



## Introduction to the Historic Preservation Element

The Historic Preservation Element promotes strategies and actions that will help ensure the qualities that define Cranston as a special place are safeguarded as a legacy for future generations. Historic structures, districts, cemeteries and landscapes are important aspects of what makes Cranston unique. Historic resources not only provide a physical link to the past, but they also help shape the City's identity.

### **Key Challenges**

Although several actions from the 1992 Plan have been implemented to protect Cranston's historic resources, important resources are still being lost or degraded as development occurs outside of locally designated districts.

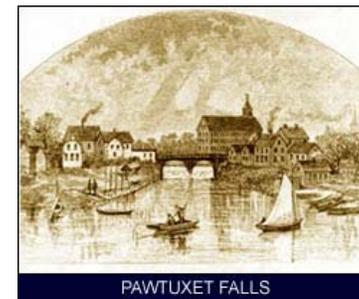
This element will address the following issues:

- Whether critical historic resources (including individual buildings, districts, historic cemeteries, and landscapes) are sufficiently protected against impacts that would degrade their historic and cultural value to the City;
- Historic preservation techniques and policies that should be actively applied and adopted to ensure that properties are not lost to development and the effects of neglect, weather and age;
- The importance of educating the public about Cranston's historic resources and how to preserve these resources.

### **Key Strategies**

A useful technique that can protect the historic architecture and landscape areas is a Local Historic District. Five local Historic Districts have been designated in Cranston: Oak Lawn Village, Lippitt Hill School, Joy Homestead, the Turgeon House, and the Westcott House. However, several other areas need additional protection through this designation, such as Pawtuxet Village, Edgewood, Norwood Avenue, the Fenner House, and Sprague Mansion.

Another key issue that must be understood when considering historic preservation is that the definition of historic resources not only incorporates specific buildings and structures, but also districts, cemeteries, and landscapes. This plan recommends preservation of landscape in the western portion of the City to coincide with the efforts to preserve the vestiges of agriculture that still exists there.





## Part I. Summary and Accomplishments of the 1992 Plan

### ***Introduction***

The Historic Preservation element of the 1992 Comprehensive Plan focused on improving education about and awareness of historic resources. This section summarizes the issues and accomplishments of the 1992 Plan and makes recommendations to support and encourage the preservation of the City's historic resources. Historic Preservation element of 1992 Comprehensive Plan focused on four themes:

- Traditional Preservation Techniques;
- Threats to Specific Historic Resources;
- Integration with the Comprehensive Plan;
- Education and Citizen Awareness.

### ***Traditional Preservation Techniques***

#### Survey and Inventory

The 1992 Plan recommended that survey and inventory are the standard techniques that the City should continue to use in order to assess, update, and expand the list of protected properties. Incomplete inventories that should be updated included comprehensive building inventories, prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, historic sites in western Cranston, and historic cemeteries. Of particular focus was the survey and sensitivity assessment of historic archaeological sites since they are difficult to detect.

#### National and State Registers

The Plan provided a map and list of existing State and National Register properties as well as properties recommended for this list. It recommended that the City should continue to evaluate and nominate eligible properties with a focus on historic districts.

#### Local Historic Districts

Local Historic Districts were purported to be the most powerful tool for a community to preserve the character of its historic areas. Efforts by the HDC, the City Plan Commission, and the citizen groups met strong opposition to establishing a Local Historic District for Pawtuxet Village. The Plan recommended that all involved agencies and citizens join forces to preserve and protect the City's historic heritage and that the HDC continue to formulate design review guidelines that are tailored to the local conditions in Cranston.

#### Other Preservation Tools

The Plan identified several preservation procedures to successfully protect historic resources in Cranston, all of which required a dynamic and aggressive educational program. These techniques included: a demolition delay ordinance, rehabilitation guidelines, economic incentive programs such as the federal and state tax credits, archaeological review, and adequate staffing and financial support of the Cranston HDC.

