

# *Reaching Across Mountains: Building Partnerships in Historic Preservation*



*West Virginia's Historic Preservation Plan  
2025-2031*

# Reaching Across Mountains: WV Historic Preservation Plan 2025-2031

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*Alexander Wade House*, Photo courtesy of Steve Brightwell, 2022.

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# Letter from our DSHPO



Davis & Elkins, Photo courtesy of Brightwell, 2022.

A warehouse is adapted for housing;

We bring new neighbors to our downtown.

A country church is listed in the National Register;

The memories of a black community in the southern coalfields are preserved.

An archaeological site is identified during survey efforts;

We recognize a river valley as home for Tribal ancestors.

A new roof is installed on a historic house museum;

School groups visit to see the exhibits and furnishings of a nineteenth century farmhouse.

A local historic landmark commission reviews proposed changes to a residence;

We preserve a neighborhood's historic character.

Historic preservation has a profound effect on the people and places of West Virginia. We don't just focus on the past, but the future. Our efforts make our state a better place to live, work, and grow. We reflect on our past accomplishments in order to identify next steps going forward. What works well? What can we do better? What should we focus on? Reaching Across Mountains: Building Partnerships in Historic Preservation calibrates our heading for 2025-2031. This five year state wide comprehensive historic preservation plan provides goals and objectives to use collaboratively.

We look forward to what will be accomplished together in the next five years as partners in historic preservation across our beautiful state. Thank you for your commitment and enthusiasm.

*Susan M. Pierce*

*former Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer\**

*\*Susan Pierce retired in June of 2025, after serving as West Virginia's Deputy SHPO since 1997. We are grateful to her for her years of service and her love for the state, which was ever-present in her historic preservation career.*

# *Part One: Introduction to Historic Preservation in the Mountain State*

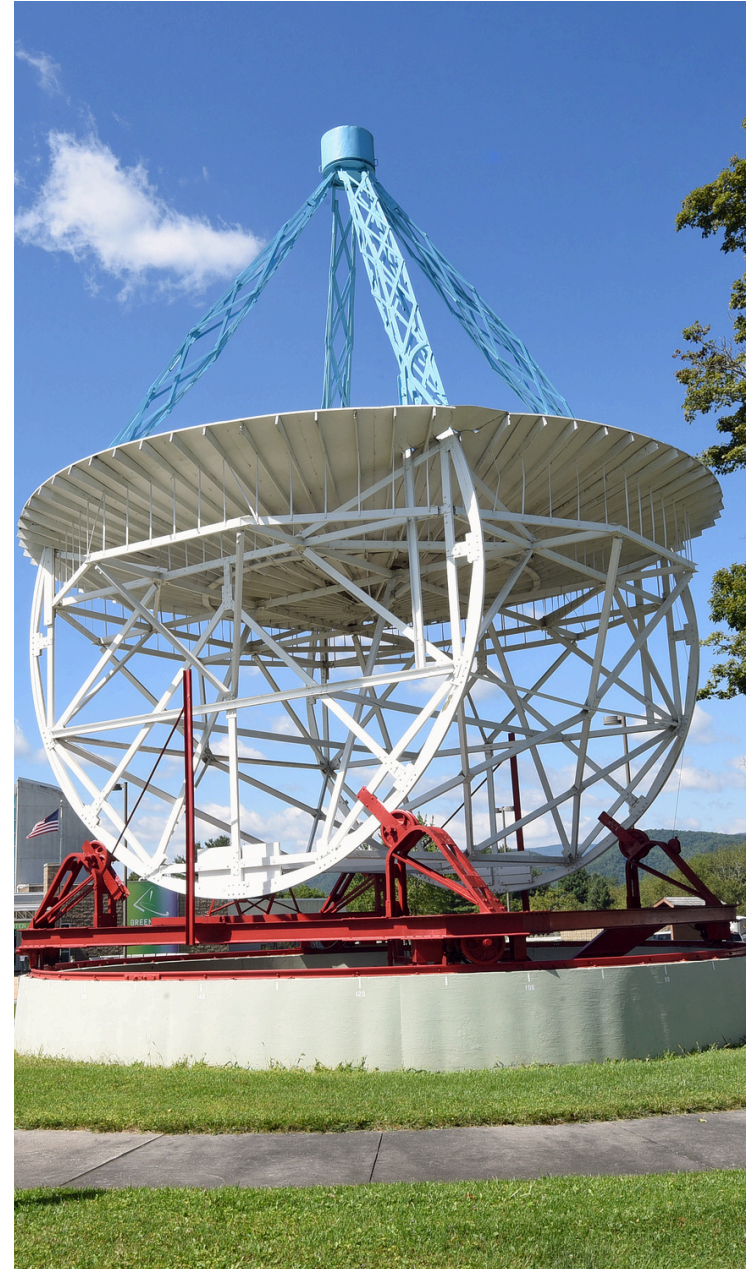


*Ananias Pitsenbarger Farm, Photo courtesy of WV SHPO, 2021.*

# Our Vision

From the battlegrounds of Point Pleasant to the steps of the state's Independence Hall to the tracks of the Cass railroad, West Virginia has a vast history. That history is a demonstration of West Virginians' pride and resilience in the face of adversity. It serves as a source of inspiration as we confront the challenges of the present. It is a history that surrounds us, our downtowns, schools, and churches are spaces in which we are able to think beyond ourselves. They are opportunities for us to simultaneously commemorate our past and forge ahead into the future. The West Virginia Historic Preservation Office (WV SHPO) seeks to help people see themselves within that history, and aid them in honoring the state's heritage via caring for its tangible resources.

Our office aims to encourage and participate in the efforts of West Virginians to identify, recognize, preserve and protect the state's prehistoric and historic structures, objects and sites. Historic preservation has the ability to enrich our lives and support the economic health of West Virginia's communities.



*Reber Radio*, Photo courtesy of Steve Brightwell, 2022.

# Planning Process



*Weston State Hospital*, Photo courtesy of Steve Brightwell, 2022.

We interact with our history everyday, so much so that it can often be taken for granted or forgotten. Our community's histories can be seen when walking into our county courthouses, or driving along our farmlands, or in visits to our cemeteries. This is the tangible legacy of West Virginians from centuries past, a legacy that while lasting, isn't necessarily impenetrable to external threats, like natural disasters or vandalism. Thus it is our duty to carefully steward our shared resources and preserve them for the next generation, through careful planning and collaborative efforts. Historic preservation empowers us with the tools and knowledge needed to care for our built environment.

To best organize and achieve our shared mission of preservation, West Virginia needs a shared road map to both protect our historic resources and adapt them for modern use. *Reaching Across Mountains: Building Partnerships in Historic Preservation* is a long range plan created to provide a vision for the state's historic preservation efforts. It is intended to provide information for individuals, local governments, organizations, communities, and the state's historic preservation office. The West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (WV SHPO) produces a comprehensive statewide historic preservation plan roughly every five years. The most recent edition was *Mountain State Legacy*, our comprehensive plan for 2020 to 2024. That plan identified five goals for preservation: education, awareness, identification, community and economic development, and stewardship. In July 2023, our office began the process of reviewing and updating these goals.

At the WV State Historic Preservation Office we work alongside West Virginians daily, whether guiding them through nominating a local historic resource or providing a webinar on state and federal financial assistance for historic properties. As such, our first action in the planning process was to reach out to all West Virginians. Our office took on a two-pronged approach to engaging West Virginians in the reevaluation of our existing goals and objectives. First, we surveyed West Virginians. We started developing the survey in August 2023. Questions in the survey were formulated based on the 2020-24 survey, as well as taking inspiration from planning efforts from Arizona State Parks, Kentucky Heritage Council, New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Ohio History Connection, and Texas Historical Commission. We were interested in learning from these organizations,

particularly the strategies they employed to reach out to their residents, the types of information they were attempting to capture, and their ideas for goals and objectives.

From this research, we created two targeted surveys and disseminated them across the state using Google Suite's Forum platform. Our surveys were available starting September 1, 2023 and the submission portal closed on June 6, 2024. Survey 1 was aimed at the public. It was composed of eleven questions; eight multiple choice and three short answers. This survey was intended to capture the public's understanding of historic preservation, the value that they place on historic structures, and the ways in which they engage with preservation. In order to reach a broad swath of West Virginians, we solicited responses using a variety of media sources. This included print media via our press release to the state's newspapers, and the recent edition of *Details*, our office's newsletter. We also distributed Survey 1 virtually. We shared the link to this survey on our department's social media, primarily its Facebook page. Also, during the nine months that the survey was open it could be accessed via our agency's website. Survey 1 went out as an eblast in the fall and then a follow up in the spring. In total, we received 137 responses from West Virginians.

Survey 2 was aimed at the state's historic preservation professionals. For our purposes, we considered colleagues to be individuals who are professional consultants, work in local government, are employed by preservation organizations, or tradespeople, as well as people who own historic properties, volunteer at a historic site, or are volunteers in local government. Survey 2 included fourteen questions: seven multiple choice and seven short answers. We employed similar methods to share Survey 2 as we did with Survey 1 (shared it on social media, distributed via e-blast, etc.) There were eighteen total respondents for this survey. In total, across both surveys, we received 137 responses from West Virginians.

In addition to the surveys, our office conducted a series of public meetings. Between September 2023 and March 2024, we hosted ten meetings which were approximately an hour and a half to two hours in length. Staff members met with the state's historic preservation stakeholders, including a history graduate program and historic landmark commissions. Seven of the state's fifty-four historic landmark commissions (HLCs) participated in the survey process. These HLCs represent the following regions in the state: Central, Eastern Panhandle, the Metro Valley, and the Mountain Lakes. While historic landmark commissions have varied experiences practicing preservation based on their region's socioeconomic demographics and physical landscape, they also confront common challenges.

WV SHPO also met with our partner organization, the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia (PAWV). The Preservation Alliance of West Virginia is a statewide grassroots organization established in 1981 to preserve the state's unique heritage. PAWV promotes historic preservation through education, advocacy, technical assistance, and heritage tourism development. Our office spoke with six of their board members and their executive director. Our discussion. questions mirrored those included in Survey 2. The first part of the meeting was spent

examining our 2020-2024 goals, and if they were still relevant. The representatives from PAWV believed that these goals were still essential to the ongoing mission of preservation within the state. When discussing our previous awareness and education initiatives, they mentioned barriers that people had when reaching out and attempting to work with the state's preservation organizations. Particularly, there is a perception that our office is an imposing government agency, a sentiment that was echoed in other meetings, and was alluded to in some survey responses from the public. This feedback was crucial in crafting our upcoming goals and objectives.

Then in March, eleven students from the Master's in Public History program at West Virginia University visited the Culture Center. During their comprehensive tour of the Culture Center, they met with members of our staff. The meeting was a combination of presentation and conversation. Our office's presentation focused on explaining comprehensive statewide historic preservation planning, such as its unifying components and the role it plays within the field. Once they had a context for the purpose of the discussion, students were asked a selection of questions from both surveys. These questions were specifically selected to fit the audience: while public history and cultural resource management students may have an existing knowledge of historic preservation topics, they do not have the same level of experience working within the field.

In the discussion portion of the presentation, the students shared numerous ideas about identification and education efforts. For example, a few students noted that identification efforts for communities unseen in the historical record are often focused within urban spaces. They felt this was an erasure of those histories within the state's rural regions. Towards the end of the conversation, one student shared that they felt the importance of preservation is that it was a way for people to love their community, and as a West Virginian, it sometimes felt that the smaller counties in the state did not receive an equal amount of attention as others. He asserted that all counties deserve to be loved equally. We seek to extend that thought to the state's historic and cultural resources.

Once responses were gathered, staff began researching important topics identified in the surveys and meetings related to the future of statewide historic preservation. These topics included demolition by neglect, state and regional economic growth, lack of financial assistance, and more. These sources were used to inform our assessment of the conditions of West Virginia's historic resources, craft our goals and objectives, and provide different perspectives on the state.

After drafting a potential plan, we again sought public comment and targeted communities that we had not heard from in the first round of discussions. In our review process, we focused primarily on seeking comments on our drafted goals and objectives. First, we conducted an internal evaluation with staff members at the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office. We then shared the selected section with tribal consultation, and also distributed them again with the public via our e-blast list, social media, and website, along with being sent to the state's Certified Local Governments.

### **Anticipated Timeline**

*Reaching Across Mountains: Building Partnerships in Historic Preservation*, West Virginia's Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, 2025-2031 will be effective from January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2031. Revision efforts will start in the summer of 2028 with WV SHPO developing surveys and organizing public meetings. The public and preservation professionals will have the opportunity to comment on the state historic preservation until March 1, 2029. Throughout that spring WV SHPO staff will create a draft of the plan. Between June and August 2029, will solicit further feedback from the public by holding additional meetings and publishing the draft to the agency's website. All necessary changes will be made to the plan based on their suggestions. This updated draft of the plan will then be sent to the National Park Service for review in late summer 2029. A final draft of the plan will be submitted to NPS by mid-November in 2029.

