



# New Jersey Historic Trust

Strategic Plan, FY2018-FY2020

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*Prepared in collaboration with  
Creative Capacity, LLC*

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees at its June 21, 2017 meeting*

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Executive Summary	2
The Trust's Statutory Authority	3
Mission/Vision/Values	4
Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats	5
Summary of Major Initiatives	6
Initiative #1: Increase grantmaking to \$10 million annually	7
Initiative #2: Promote historic preservation in the private sector	9
Initiative #3: Advocate for and provide professional development	10
Initiative #4: Advance heritage tourism	11
Initiative #5: Strengthen governance and management	12
Financial Analysis	14

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

During the 2016-17 fiscal year, the New Jersey Historic Trust worked with Creative Capacity, LLC to develop a new strategic plan to guide its work through June of 2020. Consultants interviewed board and staff members as well as external stakeholders. In September, a town hall meeting was held with NJHT grantees and partners in the historic preservation community to discuss the current situation and develop ideas for the future.

The New Jersey Historic Trust decided to undertake strategic planning at this time because of recent changes in their funding model. While still receiving state funds to make preservation grants, the funding source is smaller and more variable each year – for example, NJHT will award about \$3 million in grants in 2017, compared to the average of \$6 million that was awarded in each year since 1990. At the same time, the Trust’s own assessment of historic preservation needs in the state shows **at least \$800 million of work that needs to be completed over the next ten years in order to save historic sites**. While the Trust will continue to prioritize its grantmaking programs, the board and staff decided to investigate additional ways of promoting historic preservation in the state.

During the planning process, the board and staff determined **that public funds, especially those from the state, will remain at the core of the organization’s business model. However, the Trust also intends to pursue other revenue sources in order to increase its grantmaking budget**. The Trust will look to increase revenue from the Discover New Jersey History license plate program, and build partnerships with private foundations in need of preservation grantmaking expertise.

In an effort to promote the value of historic preservation beyond nonprofit public history sites, the Trust will also recognize the **growing importance of historic preservation in the private sector**, where opportunities for redevelopment of historic properties are increasingly central to community revitalization. The Trust will offer its expertise to other state agencies, municipalities, and private sector companies to promote historic preservation as part of redevelopment projects. It will also expand its professional development work to include private sector industries like real estate agents, appraisers, and construction managers. Finally, the Trust will advocate for a requirement that members of local Historic Preservation Commissions receive regular training to increase the skills they can bring to bear on projects in their own communities. This expansion will allow the Trust to advocate for historic preservation and promote its benefits throughout New Jersey’s economy.

Finally, the Trust is seeking to **expand the role played by its Board of Directors in promoting preservation statewide**. Board members will act as public advocates for preservation – in their home communities, with legislators and government officials, and with partner organizations. By expanding the voices speaking for historic preservation, the Trust will be better able to demonstrate **the value of our state’s history and the importance of preserving the sites that tell those stories**.

## **THE TRUST'S STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

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

As of 2002, the agency is now affiliated with the Department of Community Affairs, and also holds a designation as a 501c3 charity by the Internal Revenue Service. Since 1990, the New Jersey Historic Trust has awarded more than \$138 million in grants to 734 preservation projects, 100% leveraged with matching private funds; projects that generate local jobs (and income tax revenues), create affordable housing and visitor-ready cultural destinations (that generate tourism revenue), revitalize neighborhoods (increasing the local property tax base), and restore our civic buildings (assisting municipalities with capital expenses).

## **MISSION**

The Mission of the Trust is to advance historic preservation in New Jersey for the benefit of future generations through education, stewardship and financial investment programs that save our heritage and strengthen our communities.

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

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

## **VISION**

The Vision of the Trust is for all New Jerseyans to value our state's heritage and the historic sites that tell its story.

## **VALUES**

The New Jersey Historic Trust values:

- The preservation of historic buildings and sites, as a means of retaining the unique character of New Jersey over time.
- The opportunity to work with other agencies and community partners to use historic preservation to increase the impact of community revitalization efforts.
- The benefits that historic sites and heritage tourism bring to our state's economy and to the experiences of tourists from around the nation.
- The voices of our board, grantees, partners, and other concerned citizens in advocating for policies that encourage historic preservation.

