



GrowSmartRI
Sustainable Economic Growth
& Quality of Place

2026 Policy & Legislative Priorities



As the leading statewide advocate for sustainable, smart-growth development, Grow Smart RI represents a "big-tent" coalition of business and civic leaders, development professionals, and grassroots community change agents. Together we are committed to strengthening our Downtowns and Main Streets, expanding affordable housing, improving transit and access to daily physical activity, and protecting Rhode Island's beauty, magic and soul.

As a small team managing an ambitious reform agenda, our level of engagement varies by initiative. We lead where our expertise and track record are most robust. On other vital reforms, we play a supportive role, or at times more simply endorse the leadership of our valued community partners. Where our direct legislative involvement is limited, we often provide thought leadership and consciousness-raising. This collaborative approach ensures that we remain a versatile and effective force for smart growth across the state.

Initiatives we lead are green-bordered; a green icon  denotes those led by our partners that we actively support.

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

We believe in prioritizing growth and revitalization of our Main Street and Downtown commercial centers because they are the neighborhoods best equipped to accommodate commercial and residential growth and most likely to benefit from such growth.

Renewed and Expanded Support for the Main Street RI State Coordinating Program

[Urso [S-2676](#) / Handy [H-8316](#)]

Vibrant, attractive, and activated Main Streets and neighborhood commercial centers will draw more visitors, customers, businesses, and outside private investment to Rhode Island – while deepening the community connections and shared sense of place that make our neighborhoods truly thrive.

After legislation and initial state funding of \$125,000 for FY26, Main Street RI now serves as the official State Coordinating Program aligned with Main Street America, the national hub of expertise and manager of a network of thousands of place-based organizations and leaders around the country. Our FY27 request of \$150,000 will fund the second year of a three-year pilot program managed by Grow Smart RI, the goal of which is to build local capacity for place-based initiatives that increase economic activity in RI's commercial districts.

Historic Tax Credit Reform and Recapitalization

[Bissaillon [S-3151](#)/ Speakman [H-8408](#)]

Grow Smart RI is co-leading statewide advocacy efforts around these two objectives with Preserve RI, accompanied by a coalition of other community partners. These two identical bills advance four specific reforms in the Historic Tax Credit program designed to make it more supportive of housing production and competitive with the programs in nearby Northeastern states.

- Increase the tax credit from 20% to 30% for projects where at least 80% of rental area is for multi-family housing, and to 35% for any such projects for which at least 20% of the units are affordable rentals or 10% are sold as affordable housing.
- Lower the highest in the nation filing fee from 3% to 1% of qualified rehab expenditures and make it refundable upon project completion.
- Extend the Program's sunset five years to June 30, 2031.
- Increase waiting list transparency so the public can better understand proposed projects and developers can better plan financing.

There is no specific bill introduced to date for Historic Tax Credit Recapitalization, but we are seeking gubernatorial and legislative support for a \$25 million level of HTC recapitalization. This is essential considering there are 53 projects on the HTC waiting list as of April 27, 2026 collectively seeking \$88.5 million from the state with a projected total investment of more than \$434 million.

Green Economy Bond and Rep. Cortvriend's Amendment [H-8299](#)

We support the McKee Administration's proposed \$50 million package, especially its renewed investment in a brownfield clean-up fund and funding for coastal resiliency projects, recreational grants, and further infrastructure enhancement at our major ports.

We also support H-8299 to add \$10 million in Green Economy Bond funding for traditional land and water conservation programs that municipalities, land trusts, and state agencies rely on. These programs include funding to acquire and conserve open space, support outdoor recreation, preserve farmland, and fund an open space matching grant program.

TRANSPORTATION

We believe that a more robust, integrated, and user-friendly public transportation system and network of bike and pedestrian infrastructure are critical catalysts for a more economically vibrant, opportunity rich, healthy and marketable Rhode Island.

The following Initiatives enable RIPTA to Restore Service Cuts and Expand for the Long Term both our Public Transit System and Bike and Ped Infrastructure:

Transit Master Plan Bond Referenda [Vargas [S-2813](#) /Tanzi [H-8202](#)]

Puts forward a \$100M bond for capital improvements for implementation of the 2026 Transit Master Plan. Capital assets would include updated technology to grow ridership and improve fare collection, bus stop improvements and safety, and infrastructure for high-capacity transit lines.