# Survey Highlights

Our surveys were an immense learning opportunity for the state's historic preservation community. Survey 1 refers to the survey for public participation. This survey consisted of eleven (11) questions. Survey 2 was for professionals in historic preservation, and included fourteen (14) questions. From both surveys we have selected key questions and responses to summarize our findings.

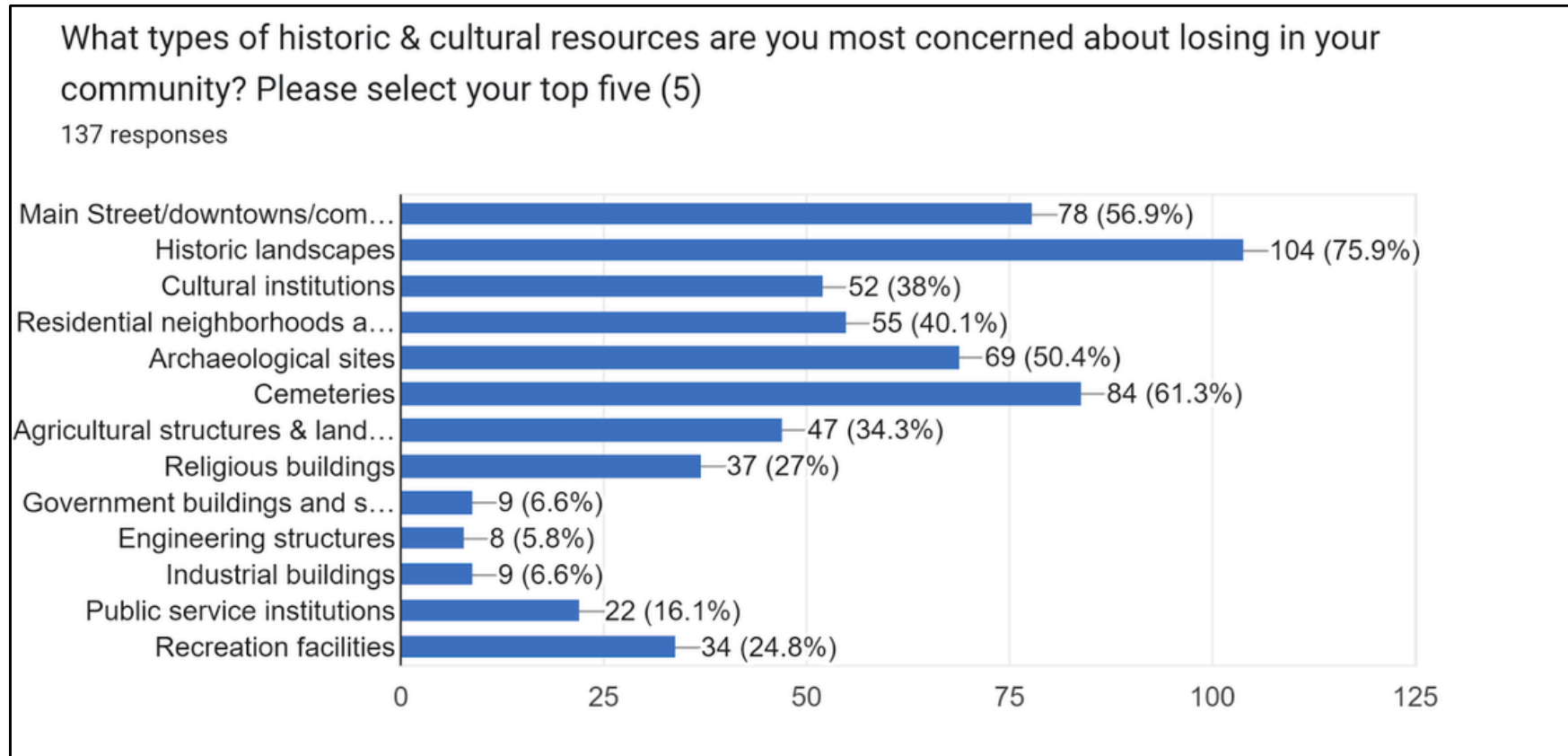
## **Preservation Perceptions: Surveying Mountaineers**

All West Virginians interact with their state's heritage, whether they know it or not. For survey 1, we heard from thirty-seven (37) of the state's fifty-five (55) counties, with our top responders being Wood (13), Kanawha (10), and Jefferson and Monongalia (8) counties. These counties have some of the highest population densities across the state, and they represent areas of estimated growth within the next few years, particularly Jefferson County. Ultimately, their relationship to historic resources, locally and statewide, is crucial to those resources' maintenance and rehabilitation. With Survey 1, our aim was to assess the public's thoughts and perceptions of their local historic sites and structures. Their responses provide clarity about the resources that the community values, as well as direction when organizing outreach and community development programs.



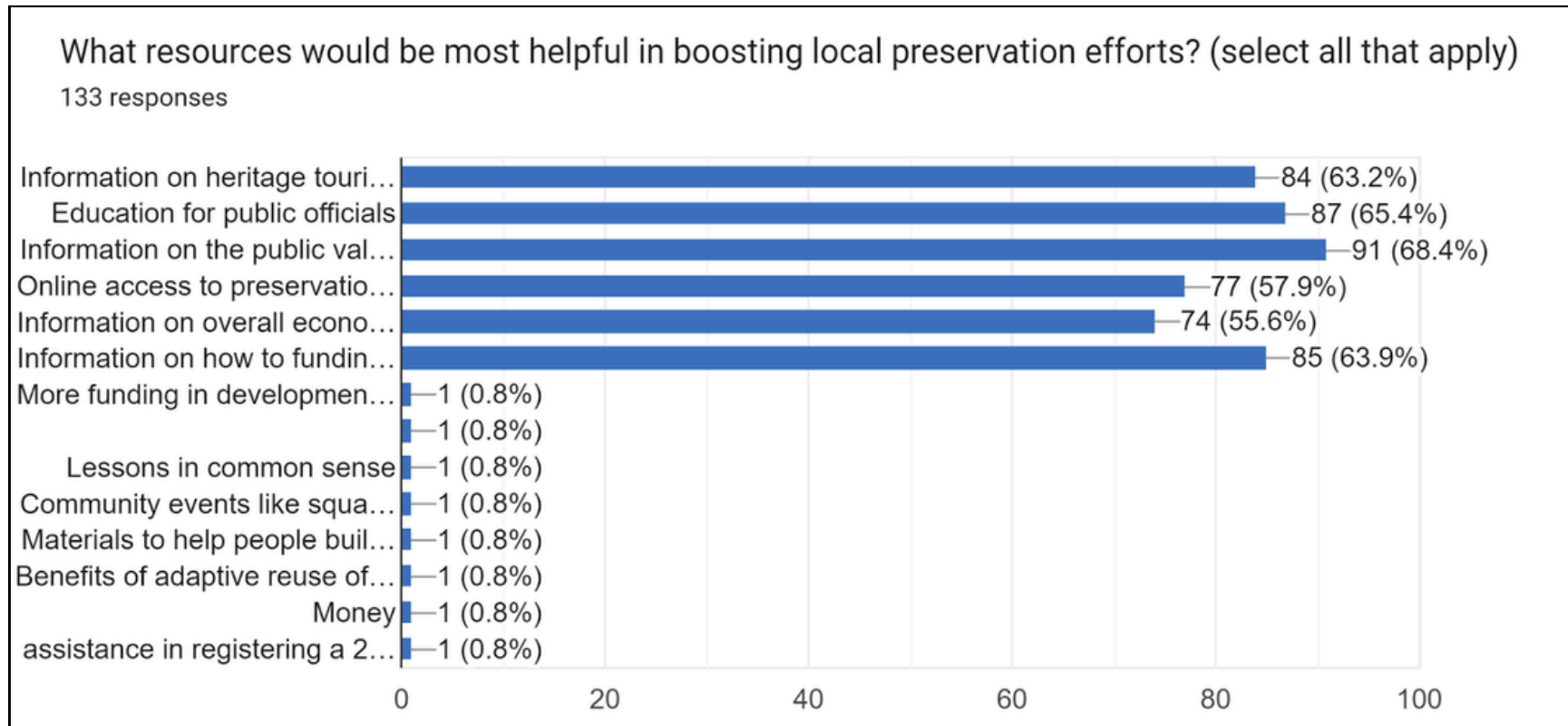
*B&O Railroad Martinsburg Shops, Photo courtesy of Steve Brightwell, 2023.*

Participants were first asked to evaluate which historic and cultural resources that they felt most concerned about losing. There were thirteen (13) set responses to this question:



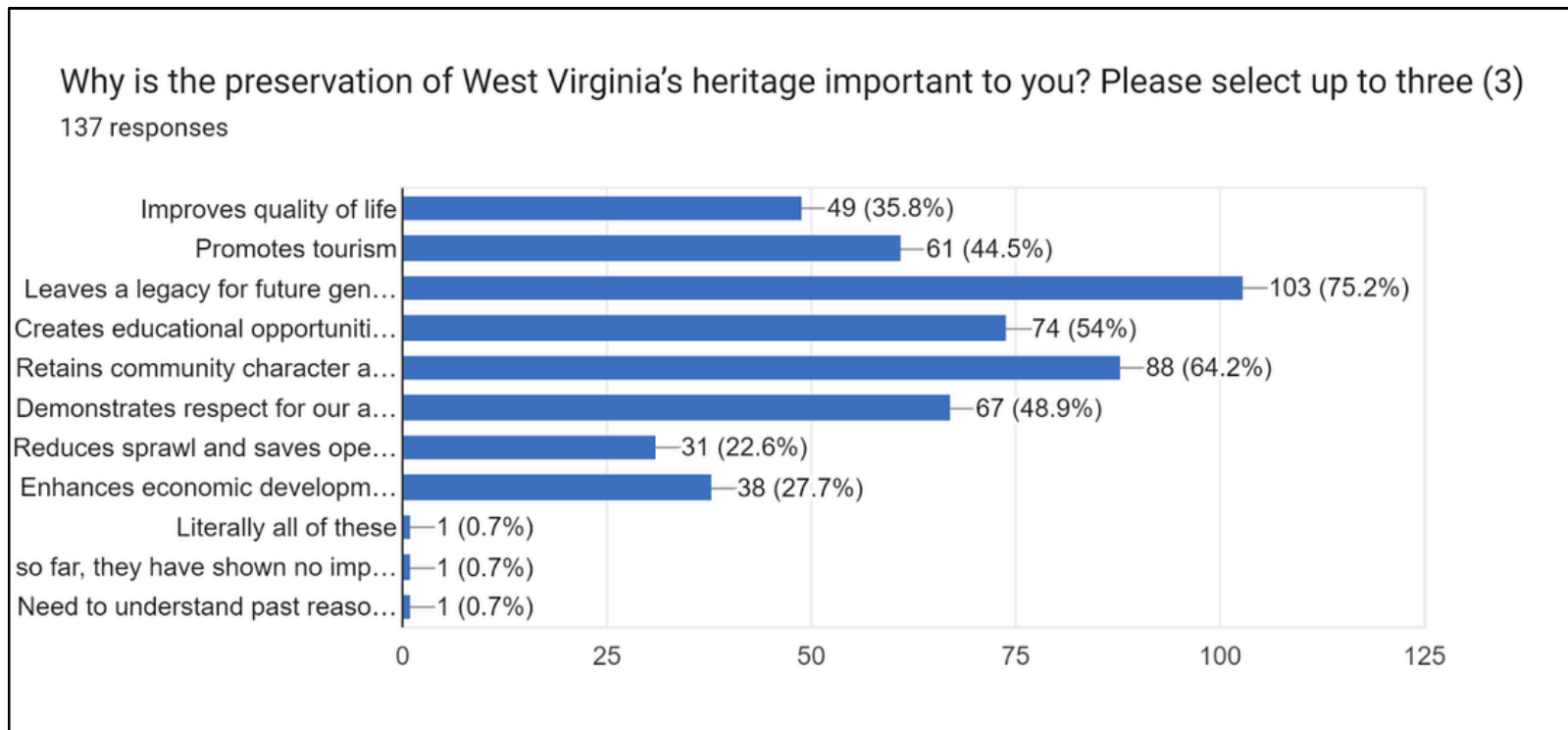
West Virginians who responded placed priority on historic landscapes, cemeteries, and main streets/downtowns.

In order to better understand what information would be most helpful for supporting preservation efforts, we asked what resources would be best for promoting local preservation. Therefore we asked what information would be best for promoting local preservation. Participants were presented with six (6) set answers as well as the option of responding “Other” and adding thoughts:



The margins between results were rather close, with only four (4) responses difference. The top selections were: information on the public value of historic preservation, education for public officials, and information on how to fund historic preservation efforts.

Often it is difficult to articulate the reason we feel so strongly about our heritage. It’s something that we think of as inherent. Yet in understanding people’s connection to their community and its history, we can refine our programming at the State Historic Preservation Office to better support communities across the state who feel deeply connected to their heritage. For this question, participants could select three (3) out of eight (8) set options, and an option to share any additional feelings:



Overwhelmingly people expressed that they believe preservation to be important because it leaves a legacy for future generations. The second most popular response was that people were interested in preservation because it is a method for us to demonstrate respect for our ancestors. These responses are reflective of West Virginians’ sense of community.

