

ELEMENT 140: STATE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION PLAN

01 INTRODUCTION

Rhode Island's historical preservation plan explains how the state organizes information about historic properties; it sets goals and policies for preservation; and it identifies strategies for carrying out the goals and policies.

The plan was prepared by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHP&HC) for several purposes. It satisfies requirements of the National Park Service, which funds programs of the RIHP&HC. It serves as an operational document to guide the Commission's activities. Finally, it is the historical preservation element of the State Guide Plan, having been adopted by the State Planning Council on June 25, 1996.

02 GOAL

The RIHP&HC's fundamental goal is as follows:

RHODE ISLAND WILL IDENTIFY, LOCATE, AND EVALUATE ALL OF THE STATE'S HISTORIC PROPERTIES AND WILL ASSIST IN THE PRESERVATION OF PROPERTIES WHICH ARE SIGNIFICANT IN THE STATE'S HISTORY.

The RIHP&HC's fundamental goal is based on the principle stated in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards: "Properties should be preserved in place, if possible, through affirmative treatments like rehabilitation or passive treatments such as avoidance."

Annual priorities are based on statewide preservation needs, on the importance of the historical resources in individual localities and the threats to them, the concerns of the public, and the availability of funding.

The RIHP&HC has established priorities for each stage of the preservation process.

(1) Identification and location:

Survey work is conducted in accordance with National Park Service and RIHP&HC standards to a level sufficient to define contexts and to evaluate properties which are eligible for listing on the National Register.

The survey of above-ground properties is complete in that every structure visible from a public right-of way in the state has been evaluated on a preliminary basis for its ability to meet the registration criteria. Some classes of above-ground properties may require additional survey to establish significance.

Archaeological sites from the historic period are identified and located to a lesser extent and are an important priority. Indian land use contexts which are under-surveyed include the pre-5000 B.P. context, the near interior context, and the upland interior context.

(2) Evaluation:

Priorities for evaluation and registration are provided in each historic context. Individual properties and districts (and sometimes classes of properties) are recommended for further study and registration. For archaeological sites from the historic period, priority is given to appropriate evaluation rather than registration.

(3) Treatment:

Rhode Island's treatment priority is to preserve all significant historic properties in place and to encourage their restoration or appropriate rehabilitation if needed. The full range of treatment options is brought to bear as a situation warrants.

The key to Rhode Island's approach is the ability to determine at an early stage which properties are worthy of preservation. Because the state survey is well advanced, it is possible to identify those above-ground properties which have historical interest (about 50,000). Of these, about 20,000 are listed on or known to be eligible for the National Register. Thus, the RIHP&HC is able to concentrate treatment decision on known resources; and other agents, both public and private, are able to identify properties which require special consideration because they are historic.

More specific priorities for protecting properties are provided within each historic context. And each Rhode Island community defines treatment strategies for its historic resources within its comprehensive plan. Like the RIHP&HC, communities are able to concentrate their treatment strategies on properties of known significance which are already located, evaluated, described, and (often) registered. Easements, tax incentives, zoning, and education are important strategies for many communities.

For archaeological sites Rhode Island's preferred treatment is avoidance; data recovery is sometimes used as a last resort when avoidance is not possible. In general, however, the cost of data recovery and the irreversible damage to historical resources that recovery necessarily entails suggest that avoidance should be preferred. Further, in some property types such as burial places ethical and legal considerations require avoidance.

03 POLICIES

****Identification and Location***

1. Continue surveys to provide appropriate context for classes of historic properties whose significance is likely to transcend town/city boundaries.
2. Emphasize survey of archaeological sites which date from the period of contact.
3. Emphasize survey of archaeological sites from the pre-5000 B.P. context, the near interior context, and the upland interior context.

****Evaluation and Registration***

4. Continue to register eligible properties giving highest priority to those whose registration will assist in the development of appropriate planning tools (such as historic district zoning); those identified by certified local governments as priorities; those identified in local community plans as high priority candidates; those identified by federal and state agencies and other publics; and those for which a particular threat may be addressed by National Register listing.
5. Register historic archaeological sites when appropriate but give priority to evaluation rather than registration.

