



MAIN STREET  
*South Carolina*

MAIN STREET SOUTH CAROLINA

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION

A MAIN STREET LEADER'S GUIDE

PRACTICAL TIPS, TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR PLACEKEEPING



**MAIN STREET SC**

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
A MAIN STREET LEADER'S GUIDE**

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**This resource was produced in partnership with  
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Downtown Florence, South Carolina.**

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# How To Use This Guide

## CONTENT

The content for this publication was created with the Main Street leader in mind and supports an awareness level practical approach to historic preservation. This guide is not a substitute for calling in preservation experts and design professionals for projects or specialized needs. The content is organized by theme and several pages have live links for additional resources and materials from peer Main Street programs.

Several areas of this guide offer opportunities for interactivity. You are encouraged to utilize these interactive spaces to customize the guide for your district.



Sections also contain highlighted call-outs with the icon to the left. These highlights include prompts to learn more, connection to the Main Street America Academy, or links to additional resources relevant to the theme.

## RESOURCES

The resource section of this publication is organized by theme similar to the guide. Resources will be periodically updated and include courses, online reading materials, technical guides and resources for property owners.

## READING LIST

The reading list is compiled to include books or publications for additional reading. Some of the reading list items may be available online, others are traditional print materials that we encourage you to source locally from an independent bookseller in a Main Street district.





One of Main Street's core principles is the preservation of our historic commercial districts and the built environment within them, a principle that is woven through each of the **Main Street Four Points** and should be integrated into the work of a successful and sustainable local program.

## So, what does this look like for Main Street programs?

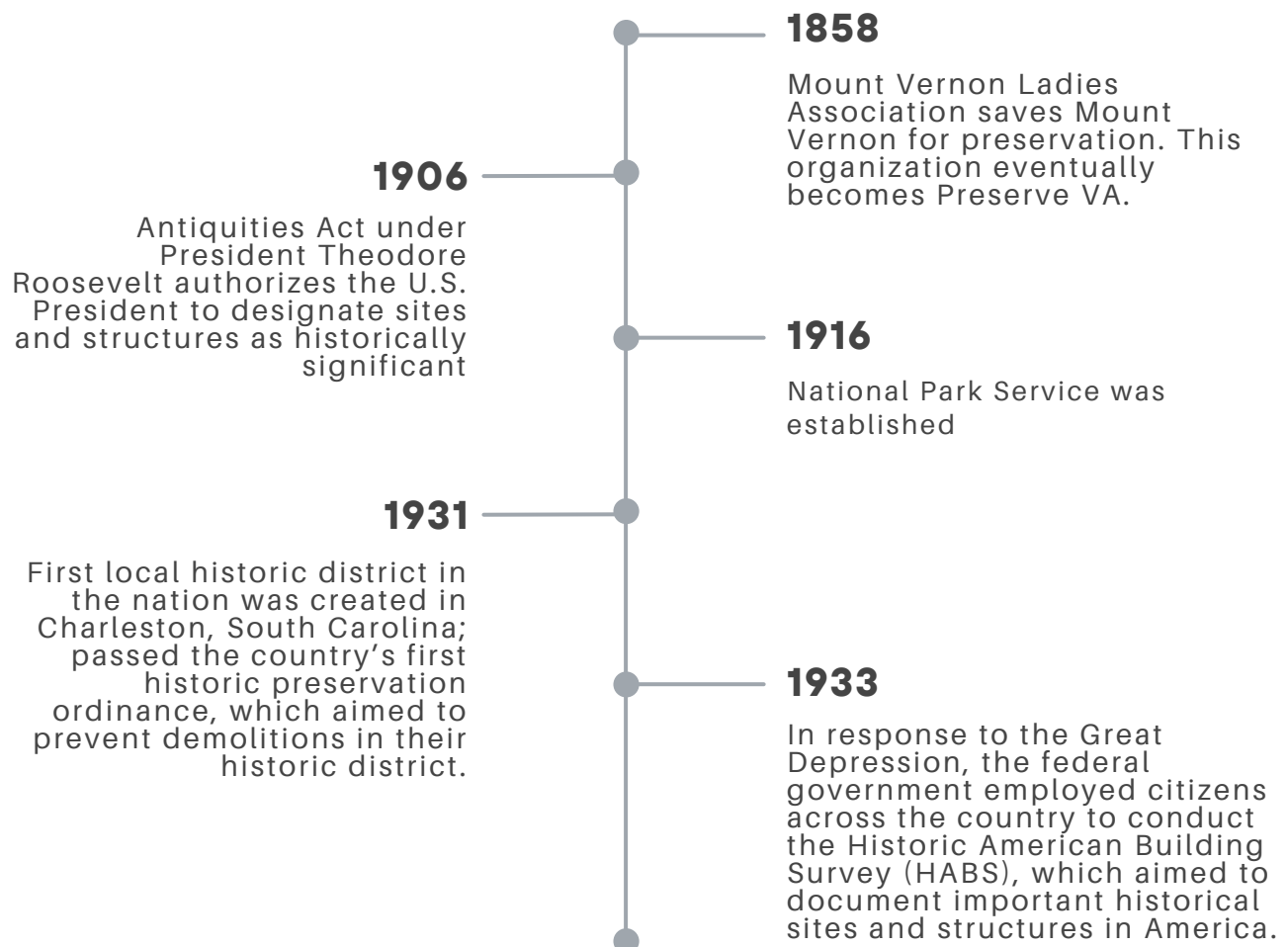
This toolkit aims to provide an awareness-level overview of preservation topics, available resources, the role of Main Street programs in historic preservation, and to empower local leaders with tools to be successful in preservation projects.

Main Street America (formerly the National Main Street Center) was established as a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to provide a framework for supporting and reviving disinvested historic commercial corridors across the United States driven by local community efforts.

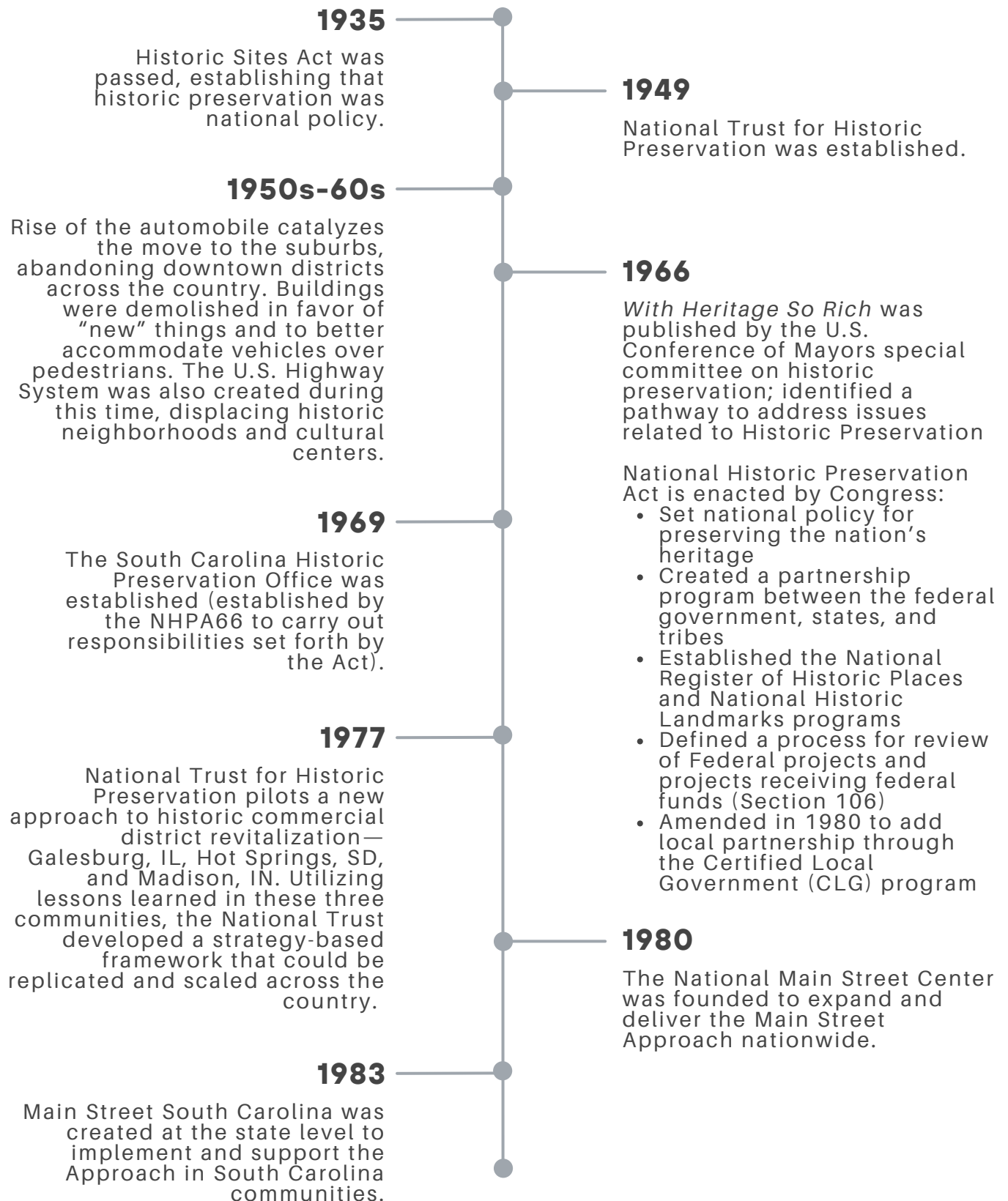
The program began officially in 1980 in response to the loss of vibrant downtown economies caused by suburban sprawl, shifting consumer habits, and the rise of the shopping mall. But the preservation movement in the United States began more than 100 years before with a group of women organized to save and restore Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington.

## ***TIMELINE***

### **PRESERVATION IN THE UNITED STATES**



# PRESERVATION IN THE UNITED STATES



Understanding preservation's history in the United States helps us frame the context of historic preservation work locally in our communities, as the formal practice is only 60 years old and it is still evolving and specializing today. With such diversity in practice, it is important to define what historic preservation means in the Main Street context.

## What is historic preservation?

The National Park Service defines historic preservation simply as "a conversation with our past about our future." But it's much more than that.

Historic preservation is the study, documentation, designation, protection and physical preservation of buildings, structures, districts, sites or objects. Essentially, preservation is about saving old stuff built by humans in our physical environment that is deemed important historically, culturally or physically at the local, state, or federal level.

### WHAT MAKES A PROPERTY HISTORIC?

To be considered historic, a property must pass **THREE** essential tests.



#### AGE

A property must be "old enough" to be considered historic, generally at least 50 years old. But, not all old buildings are historic ones.



#### INTEGRITY

For buildings, structures, landscapes, sites, or districts, this means the asset must retain significant historic elements or character-defining features largely unchanged by time. If the significance is cultural, the site must be recognizable to today's affiliated culture group and still used or revered in some way today.



#### SIGNIFICANCE

Properties must be significant as defined by three sub-tests:

- Direct association with historically significant events, people, activities, or developments that shaped history or reflect important aspects of history locally, statewide or nationally
- Embodiment of distinctive physical or special characteristics of architectural styles, building types, structures, landscapes, construction methods, or fine/high artistic craftsmanship
- Having the potential to yield information important to our understanding of the past through architectural, archeological, or other physical investigation or analysis

# THE LANGUAGE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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It's easy to feel intimidated by the language used in historic preservation, but there are a few key terms that Main Streeters should be familiar with to have conversations with property owners, local leaders and district stakeholders. A complete glossary of preservation terms can be found in the [Main Street Glossary](#).

**Common terms throughout this publication include these:**

**Condition vs. Integrity:** These two concepts are different, but related. The integrity of a building or site refers to the presence of authentic materials and features; however, the condition refers to the appearance, soundness, salvageability and maintenance over time of the material.

**Historic Fabric:** Generally, this refers to character-defining features such as porches, windows, stairways, trim, entrances and windows. It can also refer to materials such as wood, stone, brick or plaster. Historic landscape references include roads, fences and even vegetation.

**Historic Integrity:** Refers to how authentic, legitimate or intact the historic identity is, evaluated by the survival of character-defining features that existed during a property or site's most important period of time. The National Register criteria include seven qualities when evaluating integrity: location, setting, feeling, association, design, workmanship and materials.

**Historic Significance:** An established set of tests or criteria developed in connection with listing a property or site on the National Register of Historic Places; the criteria include the quality of significance to American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture present in districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects possessing the integrity of location, design, setting, materiality, workmanship or material culture.

**Mothballing:** Often describes an initial investment for securing, monitoring and protecting a historic building from the elements or deterioration while funds or plans are secured for additional preservation treatments.

**Preservation:** The act or process of using measures necessary to keep the existing form, integrity, and materials of a historic property; the act of preservation focuses on ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials rather than replacement and new construction.

**Reconstruction:** The act or process of precisely duplicating the form, features and details of a structure or site to its appearance at a certain period of time or place through new construction. The reconstruction of historic resources is rare and should only be undertaken when detailed physical and documentary evidence is available for accurate re-creation.

**Rehabilitation:** The act of adapting or reusing a historic property for a new use. This can involve repairs, alterations, and additions while preserving portions or character-defining features that express its historic, cultural, or architectural value. Adaptive re-use falls into the rehabilitation category and allows historic buildings to survive into the present and future by finding viable and appropriate new uses for them.

**Restoration:** The process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property or site as it appeared at a particular point in time. This may involve the removal of more recently added features and the reconstruction of missing details from the period of restoration. Restoration is generally very expensive and requires substantial research to get right.

**Stabilization:** A temporary treatment meant to preserve a building or character-defining feature until more permanent work can be completed, stabilization refers to the application of actions designed to protect structural stability and prevent weather-related damage while maintaining the essential form and features of the structure or site such as mothballing, propping up a canopy, covering a window with plywood, or replacing a roof.