### ***Threats to Specific Historic Resources***

The 1992 Plan identified several historic properties that need to be preserved with a concerted effort. These properties included the Sockanosset Boys School, Howard Reservation, Narragansett Brewery, and Trolley Barn (since the 1992 Plan, all but four buildings at the Sockanosset Boys School, the Brewery and Trolley Barn have been demolished). A committee, such as the one used to preserve the Rhodes on the Pawtuxet dance hall, would have examined reuse possibilities, developed guidelines for rehabilitation, and identified constituencies for supporting preservation.

**Integration with other Comprehensive Plan Elements**

Integration of the Historic Preservation element with the other 1992 Plan elements was recommended. The Plan suggested that these elements coordinate, minimize impacts, and support historic preservation programs and policies.

Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources

The Plan recommended that land and development rights acquisition, easements, and other open space protection and natural resources programs are coordinated with the historic and archaeological resources whenever possible.

Housing

The patterns of development of Cranston’s neighborhoods in the most eastern part of the City were first established with streetcar connections to Providence and then with automobiles to the residential suburbs. In order to preserve the City’s historic housing stock, its building character and fabric, the City should work with a variety of city agencies and preservation groups to educate the public about historic preservation techniques and guidelines, create economic incentives to preserve historic properties, and coordinate programs with housing agencies.

Economic Development

The 1992 Plan recommended that the existing and proposed land development ordinances be reviewed to address impacts to historic properties. Isolated historic properties in commercial areas should be protected through appropriate site plan and design guidelines that encourage historic preservation techniques. Proposed industrial uses in both rural and urban areas should also be assessed.

Land Use Plan

The zoning and land use decisions including use regulations and site planning and review procedures should be integrated with the character and location of Cranston’s historic resources and areas to minimize disruption of visual qualities and community character.

**Education and Citizen Awareness**

The 1992 Plan suggested that Cranston citizens should be made aware of their historic resources, especially since many properties and

buildings do not fit into the traditional historic areas. The Plan recommended that a committee be established to expand educational programs and coordinate them with the Planning Commission.

**Changes to the Plan since 1992**

The Cranston City Council approved the following changes to the Historic Preservation element of the 1992 Comprehensive Plan.

- Noted that the “Cranston, Rhode Island, Statewide Historical Preservation Report, P-C-1, 1981” should be considered and used as part of the Comprehensive Plan.

**1992 Plan Actions and Accomplishments**

Table 5A-1 summarizes the Historic Preservation Actions from the 1992 Comprehensive Plan and identifies those that have been accomplished.

**Table 5A-1 Accomplishments of the 1992 Comprehensive Plan**

Action	1992 Actions	Accomplishments and Changes
<b>Survey, Inventory and Traditional Preservation Techniques</b>		
HP-1	Update and expand the survey of the historic properties on a citywide basis.	This action was not accomplished.
HP-2	Work with private property owners to encourage preservation of known archeological and historic sites on their land.	The Cranston HDC accomplished this in the Oak Lawn Historic District. In non-Local Historic Districts and non-historic areas, a few sites were preserved including portions of the Sockanosset Boys Training School.
HP-3	Nominate eligible individual properties and districts to the National Register of Historic Places and the State Register.	The Norwood Avenue and the former Taft Estate / Edgewood Historic District was nominated and designated on the Federal and State Historic Registers.
HP-4	Continue to establish local historic zoning overlay districts for areas and begin designation of individual structures.	The Pawtuxet Village Historic District was proposed in 1993 but not designated. Three other individual districts have been added: Joy Homestead, the Turgeon House and the Westcott House.
HP-5	Identify and implement appropriate economic incentive programs to encourage historic preservation and rehabilitation.	A local tax credit ordinance was drafted in 1993, but it was not passed by the City Council.
HP-6	Create a system for archeological review of development projects.	This action was implemented by using the State database. The Plan Commission requires Phase I analysis for all projects in identified 20-acre cells where roadway or other facilities will be dedicated to the public.
HP-7	Expand the role of the Historic District Commission, as the primary historic preservation body in Cranston.	The HDC has expanded its role by reviewing and approving several projects that had potential impacts to historic properties including Pawtuxet Traffic Calming and Sockanosset Crossing (Chapel View).
HP-8	Develop mechanisms for coordination of the activities of the Historic District Commission with other City boards and agencies through the City Planning Commission.	New subdivision regulations that require all master plans to be reviewed by several agencies were approved in 1996. The Plan Commission has the option to send proposals with historic resources to the HDC for review.
HP-9	Initiate study committee(s) for identified threatened historic properties.	This action was not accomplished.
<b>Historic Preservation Planning and Development Policies</b>		
HP-10	Enact a demolition ordinance imposing a waiting period before demolition of historic buildings, in order to provide an opportunity to consider alternatives to demolition.	This action was not accomplished.
HP-11	Adopt design review and procedural guidelines to implement historic district zoning in designated areas.	Design review and procedural guidelines were adopted.
HP-12	Incorporate historic preservation concerns into actions and policies adopted pursuant to other elements of the Comprehensive Plan.	This action was completed.
<b>Education and Citizen Awareness</b>		
HP-13	Develop and implement an expanded public education and awareness program.	An informational program flyer was created for select 3rd and 4th grades in the City school system.



