



PRESERVATION HOTLINE #4

South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, South Carolina Department of Archives and History

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Preparing the Historic Resources Element of the Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan includes information on population trends, the economic base (labor force), natural resources, historic and cultural resources, community facilities (transportation, water, sewer, fire, medical, schools, etc), housing, land use, transportation and priority investments in public infrastructure. In a comprehensive plan, the cultural resources element includes historic buildings and structures, unique commercial and residential historic districts, unique natural or scenic resources, archaeological sites, and other cultural resources and institutions. See the Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 (S.C. Code Title 6, Chapter 29).

The local planning commission is responsible for developing and maintaining a systematic planning process. The basic planning process includes:

- an inventory of existing conditions and future projections,
- a statement of needs and goals, and
- implementation strategies with time frames.

Parts of a comprehensive plan may be prepared by different groups varying from professional planners to interested citizens. The part concerned with historic resources is often called a preservation plan and focuses on historic buildings, neighborhoods and landscapes - features that reflect the community's history. Historic districts give a community its sense of place, and older residential areas and commercial downtowns can attract both citizens and newcomers. A preservation plan also may include an archaeological element that identifies known and likely archaeological sites that could provide information about the community in early historic and prehistoric times.

Public participation is a vital part of a successful preservation plan. Citizen involvement in the development of the plan results in public understanding and support for strategies to protect the historic properties. Gathering public input can take a variety of forms from online or paper surveys, websites, social media platforms, interviews, public meetings, etc. Public meetings can be used to provide information about things like:

- historic resources and their significance,
- development pressures and other forces like declining economic conditions, which threaten historic resources,
- opportunities to use historic properties to reach other community goals such as housing, tourism or economic revitalization, and
- community values regarding quality of life issues.

Steps of a model community preservation plan

When historic preservation planning is part of a larger planning effort, some steps, such as the goals, are included as part of the comprehensive plan. If the preservation plan exists as a separate document, it should be part of overall community planning and development framework. Here are steps that communities of any size can follow in developing a historic preservation plan.

1. Establish a vision planning process

- Develop community consensus on goals and priorities for preserving the community's character and historic resources. Involve a wide range of stakeholders representing all parts of the community.
- Evaluate current trends and influences on historic resources by analyzing population change and demographics, economic environment, current land use, housing stock, transportation, infrastructure, and other community changes; identify opportunities and obstacles to preserving local historic resources.

2. Identify local historic resources

- Develop an area analysis, gather information on properties listed or eligible for the National Register, marked with historical markers, or included in the Statewide Survey of Historic Properties.
- Review community history, noting the distinctive aspects of local prehistory, history and historic resources. Include resources that tell the full story of the community.

3. Identify strategies to achieve community preservation goals

- Conduct a survey of historic resources and evaluate historic properties according to established criteria.
- Establish legal and regulatory protection and designate local historic resources.
- Create or publicize financial incentives for historic preservation.
- Use community development, downtown or neighborhood revitalization programs such as Main Street.
- Increase community awareness of historic resources.
- Develop other tools designed to meet an individual community's needs.

4. Develop and implement an action plan

- Select the tools and strategies best suited to the community's goals and objectives, identify short, medium and long range goals and strategies.
- Set priorities and establish time periods for projects with project completion dates.
- Select reliable project leaders and develop future leaders.

Sources of information

- The State Historic Preservation Office maintains an inventory of historic resources and offers grants and technical help for community preservation, including planning, writing preservation ordinances, surveying and evaluating historic properties, preparing National Register nominations, developing protection strategies, and conducting community education and information projects. Visit <https://scdah.sc.gov/historic-preservation>.
- [*2018 Comprehensive Planning Guide for Local Governments*](#) by the Municipal Association of South Carolina

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