



preserve

RHODE ISLAND

THE STATEWIDE ADVOCATE FOR HISTORIC PLACES

Around the Block E-News

Help Save RI's Historic Tax Credit Program



With the help of RI's Historic Tax Credits, Shri Studios (Pawtucket) converted an abandoned factory building into yoga and art studios, a food bank, cafe and 8 mixed-income apartments, serving adults with intellectual disabilities and the surrounding community

Rhode Island's Historic Tax Credit program, likely the best economic and community development tool Rhode Island has ever created, is currently broken. We are calling on state leaders to fix the program that has created housing, revitalized neighborhoods, and protected local environments. Help Preserve RI and Grow Smart RI save this vital program by signing the petition to tell legislators to fix RI's Historic Tax Credit.

So what's wrong with Rhode Island's Historic Tax Credit program?

A lack of predictability and funding. Converting large mills and other historic structures into housing takes years of planning and construction. Projects need to be confident the program will be around, and funded, when it's their turn. Currently, Rhode Island's Historic Tax Credit program will sunset in two years. Similar programs in surrounding states

don't have sunsets. Worse, there is no additional funding earmarked for Rhode Island's program.

Impractical rules and restrictions. Rhode Island's Historic Tax Credits incentivize investment to convert historic structures often in blighted areas rather than building new construction in greenfield sites. The credits were designed to cover the additional costs involved in historic rehabilitation (asbestos and lead paint removal, environmental cleanup, structural repairs, etc.), putting these projects on a level playing field with new construction. Instead, over time Rhode Island has added fees and restrictions that outweigh the tax benefits of the program. These include:

- An exorbitant filing fee of 3% of qualified rehab expenditures--the highest in the nation
- A lack of transparency of where projects stand on the waitlist for funding, making it difficult to plan and meet deadlines
- Unrealistic and inflexible timelines to meet milestones for eligibility
- Disadvantages housing creation by offering only a 20% credit for housing projects while commercial projects receive a 25% credit
- Requires large projects to comply with new wage requirements, which can add 25-40% to the cost of the project, negating the value of the tax credit

The ways to fix Rhode Island's Historic Tax Credits are obvious, what is required is political will. We welcome the opportunity to help navigate a solution that works for all Rhode Islanders. Please take a moment to sign the petition and let state leaders know that it's time to fix this vital program!

[Sign the Petition](#)

Support Preserve RI's Leadership Fund



After 17 years as Executive Director of Preserve RI, Valerie Talmage announced her plans to retire. We created the Leadership Fund to honor Val's years of service.

Our new Leadership Fund provides Preserve RI with the agility to respond to urgent matters and unique opportunities, and the resiliency to manage through a crisis or address unexpected costs. Small organizations like Preserve RI need to navigate leadership transitions carefully – the Leadership Fund will help ensure the organization's future success.

By supporting the Leadership Fund, you will give Preserve RI the flexibility to:

- Respond to unforeseen building repairs and improvements
- Manage risk from unexpected shortfalls in revenue or increases in expenses
- React quickly when communities need help
- Build organizational capacity through staff development
- Invest in infrastructure that will build long-term capacity

"The Leadership Fund will give Preserve RI the confidence to make bold decisions when the moment requires it. I can't think of a more fitting gift to both the new Executive Director or myself than giving Preserve RI the agility and resiliency to carry on for generations to come." - Valerie Talmage, Outgoing Executive Director of Preserve RI

Support the Leadership Fund

Balancing History and Sustainability: How Historic New England Leads Climate Action at Casey Farm



