West Virginia’s Historic Preservation Plan

In creating the goals and objectives for the 2014 – 2019 statewide plan, one theme could be seen across all the goals. Advocacy is the overarching theme that unified the goals and objectives listed below and breathes life into them. This theme teaches others the importance of historic resources. It focuses attention upon these resources and allows people to learn about them and the history of West Virginia. People and organizations become advocates of identifying new historic resources and strive to protect these places. Advocacy sparks the community and its businesses to maintain the individual charm of their area and to increase the preservation of resources as a driver of the local economy. Citizens of West Virginia are inspired to act as good stewards of historic structures and to take steps to ensure these resources are passed onto future generations. Without advocacy, these goals are empty words on paper. We must remember that historic preservation requires action. Each of us, as citizens of West Virginia or as visitors to the Mountain State, must work toward these goals, even in the smallest of ways. Through action, people will understand and appreciate the importance of the following goals and objectives.

The goals for the next five years focus on education, awareness, community and economic development, identification, and stewardship. By design they represent a plan of action for the entire state. While the SHPO has taken the lead in developing these goals, these goals cannot be achieved without the effort of a great number of people. Preserving cultural resources is not the domain of one agency or solely the domain of federal and state governments. Successful preservation efforts are always the product of grassroots effort, local leadership, and partnerships.

Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Goal 1: Education

West Virginians will have access to information and training for historic preservation techniques, resources, and skills.

Education about the history of West Virginia, its regions and communities is vital to establishing a sense of place and pride. Historic preservation should be, and needs to be, on the front lines in telling the stories that spark interest. The vast array of historic and archaeological resources within the state creates a rich tapestry of West Virginia’s past for students, citizens, and visitors. These objectives are a blueprint to reveal and illuminate the history of West Virginia.

Objectives

1.1 Develop K-12 curriculum which incorporates historic preservation themes to meet current West Virginia teaching objectives.

1.2 Develop historic preservation themed programs such as day camps, one day events, workshops, conferences and presentations for all ages.
1.3 Establish a mentor network to offer workshops and training on historic preservation topics to assist organizations such as historic landmark commissions, Certified Local Governments, Main Street programs, individual property owners and non-profit organizations.

1.4 Develop coursework and programs that address traditional skills such as masonry, wood stabilization and plasterwork to increase the skilled workforce available in West Virginia as well as increase the knowledge of the historic property owner.

**Goal 2: Awareness**

**West Virginians will recognize and understand the value of our state’s historic resources.**

The Awareness goal will inspire an appreciation of cultural resources and instill a lasting historic preservation ethic. A general lack of knowledge about historic resources and the proper historic preservation techniques was identified as the greatest challenge facing historic preservation in West Virginia. To contend with this issue, these objectives are fashioned as a guide for the SHPO and those agencies, organizations, and individuals that make decisions and take actions that impact historic and cultural resources.

**Objectives**

2.1 Develop a historic preservation caucus within the WV Legislature to identify existing support for historic preservation and encourage awareness of the benefits of historic preservation.

2.2 Develop events, publications, video and web resources that highlight and explore West Virginia’s historic resources and historic preservation efforts.

2.3 Develop events, publications, video and web resources that illustrate the proper preservation methods, techniques, and procedures.

2.4 Develop events, publications, videos or web resources that highlight the Secretary of the Interior’s established standards and guidelines for archaeology and the treatment of historic properties.

2.5 Provide information regarding activities, successes, and ongoing programs via social media and internet venues to reach a larger audience and foster a positive image about historic preservation.

2.6 Reestablish a state archaeologist position to direct efforts in education and awareness regarding the value and significance of the state’s archaeological resources.
Goal 3: Identification

West Virginians will identify, evaluate, and designate historic resources.

From archaeological sites dating to some 11,000 years to buildings, structures and objects of more recent vintage, West Virginia has numerous cultural resources. Many of these resources have not been surveyed and identified. The identification of these resources is not only important so that they can continue to be a vibrant part of our environment, but also for the planning of roads, bridges, waterlines and other projects. Once resources are identified, evaluated and designated, then architects, engineers, and other planners can include them in project development and prevent delays and increased costs that occur when they are found after the construction process has begun. This effort must include the SHPO, state agencies, counties, localities and individuals working toward the following objectives.

Objectives

3.1 Expand inventories across the state that focus on underrepresented counties, communities and resource types.

3.2 Develop historic contexts to assist in preservation planning and the identification of resources focusing on resource types whose significance has not been comprehensively studied and evaluated. These resources include agriculture, schools/education, churches/religion, industry (coal, salt, oil, gas, steel, timber) and ethnic Groups.

3.3 Increase the identification and nomination of historic resources to the National Register of Historic Places focusing on underrepresented resource types.

Goal 4: Community and Economic Development

West Virginians will incorporate historic preservation into economic and community development to maintain a sense of place.

Across the country, communities use historic preservation to improve their economies and quality of life. National and statewide efforts like the Main Street Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation impact communities. Preservation tools help stabilize and revitalize communities despite the recent economic recession. These objectives will support economic stability and growth:

Objectives

4.1 Increase the assistance for historic preservation and development projects in towns and counties identified as economically challenged.
4.2 Increase the use of existing incentive programs such as state and federal tax credits and preservation easements.

4.3 Utilize legal tools such as easements and covenants to protect identified threatened resources working with established non-profit organizations and government entities.

4.4 Develop and sustain partnerships to promote historic preservation resources as tourist destinations and develop programs and activities to link historic preservation with recreation and tourism.

**Goal 5: Stewardship**

West Virginians will safeguard/sustain historic resources in their communities and rural areas throughout the state.

If historic resources are to be a part of our future, West Virginians must take an active role in safeguarding them. Success requires historic preservation at the forefront of planning activities instead of included as an afterthought. The decision making process must thoroughly consider the benefits of historic preservation. A better understanding can produce creative and alternative solutions. These objectives will improve the stewardship and protection of our historic resources.

**Objectives**

5.1 Work with historic landmark commissions and local governments to implement local historic preservation ordinances, design review and planning overlay districts to protect historic resources.

5.2 Develop and sustain a working network between individuals, organizations, and agencies to provide a cohesive effort for historic preservation activities.

5.3 Actively participate in environmental review processes such as the Section 106 review process of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

5.4 Develop state enabling legislation for local governments to mothball, stabilize, and rehabilitate existing, abandoned or underused historic resources.