

(\$ in thousands)

Project Requests for State Funds					
Project Title	Priority Ranking	Funding Source	2026	2028	2030
Preservation and Access to History (PATH) - Facilities Improvements for Collections Care	1	GO	\$ 23,160	\$ 0	\$ 0
Historic Sites Asset Preservation	2	GO	\$ 22,285	\$ 13,625	\$ 14,510
		GF	\$ 600	\$ 0	\$ 0
County and Local Historic Preservation Grants	3	GO	\$ 1,250	\$ 1,250	\$ 1,250
Total Project Requests			\$ 47,295	\$ 14,875	\$ 15,760
General Obligation Bonds (GO) Total			\$ 46,695	\$ 14,875	\$ 15,760
General Fund Cash (GF) Total			\$ 600	\$ 0	\$ 0

Preservation and Access to History (PATH) - Facilities Improvements for Collections Care**AT A GLANCE****2026 Request Amount:** \$23,160**Priority Ranking:** 1

Project Summary: Through this project, the Minnesota Historical Society will design and construct renovations of MNHS facilities, including the Minnesota History Center and the Storage Warehouse at 1500 Mississippi Street in St. Paul, to optimize space usage to protect and preserve collections. This work will ensure the long-term safety, security and access to collections for future generations.

Project Description

The Minnesota Historical Society is requesting funds to enhance spaces at the Minnesota History Center and other facilities. Specifically, the 2026 Capital Budget request is to design and construct renovations to existing space at the Minnesota History Center and an adjunct facility in St. Paul to care for collections. Work at both facilities will provide upgrades to facility systems and sustainability best practices. MNHS has examined its program functions and space needs through a Master Planning process in 2023 and is undergoing predesign currently in order to be ready for design and construction funding to continue this project.

Project Rationale

One of the Minnesota Historical Society's core responsibilities is to house, care for and share collections that chronicle our state's unique history and culture for use today and by future generations. MNHS began collecting, preserving, and sharing Minnesota's history even before Minnesota became a state. Over 1,000,000 items are cared for in the collections at MNHS. These collections range from paper archives to the outfit Prince wore in "Purple Rain" to the 28th Virginia battle flag captured at the Battle of Gettysburg to the "Yankee Girl" sailboat. A significant component of these collections is the preservation of historically significant records of state and local government, a statutory responsibility carried out by MNHS State Archives. These collections are housed at the Minnesota History Center and other off-site facilities. One of the main off-site facilities, located on the East Side of St. Paul has significant deterioration. In addition, some collections storage areas in the MN History Center are reaching capacity.

Collections needs will be met through renovating space in the History Center, including an unfinished expansion space within the walls of the building, as well as through the renovation of the off-site facility to address critical needs. Museum collections storage areas require specialized security systems, environmental controls (HVAC) and storage systems (shelving and cabinets) to accommodate collections items of all sizes.

Collections include:

- 250,000 three-dimensional objects (furniture, clothing, tools, flags, inventions, contraptions,

amusements, mementos),

- 6,700 works of art,
- 300,000 photographs,
- 50,000 cubic feet of manuscripts (family archives, business records, political campaign collections, letters),
- 50,000 cubic feet of state archives,
- 500,000 printed works,
- 2,000 moving images and 3 million feet of news film,
- 2,000 hours of catalogs oral histories, and
- 2.25 million archaeological artifacts that span more than 10,000 years of human history.

Similarly, an important component of MNHS's mission is to share Minnesota's history with all Minnesotans and visitors. Updating these facilities will ensure that MNHS has the proper spaces to continue utilizing collections to create powerful engagement with history and provide learning opportunities for all Minnesotans.

Project Timeline

Timeline of the project is anticipated as follows, pending appropriation of funding for design and construction during the 2026 Legislative Session:

- 2023 Completed Master Planning for project
- 2025 Initiate Predesign
- 2026 Predesign/Schematic design commences (assuming with 2026 Capital Budget/bonding bill appropriation) Assessments (Hazmat, Structural, Etc.)
- 2027 Design Development/Construction Documents, and Construction
- 2028 Construction
- 2029 Construction

Other Considerations

In 2024, MNHS marked its 175th anniversary and in 2022, the Minnesota History Center marked its 30th anniversary. Since its opening, the History Center has been the place where millions of Minnesotans and guests from around the state, nation and world have discovered our history, and where collections are preserved for future generations. Guests have celebrated special occasions, remembered our heroes, and learned about our neighbors, whose background may be different from their own. As we look to the next 30 years and beyond, the Minnesota Historical Society has assessed its space needs for collections in order to best preserve, share and connect all Minnesotans with their history.