## Part II. Current Conditions and Issues

### **Introduction**

As identified in the previous Plan, “Cranston is rich in historic, cultural resources worthy of protection.” The City, however, still needs to protect its historic resources by adding structures to the local list of historic properties, protecting existing structures, and adding new historic districts. Since the 1992 Plan was adopted, the Norwood Avenue Historic District and the Edgewood Historic District were added to the State and National Registers, and there were no additions to the local historic register. The following section identifies the existing historic assets and the current historic preservation issues.

### **Historic Preservation Authorities**

#### National Register

The National Register of Historic Places is the federal government's official list of properties that are significant in American history and worthy of preservation. Properties listed in the National Register include individual buildings, historic districts, and archaeological sites. Rhode Island properties listed in the National Register include colonial houses, farms, Victorian neighborhoods, factory villages, diners, monuments, military bases, seacoast villages, suburban neighborhoods, and more. Rhode Island also has its own State Register of Historic Places. The criteria for inclusion in the State Register are the same as those for the National Register.

#### State Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission is the state agency for historical preservation and heritage programs. The Commission operates a statewide historical preservation program

that identifies and protects historic buildings, districts, structures, and archaeological sites.

#### Cranston Historic District Commission

The Cranston Historic District Commission (HDC) reviews changes to properties located in a locally zoned historic district. When there is a proposed alteration to a property within a historic district, the HDC will review the proposed scope of work for conformance with their rehabilitation standards. The Commission uses its written procedures and standards to help a property owner in preparing for the review. The other work of the HDC includes submitting proposals to create additional local historic districts, making its collective experience available for local preservation efforts, and providing opinions on State and National Register nominations.

#### Local Historic District

A Local Historic District is a special zoning area created by a community, such as Cranston, to help save historic buildings and to preserve the special sense of time and place that exists in some parts of a community. The City monitors and guides construction activity in its historic areas through the HDC. The City Council enacts ordinances which identify areas for designation as a historic district. In a Local Historic District, all exterior alterations and new construction must be reviewed and approved by the HDC. This review ensures that the historic character of the buildings is maintained when changes are made.

The following is a list of historic assets on the National Register. The dates reflect when the site was added to the Register. The Local Historic Districts are identified in bold.

## 5A. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Name	Location	Date
Arad Wood House	407 Pontiac Avenue	8/3/88
Arkwright Bridge	Hill Street	12/12/78
Taft Estate Historic District	Broad Street, Windsor Road, Circuit Drive, Narragansett Bay	10/24/03
Edgewood Yacht Club	3 Shaw Avenue	2/23/89
Furnace Hill Brook Historic and Archaeological District	Phenix Avenue and Hope Road	8/6/80
Governor Sprague Mansion /William Sprague House	1351 Cranston Street	2/18/71
<b>Joy Homestead</b> /Job Joy House	156 Scituate Avenue	12/12/78
Knightsville Meeting House /Knightsville-Franklin Congregational Church	67 Phenix Avenue	3/8/78
Lippitt Hill Historic District	Burlingame and Hope Roads and Lippitt Avenue Hope Road	3/2/89
<b>Lippitt Hill Historic School District</b>		
Nathan Westcott House	150 Scituate Avenue	1/5/89
Niles Westcott House/Westcote	101 Mountain Laurel Drive	8/3/88
Norwood Avenue Historic District	Norwood Avenue	4/26/02
<b>Oak Lawn Village Historic District</b>	Wilbur Avenue from Natick Road to Oaklawn Avenue	11/25/77
Pawtuxet Village Historic District	near Pawtuxet Cove	4/24/73
Potter Remington House	571 Natick Avenue	12/12/78
Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet Ballroom and Gazebo	Rhodes Place	12/12/78
Sheldon House	458 Scituate Avenue	1/5/89
Thomas Fenner House	43 Stony Acre Drive	3/2/90