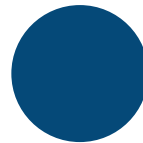
# MAIN STREET'S ROLE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic preservation isn't just about the past, it's about balancing identity, history, functionality and community need. Main Street programs use preservation tools to achieve economic and social change at the local level. This is accomplished through supporting the preservation and adaptive re-use of the built environment in our downtowns, enhancing existing community assets, and building community buy-in while driving economic growth.

**LONG-TERM  
SUSTAINABILITY**

**ECONOMIC  
VIABILITY**

**PUBLIC  
SENTIMENT**



Main Street programs must help their districts balance economic viability, public sentiment and long-term sustainability when evaluating properties for preservation efforts. This practical approach to historic preservation ensures healthy, vibrant districts responsive to community needs over time.



Main Street programs can engage in practical preservation through sharing resources related to maintaining historic buildings, funding mechanisms and regulatory compliance in addition to taking on additional roles such as these:

- Local historic district or individual property designation assistance
- Public education and outreach
- Partnerships and collaborations with local government and preservation-focused organizations
- Provision of preservation-based incentives or funding
- Advocacy
- Maintenance or rehabilitation resource assistance
- Documentation and research for historic properties and sites
- Preservation planning through tools such as design guidelines or standards, downtown master plans, and property or site preservation planning
- Facilitation of heritage tourism through promotion and storytelling

Historic preservation relies upon a few core principles and approaches that are woven through Main Street work:

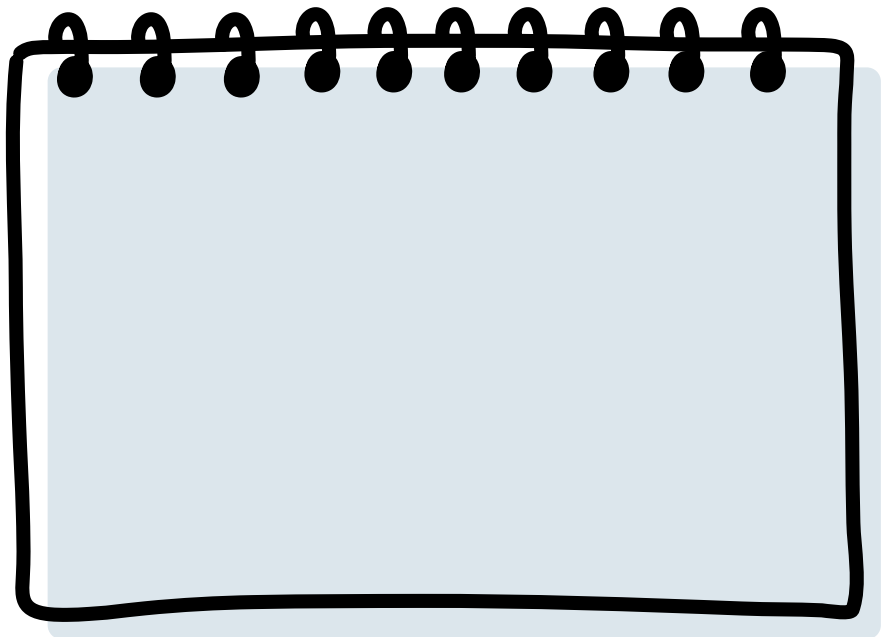
1. **Identification and Evaluation:** continuously updating your district's building inventory or survey of district assets to determine historical or cultural significance (**Building Inventory, Asset Mapping**)
2. **Maintaining Integrity:** ensuring that our districts maintain their historic character-defining features that make our places unique while acknowledging that alterations made over time may have achieved their own significance (**Design Standards, Facade Improvements, National Register, Local Overlays**)
3. **Repair over Replacement:** prioritizing the maintenance and adaptive re-use of the built environment and material culture of our downtowns rather than razing and building new (**Preservation Advocacy, Building Codes, Secretary of the Interior Standards**)
4. **Rehabilitation for Continued Use:** cultivating an environment for returning buildings to service while preserving the features that define their historic character through adaptive re-use (**Business Recruitment, Property Owner Education, Promotion**)

Additionally, Main Street programs are placekeepers. *Placekeeping* is preserving a community's unique identity, culture and history through design choices made in our districts. Placekeeping differs from placemaking in that placemaking focuses on creating new opportunities to establish a sense of place, while placekeeping relies upon local stories, traditions and landmarks to create that sense of place. Main Street programs can engage in placekeeping through:

- Identifying and mapping local cultural assets such as old signage, legacy businesses, local traditions and existing community gathering spaces
- Soliciting community feedback through storytelling and surveys on what is valuable to local residents and stakeholders
- Balancing new with respect to the established local identity ensuring new assets are complimentary to existing districts rather than copying existing landmarks or building out of scale with the local community



**If your program is already engaged in practical preservation and placekeeping activities, use the notepad to jot down what you do.**



**For additional training on the basics of historic preservation, explore the Main Street America Academy course, [Design: Historic Preservation Basics](#). Joining the Academy is free with Main Street America membership.**

## MAIN STREET QUICK START: HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic preservation activities are some of the most visible and impactful ways Main Street programs can strengthen their downtowns. Main Street leaders don't have to be experts to start making a difference. Instead, start with practical actions, build strategic partnerships and make preservation a part of the program's everyday work. Small, consistent actions will often have greater long-term impact than occasional large projects.

Successful Main Street preservation efforts are built on three principles:

- **Identify** what makes your downtown historically significant
- **Protect** historic assets through education, maintenance and thoughtful rehabilitation
- **Promote** the value of preservation as an investment in community economic vitality, character and long-term resilience

|                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>STEP 1:</b><br>Know your historic assets               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify historic buildings, districts, landmarks and cultural resources</li> <li>• Gather existing surveys, National Register nominations and local preservation ordinances and documents</li> <li>• Begin a building inventory or update an existing one</li> </ul> |
| <b>STEP 2:</b><br>Build relationships                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect with local preservation organizations, planning staff, historical societies, museums, libraries and SC State Historic Preservation Office</li> <li>• Introduce preservation as a shared community goal rather than a regulatory issue</li> </ul>              |
| <b>STEP 3:</b><br>Learn the basics                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become familiar with basic preservation principles, historic tax credits, design guidelines and rehabilitation best practices</li> <li>• Understand why repairing historic buildings is often more sustainable and cost-effective than replacement</li> </ul>         |
| <b>STEP 4:</b><br>Make preservation part of every program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include preservation in economic development, design, promotions and organizational planning</li> <li>• Highlight historic buildings in marketing materials, tours and downtown events</li> </ul>                                                                     |
| <b>STEP 5:</b><br>Celebrate success                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share before and after rehabilitation photos of buildings</li> <li>• Recognize property owners investing in historic buildings</li> <li>• Tell stories that connect buildings with community history</li> </ul>                                                       |

## START DOING NOW

Below are low-cost, high-impact activities you can start doing immediately.

- Conduct windshield or walking surveys of downtown buildings
- Photograph buildings annually to document change over time
- Create a simple inventory of vacant and underutilized historic buildings
- Share one historic building story every week on social media
- Host walking tours or architectural tours
- Celebrate National Preservation Month each May
- Educate property owners about routine maintenance
- Promote historic rehabilitation tax credits and available incentives
- Encourage repair over replacement whenever possible
- Recognize exemplary rehabilitation projects through awards or publicity
- Invite preservation experts to speak at community events
- Include preservation goals in annual work planning
- Build relationships with property owners before issues arise

## THESE ACTIVITIES CAN WAIT

As organizational capacity grows, Main Street programs can expand into larger preservation initiatives. These efforts often require funding, technical expertise and strong local partnerships.

- Developing or updating local design standards or guidelines
- Completing professional historic resource surveys
- Pursuing National Register nominations
- Establishing local historic districts
- Creating facade grant programs
- Developing revolving loan or preservation funds
- Producing detailed preservation plans
- Commissioning architectural studies or facade renderings
- Creating preservation or conservation easement programs
- Leading major advocacy efforts



# PRESERVATION ADVOCACY

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Historic preservation is a shared ethic and simply supporting preservation values isn't enough to be successful. Main Street programs must advocate for and facilitate active preservation of the built environment (buildings) and sensitive long-range planning that removes barriers to investment and supports positive land use and adaptive re-use policies. This requires cooperation and partnership between the Main Street program, district property owners and local government.

Aside from its role as a core component of the Main Street Approach, historic preservation is essential for supporting economic development, fostering a sense of place and identity, and promoting sustainability in our community. By encouraging the rehabilitation of historic and significant buildings in our downtown, thoughtful and intentional preservation efforts help to attract tourism, support small businesses, and increase investment in our communities which in turn enhance local quality of life and strengthen the tax base.

# Getting Involved with Advocacy

Historic preservation advocacy is easier than you think to get involved in. We advocate for historic preservation so we can protect, rehabilitate and repurpose historic buildings and sites, enhance our communities by strengthening property values, promote sustainability and foster unique, walkable neighborhoods. Key areas of preservation advocacy nationally include:

- **Policy and legislation:** lobbying for tax incentives such as South Carolina's Abandoned Building Tax Credit or Historic Tax Credits and preventing policies harmful to historic resources
- **Funding advocacy:** supporting and securing federal funds for state and local projects such as the Historic Preservation Fund administered through the National Trust for Historic Preservation and our SC State Historic Preservation Office.
- **Endangered places protection:** rescuing, acquiring, or repurposing threatened historic buildings or sites for re-use
- **Engagement** with local preservation commissions

## NATIONAL PRESERVATION MONTH

National Preservation Month in May is an excellent opportunity for Main Street programs to advocate for preservation, celebrate local history, engage the community, and recognize preservation success. Many activities require little funding and can be adapted for any size community.

### Community Engagement

- Host a free downtown historic walking tour or behind-the-scenes tour
- Create a "history hunt" scavenger hunt for families
- Display historic photos in storefront windows

### Social Media Campaigns

- Post before-and-after rehabilitation success stories
- Highlight local preservation champions and volunteers
- Create short videos highlighting interesting building features

### Property Owner Outreach

- Recognize outstanding rehabs with window decals
- Provide simple building maintenance tips through weekly emails
- Host a lunchtime preservation info session for property owners



## KEY PRESERVATION ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>National Trust for Historic Preservation</b>              | Privately funded nonprofit founded in 1949 to protect and promote historic places; frequently advocates for preservation funding, saving historic places and influencing key federal legislation                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Preservation Action</b>                                   | A 501(c)4 nonprofit created in 1974 that serves as the grassroots lobby for historic preservation with the goal to make historic preservation a national policy priority                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>National Conference of Historic Preservation Officers</b> | Represents state-level efforts among state historic preservation offices, or SHPOs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>National Alliance of Preservation Commissions</b>         | Advocates for effective practices, programs, and funding that benefit local preservation programs and architectural review boards                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Preservation South Carolina</b>                           | A South Carolina-based nonprofit that directly preserves and protects historic buildings and places, advocates for re-use, and promotes South Carolina's diverse cultural legacy; they also administer the SC Preservation Awards, a SC-based endangered property registry, advocate for state tax credit programs and administer conservation easements in SC |
| <b>Local Preservation Societies or Commissions</b>           | Work at the local level to support preservation efforts, promote historical resources, and may have additional authorities depending on local ordinances                                                                                                                                                                                                       |



**List your local preservation organization(s) to the right.**

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# Making The Case

More than saving old buildings, making an advocacy case is about connecting the past to community vitality of the present and future through framing preservation as a sustainable economic driver and a way to ensure the protection of your community's unique identity. Depending on the personalization of the message, appeals should be emotional and logical and include talking points and targeted action steps. Programs should be specific about what they are asking for and be mindful of timing, especially if the ask is for funding. The most effective time for advocacy work is before the wrecking ball arrives or the funding process is completed. Consider utilizing real-world examples from your district, utilize local data and leverage advocacy resources from Main Street America, Main Street South Carolina and other preservation advocacy organizations.

Key cases Main Street programs can make for preservation initiatives include:

1. **Economic Vitality:** Historic districts are typically laid out with more density than sprawling strip centers, making their tax value and value potential much higher per acre. Historic districts often see higher appreciation and attract tourists, investors and new businesses looking for unique and authentic spaces.
2. **Community Identity and Material Culture:** Our buildings on Main Street tell the story of our community's evolution, maintaining a connection to the past and fostering a unique sense of identity in place.
3. **Improved Quality of Life for Residents:** Designed to be highly walkable with a variety of uses, historic downtowns become centers for commerce, culture and community.
4. **Sustainability:** The greenest building is the one that is already there. Adaptively reusing buildings is more sustainable than new construction, leads to less waste in landfills and materials often outperform modern building alternatives with energy exchange.

As important as the message itself, who the message is for will determine how messages should be delivered, what to prioritize and what appeal will make the best case for preservation in your district. Remember, advocacy isn't a one-time activity. It's a skill that must be shaped over time and utilized consistently to tell the story of your district and ensure its resilience for the future.

# Personalizing The Message

Different audiences will require different messaging when engaging in historic preservation advocacy because each audience will have differing needs, priorities and challenges. Generally, the audiences Main Streets might encounter when advocating for historic preservation include elected officials, local government peers, property owners, developers and the general public.



