

Historic and Cultural Resources Plan

This chapter of the *Comprehensive Plan* presents the policy framework for preserving and enhancing the historic and cultural resources of Eau Claire.

This plan recommends the continuation of many policies and programs put in place over the years since Eau Claire’s preservation program was begun. It reinforces the role of Eau Claire Landmarks Commission (ECLC) in enhancing and preserving Eau Claire’s historic buildings and guides the ECLC to play an active role in helping to maintain the character and integrity of historic areas ongoing change.

Importance of Historic Preservation

With its location at the confluence of the Eau Claire and Chippewa Rivers, Eau Claire has been transformed from an undisturbed wilderness to a bustling community of more than sixty thousand people. Norwegian, Irish, French, German and Canadian immigrants settling here from the mid-1800s through the early 1900s constructed many homes and commercial buildings of diverse styles and scale, which helped define Eau Claire and its neighborhoods. Although Eau Claire is now a regional center for medical services, retail, education, government and business, its early role as a center for lumber and manufacturing industries is still an integral part of Eau Claire’s heritage, legacy and identity.

Eau Claire recognized the importance of preserving its cultural and historic resources back in the 1970s when it initiated its preservation program. As many of the community’s architecturally and historically important buildings were demolished in the early and mid 1900s, citizens became increasingly concerned about preserving the remaining significant buildings and sites for future generations. Refer to the Historic and Cultural Resources Assessment chapter for a detailed summary of the programs and accomplishments of Eau Claire’s preservation program.

Benefits of Historic Preservation

As the preservation program has grown, the community has experienced the broad range of benefits that preserving the City’s historic resources brings; such as:

- **A Sense of Place.** Perhaps the most important rationale is the desire to retain and protect a “sense of place”. The preservation of historic and older buildings helps to keep the visible symbols of our heritage and to provide a connection to the past. Our older buildings help define communities and their unique personalities and their preservation provides the foundation for local pride.

Much of America’s landscape has gone the way of uniformity, franchise businesses, billboards, standardized housing projects and other accompaniments of suburban

development. Many of the unique cultural features, which distinguish one community from another, have been lost because of the economic expediency of standardization. The intangible qualities of our older buildings and neighborhoods have become a resource that is important to preserve and protect.

- **Neighborhood Preservation.** Another clear rationale for heritage preservation is the contribution that the older neighborhoods make in defining the character of a community. Much of the ambience of neighborhoods is derived from the unique architecture and variety of housing styles of the older buildings, many of which have specific local importance attached to them.
- **Community Pride and Accomplishment.** An important component of preservation is the fostering community pride as individuals become involved in projects to preserve their heritage. Here in Eau Claire, many people who have already participated in preservation either through the restoration, protection and maintenance of older buildings or through involvement with organizations or groups that have derived a feeling of pride and accomplishment in contributing to the community in a manner which may be handed down to future generations.
- **Economic Development.** Historic preservation is an important tool for economic development. As more people are placing a higher value on their community's unique identity, property owners and businesses are realizing clear financial advantages in maintaining and protecting older and historic structures. Recent market trends in housing restoration and the popularity of restaurants, specialty shopping facilities and offices in older buildings have been major incentives for preservation. As the cost of construction and land increase, developers are finding that re-using older structures makes good economic sense.
- **Resource Conservation.** Preservation of older buildings and districts is one of the most cost-effective means of conserving resources. Frequently, the quality of construction and the materials used in older buildings cannot be matched using modern construction practices. Extending the life of these buildings not only retains the quality built into the original structures, but also reduces the new materials, which must be expended for replacement buildings.
- **Tourism.** National and state surveys consistently show that historic areas and attractions are a major reason why people travel and visit certain areas. Eau Claire has much to offer tourists in architecture and history. Preserving and enhancing these resources will help to bolster our tourism industry.

Major Historic and Cultural Resources Issues

The Assessment of Conditions and Issues chapter of the *Comprehensive Plan* provides the background information for this chapter. In review of the historic preservation program, which was established in 1983, the following issues were identified.

