



GrowSmartRI
Sustainable Economic Growth
& Quality of Place

Governor-elect Lincoln D. Chafee's responses to key policy recommendations of Grow Smart Rhode Island

Below are ten (10) key recommendations from Grow Smart Rhode Island's *2010 Briefing Book for Candidates*, followed by a response from then-candidate Lincoln D. Chafee. The entire Briefing Book can be accessed at www.growsmartri.org.

1. Investing responsibly in our state's transportation infrastructure – including a 21st century mass transit system – is increasingly seen by civic and business leaders as essential to Rhode Island's economic recovery and future prosperity. The Governor's *Blue Ribbon Panel on Transportation Funding* published a report in 2008 proposing eight recommendations for raising the resources necessary to bring roads and bridges into a state of good repair and to strengthen the state's public transit system. However, none of the recommendations has yet been implemented. **Grow Smart recommends that the Governor and the General Assembly identify adequate, long range and sustainable funding sources for roads, bridges and public transportation and establish a dedicated Transportation Trust Fund.**

My record as Warwick mayor and member of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works demonstrates my long-term commitment to transportation and infrastructure.

2. Rhode Island's urban and town centers are vitally important to our state's future well-being because they have concentrations of commerce and population as well as buildings, roads, utilities and transportation infrastructure already in place. By putting an end to the many wasteful public subsidies for scattered development on greenfields and instead focusing on incentives for future commercial and residential growth and re-growth in centers, we can capitalize on existing assets and reap the economic, environmental and community benefits of doing so. **At no cost to the State, Grow Smart recommends providing an incentive for municipalities to encourage location-efficient economic development by exempting from the property tax levy cap (S-3050) all or a portion of new property taxes generated in districts that meet state-approved Growth Center standards.**

Support. We need to work with the RI League of Cities and Towns and EDC to make sure this is as effective as possible.

3. The Rhode Island Historic Preservation Investment Tax Credit, which was available to new projects from 2002 through 2008, is estimated to have leveraged \$5.35 in total economic output for each dollar of state tax credit investment. It stimulated \$1.2 billion of private investment, incentivized the rehabilitation of 226 structures in 22 Rhode Island cities and towns, and generated thousands of new construction and permanent jobs and tens of millions in new state and local tax revenue. Despite significant evidence of its value, it was halted for new enrollees in 2008. Grow Smart recommends that **Rhode Island should reinstate a targeted State Historic Tax Credit.**

I have proposed reinstatement of the historic tax credit, which should happen first in local and national historic sites or districts in economically stressed neighborhoods.

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4. The continued revitalization of our centers and corridors will require effective coordination between state, local and private partners. Big picture decision-making at the state level has often not caught up with or adapted to strategies recommended in *Land Use 2025*, Rhode Island's forward-thinking state land use plan. Grow Smart therefore recommends that **the Governor establish a sub-cabinet in the Executive Branch that includes all state agency directors whose capital spending has an impact on land development. Task the sub-cabinet with coordinating capital spending and aligning state agency investments with smart growth strategies in *Land-Use 2025*.**

I support the objective of coordinating all state capital development projects to be consistent with the Land Use 2025 plan.

5. The siting of state offices and other state facilities not only influences private development decisions, but can also have a lasting effect on the vitality of our urban and town centers. Rhode Island state government should take the lead in making siting decisions that maximize citizen access to government services and economic development benefits. Grow Smart recommends that **our new Governor issue an Executive Order reminding department heads in state government to comply with a provision of the State Properties Committee statute (RIPL 37-6-2), giving preference to siting state offices and facilities in transit-friendly urban and/or economically distressed locations.**

I support this measure.

6. Permanently protected land ensures that Rhode Islanders will continue to enjoy a number of benefits including reduced susceptibility to flooding, safe drinking water, local farms, wildlife habitat, scenic landscapes and recreational opportunities. While voters have consistently supported bond issues to fund land conservation programs, bonding increases state and local debt and is an uncertain source. Land conservation efforts would be enhanced by an alternative source of funding. In 1990, Rhode Island created a Housing and Conservation Trust Fund in recognition of the fact that affordable housing and open space land preservation are two essential attributes for Rhode Island's long term well-being that lack a stable funding source. While the Trust Fund remains on the books, no funding stream was ever identified. Grow Smart recommends that **the State should activate Rhode Island's Housing and Conservation Trust Fund and provide a permanent funding stream for the Fund.**

I would be interested in pursuing this once the state is able to resolve the FY 2010 anticipated budget shortfall, projected to be \$350million.

7. Housing has a major impact on economic growth, both because we must have affordable places for workers to live and because the residential construction industry should be an economic engine for Rhode Island's economy. One step is to revise municipal zoning ordinances to allow more compact residential development and thereby lower development costs for market rate home ownership and rental units. However, the State must also have a supply of rental and home ownership units that will remain affordable over the long-term to low and moderate income workers in our service industries. These homes generally require Federal and/or state subsidies. The \$50 million in affordable housing bond funding approved in 2006 will be fully committed by the end of 2010. Grow Smart recommends that **the State should continue to appropriate funds for the Neighborhood Opportunities Program (NOP.) NOP was the first Rhode Island program established to provide funds to address the housing needs of low and moderate income Rhode Islanders and will be the only program remaining after housing bond funds are spent out.**

I believe this is a priority.

8. It is often said that farmers are “land rich and cash poor,” and the reality of that saying means that a farmer’s death frequently puts a farm’s future at risk. Because Rhode Island’s land values are high, state estate taxes on family farms are also high. Often, families do not have the cash available to pay the estate tax and therefore are forced to sell all or a portion of the farm. Grow Smart recommends that **Rhode Island should ease the estate-tax burden for farm families. A cap on the value of farms for Rhode Island estate tax purposes would avoid the next generation’s having to sell all or parts of their farms to cover taxes.**

I would like to provide more support and outreach to farm families to preserve as many farms as possible.

9. Most of the planning decisions that shape our state’s future are made at the local level, and those decisions are based on local comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations. Municipal planning staffs do not generally have the time to research and develop ordinances for new and creative land use strategies, and many municipalities do not have resources to hire consultants. Therefore, Grow Smart recommends that **the State should provide technical assistance to municipalities in the areas of planning and ordinance development on approaches ranging from Tax Increment Financing and establishment of village zoning to Transfer of Development Rights and Conservation Development.**

I absolutely agree. The state will develop model language for ordinances that may be used by municipalities.

10. The underused or vacant industrial sites found in Rhode Island’s historic city and town centers can provide good locations for new economic activity. However, many have soil contamination issues that must first be cleaned up. The clean-up can lead to project delays, including delays caused by limited RIDEM staff resources to review projects. For a developer who already has capital invested in a property, time is money. Grow Smart recommends that **Rhode Island follow the example of Massachusetts and Connecticut and adopt a Licensed Site Professional (LSP) program for oversight of brownfield remediation to expedite clean-up projects.**

I like this idea, and as author of the federal Brownfields Act, I welcome actions to facilitate improvement on this.