RIDOT Efficiency Study [Zurier [S-2124](#)] / Stewart [H-7499](#)]

Requires an independent efficiency study of the Rhode Island Department of Transportation.

Bicycle Bond Referenda [Tanzi [H-8298](#)]

This \$25M bond would implement Rhode Island's Bicycle Mobility Plan – building a safer, connected statewide network that revitalizes downtowns, strengthens the economy, improves public health, and cuts congestion and emissions. It could also unlock up to \$125M in federal matching funds while creating good-paying jobs.

\$5 million Budget Allocation [McKenney [S-2825](#) /Alzate [H-8256](#)]

This budget allocation in FY27 budget would restore the 2025 transit service cuts.

Increase RIPTA's share of Highway Maintenance Account to 20% [Zurier [S-2095](#)/Cortvriend [H-8178](#)]

Increases RIPTA's share of Highway Maintenance Account funds from 10% to 20%. The estimated annual revenue to RIPTA is \$10 million.

Rideshare Sales Tax Reallocation [Britto [S-3084](#) /Stewart [H-8145](#)]

Allocates current 7% sales tax collected on all Uber/Lyft rides to RIPTA's Ride Anywhere operational budget. Estimated annual revenue to RIPTA: \$10-\$15M.

Commuter Transportation Benefits Act [Bissaillon [S-2323](#) /Hull [H-7363](#)]

Requires any company with 500 or more employees to provide transit passes to employees as a pre-tax transportation fringe benefit, which would generate more revenue for RIPTA via its Wave to Work program, and expand Rhode Islanders affordable transportation choices.

Car Inspection Fee Increase [Vargas [S-3013](#) /Furtado [H-8369](#)]

Raises the standard inspection fee on personal cars and motorcycles, with the increase going through the Highway Maintenance Account, primarily to support RIPTA. The last increase was in 2014.

Motor Fuel Tax – Index Allocation to RIPTA to Inflation and Two-year Inflation Rate

[Zurier [S-2668](#) /Stewart [H-8315](#)]

This bill adjusts RIPTA's 2025 29% gas tax share for inflation and fixes a calculation gap: currently the biennial review uses only the prior year's inflation rate, missing a full year of increases. The bill would apply the cumulative two-year rate instead, which would be more fair to RIPTA and increase its total revenue.

RIPTA Board Restructuring [Tanzi [H-8127](#)]

Reverses the 2023 law making the Director of RIDOT the Board Chair of RIPTA and updates, clarifies, and strengthens other board appointment guidelines.

HOUSING

We believe that the most effective, high impact way to address our state's housing supply and affordability crises is to focus on location efficient development and an integrated, comprehensive approach that includes not only extra funding but land use reform, incentives for transit oriented development, targeted infrastructure investment and enhancement of both the State Historic Tax Credit, and municipal staff capacity.



State Housing Plan implementation

The plan calls for adding 15,000 housing units to Rhode Island's housing stock by 2030 and sets production targets for individual communities based on their capacity to absorb housing growth in a location-efficient framework. Grow Smart RI is working on a set of technical assistance materials and workshops to implement this plan along with Housing Works RI and Weston and Sampson.



Housing Bond

Currently proposed by the Governor at \$120 million level. We support efforts by the Housing Network of RI and others to increase this bond to \$150 million.



"8" Law Reform [Bissaillon [S-3160](#) / Slater [H-8006](#)]

Reform of the "8" Law would encourage attainable housing production and reuse of vacant commercial properties by capping local property tax rates on new residential developments that include a set percentage of affordable units – whether built new or converted from existing structures.



Minimum lot size reform [Mack [S-2265](#) / Cruz [H-8387](#)]

Create more affordable homeownership opportunities by allowing homes to be built on modestly sized lots (5000 sq ft) where public water and sewer are available. Also reduces minimum lot size requirements for small apartment buildings.



Parking reform [Kallman [S-2628](#) / Gilrado [H-8005](#)]

Caps parking minimum requirements for new homes and offers more flexibility for affordable housing, small businesses, daycares, and assisted living facilities to manage their own parking spaces.



Technical fixes [Gu [S-2907](#) / Speakman [H-8039](#)]

Clarifies ADU, subdivision, and single-family townhome laws and closes a loophole based on stakeholder feedback about what is and is not working to get homes built.