****Treatment***

6. Encourage and assist appropriate restoration and rehabilitation if needed for above-ground historic properties.
7. Encourage and assist avoidance as the preferred treatment for underground historic properties.

****City/Town Government***

8. Insure that historical preservation is integrated into local planning processes, through the mechanisms of comprehensive plans and (where appropriate) zoning ordinances.
9. Insure that each community's plans respond to the character and number of historic resources in the community and to the threats to historic resources.
10. Insure that elected and local officials (including historic district commissioners) and municipal planners have sufficient technical assistance in historical preservation issues to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

****State and Federal Agencies***

11. Review actions of federal and state agencies to insure that potential adverse effects of their actions on historic resources are minimized.

****Private Property Owners***

12. Assist private property owners in the appropriate maintenance and rehabilitation of their historic resources by developing materials which acquaint them with existing financial and protective mechanisms; by developing programs of technical assistance; and by developing materials which increase recognition of historic resources.

****Historic Land Areas***

13. Insure that Rhode Islanders have sufficient information available about their designed and agricultural landscapes to make effective decisions about their protection and to develop and promote appropriate strategies for the protection of historic land areas.

***Tourism**

14. Assist state and local officials in the promotion of historic sites as tourist destinations.
15. Assist stewards of historic sites to develop strategies which will increase the viability of their sites as destinations.

***Housing**

16. Assist state and local housing agencies (including community development corporations) in the use of historical preservation tax credits.

***Accessibility**

17. Assist owners of historic buildings in meeting their obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act to insure that historic properties enrich the lives of all Rhode Islanders, including those with auditory, mobility, and visual disabilities, and to insure that the historic character of buildings is retained as they are made accessible to all.

***Dangerous Building Materials**

18. Assist Rhode Island's property owners, state agencies, and communities with technical information about lead paint, asbestos, radon, and toxic wastes to assure that appropriate treatments for these dangerous substances do not unnecessarily threaten the integrity of historic resources and to assure the safety of those who use and live in the state's historic buildings.

***Natural Disasters**

19. Assist state and federal disaster management agencies in planning for response to a natural disaster which has a major impact on historic resources.

***Historical Preservation Education**

20. Provide public education materials and programming which meets the needs of Rhode Islanders for information about their resources and protection mechanisms.

04 STRATEGIES

SURVEY OF ABOVE-GROUND RESOURCES

1. Complete landscape and sculpture surveys. Publish both.
2. In evaluating applications for CLG or other funding, give high priority to projects which propose to study and evaluate resources related to the history of African-American Rhode Islanders. Especially important in this regard are the towns of South County and northern Rhode Island.

3. In evaluating applications for CLG or other funding, give high priority to projects which will study, evaluate, and nominate to the National Register eligible properties related to the development of suburban architecture.
4. Survey and evaluate military fortifications. Develop a context for evaluation and registration requirements for elements of the system of fortifications located throughout Narragansett Bay.
5. Consider a survey of the state's historic watercraft, perhaps in partnership with the Museum of Yachting (Newport) or the Herreshoff Museum (Bristol).
6. Re-survey as necessary areas of the state which lack comprehensive surveys sufficient to complete the National Register database.
7. When feasible, assist communities in conducting additional surveys needed to achieve a goal identified in the community's comprehensive plan.

STATE PROPERTIES

1. Continue to monitor changes to the status of state-owned properties to insure that de-accessioned properties are protected to the fullest extent possible by identification of uses and alterations which meet the Secretary of Interior's (SOI's) Standards and by the attachment of preservation easements when sale is contemplated. Continue to respond to requests for comment received through the Intergovernmental Review Process, which circulates notices of proposed actions by the State Properties Committee (Department of Administration).
2. Insure that state agencies which own or acquire properties are fully aware of the historic and architectural significance of their properties and insure that such agencies have access to adequate technical assistance to meet the SOI's Standards.
3. Work with the Department of Environmental Management toward improved maintenance and interpretation of all historic properties in state parks, especially Fort Adams. The RIHP&HC should consider with RIDEM how best to manage Fort Adams (see also recommendations for SURVEY, including military fortifications, many of which are publicly owned and managed by the RIDEM).
4. Identify specific actions which will improve the access of Rhode Islanders to the Newport Colony House.
5. To the extent possible, monitor physical changes and changes in use for state-owned historic properties to assist state agencies in meeting their obligations toward such properties.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

1. Implement the Multiple Property Submission for single-family houses in at least one community to test its utility for lowering the cost of and improving access to the process of nominating properties to the National Register.

