

THE HISTORIC HEARTBEAT OF OUR MAIN STREETS

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Pick a place. It can be your favorite downtown, or the one closest to where you live.



Write down...

All of the things you enjoy about that place. People, places, and things. Be specific and descriptive! (2 *minutes*)



WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY HISTORIC?



SOME ASSUMPTIONS

“Small business can’t afford to be in historic districts.”

“Historic preservation is preventing new affordable housing.”

“If we protect historic buildings, we can’t get the density we need to grow.”

“Historic downtowns are frozen in time.”

“Historic Designations Are Ruining Cities”
Forbes Magazine (2019)



(SOME OF THE) 24 REASONS HISTORIC RESOURCES ARE GOOD FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

OLDER, SMALLER, MIXED AGE BUILDINGS & BLOCKS ARE GOOD FOR...

JOBS

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

HERITAGE TOURISM

PROPERTY VALUES

FORECLOSURE PATTERNS

STRENGTH IN UP & DOWN MARKETS

SMALL BUSINESSES

START UPS & BUSINESS CREATION

CULTURAL & SOCIAL ACCESS

HOUSING & AFFORDABILITY

WALKABILITY & BIKEABILITY

DENSITY AT HUMAN SCALE

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

SMART GROWTH GOALS

NEIGHBORHOOD DIVERSITY

FIRST PLACE OF RETURN

TAX GENERATION

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILITY



WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

HERITAGE TOURISM

- Consistent findings indicate that **heritage visitors stay longer, visit more places, and spend more per day** than do tourists with no interest in historic resources.

NEIGHBORHOD HEALTH & VITALITY

- **50% of U.S. residents say that walkability is a top priority** or a high priority when considering where to live. What neighborhoods are walkable? Historic neighborhoods.
- Healthy neighborhoods reflect the economic, racial, and ethnic diversity of the entire city. Where are these **“mirror of the city”** areas? Almost always in historic areas.
- Social and cultural resources are densest in historic corridors – **public art, libraries, colleges and universities, social services, and museums.**

Since 1980, **Main Street districts** have seen cumulative investment of **\$79 billion, 285,000 buildings rehabilitated, more than 640,000 net new jobs, and nearly 144,000 net new business.**

SMALL BUSINESS

Small businesses employ **23 million more workers** than do firms of 500+ and have added **30% more jobs** since 2010 than big business.

Small businesses also offer the greatest entrepreneurial opportunity to **women and people of color.**

ECONOMIC INVESTMENTS

Homes in downtown historic districts... **do better when the market is good, fall later and less steeply when markets decline,** and begin their value recovery sooner than other neighborhoods.

The value of real estate is driven by its context, and the **protection of that context is the economic essence of historic areas.**



IN RHODE ISLAND

“ The development and use of historic structures are of critical importance to economic measures and... will improve property values, foster civic beauty, and promote public education, pleasure, and welfare.”

State of Rhode Island General Assembly

(H 5547, CHAPTER 44-33.2)



GROWTH & INVESTMENTS

19 of 39 cities and towns have local historic zoning (Certified Local Governments).

Local historic districts collectively cover just over 1% of the state land area. But **12% of Rhode Island's population** and **4% of that state's jobs** are located in local historic districts

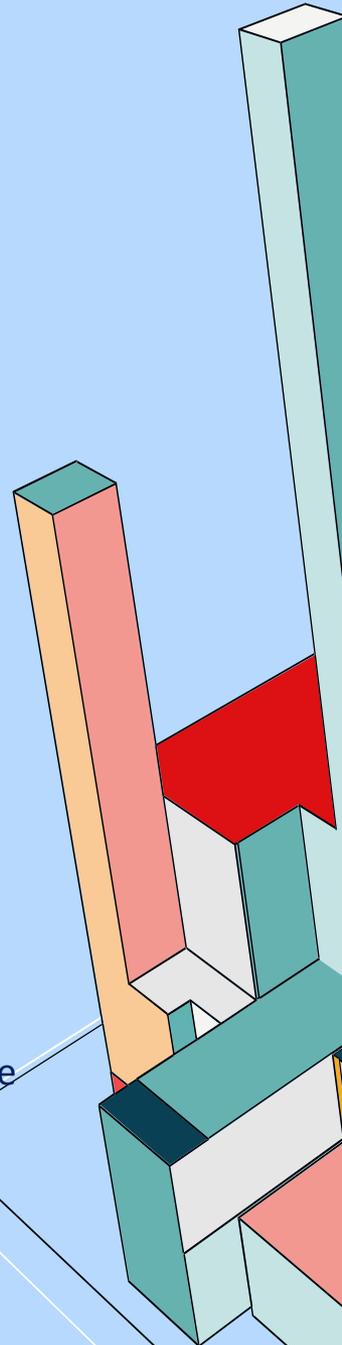
56% of the state's population growth since 2010 has taken place in local historic districts.

