architectural significance.

Map HD1 illustrates the National Register historic sites and districts together with the local historic district and locally designated individual historic sites. The table below lists the BHDC's individually designated properties, including their map ID, plat and lot number, and address.

Table HC1 - Individually Designated Properties - BHDC		
Map ID	Plat Lot	Address
<u>1</u>	<u>23-139</u>	<u>132 Bayview Ave.</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>19-12</u>	<u>88 Church St.</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>180-21</u>	<u>Colt Lane - Coggeshall Farm</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>29-55</u>	<u>150 Franklin St.</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>29-53</u>	<u>160 Franklin St.</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>166-3</u>	<u>55 Ferry Rd.</u>
<u>7</u>	<u>165-7</u>	<u>Ferry Rd. - Blithewold</u>
<u>8</u>	<u>166-6</u>	<u>Ferry Rd. - Blithewold</u>
<u>9</u>	<u>165-8</u>	<u>77 Ferry Rd. - Blithewold</u>
<u>10</u>	<u>165-6</u>	<u>131 Ferry Rd.</u>
<u>11</u>	<u>165-2</u>	<u>151 Ferry Rd.</u>
<u>12</u>	<u>163-3</u>	<u>70 Griswold Ave.</u>
<u>13</u>	<u>7-11</u>	<u>900 Hope St.</u>
<u>14</u>	<u>3-97</u>	<u>956 Hope St.</u>
<u>15</u>	<u>2-5</u>	<u>996 Hope St.</u>
<u>16</u>	<u>83-35</u>	<u>1013 Hope St.</u>
<u>17</u>	<u>2-1</u>	<u>1014 Hope St.</u>
<u>18</u>	<u>118-80</u>	<u>1030 Hope St.</u>
<u>19</u>	<u>103-2</u>	<u>1200 Hope St.</u>
<u>20</u>	<u>103-15</u>	<u>1222 Hope St.</u>
<u>21</u>	<u>61-34</u>	<u>1237 Hope St.</u>
<u>22</u>	<u>55-4</u>	<u>1303 Hope St.</u>
<u>23</u>	<u>54-5</u>	<u>1343 Hope St.</u>
<u>24</u>	<u>89-59</u>	<u>1382 Hope St.</u>
<u>25</u>	<u>160-17</u>	<u>244 Metacom Ave.</u>
<u>26</u>	<u>136-4</u>	<u>250 Metacom Ave.</u>
<u>27</u>	<u>137-7</u>	<u>300 Metacom Ave.</u>
<u>28</u>	<u>138-1</u>	<u>616 Metacom Ave.</u>
<u>29</u>	<u>167-36</u>	<u>7 Old Ferry Rd.</u>
<u>30</u>	<u>130-2</u>	<u>60 Poppasquash Rd.</u>
<u>31</u>	<u>130-3</u>	<u>66 Poppasquash Rd.</u>
<u>32</u>	<u>183-37</u>	<u>106 Poppasquash Rd.</u>
<u>33</u>	<u>19-20</u>	<u>275 Wood St.</u>
<u>34</u>	<u>29-1</u>	<u>500 Wood St.</u>
<u>35</u>	<u>20-19</u>	<u>27 Cottage St.</u>

The BHDC serves as a design review body for exterior changes to properties within the District. Any alteration, repair, demolition, or new construction requires a Certificate of Appropriateness to ensure compatibility with the property's historic character and the district as a whole. The Commission currently relies on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards but is in the process of developing locally written and tailored Design Guidelines. and The BHDC provides technical assistance to property owners, reinforcing its role as both a regulatory and educational body.

Key features of the process include:

- ~~Mandatory review for exterior changes visible from a public way (interior work is not subject to review).~~
- ~~Landscaping and paint color are not subject to review, except for major site features such as walls or fences.~~
- ~~Administrative review available for minor projects.~~
- ~~Public hearings held monthly, where applications are reviewed and approved, denied, or continued.~~
- ~~Concept review option for early consultation with the Commission.~~

The District reflects Bristol's architectural and cultural heritage through its buildings, structures, sites, and settings. Preservation oversight by the BHDC ensures this legacy is protected while allowing for sensitive adaptation and reuse. By combining regulation with education and technical guidance, the Commission helps property owners understand best practices and supports preservation as a community partnership.