2. Develop and distribute a publication which explains the National Register process and identifies all of the properties currently listed.
3. Nominate eligible landscapes and sculptures to the National Register, using completed surveys and context statements, when available.
4. In allocating resources among National Register activities, give high priority to resources which represent the granite industry of Westerly and small rural mill villages, especially in South County towns.
5. In allocating resources among National Register activities, give high priority to resources which are threatened (and for which National Register listing is likely to make a substantial difference), to resources which are identified by communities in their comprehensive plans as candidates for the National Register, and to resources which are the object of local efforts for preservation and restoration.
6. Investigate the feasibility of publishing some National Register nominations.
7. Process in a timely manner all nominations presented for consideration; as resources permit, prepare nominations.

ARCHAEOLOGY

1. Write and publish a book on Rhode Island's Indian sites.
2. Work toward the development of a context for the evaluation of non-Indian archaeological sites. Consider the effectiveness of limiting the context statement to a brief essay which identifies classes of properties which deserve special care in the project review process and/or adopting property types used in above-ground survey for archaeological resources.
3. Work toward the development of a context for understanding archaeological resources which are underwater.
4. Continue to enter site data in the archaeology database until backlog is completed. Develop a mechanism to insure that sites located in the future are entered in the database.
5. Work toward the development of a community archaeology program which will involve a broader audience in the theory and practice of archaeology in Rhode Island. The community archaeology program may include, among other components, school-based programming and a field school.
6. When the RIHP&HC can initiate or assist others in initiating an archaeological survey without the constraints imposed by project review, special care should be exercised to insure that survey design and project location reflect RIHP&HC priorities.

7. Continue RIHP&HC's role in technical assistance to communities as comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances are prepared and as subdivision (and other) regulations are prepared to insure that, where possible, protection of archaeological sites is incorporated into these legal tools.
8. Continue to hold the RIHP&HC's Conference on the Archaeology of the Narragansett Basin. Expand the audience to include members of the general public. Consider publishing the proceedings.

PROJECT REVIEW

1. Continue to respond to all requests for project review while working toward institutionalized relationships between the RIHP&HC and project-sponsoring agencies.
2. Evaluate on an annual basis needs for survey and for educational materials identified by the project review process for possible inclusion in annual work program.
3. Include in all educational materials provided to local historic district commissions materials which explain the coordination of review by RIHP&HC and HDCs. Determine if additional materials are needed, especially those which address recurrent design, planning, and mitigation issues.
4. Consider modifying the nature and level of staff allocated to project review to address the large volume of paper and data entry work which project review generates. This would insure more efficient maintenance of the computer log and project files; improve coordination among different areas of project review (e.g., architectural review, archaeological review, historical review); and enable the project review staff more time for other duties.

CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

1. Using CLG grants and other resources, work toward insuring that every local historic district commission has:
 - a survey of its district(s) which is sufficiently detailed and up-to-date allow HDC members to make informed decisions. Such a survey may be available in several formats: as a set of data sheets, as a descriptive inventory, as a set of photographs, as an electronic database, or a combination of these. Each community's survey should be available in the formats which the local HDC identifies as most useful to its members and constituents. At a minimum, the RIHP&HC should assist historic district commissions in creating a list of properties (identified by plat and lot number) subject to historic district zoning.
 - appropriate public education materials to explain the function and processes of each HDC to its constituents. Such materials may take several forms (which are best determined by each HDC), but at a minimum each CLG should have an inexpensively produced free brochure explaining its procedures to applicants.
 - access to appropriate technical written materials to assist in making informed decisions, to help applicants make appropriate decisions about their properties, and to

assist local officials in making decisions about planning issues which may have an impact on historic properties. Where appropriate, an HDC may adopt particular written standards and guidelines whose publication and distribution may be assisted with CLG grants. In other cases, the RIHP&HC should encourage HDCs to use "The Easy Guide to Rehab Standards" (published by RIHP&HC in 1992) as a guide for its own decision-making and for the plans of applicants.