## ELECTED OFFICIALS

Elected officials may prioritize or value a proposal's relevance to their constituents, bottom lines such as data or return on investment, leveraging limited resources, low risk or perceived risk of failure, and visibility or acknowledgement of themselves within a proposed project or idea. You can reach this audience by shaping your message to include:

- Data related to the activity generated by the re-use of historic buildings (increased tax value, connection of preservation to another priority such as housing, elimination of blight, etc.)
- Local success stories with key facts and personal stories from affected constituents involved in the project
- Storytelling with small businesses, constituents in their district, etc.
- Examples of cost savings from re-using or adding onto a building rather than tearing it down or constructing something new
- Examples from other cities of similar size or of widespread support for similar projects
- Opportunities for public thanks of support and/or photo opportunities



## LOCAL GOVERNMENT PEERS

Peers from local government may not always recognize the importance of the Main Street program and historic preservation efforts due to siloed work areas, inability to see how the Main Street program affects their department, etc. You can reach this audience though:

- Connecting to other departmental goals and discuss how Main Street's preservation work might support them
- Reviewing your local comprehensive or downtown master plans to understand broader goals
- Finding ways to engage with or enhance related efforts



## DISTRICT PROPERTY OWNERS

District property owners may struggle with perceptions of loss of control of their privately owned properties, perceived inconsistent treatment, lack of awareness of their responsibilities as owners of a historic property, or concerns about time and expense involved in compliance with local policies or guidelines. You can reach this audience through these steps:

- Working to ensure local processes for approval are transparent and streamlined, minimizing barriers to access
- Presenting yourself as a resource connector or facilitator who wants to see the property owner succeed
- Educating the property owner about preservation resources, principles, local standards, building code requirements, and incentives or opportunities

## DEVELOPERS

Developers tend to be concerned with maximizing their return on investment in your district and understanding local processes related preservation. In addition to tips for property owners, consider these ways to reach developers:

- Educating developers about financial incentives including tax credits
- Sharing unique marketing opportunities for buildings with history



## THE PUBLIC/RESIDENTS

The general public refers to a diverse population that will have everything from zero preservation knowledge and experience to local enthusiasts or subject matter experts. This group also includes those in your community who may have historically been excluded from issues related to historic preservation. Reaching historically excluded audiences requires care and attention, building trust and relationships over time. Tips for reaching the public and those previously excluded from preservation discussions include:

- Practice self-awareness by showing genuine interest in listening and understanding the needs and priorities of the community
- Explore ways to meaningfully collaborate and better recognize and preserve what is important to the community
- Invite the public to participate in shaping preservation programs and policies through surveys, focus groups, service on local commissions, etc.
- Tailor messages as much as possible to different audiences and their unique concerns as they relate to historic preservation efforts in your district.

## Making The Case

Even if you cannot officially participate in formal advocacy efforts with your Main Street Program due to local policies or organizational structures, you can still build support for preservation-related goals:

- Ensure historic preservation themes and best practices are included in your local comprehensive plans or master plans
- Coordinate with other local government offices to ensure processes are transparent
- Encourage consistent codes enforcement
- Update preservation policies, practices and incentives to meet community needs
- Provide preservation training for local boards, commissions and advocacy groups in your community
- Educate property owners, developers, and business owners about historic preservation activities and resources



**The National Alliance of Preservation Commissions has an [excellent messaging guide](#) with sample language, scenarios, and tips for advocating and communicating about your district.**

## Preservation Myths

Historic preservation is a complex and nuanced topic that can sometimes be perceived as not progressive. Below are several common misconceptions about historic preservation accompanied by rebuttals you can use to help clear up misunderstandings about the work.

### **MYTH: HISTORIC PRESERVATION IMPEDES JOB GROWTH.**

*Reality:* Building rehabs are more labor intensive and actually create jobs. According to PlaceEconomics, 37% more jobs are created for projects involving rehabilitation or restoration of a property than for new construction because rehabs required skilled labor. Additionally, historic districts attract 31% more job growth on average compared to areas outside of a historic district.

**MYTH: PRESERVING HISTORIC SITES DRAINS MUNICIPAL BUDGETS.**

*Reality:* Heritage tourism brings greater value to a community than visitation for other purposes. Heritage tourists spend more money on lodging, transportation, food and beverage, retail and recreation than other travelers.

**MYTH: HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATIONS STIFLE PROPERTY VALUES.**

*Reality:* Protection and rehabilitation of historic structures consistently results in greater appreciation or value over time and historic structure investment is more resilient during economic downturns.

**MYTH: PRESERVATION HINDERS SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.**

*Reality:* Historic commercial corridors, especially those with active Main Street programs, are more resilient and see more small business growth than areas outside of historic commercial corridors.

**MYTH: URBAN YOUNG PEOPLE WANT NEW CONSTRUCTION.**

*Reality:* Today's younger populations are increasingly drawn to craftsmanship and show appreciation for the unique character of preserved historic structures and districts.

**MYTH: NEW CONSTRUCTION IS "GREENER" THAN A HISTORIC BUILDING.**

*Reality:* The "greenest" building is the one that's already there. Historic buildings in the south were designed to maximize air exchange and exist within local conditions rather than compete with them, often leading to better performance of the building.

**MYTH: PRESERVATION POLICY LIMITS INFILL AND LEADS TO SPRAWL.**

*Reality:* Historic preservation is a land use policy that values managed change over time. New construction expenses in today's market are often higher than building rehabilitation expenses.

## **MYTH: PRESERVATION PREVENTS CITIES FROM GROWING THEIR TAX BASE.**

*Reality:* Urban historic districts are significantly more valuable per acre than sprawling strip center retail or residential growth. Cities can capitalize on tax increases post-rehabilitation through tools such as Tax Increment Finance districts, or TIF districts, which can help support infrastructure improvements in South Carolina municipalities.

**How can Main Street programs oppose these common narratives?** Main Street programs play a critical role in proving that historic buildings are profitable while respecting property rights through education, case studies and strategic partnerships. A few key ways Main Streets can help are these:

1. Programs can use economic metrics to demonstrate that every dollar invested into a downtown program or project can yield significant economic reinvestment in the form of property values, job growth and quality of life.
2. Host hard hat tours or spotlight successful projects to demonstrate how properties can be placed back into service for modern uses.
3. Host workshops and distribute educational materials to explain how local preservation regulations apply to your district or historic properties.
4. Ensure your organization understands tax credit programs and available incentives to support property owners in redeveloping historic buildings. This can help “make the numbers work” for a project to be profitable when comparable projects may be tough to find.



Main Street South Carolina has a useful [Canva template](#) for visually representing the cost of vacant buildings in your downtown. To use the template, click on “view template” and open the template in Canva’s editor tool. Programs should update the template to reflect local conditions and known district costs.





# PRESERVATION LAW AND ETHICS

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Main Street leaders aren't expected to be experts in preservation law and preservation planning, but historic preservation laws are important tools that can support Main Street program goals. A general understanding of preservation law will help you evaluate your community's local ordinances and understand the limitations of those laws when implemented.

Through this resource, determination of what is defined as "historic" can be found in the "What is Historic Preservation" section. The statutory criteria included in that section of this resource guides most of the preservation law principles discussed in this section.



For additional reading on laws specific to historic preservation, check out The National Trust for Historic Preservation's book, [\*A Layperson's Guide to Historic Preservation Law\*](#) by Julia Miller.

# National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places was established under the Historic Sites Act of 1935, 16 U.S.C. §§ 461, et. seq., and was expanded by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. §§ 470a, et. seq. The National Register is maintained by the United States Secretary of the Interior through the National Park Service.

The National Register is the United States' official list of historic resources including historic districts (collections of historic buildings), sites, buildings, structures or other objects that are significant to American history, archeology, architecture, material culture, etc. The National Register includes state and locally significant sites in addition to those of national significance.

The original intent of the National Register was to be a planning tool for federal agencies to identify significant resources; however, now it plays an important role in federal regulatory protection and unlocks property owner eligibility for federal historic tax credits. Property owners may block the individual inclusion of their property on the national register, but that will not prevent the application of laws affecting historic properties that are eligible for inclusion in the National Register, nor will it prevent the property from being listed as contributing to a historic district.

The National Register also includes the prestigious National Historic Landmarks property registration. This designation is reserved for individual properties that possess significant value to the nation rather than local or state significance.

The criteria for National Register designation is established by the Department of the Interior, set forth at 36 C.F.R., Part 60. Regulations governing National Historic Landmark designation are codified at 36 C.F.R., Part 65.

Listing properties or a district on the National Register is not the same as a local historic district designation, which may provide additional protections from alteration or demolition under local ordinances.

## WHAT THE NATIONAL REGISTER DOES

- Serves a recognition of significance, formally recording and designating properties deemed worthy of preservation for historical, architectural or cultural value
- Unlocks financial incentives, enable owners of income-producing properties to qualify for a 20% Federal Historic Tax Credit for qualifying rehabilitation expenses
- Provides limited protection, requiring federal agencies to consider the impact of any proposed project to the historic resource through the Section 106 Review process
- Encourages preservation through helping state, local and federal agencies plan for preservation of cultural resources

## WHAT THE NATIONAL REGISTER DOESN'T DO

- Does not restrict private property rights to remodel, sell or demolish a property if private funds are used
- Does not guarantee funding from local, state, or federal grants available for preservation
- Does not require owners of private property to open their spaces up for public access
- Does not mandate maintenance of historic properties simply through inclusion on the registry
- Does not prevent development, even development that destroys a property, as long as the Section 106 process is completed if the project receives federal funding



National Register nominations are archived online and are made up of photographs of the nominated building or district and the accepted nomination forms. Nomination forms include details of the historic or architectural significance of each property, detailed history, description of the site(s), etc. These are a great way to get to know the Main Street district you have, or learn more about how the nomination process works.

## NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION PROCESS

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>STEP 1</b> | Check to see if the property has previously been evaluated for National Register eligibility. If the property has not been evaluated previously, or needs to be re-evaluated, complete and submit a Preliminary Information Form, available through the SC State Historic Preservation Office.                                                                                                               |
| <b>STEP 2</b> | If the property meets the criteria for eligibility, complete the nomination form, or hire a consultant to complete the form for you. While nominations can be completed without a consultant, they are time intensive and require extensive research, documentation and writing.                                                                                                                             |
| <b>STEP 3</b> | After verifying that the nomination meets the state historic preservation office's submittal requirements, send the completed draft to the contact at the SC SHPO for review according to their submission requirements. Most applications go through at least one round of revisions in order to meet National Park Service standards. From first draft to listing, the process may take nine to 12 months. |
| <b>STEP 4</b> | When the nomination is fully revised and completed, it will be placed on the next available agenda for the South Carolina State Board of Review.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>STEP 5</b> | Once approved by the review board, the nomination is sent to Washington, DC for approval by the Keeper of the Register. If a property owner objects to individual nomination, the Keeper of the Register will review the nomination for eligibility, but will not list the property or resource on the Register. Districts can still be listed even if property owners object.                               |
| <b>STEP 6</b> | If approved by the National Park Service, the property will be officially listed and the owner will receive a confirmation letter from the SC State Historic Preservation Office confirming their listing on the Register.                                                                                                                                                                                   |

# State and Local Designation

Some states have separate state historic registers, but **South Carolina does not.**

Local communities may place greater protections in place for historic resources by enacting local preservation ordinances, which create a process by which individual properties may be designated as landmarks, or contributing properties within historic districts may be designated as locally significant. According to the SC SHPO, over 40 cities, towns and counties have designated local historic districts and individual historic landmarks by adopting local preservation ordinances in South Carolina. South Carolina cities, towns, and counties can enact preservation ordinances that provide for “the preservation and protection of historic and architecturally valuable districts and neighborhoods” under the South Carolina Code of Laws, §6-29-870.

A local preservation ordinance typically establishes a design review board and process. Other names for these review boards include architectural review board, or ARB; board of architectural review, or BAR, etc. Preservation ordinances are tailored to fit local conditions and needs. Designation under local preservation ordinances often affects a property owner’s ability to alter the character-defining features of a property and may even prevent demolition of locally designated properties.

## **HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE A LOCAL DISTRICT?**

If you’re unsure whether your community has a local historic district designation, a good place to start is by checking your local Code of Ordinances. If you have a preservation ordinance, it should outline the powers of an authorized architectural review board or historical commission, describe overlay districts, and describe how properties are designated as “historic” or “significant” in your community.

## **WHAT LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION DOES (TYPICALLY)**

- Designates historic properties or districts on the basis of established local criteria and local procedures
- Typically regulates exterior alterations or changes through established design standards or guidelines, requiring a Certificate of Appropriateness and design review process prior to completing proposed alterations
- Protects neighborhood or district character-defining features to ensure exterior alterations and new construction reflect the architectural, historical or environmental character of the designated area
- Manages development through loss prevention of a neighborhood or district's unique historic fabric and manages change over time
- Can stabilize and increase property values by maintaining neighborhood or district quality
- Can prevent alterations or demolition depending on how local preservation ordinances are written
- Can require enhanced property maintenance and appearance standards depending on how local preservation ordinances are written
- May qualify a property for incentives as established by the local government

## **WHAT LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION DOESN'T DO (TYPICALLY)**

- Regulate interior alterations or design
- Require historical restoration to a structure's original appearance
- Does not qualify a property owner for federal preservation grants nor state or federal historic preservation tax credit programs
- Prevent all development, rather it ensures changes over time are appropriate to the neighborhood or district
- Require public access to private property
- Prevent the owner from selling the property

# Federal Preservation Laws

There are three major laws that play a role in protecting historic resources from federal government action: The National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 470; the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 4231-4347; and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, 49 U.S.C. § 303.

## NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) is the key federal law that establishes policy for the preservation of cultural and historic resources in the United States, establishing a national preservation program and a system of procedural protections.

The NHPA has three major components:

1. The expansion and maintenance of the National Register of Historic Places
2. The establishment of a protective review process to ensure federal agencies consider the effects of federally-involved activities on historic properties listed or eligible for the National Register (Section 106 Review)
3. Requires federal agencies to locate, inventory, and nominate properties to the National Register, assume responsibility for preserving historic properties, and use historic buildings to the “maximum extent possible”

The NHPA also created state historic preservation offices, which manage federal grant programs on behalf of the U.S. Treasury’s Historic Preservation Fund, manage the Certified Local Government program, and are responsible for working with federal agencies to facilitate the Section 106 process and identifying and nominating properties for listing in the National Register. The Historic Preservation Fund requires that 10% of every state’s allocation be distributed to Certified Local Government projects.

Section 106 is part of the NHPA, codified at 16 U.S.C. § 470f, and it requires that federal agencies consider the effects of their actions on historic resources or sites before funding, licensing or otherwise proceeding with projects that may affect National Register-listed properties or eligible properties. It’s common to see a required Section 106 review for federally funded grant programs.



