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2026 RHODY AWARDS: "AUDIENCE AWARD" VOTING OPEN NOW

Preserve Rhode Island (Preserve RI) celebrated the honorees of the 2026 Rhody Awards for Historic Preservation on Sunday, October 25 at the WaterFire Arts Center in Providence. Each year, Preserve RI celebrates people in projects across the state that demonstrate excellence in historic preservation. This year's awardees are no different and show diverse approaches to preservation — from landmark-saving brick-and-mortar restoration projects, creating guidelines to better inform future preservation efforts, or mapping precious history that would otherwise be lost.

An independent jury of historians, architects, developers, community leaders, and preservationists had the difficult task of narrowing down the nominations to only 10 finalists.

To Ruth Taylor, Interim Executive Director of Preserve Rhode Island, *"It is a pleasure to celebrate these awardees, who are carrying on an important Rhode Island tradition of caring about, and caring for, our historic structures and places. This tradition should continue to be on all of our minds – it is the main reason that we live in such a beautiful and evocative place."*

To learn more about this year's Rhody Awardees, videos of each winner can be viewed on the Preserve RI website. The public is encouraged to vote for their favorite project and help Preserve RI determine the recipient of the Audience Award. Voting is open until Friday, October 30th at noon.

The 2026 Rhody Awardees are:

Neal Kaplan – *Stephen J. Tyson Sr. Artisan Award*
Starting his company, Neal Estate, in 1986, Neal Kaplan has spent the past 4 decades restoring historic properties in Providence with the upmost care and attention to detail. His craftsmanship and command over preservation technologies has made him a resource to many, something he made more widely accessible during his 20 years serving on the Providence Historic District Commission.

Michael Semenza - *Frederick C. Williamson Professional Award*
Salve Regina University would not look the same if it were not for Michael Semenza. His commitment to protecting and stewarding the campus's collection of historic properties was unmatched, and his role as a fundraiser is a crucial part of the historic preservation equation. Examples of Michael's work

include securing a $202k grant from the J. Paul Getty Trust and receiving the prestigious Arthur Ross Award for Stewardship from the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art.

Gillian Lang and Edward Lloyd (Providence)- *Homeowner Award*

Homeowners Gillian Lang and Edward Lloyd fell in love with the John Truman House, a charming Georgian home located just off Benefit Street in Providence. The building came with a quirk, however, with a significant bow in the front of the house that was causing windows to pop out. Edward Lloyd also owns Kerf LLC, a workshop focusing on residential woodwork and preservation, and was able to tackle the project. The home's exterior shines today as an example of careful restoration.

Millrace District (Woonsocket) – *Preservation Project Award*

At the entrance to Main Street in downtown Woonsocket, this project by Neighborworks Blackstone River Valley revitalized three historic mill buildings into 70 new housing units, ranging from 30% to 100% average median income requirements. This project also prioritizes mixed development, with commercial spaces available and the nearby Millrace Kitchen and Museum of Work and Culture. This project received state historic tax credits.

Agassiz Mansion/Castle Hill Inn (Newport) – *Community Impact Award*

In early February of 2026, the Agassiz Mansion at Castle Hill was on fire, literally. Despite challenges such as a historic blizzard, the team at Kirby Perkins Construction was able to repair the building within three months. Restoration work included replication of damaged butternut wood features in the bar area, saving as much of the original woodwork as possible, and carefully restoring the exterior.

Windmill Building (Narragansett) - *Community Impact Award*

The Windmill Building in Narragansett has served multiple roles over the course of its history, including as a private residence and infirmary for the Jewish Orphans of Rhode Island summer camp. Threatened with demolition in 2019, the Narragansett Historical Society took on the grand task of saving this unique "folly" building. Thanks to an extensive fundraising effort to renovate the property, the site can now serve as NHS's permanent home.

Lead Paint Adaptation and Mitigation (Newport) - *Community Impact Award*

In response to the expansion of lead safety requirements in Rhode Island, the Newport Restoration Foundation, with support from the City of Newport, contracted Heritage Restoration to research how to get historic properties to meet code. The end result was two handbooks, one for homeowners and one for building professionals, that have been adopted at the statewide level. These handbooks have been critical resources for those getting their historic rental properties up-to-code.

Urban Renewal Guide (Providence) – *Community Impact Award*

Urban renewal is an important topic when discussing the full American story, and Providence Preservation Society's guide is one of the few in-depth overviews of how urban renewal has shaped an entire city. This resource is critical to understanding the Providence we know of today, while both serving as a foundation for further research and as a reference in current/future land use battles.

Providence Art Club (Providence) – *Stewardship Award*

If you have visited Providence, you are familiar with the four historic buildings stewarded by the Providence Art Club, a non-profit organization founded 146 years ago. Over the course of those years, numerous improvements were made to the buildings to adapt their use for the organization, all while preserving the impressive exteriors for the public's benefit. Most recently, the Art Club has embarked on an exterior restoration of the iconic Fleur-De Lys Studio, a National Historic Landmark.

The Old State House (Providence) – *Stewardship Award*

In time for America 250, the RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) has completed a multi-year $10 million investment in its headquarters, the Old State House (1762). Improvements include upgraded systems (including geothermal heating and cooling), a restored interior/exterior, and an expanded National Register nomination. The RIHPHC has stewarded the building for over 50 years and will continue to do so for years to come.

About Preserve Rhode Island

Preserve Rhode Island is Rhode Island's statewide advocate for historic places. The 70-year-old nonprofit provides guidance for local preservation groups, finds productive and adaptive reuses for threatened buildings, advocates for the revitalization of historic places to stimulate local economies and engages the community through public programs at Lippitt House Museum. Visit www.preserveri.org to learn more.

Select images of the Rhody Award winners can be found here.

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