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

To be determined through the planning process.

Description of Previous Appropriations

The Minnesota History Center opened in the Fall of 1992 and was funded through major State of Minnesota Capital Budget appropriations made in the late 1980s, as well as significant private donations.

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Historic Sites Asset Preservation

AT A GLANCE**2026 Request Amount:** \$22,885**Priority Ranking:** 2

Project Summary: The Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) is requesting \$22.885 million in 2026 for the preservation and restoration of historic structures, landscapes and building systems in the statutorily-defined State Historic Sites Network and for monuments located statewide. Due to deferred maintenance needs of historic structures outpacing appropriations, the state of facilities in the historic sites network is reaching a critical level.

Project Description

Funding for the Minnesota Historical Society's Historic Sites Asset Preservation request will help to preserve some of the state's most significant historic structures, which are preserved for the education and enjoyment of our citizens.

Over the past five decades, more than 24 million students, families, and tourists have visited the 150+ landmark buildings, trails and museums of the State Historic Sites Network. MNHS is committed to keeping these extraordinary properties open and accessible to the public now and for future generations. Although many of the historic structures are now more than one hundred years old and holding up remarkably well, age and modern visitation do take their toll. While keeping pace with the impacts of visitor traffic and continuous aging of the historic structures is always one of our chief concerns, we also must keep up with changes in life/safety systems, environmental issues, security, accessibility, infrastructure upgrades and renovations necessary to support building use. In addition to the necessary work on historic structures, many of the modern visitor centers constructed 30 to 40 years ago are now in need of renewal or are reaching the end of their useful life. The asset preservation investment for such a vast network of varied structures is an indispensable component of operating the Historic Sites Network for the people of Minnesota.

In recognition of the integral part that these buildings and landscapes play in public education, the people of Minnesota have invested significantly in the State Historic Sites Network. Maintaining these resources is expensive, but it is a good cost-benefit ratio for the people of Minnesota and the over 600,000 visitors each year. As non-renewable social and cultural resources, historic buildings require a high standard of care. The skills of specially qualified architects, engineers and contractors are required to assess, design and implement repairs, maintenance, and systems improvements. The cost of high-quality materials increases every year. The investment is well rewarded by the educational benefits and public appreciation for preserving the state's precious heritage.

The Historic Sites Network also serves as a showcase for the principles and techniques of historic preservation, setting a standard for the state. These structures are learning resources used by students of Minnesota history, by students and practitioners of architecture, and by the traditional building trades. Preservation of historic structures, by definition, meets the state's goal of funding sustainable, high-performance buildings, since historic structures preserve previous energy and financial investments. It has been said that "the greenest building is the one that is already built."

MNHS's Historic Sites & Facilities Operations and Capital Planning Departments are responsible for all 150+ of the structures in the Historic Sites Network. Every year the staff typically manages five or six large projects and dozens of small projects scattered across the state. Staff prioritizes work projects based upon long-range planning, building analysis, and structural conditions. Working in consultation with preservation architects and specialty engineers, cost estimates are prepared for appropriation requests.

Projects in this request are part of the State Historic Sites Network, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, 138.661, and have strong local and regional support from the areas in which they are located, since historic sites are an important component of our state's tourism economy. Local citizens, businesses, and support group members have assisted these sites with volunteer hours, in-kind contributions, and grass-roots leadership. Minnesotans are rightfully proud of the sites.

The historic buildings, artifacts, and landscapes within the State Historic Sites Network are of national and state significance. They fulfill the mission given by the Territorial Legislature to the Minnesota Historical Society, to collect and preserve evidence of human culture in the state, and to teach Minnesota history in all its academic, technological, and social diversity. Failure to maintain these cultural treasures will result in irreversible loss of material and intellectual culture.

Project Rationale

This request is for work that is critical to the preservation and maintenance of important historic resources, which are a state responsibility under Minnesota Statutes 138.661, the authorizing statute for the State Historic Sites Network. Preservation of historic structures, by definition, meets the state's goal of funding sustainable, high performance buildings, because historic structures preserve previous energy and financial investments.