## **NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT**

While Section 106 is a good tool for requiring the federal government to pause and consider impacts to historic resources, it does not prevent federal agencies from moving forward with projects, even if that project causes harm to the historic resource.

## **NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA)**

The National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4347 is primarily an environmental law, but it has some applicability to historic resources in our communities. Specifically in NEPA, the federal government has a responsibility to assure for all Americans, “safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings” and to “preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage.”

The statutory protections of NEPA do have some overlap with the NHPA, and both acts govern federal agency action in the community. Similar to Section 106 Review, NEPA provides only procedural protection against potentially harmful federal actions in communities. NEPA also only regulates “major federal actions,” such as the adoption of federal policies or programs or the approval of federally funded, licensed or permitted projects.

## **SECTION 4(F) - DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION ACT**

Section 4(f) is considered to be the strongest preservation law at the federal level, codified at 49 U.S.C. § 303. Section 4(f) provides substantive protection for historic properties by prohibiting federal approval or funding of transportation projects that require the use of any historic site, public park, recreation area, or wildlife refuge unless there is no “feasible or prudent alternative to the project,” and the project includes “all possible planning to minimize harm to the resource.”

## SECTION 4(F) - DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION ACT

The term “use” is the strongest in this Act because it refers not only to the physical taking of a site, but also the indirect effects that a project could have that might “substantially impair” the value of protected sites. A good example of this is a proposed highway that would cut off a historic district from nearby commercial activity, thus negatively affecting the economic vitality of the district.

Section 4(f) applies to all transportation agencies within the U.S. Department of Transportation including the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Authority, and Federal Aviation Administration to name the largest ones. For coastal communities, this also applies to the Coast Guard which has regulatory authority affecting bridges.

The Act does have similarities to NEPA and the NHPA, but there’s one critical difference—Section 4(f) affects the approval of projects rather than simply requiring procedural consideration. Often times, Section 4(f) will rely upon findings from NEPA and NHPA to move projects forward under “de minimus impact” if NEPA and the NHPA find no historic properties, districts or sites will be negatively impacted.

## South Carolina Preservation Laws

South Carolina has several laws, regulations, and executive orders related to historic and cultural resource preservation. Many of these laws are related to the treatment of historic cemeteries and burials or archeological sites.

For coastal communities, the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1976 (48-39-150, SC Code of Laws) addresses protection of historical and archeological properties or sites, and requires that the SC Department of Environmental Services consider the extent to which a development could affect irreplaceable historic and archaeological sites in South Carolina’s Coastal Zone. This law covers eight coastal counties in South Carolina including Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Georgetown, Horry and Jasper.

## SOUTH CAROLINA PRESERVATION LAWS

South Carolina has laws (60-12-10 through 60-12-90, SC Code of Laws) related to the protection of state-owned or leased historic properties that are listed in the National Register. County governments may accept donations or purchase properties with national historical value (primarily battleground sites), but 4-7-20, SC Code of Laws states that upon acquisition, the governing body has a responsibility to preserve or restore the site so that the “historic value of the property is at its maximum.” And, 6-31-10 through 6-31-160, SC Code of Laws, specifies that development agreements entered into by local governments must provide a description of any provisions for the preservation and restoration of historic structures, where appropriate.

Additionally, South Carolina state law sets the guidelines for implementation of the Certified Local Government program in South Carolina (12-100 – 12-107, SC Code of Regulation), which promotes community preservation planning and heritage education and the SC Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act (6-29-310 through 6-29-1640, SC Code of Laws), which sets requirements for local government comprehensive plans including a cultural resource element “which considers historic buildings and structures, commercial districts, residential districts, unique, natural, or scenic resources, archeological, and other cultural resources.” This allows local governments to adopt zoning laws and overlay districts to protect historic properties and establish a board of architectural review.

South Carolina has also codified several financial incentives into state law, which aim to empower local governments to incentivize historic preservation efforts or allow the state to incentivize preservation activities on their own. These include the following:

- **Special Local Tax Assessments for Rehabilitated Historic Properties and Low and Moderate Income Rental Property** (4-9-195 and 5-12-140, SC Code of Laws); this law is also known as the Bailey Bill, and it allows counties and municipalities to adopt ordinances providing special property tax assessments to encourage the rehabilitation of historic buildings.
- **Capital Project Sales Tax Act** (4-1-300 through 4-10-380, SC Code of Laws); this Act allows proceeds from a capital project sales tax to be used for cultural, recreational or historic facilities.

## SOUTH CAROLINA PRESERVATION LAWS

- **Local Accommodations Tax Act** (6-1-500, SC Code of Laws); which allows for one of the uses of the revenue generated by local accommodations tax to be “tourism related cultural, recreational, or historic facilities.”
- **South Carolina Conservation Easement Act** (27-8-10 through 27-8-80, SC Code of Laws); this Act provides a sound legal basis for the donation of conservation easements to preserve the historic, architectural or archaeological aspects of properties. This law also makes the donation of easements more attractive by requiring a local tax assessor to consider an easement when assessing the value of a property. Related to the Conservation Easement Act is the South Carolina Conservation Bank Act (48-59-10 through 48-59-140, SC Code of Laws), which sets aside a portion of the Documentary Deed Stamp recording fee into a trust fund for the Conservation Bank. The Bank awards funds to local governments, state agencies, and nonprofits to purchase interest in lands containing natural resources, wetlands and/or historic and archaeological sites for preservation.
- **South Carolina Textiles Communities Revitalization Act** (12-65-10 through 12-65-60, SC Code of Laws); this Act provides incentives for the rehabilitation, renovation and redevelopment of abandoned textile mills located in South Carolina. Many Upstate South Carolina communities have these mill sites, which can qualify to receive a property tax break, state income tax credit, or corporate license fee credit, equal to 25% of qualifying rehabilitation expenses.
- **South Carolina Historic Rehabilitation Incentives Act** (12-6-3535, SC Code of Laws); this Act creates two state tax credits for historic properties that are a percentage of qualifying rehabilitation expenses. Income-producing buildings that qualify for the Federal Historic Tax Credit can qualify for a 10% state credit. Residential owner-occupied historic buildings can qualify for a 25% state credit against qualifying rehab expenses. Both credits require the work completed meets the Secretary of Interior Standards for rehabilitation, meet minimum expenditure thresholds on qualifying rehab expenses, and be reviewed by the SC State Historic Preservation Office. Additionally, letters of intent to use the credit must be submitted to the SC SCHPO prior to beginning qualifying rehabilitation work.

# Local Preservation Laws

Through enabling laws set by the State of South Carolina (6-29-310 through 6-29-1640, SC Code of Laws), local governments may affect the treatment of historic properties in their jurisdictions.

Using historic preservation ordinances, local governments regulate changes to historic resources that would alter or destroy their character-defining features. Historic preservation is also addressed through local comprehensive planning and in coordination with local land-use laws (zoning). Unfortunately, a preservation ordinance alone won't sufficiently protect historic resources without other governmental policies and laws governing zoning or land use, growth and development, transportation or housing that support preservation as a shared ethic.

Historic preservation has been upheld as a valid public purpose under the U.S. Constitution. In 1978, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Penn Central Transportation Co. v. City of New York*, 438 U.S. 104 (1978), recognized that preserving historic resources is "an entirely permissible governmental goal" and that New York City's local preservation ordinance was an "appropriate means" to secure that goal.

Local jurisdictions may also establish preservation commissions by ordinance, which may have different goals than an architectural review board, with either binding or advisory review authority over local historic designations or alterations to historic properties.



Main Street SC offers an [on-demand video training](#) for architectural review boards led by Randy Wilson of Community Design Solutions. The training covers architectural design, effective meeting procedures, and preparing defensible responses.



## LOCAL PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

Most local preservation ordinances are made up of the following components:

- ☐ Statement of purpose and the powers and authorities in enacting a preservation ordinance
- ☐ Definitions
- ☐ Establishment and authority of a historic preservation commission, architectural review board or other related administrative board
- ☐ Criteria and procedures for designation of historic properties or districts
- ☐ Statement of actions reviewable by the established review board or commission and the legal effect of such review
- ☐ Criteria and procedures for review of such actions
- ☐ Standards and procedures for the review of economic hardship claims or other special circumstances
- ☐ "Affirmative maintenance" requirements and procedures governing situations of demolition-by-neglect
- ☐ Procedures for appeal from final preservation commission or architectural review board decisions
- ☐ Fines and penalties for violation of ordinance provisions

# SC Certified Local Government Program

The SC Certified Local Government Program is a partnership between local municipal governments, the SC Department of Archives and History State Historic Preservation Office, and is authorized by the National Park Service. The purpose of the program is to integrate historic preservation into local planning and development ensuring the protection of significant historic, archeological and cultural resources.

Benefits of being designated as a Certified Local Government, or CLG, in South Carolina include access to grant programs, specifically the state's planning and stabilization grant programs administered by the SHPO, access to technical assistance from the SHPO, and the ability to review and comment on new National Register nominations within their local jurisdiction as part of the review process. Additionally, at least 10% of the state's annual federal allocation of grant funds must be distributed to CLGs.

To become a CLG in South Carolina, communities must

- adopt a local historic preservation ordinance,
- establish a qualified historic preservation commission such as an architectural review board,
- maintain a system for surveying and inventorying historic properties, and
- provide for public participation in the preservation process.

Applications are accepted through the SC Department of Archives and History and must meet federal standards regarding the protection of historic properties. Upon approval by the SHPO and the National Park Service, the applicant community will be recognized as a CLG. CLGs in South Carolina are responsible for returning annual data to the SC SHPO and maintaining a local contact for the CLG.



Is your [SC Certified Local Government program](#) contact up to date for your community? The SC Historic Preservation Office relies upon local municipalities and Main Street programs to ensure contact information remains up-to-date.



# Preservation Ethics

Historic preservation is a shared ethic that goes beyond simply supporting preservation values. Rather, preservation on Main Street is about active preservation of the built environment, sensitive long-range planning that removes barriers to investment and supports positive land use and adaptive re-use policies, and fostering stewardship, equity, identity and connection to a place.

Preservation in the Main Street context encourages inclusive, community-driven efforts to honor diverse narratives, adaptively re-use buildings for local needs, and connect past experiences with future sustainability.

Key aspects of this shared, community-centered ethic described by the Main Street America Community Evaluation Framework include these:

- The community at large demonstrates a commitment to historic and cultural preservation through established policies, designations and incentives that support revitalization.
- Main Street builds public support for preservation through education, storytelling, and collaboration with the community at large and stakeholders.
- Main Street leads and supports preservation efforts and promotes best practices through the provision of technical assistance, technical guidance, and advocacy for historic district revitalization and cultural asset preservation.
- Main Street actively promotes the district's unique historical and cultural assets.

These aren't just requirements for Main Street program accreditation; they are a framework for supporting place-based, people-focused design through active stewardship and community-driven planning.

## PRESERVATION ETHICS

Another ethical consideration in historic preservation is striking a balance between public interest and private property rights, working to ensure that programs and initiatives do not cause gentrification or displacement, but rather create diverse, inclusive, vibrant and sustainable communities alongside protecting physical structures or cultural assets. These are key principles in ethical historic preservation:

- **Community participation** – engaging local stakeholders to shape preservation projects, ensuring projects address local needs rather than imposing external agendas
- **Anti-displacement efforts** – pairing preservation efforts with intentional anti-displacement policies to protect legacy business owners and residents
- **Recognizing cultural significance** – broadening the scope of preservation beyond architecture to include cultural heritage, intangible history, and landscapes that define a community's identity
- **Equitable lens** – recognition of past/early preservation and planning practices, which may not have been equitable to all residents in the community, ensuring current and future work is inclusive and representative of the community
- **Ethical standards and integrity** – following professional best practices and ethical codes that emphasize honest documentation, respect for cultural assets and transparency in decision-making



- Supporting adaptive reuse through encouraging rehabilitation of buildings for community needs based on market data and local conditions such as affordable housing
- Identifying and honoring sites through cultural asset mapping that are important to the community, not just consultants or preservation experts
- Adoption of reasonable design standards that allow for improvements to properties without hindering accessibility or affordability
- Support for smaller projects and legacy businesses rather than focusing solely on major landmark structures in the district
- Community storytelling and community-led research to highlight neglected, hidden or overlooked narratives



# PRESERVATION PLANNING

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Preservation planning is an important tool to help build the culture of preservation in a local community. Commonly, preservation is built into municipal comprehensive plans, but there's an opportunity to take that a step further and approach preservation activities holistically to ensure preservation priorities and goals are identified, local needs are addressed and community input is captured.

Preservation planning exercises help reinforce that your community is clear about the important role history plays in a town's future, the value of good design practices, and the commitment to maintaining the unique character of place.

Preservation plans can also include a community's design standards, issue guidance on the establishment and acceptance of new historic districts, provide a roadmap to developers or property owners for the treatment of historic assets in the community, and tell the story of local history and culture.

## PRESERVATION PLANNING

The National Park Service has established three standards for preservation planning:

- **Standard 1:** Preservation planning establishes historic contexts.
- **Standard 2:** Preservation planning uses historic contexts to develop goals and priorities for the identification, evaluation, treatment and registration of historic properties.
- **Standard 3:** The results of preservation planning are made available for integration into broader planning processes.

These standards are based in the principles that we cannot replace destroyed historical assets, that planning is necessary to make responsible decisions about historic properties, and that preservation planning must include meaningful public participation.

## TYPICAL PRESERVATION PLANS

**Municipal Comprehensive Plan Elements:** In South Carolina under the SC Comprehensive Planning and Enabling Act, any municipality that implements zoning and land use regulations must have a comprehensive plan. Historic preservation falls under the required Cultural Resources element, which is one of 10 required sections for a comprehensive plan. The SC State Historic Preservation Office has developed a brief to support municipalities with their preparations of this plan element.

**Traditional Preservation Plan:** At the resource, site, district or city level, a traditional preservation plan is a long-range document that supports the protection, management, interpretation and maintenance of resources, sites, districts or cities. These types of plans can focus on historic and community preservation or cultural resource preservation and are typically created by consultants.