## **STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS**

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong record of historic preservation</li> <li>• Staff professionalism and expertise</li> <li>• High standards for project execution</li> <li>• Grant funds available to support projects</li> <li>• Growing connections to other areas of the field (heritage tourism, etc.)</li> <li>• Fiscal responsibility</li> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Good customer service for grantees</li> <li>• Strong execution of the annual conference</li> <li>• New capability to purchase easements</li> <li>• 501c3 status allows for private fundraising when useful, as well as serving as a conduit for funding from foundations interested in preservation</li> <li>• Reasonably stable support from the state for general operations and staffing</li> <li>• Preservation work creates visible positive changes in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By their nature, NJHT projects take a long time to complete and require a lot of oversight as they progress</li> <li>• Board has not had new appointments in some time</li> <li>• Current qualifications for Board appointments may not align with what NJHT now needs from its board</li> <li>• NJHT has no internal fundraising systems or staff expertise in fundraising, making it difficult to generate private donations</li> <li>• Our brand (and historic preservation in general) is poorly understood by the public, and there is minimal advocacy and public education to convince people of the importance of our work</li> <li>• Grantmaking is currently limited to nonprofits and state/county/municipal properties</li> </ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong private redevelopment climate in the state; NJHT could become more involved in these types of projects</li> <li>• Interest in heritage tourism is rising</li> <li>• Heritage Tourism Master Plan encourages legislators to dedicate additional Hotel/Motel Tax Dollars to heritage tourism</li> <li>• New Jersey is an increasingly diverse state, providing opportunities to tell the stories of new communities and cultures and help to preserve their historic sites</li> <li>• Gubernatorial election in November 2017 presents a chance to start fresh with a new administration</li> <li>• Many municipalities have or want to have Historic Preservation Commissions, but lack training for their members</li> <li>• The new Director of the Division of Travel and Tourism is enthusiastic about heritage tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funds available for grants have been drastically reduced</li> <li>• Many of our allied organizations and grantees are not aware that our grant funds have been reduced</li> <li>• “Quality of Life” issues are not a priority under the current state administration</li> <li>• Future of grassroots partner organizations is unclear – will grassroots advocacy be possible?</li> <li>• Need for historic preservation improvements far outstrips the funds available</li> <li>• NJ is one of only 15 states that does not have a state tax credit for redeveloping an income producing historic property</li> <li>• NJ Division of Travel and Tourism has fewer resources than in the past</li> <li>• Lack of history education in K-12 schools, particularly local NJ history</li> </ul>

## **SUMMARY OF MAJOR PLAN INITIATIVES**

- 1) Increase funds available for historic preservation grants to at least \$10 million annually.
- 2) Promote historic preservation as an effective tool for enhancing private redevelopment projects.
- 3) Increase the Trust's role in advocating for and providing professional development to a wide range of people who would benefit from increased knowledge about the field.
- 4) Advance heritage tourism as an essential component of the state's tourism industry.
- 5) Strengthen the NJHT's management and governance capacity, so that it will continue to thrive even when it faces external pressures.

## **Strategic Initiative #1: Increase funds available for historic preservation grants to at least \$10 million annually.**

### **Objectives:**

- **Diversify the Trust’s funding sources so that it can be more responsive to the state’s preservation needs and more stable in the long term.**
- **Double annual revenue generated by Discover Jersey History license plate sales.**

### **Strategies: Government Funding**

1. Year One: Reposition the core grantmaking program to make the best use of our current resources.
  - a. Revise grantmaking rules and adjust grant programs and guidelines to best use the funds currently available.
2. Year One and ongoing: Identify key legislators who have an interest in furthering the state’s preservation agenda and solicit their support.
3. Year One and ongoing: Work with the state legislature and administration to seek additional sources of state funds beyond the Corporate Business Tax.

### **Strategies: Private Fundraising**

4. Year Two and ongoing: Explore opportunities to partner with foundations or major donors who would like us to steward their historic preservation investments.
5. Year Two or Three: Identify opportunities to launch time-limited, special fundraising campaigns aimed at key objectives that would have broad public appeal (disaster recovery, for example).

### **Strategies: Discover New Jersey History License Plate**

6. Year One and ongoing: Invest in marketing the Discover New Jersey History license plate, as a means of raising the visibility of historic preservation and generating unrestricted income.
  - a. Year One: Work with the Motor Vehicle Commission to improve the process for purchasing specialty plates, to recapture potential sales that are currently lost because the online process is too difficult.
    - i. Work with other specialty plate constituencies to identify potential improvements and encourage the Motor Vehicle Commission to act on them.
  - b. Year One: Create and execute a targeted marketing campaign aimed at a test audience most likely to purchase the plate.
    - i. Emphasize historic preservation (“Save Historic Sites Now” or similar slogan) as a cause that people care about. Position the plate as a donation that allows sites to be preserved.

- ii. Select marketing tools with a reasonable return on investment ratio.
  - 1. Launch a website to promote the plate, which would also demonstrate how plate funds are used to restore and improve sites.
  - 2. Run social media campaigns that will boost visibility of the plate as a tool to support historic preservation.
  - 3. Rent email lists of people with an interest in history to draw their attention to the plate.
  - 4. Work in partnership with grantees and historic sites to promote the plate.
- iii. Year Two: Redesign the license plate image and slogan to better focus on the cause of historic preservation and be more visually appealing.
- iv. Year Three: Assess results of this campaign after 12-18 months and determine if further marketing investment would be worthwhile.
  - 1. Identify likely target audiences for the plate, and aim marketing campaigns at those people (for example, history professionals, heritage tourism groups and their members, people who visit historic sites).
- v. Year Three: If sales have doubled by the end of year three, then expand the campaign to reach more potential buyers. If sales have not doubled, consider how this program can best be pursued in the future.