We also asked respondents two long form questions. This was to enable us to investigate the ways in which people envisioned themselves within the historic preservation field.

*Survey Question: What can you do to advance historic preservation in West Virginia?*

Part of WV SHPO's mission is to encourage and support West Virginians in their efforts to protect the state's historic resources. Our office was interested in exploring the ways people are currently active within their communities. Simultaneously with this question we intended to prompt participants to consider the ways they might get involved in local preservation projects, if they aren't already. 87 out of our 137 participants responded.

***Selected Responses:***

*"I could apply for grants, develop more local stewardship and capacity. I can increase awareness regionally and maybe more interest locally."*

*"At this stage in life, very little."*

*"Continue to work with lawmakers and local governments."*

*"Support the organizations that are actively improving and preserving structures and neighborhoods in my town."*

*"Attend, encourage, promote and initiate public events."*

*"Contact elected officials to support preservation efforts; educate others on preservation efforts in WV."*

*"Continue to promote adaptive reuse of our historic buildings and also encourage preservation trades so we have folks that can work on the historic buildings."*

*"Educate myself; engage in discussion about preservation with community members and elected officials; continue working in the public history/historic preservation field in WV."*

*"Become involved in organizations and volunteer for cemetery cleaning ups, historic tours, etc.."*

Overall, participants had a positive reaction to this question and shared a variety of strategies for engaging with their community. Themes included education, public outreach, and volunteerism. A few respondents, though, saw their age as an inhibiting factor to their participation. Over the next five years, we intend to address this concern by creating opportunities that demonstrate that people can be involved in preservation in a myriad of ways that don't necessarily mean they have to be physically engaged in these efforts.

*Survey Question: What questions do you have about historic preservation?*

One way that we can refine our programs and activities is to understand the questions that the public has about preservation. The questions below identify the various topics that people are interested in as well as their gaps of knowledge, both of which can be incorporated into presentations and workshops. 55 out of 137 participants submitted their questions to us.

***Selected Responses:***

*“I’d like to know more about opportunities for which I may be qualified to help with.”*

*“It is hard to know what you don't know and ask for help that seems so disconnected from resources. The processes are shrouded in institutional knowledge that is a barrier for new entrants.”*

*“How can I get involved?”*

*“How do I improve preservation efforts in my town?”*

*“What are some of the ways to reach and educate public officials on the benefits of historical preservation?”*

*“Who decides who gets the funds?”*

*“What would the state's priorities be in historic preservation?”*

*“What funds or grants are available for preserving historic sites?”*

*“What funding is available for private citizens to preserve historic buildings and fences?”*

*“How can we get lawmakers and city councils more involved?”*

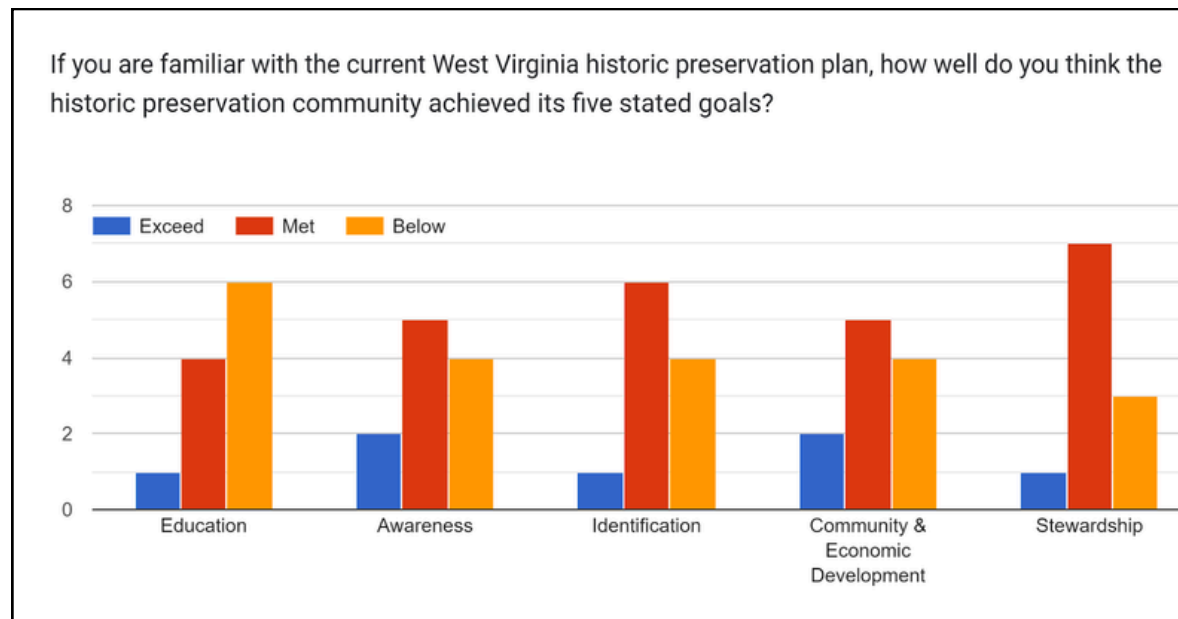
Participants’ questions are encouraging and indicate a desire to be informed about their local history and participate in preserving it. From their responses, most people seem interested in learning more about opportunities to get involved and funding sources. We plan to address these questions through our outreach and stewardship objectives.

## Historic Preservation on the Ground: Surveying Colleagues in the Historic Preservation Field

Historic preservation in West Virginia feels like a small field, but those within the field, either as professionals or as volunteers, are dedicated to the saving and sharing of the state's heritage. In total we heard from seventy-two (72) participants that were either people that were previously familiar with historic preservation or actively practicing in the field. Only eighteen (18) formally responded to our survey, while the other fifty-four (54) shared their feedback via our in-person meetings. For survey 2, we received responses from fourteen (14) of the fifty-five (55) counties. Of our eighteen (18) respondents, seven (7) are currently employed by a preservation or local history organization, five (5) are volunteers in their local government, and four (4) are historic building owners. While we conducted outreach across the state, most respondents were located in the Eastern Panhandle, Central, and Mid-Ohio Valley regions of the state.

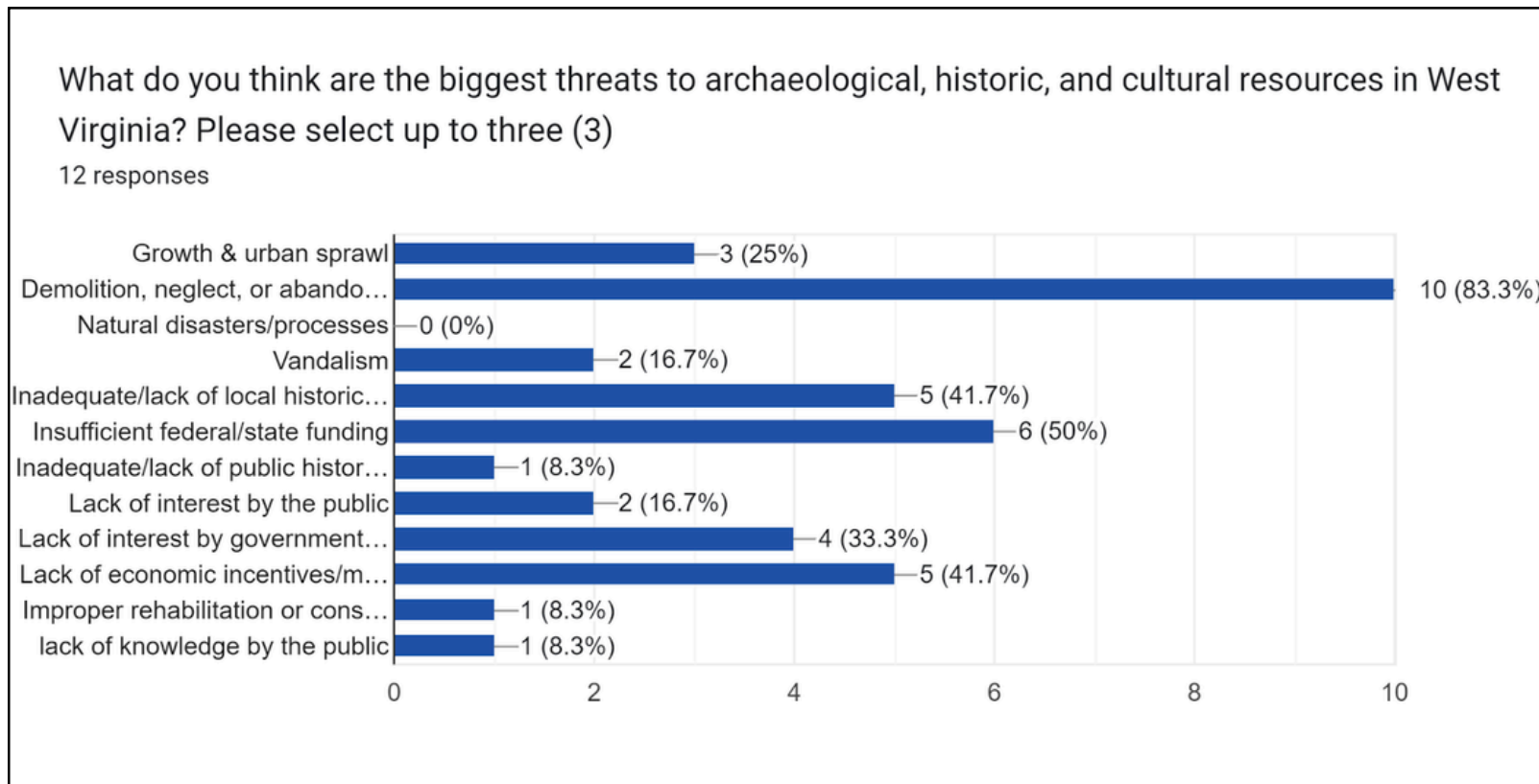
In the survey, we asked respondents to reflect and comment on the state of historic preservation within West Virginia, and preservationists collective efforts. From this we wanted to learn where we all need to improve as well as how we can bolster our current strengths, as well as re-assess the relevancy of our goals and objectives over the past five years.

Participants were asked to rate how well the state did in accomplishing the goals of the last Preservation Plan, including: education, awareness, identification, community and economic development, and stewardship efforts. Goals could be ranked as met, exceeded, or below:



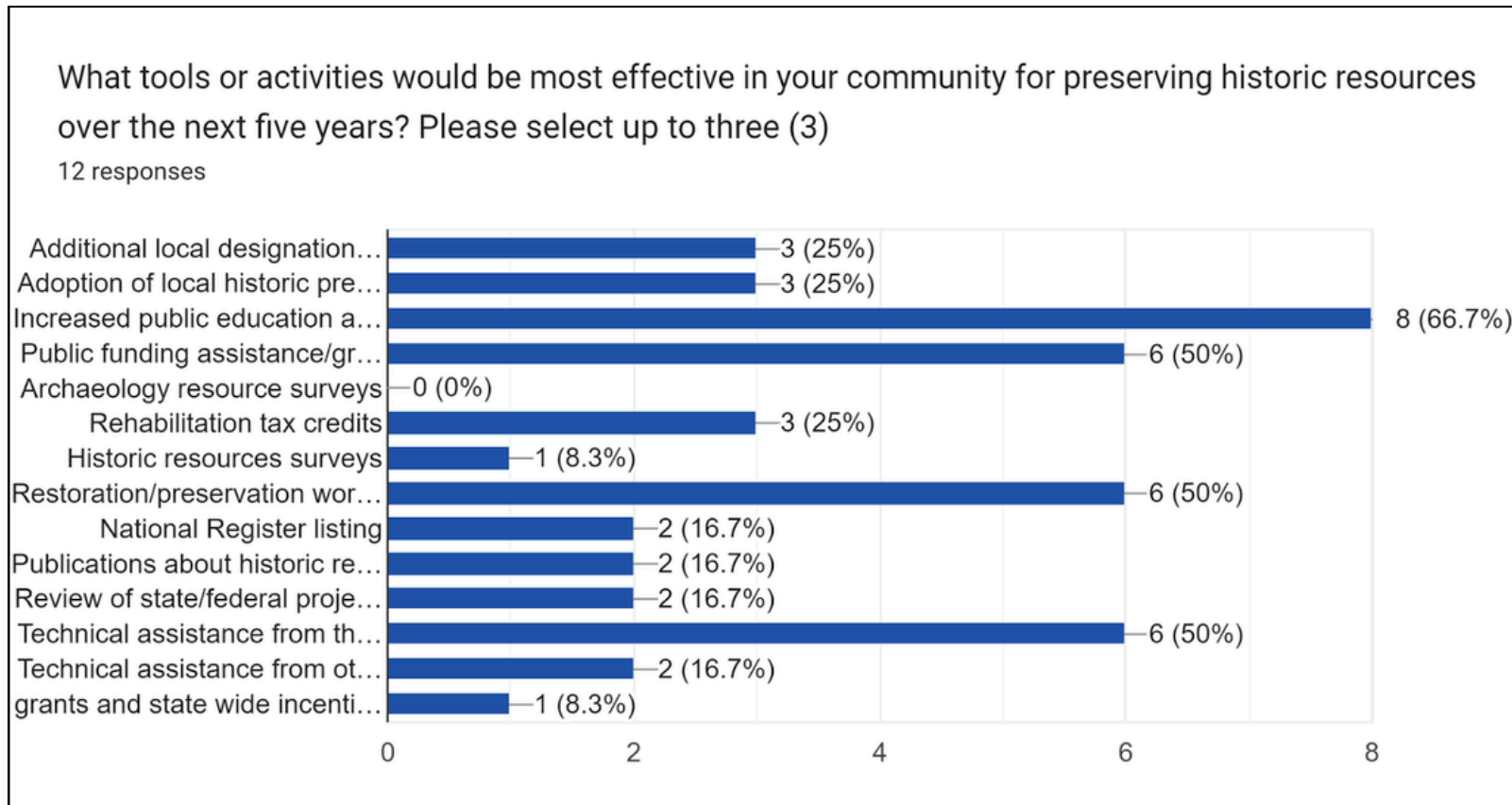
Responses suggest that the stated goals still resonate strongly with West Virginia’s preservationists. In particular though, it shows that over the next five (5) years, we need to focus on building awareness and broadening our education on historic preservation themes. There was no category in which we overwhelmingly exceeded expectations or the stated goals.