**Design Guidelines or Standards:** If a municipality has a preservation ordinance, they likely already have a set of design guidelines or standards, which are frameworks used by local municipalities to evaluate new or infill development, exterior renovations or alterations, the public realm, etc. to ensure they align with the historic or character-defining features of a designated area. Design standards can affect private commercial property and residential property, public property and the public realm of a defined area.

**Downtown Master Plans or Small Area Plans:** This type of plan leverages historic preservation as an element to outline a long-range strategic vision and guide future growth, redevelopment, and new development in downtown commercial districts. These plans typically include core elements such as economic development, urban design, public spaces, connectivity and accessibility, and even organizational strategies. Successful master planning efforts balance community input and market data to ensure the final document reflects the unique identity and needs of the community.



# PRESERVATION ECONOMICS

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There are undeniable quantitative and qualitative benefits to historic preservation in Main Street communities. The bottom line for preservation economics is that a rehabilitated building in a historic district increases tourism draw, typically sees higher appreciation and tax value, is sustainable and resilient to economic downturn, and creates more jobs than a typical new-construction project.

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's 2013 [\*Measuring Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation\*](#) report recommended tracking the following statistics related to historic preservation in historic districts to determine economic health:

- Job creation and household income level for jobs created through historic rehabilitation projects
- Property value over time in historic districts compared to outside of a district
- Infrastructure cost savings and preserved green site acreage when buildings are rehabilitated or adaptively reused
- Downtown revitalization metrics, accurately reported, from Main Street communities

## PRESERVATION ECONOMICS

While there's no doubt that preservation is an economic driver, there are a few key benefits Main Street leaders can leverage when making the case for preservation as an economic strategy:

- Job creation: for every 100 jobs created related to an adaptive re-use or rehabilitation project, 186 are created elsewhere in the economy.
- Local spending: 60 to 70 cents of every \$1 spent on local preservation efforts remain in the local community.
- Heritage tourism: heritage tourists seeking authentic historical and cultural experiences spend more time and money in a destination than standard travelers do.
- Real estate stability: rehabilitated historic buildings appreciate faster and show stronger market resilience than properties outside of a historic district over time.

Main Street practitioners can also make the case for adaptive re-use through appealing to developer teams. Dependent upon their existing conditions, rehabs can be around 16% less costly than new construction because they leverage existing infrastructure, reduce exposure to fluctuating material costs and supply chain issues, and typically have faster time to revenue since the structure already exists.

One of the most closely tracked economic impact reports is that of the Federal Historic Tax Credit program. In the FY 2025 National Park Service report, it was noted that since 1977, \$135.76 billion in rehabilitation investment occurred. In South Carolina for FY 2025, \$118.47 million in qualifying rehabilitation expenses occurred (\$254.47 million in total project investment) and nine projects were completed across six counties.

### Tax Credit Programs

To qualify for federal and state historic tax credit programs, commercial properties must be income producing, buildings must be designated as historic (contributing to an established district or individually listed), the rehabilitation costs must be substantial, and the work must adhere to established Secretary of Interior Standards for Historic Rehabilitation. After rehabilitation and capturing the credit(s), property owners must retain ownership and produce income from the building for a minimum of five years. In general, tax credits reduce the amount of income taxes owed. Each applicant's tax situation is different, so Main Street programs should encourage prospective applicants to work with tax specialist to determine how the credits might impact the applicant's tax liability.



## **FEDERAL HISTORIC TAX CREDIT**

A 20% income tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of historic buildings that are determined to be “certified historic structures,” either contributing to an established historic district or be eligible for individual listing on the National Register. Projects must be income-producing, and the IRS defines qualifying rehabilitation expenses on which the credit may be taken. State Historic Preservation Offices and the National Park Service review rehabilitation work to ensure it complies with the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. Owner-occupied residential properties do not qualify for federal historic tax credits.

## **SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORIC TAX CREDIT**

South Carolina also has an established tax credit for historic structure rehabilitations. If a project qualifies for the 20% federal credit, it may also qualify for a state income tax credit of 10% or an optional 25% credit not to exceed \$1 million in lieu of the 10% credit. The 25% optional credit is intended to incentivize small-scale projects.

Applying for Historic Tax Credits is not a simple process, and it involves a multi-part application and review. Most applicants rely upon tax credit specialists to help them through the process, but it’s important that Main Street programs are able to connect developers to the appropriate resources and have a general knowledge of how the programs function.

Rehabilitation costs must be “substantial” in order to capture federal and state historic tax credits. “Substantial” is defined as qualifying rehabilitation expenses over a 24-month period exceeding \$5,000 and greater than the adjusted basis of the building. Adjusted basis is usually the purchase price of the property minus the cost of the land, plus the value of improvements already made, minus the depreciation already taken on the building.

“Qualifying rehabilitation expenses,” or QREs, include costs associated with exterior and interior work on the historic building according to Secretary of Interior Standards, architectural and engineering fees, site survey expenses, development fees, and other construction-related costs if they are added to the basis. QREs do not include property purchase costs, furnishings, fixtures or equipment, new additions that expand the volume of the existing building, new buildings, parking lots, sidewalks or landscaping.



## HISTORIC TAX CREDIT PROCESS



The process of applying for Federal or State Historic Tax Credits occurs in three parts. Steps 1 and 2 must be completed before a project seeking tax credits begins. The tax credit process is fairly complicated and lengthy. Main Street programs should refer investors to historic tax credit field experts for direct assistance. Review Main Street SC's *Mastering Main Street Planner* for best practices in evaluating projects for these programs.

### STEP 1: IDENTIFYING ELIGIBILITY

- Historic designation certification either as an individual listing on the National Register or a contributing property to an established historic district
- Property is or will be income producing as commercial, mixed-use or multifamily

### STEP 2: APPLICATION PROCESS

- Starting with the SC Historic Preservation Office, applicants complete Part 1 of the application, which presents information related to the significance and appearance of the proposed project; there is no fee to submit Part 1 review to the SC SHPO.
- If the proposed project moves successfully past Part 1, Part 2 is initiated, which describes the current condition of the building and the planned rehabilitation work. Proposed work is evaluated against the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation by the SC SHPO and the National Park Service. An approved Part 2 from the National Park Service means that if the work is completed as described and approved, it will qualify for the tax credit program.
- Once work is reviewed and approved by the SC SHPO and the National Park Service, the property owner can then begin the project once local requirements for construction are met (local plan review, permitting, etc.). If any changes are made as a result of local review or after the work is approved, that work will need to be reviewed again by the SC SHPO and the National Park Service prior to beginning work.

### STEP 3: COMPLIANCE

- Once all work is completed, the SC SHPO and the National Park Service review the completed project to assess whether the completed work is consistent with the proposed and approved work from Part 2 of the application process.
- If the project meets the compliance requirements for the tax credit(s), it will be designated as a Certified Rehabilitation and thus eligible to capture tax credits at the state and federal levels.
- The developer will work with their tax professional to capture the credits.

As a final point to the federal and state historic tax credit process, it's important to note that some developers may not have enough tax liability to fully utilize the historic tax credits themselves. That's where third-party syndication can be useful. Syndication brings in third-party investors to essentially purchase the credits from the project developer. The value of the credits depends on current market rates. This can help bring direct equity into a project. Syndication is not something Main Street programs will be involved in directly, but understanding this process and being able to connect a developer to a syndication expert will be useful.

## **MAIN STREET'S ROLE IN HISTORIC TAX CREDITS**

Main Street program leaders should have a general understanding of the historic tax credit process and be able to advocate for the continuation of these programs at the state and federal level when needed. Programs may get involved with property research and document provision during Part 1 of the tax credit process. Programs should also be able to connect property owners or developers with the SC SHPO.

## **SC ABANDONED BUILDING TAX CREDIT**

South Carolina's Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act is an important tool for Main Street programs to understand. This Act allows taxpayers to claim a credit equal to 25% of qualifying rehabilitation expenses for revitalizing empty or underutilized buildings regardless of their historic status. The credit is capped at \$700,000 per site and must be taken in equal installments over three years. The building or property must be at least 66% vacant or continuously unused for at least five years. Local municipal governments certify that the building meets this requirement through a city council resolution. Owners of properties who owned a site when it was operational or immediately before the site's abandonment do not qualify for this credit. Generally, it will be new owners who seek this credit. Single family residences and non-business sites are also ineligible for the credit.

There are also minimum investment thresholds to capture this credit based on the local population of the community in which the building is situated:

- \$250,000 for communities with populations over 25,000
- \$150,000 for communities with populations between 1,500 and 25,000
- \$75,000 for communities with populations less than 1,500

## **SC ABANDONED BUILDING TAX CREDIT**

Prior to seeking this credit, developer teams must submit a Notice of Intent to Rehabilitate with the South Carolina Department of Revenue and have the building certified through the local municipality as meeting the vacancy requirements.

In 2026, this credit was strengthened by the state government removing the requirement that the property be income producing, clarify guidance for state-owned properties, establishes the local government as the final authority for building vacancy certification, and prohibits the credit from being used as loan collateral. This tax credit is currently active through 2035.

Of special note with this credit is the ability to stack it with not only historic tax credits at the state and federal level, but also stack the credit in the same building as long as the building serves different use classes and the proposed rehabilitation work meets appropriate thresholds. For example, if the first floor of the vacant building is classified for place of assembly uses such as event spaces, dining, etc. and the upper floors are used for residential housing, the property may be eligible for application of the credit for the first floor and the second floor separately. Abandoned Building Tax Credits may also be syndicated. Developers should consult a tax credit professional prior to initiating an Abandoned Building Tax Credit project.

### **MAIN STREET'S ROLE IN THE SC ABANDONED BUILDING TAX CREDIT**

Depending on how a local program is structured, Main Street may facilitate the vacancy certification with the local municipality, conduct property research, connect developers with tax credit professionals and provide access to training related to the SC Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act.

# Local Preservation Incentives

## THE BAILEY BILL

The Bailey Bill, codified in SC Code of Laws, §4-9-195 and §5-21-140, is one of several local historic preservation incentives available to municipalities to encourage property rehabilitation. The Bailey Bill allows local jurisdictions (cities and counties) to freeze a property tax assessment based on a property's fair market value before rehabilitation for a period of no more than 20 years. Local jurisdictions set the period of the freeze in their Bailey Bill ordinance.

The benefit of a Bailey Bill ordinance is the savings over time from the property tax freeze period. This can often help "make the numbers work" on a historic rehabilitation project. A downside to the Bailey Bill is that it is incompatible with a tax increment finance, or TIF, district, which relies upon property tax increases to bond public improvement projects. Enacting a Bailey Bill Ordinance requires cooperation with the local county government. Typical Bailey Bill Ordinances include the following:

- Defining how historic structures will qualify for the assessment
- Defining the minimum required investment to qualify, typically 20-50% of a property's fair market value
- Defining the qualified rehabilitation expenses, or QREs
- Defining how compliance for each project will be certified and by whom
- Defining the assessment period, typically between 10 and 20 years

Each local government sets their own rules for the Bailey Bill, and many communities utilize this as an economic incentive for historic preservation in South Carolina.

To comply with the regulations in South Carolina's code, developers will need to receive Bailey Bill certification for their proposed development site. A preliminary two-year certification while the project is in progress is granted prior to the final certification. Final certification is processed after the approved rehabilitation is completed, the property receives historic designation (individually listed or contributing to a district), and the rehabilitation receives approval from the local architectural review board or SC SHPO. For final certification, the property must have historic designation, have an approved and completed rehabilitation, and must meet minimum investment thresholds as set by the local ordinance. Depending on how it is written locally, the Bailey Bill can apply to both residential and commercial properties.

## LOCAL FACADE GRANT PROGRAMS

Another preservation incentive commonly used in Main Street programs for historic preservation is the implementation of facade grant programs. Successful facade grant programs establish clear guidelines for eligibility, require pre-approval or review before work is completed, and are reimbursement based. Depending on the community's funding source for these programs, the following program structures are common:

- Matching grants that require applicants to participate in the facade rehabilitation expenses
- Component grants that fund specific facade details such as canopies or awnings, windows, or significant details

Planning for funding a facade grant program is critical. Local hospitality tax can be a good revenue stream to fund these programs long-term, or these can be funded through business improvement district revenue; some nonprofit programs seek initial funding through grants. Some programs prioritize design assistance as part of the award process to ensure compliance with local design standards.

## STEPS TO ESTABLISH A FACADE GRANT

1. Set the grant program goals, eligibility guidelines, and standards. Define a target area in which the program will be administered, define property eligibility based on local needs, and define eligible improvements covered by the program.
2. Establish design and compliance standards. Typically, programs will require local review by an established architectural review board and/or require work to align with Secretary of Interior Standards for Historic Rehabilitation.
3. Secure funding and set financial parameters for the program. Determine whether the program will be funded using municipal funding sources, state or federal grants, or sponsored locally. Most programs require matching funds and all should be utilizing reimbursement-based frameworks to ensure compliance with standards. If your funding is coming from municipal sources, you may need to adopt an ordinance to establish the program.
4. Create an application. Applications should include property owner consent, detailed proposed work and cost estimates, design plans and color palettes, and "before" photos of existing conditions.
5. Establish a review and approval process. This should be transparently provided to applicants when they apply and should be followed consistently for all applicants. Typically, applicants are reviewed for completeness before proposed work is approved by an architectural review board. Once work is approved, the applicant is notified of their approval and award status. Establish timeline constraints for the work to start and be completed.
6. Establish reimbursement protocol. Applicants should only receive facade funds after approved work is completed and verified. Applicants should also have to submit copies of invoices and paid receipts for grants to be processed.



# CHALLENGES IN PRESERVATION

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It's also important to understand common challenges faced in preservation and how to manage and mitigate these common challenges.

**Deferred maintenance** is one of the biggest challenges affecting preservation. Weather exposure and neglect over time cause structural deterioration, water damage and costly repairs. Small or minor issues can become catastrophic, leading to loss of significant details or entire structures. The solution to combatting deferred maintenance in a district or property is to provide ongoing property owner education about preventive maintenance, disaster planning and connecting owners to resources before neglect occurs over time. At the district level, a local municipality may apply enhanced maintenance requirements or standards to historic properties.