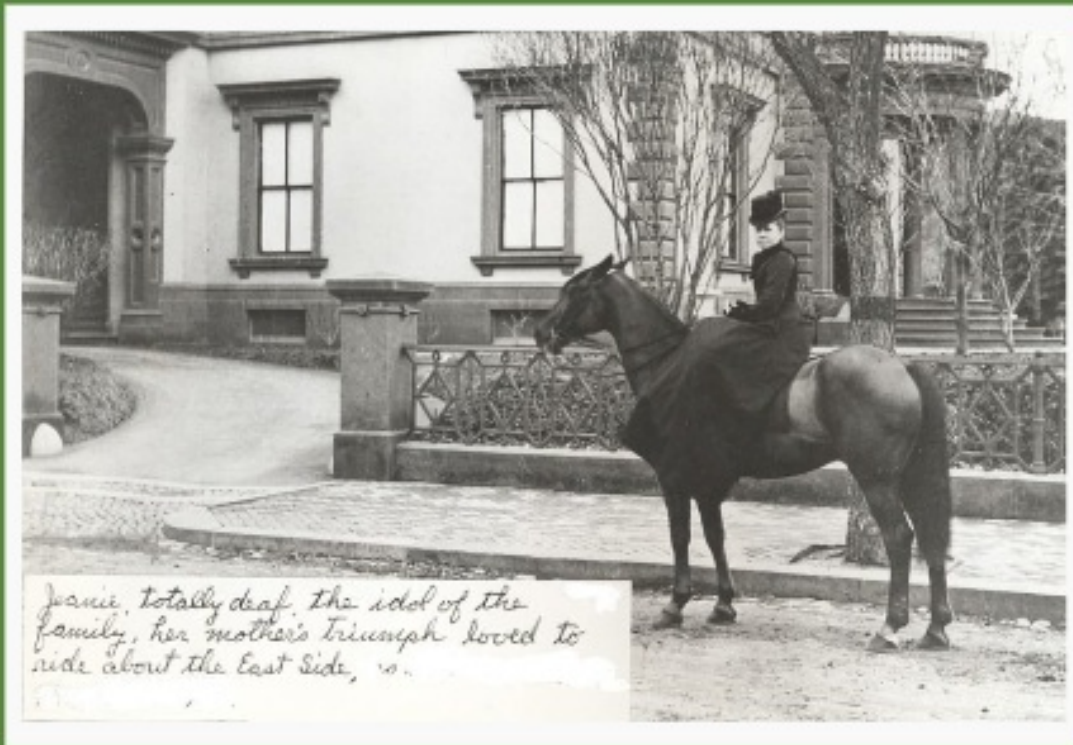
Balancing the preservation of cultural heritage with modern climate action at Historic New England is a complex but essential task. This challenge is being addressed head-on at Casey Farm, a historic site in Saunderstown, Rhode Island. In its 1750 farmhouse and 18th- and 19th-century farm buildings, the farm hosts a variety of educational programs and attracts thousands of visitors annually. It is an ideal location for testing climate-action strategies. Katy Pomplun, Institutional Giving Officer for Preservation, explains, “With such a large number of visitors and diverse programming, we saw an opportunity to engage a wide range of stakeholders, and the feedback here will help shape future efforts across our collection.”

The site’s combination of historic significance and modern-day programming presented a unique challenge, but it also offered an ideal testing ground for climate-action strategies that can be applied to Historic New England’s entire portfolio of historic sites. The farm’s 300 acres provide ample space for large-scale sustainability projects from renewable energy generation to stormwater management, all while preserving the historic character of the site.

The approach Historic New England is taking is called “site-specific climate action planning.” Joie Grandbois, Sustainability Coordinator at Historic New England, elaborates, “We begin each site’s planning with three key analyses: an energy use assessment, a climate risk assessment, and a programming evaluation. These assessments inform tailored goals for each site, helping us identify unique challenges and opportunities for climate action.”

[Continue Reading](#)

Lippitt House and the History of Equal Rights for Deaf Education



Photograph of Jeanie Lippitt from a family album is captioned: "Jeanie, totally deaf, the idol of the family, her mother's triumph, loved to ride about the East Side."

Jeanie Lippitt (1852 – 1940) became deaf at four years old from scarlet fever that also took the lives of three of her siblings. Starting in their home, her mother Mary Ann, developed an education system that made it possible for Jeannie to participate in mainstream society. Jeannie's success at social integration inspired Mary Ann to become a passionate advocate for the oralist method of deaf education.

In Lippitt House Museum's latest blog series, four Brown University students of American Sign Language explore Mary Ann's advocacy, the history of oralism, and the state of education for the Deaf today. Their posts on the Silver and Spindles Blog touch on Alexander Graham Bell's relationship with the Lippitt family and the transformation of the Rhode Island School for the Deaf from oralism to bilingual education.

[Read More](#)

People in Preservation: Kimberly Smith Barnett

Senior Manager, Ryan LLC

Kim Smith Barnett is a partner at Ryan LLC, a company working on historic tax credit projects located in New England and New York. She has more than 20 years of experience as

a historic preservation professional, specializing in historic tax credit consulting, historic real estate development finance, and non-profit finance. Kim has spent much of her professional career working in Providence's low-mod income historic districts. She began in 2001, working with the West Broadway Neighborhood Association (WBNA) and spent 16 years at the Providence Revolving Fund.