Due to their frequent interactions with the historic resources both within their communities and throughout the state, we wanted to gain our participants’ insights into the ongoing threats to the maintenance of those resources and their possible rehabilitation. Participants were presented with eleven (11) set options, along with the ability to contribute additional responses:



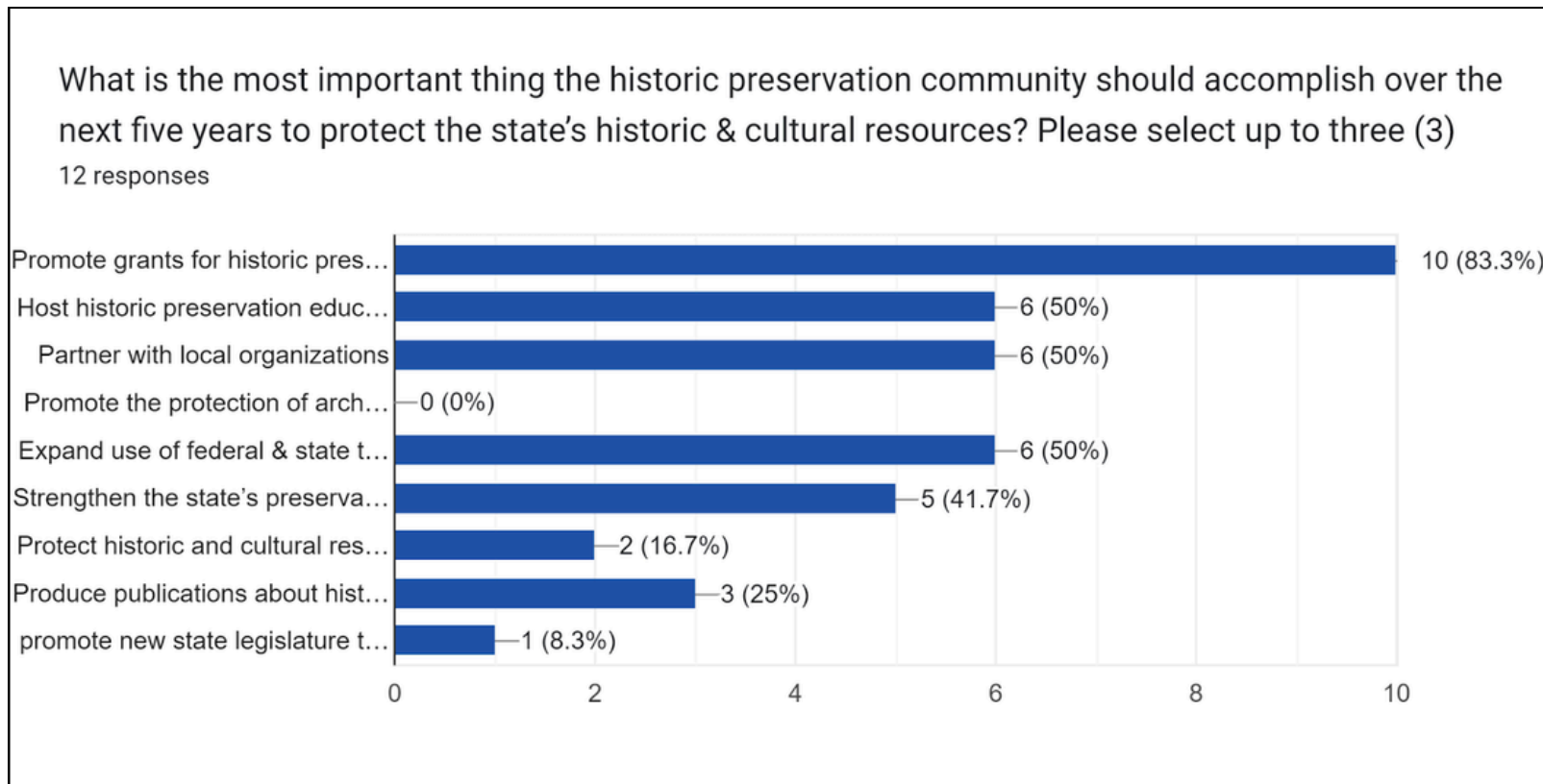
From this question, demolition, neglect, and abandonment emerged as the most prevalent threat. Other top responses were lack of economic incentives and insufficient funding, which we address together in later section 2.2 as it is a related issue, and inadequate local historic preservation laws.

In conversation with the previous question it was essential to understand what resources would help support West Virginians looking to steward historic resources in their communities. This assessment is a grassroots effort as our stakeholders have a more comprehensive grasp of their communities (its needs, its perspective on preservation, etc). As such we wanted to learn more about the tools and activities that they think would effectively strengthen historic preservation. There were thirteen (13) set options, along with the opportunity for participants to write in other suggestions:



According to preservation stakeholders, increased public education, public funding assistance, restoration workshops, and technical assistance would have a greater impact on local efforts. From these recommendations, it appears that education and awareness are still a priority when it comes to our future goals and objectives, and that we will need to expand our outreach and assistance efforts.

Our office was also interested in exploring what our collaborators were interested in pursuing over the next five (5) years. Participants were presented with eight (8) set responses along with an “Other” option for them to share alternative ideas:



Overall, their focus was to assist in the promotion of grant funding for historic preservation work and initiatives. Tied at second are: to host historic preservation education and training programs, partner with local organizations, and expand the use of historic rehabilitation tax credits.

Additionally, participants were asked to answer four (4) paragraph form questions. These questions were intended to assess local needs, as well as foster reflection on individual or organizational aims and help to inform future growth.

*Survey Question: What are your local preservation organization's top two strengths?*

Most participants were serving on their local historic landmark commission, but others were historic building owners, professional consultants, or employed by a preservation/local history organization. These backgrounds gave them different perspectives on the state of preservation within their communities. Of our eighteen (18) participants, sixteen (16) of them responded to this question. A few of these responses were only one (1) to two (2) words. Four (4) of these participants reveal that their strengths lie within their communal connections:

***Selected Responses:***

*“Adding historic structures to the National Register and getting undeveloped land under conservation easement.”*

*“Local interest from the public, funding incentives have been increased.”*

*“Preservation of the downtown area, the mayor is keenly aware of the opportunities and challenges of local preservation efforts.”*

*“Plans to preserve then use historic buildings for community enrichment; including talented people from within the preservation community to make those plans.”*

These answers demonstrate the potential for revitalization via adaptive reuse across the state, as well as a rededication to stewardship practices over historic landscapes.

*Survey Question: What are your local preservation organization's top two weaknesses?*

In contrast to the previous question, we wanted to know what participants are struggling with. Lack of funding was a trend in their responses, with five (5) out of seventeen (17) mentioning it in some capacity. Below the selected comments discuss another prominent issue:

***Selected Responses:***

*“Little to no support from county government & pro growth planning commission.”*

*“Lack of interest in historic preservation by local & State officials. Lack of technical assistance writing Federal grants.”*

*“Lack of community involvement/outreach (for example, not everyone in the community is aware of preservation efforts).”*

*“Apathetic/ignorant residents and local elected officials; abandonment and neglect of historic and cultural resources.”*

On the surface these responses seem bleak, yet they present us with an opportunity. Each of these comments speaks to a lack of relationship in some way, broadly between the community and historic preservationists. This demonstrates a need for a stronger historic preservation network within the state, as well as some strategizing for community outreach.

*Survey Question: Do you feel that you are a part of a statewide historic preservation network? Why or why not?*

Participants had a varied reaction to this question. Several responses consisted of a brief “yes” or “no.” A few participants expanded upon their initial responses with additional reasoning:

***Selected Responses:***

*No, lack of ongoing effort to communicate.*

*I think the network can be improved but there is a network.*

*Yes, plenty of support.*

*Yes. Active in preservation with Main Street, Brownfields, APC, PAWV and with a number of individual organizations and people.*

*Yes. I engage frequently with folks across the state related to local history and historic preservation, including PAWV and SHPO.*

While longer answers to this question affirmed the existence of a preservation network within the state, the selected responses show there is room for improvement.

*Survey Question: What are the two greatest opportunities for overall preservation in West Virginia?*

The last question on the survey was intended to help reignite people’s enthusiasm and change their communities’ weaknesses into an opportunity to make an impact. Throughout the responses the participants unique circumstances, and their vision for the state’s historic resources:

***Selected Responses:***

*“There is a wealth of historic resources just waiting to be identified and preserved, and an untapped citizenry just waiting to learn about the benefits of historic preservation.”*

*“Our state’s historic tax credit program, as well as grants, and the local historic landmark commissions.”*

*“Making citizens of historic districts aware of their responsibility in historic preservation, and providing incentives toward historic preservation.”*

*“The abundance of resources, and the necessity to rehabilitate over demolition.”*

From these answers it is clear that our colleagues think that our historic resources are an opportunity in and of themselves with an open potential.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Conducting these outreach and survey efforts has helped us better understand the priorities, concerns, and aspirations of West Virginians when it comes to caring for their historic and archaeological resources. We will use this knowledge to shape our programs and activities over the next five years. There are various factors at play: people's deep emotional ties to historic resources, conflicting visions of the future, and access to materials and funding. Most respondents in the public reported an interest and support for local preservation efforts, but aren't sure about the long term benefits of preservation or how to get involved. Thus there is a need for greater education, and communication among preservation professionals. West Virginians value their local, state and national histories, we simply have different understandings of how to recognize those histories.



*Part Two: Past, Present, & Future: A Path Forward for 2025-20231*

*Interwoven Mill, Photo courtesy of Catherine Easterling, 2024.*

# Historic & Cultural Resources Inventory

WV SHPO assists West Virginians in the identification of the state's many historic & cultural resources. This is primarily accomplished by conducting archaeological and historic resource surveys. These surveys examine the built environment (buildings, structures, objects) within a given area (i.e. a neighborhood, city, or county). Surveys can be conducted by public agencies, private organizations, or individuals. This work may be undertaken for a number of reasons, some of which may include: the assessment of effects required under Section 106 for a new federal highways project, the identification of a reasonable size and significance of a new historic district 3. the determination of integrity of historic resources already listed on the National Register.

Before doing any fieldwork, the surveyor should research the history of the area or community of interest in order to understand the significance of the historic resources. This research is important to our shared understanding of the significance of buildings, structures, and objects on a local or state level.

Following initial research, surveyors go out into the community. When they look at a property they are documenting the following information: the materials these resources are built of (i.e. what types of roofing materials are present; do the exterior walls of the building appear to be brick, wood siding, or perhaps something else?); its location (the address or coordinates); the condition of the property (is it well maintained or are there areas that could use some attention?); if additional structures have been constructed on the property (a garage or a barn); and its history (when it was built? what it was used for?). Surveyors must also evaluate the age and integrity of resources within the project area. For a historic resource or property to be considered significant, it generally needs to be at least fifty (50) years old, and surveyors should note if resources are within five years of that fifty (50) year date. This information is all documented on our office's Historic Property Inventory (HPI) form which is the most common mechanism that consultants, individuals, agencies, and our own office uses to inventory cultural resources in our state.

When surveys are completed formally by professionals, such as public agencies, consultants, and private organizations, the forms and findings are compiled into a survey report. The report describes the historic context of the project area, summarizes the methods for conducting the survey, and reviews the area's architecture and its historic integrity. In these reports, the surveyor also make recommendations for which properties could be nominated to the National Register, and whether or not they have the integrity and significance to be nominated individ-

ually or within the context of a historic district. Additionally, the report includes a copy of the HPIs from the survey, relevant maps, and photographs. For further guidance on conducting a survey please reference our office's [handbook](#) on the topic.