**Inappropriate alterations** to historic structures can result in the erasure of important historical details. Common inappropriate alterations include material change, window, door or storefront fenestration, rhythm or materials changes, or the removal of historic details entirely. Solutions for inappropriate alterations include education about established design standards, enforcement of design standards through an architectural review board and codes enforcement, and encouraging property owners to opt for repair over replacement of character defining features.





**Absentee or vacant building property owners** are also a challenge for historic preservation efforts. Without active building stewardship, minor issues can become major ones, as maintenance is often not prioritized. Solutions to address issues related to absentee or vacant property owner issues include establishment of maintenance and appearance codes for the district, implementation of a vacant/abandoned building ordinance, education for property owners on tax credits, local incentives or cost of vacancy. Some absentee owners may be unaware of the condition of their buildings, so establishing contact information can be helpful to supply information over time about a building's condition.

**Historic signage** is often lost due to business turnover. Common signage types lost are vintage neon, painted wall ads, and handcrafted or wooden signs. Historic signage contributes to the character of a district. While it's not feasible to require all historic signs to remain, Main Street leaders should encourage restoration or repair of these signs where possible. Additionally in design standards, a signage ordinance should encourage new signs to be made from appropriate materials found in the district. Programs can consider a signage grant to offset the cost of quality signage materials and encourage adherence to established standards.





# THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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The built environment is the collection of buildings, streets, parks, infrastructure, public spaces and physical features of those that shape communities. Unlike the natural environment, the built environment reflects the choices, values, technologies and cultural traditions of the people who created and used it.

Historic downtowns provide an excellent example of the built environment in action. Main Street districts are composed of commercial historic buildings designed to serve multiple functions, often combining storefronts, residences, and community spaces into one structure. These buildings contribute to a community's identity through their architectural styles, materials and craftsmanship, and patterns of use.

Understanding the built environment requires more than identifying architectural styles. It involves recognizing how buildings function, how they relate to one another within a district, and how they evolve over time. Tools such as building inventories, condition assessments, and historic documentation help communities track changes, plan for future investment, and make informed decisions about preservation and development. Historic preservation serves as both a practical and cultural tool for sustaining vibrant, authentic places that connect people to their shared past while supporting future growth.

# Anatomy of a Main Street Building

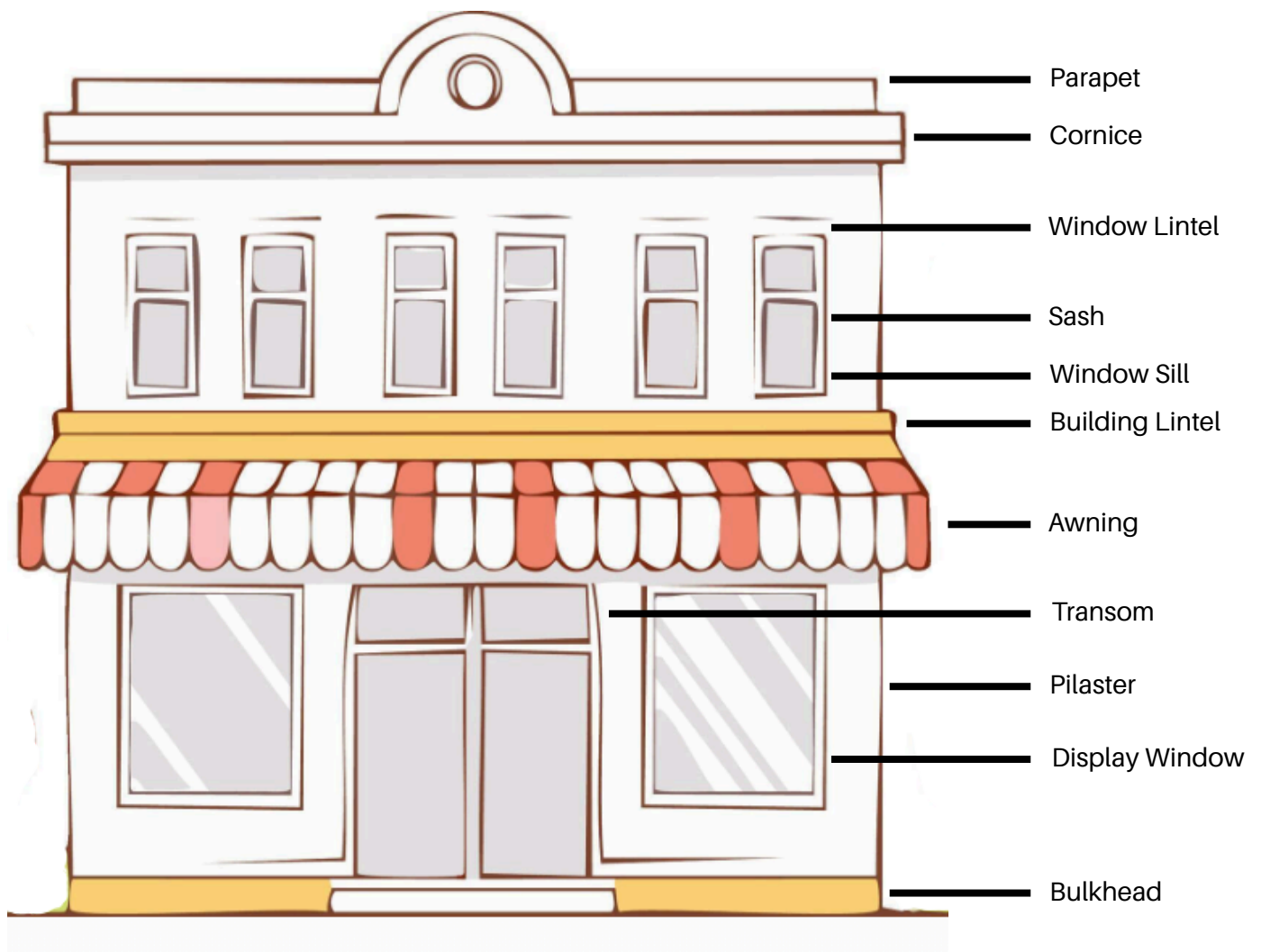
Most historic downtowns in South Carolina are comprised of traditional 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Main Street-type buildings, which are typically split into a functional ground-floor storefront and one or more decorative upper-story facades. The original “mixed-use” building, these structures often represent a “two-part commercial block” design with the first floor serving retail or other commercial needs and office or residential needs upstairs. Buildings constructed prior to the mass availability of I-beams would have been between 20 and 25 feet wide based on the efficient single span of wooden joists.

The upper portion of a Main Street building is typically constructed of brick, stone or cast iron with a focus on symmetry and character-defining elements such as a decorative cornice or parapet. Common upper-story character defining features include:

- Cornice: the “crown” of the building at the top, this detail typically projects and is highly decorated with brackets, modillions or dentils to provide a finished look against the sky.
- Parapet: a vertical extension of a wall that rises above a roofline that typically serves as a front-facing gable or conceals the front gable of a roof. Parapets may also have decorative elements that “finish” at the top of the building.
- Upper-story windows: windows on upper stories often follow a rhythmic fenestration that follows a pattern and a hierarchy. Windows closer to the first level might have hoods or lintels made of stone or cast iron while windows closer to the cornice might be simpler in design.

The lower portion of the façade is a storefront typically designed for maximum visibility featuring large spans of glass for displaying goods. Depending on the evolving uses of the Main Street district, this lower storefront may have later mid-century modern details that don’t reflect the traditional 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century details on the upper stories. Many of these mid-century details have achieved their own period of significance. Common first floor storefront elements can include:

- Transom: this is a band of windows located above the main display windows designed to bring light deeper into a store. These windows are sometimes movable to allow for better air exchange and were located above awnings or canopies in many cases. Transoms can also be made of leaded glass with more opacity.



- Display window: Large panes of plate glass, these are typically on either side of a recessed entry and supported by cast iron, wood, copper or other metal frames depending on when the storefront was installed.
- Bulkhead: The solid area directly below the display windows acts as a base serving both a functional and decorative purpose. The base supports and protects the glass storefront while also providing a grounded or solid appearance at the sidewalk level.
- Pilasters: These are the flat or rectangular vertical members attached to a storefront that look like columns, but are physically attached to the wall, often framing the storefront and building edges.
- Lintel: the lintel serves as a horizontal support located above the storefront which supports the upper floors. In highly decorative buildings, this area will represent a transitional space between the storefront, which was easier to remove or update, and the rest of the building which was typically built with solid materials such as brick or stone. This lintel area may also have an applied signboard or act as the sign band for the building.

A commercial building's type refers to the arrangement of the building—its layout or floorplan, and massing. A building's style is determined by the period of time it was built or how it was used and includes the decorative elements on the façade(s). The style refers to architectural details applied to the basic type or structure of the building.

In South Carolina, the two most common historic building types are the one-part commercial block and the two-part commercial block.

One-part commercial block buildings are typically single-story dominated by a decorative façade. These building types are typically used for retail shops, small restaurants and service-based businesses. They usually have large plate-glass display storefront windows with a decorative cornice or parapet at the top.

Two-part commercial block buildings are slightly larger, typically two to four stories with a clear division on the exterior to match different interior uses. Two-part commercial block buildings combine public and private spaces, with the ground floor serving as dedicated commercial space and the upper floor(s) acting as private offices, meeting halls or residences. The ground floor of these structures is usually made of transparent open storefronts and the upper stories are usually brick, stone or other material facade with windows aligned on each story and decorative facades.

Other building types may exist, and [Washington Main Street has a comprehensive visual resource](#) describing other typologies that can be found in historic districts across the country.





# Mid-Century Buildings

Mid-century buildings are not typically top of mind when someone thinks about historic commercial buildings; but they are important, and many of them have now achieved their own period of significance. Most of South Carolina's Main Street communities have at least one building that has had Mid-century Modern alterations deserving documentation and preservation.

Mid-century buildings were typically built between 1945 and 1975 and in South Carolina, these building types were very popular on university or college campuses, in all levels of government construction, in suburban communities, and in the design of homes, schools, banks, motels and even churches. Many Mid-century buildings are still in use in our downtowns. The style was popularized during Urban Renewal, and many historic late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century storefronts made alterations to first-floor retail spaces to modernize, showcase products and give visitors a more mall-like experience.

Mid-century buildings also present their own set of preservation challenges. Often, their aesthetics are perceived by the community as undesirable, materials used in their construction are deteriorating or were not intended to last in the same way as earlier materials, and there's a lack of understanding from preservation professionals on styles, maintenance of unique materials, and influential architects or designers of the time. Additionally, many Mid-century buildings in South Carolina reflect times of painful history for communities who were excluded, displaced or affected by Urban Renewal.

Main Street programs will play an important role in recognizing and preserving Mid-century buildings in historic downtowns. The South Carolina Department of Archives and History has two resources specifically for appreciating, researching, and preserving these building types including a slide deck with strategies to promote and support the preservation of Mid-century buildings and a preservation brief about researching and documenting these structures.



The SC Department of Archives and History has a [slide deck](#) about Mid-century Modern architecture and preservation, and research methods and documentation can be found in [Preservation Hotline #13](#).

## BUILDING INVENTORY

One of the most useful tools for tracking change over time in a Historic District is a building inventory. This living document, updated over time, allows a Main Street organization to better understand the properties located within the Main Street program area. Knowing what properties are in a district, what they are made of, prior uses, construction dates, current contact information, etc. can help programs better promote opportunities for preservation and small business recruitment over time.

Building inventories are made up of basic information about the property, a physical property description including any known alterations, photographs of the property (both historical and current), and a narrative about the building. The narrative typically frames the building in context with other buildings in the district, describes character-defining features and architectural style elements, describes any significant events or owners of the building, and describes any known alterations made over time to the building. The narrative is useful for National Register nomination, public history preservation, and storytelling for the district.

Building inventories should be updated annually to include building alterations, current uses, current owners, etc. This living document should follow data health best practices: be stored in a location that is accessible to program leadership, updated regularly and backed up regularly. Doing so will ensure that this work carries forward regardless of who is leading the program.

## MAIN STREET AMERICA BOOMS TRACKER

An additional tool to support building inventories is Main Street America's [BOOMS Tracker](#).

While not a replacement for an in-house building inventory, the BOOMS Tracker is a tool used for identifying, mapping and cataloging opportunities within Main Street districts. This GIS-based digital map empowers local Main Street communities to map, track, and analyze properties within their districts. The BOOMS tracker is a great exercise for communities to gather parcel-level data from the field about their districts. Additionally, participants in the free BOOMS tracker also receive a useful data visualization tool and the BOOMS tracker dashboard, which translates the data collected into an easy-to-use visual display. Like the building inventory, this tool should be updated regularly as conditions change in a district over time.



The BOOMS tracker is available to all designated Affiliate and Accredited Main Street America members. To obtain the log-in information for the tracker, eligible communities will need to reach out to the Main Street America research team for credentials. System requirements, onboarding guides and tips can also be found on Main Street America's BOOMS Tracker Hub.

## Basic Building Assessments

Basic building assessments, also known as historic structure assessments or historic structure reports, are detailed evaluations of a property's architectural history and physical condition at any point in time. Their purpose is to identify deterioration, map any necessary repairs needed, and sometimes establish historic significance. They are critical for several issues:

- **Reducing rehabilitation risks:** historic buildings may have issues that developers and property owners are unaware of, so a realistic snapshot of a building's current condition can help developers and property owners plan for accurate budgets and avoid costly surprises during renovation.
- **Fostering compliance with local ordinances:** some communities have additional maintenance and appearance codes within their historic districts and to better support codes enforcement efforts. A basic building assessment can give these officials the tools they need to bring buildings into compliance.
- **Unlocking financial incentives:** building assessments can support the documentation to establish a building's historic integrity, which is required for local tax abatement programs such as the Bailey Bill or pursuit of historic tax credits.
- **Guiding future maintenance:** condition assessments give property owners a map for ongoing maintenance over time helping to preserve original details that contribute to the craftsmanship and integrity of the district's character-defining features.