The **Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit** has been available in some form since 1978. It provides for a tax credit of **20% of a project's Qualified Rehabilitation Expenditures**. The credit is available if a project meets four tests:

- 1) The property must be an investment property or one held for use in trade or business;
- 2) The property must be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as a contributing building in a National Register Historic District;
- 3) The work done must be undertaken consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation;
- 4) The investment must be greater than \$5000.

Since the inception of the program, the private sector has invested **\$1.8 billion** in Rhode Island's historic buildings. Each year, these projects generate approximately **1,600 jobs**.

20% of new housing in RI is generated through the HTC program, including 20% of all affordable housing



IN RHODE ISLAND

HERITAGE TOURISM

Heritage tourism attracts around **9.8 million heritage visitors annually** who spend significantly, boosting the economy by nearly **\$1.4 billion**.

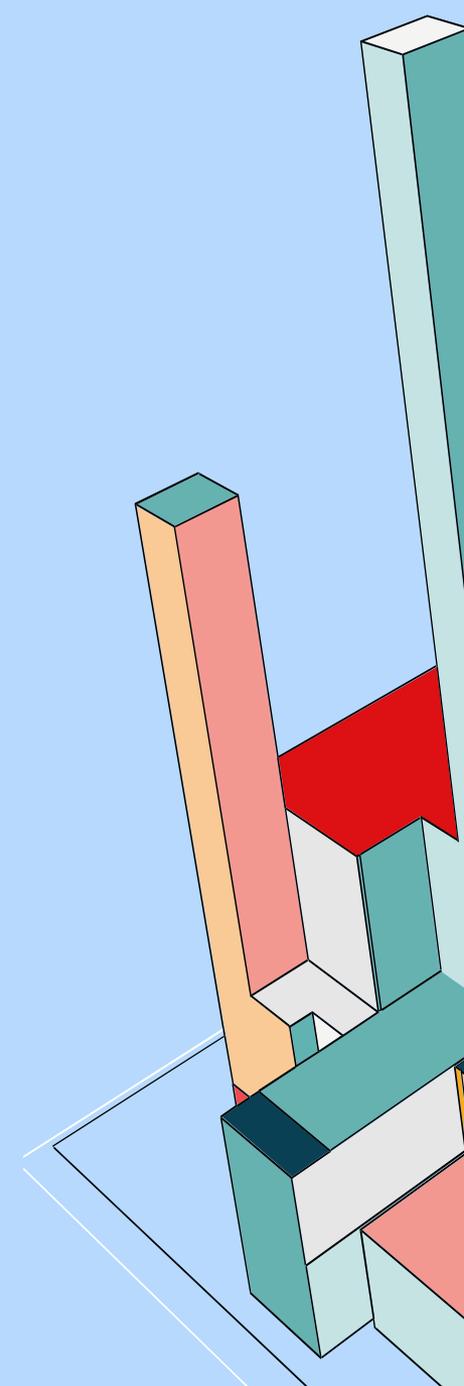
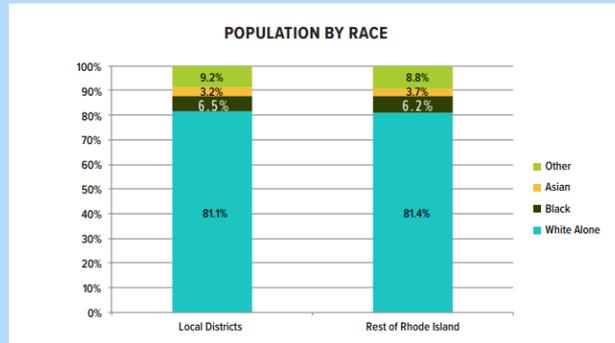
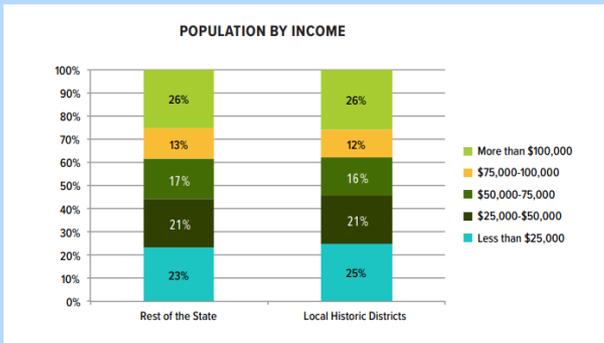
Heritage visitors represent 43.5% of all visitors to the state, they account for **54.3 %** of total spending by tourists. On average, they spend 33% more than non-heritage tourists.