Our role at WV SHPO is evaluate and make determinations on the eligibility of the survey findings. Additionally, our office serves as a repository for the information collected in such surveys, and when possible, we provide financial assistance to communities for survey efforts. West Virginia's inventory is available to the public for free via the [GIS map](#) on our website. This map includes copies of all HPIs and National Register of Historic Places nominations for inventoried properties in the state. A caveat is that to protect these sites and their resources, access to our archaeological survey data is restricted. Our office will grant access to this information on a case-by-case basis to professional archaeologists. We are constantly in the process of updating our map with the most current documents as they are provided to our office or created in-house.

It is also important to note that our inventory is not a comprehensive list of all historic buildings and structures in the state. Our built environment changes over time, meaning that documenting historic resources as they exist in time can be helpful for future preservation planning. So, all documentation submitted to our office is important in helping us navigate the changing landscape, document historic resources, and plan for thoughtful reuse.

From these surveys, 115,417 architectural sites and 18,222 archaeological sites have been inventoried in West Virginia. 1,146 properties have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, encompassing approximately 26,316 historic resources.

Throughout the rest of this section we will provide a brief description of the different types of historic resources included on the National Register of Historic Places. Each type of historical and cultural resource represents a different facet of the state's history and contributes to our modern landscape:

### **Archaeological Resources**



Archaeological resources are vital to constructing our understanding of prehistory. In West Virginia, archaeologists have discovered artifacts from the Paleoindian, Archaic, and Woodland Periods, as well as the Protohistoric Period. Archaeology has also been utilized throughout the state to help us understand our frontier forts, Civil War battlefields, and our large industrial sites. While archaeological sites are great learning resources, access to these sites may be restricted due to their sensitive nature.



### **Buildings**

As defined by the National Park Service, a building is anything created to shelter human activity. Buildings are likely the most recognizable type of historic resource. We all interact with buildings on a daily basis, and as such they become integral parts of our lives, across West Virginia we are shown the vast potential of these resources. Throughout the state, historic buildings are being adapted for new uses (becoming restaurants, music venues, and affordable housing) or being updated for their original use (like theaters, storefronts, and hotels).



### **Districts**

A district is a concentrated group of buildings, structures, sites, or objects connected historically by planning or physical development. Common types of districts in the state are downtowns, which show how we organize our economic and political life, and residential neighborhoods which demonstrate the ways that we create community. In districts, it is clear to see the overlap between West Virginia's history and its present as districts like our downtowns continue to serve as economic hubs and places of social life.



### **Historic Cemeteries**

Historic cemeteries are a unique type of historic site as they are generally not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. In order to qualify, they must meet additional criteria in order to be listed. Generally, cemeteries are considered to be historically significant because of their design, architectural, or commemorative elements, or because they are the burial ground for a historically significant person. There are approximately twenty (20) cemeteries in the state that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



### **National Historic Landmarks**

The National Historic Landmark (NHL) program only recognizes nationally significant resources, which are those that represent an outstanding aspect of American history and culture. From panhandle to panhandle and across southern coalfield, there are sixteen (16) NHLs in West Virginia. These buildings, structures, and sites are living memorials to our nation's innovations in transportation, academic discourse, and public health, as well as the sites of significant political events and movements.



### **Objects**

Historic objects are identified from other resources by their smaller scale and their primarily artistic nature. Art sculptures, fountains, monuments, and statues are included under the umbrella of objects. These constructions often allow us to celebrate moments of triumph as well as commemorate grief and loss. While there are not many objects in West Virginia listed on the National Register, these resources are frequently very significant icons in communities.



### **Sites**

Sites are locations of a significant event, activity, structure, or building, or a location that holds significance. This includes natural formations, battlefields, farms, trails, and landscapes. Throughout West Virginia, our sites are emblematic of what is special about our state. Sites, like our mines and lumber yards, speak to the decades of West Virginians' contributions to power the nation's industrialization. Similarly, our farms capture the beauty of our mountainous terrain.



### **Structures**

Structures are constructions designed with a functional purpose other than sheltering human activity. They can vary from bridges to trains to dams. In West Virginia, these resources are often associated with our state's transportation history and industrial and infrastructure developments. Our state's structures have moved our state forward, integrating West Virginia with the broader economy and fostering connection through travel.

We hope that as we continue to identify and preserve these resources that we will also persist in constructing a broad understanding of West Virginia's history.

# Challenges Facing our Historic Resources



*Interwoven Mills Windows Before Rehabilitation*, Photo courtesy of WV SHPO, 2023.

West Virginia's wealth of historic resources are affected by a variety of challenges. Our participating historic preservation professionals identified the following concerns as being the greatest threats to historic and cultural resources:

- Demolition, Neglect, & Abandonment
- Insufficient Funding/Lack of Economic Incentives
- Supporting Local Stakeholders in Their Preservation-Related Decisions about Preservation
- Lack of Engagement Between the Community of Preservationists and the Broader Community
- Balancing Economic and Population Growth with Preservation

Each of West Virginia's 55 counties experiences these issues in unique ways, based upon factors like local ordinances and building codes, as well as community development and landscape factors. At the State Historic Preservation Office, we seek to support communities in making the best decisions possible for their historic and archaeological resources by offering them a range of tools and resources to help face these challenges.

## *Demolition, Neglect, & Abandonment*

Overwhelmingly, our participants from the historic preservation field reported that neglect and abandonment was the primary threat to the state's archaeological, historic, and cultural resources. Neglect and abandonment of historic resources is a widespread problem within West Virginia and across the nation, with each region affected by it to a varying degree. Allowing properties to remain vacant has potentially detrimental effects. Neglected properties increase crime, prevent economic development, and are a threat to public health. All communities, in some capacity, are confronted with the challenges these buildings present.

While there is no universal solution for addressing neglect and abandonment, local governments and interested individuals have myriad tools that they can employ in order to rehabilitate these structures. For example, the grassroots historic preservation organization Preservation Alliance of West Virginia (PAWV) offers hands-on workshops on mothballing buildings and repairing historic masonry. WV SHPO seeks to provide proactive assistance through our educational programs as well as technical and financial assistance, such as our Endangered Properties grant, to help communities retain rather than demolish historic buildings. Neglected resources are an overwhelming challenge, partially due to the sheer number of buildings (1 in 16) that are abandoned and also due to the expense they present for local governments.

#### *Insufficient Funding & Lack of Economic Incentives*

There are a multitude of factors that pull funding away from historic preservation efforts and projects within the state. Local governments are forced to make difficult decisions when allocating funds as they often have several competing concerns within their communities-ongoing infrastructure improvements, education, and healthcare to name a few. Due to this high demand for financial resources, they rely on external sources to cover certain funding gaps. Meanwhile, private individuals are confronting the increased cost of construction materials as well as the scarcity of contractors, especially those trained in historic trades.

Currently, WV SHPO has two permanent grant opportunities: our survey and planning grants, and our state development grants. Our Certified Local Government (CLG) program helps connect the state's local governments to these grants and to technical assistance. Through our survey & planning grants, CLGs



*New Salem Baptist Church, Photo courtesy of WV SHPO, 2024.*

are awarded 70% of the total project costs, while non-CLG grant recipients are awarded no more than 60% of the total project costs. The funding source for this grant program is the Historic Preservation Fund, National Park Service. Our state development grant is dedicated to the brick-and-mortar rehabilitation of National Register of Historic Places properties. The development grant covers 50% of the total project costs, and funding for this grant is typically appropriated annually by the West Virginia Legislature.

Our other source of financial support for the state is our historic rehabilitation tax credit program. West Virginia offers two types of historic rehabilitation tax credits (HTC), residential and commercial. The residential HTC is aimed at providing a financial incentive to property owners who undertake substantial rehabilitations of their historic residences while preserving the historic character. At the end of the project property owners receive a 20% state income tax credit. Our commercial tax credit program provides a federal income tax credit and a West Virginia state income tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings. The total credit is 45% of approved rehabilitation costs. For both the residential and commercial tax credit, the property must be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Our office recognizes that there are some limitations to these programs, in particular that the need for grant funding is greater than our capacity. On average, we receive 46 applications for development grants and 11 for survey and planning grants annually, and approximately 20 to 25 and 10 to 15 projects, respectively, are funded. In total, we distribute roughly \$700,000 to historic preservation projects throughout the state each fiscal year. We try to address this funding gap by applying for and distributing additional funding, such as our 2021 Paul Bruhn Revitalization Grant award and the 2024 Day of Service and Remembrance grant from Volunteer America. Through our subgrant programs, we can expand our contribution towards the state's planning efforts and addressing physical rehabilitation of historic resources.

Other organizations are potential funding sources for West Virginian residents and local governments. For instance, both the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia and Wheeling Heritage have managed Paul Bruhn Revitalization subgrant programs. PAWV used the funds to support their Saving Historical Places Grant which is intended to help



*Roof replacement funded by WV SHPO grant in Arthurdale, Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Satterfield, 2023.*

alleviate some of the pressures of deferred maintenance, particularly those historically significant buildings on the verge of demolition by neglect. Wheeling Heritage has a more localized service area, focusing on the revitalization of the city. With their 2021 and 2023 Bruhn grant funding, Wheeling Heritage focused on rehabilitation which would stimulate commercial redevelopment and urban neighborhood redevelopment projects. Subgrants from these organizations supplement WV SHPO's annual grant programs by offering different and expanded funding opportunities.

There are three (3) overlapping challenges when it comes to financial aid and incentives: a lack of adequate funding, a limited awareness of existing financial resources, and a lack of knowledge about grants as well as a limited capacity to manage them. Ultimately, these challenges mean that many of our state's historic resources are not receiving the necessary funding to preserve them. As we move forward in the next five (5) years, we hope to increase our outreach to address both issues.



*Shepherdstown, Jefferson County, Photo courtesy of WV SHPO, 2021.*

#### *Supporting Local Stakeholders in Their Preservation-Related Decisions about Preservation*

As economic development efforts take shape, West Virginia is at the precipice of change in many regions, and the staff members of the WV SHPO are eager to support communities as they make decisions about their historic resources. As our survey and engagement process showed, those with expertise and interest in historic preservation across the state are approaching these changes with a basis of technical knowledge and hands-on experience working with historic resources. They are interested in exploring how we maintain our communities' historic feel, and the ways that we can incentivize the preservation of our state's unique historic character. There are a variety of tools available to help communities navigate these decisions about preservation and progress, including: local preservation ordinances (i.e. zoning and demolition by neglect), design guidelines and review, and code enforcement.

There are fifty-five (55) communities, both cities and counties, across the state of West Virginia that are dedicated to addressing preservation concerns through our Certified Local Government (CLGs) program. Seven (7) of these CLGs have implemented a design review for specific districts within their towns. These types of ordinances have the potential to contribute to the economic prosperity of local downtowns and commercial districts by ensuring that these areas retain a sense of place that can be a draw for tourists and locals looking to appreciate the area's historic character. Communities can also choose to honor local historic significance by undertaking documentation of their historic features, offering heritage and architectural tours, and pursuing recognition through designation on the National Register of Historic Places. Some of these tools might not be the right fit for all communities, but with the myriad of choices available, local decision makers can select those that are appropriate for them. The next few years will provide an opportunity for community members to be in conversation with each other about how to best preserve the aspects of their communities that are most important to them. Those interested in implementing new mechanisms to preserve their communities' shared heritage will certainly play a part in this conversation, particularly for those communities that chose to adopt different ordinances and education efforts. Together, West Virginians will make the best decisions for their community.

#### *Lack of Engagement Between the Community of Preservationists & the Broader Community*

How do you get people engaged? It's a fair question, and one that many organizations are forced to ask themselves. It is certainly one that resonates within West Virginia. Our historic landmark commissions note that it is difficult to communicate the importance of preservation to their community members. Additionally, they feel that the public doesn't have the knowledge about the resources and incentives available to them. This then translates into a lack of broader community support. Anecdotal evidence from the public meetings suggest that this perception as well as an overall lack of interest is closely connected to lack of awareness. The state's historic preservation community collaborates with a various set of people, like local government officials, business owners, nonprofits, state agencies, and citizens.

Simultaneously, possible lack of interest doesn't necessarily mean lack of care. Our attention is in high demand: from our personal commitments, to our jobs, to social media, to a living healthy lifestyle. While participants in our general survey reported high levels of interest in their local heritage and history, that doesn't always translate into action. Participants also reported there being significant barriers to entry, such as not knowing the particular terminology or who to reach out to with specific questions, when it comes to stewarding historic resources.



*Certified Local Government Overview*, Photo courtesy of WV SHPO, 2024.

### *Balancing Economic & Population Growth with Preservation*

Perhaps most visible within the state's economic centers, such as the Eastern Panhandle region as well as cities like Huntington and Bluefield, the state's economy continues to grow, and the footprints of residential and commercial areas are expanding with that economic trajectory. For example in the Eastern Panhandle, projections suggest that growth and economic expansion is expected to continue, as a 2022 report on the economic outlook of the region states that the total employment in this area will surpass statewide and national averages. Additionally, the region's population is predicted to slowly but steadily increase over the next three years. Commercial expansion helps move our communities forward, diversifying people's job opportunities and increasing investment in our towns and cities. Other regions of the state are experiencing economic growth as well.

