

2025 -- S 0174 AS AMENDED

LC000611

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

JOINT RESOLUTION

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

- 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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