

Rationale Kristen & Alan

The history of Portsmouth is:

AC:

1. Nationally recognized as important to the history of the Country and State
2. Integral to the cultural identity of the city
3. A major tourism draw

KP:

4. Important to the economic viability of the city
5. Studied and documented by Scholars from all over the world
6. A repository of information about the people and cultures who have lived in Portsmouth (Piscataqua region)
7. Important for how we shape Portsmouth in the future

Rationale

The history of Portsmouth dates back to the early part of the 17th century. From the earliest explorers, to the settlers who found economic prosperity, to shipbuilders, merchants and industrialists, Portsmouth has paralleled the struggles and growth of the State of New Hampshire and the United States. The importance of our seacoast city in the northeast corner of the country cannot be overstated.

We boast of the earliest engagement of the war for US independence, revolutionary war heroes, signers of the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution, Statesmen and successful businessmen – and that is all before the end of the 19th century. Documentation of the earliest period of our city is a treasure for researchers and scholars who seek to understand who we are and the events that shaped us.

The earliest beginnings of 'merchant adventurers' versus those seeking religious freedom shaped the values and the cultural underpinnings of the region; all were welcome, everyone's contributions were valued and the building of our area was based on the collective effort of all who lived here. We certainly acknowledge the dark history of both slavery and sometimes less than harmonious relations with native peoples who inhabited these lands some 12,000 years before Europeans. The sad lessons we have learned from these times have also shaped who we are and has led us to being more open and inclusive to all our fellow citizens. The written history as well as the artifacts tell a story of who we are. Their safeguarding and accessibility are

important for us today and are a legacy for future generations who want to know and study this community and the impact that we had in building and shaping this region and the United States.

The Chamber Collaborative tells us that we receive some millions of visitors per year. With our old stately buildings, many of which were built during the Brick Act (1814-1825), the history that abounds and the music, art and dining scene, Portsmouth can proudly declare itself as a tourist heritage economy. Visitors take advantage of perusing the collections at the Athenaeum, taking the self-guided tour of our living history museum; Strawberry Banke or viewing the exhibits and taking the walking tour at the Historical Society. The foundation of economic vitality of Portsmouth is the historical attractions that bring tourists here. Once here, they are delighted to hear world class jazz and blues, take in a Broadway worthy show or take advantage of fine dining opportunities. Everything that we do today continues to add to our unique and fulfilling way of life. We must do all we can to preserve everything we have and to treat our archives as the treasures that they are.

Having a city archive in Portsmouth can bring several benefits that contribute to the economic viability, scholarly interest, cultural preservation, and future development of the city. Here's how it can make a positive impact:

1. **Preservation of Historical Records:** A city archive serves as a repository of historical documents, photographs, maps, city-owned documents and other artifacts related to the city and its surrounding region. By preserving these records, the archive ensures that the history of Portsmouth and the Piscataqua region is safeguarded for future generations. This preservation effort helps maintain the city's cultural heritage and provides researchers with rich resources to study and document the past.
2. **Attracting Scholars and Researchers:** The existence of a comprehensive city archive attracts scholars, historians, and researchers from all over the world who are interested in studying the history, people, and cultures of Portsmouth. Researchers often require access to primary source materials for their research, and a well-organized archive with a diverse collection can make Portsmouth an attractive destination for academic and intellectual pursuits. This influx of research and general interest can bring economic benefits to the city through increased tourism, enhanced collaboration with local institutions, and academic conferences.
3. **Promoting Cultural Tourism:** Portsmouth has a rich cultural heritage, and a city archive can help promote cultural tourism. The archive can showcase exhibitions, host educational programs at schools, and offer guided tours that highlight the historical significance of the city and its surrounding region. This not only attracts tourists but also generates revenue for local businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, and shops, thus enhancing the economic viability of the city.

4. **Shaping Future Development:** A city archive plays a vital role in informing the future development of a city. By studying historical records and understanding past patterns, city planners, policymakers, and architects can make more informed decisions about urban development, infrastructure projects, and heritage preservation. The archive acts as a valuable resource for identifying and protecting historically significant buildings, neighborhoods, and cultural landscapes, thereby ensuring that future development aligns with the city's historical identity and character.
5. **Engaging the Community:** A city archive can actively involve the local community by organizing educational programs, workshops, and exhibitions that promote historical literacy and civic engagement. By connecting residents in the preservation and interpretation of their city's history, the archive fosters a sense of pride, identity, and belonging. This community engagement can also lead to the generation of local historical knowledge, oral histories, and personal archives, which further enrich the city's archival collection and make it more representative of diverse experiences.

In summary, a city archive brings economic viability by attracting researchers, promoting cultural tourism, and shaping future development. It serves as a repository of information, allowing local schools and colleges, as well as scholars from around the world to study and document Portsmouth's history. Furthermore, it plays a crucial role in preserving the city's cultural heritage, engaging the local community, and informing decision-making processes for a sustainable and historically conscious future.