-access to appropriate training to carry out its functions in a responsible and effective manner.

-access to appropriate technical advice as needed (architects, planners, communication specialists, etc.).

2. Continue to sponsor the CORE workshops on a regular basis to provide training for local historic district commissioners and community planning staffs.
3. Investigate alternative and supplementary legal tools such as conservation districts to determine their suitability for Rhode Island communities. Develop a mechanism to share this information with CLGs and others.
4. Consider altering the RIHP&HC's CLG regulations to allow for certification of all local governments which have developed local preservation programs.
5. Monitor the staffing needs of HDCs and, when unmet staffing needs are identified, explore means for the RIHP&HC to assist, either on a project basis or with long-term assistance.

PLANNING

1. Continue to advise elected local officials concerning their comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances to insure that as these documents are written and revised they account for the special needs of historic resources.
2. Work more closely with communities which contain archaeologically sensitive areas to help insure that the special requirements of archaeological sites are met by development of review processes for new construction.
3. Publish and distribute the RIHP&HC's model historic district zoning ordinance, model rules of procedure for historic district commissions, and fact sheets on historic district zoning.
4. Continue to consult regularly with the Division of Planning concerning preservation planning progress in the state.
5. Consider convening annually a meeting of preservation leaders from across the state to report on RIHP&HC activities and to discuss RIHP&HC's annual work program.
6. Prepare a plan for the preservation of historic land areas.
7. Prepare a plan for RIHP&HC's response to a major natural disaster.

FINANACIAL ASSISTANCE/ARCHITECTURAL ASSISTANCE TO PROPERTY OWNERS

1. Evaluate how best to use the limited funds available in the Historic Preservation Loan Fund to achieve maximum effect, especially the provision of small elements of larger financing packages.
2. Examine the application process and the standards applied in the state tax credit program to determine if this program could be more widely used. Alter the administrative processes or increase the availability of public information about this program if needed.
3. Consider more intensive public education on financial assistance programs, perhaps targeted geographically or in partnership with others.
4. Develop educational materials related to specific preservation issues.
5. When planning grant funds are available, give highest priority to those properties which have extraordinary historic significance or whose preservation has broad public benefit.
6. Review in a timely fashion all applications for federal and state tax credits, loan applications, and grant applications.
7. Monitor existing easements and seek donations of new easements.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

1. Continue to publish the RIHP&HC newsletter; consider defining more explicitly its audience and purpose.
2. Consider regular news releases to newspapers and newsletters on a variety of topics, both hard news and softer issues.
3. Consider developing educational programs which will allow the RIHP&HC to become a programming sources for local organizations, including a speakers bureau and a videotape library.
4. Provide assistance to local communities in planning and publicizing preservation activities, especially Preservation Week.
5. As each year's annual work program is prepared, consider each task for its public education potential as well as its ability to satisfy other requirements. This will be an especially useful strategy for CLG grants.
6. Provide workshops for specific audiences, such as CORE, heritage education resources, hands-on classes for property owners, downtown revitalization.
7. Continue to provide publications designed for specific audiences to address their identified needs for information on specialized topics.

8. Continue to sponsor the annual statewide preservation conference.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

1. Work toward completion of data entry for the main data file; create complete inventories for all historic districts included on the National Register.
2. Study and evaluate the inclusion of photographs in the main data file.
3. Develop a mechanism for consistent up-dating of the location of historic resources on the RIGIS system.
4. Develop a mechanism for consistent up-dating of the directory.
5. Consider adding to the main data file information about local historic district zoning.
6. Consider whether and how to cross-reference all of the RIHP&HC databases.