Alongside this growth, historic landmark commissions can face tough decisions about how to best steward the historic resources within their purview. Yet these decision points for local communities also offer an opportunity for our historic preservation community to grow. Through state and federal programs, West Virginians have access funding and tax credits for historic preservation and to rehabilitate their local historic resources, adapting them for new uses. Our office will continue to support organizations and individuals, through partnerships and our programs to address finding a balance between economic growth and resource preservation.



*Rosenberger-Brown Farm*, Photo courtesy of WV SHPO, 2024.



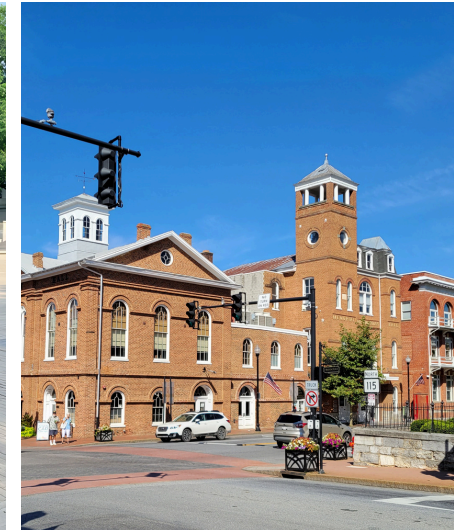
*Miller-Pence Farm*, Photo courtesy of WV SHPO, 2021.

# Goals & Objectives

From across West Virginia a common theme emerged in our survey, that preservation organizations struggle to connect with the public. In many cases, members of historic landmarks commissions said that their community viewed preservation as a roadblock to progress or as some intimidating government entity. Other participants indicated that there are knowledge barriers preventing them from getting involved in historic preservation. We recognize that preservation is most successful when it is a collaborative effort among a variety of stakeholders. Thus, each of our goals is aimed at fostering relationships between people and organizations with different levels and types of knowledge and experience.

Our approach to historic preservation within the Mountain State includes: 1.) outreach and engagement, 2.) identification and evaluation of historic resources, 3.) community and economic development, and 4.) stewardship of our heritage. Each of these goals provides an opportunity for preservationists, especially our office, to be in continuous dialogue with each other, local stakeholders, and community members.

Our framework for 2025 through 2031 consists of goals, objectives, and strategies. The goals are intended to be overarching ideas which will organize our state's efforts. Our objectives are specific aims, while the strategies are intended to inspire the actions of local and state historic preservation organizations, and should be adapted to best suit individual communities and their needs.



Photographs courtesy of WV SHPO.



**Goal 1: West Virginians will be engaged with their history and view historic preservation as an opportunity to learn more about our shared heritage, and retain a sense of place.**

West Virginians share an understanding that their history is important. For many this is expressed in a view that preserving our state's history ensures we leave a lasting legacy, one for future generations to both learn from and enjoy. Our historic structures are opportunities to learn more about our shared heritage, while also retaining a sense of place.

Simultaneously, there are questions about historic preservation: Who do you talk to to learn more about it? How does a member of the public get involved? Trained preservationists seek to engage with the public to help them see the intrinsic value of our state's historic resources and then provide tools and skills to preserve the historic resources that they care about.

*Objective 1.1: Increase access to information about historic preservation.*

Strategies:

*1.1.1: Highlight successful preservation projects throughout the state to illustrate the variety of resources and project types.*

- Utilize social media and print publications to share these stories.

*1.1.2: Provide annual training, both in-person and virtual, to the state's Certified Local Governments, other organizations, and the public.*

*1.1.3: Create a virtual archive of webinars on the WV SHPO website and YouTube channel.*

*1.1.4: Continue to update program guides and manuals to improve people's ability to successfully nominate a property to the National Register, apply for grant funding, survey the state's architectural and archeological resources, participate in the historic tax credit program, and develop Certified Local Governments.*

*1.1.5: Update virtual resources, i.e organizational websites, to improve immediate access to program information and resources.*

*Objective 1.2: Provide the public with opportunities and resources to recognize and understand the value of the state's historic resources.*

Strategies:

*1.2.1: Collaborate with K-12 educators to develop curriculum, according to the state's standards, that introduces students to historic preservation themes.*



*1.2.2: Develop tools to connect the public with their physical landscape, i.e. a virtual tour that uses oral histories from people explaining their relationship with key West Virginia buildings.*

*1.2.3: Continue to fund heritage education projects (such as producing posters recognizing historic & archaeology months, publishing brochures, sponsor workshops, and creating digital walking tours), National Register nominations, and architectural/archaeological surveys.*

*1.2.4: Connect with additional entities such as convention & visitors bureaus, local economic development authorities, and Main Streets in order to expand our audience.*

*Objective 1.3: Assist the public in getting involved in local historic preservation efforts.*

Strategies:

*1.3.1: Develop guides with tips to help public audiences get involved with different aspects of preservation, including adaptive reuse, volunteerism, and advocacy.*

*1.3.2: Share volunteer opportunities from local historic landmark commissions and historic sites via a monthly eblast and on social media to increase local volunteerism and maintenance of historic and cultural resources.*

*1.3.3: Provide continuing education resources related to preservation at regional and statewide conferences.*

*1.3.4: Provide quarterly workshops and webinars discussing preservation issues and best practices.*

**Goal 2: West Virginians will participate in the identification and evaluation of our state's historic resources in order to sustain preservation efforts.**

Once preservationists have identified the historic resources, the work of historic preservation begins. With our historic sites we can expand West Virginia's historical narrative and honor the experiences of overlooked communities, such as examining the Green Book sites which helped African Americans travel throughout the state. We can also build centers of community and economic life, like marketplaces or affordable housing in large-scale buildings that connect people and commerce. Thus we recognize that identifying resources, evaluating their potential, and designating their significance is the basis for all of our historic preservation goals.



*Objective 2.1: Advance the identification, evaluation, and designation of the state's historic resources.*

Strategies:

2.1.1: Provide public in-person workshops, webinars, and recorded training on topics such as researching historic properties, steps to completing a Historic Property Inventory form, etc. to empower grassroots and individual survey efforts.

- Produce a series of virtual trainings on completing a National Register of Historic Places nomination step-by-step.

2.1.2: Utilize social media to aid people in identification of historic resources. For example, publishing a series of posts featuring common types of historic resources within West Virginia and key characteristics that the public should look for.

- Develop one to two page guides on each evaluation criteria with in-state/local examples.

*Objective 2.2: Increase survey and designation efforts that recognize communities that have not historically been documented and their resources throughout the state.*

Strategies:

2.2.1: Aid in developing preliminary historic contexts to assist in the identification of resources that have not been comprehensively evaluated.

2.2.2: Encourage and support the preparation of National Register nominations for historically under documented communities.

2.2.3: Apply for grant funding with a focus on identifying and listing resources that demonstrate the wide array of communities and industries within the state's history.

2.2.4: Develop a network representing all voices to broaden preservationists perspectives and offer guidance on opportunities for more inclusive identification efforts.

*Objective. 2.3: Increase access to information on our state's historic resources.*

Strategies:

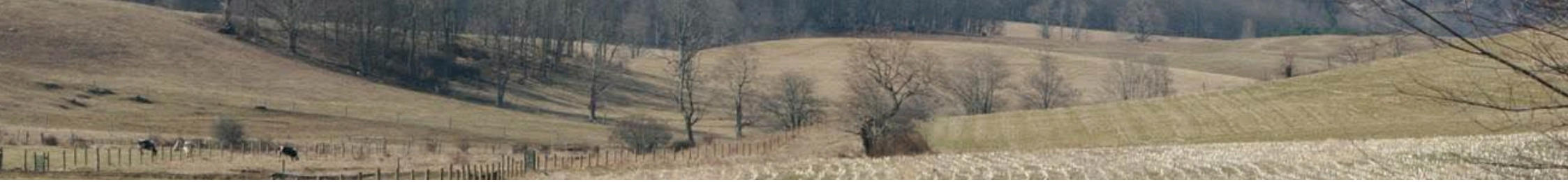
2.3.1: Continue to digitize Historic Property Inventory forms and upload them to our GIS system.

2.3.2: Undertake internal database clean-up in order to improve website searchability.

2.3.3: Increase people's awareness and use of GIS systems in order to further identification efforts of local and state historic and cultural resources.

- Provide an introductory webinar on utilizing the system and its applications.

2.3.4: Distribute information on digital mapping and storytelling platforms to increase awareness of the state's resources and their connection to the state's heritage.



**Goal 3: West Virginians will understand the potential of historic preservation and utilize its tools and resources to revitalize our communities.**

Rehabilitation denotes opportunity: an opportunity for our local communities to continue to thrive, and to encourage new growth. Across the country it has been continuously demonstrated that collective investment in historic structures has long lasting impacts in both urban and rural spaces. West Virginia has seen this too with the revitalization of downtowns and historic districts in places like Lewisburg, Charleston, Fayetteville, and Wheeling. Rehabilitating historic buildings supports the local economy, increasing the number of jobs, raising the household income, and benefiting other surrounding industries. Rehabilitation is also often the most energy efficient and cost effective way to bring about changes. While the change created through preservation often happens incrementally, ultimately, revitalizing our communities through preservation ensures a higher quality of life.

*Objective 3.1: Expand the use of financial incentive programs, such as state and federal tax credits, and grants.*

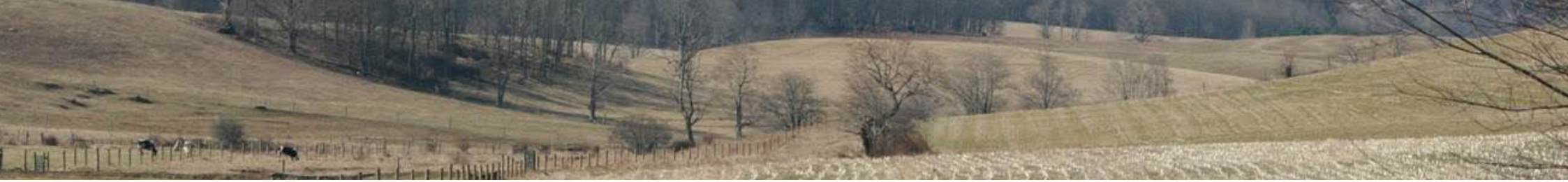
Strategies:

- 3.1.1: Increase knowledge about the state and federal tax credit programs through the development of an annual webinar.
- 3.1.2: Continue to offer Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit presentations to interested communities and targeted audiences.
- 3.1.3: Collaborate with state and local partners to create digital guides on commercial buildings that have been revitalized in order to demonstrate the economic impact revitalization has had on these communities.

*Objective 3.2: Identify and promote financial and technical assistance for programs that link historic preservation with recreation and tourism.*

Strategies:

- 3.2.1: Continue to collaborate with the state's other agencies.
- 3.2.2: Establish a relationship with tourism and recreational organizations to demonstrate and increase the broader importance of preservation.
- 3.2.3: Identify and provide financial assistance for activities that connect historic preservation with recreation and tourism to sustain heritage tourism efforts.
- 3.2.4: Connect new applicants with individuals and organizations that have successfully completed a similar project to mentor them in the process.



*Objective 3.3: Develop tools to help property owners, non-profit organizations, and government entities to protect identified threatened resources.*

Strategies:

3.3.1: Create informational materials, and provide training for property owners and local governments on the value of existing property as an asset.

3.3.2: Provide continuing education courses for realtors, architects, and contractors on preservation topics like National Register of Historic Places and the state's residential historic tax credit program.

3.3.3: Assist in the development of systems to track the number of vacant properties, and implement local ordinances that combat demolition by neglect.

**Goal 4: West Virginians will continue to act as stewards of our shared heritage, protecting and sustaining our historic resources across the state.**

When taking on a preservation project, people become stewards of our past, present, and future. Historic preservation is multifaceted, and is an expression of people's commitment: to our shared heritage, to our communities' economic development and longevity, or our environmental sustainability. As such we all have the shared responsibility to maintain these structures and buildings. This maintenance is accomplished through a number of initiatives including collaborative and supportive preservation networks, financial incentives and investment, and regular planning efforts.

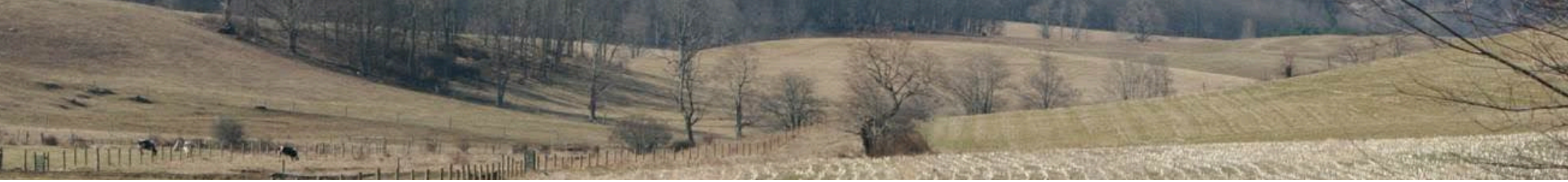
*Objective 4.1: Strengthen the relationship between individuals, organizations, local governments, and state agencies invested in historic preservation activities.*

Strategies:

4.1.1: Provide a variety of networking opportunities for the state's historic landmark commissions, preservation organizations, and historic sites.