Main Street programs may facilitate or conduct basic building assessments as a function of creating a building inventory, supporting local codes enforcement efforts, or supporting property owners or developers. Main Streets don't have to be experts in architecture to conduct basic building assessments. Most points on an assessment can be conducted visually. Additionally, a building assessment doesn't replace work by experts such as architects, structural engineers, building officials, etc.; however these basic assessments are foundational to the strength of a community's economic vitality and community preservation goals.

## DISTRICT BUILDING ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

This checklist is intended for use by Main Street staff, volunteers, design committees and preservation advocates conducting visual assessments of downtown buildings. It is not a substitute for professional architectural, engineering or codes inspection.

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

Building Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Building Name (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessor(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Current Use: \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate Construction Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contributing to district? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

### HISTORIC INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT

Evaluate whether original historic features remain visible and intact.

| Feature                  | Intact                   | Altered                  | Missing                  | N/A                      |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Storefront configuration | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Upper-story windows      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Historic masonry         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cornice/parapet          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Decorative details       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Historic doors           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transom windows          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Display windows          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Integrity Notes

- ☐ Building retains strong historic character
- ☐ Alterations appear reversible
- ☐ Historic materials remain beneath later coverings such as slipcovers
- ☐ Historic integrity is significantly compromised.

**Notes:**

## BUILDING CONDITION ASSESSMENT

Evaluate structural indicators visually and utilize the check boxes for each section below.

### Structural Indicators

| Condition                         | Good                     | Fair                     | Poor                     |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Foundation appears stable</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Exterior walls plumb</b>       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>No major settlement cracks</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Roofline appears level</b>     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Warning Signs

*Check all that apply.*

**Notes:**

- ☐ Large masonry cracks
- ☐ Bulging walls
- ☐ Leaning parapet
- ☐ Sagging roof
- ☐ Evidence of settlement
- ☐ Open structural failure
- ☐ None observed

## Roof and Water Management

### Roof Condition

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Unable to observe

### Evidence of Water Intrusion or Problems

*Check all that apply.*

- |                                                          |                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Missing roofing materials       | <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetation growth            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ponding water                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Water infiltration suspected |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Damaged flashing                | <input type="checkbox"/> None observed                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interior water staining visible |                                                       |

### Gutters and Downspouts

- ☐ Functional    ☐ Damaged    ☐ Missing    ☐ Inadequate drainage

Notes:

## Masonry and Exterior Materials

### Masonry Condition:

- ☐ Excellent    ☐ Good    ☐ Fair    ☐ Poor

### Conditions Observed:

- |                                                     |                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated mortar joints | <input type="checkbox"/> Biological growth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate repointing   | <input type="checkbox"/> Cracked masonry   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spalling brick             | <input type="checkbox"/> Painted masonry   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Efflorescence              | <input type="checkbox"/> None observed     |

### Masonry Preservation Considerations

### Notes:

- ☐ Original masonry appears repairable
- ☐ Historic materials should be retained
- ☐ Replacement materials may be needed

## STOREFRONT ASSESSMENT

Evaluate existing storefront features using the sections below.

### Storefront Features

| Feature                       | Present                  | Altered                  | Missing                  |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Display windows               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Recessed entry                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transom windows               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bulkheads                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Historic storefront materials | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Storefront Compatibility

- ☐ Historic storefront remains intact
- ☐ Alterations are compatible
- ☐ Modern alterations obscure historic features
- ☐ Storefront reconstruction may be feasible

### Notes:

## WINDOWS AND DOORS ASSESSMENT

Evaluate existing storefront features using the sections below.

### Windows

- |                                                            |                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Original historic windows present | <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement windows incompatible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic windows altered          | <input type="checkbox"/> Windows boarded                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement windows compatible    | <input type="checkbox"/> Window openings bricked in       |

### Doors

- |                                                           |                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Original historic doors retained | <input type="checkbox"/> Incompatible replacement doors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compatible replacement doors     | <input type="checkbox"/> Boarded entrance               |

### Preservation Considerations

- ☐ Repair appears feasible to windows and/or doors
- ☐ Replacement should be avoided if repairable
- ☐ If repair is not feasible, replacement should be compatible

### Notes:

## UPPER FACADE AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

Evaluate existing features using the sections below.

Check all that apply.

- |                                                       |                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic cornice intact      | <input type="checkbox"/> Stone detailing present       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decorative brickwork present | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic signage remains      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cast iron features present   | <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural details obscure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Copper features present      | <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural details removed |

### Notes:



## ACCESSIBILITY AND BUILDING USE

Evaluate using the sections below.

### Occupancy Status:

☐ Occupied    ☐ Partially Occupied    ☐ Vacant    ☐ Under renovation

### Accessibility Observations:

- ☐ Accessible entrance present
- ☐ Accessibility improvements may be needed
- ☐ Accessibility improvements appear feasible

### Notes:

## MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENT

Evaluate using the sections below.

### Routine Maintenance Indicators

| Item                | Good                     | Fair                     | Poor                     |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Paint condition     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Caulking/sealants   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Window maintenance  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| General cleanliness | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Deferred Maintenance

☐ Minimal    ☐ Moderate    ☐ Significant    ☐ Severe

### Notes:

## PRESERVATION PRIORITIES

Evaluate using the sections below.

### Immediate Concerns:

- ☐ Active water infiltration
- ☐ Structural concerns
- ☐ Public safety concerns
- ☐ Deteriorating masonry
- ☐ Roof failure
- ☐ Vacant building stabilization needed

### Recommended Actions

- |                                                    |                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Routine maintenance       | <input type="checkbox"/> Facade restoration                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Masonry repair            | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional structural evaluation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Window repair             | <input type="checkbox"/> Further historic research          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Storefront rehabilitation | <input type="checkbox"/> Grant/incentive opportunity        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roof repair               | <input type="checkbox"/> No recommended actions             |

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

### Historic Preservation Priority

- ☐ High
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ Low

### Rehabilitation Potential

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Limited

### General Comments:

# PHOTO DOCUMENTATION

Quality photographs should be taken of the structure on each visible side. Take care to ensure photos are in focus, capture architectural details, maintain straight verticals to avoid keystone effect, the entire building facade is visible, include context, and avoid obscuring elements such as street trees if they block the facade. Try to shoot photos on overcast days, or ensure the light is behind you when you take photos of the building.

## Photo Documentation

| Photo # | View/Description |
|---------|------------------|
| 1       | <hr/>            |
| 2       | <hr/>            |
| 3       | <hr/>            |
| 4       | <hr/>            |
| 5       | <hr/>            |

# GUIDING PRESERVATION PRINCIPLES

When completing this assessment, remember these foundational preservation principles:

- Retain and repair historic materials whenever possible.
- Avoid unnecessary replacement of historic features.
- Identify and preserve character-defining architectural elements.
- Use compatible materials and designs when alterations are necessary.
- Address water intrusion and deferred maintenance promptly.
- Recognize that most historic buildings remain viable candidates for rehabilitation even when deteriorations appears substantial.

# Property Owner Maintenance Checklist

Main Street programs should prioritize supporting district property owners, which sometimes get overlooked, as they are the keepers of the historic character in your districts. Protecting and maintaining the historic character of a district drives heritage tourism, stabilizes local tax bases, and attracts additional private investment.

Well maintained properties contribute to the economic sustainability and growth of the historic district, which leverages distinct architecture and local ownership to cultivate vibrant commercial and community centers. Assisting property owners with resources such as property maintenance checklists fosters protection of the community's built environment.

Many property owners lack specialized knowledge in maintaining historic building materials, so providing technical guidance ensures renovations and maintenance comply with generally accepted standards for preservation work. Additionally, distributing property maintenance support can help

- Catch issues early – routine, seasonal maintenance helps building owners stay ahead of minor problems such as clogged downspouts, failing flashing or cracked masonry before they escalate into much bigger (and more costly) issues.
- Preserve historic character – checklists provide best practices on preserving character-defining features, steering owners away from harmful practices such as applying inappropriate materials, painting, or sandblasting.
- Ensure cost savings and budgeting – preventative maintenance significantly lowers long-term repair costs, leading to better budgeting and resource allocation for bigger maintenance projects or enhancements.
- Standardize district care – distributing uniform checklists ensure building owners throughout the district apply consistent, proper preservation practices and prepare for district-specific risks such as hurricanes.

Regular maintenance is the most effective and least expensive preservation strategy for historic buildings. The following checklist is based on generally accepted preservation principles including guidance from the National Park Service and established preservation practice emphasizing repair over replacement, routine inspection and early intervention.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION MAINTENANCE

Before beginning seasonal inspections, keep the following core principles in mind.

### ALWAYS:

- ✓ Address water intrusion immediately.
- ✓ Preserve and repair original materials whenever possible.
- ✓ Document changes and repairs with photographs.
- ✓ Use compatible materials and methods.
- ✓ Investigate causes of deterioration before making repairs.

### AVOID:

- X Replacing historic features when repair is feasible.
- X Using abrasive cleaning methods such as sandblasting or pressure washing historic masonry.
- X Sealing moisture inside historic materials.
- X Covering or concealing deterioration without correcting underlying issues.
- X Painting unpainted masonry.



The Secretary of Interior has several [Standards for Historic Rehabilitation](#) and a series of technical briefs for best practices on the care of historic buildings and their character defining features. Additionally, Missouri Main Street offers a [preservation toolkit](#) with one-page guides to support repair and maintenance of historic properties and building elements.

# **SPRING PROPERTY OWNER CHECKLIST**

**FOCUS: Assess winter damage and prepare for unpredictable weather season.**

## ***HIGH PRIORITY***

### **Roof and Drainage Systems**

- ☐ Inspect roof coverings for missing, cracked, loose or damaged materials
- ☐ Check flashing around dormers, vents, roof penetrations or chimneys
- ☐ Remove debris from gutters, downspouts, and roof valleys and scuppers
- ☐ Confirm downspouts discharge water away from foundations
- ☐ Look for signs of interior leaks in attics and upper floors
- ☐ Inspect roof-mounted equipment and penetrations

### **Foundation and Site Drainage**

- ☐ Walk entire foundation perimeter
- ☐ Look for standing water or erosion near foundation walls
- ☐ Check for new cracks, settlement or displacement
- ☐ Look for standing water, efflorescence on bricks, mold growth and new cracks
- ☐ Verify grading slopes away from the building
- ☐ If applicable, inspect basement or crawl spaces for moisture

### **Masonry and Parapets**

- ☐ Examine brick, stone and mortar for missing mortar, cracking, bulging, surface deterioration (spalling), or biological growth
- ☐ Inspect parapet walls from street and roof level
- ☐ Note areas requiring monitoring or professional evaluation

### **Exterior Wood**

- ☐ Inspect any wood siding or storefront elements, trim, porches, railings and decorative elements
- ☐ Probe suspicious areas for rot, paying special attention to window sills, columns, stair components and water collection points before summer heat accelerates deterioration



# SPRING PROPERTY OWNER CHECKLIST

## MEDIUM PRIORITY

### Windows and Doors

- ☐ Check glazing putty condition if present
- ☐ Test operation of windows and doors
- ☐ Inspect weatherstripping
- ☐ Look for peeling paint and exposed wood
- ☐ Repair minor caulking failures where appropriate

### Landscape Review

- ☐ Trim vegetation away from walls and foundations
- ☐ Remove vines attached to historic masonry or wood
- ☐ Evaluate tree limbs overhanging roofs

### Historic Storefronts

- ☐ Inspect storefront glass and framing
- ☐ Check sealants around display windows
- ☐ Evaluate transom windows for leaks
- ☐ Repair damaged weatherstripping

## LOW PRIORITY

### Documentation

- ☐ Photograph building elevations
- ☐ Update maintenance log
- ☐ Record changes observed since last year

# **SUMMER PROPERTY OWNER CHECKLIST**

**FOCUS: Exterior repairs, painting and moisture management, paying special attention to hurricane preparedness**

## ***HIGH PRIORITY***

- ☐ Review emergency and hurricane plan
- ☐ Photograph significant architectural features
- ☐ Update insurance documentation
- ☐ Update contractor and emergency contact lists
- ☐ Verify roof access procedures
- ☐ Inspect and secure signage, awnings and canopies, decorative elements and rooftop equipment
- ☐ Identify locations for temporary protection materials

### **Roof Inspection**

- ☐ Conduct a detailed roof inspection before peak storm season
- ☐ Verify flashing remains secure
- ☐ Repair minor deficiencies immediately
- ☐ Inspect parapet coping and sealants

### **Building Envelope**

- ☐ Inspect for openings where wind-driven rain could enter or areas historically prone to leaks
- ☐ Check windows, doors, utility penetrations and masonry joints
- ☐ Watch for condensation issues caused by humidity
- ☐ Monitor unoccupied spaces

### **Paint and Protective Coatings**

- ☐ Inspect all painted surfaces
- ☐ Scrape and repaint localized failures before exposed wood deteriorates
- ☐ Repair causes of paint failure before repainting
- ☐ Ensure surfaces are dry before painting

### **Balcony and Railing Safety**

- ☐ Check the following: handrails, balusters, steps, balcony decking and structural connections
- ☐ Tighten loose components
- ☐ Repair deteriorated wood or metal

# SUMMER PROPERTY OWNER CHECKLIST

## *MEDIUM PRIORITY*

### **HVAC Systems**

- ☐ Service cooling equipment
- ☐ Verify condensate drains are functioning
- ☐ Inspect for moisture accumulation around equipment
- ☐ Check rooftop units for secure attachment

### **Historic Windows**

- ☐ Repair damaged glazing putty
- ☐ Lubricate hardware
- ☐ Repair sash cords or balances
- ☐ Ensure any storm windows fit properly if you have them
- ☐ Consider having upper floor windows cleaned

### **Masonry Monitoring**

- ☐ Reinspect cracks identified in spring
- ☐ Remove vegetation from mortar joints
- ☐ Schedule repointing if mortar loss is significant

## *LOW PRIORITY*

### **Paint and Protective Coatings**

- ☐ Inspect all painted surfaces
- ☐ Scrape and repaint localized failures before exposed wood deteriorates
- ☐ Repair causes of paint failure before repainting
- ☐ Ensure surfaces are dry before painting
- ☐ Avoid major exterior painting during periods of extreme heat and humidity

# FALL PROPERTY OWNER CHECKLIST

**FOCUS:** Hurricane vigilance and winter preparation; fall in South Carolina often brings tropical systems, severe storms, and sudden temperature changes.