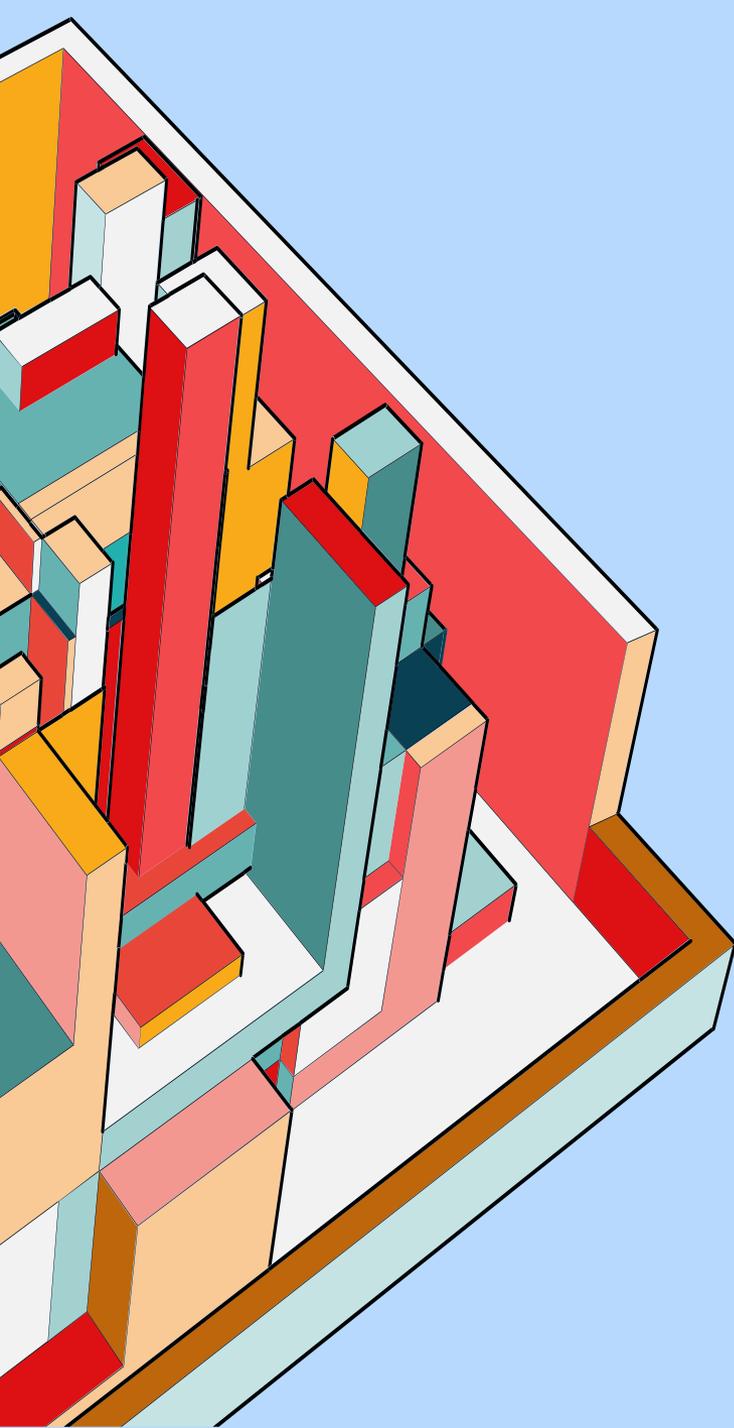
In Rhode Island, **16 of the 25** highest rated restaurants on Yelp are in historic districts (as of 2023).

Approximately **26,000 direct jobs** support this industry.

The Preservation Society of Newport County is the state’s largest membership organization.

NEIGHBORHOD HEALTH & VITALITY





Providence, RI

18.4 mi² | Pop: 179,207 | 135th Most Populous U.S. City | Est. 1832

In **Providence**, compared to areas with large, new structures, character-rich **blocks of older, smaller, mixed-age buildings** contain...