4.1.2: Generate intergenerational conversations about local and state historic resources, and best practices for preservation.

- Partner with local universities to facilitate discussions between students and preservation professionals and volunteers.



4.1.3: Establish regular open meetings (in-person and online) for preservation organizations and agencies to have conversations with the public.

4.1.4: Expand the state's partnership network to ensure that all West Virginians have equal access to the state's historic preservation activities.

- Seek to include the viewpoints of communities who have historically not been engaged in historic preservation.

4.1.5: Actively participate within the review process for projects that trigger Section 106 or Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

- Develop sustainable relationships with federally recognized tribes with ancestral homelands in West Virginia to further public understanding of their perspective on the protection of extant resources.
- Continue to educate the public on the ways they can participate in the review process.

*Objective 4.2: Investigate and develop established and new funding sources, as well as connect communities and organizations to existing resources and financial assistance.*

Strategies:

4.2.1: Apply for federal subgrant programs, such as the Paul Bruhn Revitalization Grant, to expand financial assistance for physical rehabilitation.

4.2.2: Continue to send a bi-monthly e-newsletter to the state's CLGs notifying them of upcoming training sessions and funding opportunities.

4.2.3: Continue to provide annual financial assistance for projects related to evaluating and treating the state's historic resources.

4.2.4: Host webinars aimed at helping people find funding opportunities, write compelling applications, and successfully complete a grant project.



*Objective 4.3: Collaborate with communities (i.e. historic landmark commissions and local governments) interested in instituting local preservation ordinances, design review, preservation easements, and conservation covenants.*

Strategies:

4.3.1: Provide information, upon request, on the benefits of maintaining a building or district's historic character.

4.3.2: Assist preservation organizations in their efforts to build relationships with the public and help answer questions on preservation ordinances.

4.3.3: Partner with local commissions and governments undertaking the process of drafting preservation ordinances and/or design review guidelines.

4.3.4: Continue to provide the preservation perspective to local governments considering zoning and planning efforts.

4.3.5: Develop a formal historic preservation easement program, including an application form, easement policies, and an information packet.

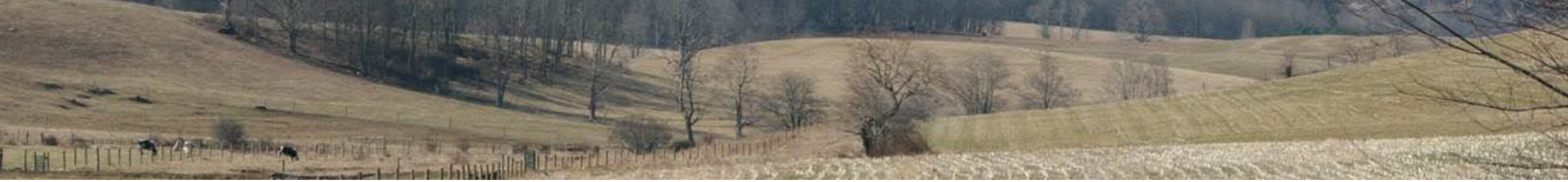
*Objective 4.4: Provide information about how historic preservation can overlap with disaster planning and recovery operations at the local, regional, and state level.*

Strategies:

4.4.1: Establish and strengthen connections with local planning commissions to ensure local planners have access to the information they need about historic preservation when undertaking disaster preparedness planning.

4.4.2: Partner with the West Virginia Emergency Management Division to develop materials on best practices for hazard mitigation and disaster recovery.

4.4.3: Disseminate emergency preparedness materials to the state's Certified Local Governments.



*Objective 4.5: Advise and assist state and federal agencies to ensure the protection of the state's historic resources.*

Strategies:

4.5.1: Actively participate in the review process for projects that trigger Section 106 or Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and WV Code §29-1-8(a).

4.5.2: Create training and education resources for agencies and their designees to help streamline review procedures.

- Produce a series of webinars on the submission process, including but not limited to accessing and using the online portal, & completing inventory forms.
- Develop reference guides on documenting buildings, such as the “Dos and Don’ts” of photographing resources.

4.5.3: Participate, as appropriate, in Section 106 program alternatives (i.e. Programmatic Agreements) in order to streamline the review process and establish clear and consistent requirements for all parties involved.

4.5.4: Encourage local governments (i.e. historic landmarks commissions, planning commissions) to participate in the Section 106 consultation process for projects in their communities when appropriate.

4.5.5: Establish clear, regular, and consistent communication between the SHPO and federal agencies, THPOs, state agencies, and other participants in federal and state review and compliance processes.

4.5.6: Increase outreach efforts to address misconceptions about Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Throughout the planning process, West Virginians expressed their interest in their local and state history. Members of historic landmarks commissions as well as members of the public overwhelmingly think of the state's historic sites, buildings, and objects as a valuable legacy. By continuing to engage with West Virginians, we can further ensure that that history is not only preserved, but that it serves as the basis for communities to grow and thrive.



*Part Three: Reflections on Mountain State Legacy*

*WV Independence Hall, Photo courtesy of Steve Brightwell, 2022.*



*Jefferson County Courthouse, Photo courtesy of Steve Brightwell, 2023.*

# Accomplishments in Preservation

West Virginia, along with the rest of the country, underwent drastic changes between 2020 and 2024. New challenges were presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and it greatly altered our ability to connect with community members. In many ways, West Virginia's historic preservationists rose to confront these challenges and were able to overcome them.

The Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area (AFNHA), which consists of sixteen West Virginia and two Maryland counties, focuses on cultural heritage, environmental stewardship, and tourism to support community and economic development. Since 2020 AFNHA has:

- AFNHA owns the historic Darden Mill in Elkins, WV and has completed several improvement projects. In 2021, they painted the building's exterior and then in 2024 they repaired the gutter system.
- In 2022, AFNHA established a grant program that supports projects that provide direct historic preservation, or enhance historic structures and places. The grant program has awarded just over \$187,000 with funded projects within the heritage area including direct historic preservation activities, signage and interpretation for historic places and structures, archaeology, and surveys.
- In 2024, AFNHA secured a pledge for a Congressionally Directed Spending grant from HUD to rehabilitate the third floor of the Darden Mill for additional interpretive, office, and meeting space, as well as the addition of an elevator for better access.

- The AFNHA AmeriCorps program consists of 30-40 members annually deployed across its WV service area. AmeriCorps members continue to support organizations that support historic preservation across our region such as the Beverly Heritage Center, US Forest Service, Mainstreet organizations, and Arthurdale, among others. They provide “boots on the ground” support for their projects that would otherwise go undone.

Friends of Wheeling is the oldest preservation organization in the state, founded in 1970 to preserve Wheeling’s architectural and cultural heritage. Over the last four years, the Friends of Wheeling have:

- A Bicycle Tour of South Wheeling was held in September 2021, highlighting various historic sites – primarily relating to South Wheeling’s industrial past.
- Major remodeling was done on one of the apartments at 921 Main, and a matching grant from the State Historic Preservation Office enabled brick repointing work on the north side of the building.
- In 2023, 11 tours of historic buildings in Wheeling were conducted, including the very popular tour of the Howgait mansion, with more than 100 in-person visitors.
- The Ohio County Cemeteries Foundation was formed in 2023, focusing on cemetery rehabilitation.
- The 2023 AmeriCorps members collaborated on two Old House Seminars, co-sponsored by Friends of Wheeling and Wheeling Heritage, and organized a hands-on workshop at Stone Church Cemetery.
- Friends of Wheeling was recognized for “distinguished service, loyalty, and dedication” at the annual State of the City luncheon.
- Fifteen building tours were hosted in 2024, starting with the very popular tour of the S.S. Bloch Mansion (now known as Elmhurst-House of Friendship). Online viewing of tours has increased over the years, with the Bloch Mansion being the most viewed – with some 8000 views on the Friends Facebook page.
- In January 2024, Friends of Wheeling presented a statewide, online Deed Research workshop, sponsored by Preservation Alliance of WV. Participants were guided through steps needed to research a property using free resources



*Workshop at Stone Church Cemetery, Photo courtesy of Friends of Wheeling, 2022.*

such as county deed records, state vital records for births, deaths, and marriages, online ancestry sources, and online newspaper articles.

- A highlight of 2024 was a welcoming reception for nearly two dozen people who have recently moved to Wheeling specifically to rehabilitate historic buildings. Friends worked with each person to share information about the histories of their buildings and found the interest of the “New Wheeling Preservationists” to be refreshing and inspiring.
- The rehabilitation of the Hughes Duplex is an ongoing effort for Friends of Wheeling. The project began in 2021 when the group acquired the building. Work over the past three years has included stabilization, facade repair, brick repointing, installation of utilities, window restoration, and masonry repair. In the summer of 2024, an open house was held to showcase the progress of rehabilitation.

Most historic preservation work is accomplished at the local level. In West Virginia there are 55 Historic Landmark Commissions (HLC) in the state. The following are submissions from our HLCs documenting their progress and accomplishments on a variety of projects from 2020-2024:

- The City of Hinton is currently working on the restoration of the historic Hinton Hardwoods building, and have made significant progress in the past few years. The city received a grant from the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia and put a new roof on the building. They also received funding from Opportunity Appalachia to complete a structural analysis of Hinton Hardwood. The City of Hinton also received a congressional directed spending grant to be used to install interior wiring, plumbing, and HVAC. The building is being adapted into 16 apartments, and a retail and event space.
- The Jefferson County Courthouse was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 2023 after several years of hard work and dedication from the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission.
- In Martinsburg, the Shenandoah Hotel and the Interwoven Mill complex have been revitalized, utilizing the historic rehabilitation tax credits. The city has also completed exterior renovation to the Apollo Theater, restoring the facade.
- In 2021, the Nicholas County Historic Landmarks Commission (NCHLC) contributed to the design and implementation of a commemorative trail and a public library display space for the Richwood High School Memorial Walking Trail.



*Interwoven Mill*, Photo courtesy of Catherine Easterling, 2024.

- NCHLC also worked on the preservation of the exterior of the Federal Building in Summersville. Then in 2024, they placed a historical marker about Bomber No. 5 1921 at the plane’s crash site. Currently, they are working with Nicholas County Parks & Tourism for the “Rock the Landmarks” project to promote tourism and site visitation.
- The Shepherdstown Historic Landmarks Commission introduced the issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs) and workshop opportunities. Through the COAs and workshops, the Shepherdstown HLC worked with property owners in restoration and new construction project. Major restoration efforts included the Thomas Shepherd Grist Mill, the Shepherdstown Opera House, the James Tavern, and 407 East German Street.

The Preservation Alliance of West Virginia (PAWV) is a statewide, grassroots, nonprofit organization dedicated to historic preservation in the Mountain State. PAWV promotes preservation through education and outreach, advocacy, and technical assistance.

- Awarded two Paul Bruhn Historic Rural Revitalization Grants and subgranted to 14 projects. One in 2021 (\$550,000) for the Saving Historic Places Grant, and the other in 2023 (\$750,000) for the Fund for Historic Schools Grant.
- Continued the Preserve WV AmeriCorps program.
- Offered free Cemetery Preservation Workshops and helped to preserve over two dozen cemeteries.
- Offered workshops in hands-on window restoration and historic masonry preservation.
- Promoted historic trades as a career pathway for West Virginia.
- Advocated for the saving of historic properties and policies that make historic preservation incentives more accessible to rural communities.

Wheeling Heritage was founded to support the revitalization of Wheeling, West Virginia. The organization continues to play a key role in preserving the historic charm and architectural legacy of the city:

- From 2020 to 2023, one history district was listed on the National Register, three historic districts were expanded, and one survey was completed.



*Thomas Shepherd Grist Mill Before & After.* Photo courtesy of Andy Beall. Shepherdstown, WV.

- In 2021, Wheeling Heritage launched the Wheeling Historic Revitalization Subgrant Program with the support of a \$750,000 Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant from the National Park Service. This program has funded nearly a dozen projects, focusing on commercial properties and urban neighborhoods. In 2023, they received a second of funding from the Paul Bruhn grant program.
- They received a million earmark from Senator Capito and \$750,000 from the City's American Rescue Plan Act for preservation and revitalization initiatives.
- The Old House Seminar was held in May 2023 to provide information on maintaining and preserving historic properties.
- In July 2023, Wheeling Heritage received funds for their Gateway Project to support major revitalization efforts in the Gateway area.
- In October 2023, their Housing Survey was released, providing key insights into Wheeling's housing stock and preservation opportunities.
- The Artisan Center Renovation is an ongoing renovation project spanning 2023-2024, revitalizing the Artisan Center to preserve its historical integrity while enhancing its functionality.
- Wheeling Island Flood Wall Restoration slated for completion in November 2024, preserving an iconic feature of the city's industrial past.

