

# PROTECTING HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From Chief Powhatan's capital, Werowocomoco, to American Revolution and Civil War battlefields, to Rosenwald schools and sites related to the struggle for Civil Rights, Virginia's unique and diverse array of historic and cultural resources tell the story of our Commonwealth and nation. Robust support for existing programs as well as exploration of broadening preservation tools available to protect these resources is critically important to ensure their benefit to current and future generations and supports key industries, including agriculture and tourism. We recognize that certain historic resources without proper context can be painful reminders of racial injustice and it is important that we support efforts to recontextualize these resources as appropriate.

## CHALLENGE

The programs below are the essential tools of historic and cultural conservation in the Commonwealth. Strong support for these programs will continue Virginia's role as a leader in this space.

### HISTORIC REHABILITATION TAX CREDIT (HRTC)

Urban and rural communities leverage this catalytic community redevelopment and economic development tool to adapt and reuse older structures. Economic studies<sup>1</sup> offer compelling data that construction and related activities associated with HRTC projects generate \$4.20 to \$5.30 of economic impact for every \$1.00 of tax credit.<sup>2</sup>

### LAND CONSERVATION

The Virginia Land Conservation Fund (VLCF), the Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund (VBPF), and the Land Preservation Tax Credit are the cornerstones of land conservation in Virginia. The VLCF funds a range of conservation projects in rural and urban areas. VBPF is targeted exclusively toward preserving historic battlefields. VBPF grants are often matched with federal dollars from the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program, resulting in the preservation of 693 acres in the last two years alone<sup>3,4</sup>

### AFRICAN AMERICAN AND INDIGENOUS RESOURCES

The creation of the new Virginia Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Historic Preservation Fund offers opportunities for a more complete telling of Virginia history by preserving BIPOC sites that have been disproportionately marginalized in the past.<sup>5</sup> Funding in 2024-26 should be maintained at \$10 million over the biennium budget.

## SOLUTION

The state has tremendous opportunities to advance the preservation of Virginia's historic and cultural resources by enhancing our existing programs and initiatives. Given the proven return on the Commonwealth's investment

from the HRTC, and the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge the state to protect and maintain the HRTC in order to help with the state's economic recovery, and to give particular consideration to HRTC projects with the potential to benefit under-represented communities.

On the land conservation front, fully funding both VLCF and VBPF is of critical importance to helping save Virginia's battlefields and other historic sites before they are lost to development. This year's increase in funding to VLCF is an important step forward, but even more can be done. With regard to African American and Virginia Indigenous resources, the recent emphasis that the General Assembly has placed on elevating under-told stories is encouraging. In particular, the creation of the new Virginia Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Historic Preservation Fund offers opportunities for a more complete telling of Virginia's history by preserving BIPOC sites that have been disproportionately excluded in the past. Increased funding, recognition, and protection for these resources across the Commonwealth is essential.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Maintain the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program.

\$30 million per year for the VLCF and \$5 million per year for the Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund.

Adjust the VLCF to be accessible for the preservation of sites that highlight Virginia's culturally diverse history.

\$5 million per year for the Virginia BIPOC Historic Preservation Fund.