## *HIGH PRIORITY*

### **Hurricane Monitoring**

- ☐ Repeat roof inspections after every significant storm
- ☐ Inspect flashing, gutters, copings, parapets, signage, awnings and canopies
- ☐ Address storm-related damage immediately

### **Masonry and Water Intrusion**

- ☐ Check for moisture intrusion after tropical weather
- ☐ Inspect mortar joints for deterioration
- ☐ Identify areas needing repointing before winter freezing

### **Roof and Gutters**

- ☐ Clean gutters and downspouts after leaf drop
- ☐ Remove debris from roof valleys
- ☐ Confirm downspouts and gutters remain securely attached
- ☐ Check roof coverings before first freeze

### **Weather Protection**

- ☐ Inspect exterior caulking and sealants
- ☐ Repair obvious openings that might allow water penetration
- ☐ Check upper floor access doors and weather seals

### **Heating Systems**

- ☐ Service heating equipment
- ☐ Inspect any active chimneys or flues
- ☐ Verify proper ventilation
- ☐ Install fresh batteries in smoke and CO2 detectors

# FALL PROPERTY OWNER CHECKLIST

## *MEDIUM PRIORITY*

### **Windows and Doors**

- ☐ Check weatherstripping
- ☐ Verify windows close securely, especially upper story
- ☐ Repair any cracked or broken glass
- ☐ Check transom windows and storefront entries

### **Mechanical Systems**

- ☐ Confirm emergency power systems are functional
- ☐ Inspect venting systems
- ☐ Service fire sprinkler system if applicable

## *LOW PRIORITY*

### **Documentation**

- ☐ Update annual maintenance records
- ☐ Compare current conditions to spring inspections
- ☐ Develop repair and maintenance plan for the coming year

# WINTER PROPERTY OWNER CHECKLIST

**FOCUS: Monitoring and planning, damage prevention**

## **HIGH PRIORITY**

### **Interior Moisture Monitoring**

- ☐ Inspect ceilings after rain events
- ☐ Look for water stains, peeling paint, plaster deterioration, mold growth, floor movement, and rust on metal ceilings
- ☐ Investigate sources of moisture immediately

### **Freeze/Thaw Monitoring**

- ☐ Inspect masonry after cold snaps
- ☐ Check vulnerable areas such as parapets, chimneys, cornices or exposed masonry
- ☐ Monitor known cracks

### **Plumbing Protection**

- ☐ Prepare interior and exterior pipes for freeze events; prepare tenants with local procedures for freeze events such as dripping faucets or insulating interior pipes to prevent bursts
- ☐ Verify adequate heat in unoccupied areas to keep humidity in check; monitor unheated spaces
- ☐ Protect pipes in vacant commercial spaces

## **MEDIUM PRIORITY**

### **Structural Review**

- ☐ Observe for changes in floors, walls, ceilings or storefront framing
- ☐ Document movement or cracking

## **LOW PRIORITY**

### **Capital Planning**

- ☐ Obtain estimates for major repairs
- ☐ Schedule preservation projects for spring
- ☐ Prioritize deferred maintenance items

## **SOUTH CAROLINA ANNUAL INSPECTION AREAS**

These building elements deserve special attention every year because they are particularly vulnerable in South Carolina's climate.

### **Flat and Low-Slope Roofs**

Inspect these at least twice annually and after major storms. Repair issues promptly to avoid more costly repairs in the future.

### **Parapet Walls**

Many historic downtown commercial buildings have parapets hidden from street view. Failure of these features can create significant safety hazards. Additionally, if these are not properly flashed, they are a common point for water intrusion into buildings.

### **Storefront Transoms**

These are common locations for water intrusion and air leakage. Many historic transoms also have mechanical features that allow for opening and closing to properly ventilate buildings in the summer. These mechanical functions should be inspected regularly.

### **Rear Elevations**

Rear walls often receive less maintenance, but experience more significant moisture exposure. Evaluate these areas for vegetation growth, deteriorating mortar, and water intrusion.

### **Brick Mortar Joints**

South Carolina's humidity and rainfall can accelerate mortar deterioration. Repointing should use compatible historic mortars rather than hard modern mortars. Mortar is the sacrificial element of masonry. Consult a local brick mason to determine the best repointing mortar for your brick work.

### **Cornices and Decorative Metalwork**

Inspect these elements annually for corrosion, loose connections, and water infiltration.



**If you observe any of the following conditions, contact a qualified contractor, engineer, or architect immediately: active roof leaks, loose parapet masonry, bulging brick walls, significant building settlement, structural cracking, falling architectural materials, major storm damage, persistent standing water, or evidence of hidden moisture behind walls.**



# Building Code Basics

Building codes are highly technical *model* codes or requirements that are created by cohorts of experts specializing in residential, fire, electrical, plumbing, mechanical and other construction-related fields. They are constantly reevaluated and deal with the protection of health and safety, which leads them to be rigid.

If your community has a building department at the municipal level, your city council will adopt a version of the International Building Code to utilize for plan review. If your community outsources its codes review process, the contracted company that oversees those functions will have an adopted version of the code they are measuring plans against for compliance.

In the context of historic preservation, it's important to advocate for the adoption of the International Existing Building Code for your community as an additional code pathway. The [International Existing Building Code](#), or IEBC, was created in 2002 as a response to guide building officials in determining the acceptable treatment of existing (historic) buildings in the context of the type and scale of the work being proposed in such a building.

**Why is it important for your community to adopt the IEBC?** Simply, it offers three compliance pathways for changes to existing or historic buildings that provide some flexibility to address safety yet retain historic details. The design professional will choose the code pathway, but it's the job of your plans reviewer or building official to measure the proposed changes against that code path for compliance. The three code pathways for the IEBC are these:

- The prescriptive method, which requires all work be fully compliant with currently adopted building codes
- The work area method, which establishes requirements based on the type and scale of work being performed on the building
- And the performance method, which relies on a scoring system to assure the rehabilitation will maintain or exceed the current level of safety

It's important to note that municipalities, counties, or contractors do not write the codes themselves; rather, they are charged with ensuring buildings meet established health and safety requirements. Building officials may be resistant to alternative compliance strategies if they don't have much experience with them locally. Main Street programs should consider bringing in experts in the IEBC as part of a municipality's adoption to support training building officials and ensuring local design professionals are aware of the adoption of the code.



**Main Street Alabama’s [Decoding Downtown](#) publication offers guidance for programs seeking to adopt the IEBC and other codes to support historic preservation efforts in your community, many of which are applicable to South Carolina.**

The IEBC provides a comprehensive model to facilitate the repair, alteration, addition, and change of occupancy of existing buildings. Its core objective is to achieve appropriate life safety without requiring older buildings to be brought up to the stricter modern “new construction” standards of the International Building Code, or IBC.

Aside from the distinct flexibility of the compliance pathways described previously, the IEBC also defines the requirements for existing buildings when major, non-routine changes happen to a structure such as:

- Change of Occupancy: when a building’s use changes (i.e. from a boutique to a restaurant), the code enforces evaluation of structural loads, fire protection, and egress to match the safety level of the new occupancy;
- Historic Building provisions that allow structures to undergo repairs and alterations while preserving their original architectural elements without strictly adhering to modern building codes;
- Relocated buildings: which detail the requirements for safely moving a building to a new site.

Additionally, the IEBC provides helpful supplemental resources and guidelines to address specific historical materials, analyzing the fire resistance ratings of older or obsolete building materials and providing guidelines for improving structural resilience.

It’s also important to note that even with the adoption of the IEBC, a change of building use will trigger a property to be required to come into compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, standards, which often have stricter requirements for accessibility and egress. If alterations are made that trigger additional ADA compliance requirements, a developer must spend up to 20% of the total renovation budget on path-of-travel accessibility features before the costs are deemed “disproportionate.” A qualified design professional and plans reviewer can assist property developers in meeting any required codes for improving their historic structures.

# The Rehab Process

Rehabilitating historic properties is a careful process balancing preservation of character-defining features with requirements for modern use and life safety as prescribed by adopted local building codes. Generally, the rehabilitation process includes the following below, and property owners should expect to discover (and budget for) unexpected discoveries within the building.

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>STEP 1</b> | <b>Research and Documentation:</b> Investigate the building's history, original architectural plans if available, and construction materials to understand its historical significance and discover past alterations over time.                                                                                                           |
| <b>STEP 2</b> | <b>Condition Assessment:</b> Have experts inspect the structural integrity, roof system, foundation and major mechanical systems such as plumbing, electrical and HVAC to identify issues and prepare for code required repair or replacements. Test for lead and asbestos.                                                               |
| <b>STEP 3</b> | <b>Establish Preservation Goals:</b> Align the project with locally recognized design standards and established guidelines such as the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which describe key processes for repair rather than replacement of character-defining features.                                              |
| <b>STEP 4</b> | <b>Approvals and Permits:</b> Submit detailed plans to local architectural review boards, building departments, and if seeking tax credits, the South Carolina Department of Archives and History <i>before</i> beginning any work.                                                                                                       |
| <b>STEP 5</b> | <b>Stabilization and Selective Demolition:</b> Secure the structure from the elements and to prevent vandalism or theft. Working with experts, carefully remove any identified hazardous materials, non-historic additions that take away from the building's character, and any approved interior or exterior non-contributing elements. |
| <b>STEP 6</b> | <b>Structural and Systems Upgrades:</b> Repair any discovered foundation or roof issues and discreetly integrate modern electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and fire suppression systems without damaging historic finishes or character-defining features.                                                                                       |
| <b>STEP 7</b> | <b>Exterior and Interior Rehabilitation:</b> Repair original masonry, windows and doors. Restore interior historic plaster, trim, flooring and ceiling treatments according to established standards and with matching materials.                                                                                                         |

# Additional Resources

Below is a compiled list of additional resources to learn more about various preservation topics. The list is not exhaustive, but will provide a good foundation for Main Street leaders to learn more.

## SC Department of Archives and History

- [Manual for Owners of Historic Buildings](#)
- [Survey Manual: SC Statewide Survey of Historic Properties](#)
- [Certified Local Government Program](#)
- [National Register Listings by County](#)
- [Preservation Hotlines](#)
- [SC Historic Tax Credit Programs](#)
- [SC SHPO Grants](#)

## [PlaceEconomics](#)

## [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#)

- [Historic Tax Credit Toolkit](#)
- [Grant Programs](#)

## [Main Street America Academy](#)

## [Main Street America Knowledge Hub](#)

## [South Carolina Preservation Toolkit \(African American Sites\)](#)

## [National Alliance of Preservation Commissions](#)

## [Economic Benefits of Preservation in South Carolina \(Publication\)](#)

## National Park Service - [Historic Preservation](#)

- [Federal Historic Tax Credit Guide](#)
- [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties](#)
- [Preservation Standards Bulletins](#)

## Advisory Council on Historic Preservation [E-learning Portal](#)

## Connecticut Main Street [Facade Planning Handbook](#)

## [Preservation Directory](#) (find consultants and experts)

# Preservation Reading List

For in-depth discovery into historic preservation concepts, the following books are suggested:

## **Foundations of Historic Preservation**

*Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice*

Norman Tyler

*A Richard Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*

Robert E. Stipe (editor)

*Why Old Places Matter*

Thompson M. Mayes

## **Identifying Architectural and Commercial Building Details**

*A Field Guide to American Houses*

Virginia Savage McAlester

*American Vernacular Buildings and Interiors*

Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings

*Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape*

Carl R. Lounsbury

*Architecture and Ornament*

Margaret Maliszewski-Pickart

*Historic Building Facades: The Manual for Maintenance and Rehabilitation*

New York Landmarks Conservancy and William G. Foulks

*Signs, Streets, and Storefronts: A History of Architecture and Graphics along America's Commercial Corridors*

Martin Treu

## **Preservation Practice, Materials, and Building Treatment**

*Preserving Historic Architecture*

US Department of the Interior and Wayne Goodman

*How Buildings Learn*

Stewart Brand

*Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*

Thomas C. Jester

## **Policy, Codes and Regulatory Frameworks**

*Historic Preservation Law*

Sara Bronin and J. Byrne

*Preservation Politics: Keeping Historic Districts Vital*

William E. Schmickle

# Preservation Reading List

## **Economics and Development**

*The Economics of Historic Preservation: a Community Leader's Guide*

Donovan D. Rypkema

*The Small Developer's Handbook*

Dan Bertolet

## **Urbanism, Adaptive Reuse and Trends**

*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

Jane Jacobs

*Building Reuse: Sustainability, Preservation, and the Value of Design*

Kathryn Rogers Merlino

*Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America One Step at a Time*

Jeff Speck

## **Social Impact, Equity and Interpretation**

*Managing the Magic of Old Places: Crafting Public Policies for People-Centered Historic Preservation*

Jeremy Wells

*Place, Race, and Story: Essays on the Past and Future of Historic Preservation*

Ned Kaufman

*The Past and Future City: How Historic Preservation is Reviving America's Communities*

Stephanie Meeks

*Preservation and Place: Historic Preservation by and of LGBTQ Communities in the United States*

Katherine Crawford-Lackey and Megan E. Springate

## **Main Street**

*Revitalizing Main Street: A Practitioner's Guide to Commercial District Revitalization*

Kennedy Smith

*Main Street's Comeback: And How it Can Come Back Again*

Mary Means

*Main Street Mavericks*

Jaime Izurieta

*The Experience Economy*

B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore