

**2025 -- S 0174 AS AMENDED**

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LC000611  
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**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025**

**J O I N T   R E S O L U T I O N**

**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  
20 rehabilitated buildings in Main Street districts since 1980; and

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

5           WHEREAS, The State of Rhode Island currently has a Main Street Rhode Island  
6 Improvement Fund within the Commerce Corporation as set forth in chapter 64.27 of title 42 to  
7 foster private-public partnerships in relation to improvement of streetscapes in local business  
8 districts; and

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

14           WHEREAS, Collaboration between the Commerce Corporation and Grow Smart RI on  
15 the use of the Main Street Improvement Fund has the potential to stimulate investment and  
16 generate substantial economic activity and otherwise yield many benefits to the State and its  
17 municipalities; and

18           WHEREAS, These potential benefits demonstrate the need for the formal establishment  
19 of a Main Street Rhode Island program and the collaboration of the Commerce Corporation and  
20 Grow Smart RI; and

21           WHEREAS, The formal establishment of “Main Street Rhode Island” would be managed  
22 by Grow Smart RI for an initial period of three years, with annual reports detailing progress on  
23 the following goals and activities:

- 24           - Hiring and retention of a full time Main Street RI Coordinator position;
- 25           - Training for local RI communities provided by Main Street America and its members  
26 from throughout the nation;
- 27           - Monthly educational sessions and bi-monthly networking opportunities for all local  
28 groups focused on the cultivation of vibrant Main Street districts;
- 29           - The management of a “learning cohort” of individual communities to receive  
30 customized technical assistance;
- 31           - Development of an online resource center of training materials, actional research and  
32 best practices;
- 33           - Presentation of an annual full-day conference-style event for learning and sharing of  
34 information; and

1 - A signed MOU with Main Street America with Main Street Rhode Island established as  
2 the Coordinating Program for the State of RI; now, therefore be it

3 RESOLVED, That a program is hereby established called "Main Street Rhode Island" to  
4 be managed by Grow Smart Rhode Island. The commerce corporation is hereby empowered:

5 (1) To accept monies from federal sources, grants, private entities or other sources  
6 intended for Main Street Rhode Island; and

7 (2) To disburse all such monies received and intended for Main Street Rhode Island to  
8 Grow Smart Rhode Island; and

9 (3) To appropriate any portion of the monies held in the fund created pursuant to Chapter  
10 64.27 of Title 42 to Grow Smart Rhode Island to support expenditures related to the  
11 administration of and execution of the Main Street Four Points Approach.

12 The state controller is hereby authorized and directed to draw his orders upon the general  
13 treasurer for the payment of said sum, or so much thereof as may be from time to time required,  
14 upon receipt of properly authenticated vouchers.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
JOINT RESOLUTION  
TO ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE MAIN STREET COORDINATING PROGRAM

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- 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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