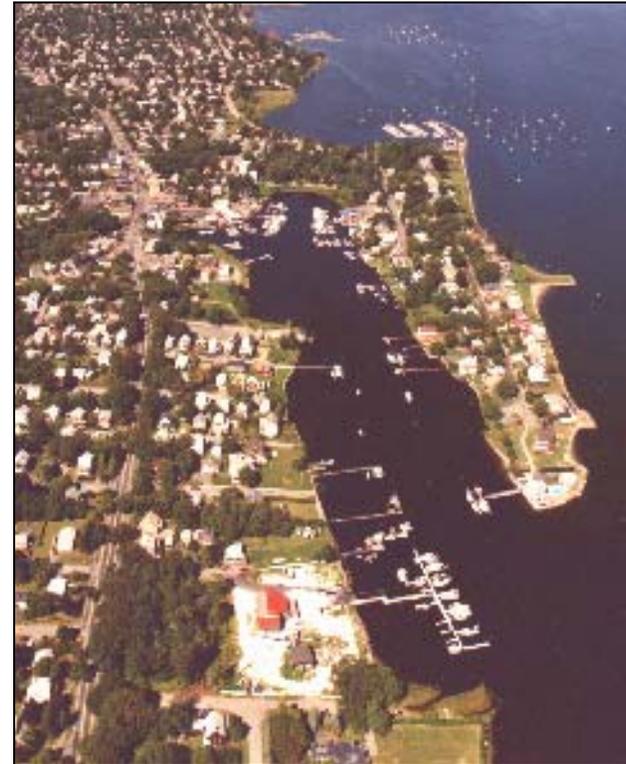
**Table 5A-2 Historic Assets on the National Register, March 2004**

Source: Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission ([www.preservationri.gov](http://www.preservationri.gov)), June 2004.

### **Survey, Inventory, and Traditional Preservation Techniques**

Several areas and buildings in Cranston have been targeted for historic preservation over the past ten years with limited success.

Some of the key areas include the historic Pawtuxet Village District and the historic Norwood Avenue District.



**Pawtuxet Cove**

Although the Cranston Historic District Commission supports the preservation of these and other areas, the City needs to increase its effort and support to help ensure that preservation actions are successful. Preservation actions should focus on specific properties and districts (see Table 5A-3). Although general policies that are broader in scope may embrace all potential properties, they do not set the stage for critical paths and direction that will involve agencies, residents, city staff, and elected officials needed to follow, support and implement specific actions.

The Pawtuxet Village Historic District
The Taft Estates Historic District
The Norwood Avenue Historic District
Rolfe Street Commercial District
Cranston Print Works

**Table 5A-3 Properties Recommend for Local Historic Districts**

The Pawtuxet Village Historic District

Pawtuxet Village was initially settled in the mid 1600’s around the water falls and cove where the Pawtuxet River empties into Narragansett Bay. Due to the availability of waterpower and access to the Bay, Pawtuxet Village experienced different periods of industrial, residential, and recreational development. The different layers of Pawtuxet Village’s historic character were eventually recognized with its designation to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. The Warwick side of the village received even further recognition and protection when it was designated as a Local Historic District in 1989. After three attempts by the Cranston HDC to pass an ordinance designating the Village as a Local Historic District, it still remains unprotected.

The Edgewood Historic District – Taft Estate Plan

The Edgewood Historic District – Taft Estate Plan, located on the eastern section of Cranston along Narragansett Bay, was placed on the National Register of Historic places in 2003. This 14-acre suburban neighborhood contains a mixture of period homes that were constructed between 1850 and 1941. It is a relatively rare example of a streetcar and early-auto/garden suburb.

