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Project Summary: Preservation Plan for Warren, RI

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PROJECT: Preservation Plan for Warren, Rhode Island
Roger Williams University - Spring 2011

During the spring semester of 2011, the graduate-level course in Historic Preservation Planning (HP682) at Roger Williams University (RWU) was charged to prepare a historic preservation plan for a local community in order to provide students with a “real-world” application of preservation planning principles, and as a way of meeting RWU’s mission of assisting local communities.

The Town of Warren, RI was chosen because the Town is in the midst of updating its Comprehensive Community Plan, one of the elements of which is Historical and Cultural Resources. In addition, it had been over 35 years since the initial preservation plan for the community was created in 1975. For these reasons, there was the potential for a unique cooperation between Warren and RWU to examine and plan for the preservation of the community’s historic resources.

The exercise set out to achieve two main objectives in its work from January to May, 2011:

- Provide RWU historic preservation students with a real-world experience in working with knowledgeable, committed individuals and organizations working to improve and preserve their community and,
- Provide the Town of Warren with updated information about its historic resources and “best practices” methods of preservation and conservation for use in its Comprehensive Community Planning process.

The effort was carried out by the students and faculty from the Historic Preservation Program at RWU. The Program is a part of the University’s School of Architecture, Art and Historic Preservation. The graduate students who made up the Team were Kasey Beckwith, Laura Briggs, Christine Greeley, Duane Houghton, Sarah Janeczek, Martine Rousseau, Sydney Schoof, and Alison Talbot. The course was taught by Visiting Assistant Professor Arnold N. Robinson, AICP. The team met each Monday for two three hour work sessions, and team members researched key issues, interviewed stakeholders, carried our field survey and prepared draft plan elements during the days between Monday team meetings.

Key elements of the planning process included:

- Precedent Analysis
- Existing Conditions Assessment
- Regulatory Systems Analysis
- Public Input and Community Engagement
 - Collaboration with Project Advisory Committee
 - Public Opinion Poll
 - Warren Historic Preservation Public Workshop

When the information gathering and research process was complete, the class created a plan of action for historic preservation. These draft elements were collaboratively researched, written and edited by the team as a whole. Specific plan elements include:

- History of Preservation in Warren
- Threats to Historic Resources in Warren
- Defining the Role of Historic Preservation in Warren
- Options for Historic Preservation in Warren