



NEW JERSEY
**HISTORIC
TRUST**

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2028



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Project Summary	4
.....	
The Trust's Statutory Authority	6
.....	
Mission, Vision, and Values	7
.....	
Goals and Objectives	8
.....	
Heritage Tourism	10
.....	
Under-Represented History	12
.....	
Resiliency	13
.....	
Professional Development	14
.....	
Agency Programs and Capacity	15
.....	

PROJECT SUMMARY

During 2022-23, the New Jersey Historic Trust retained Creative Capacity, LLC to facilitate a strategic planning process. The Trust used the planning process as an opportunity to gather information and feedback from across its community, including:

- Idea generation sessions with Trust staff and board members.
- Two stakeholder listening sessions – one on the impact of climate change on historic properties, and one on heritage tourism.
- An online community survey completed by 151 people involved in managing historic sites around the state.

Following this research, Trust staff and board members worked with Creative Capacity to create an adaptive strategic plan, designed to help the Trust adapt to changing conditions over the next five years. The plan's goals and objectives will guide decision making. Broad strategies are included to illustrate the kind of work that is likely to take place; each strategy is followed by examples of potential actions that could fulfill the Trust's objectives. Annual assessments and plan reviews will determine the best options for pursuing the Trust's strategic objectives.

Several themes emerged during the process:

- **Connection** – The importance of developing and maintaining connections throughout the state's history community, especially with people and historic sites that have not previously been involved with the Trust.
- **Heritage Tourism** – The opportunity to promote the value of heritage tourism to the state's economy and to building healthy communities.
- **Learning** – The need for strengthening historic preservation knowledge and skills throughout the field, especially among volunteers and Historic Preservation Commission members.
- **Preservation** – The increasingly timely need to mitigate the impacts of severe weather on the state's historic resources.

The Trust will focus on these themes over the next five years, aligning its programs and approach with its goals.

THE TRUST'S STATUTORY AUTHORITY



The New Jersey Historic Trust was created by state legislation in 1967 as an agency established within the Department of Parks, Forestry and Recreation, in but not of the Department of Conservation and Economic Development. In 1970, the Historic Trust became part of the newly formed Department of Environmental Protection, that also subsumed the stewardship of natural and historic resources. The Trust was created to advance historic preservation in the state, particularly by supporting the preservation of historic properties and advocating for the value of historic preservation in our communities. Its enabling legislation specifically allowed the Trust to accept gifts of property, raise private funds, and apply for grants to augment the state's stewardship for historic sites. As a result of the 1987 voter approved bond referendum – the first bond referendum to include funding for historic preservation – the Trust's enabling statute was amended to administer the state's capital grant program.

In 2002, the agency became affiliated with the Department of Community Affairs. It also holds a designation as a 501c3 charity by the Internal Revenue Service. The Preserve New Jersey Historic Preservation Fund was established in 2016 to provide an annual source of matching grants from the state's corporate business tax for historic preservation projects. Previous preservation projects were funded through the Garden State Historic Preservation Trust Fund (2000-2012) and the Historic Preservation Bond Program (1990-1997).

Since 1990, the New Jersey Historic Trust has awarded more than \$180 million in grants to preservation projects, 100% leveraged with matching private funds – projects that generate local jobs (and income tax revenues), create affordable housing and visitor-ready cultural destinations (that generate tourism revenue), revitalize neighborhoods (increasing the local property tax base), and restore our civic buildings (assisting municipalities with capital expenses).

MISSION

The New Jersey Historic Trust advances historic preservation for the benefit of the state's diverse population today and for its future generations. Through its education, tourism, stewardship, and financial investment programs, the Trust saves New Jersey's heritage and strengthens its communities.

In order to present a fuller understanding of our heritage, the Historic Trust actively supports the discovery, preservation, and appreciation of the tangible remains of history that have been previously under-represented in the historical record.

The Historic Trust seeks to achieve its mission by serving as:

- A leading voice for preservation at the state level
- A catalyst for preservation and community revitalization activities
- A full partner in state policy development
- A technical and financial resource for the stewardship of historic properties.

VISION

All New Jerseyans will value our state's heritage and the historic sites that tell its story.

VALUES

The New Jersey Historic Trust values:

- The preservation of historic buildings and sites, as a means of retaining the unique character of New Jersey over time.
- The opportunity to work with other agencies and community partners to use historic preservation to increase the impact of community revitalization efforts.
- The benefits that historic sites and heritage tourism bring to our state's economy and to the experiences of tourists from around the nation.
- The voices of our board, grantees, partners, and other concerned citizens in advocating for policies that encourage historic preservation.
- The discovery and preservation of sites associated with the history of all the state's residents, especially those whose history has not been well represented in the past.

SUMMARY OF GOALS & OBJECTIVES

◆◆◆ HERITAGE TOURISM

Enhance the ability of historic sites to welcome visitors and expand heritage tourism in their communities.

