



State Historic Preservation Office

South Carolina Department of Archives and History
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Setting Up a Local Preservation Program

The decisions and actions of local governments and individuals often decide the fate of the irreplaceable historic and prehistoric properties that give South Carolina communities their special character and make them better places to live and visit. Effective local government preservation programs have several closely linked components:

- a survey of historic and prehistoric resources,
- a historic preservation zoning ordinance,
- public education, and
- preservation planning

Surveys of Historic and Prehistoric Resources

[Surveys](#) help local governments and preservation groups identify and evaluate historic properties. This information helps communities plan how to protect and benefit from historic and cultural resources. A survey:

- Identifies historic buildings, structures, and landscapes (surveys of archaeological sites may also be conducted)
- Records physical characteristics and locations on maps
- Evaluates significance in local and South Carolina history and determines if properties or areas are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Completed survey records are kept by the local government and the SHPO for future research and planning needs.

Historic Preservation Overlay Zoning Ordinance

State law [Section 6-29-870 of the SC Code of Laws 1976, as amended](#) allows communities to pass zoning ordinances to protect historic and architecturally valuable districts and neighborhoods by restricting or placing conditions on exterior alterations, additions, demolitions, or relocations of structures in those areas. Charleston adopted the first preservation zoning ordinance in the country in 1931.

A preservation zoning ordinance protects historic properties by officially recognizing historic areas, buildings and sites as local historic districts and landmarks. Owners of these locally designated properties get approval from a locally appointed board for exterior changes, additions, new construction, relocation or demolition, so that changes complement the historic appearance of the building and its surroundings. This approval process is called design review. The presence of a preservation ordinance does not prevent change, rather it encourages appropriate alterations and new construction that fits in with existing buildings.

[SC's Sample Preservation Ordinance \(PDF\)](#) follows state law and also has all of the necessary language and information to ensure your community can qualify for Certified Local Government status. The SHPO staff will review drafts. The SHPO also offers training for members and staff of BARs and responds to special information requests.

Studies across the nation and in South Carolina have shown that having local preservation overlay zoning in place not only protects the historic properties, it [protects the value](#) of those properties. Thus owners of historic buildings in these protected districts see the value of their investments increase.

Public Education

Support for protecting a community's historic resources can be built through programs and publications that:

- Raise awareness of historic buildings in the community
- Explain the design review process
- Help owners with appropriate designs
- Educate owners about historic building maintenance
- Explain the economic benefits of historic preservation

Preservation Planning

With preservation planning communities integrate preservation into other plans and policies, such as transportation, subdivision regulations, housing and economic development. The development or update of a comprehensive plan is a great opportunity to consider the future of a community's historic resources. According to the Comprehensive Planning Act of 1994, it should contain "a cultural resources element which considers historic buildings and structures, commercial districts, residential districts, unique, natural or scenic resources, archaeological, and other cultural resources."

Created with citizen input, a preservation plan:

- Reviews the current conditions of historic resources
- Describes the desired future for these resources
- Outlines action steps

Additional Resources

Local governments that develop effective preservation programs may apply to become [Certified Local Governments](#) (CLGs) and enter into a partnership with the SHPO and the [National Park Service](#).

Local governments may apply for [matching grants](#) from the SHPO for surveys, design guidelines, educational projects like walking/driving tour brochures and audiotapes, National Register nominations, public programs (workshops, slide shows, videos or conferences), publications, and preservation planning.

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