**Strategies: Build the Endowment Account**

- 7. Promote the Trust's ability to purchase easements as a way to both protect key private properties and generate revenue for the endowment.
  - a. Develop guidelines to prioritize the kinds of easements that should be purchased with the Trust's limited funds.
- 8. Actively seek the donation of easements, allowing the Trust to both monitor the historic preservation of key properties as well as generate funds for the endowment account.

## **Strategic Initiative #2: Promote historic preservation as an effective tool for enhancing private redevelopment projects.**

### **Objective:**

- Create a broad collaborative network of state agencies willing to integrate historic preservation into private real estate, economic development, and tourism projects.

### **Strategies:**

1. Year One and ongoing: Identify state agencies, especially those affiliated with the Department of Community Affairs, which would benefit from having historic preservation expertise available in their work.
2. Year One and ongoing: Advocate for a state tax credit for historic preservation, to provide incentives for private companies to redevelop historic properties.
3. Year One: Consider how to best deploy the Trust's expertise and resources in private projects, creating clear guidelines for the kinds of projects and partners that are appropriate to the Trust's mission and goals.
4. Years One and Two: Determine how the existing Revolving Loan Fund can best be re-positioned to advance projects that involve historic preservation.
  - a. Year One: Work with the new administration and legislature in 2018 to discuss an amendment to the Loan Fund's structure that would allow loans to be made more expeditiously.
  - b. Year Two: Solicit applications for an initial round of loans, in order to raise the Trust's profile in the private redevelopment community and pilot the loan-making process.
  - c. Year Three: Assess the first round of loans and seek out other projects where a Trust loan might make a difference in promoting historic preservation in private projects.
5. Years Two and Three: Direct some Trust resources to working with County and municipal governments to create plans for preparing privately-owned historic buildings and "elephant buildings" for redevelopment so they can contribute to the town's economy.
6. Years Two and Three: Collaborate with the Division of Travel and Tourism to identify opportunities for historic preservation/sites to be integrated into tourism development projects.

**Strategic Initiative #3: Increase the Trust’s role in advocating for and providing professional development to a wide range of people who would benefit from increased knowledge about the field.**

**Objectives:**

- Ensure that all local Historic Preservation Commission members are required to receive training in historic preservation, so they can effectively carry out their roles.
- Offer professional development sessions on a regular basis to at least three new communities that would benefit from learning more about historic preservation.
- Continue to provide ongoing professional development opportunities to nonprofit history sites and historic preservation professionals.

**Strategies:**

1. Year One and until complete: Advocate for new legislation requiring local Historic Preservation Commission members to receive training.
2. Year One and ongoing: Collaborate with the M.A.R.C.H./Rutgers certificate program to launch and support ongoing training.
  - a. Explore a formal partnership with M.A.R.C.H. in order to raise the Trust’s profile as a provider of high quality training.
  - b. Year One: Deploy Trust board members to encourage HPC members in their counties to attend training voluntarily.
3. Year Two and ongoing: Offer training for realtors to increase their knowledge of historic preservation.
  - a. Year Two and ongoing: Present at the annual New Jersey Realtors conference.
  - b. Year Three: Consider offering credit-based professional development sessions to real estate practices or working groups.
  - c. Years Two and Three: Seek other markets where professional development in historic preservation would be valuable (appraisers, construction managers, etc.).
4. Continue current professional development priorities aimed at the field:
  - a. Enhance the annual conference so that it continues to appeal to a wide range of nonprofit history and historic preservation professionals.
  - b. Continue to offer *Best Practices* workshops in partnership with the New Jersey Historical Commission, in order to strengthen the capacity of nonprofit history sites.
5. When Possible: Support and promote programs that encourage young people to engage with history, laying the groundwork for the next generation of supporters of historic preservation.

## **Strategic Initiative #4: Advance heritage tourism as an essential component of the state’s tourism industry.**

### **Objectives:**

- Increase the number of visitor-ready historic sites by 20% annually.
- By 2022, New Jersey will have the infrastructure to regularly market heritage tourism and realize its value to the tourism economy.