- Elevate understanding of heritage tourism’s contributions to local, regional, and state economic development and enhanced quality of life.
- Facilitate greater participation by historic sites with existing tourism providers and economic development organizations (Visit NJ, Destination Marketing Organizations, Chambers of Commerce, etc.).
- Increase visitor amenities that support heritage tourism at historic sites.
- Promote visitation to heritage tourism sites through increased visibility and use of *Journey Through Jersey*.

◆◆◆ UNDER-REPRESENTED HISTORY

Ensure that Trust programs preserve sites that have been previously under-represented in our state’s history.

- Increase the number of New Jersey sites related to under-represented history on the New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places through our funding and support for applications.
- Support the discovery and interpretation of under-represented history at existing historic sites.
- Explore options for increasing access to the Trust’s grant programs.

◆◆◆ RESILIENCY

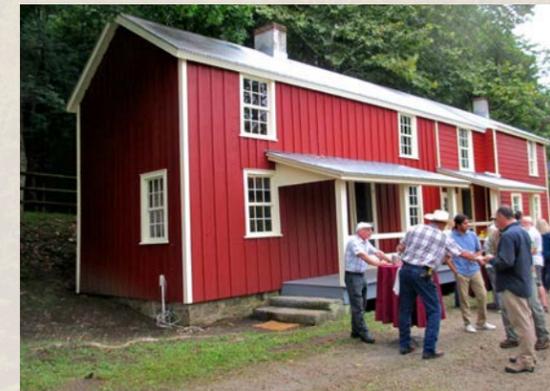
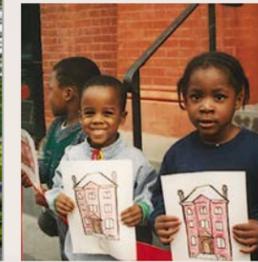
Support the state’s historic properties in developing greater resilience to climate-related risks.

- Develop a clear understanding of the potential impacts of climate risks on the state’s historic sites, and raise awareness of this challenge to New Jersey’s heritage.
- Facilitate the mitigation of climate risks to the state’s historic sites.
- Integrate mitigating climate risks into the Trust’s funding strategy.

◆◆◆ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ensure that professional development is consistently available to everyone involved in historic preservation in the state.

- Support the passage of legislation that requires members of local Historic Preservation Commissions to receive training.



- Ensure that training in both historic preservation and nonprofit management is regularly available to staff, volunteers, and board members of nonprofit historic sites.
- Increase the sector’s capacity in the key areas of promoting heritage tourism and mitigating the impact of climate-related risks on historic sites.
- Promote historic preservation by ensuring that training in preservation techniques is widely available to everyone who stewards a historic property in our state.

◆◆◆ AGENCY PROGRAMS AND CAPACITY

Align the Trust’s programs and organizational capacity with its strategic direction.

- Evaluate and revise the grant program to align it with the Trust’s current strategic goals.
- Increase the Trust’s capacity for community education and engagement.
- Enhance the board’s composition and committee structure.

HERITAGE TOURISM

Enhance the ability of historic sites to welcome visitors and expand heritage tourism in their communities.

- Elevate understanding of heritage tourism's contributions to local, regional, and state economic development and enhanced quality of life.
- Facilitate greater participation by historic sites with existing tourism providers and economic development organizations (Visit NJ, Destination Marketing Organizations, Chambers of Commerce, etc.).
- Increase visitor amenities that support heritage tourism at historic sites.
- Promote visitation to heritage tourism sites through increased visibility and use of Journey Through Jersey.

STRATEGY 1 Connect historic sites with existing tourism and economic development organizations.

- Identify and implement strategies that facilitate active participation by historic sites in existing tourism promotion efforts run by the NJ Division of Travel and Tourism, Destination Marketing Organizations, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
- Encourage more cross-county coordination of historic site promotion (Example: Camden County).
- Capitalize on the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution to highlight the value of heritage tourism – to historic sites themselves, to tourism agencies, and to County and municipal governments.

STRATEGY 2 Refine our strategy for supporting the improvement of visitor amenities at historic sites.

- Increase investments in visitor readiness for heritage tourism.
- Expand visitor readiness resources beyond brick and mortar amenities to include marketing tools like websites, etc.

STRATEGY 3 Enhance Journey Through Jersey

- Increase the number of sites represented on the *Journey through Jersey* site.
- Increase content that makes the site valuable to tourists, like themed or regional touring plans.
- Increase digital traffic through search engine optimization and partnership marketing.
- Build promotional partnerships with sites featured on *Journey Through Jersey*.

STRATEGY 4 Advocate for the value of heritage tourism.

- Promote the economic development benefits of investing in historic preservation and heritage tourism to State, County and municipal governments.
- Advocate for legislation that secures ongoing support for heritage tourism in the state's tourism promotion efforts.
- Create an effective partnership between the Trust and the NJ Division of Travel and Tourism.