Although it is on the National Register, owners of these private properties are free to manage, maintain, or dispose of their property. In order to ensure that the historic character of this District is retained, in particular, the numerous examples of Late Victorian domestic architecture; it should be nominated and registered as a Local Historic District.

***Historic Preservation Planning and Education***

One of the key goals of historic preservation in historic districts is to ensure that new buildings and designs are in keeping with the existing historic pattern and character of the area. This issue

continually occurs in historic districts and with historic buildings as the following examples illustrate:

- A new building is proposed that is set back from the street in an area that has buildings with no setbacks.
- Proposed homes are built out to the maximum lot coverage in a neighborhood that is less dense than the proposed development.

Although these types of buildings may meet local zoning requirements and technically fit the lot envelope, the historic guidelines and standards generally do not allow them to be built. When built, these types of buildings distract from the historic fabric of the district and from the intended preservation of a historic building. The City should ensure that the Historic District Commission has a stronger role in the review of proposed buildings. An educated and informed public will also support preservation efforts.

Specific areas as identified in the previous section should also be targeted for educating the public. This will help focus efforts and ensure that all interested residents understand the benefits of historic preservation. Education of the neighborhood around Pawtuxet Village, in particular, should be prioritized and supported to ensure that this area becomes a local district.



## Part III - Strategies and Actions

This section identifies historic preservation actions that can benefit the property owners, businesses, and the residents of Cranston. It also explains each of the actions that are necessary to support historic preservation and help resolve issues identified in the previous section.

Although several of the historic preservation actions identified in the 1992 Plan were accomplished, historic preservation techniques and policies should be actively pursued to ensure that properties are not lost to development and age, and that the community can benefit from the preservation of its historic resources. Pawtuxet Village is slowly losing its architectural character due to the lack of standards and guidelines for the exteriors of buildings that could be applied if it were designated as a Local Historic District. The following action items address the protection of these and other historic assets. A summary of the proposed actions, time frames, and responsibilities is at the end of this section.

### ***Traditional Preservation Techniques***

#### Pawtuxet Village Historic District

Pawtuxet Village was initially settled in the mid 1600's around the falls and cove where the Pawtuxet River spills into Narragansett Bay. While this area was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, and the Warwick side of the village has been designated as a local historic district, the Pawtuxet Village as a whole remains unprotected and at risk of losing its unique historic character. Several fine examples of buildings that reflect this area's distinctive maritime character remain in the Village. In order to ensure that the several examples of 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture remain in this district, it should be designated and adopted as a Local Historic District.

#### Edgewood / Taft Estate Historic District

The Edgewood neighborhood is located on the eastern section of Cranston along Narragansett Bay and contains a mixture of period homes that were constructed between 1850 and 1941. Although this area is on the National Register, owners of private properties in this district are free to manage, maintain, or dispose of their property with limited protection of the historic resources. In order to ensure that construction activity does not erode the historic character of the Edgewood / Taft Estate Historic District, it should be designated and adopted as a Local Historic District.

#### Norwood Avenue Historic District

The Norwood Avenue Historic District is located along Norwood Avenue between Roger Williams Park and Broad Street. This area is listed on the National Register and includes at least eight historically significant homes dating from between 1870 and 1930. By registering this district as a Local Historic District, the distinctive characteristics of this neighborhood will be protected for future generations to enjoy.

#### Update and Expand the Survey of Historic Properties

This action was identified in the 1992 Plan; however, it has not been accomplished to date. A periodic citywide survey of historic resources is critical to ensure the inventory of historic properties is continually updated in accordance with current community values. The citywide historic inventory update should also include a prehistoric and historic archeological assessment.

***Encourage Private Preservation***

While it is recognized that archeological sites are often not clearly visible, such as the site at Furnace Hill Brook, they should be protected through ongoing communication with property owners to ensure that the historic value of these sites is not compromised. The success of this action will be largely dependent on the education and awareness actions listed below.