HDC Priorities & Process Improvements

The Historic District Commission highlighted several priorities during review of the draft Historic & Cultural Resources Element, with a strong emphasis on improving the clarity, accessibility, and efficiency of the HDC review process. Members noted persistent challenges with applicants submitting incomplete or low-quality applications and recommended a suite of process improvements, including development of a short instructional video for applicants, expanded guidance materials (such as style books and sample application packets), and the establishment of monthly open office hours to support homeowners early in the design process. The HDC also recommended that forthcoming Design Standards include clear visuals such as photographs and renderings to illustrate expectations for alterations and new construction. Beyond process-focused improvements, the Commission emphasized voluntary participation opportunities, including creating a pathway for individual property owners to opt into historic district protections and promoting recognition programs rather than regulatory expansion outside the current Local Historic District. Additional priorities included organizing tours of lesser-known historic sites (e.g., Wayposset) to broaden public understanding of Bristol's cultural heritage; supporting state and local tax incentives for historic property rehabilitation; establishing a multi-stakeholder committee including historic to guide the reuse of decommissioned school buildings; and advancing efforts to minimize visual clutter such as signage (working with RIDOT) within the historic district.

Climate Vulnerability of Historic Resources

Bristol's historic waterfront and cultural resources face mounting risk from sea-level rise and coastal flooding. The Town is committed to incorporating preservation considerations into its broader hazard mitigation, emergency preparedness, and capital planning efforts.

In September 2022, with Certified Local Government (CLG) funding from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission (RIHPHC), the Town of Bristol partnered with Preservation Strategies (Shantia Anderheggen) and the Bristol Historical & Preservation Society (Catherine Zipf) to assess the vulnerability of historic resources within the Bristol Waterfront Historic District (BWHD)—a National Register district listed in 1975—to two feet of sea-level rise and related coastal hazards. The study was designed to inform both this Comprehensive Plan and the Town’s Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Key Findings

- **At-risk inventory:** More than 33 historically and architecturally significant properties within the BWHD are highly vulnerable under a 2-foot sea-level rise scenario within the 100-year flood zone.
- **Building types:** Residential structures—both single-family and multi-family—represent the largest share of at-risk resources, along with several key commercial and mixed-use properties.
- **Value at risk:** The assessed value of the 33 highest-significance properties is approximately \$40 million, underscoring both the cultural and economic stakes of coastal resilience.
- **Escalating impacts:** Tidal flooding and storm-related inundation are increasing in frequency, threatening building integrity, public safety, and the district’s historic character.

Recommendations from the 2022 study have been integrated into this Plan’s implementation actions, emphasizing a preservation-based resilience approach that protects both the physical integrity and cultural value of historic properties. The Town will continue to maintain an updated record of at-risk resources, develop preservation-sensitive design guidance for resilience improvements, and provide outreach and technical assistance to help property owners and boards make informed, character-conscious adaptation decisions.

Archaeological Resources

Bristol’s archaeological record demonstrates thousands of years of Native American presence. The most significant public example is the Waypoysset Preserve at the Narrows and Mount Hope. This site, recognized as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, underscores the long-term settlement and cultural importance of the Mount Hope area and its associations with Wampanoag history and the leadership of Metacom (King Philip).

In addition to prehistoric evidence, Bristol’s historic waterfront has revealed important industrial-era remains. Excavations during redevelopment at the Belvedere and Thames Street area uncovered the remnants of an early nineteenth-century rum distillery. Archaeologists have noted this as one of the most significant rum-distillery finds in the Northeast, also considered eligible for the National Register. These findings

highlight Bristol's maritime economy and its connections to international trade during the height of the town's port activity.

While precise archaeological site locations remain protected, the Comprehensive Plan identifies two broad zones of high archaeological sensitivity: the Mount Hope and Narrows area, due to extensive Indigenous use and cultural associations, and the downtown waterfront, where industrial and maritime archaeology can be expected. Bristol also forms part of the Sowams Heritage Area, a regional cultural landscape that encompasses the ancestral homelands of the Pokanoket people and other Indigenous communities. Sowams contains numerous archaeological and cultural sites tied to Indigenous history, early colonial settlement, and events such as King Philip's War.

Cultural Assets and Community Life

Bristol is home to a wide range of cultural institutions that are central to the town's identity as both a historic destination and a vibrant community. Churches, ethnic and social clubs, and major landmarks such as the historic State House, Blithewold, the Bristol Historical and Preservation Society, Coggeshall Farm, the Herreshoff Marine Museum, Linden Place Museum, the Bristol Art Museum, Mount Hope Farm, and the Audubon Society's Environmental Education Center contribute to Bristol's distinctive character. These institutions enrich community life, attract visitors, and generate economic activity, and town policies should continue to support their success and growth.