Project Timeline

After funding becomes available, MNHS project managers will oversee design for each project, then commence construction. Since each project contains unique individual components, timelines will be different for each asset preservation project. All asset preservation projects will be completed by the required funding expiration date.

Other Considerations

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

Generally, not applicable. There may be some minor savings from energy efficiency.

Description of Previous Appropriations

Appropriations for asset preservation of the state Historic Sites Network have been made in most major capital budget bills since 1990. MNHS has received the following general obligation bond appropriations in recent years

2025: \$4 million

2023: \$14 million

2020: \$2.350 million

2018: \$8 million

2017: \$2.5 million

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County and Local Historic Preservation Grants

AT A GLANCE**2026 Request Amount:** \$1,250**Priority Ranking:** 3**Project Summary:** This project provides funding, on a competitive matching basis, for county and local historic preservation projects. This program will allow local communities to preserve their most significant historical resources.**Project Description**

The county and local historic preservation program provides grants on a local match basis to preserve historic assets owned by public entities. These properties are historically significant structures, with priority given to those that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This program is one of the most successful of its type, with relatively small amounts of money leveraging local funding and volunteer efforts. Since recipients of county and local preservation grants are required to fully match state funds, this project provides the best possible return on the state's investment. Funds appropriated between 1994 and 2025 were spread across Minnesota on a competitive grant basis, with requests more than double the funds available.

This project also has the effect of reducing the state's overall share of investment in preserving historic resources while fulfilling the state's statutory commitment to preserving elements of the state's inventory of historic resources (according to M.S. Sec. 138.665). Some states, for example, attempt to preserve 125+ historic sites at the state level. In Minnesota, we have limited the state's historic sites network to 32 sites, allowing the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) to concentrate on its mission of interpreting historic sites of statewide significance. Minnesota's grant-in-aid program, initiated in 1969, encourages local organizations to take on such preservation projects.

Since 1969 more than 2,400 capital and operating grants have been awarded to qualified historical organizations in all 87 counties, resulting in the preservation of the evidence of Minnesota's past. In recent rounds of grants, 248 grants from the MNHS's capital bond-funded grant program have assisted in preserving and making accessible such projects as historic county courthouses (62 grants to 27 different courthouses); historic city halls (29 grants to 17 different city halls); and historic library buildings (20 grants to 16 different libraries). Grants have helped to preserve publicly owned historic structures that provide a unique lens on our state's history.

Types of historic structures preserved with grants funds include depots, senior and community centers, schools, bridges, theaters, park buildings, museums, water towers, and township halls. Specific examples include Norman County Courthouse Preservation (Norman County); the Andrew Volstead House roof replacement (City of Granite Falls); the Olof Swensson House roof replacement

(Chippewa County); the O.G. Anderson and Company Store restoration (City of Minnesota); the Anna and Mikko Pyhala Farm Restoration project (Town of Embarrass); the Mahnomen City Hall Restoration; Winona Masonic Hall/Senior Center (City of Winona); the Rensselaer Hubbard House restoration (City of Mankato); Robbinsdale Branch Library restoration (City of Robbinsdale); the Minneapolis Pioneers and Soldiers Memorial Cemetery Preservation, and the Norenberg Estate Water Tower (Hennepin County [Grantee is Three Rivers Park District]), and Bemidji Carnegie Library (City of Bemidji).

From a financial perspective, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2020, 2023 and 2025 appropriations totaling over \$11.25 million have leveraged at least an equal amount in local match funding, as well as countless hours of volunteer effort.

Project Rationale

The county and local historic preservation grants program enables city and county government to fulfill their obligations to preserve historic structures, under MN Statute 138.665, while sharing the cost with the State of Minnesota.

Project Timeline

N/A

Other Considerations

Against a backdrop of economic challenges and heightened concern for the environment, historic preservation has a proven track record in stimulating local economies and revitalizing local communities, large and small.

It has been said: “the greenest building is the one that is already built.” Continuation of funding for this grant program leverages local resources and helps to preserve the built environment, thereby conserving the resources already put into these buildings and further the efforts to contribute to a sustainable future.

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

None.

Description of Previous Appropriations

Funding for the County and Local Historic Preservation Grant program has been included in most major capital budget bills since 1994. The four most recent appropriations have been: 2025: \$1 million (GO); 2023: \$1 million (GO); 2020: \$750,000 (GO); 2014: \$1,400,000 (GF)

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