

2025 -- S 0174

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

JOINT RESOLUTION

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION OF \$500,000 TO ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE MAIN
STREET COORDINATING PROGRAM

Introduced By: Senators Urso, Britto, Burke, Tikoian, Rogers, LaMountain, Zurier, Gu,
Felag, and Vargas

Date Introduced: February 07, 2025

Referred To: Senate Finance

(General Treasurer)

1 WHEREAS, The State of Rhode Island is recognized as the 2nd most urbanized state in
2 the country and has many traditionally-developed commercial districts, including retail corridors,
3 downtowns, village squares, and neighborhood commercial centers, herein collectively referred to
4 as “Main Street districts”; and

5 WHEREAS, When Main Street districts are functioning as vibrant places, they yield
6 many benefits to the State and its municipalities, with the potential to generate substantial
7 economic activity, tax revenues, housing, tourism, small business creation, jobs, and real estate
8 development, as well as positive social and public health outcomes; and

9 WHEREAS, Overall, Rhode Island’s Main Street districts are currently not living up to
10 their potential to generate these benefits with local efforts to revitalize and cultivate these districts
11 often inconsistent, not comprehensive, and disconnected from each other, resulting in inefficiency
12 and uneven success; and

13 WHEREAS, Forty-one other states and five city or county governments outside of Rhode
14 Island have successfully increased economic benefits from their Main Street districts through the
15 creation of a Main Street Coordinating Program designed to build capacity at the local level to
16 improve Main Streets districts’ economic vitality, appearance, function, events, marketing, and
17 organization through the trademarked and proven “Main Street Four Points Approach”; and

18 WHEREAS, Main Street programs in other states have collectively tracked \$101.58
19 billion in reinvestment, 168,693 net new businesses, 746,897 net new jobs, and 325,199

1 rehabilitated buildings in Main Street districts since 1980; and

2 WHEREAS, These other coordinating programs are all affiliated members of a national
3 network organized and supported by Main Street America - an organization widely recognized as
4 the premier expert on improving Main Streets' performance, with thirty-three coordinating
5 programs housed within government and thirteen run as independent nonprofits; and

6 WHEREAS, The well-known and respected RI-based nonprofit Grow Smart RI has been
7 building a relationship with Main Street America since 2021, has studied the program extensively
8 including the different ways it is coordinated at the state level, and is prepared to leverage its
9 twenty-six year history as a conveyor and trainer in place-related issues to implement a Main
10 Street RI Coordinating Program in the State as soon as funding is identified; and

11 WHEREAS, All other state Main Street Coordinating programs receive funding from
12 their state governments, and an investment of \$500,000 would provide the necessary start-up
13 costs to launch this program in RI; and

14 WHEREAS, The \$500,000 for the formal establishment of "Main Street Rhode Island"
15 would be managed by Grow Smart RI for an initial period of three years, with annual reports
16 detailing progress on the following goals and activities:

- 17 - Hiring and retention of a full time Main Street RI Coordinator position;
- 18 - Training for local RI communities provided by Main Street America and its members
19 from throughout the nation;
- 20 - Monthly educational sessions and bi-monthly networking opportunities for all local
21 groups focused on the cultivation of vibrant Main Street districts;
- 22 - The management of a "learning cohort" of individual communities to receive
23 customized technical assistance;
- 24 - Development of an online resource center of training materials, actional research and
25 best practices;
- 26 - Presentation of an annual full-day conference-style event for learning and sharing of
27 information; and
- 28 - A signed MOU with Main Street America with Main Street Rhode Island established as
29 the Coordinating Program for the State of RI; now, therefore be it

30 RESOLVED, That there is hereby appropriated, out of money in the treasury not
31 otherwise appropriated for the fiscal year 2025-2026, the sum of five hundred thousand dollars
32 (\$500,000) for the formal establishment of Main Street Rhode Island, to be managed by Grow
33 Smart RI; and the state controller is hereby authorized and directed to draw his orders upon the
34 general treasurer for the payment of said sum, or so much thereof as may be from time to time

1 required, upon receipt of properly authenticated vouchers.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
JOINT RESOLUTION
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION OF \$500,000 TO ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE MAIN
STREET COORDINATING PROGRAM

- 1 This resolution would authorize the appropriation of the sum of \$500,000 for the formal
- 2 establishment of "Main Street Rhode Island".

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