The community also benefits from an active cultural calendar. The Bristol Fourth of July Parade, organized by the Fourth of July Committee, anchors a series of events that celebrate civic pride. School-based programs such as Mosaico's Sense of Pride engage young people in local history and traditions. Volunteer organizations further contribute to this vitality: Bristol Blooms enhances Hope Street with seasonal plantings, while the Bristol Garden Club's Daffodil Program brings color and community spirit each spring through the planting of thousands of bulbs across town. Explore Bristol complements these efforts with coordinated marketing to promote tourism and cultural events.

The cultural assets described here are not a complete list, but they demonstrate the breadth of institutions, organizations, and events that contribute to Bristol's unique identity and its reputation as a cultural and historic destination.

Key Cultural Institutions and Organizations in Bristol

Museums & Historic Sites

- **Historic State House** – A landmark of Rhode Island's early civic life and an enduring symbol of Bristol's role in state history.

- **Blithewold Mansion, Gardens & Arboretum** – A nationally recognized estate and public garden showcasing Gilded Age architecture and horticultural design.
- **Bristol Historical & Preservation Society (BH&PS)** – Maintains archives, collections, and programming that document and celebrate Bristol’s history.
- **Coggeshall Farm Museum** – A living history site interpreting 18th-century agrarian life in Rhode Island.
- **Herreshoff Marine Museum** – Preserves Bristol’s maritime heritage, particularly its legacy of yacht design and America’s Cup racing.
- **Linden Place Museum** – A Federal-style mansion and cultural venue offering tours, exhibits, and events.
- **Bristol Art Museum** – A contemporary art museum hosting exhibitions, educational programs, and community arts initiatives.
- **Mount Hope Farm** – A historic farmstead and community gathering place that hosts markets, events, and public programming.
- **Audubon Society Environmental Education Center** – Provides exhibits, trails, and programming focused on coastal ecology and environmental education.
- **Wayposet Preserve Trust** - land trust that manages a 28-acre open space preserve off Narrows Road to the Mount Hope Bay that is open to the public for passive recreation and has been recognized a historical heritage site.

Arts, Culture & Events

- **Bristol Theatre Company** – A community theatre group founded in 1983 that continues to produce performances, but is currently lacking a permanent venue.
- **Bristol Fourth of July Committee** – Organizes the nationally renowned Fourth of July Parade and a series of related community events.
- **Live Music & Festivals** – Bristol hosts a summer concert series and PorchFest on High Street each fall, both of which bring residents and visitors together to celebrate music and community.
- **Mosaico, Inc.** – Provides cultural and educational programming, including the Sense of Pride initiative in local schools.

Volunteer & Civic Organizations

- **Bristol Blooms** – A volunteer group that plants and maintains hanging flower baskets along Hope Street.
- **Bristol Garden Club** – Enhances the Town’s landscape and civic pride, most notably through its Daffodil Program which has planted thousands of bulbs across Bristol.
- **Explore Bristol** – Coordinates marketing and tourism initiatives to promote Bristol as a cultural and historic destination.

Scenic Corridors, Byways & Heritage Recognitions

Bristol's historic streetscapes and waterfront roadways are central to the Town's identity and its tourism economy. Several corridors are formally recognized for their scenic and cultural value at both the state and federal levels.

State Scenic Roadways. Hope Street and Ferry Road (State Route 114) and High Street (local road) are designated as State Scenic Roadways by the Rhode Island Scenic Roadways Board. This designation requires review of roadway alterations, tree trimming, and other changes to ensure that scenic qualities are preserved. The designation applies to the full length of Route 114 from the Warren town line to the Mount Hope Bridge (known locally as Hope Street and Ferry Road) and to High Street, providing an added layer of protection by requiring State review for certain projects.

Revolutionary Heritage Byway. The Revolutionary Heritage Byway, designated a National Scenic Byway in 2021, follows Route 114 through Bristol from the Warren town line south through the historic downtown, past waterfront parks, cultural landmarks, and civic institutions, to the Mount Hope Bridge. This corridor showcases nationally significant historic, cultural, and scenic resources. Recent federal funding has supported improvements that balance safety and infrastructure upgrades with preservation of its distinctive character.