UNDER-REPRESENTED HISTORY

Ensure that Trust programs preserve sites that have been previously under-represented in our state's history.

- Increase the number of New Jersey sites related to under-represented history on the New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places through our funding and support for applications.
- Support the discovery and interpretation of under-represented history at existing historic sites.
- Explore options for increasing access to the Trust's grant programs.

STRATEGY 1 Support the addition of sites that preserve New Jersey's under-represented history to the National Register of Historic Places.

- Support sites related to under-represented history in applying to the National Register.
- Support the discovery of under-represented histories within existing National Register nominations.
- Support the discovery and preservation of sites that have the ability to yield new information.

STRATEGY 2 Increase the Trust's visibility and accessibility among under-represented history sites.

- Address challenges faced by under-represented history sites when applying for Trust grants, such as the lack of traditional information needed for a preservation plan.
- Connect under-represented history sites to heritage tourism resources.
- Promote under-represented history on *Journey Through Jersey*.

STRATEGY 3 Invest Trust resources in identifying and preserving under-represented history.

- Identify themes that could benefit from Trust support for surveys and historic context studies.
- In all grant programs, encourage an applicant's connection to their site's under-represented history.
- Develop special projects that focus on under-represented history, similar to the Women's History Trail.

RESILIENCY

Support the state's historic properties in developing greater resilience to climate-related risks.

- Develop a clear understanding of the potential impacts of climate risks on the state's historic sites, and raise awareness of this challenge to New Jersey's heritage.
- Facilitate the mitigation of climate risks to the state's historic sites.
- Integrate mitigating climate risks into the Trust's funding strategy.

STRATEGY 1 Connect to the state's climate resiliency efforts.

- Participate actively in the state's climate resiliency efforts, both to increase our own knowledge and to advocate for the needs of historic preservation.

STRATEGY 2 Assess the state's historic sites to understand the potential scope and impact of climate-related risks.

STRATEGY 3 Increase the field's understanding of climate risks and mitigation strategies.

- Identify the most common threats and develop sample solutions.
- Identify ways for grantees to balance long-term climate resiliency with emergent and immediate preservation needs.
- Provide professional development to the field to increase understanding of how to assess risks and execute mitigation strategies.

STRATEGY 4 Develop funding strategies that help sites to address these risks.

- Emphasize the importance of assessing climate risks in all of our grant programs.
- Support the development of risk mitigation plans for historic sites.
- Develop grant opportunities aimed at climate risk mitigation.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ensure that professional development is consistently available to everyone involved in historic preservation in the state.

- Support the passage of legislation that requires members of local Historic Preservation Commissions to receive training.
- Ensure that training in both historic preservation and nonprofit management is regularly available to staff, volunteers, and board members of nonprofit historic sites.
- Increase the sector's capacity in the key areas of promoting heritage tourism and mitigating the impact of climate-related risks on historic sites.
- Promote historic preservation by ensuring that training in preservation techniques is widely available to everyone who stewards a historic property in our state.

STRATEGY 1 Increase the effectiveness of local Historic Preservation Commissions through training.

- Support the passage of legislation that requires training for all Historic Preservation Commission members.
- Provide resources and support to Historic Preservation Commissions.
 - » Provide easy access to a mandatory training program for all HPC members.
 - » Provide quality ongoing professional learning to HPC members.
 - » Develop a library of on-demand resources for HPC members.

STRATEGY 2 Build partnerships that support ready access to professional development.

- Establish partnerships with professional development organizations in nonprofit management, so that training is readily available to all staff and volunteers at historic sites.
- Encourage participation in training to enhance stewardship for New Jersey's historic resources.

STRATEGY 3 Support and promote opportunities for skill-building in historic preservation across the field.

- Offer opportunities for people interested in historic preservation to improve their skills.
- Increase staff opportunities for professional development, especially in emerging priorities like mitigating climate risks to historic sites, preserving under-represented history, etc.
- Provide training in historic preservation to related professionals, such as engineers, architects, Zoning and Planning Commission members, etc.

AGENCY PROGRAMS AND CAPACITY

Align the Trust's programs and organizational capacity with its strategic direction.

- Evaluate and revise the grant program to align it with the Trust's current strategic goals.
- Increase the Trust's capacity for community education and engagement.
- Enhance the board's composition and committee structure.

STRATEGY 1 Revise the grant application and reporting process to make Trust grants easier to manage for applicants, Trust staff, and evaluators.

STRATEGY 2 Assess and revise the grant program to align it with current strategic goals.

STRATEGY 3 Add a new staff position that will drive the Trust's community education efforts.

STRATEGY 4 Provide professional development opportunities for all staff.

STRATEGY 5 Continue to work with the Appointments Office to vet and approve new Trustees.

STRATEGY 6 Redesign the board committee structure to align with current strategic goals.



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