



Grow Smart RI advocates sustainable economic growth that builds upon and strengthens Rhode Island's exceptional quality of place.

We work to achieve:

- Revitalized, walkable urban and town centers
- Housing options and affordability
- Expanded transportation choices
- A vital agricultural sector
- Responsible stewardship of natural resources

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GrowSmartRI
 Sustainable Economic Growth
 & Quality of Place

2011 Legislative & Policy Agenda



Sustainable Economic Growth and Community Revitalization

- ☑ **Reinstate a Targeted State Historic Tax Credit**
Restore a more targeted tax incentive program to encourage adaptive reuse of Rhode Island's rich stock of historic buildings. The State Historic Tax Credit program, begun in 2002 but halted for new enrollees in 2008, is estimated to have leveraged \$5.35 in total economic output for each dollar of state tax credit investment, while bringing new vitality and economic activity to many historic structures and neighborhoods. To jumpstart the state's economy, particularly the hard-hit construction industry, we need to establish a new tax credit program.
- ☑ **Amend Zoning Enabling Act to Better Facilitate Mixed-Use Redevelopment** - [H-5372/S-306](#) (Reps. O'Grady, Johnston, Phillips; Sen. Crowley, Nesselbush, DaPonte, and Goodwin). Expand the Rhode Island definition of "Overlay Districts" to allow for less restrictive regulation (such as flexible Village Zoning) in addition to more restrictive regulation (such as Historic District Zoning). This would make it easier to achieve revitalization of our urban, town and village centers.
- ☑ **Amend Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act—**
[S-0021/H-5380](#) (Sen. Tassoni, DeVall, Doyle, Miller; Reps. Winfield and Petrarca)
Simplify and enhance municipal comprehensive planning.
- ☑ **Help to Jump-Start Smart Economic Development in Urban and Town Centers in Partnership with Municipalities** - [H-5496](#) (Rep. Coderre)
At no cost to State government, give municipalities both an *incentive* and a *means* to encourage growth in urban and town centers. Allow cities and towns to exempt from the property tax levy cap the incremental increase in property tax revenue generated in locally-designated and state-approved "growth centers", provided that such revenues are reinvested exclusively in capital improvements within the growth centers.
- ☑ **Better Coordinate State Capital Investments**
By Executive Order, establish a sub-cabinet that includes all state agency directors whose capital investments impact land development. Task the group with coordinating capital investments to maximize the economic and environmental benefits of infrastructure improvements.
- ☑ **Site State Facilities in Urban and/or Distressed Locations**
By Executive Order, remind department heads in state government to comply with a provision of The State Properties Committee statute (37-6-2) giving preference to siting state offices and facilities in urban and/or economically distressed locations.

Transportation Investment and Debt Reduction

- ☑ **Enact the RI Transportation Investment & Debt Reduction Act**
[S-0148/H-5789](#) (Sen. DiPalma; Reps. O'Grady, Handy, Tanzi, Ajello & Ferri)
This bill addresses Rhode Island's longstanding crisis in transportation funding by 1) Creating a trust fund to be used for transportation needs, including maintenance and repair of state and local roads and bridges and investment in clean, affordable public transportation, and 2) Reducing the unsustainable level of borrowing by the state to fund transportation. The bill adopts recommendations from the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel (BRP) on Transportation funding and allocates 50% of funds raised to RIDOT, 35% to transit and 15% for local roads and bridges.

Ports

- ☑ **Enhance Port Capacity**
Work with the Governor, General Assembly and other stakeholders to promote environmentally responsible investments in Rhode Island ports.

Housing Options and Affordability

- ☑ **Fully Fund the Neighborhood Opportunities Program**
Appropriate \$7.5 million 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 for this purpose after the housing bond funds are spent out within the next year.
- ☑ **Activate the Rhode Island Housing & Land Conservation Trust**
Identify a permanent source to begin funding the Housing and Land Conservation Trust (RIGL 42-113), in existence but inactive for 20 years.

Agricultural Viability and Profitability

- ☑ **Strengthen the Farm Forest and Open Space Program (FFOS)**
Review the Farm Forest and Open Space Program (FFOS) to update recommended land values and to identify ways to strengthen the FFOS program's effectiveness in preventing the loss of farmland to development.
- ☑ **Estate Tax Reform**
[H-5209](#) (Reps. Walsh, Fellela, Guthrie, Gallison & Dickinson)
Ease the estate-tax burden on 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.