Twice the population density



65% more jobs in small businesses and 44% more jobs in new businesses

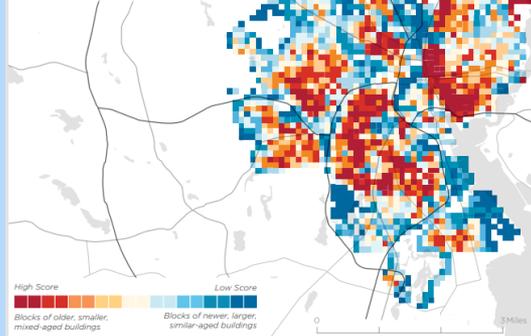


82% more women and minority-owned businesses

Built Character in Providence

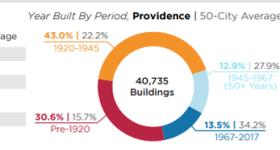
18.4 mi² | Pop: 179,207 | 135th Most Populous U.S. City | Est. 1832

The Atlas of ReUrbanism uses the Character Score to classify building stock by age and size. Higher scoring areas in **red** represent blocks of older, smaller, mixed-aged buildings. Lower scoring areas in **blue** represent newer, larger, similar-aged development.



Building and Preservation Facts

Parcels/Buildings	Providence	50-City Average
Total	40,735	204,038
Per Square Mile	2214	1,436
Median Year Built	1930	1952
On Nat'l Register of Historic Places	12.4%	6.8%
Locally Designated	5.2%	4.3%
Historic Tax Credit Projects	101	27.5



High v. Low Character Score

Use the table below to compare high- and low-character score areas in terms of their density and diversity, inclusiveness, and economic vitality.

	High Character Score Areas	Low Character Score Areas
Density & Diversity		
Avg. Population/Grid Square ¹	129.9	53.4
Median Age (Years) ²	31.7	36.6
Avg. Between Age 18-34 ³	35.4%	30.5%
Avg. Foreign Born ⁴	29.2%	26.2%
Avg. New to County ⁵	6.7%	6.3%
Avg. People of Color ⁶	60.6%	48.6%
Avg. Housing Units/Grid Square ⁷	52.2	21.9
Avg. Vacant Homes ⁸	13.5%	9.1%
Avg. Owned Homes ⁹	36.5%	47.4%
Inclusiveness		
Total Women and Minority-Owned Businesses ¹⁰	370	203
Avg. Affordable Rental Housing Units ¹¹	78.0%	79.8%
Economic Vitality		
Total Jobs in Small Businesses ¹²	9,143	5,529
Total Jobs in New Businesses ¹³	1,303	908
Total Jobs in Creative Industries ¹⁴	5,780	4,820

¹Data from the 2010 Census
²**Data from the 2010 State & Year Estimates of the American Community Survey
³***Data from Data & Statistics, 2016
⁴****Data from HUD, 2015, 2016



WHAT IS THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE?



RI250

**Community and Statewide Grant Program
Final Application Deadline: January 31, 2026**

Projects may include, but are not limited to:

Local events and heritage days

Historical reenactments

Education programs

Interpretive signage or exhibits

Community storytelling or performances

Public art projects

Other creative activities that commemorate the 250th anniversary and engage local communities

RESOURCES

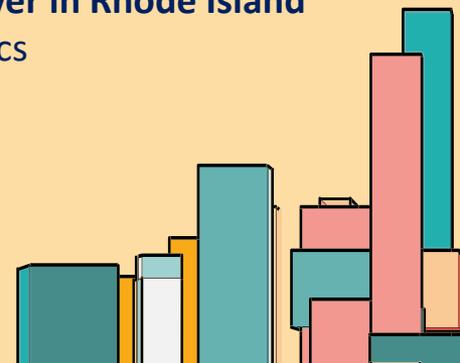
- ***Why Old Places Matter***, Tom Mayes
- ***The Past and Future City: How Historic Preservation is Reviving America's Communities***, Stephanie Meeks
- ***Historic Preservation and the Livable City***, Eric W. Allison and Lauren Peters
- ***The Future of the Past: A Conservation Ethic for Architecture, Urbanism, and Historic Preservation***, Steven W. Seme

Older, Smaller, Better Preservation
GreenLab

Atlas of ReUrbanism Preservation
GreenLab

24 Reasons Historic Preservation is Good for Your Community
PlaceEconomics

Economic Impact Report: Historic Preservation as Overlooked Economic Driver in Rhode Island
PlaceEconomics



THANK YOU

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