

FUNDING YOUR PRESERVATION PROJECT

Nonprofit Organizations & Local Governments

Community groups and local governments interested in the preservation of historic buildings often take ownership of properties in order to save them. The existing condition of those buildings can vary greatly, thus requiring different levels of investment to support efforts ranging from ongoing maintenance to a comprehensive rehabilitation that addresses structural repairs and compliance with accessibility and life safety requirements. A long-vacant school may have the immediate need for a new foundation and roof, while a former Grange Hall just needs a fresh coat of paint. They all require sustainable planning and funding. This handout is intended as a framework for your nonprofit or town building committee to prepare a plan that ensures the building is used to its fullest potential and that a sustainable stream of funding is available for operation and long-term maintenance.



The Friends of the Greenville Depot formed to save and restore their town's Canadian Pacific depot, which includes an 1889 freight shed and 1911 Ladies Waiting Room.

Where to Start

It is critical to first understand the building's current state and repair needs. A [Building Conditions Assessment](#) captures a snapshot of the building, identifies repair priorities, and establishes budget expectations for planned rehabilitation and ongoing maintenance. This information informs a game plan and associated costs for a project, which can convey need to funders or make the case to voters for allocating public funds. Assessments are usually prepared by historic preservation professionals in cooperation with a qualified contractor, architect, or engineer. The 1772 Foundation, in partnership with Maine Preservation, and the Maine Historic Preservation Commission's Historic Preservation Fund provide grant support for planning activities (see below).



Building Use

Successful projects are shaped around sustainable, uses that offer benefits to the greatest number of people. Public forums and asset mapping are good ways of understanding the needs of your community and how your building may help to that end. Operating and maintaining a building costs money, from keeping the lights on to replacing the roof. Building stewards should ensure use of the space provides income that covers these costs, while setting funds aside for larger, long-term maintenance and repair projects. For example, once the structure was secure and a new roof installed, the Friends of the Greenville Depot first adapted the train depot's freight shed into an events venue. The rental income will underwrite restoration of the later Ladies Waiting Room section for use as a small museum, while the events venue provides an amenity needed in Greenville. The initial stabilization of the 1894 Norway Opera House by the Town of Norway and a partnering nonprofit included rehabilitation of its five commercial storefronts, which are now fully leased and generating income to support restoration of the upper-floor performance hall. Similarly, short-term rental of the Keeper's House at Burnt Coat Harbor Light Station supports ongoing maintenance of the lighthouse on Swan's Island.

Fundraising

Transformational projects take time and money. Fundraising is a key component to any preservation effort, from raffles, yard sales, and GoFundMe campaigns to professionally advised capital campaigns and galas. It also provides an avenue for individuals and businesses to support a project without being directly involved. Contributions to a project can lead to incremental progress or they can serve as critical match funds in pursuit of larger grant funding. The [Maine Philanthropy Center](#) is a good place to start seeking assistance in the pursuit of funds to bring your project to fruition.

Grants

There are grant programs specifically intended for the preservation of historic buildings, and others that more generally support the redevelopment of existing properties. Dedicated preservation grant programs like the [Historic Preservation Fund](#) require a building be listed in the [National Register of Historic Places](#), either individually or as a contributing part of a historic district, and generally support repairs to a building's structure and exterior envelope. Grant programs intended to broadly spur economic revitalization or support community vitality through rehabilitating and repurposing vacant and underused buildings often offer larger, more flexible awards. These programs may help with systems upgrades, interior renovations, and accessibility improvements, on top of exterior and structural repairs, and often times are tied to specific uses like civic functions, recreation, education, and private commerce.



Grants come in a variety of forms and sizes, with eligibility requirements and guidelines dependent on their source. Public grants from the state and federal government are larger, and usually accompanied by strict guidelines and intensive reporting requirements, while grants from private sources like foundations and trusts are usually smaller and more flexible. We maintain a [non-exhaustive list](#) of relevant grants on our website.

Examples of preservation grant programs:

- Historic Preservation Fund (Maine Historic Preservation Commission)
- [The 1772 Foundation in partnership with Maine Preservation](#)
- Community Building Grant at Maine Community Foundation
- [Maine Steeples Fund](#)
- Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust
- Davis Family Foundation
- National Trust for Historic Preservation

Examples of revitalization and reuse grant programs:

- [Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program](#) (USDA)
- [Community Development Block Grants](#) (CDBG)
- Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC)
- Congressionally Directed Spending/Community Project Funding (Maine Congressional Delegation)
- Façade improvement grants (community-specific)

Assistance

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