### **Strategies:**

1. Year One: Develop strategies to implement technical assistance programs, as identified in the Heritage Tourism Master Plan.
2. Year One and ongoing: Promote the value of heritage tourism to state agencies.
  - a. Work with the Division of Travel and Tourism to increase marketing for heritage tourism destinations.
  - b. Regularly participate in quarterly meetings of the state’s Destination Marketing Organizations to demonstrate how heritage tourism can increase visitorship.
  - c. Meet with legislators, especially those on the Tourism Committees, to discuss the value of heritage tourism and explore legislative strategies for permanently integrating heritage tourism into state tourism initiatives.
  - d. Meet with Gubernatorial candidates and the Transition Team to discuss the benefits of heritage tourism.
3. Year One and ongoing: Continue to develop content and functionality for the *Journey Through Jersey* project.
  - a. Year One: Continue to add new sites and promote its use to the general public.
  - b. Year One: Hire an intern to develop a social media campaign to promote the site.
  - c. Year Two and Three: Experiment with selling ad space or getting sponsors for the site to demonstrate its sustainability.
  - d. Year Three: Explore options for making the site sustainable in the long-term. Look for a tourism agency or other private third-party that could integrate the site into their ongoing work in the long-term.
4. Year Two: Revise grant regulations to increase NJHT’s focus on supporting visitor amenity projects.
5. Years Two and Three: Provide training (or assessment) to smaller/nascent historic sites, to help them understand what would be required in order to be visitor-ready.
6. Years Two and Three: Advocate for the inclusion of heritage tourism as part of the regular state tourism economic impact assessment. Ensure the distribution of results throughout the tourism industry, bolstering the case for continued investment in heritage tourism initiatives.

## **Strategic Initiative #5: Strengthen the NJHT’s management and governance capacity, so that it will continue to thrive even when it faces external pressures.**

### **Objectives:**

- Strengthen the board’s leadership role in promoting historic preservation priorities at the state and local level, as evidenced by increased historic preservation funding and projects statewide.
- Retain high quality staff, and ensure that they receive professional development opportunities that continue to expand their skills.
- Build new partnerships and collaborate with established statewide organizations that share our goals for promoting the quality of life in New Jersey.

### **Strategies:**

1. Year One: Agree on the role of the board, and on the individual responsibilities expected of board members.
  - a. Put annual processes in place that will allow board members to commit to certain actions over the course of the year, so overall board accomplishments and performance can be assessed at the close of the year.
2. Year One and ongoing: Actively recruit potential board members who have historic preservation experience, as well as other skills that will help NJHT reach its strategic goals.
  - a. Emphasize skills that will help to achieve our strategic plan goals, such as advocacy, marketing, and connections to fields like redevelopment and real estate.
  - b. Work with the Appointments Office to annually get new board members confirmed.
3. Year One and ongoing: Strengthen the role of the Legislative Committee in advocating for legislation that is positive for historic preservation.
  - a. Identify a board candidate who is interested in tracking legislation and bringing relevant bills to the attention of other board members.
  - b. Regularly update the board’s “talking points” sheet (annually at minimum, more frequently as needed).
  - c. Provide training and support for any board members who need help in promoting historic preservation.
  - d. Engage all board members in promoting the importance of historic preservation in our state – at public events, at legislator visits, at hearings, and in the private sector.
4. Year One and ongoing: Develop an internal system for identifying events where board participation could be valuable, and matching those with individual board members.
  - a. Produce a brochure about NJHT’s impact and services that board members can distribute at the events they attend.

5. Year Two and ongoing: Identify statewide organizations that share goals with NJHT, and look for opportunities to build partnerships around shared agenda items.
6. Years One and ongoing: Invest in professional development for staff members to expand their skills into new areas of historic preservation.

## **FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS**

This chart estimates the cash costs of implementing the strategic plan over the next three years. These numbers are estimates only, designed to inform long-term planning and budgeting. With the exception of the license plate campaign, most of the strategic plan's initiatives require investments of board and staff time rather than cash.

<b><u>Initiative/Strategy</u></b>	<b><u>FY18</u></b>	<b><u>FY19</u></b>	<b><u>FY20</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
<b>Initiative #1: License Plate Campaign</b>				
Create a marketing campaign to promote license plate sales.	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$105,000
<b>Initiative #2: Redevelopment</b>				
<i>No direct cash costs expected at this time</i>				\$0
<b>Initiative #3: Professional Services</b>				
Support the Rutgers/MARCH certificate program.	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$6,000
Present Best Practices workshops	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$15,000
<b>Initiative #4: Heritage Tourism</b>				
Support the Journey Through Jersey project (intern to develop a social media campaign).	\$5,000			\$5,000
Provide training to smaller sites about visitor readiness.		\$3,000	\$3,000	\$6,000
<b>Initiative #5: Capacity</b>				
Produce brochure about NJHT	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$3,000
Invest in professional development for staff.	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$9,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$51,000</b>	<b>\$49,000</b>	<b>\$49,000</b>	<b>\$149,000</b>