A Corridor Management Plan, completed as part of the Revolutionary Heritage Byway nomination process (c. 2000/2021), outlines the corridor's interpretive themes and long-term preservation and tourism goals. Continued coordination with RIDOT and Statewide Planning will support implementation of its recommendations within Bristol.

The Town recognizes that scenic byways are more than transportation routes. They are living cultural landscapes that define Bristol's sense of place, enhance visitor experience, and contribute to the local economy. Protecting these corridors requires coordinated planning and initiatives across transportation, land use, and historic preservation.

In 2025, Bristol became home to a new international heritage designation with the installation of *Our Ancestors Come With Us*, a bronze sculpture in Independence Park. The park was recognized as a UNESCO "Site of Memory" within the Routes of Enslaved Peoples Project, acknowledging Bristol's role in the transatlantic slave trade and honoring the resilience of African-descended peoples. The designation broadens the community's understanding of its past and creates opportunities for interpretation, education, and tourism. Along with Bristol's inclusion in the Sowams Heritage Area, it

strengthens Bristol’s cultural identity and underscores its national and international significance.

Relevant State Guide Plan Elements ~~&~~, Reference Documents & Consistency

This element aligns with and supports several components of the Rhode Island State Guide Plan that ~~support~~ address historic preservation, scenic resource protection, cultural landscapes, and context-sensitive planning. ~~Key reference documents include:~~ The following State Guide Plan elements and reference documents provide the policy framework with which this Comprehensive Plan is consistent:

1. [Element 210 – Historic Preservation \(2020–2027\)](#)
Protecting Our Legacy of Buildings, Places, and Culture. Provides statewide preservation goals, policies, and strategies (survey updates, Certified Local Government program, climate risk, inclusion of underrepresented heritage, easements, demolition delay).
2. [Element 121 – Land Use 2025](#)
State’s overarching land use policy framework — directing growth while conserving resources and protecting community character, historic landscapes, and scenic roadways.
3. [Element 152 – Ocean State Outdoors: Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP, 2019\)](#)
Guides recreation and open space, and explicitly links cultural resources, scenic landscapes, and heritage tourism to quality of life.
4. [Element 611 – Moving Forward RI 2040 \(Long-Range Transportation Plan\)](#)
Rhode Island’s statewide transportation plan; includes policies on context-sensitive design, bike/pedestrian infrastructure, safety, and resilience — directly relevant for scenic corridors and byway management.

This Comprehensive Plan element is consistent with:

- Element 210 – Historic Preservation, by advancing local preservation goals, supporting survey updates, adaptive reuse, and protection of cultural resources.
- Element 121 – Land Use 2025, by directing growth and conservation in ways that preserve Bristol’s historic landscapes and scenic roadways.
- Element 152 – Ocean State Outdoors (SCORP), by recognizing the role of cultural landscapes, scenic corridors, and heritage tourism in recreation and community vitality.
- Element 611 – Moving Forward RI 2040, by promoting context-sensitive design and multimodal improvements along scenic byways.

Scenic Roadways & Byways References

In addition to the State Guide Plan, the Town also coordinates with RIDOT's Scenic Roadways Program and applies the Rhode Island Scenic Roadways Stewardship Guidebook to manage designated corridors.

- [RIDOT Scenic Roadways Program](#) – Designates Hope Street (Route 114) and High Street in Bristol as official scenic roadways, requiring review of changes.
- [Rhode Island Scenic Roadways Stewardship Guidebook](#) – Guidance on managing scenic corridors (viewsheds, landscaping, signage, lighting).
- ~~Revolutionary Heritage Byway~~ – ~~A state scenic roadway (2000) and National Scenic Byway (2021) that runs through Bristol; recently awarded federal funding for upgrades.~~

~~Consistency with the State Guide Plan and State Standards~~

~~This Comprehensive Plan element is consistent with:~~

- ~~Element 210 – Historic Preservation, by advancing local preservation goals, supporting survey updates, adaptive reuse, and protection of cultural resources.~~
- ~~Element 121 – Land Use 2025, by directing growth and conservation in ways that preserve Bristol's historic landscapes and scenic roadways.~~
- ~~Element 152 – Ocean State Outdoors (SCORP), by recognizing the role of cultural landscapes, scenic corridors, and heritage tourism in recreation and community vitality.~~
- ~~Element 611 – Moving Forward RI 2040, by promoting context-sensitive design and multimodal improvements along scenic byways.~~

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