***Historic Preservation Planning and Development Policies***

Create a Historic Resource Task Force

The historic resources of Cranston can play an important part of the City's tourism industry. A task force is needed to assess how the historic resources of the City can be further promoted to attract residents from within Cranston, adjacent towns and cities, as well as broader locations at the regional, national, and international scale. The role of the task force will include an assessment of the existing demands of the tourist markets and identify options to capitalize on these demands to promote the City's historic resources. Another important role of the task force will be to identify the measures needed to ensure that tourism does not adversely affect the historic resources. The task force should coordinate with the West Bay Land Trust and the City Plan Commission.

***Education and Citizen Awareness***

Educate Neighborhoods on Local Historic Districts

An education program is needed to increase awareness of the implications and ultimate benefits of Local Historic District designations. While a broad historic preservation education program will be useful to help the residents of Cranston appreciate the importance of historic preservation, a more targeted approach is needed to ensure that actions such as designating Local Historic Districts can be implemented effectively. The education program should focus on specific areas such as the Pawtuxet Village to help the residents of these areas become more aware of the historic value of their districts and how the historic resources are instrumental in creating a unique local identity for their neighborhoods.

Distribute Information and Guidance on Preservation.

An important aspect of historic preservation is helping residents, the City administration, and visitors become aware of which buildings and places in Cranston are historically significant, and more importantly, why they are significant. An education program should be implemented to help residents understand how its historic resources contribute towards a community's unique identity. Information and guidelines on historic preservation can be disseminated in various media to help people understand what actually affects the historic character of places and how Cranston's unique character can be protected. Existing resources such as the Secretary of Interiors Standards of Preservation of Historic Properties can be used for the education and awareness program.

**Historic Preservation Action Program****Table 5A-4 Summary of the Proposed Actions and Responsibilities for this Plan**

	Action	Responsibility
<b>Survey, Inventory and Traditional Preservation Techniques</b>		
HP-1	Nominate eligible individual properties and districts to the National Register of Historic Places, and the State Register.	Planning Department Historic Commission
HP-2	Continue to establish local historic overlay districts for areas and begin designation of individual structures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make Pawtuxet Village a Local Historic District.</li> <li>• Make Edgewood / Taft Estate Historic District a Local Historic District.</li> <li>• Make Norwood Avenue Historic District a Local Historic District.</li> <li>• Make Rolfe Street Commercial District a Local Historic District</li> </ul>	City Council Planning Commission Planning Department Historic Commission
HP-3	Continue to identify and implement appropriate economic incentive programs to encourage historic preservation and rehabilitation.	City Council Planning Commission Planning Department Historic Commission
HP-4	Continue to include archeological review of development projects according to the state database.	Planning Commission Planning Department Historic Commission
HP-5	Continue to update and expand the survey of the historic properties on a citywide basis.	Planning Department Historic Commission
HP-6	Continue to work with private property owners to encourage preservation of known archeological and historic sites on their land.	Planning Department Historic Commission
HP-7	Continue the role of the Historic Commission as the principle City agency for historic preservation.	City Council Historic Commission
<b>Historic Preservation Planning and Development Policies</b>		
HP-8	Create a task force to look at the options and demands of tourism focused on the historic resources of the City.	Planning Department Historic Commission Economic Development
HP-9	Establish study committee(s) for identified threatened historic properties to include representation from district and property when possible.	City Council Planning Department Historic Commission
HP-10	Enact a demolition ordinance imposing a waiting period before demolition of historic buildings in order to provide an opportunity to consider alternatives to demolition.	City Council Planning Commission Planning Department Historic Commission
HP-11	Continue to implement design review and procedural guidelines for historic district zoning in designated areas.	Planning Department Historic Commission

5A. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

HP -12	Survey accurate locations of historic cemeteries using GPS and submit the coordinate data to the City's IT department in order to map the cemeteries on GIS maps with plat and lot information.	Historic Cemetery Commission IT Department
<b>Education and Citizen Awareness</b>		
HP-13	The Historic Commission should target specific areas such as Pawtuxet Village to educate the neighborhood about the benefits of a Local Historic District designation.	Planning Department Historic Commission
HP-14	Assist residents and City administration to understand and appreciate the importance of preserving historic buildings and places.	Planning Department Historic Commission
HP-15	Distribute information and guidance on preservation, based on the Secretary of Interiors Standards of Preservation, for public and private use.	Planning Department Historic Commission