As for the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office, the office continued to aid in the identification of the state's historic resources. This support for preservation across the state was encompassed by a variety of programs and activities:

- In 2019, WVSHPO received a grant from the National Park Service. The project was completed in two phases. The first phase was dedicated to completing an architectural survey of West Virginia State University, one of the state's historically black universities. In its second phase, a Multiple Property Documentation cover form on the state's Green Book sites was completed as well as the nomination of two historic districts, one in Morgantown and the other in Bluefield. This project was completed in the summer of 2024.
- During FY 2020, WV SHPO received a Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant for \$350,000 which was used to help owners of National Register of Historic Places properties with rehabilitation issues. Fourteen grants were awarded to property owners throughout the state.



*West Virginia State University Faculty Housing, Photo courtesy of WV SHPO, 2022.*

- WV SHPO also continued to update and expand our geographic information system (GIS). Currently, its internet geodatabase is composed of approximately 13,804 architectural sites, 524 archaeological sites, 65 National Register properties, 102 architectural surveys, 675 archaeological surveys, and 552 cemeteries. This database has and continues to increase West Virginians' access to information on the state's historic resources.
- In 2022, legislation removed limitations on the allocation of tax credits per year and per rehabilitation project, it also introduced phased projects. Both aspects of the legislation allowed for larger projects to happen. Since the legislation passed, WV SHPO has seen an increase in applications for its tax credit program. In fiscal year 2022, 19 rehabilitation projects were completed through the tax credit program with a total rehabilitation investment of \$11,634,592. Comparatively, in fiscal year 2024 8 projects were completed with a total rehabilitation investment of \$70,305,030.

Through these activities, the historic preservation community fulfilled our shared 2020-2024 goals and objectives. Reflecting on past activities helps to inform future efforts. Over the next five (5) years, we intend to build off of our recent successes by increasing our public engagement, expanding our recognition of historic resources with an emphasis on historically under documented communities, aiding in community and economic development, and continuing to work as responsible stewards of our shared history.

# Appendix A: Questionnaires

## Survey 1: General Questionnaire

1. What types of historic & cultural resources are you most concerned about losing in your community? Please select your top five (5)  
Main Street/downtowns/commercial corridors

Historic landscapes

Religious buildings

Cultural institutions

Government buildings and spaces

Residential neighborhoods and homes

Engineering structures

Archaeological sites

Industrial buildings

Cemeteries

Public service institutions

Agricultural structures & landscapes

Recreation facilities

2. What types of historic and/or cultural resources are you aware of in your community? (select all that apply)

Historic building (hotel, train station, house)

Archaeological sites

Historic site (battlefields, cemeteries)

State Parks

Historic structure (bridge, monument)

Other (churches, schools)

Historic district

Industrial sites

Landscapes/farms

Parks or urban open spaces

3. Please indicate the frequency with which you have visited the following cultural & historic resources in West Virginia in the past three (3) years? This could include an NPS site, local/regional museum, historic site, home, a West Virginia state park, or an event at a historic site. (please circle)

Weekly    Monthly    Quarterly    Twice a year    Annually    Every 2-3 years

4. Which historic preservation programs are you familiar or have worked with?

Certified Local Governments/Historic Landmark Commissions

Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits

National Register of Historic Places

State Development Grant Program

Survey & Planning Grant Program

Historic & Archaeological Surveys

Section 106 Review

Saving Historic Places Grant

Endangered Properties List

Cemetery Rehabilitation

Special topic trails

Workforce training

5. Who do you contact to learn more about historic preservation efforts? Please select three (3)

WV State Historic Preservation Office

Local organizations like historic landmarks commissions

Preservation Alliance of WV

Other (please specify)

Wheeling Heritage

National Coal Heritage Area

National Trust

National Park Service

6. How do you reach out to historic preservation organizations?

Website	Local meetings
Social media	Phone
Print Publications	Webinars
Email	Public workshops
In-person lectures & presentations	Other (please specify)
Volunteer participation opportunities	

7. What resources would be most helpful in boosting local preservation efforts?

Information on heritage tourism	Online access to preservation information
Education for public officials	Information on overall economic impacts of historic preservation in the state
Information on the public value of historic preservation	Information on how to fund preservation efforts

8. Why is the preservation of West Virginia's heritage important to you? Please select up to three (3)

Improves quality of life	Demonstrates respect for our ancestors and culture
Promotes tourism	Reduces sprawl and saves open spaces
Leaves a legacy for future generations to learn from and enjoy	Enhances economic development
Creates educational opportunities about history and culture	Other
Retains community character and sense of place	

9. What can you do to advance historic preservation in West Virginia?

10. What questions do you have about historic preservation?

11. What county in West Virginia are you from or living in currently?

**Survey 2: Questionnaire for Historic Preservation Colleagues**

1. If you are familiar with the current West Virginia historic preservation plan, how well do you think the historic preservation community achieved its five stated goals? Please circle your answer for each:

Education	Awareness	Identification
Exceed	Exceed	Exceed
Met	Met	Met
Below	Below	Below
Community & Economic Development		Stewardship
Exceed		Exceed
Met		Met
Below		Below

2. Do the 2019-2024 goals (education, awareness, identification, community & economic development, and stewardship) still represent areas where the historic preservation community should be focusing their attention?

Yes

No, if so why not?

3. What do you think are the biggest threats to archaeological, historic, and cultural resources in West Virginia? Please select up to three (3)

Growth and urban sprawl	Inadequate/lack of local historic preservation laws	Lack of interest by government officials and agencies
Demolition, neglect, or abandonment	Insufficient federal/state funding	Lack of economic incentives/money
Natural disasters/processes	Inadequate/lack of public historic preservation education	Improper rehabilitation or conservation of historic & cultural resources
Vandalism or looting	Lack of interest by public	Other

4. What tools or activities would be most effective in your community for preserving historic resources over the next five years? Please select the top three (3)

Additional local designation of local landmarks and districts	Restoration/preservation workshops
Adoption of local historic preservation ordinances/create local historic preservation commissions	National Register listing
Increased public education and info	Publications about historic resources
Public funding assistance/grants for heritage tourism	Review of state/federal projects for impact on historic resources
Archaeology resource surveys	Technical assistance from the WV SHPO
Rehabilitation tax credits	Technical assistance from other organizations other than WV SHPO
Historic resource surveys	Other

5. What is the most important thing the historic preservation community should accomplish over the next five years to protect the state's historic & cultural resources? Please select up to three (3)

Promote grants for historic preservation work

Host historic preservation education & training programs

Produce publications about historic and archaeological resources

Partner with local organizations

Other (please specify) – Accessible, Activities

Promote the protection of archaeological sites

Expand use of federal & state tax incentives for historic preservation projects

Strengthen the state's preservation network

Protect historic and cultural resources from natural and man-made disasters

6. Do you think that current state and local preservation programs effectively protect WV's archaeological, historic, and cultural resources? (please circle)

Strongly agree   Somewhat agree   No opinion   Somewhat disagree   Strongly disagree

7. Which WV SHPO programs have worked with? (please circle all that apply)

Certified Local Governments/Historic Landmark Commissions   Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits

National Register of Historic Places

State Development Grant Program

Survey & Planning Grant Program

Historic & Archaeological Surveys

Section 106 Review

Saving Historic Places Grant

Preserve WV AmeriCorps

8. What are the top two strengths of preservation efforts near you?

9. What are the top two weaknesses of preservation efforts near you?

10. Do you feel that you are a part of a statewide historic preservation network? Why or why not?

11. What are the two greatest opportunities for the historic preservation community in West Virginia?

12. What is your relationship to historic preservation? (please circle the best answer)

Historic building owner      Volunteer at house museum, local history museum, or arts/cultural org

Professional consultant      Volunteer in local government

Government      Employed by preservation or local history organization

Trades/Crafts Personnel      Student

AmeriCorps Member      Other (please specify)

13. Do you have any additional comments that you would like to share with us?

14. What county in West Virginia are you from or living in currently?

# Appendix B: Certified Local Governments & Historic Landmark Commissions

Commission & County	Address	City/State/Zip
Alderson HLC, Greenbrier	PO Box 146	Alderson, WV 24910
Bath HLC, Morgan	3041 Pine Grove Rd	Berkeley Spring, WV 25411
Beckley HLC, Raleigh	P.O. Drawer AJ	Beckley, WV 25802-2832
Belington HLC, Barbour	505 Crim Avenue	Belington, WV 26250
Berkeley County HLC, Berkeley	136 E. Race Street	Martinsburg, WV 25401
Beverly HLC, Randolph	P.O. Box 227	Beverly, WV 26253-0227
Bluefield HLC, Mercer	P.O. Box 4100	Bluefield, WV 24701

Bramwell HLC, Mercer	P.O. Box 338	Bramwell, WV 24715
Buckhannon HLC, Upshur	70 East Main Street	Buckhannon, WV 26201
Buffalo HLC, Putnam	P.O. Box 307	Buffalo, WV 25033
Cabell County HLC, Cabell	Ste. 300, 750 Fifth Ave.	Huntington, WV 25701
Cameron HLC, Marshall	44 Main Street	Cameron, WV 26033
Charles Town HLC, Jefferson	27-T Wiltshire Road	Kearneysville, WV 25430
Charleston HLC, Kanawha	915 Quarrier Street	Charleston, WV 25302
Elkins HLC, Randolph	PO Box 1863	Elkins, WV 26241
Fairmont HLC, Marion	200 Locust Avenue	Fairmont, WV 26554
Fayette County HLC, Fayette	218 Woods Avenue	Oak Hill, WV 25901-2120

Gilmer County CLG, Gilmer	P.O. Box 91	Glenville, WV 26351
Grafton HLC, Taylor	1 West Main Street	Grafton, WV 26354
Greenbrier County HLC	200 North Court Street	Lewisburg, WV 24901
Hampshire County HLC	P.O. Box 883	Romney, WV 26757
Harpers Ferry HLC, Jefferson	P.O. Box 217	Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
Harrison County HLC, Harrison	301 W. Main Street	Clarksburg, WV 26301
Hinton HLC, Summers	P.O. Box 477	Hinton, WV 25951
Huntington HLC, Cabell	P.O. Box 1659	Huntington, WV 25717
Jefferson County HLC,	P.O. Box 23	Charles Town, WV 25414
Lewisburg HLC, Greenbrier	119 W Washington Street	Lewisburg, WV 24901

Logan County HLC, Logan	General Delivery	Sarah Ann, WV 25644
Mannington HLC, Marion	203 Market Street	Mannington, WV 26582
Martinsburg CLG, Berkeley	232 North Queen Street	Martinsburg, WV 25401
Mingo County HLC	P.O. Box 1476	Gilbert, WV 25621
Monroe County HLC, Monroe	P.O. Box 193	Union, WV 24983
Moorefield HLC, Hardy	206 Winchester Ave	Moorefield, WV 26836
Morgantown CLG, Monongalia	389 Spruce Street	Morgantown, WV 26505
Moundsville HLC, Marshall	516 9th Street	Moundsville, WV 26041
Mt. Hope HLC, Fayette	321 Montana Street	Mt. Hope, WV 25880
Mullens HLC, Wyoming	316 Moran Avenue	Mullens, WV 25882

Nicholas County HLC, Nicholas	717 Main Street, Suite 204	Summersville, WV 26651
Philippi HLC, Barbour	P.O. Box 460	Philippi, WV 26416
Point Pleasant HLC, Mason	902 Main Street	Pt. Pleasant, WV 25550
Putnam County HLC, Putnam	3389 Winfield Road	Winfield, WV 25213
Ravenswood HLC, Jackson	City Hall, 212 Walnut Street	Ravenswood, WV 26164
Ritchie County HLC, Ritchie	115 East Main St., Room 201	Harrisville, WV 26362
Romney HLC, Hampshire	340 E. Main Street	Romney, WV 26757
Ronceverte HLC, Greenbrier	P.O. Box 417	Ronceverte, WV 24970
Shepherdstown HLC, Jefferson	P.O. Box 1786	Shepherdstown, WV 25443

South Charleston HLC, Kanawha	P.O. Box 8597	So. Charleston, WV 25303
Summers County HLC, Summers	201 Temple Street	Hinton, WV 25951
Tucker Co. HLC, Tucker	215 First Street	Parsons, WV 26287
Weirton HLC, Hancock	3632 Collins Way	Weirton, WV 26062
Weston HLC, Lewis	102 W. 2nd Street	Weston, WV 26452
Wheeling HLC, Ohio	P.O, Box 350	Wheeling, WV 26003
White Sulphur Springs HLC, Greenbrier	34 W. Main Street	White Sulphur Springs, WV 24986
Wirt County HLC	PO Box 773	Elizabeth, WV 26143
Wood County HLC	#1 Court Street	Parkersburg, WV 26101

# Appendix C: West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office Staff List Updated August 28, 2025

**For information on specific WV SHPO programs please contact the following staff.**

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