You've spent much of your career working in Providence's low- and moderate-income historic districts. People often think of historic preservation as elitist. Tell us how preservation benefits the residents of these neighborhoods?

That's a common perception I've heard throughout the years, but it has not been my experience. My time at Providence Revolving Fund (PRF) opened my eyes (2002-2018). At the time, PRF was focused on providing resources for homeowners in low-mid income census tracts that were also historic districts. PRF prepared construction specifications for homeowners, bid out the jobs, assisted the homeowner with choosing a contractor, and lent them the funds to complete the renovation at interest rates and payments that they could afford. After the project was done, we serviced the loans in house. These folks let us become part of their community. When a vacant property was bringing down the neighborhood, PRF would use resources to tackle the property ourselves. PRF bought the worst of the worst, fixed them up, and then sold to low-mod income homebuyers or designated affordable rental units in the property. Over time, the combined efforts of the homeowners investing in their beautiful historic properties and PRF (and others) tackling the tough properties brought the whole neighborhood up. Nearly every house we developed had affordable deed restrictions on it. One of our early developments on Whitmarsh Street had been owned by the same family for over 20 years. When they were ready to downsize, they came back to us and asked us to buy it from them. They wanted another family to have the same opportunity they did.

What tools have been successful in accelerating preservation and restoration efforts in these communities?

In Providence, we had a special partnership. Three things were going on at once. The homeowners took a chance and made investments to their properties using the tools that were available to them. At the same time, there were numerous non-profit and for-profit developers (PRF, WBNA, Armory Revival Company, to name a few) working to tackle the bigger preservation problems, using talented contractors who mostly lived in the same neighborhoods. Thirdly, the City worked closely with all of us to share the resources they had. Utilizing the state and federal historic tax credit

programs where appropriate was also part of the equation. Different communities have varying needs. It takes a multi-faceted approach by each stakeholder in the community to be successful at preserving their neighborhoods.

[Read the Full Interview](#)

2024 Rhody Audience Award Goes to Belmont Chapel in Newport

Last month we celebrated the Rhody Awards at Rosecliff in Newport, honoring the best in historic preservation across Rhode Island. Each of this year's winners illustrates the positive impact historic preservation has on our communities.



After the event, we asked the public to weigh in on their favorite preservation story. It's a special pleasure to announce that the 2024 **Audience Award** goes to our friends at The Belmont Chapel Foundation. Thanks to their splendid restoration, a near derelict structure now stands as an iconic landmark within Island Cemetery in Newport.

We send a tremendous round of congratulations to the team at The Belmont Chapel Foundation and all the 2024 Rhody Awardees. **Click the button below to see photos from this year's ceremony and watch videos of this year's awardees.**

[See the Photos and Watch the Videos](#)

Local News

Bristol

November 15: [Brown transfers land in Bristol to preservation trust established by Pokanoket tribe](#)

Burrillville

November 20: [Burrillville Land Trust workshop December 9 will show homeowners how to utilize state funds for preservation](#)

East Providence

October 29: [President of US Lighthouse Society Visits Pomham Rocks Lighthouse](#)

Little Compton

October 21: [Spite tower in Little Compton: Speculation behind why it was built](#)

Newport

November 20: [Champlin grants to help fund major projects for Newport area non-profits](#)

Pawtucket

October 30: [Committee encouraged on Pawtucket City Hall fix](#)

November 13: [Alison Bologna Creates a Space for All with New Shri Location](#)

Providence

October 23: [Who decides what gets built in Providence? Here's what all the boards and commissions do.](#)

November 1: [RIPTA reopens East Side Tunnel](#)

November 7: [Historic Providence temple donated to Center for Southeast Asians](#)

November 10: [It's Time to Start Thinking About Repurposing Providence Place Mall](#)

November 20: [PHOTOS: Fire Engulfs Historic East Side Mansion](#)

Woonsocket

November 14: [Downtown Woonsocket business district added to National Register of Historic Places](#)

Statewide News

November 6: [Rhode Island voters approve all four bond questions totaling over \\$343 million](#)

National News

October 19: [These are America's most haunted historic hotels, according to new list](#)

November 6: [\\$10M historic preservation bond passes in Maine's Tuesday election](#)

November 16: [Sitting in a prime location, this Utah arts venue is now on the National Register of Historic Places](#)

International News

October 28: [Concern for Lebanon's heritage grows as Israel intensifies destruction of historic landmarks](#)

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