1. **Protection:** Are the City's historic resources adequately protected?
2. **Coordination:** How can the Landmarks Commission, Historic Preservation Foundation, Chippewa Valley Museum and other organizations better coordinate efforts to promote and educate the community about historic preservation?
3. **Preservation Incentives:** Should additional incentives be made available to encourage the preservation and restoration of significant buildings, and should such incentives be made available to older "non-significant" buildings?
4. **Opted-Out Properties:** How should the City address the current status of the districts and individual properties that opted out of their historic designation in 1992?
5. **Downtown:** Do the buildings downtown need some level of additional recognition, designation or protection?
6. **Citizen Interest:** What can be done to increase citizen interest in preservation of Eau Claire's historic resources?
7. **Support:** How can the City and other groups work with neighborhoods and individuals to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the benefits of historic preservation?
8. **Education:** How can the Landmarks Commission strengthen its educational role in the community?
9. **New Building Materials:** How can preservation interests be balanced with some property owner interests in reducing maintenance of their property by utilizing new types of building materials and new technology?
10. **Tourism Promotion:** How can historic preservation be utilized as a more effective tool to promote tourism in the community?



A fine example of commercial architecture, restoration and re-use in downtown.

Overview of Historic and Cultural Resources Plan

The Historic and Cultural Resources Plan is one of the few elements that is led by its own implementation organization. The Eau Claire Landmarks Commission has been given the charge of encouraging the preservation of the City's architecturally and historically significant buildings, neighborhoods and sites. It was created according to Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 62, which mandates that any city with buildings and/or historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places shall have a Historic Preservation Commission to oversee those properties. In addition, the Commission works to foster a sense of pride in the community's historic and architectural resources through educational and promotion activities and programs. Chapter 2.65 of the City Code outlines the charge and responsibilities of the Commission.

This plan builds on the plans adopted in 2005, 1993 and 1982. It is meant to guide public and private investments to preserve Eau Claire's historic and cultural resources and provide direction to the ECLC.

Goal and Objectives

Goal

Identify, protect and preserve Eau Claire's resources, which reflect distinctive elements of the City's cultural, social, economic, political, historical and architectural heritage in order to enhance the quality of life and foster pride and knowledge about Eau Claire's past.

Objective 1 – Evaluation and Designation: Continue to survey and evaluate historic and potentially historic resources for designation, recognition and protection.

Objective 2 – Role of ECLC: Work to expand the role of the ECLC to use its expertise in assisting in the implementation of other elements of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

Objective 3 - Community Support: Increase community support for heritage preservation and for the work of the ECLC.

Objective 4 – Heritage Education: Continue to provide programs and activities that will instill an appreciation and pride in Eau Claire's past.

Objective 5 – Heritage Tourism: Explore alternatives to enhance heritage tourism in the City and area.

Objectives and Policies

Objective 1 -- Evaluation and Designation

Continue to survey and evaluate historic and potentially historic resources for designation, recognition and protection.

Identifying and protecting resources that are important historically or architecturally is an ongoing process. Eau Claire has a very strong foundation in this regard and should continue to update its knowledge.

Policies

1. Intensive Historic and Architectural Resource Survey

Continue to regularly update and expand the City's Intensive Historic and Architectural Resource Survey in order to have a current listing of properties and sites that may be historically and architecturally important in the community.

This document was first prepared in 1983 and subsequently updated in 1987 and 1996. Updates should re-evaluate previous survey findings and initiate review of areas where structures are meeting the 50-year-old threshold.

In addition, coordinate with the State Historical Society regarding the location and preservation of archeological sites that may be in the community.

2. Certified Local Government Program

Continue to maintain its status as a member of the Certified Local Government Program through the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Continue to seek grant-funding assistance through the program to assist in preservation activities. The ECLC should periodically make application for funding through the City's Community Development Block Grant Program for surveys and National Register nominations.

3. National Register Nominations

Proactively seek and prepare nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for individual properties and districts that have been identified as eligible in the Intensive Historic and Architectural Surveys and in consultation with the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Cultural Resource Management Manual prepared by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

The City currently has 41 individually listed or eligible properties and 7 districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Surveys have also identified a number of additional properties that are potentially eligible for the National Register. The Assessment chapter enumerates and maps the properties and districts.



The Third Ward National Historic District has many well-maintained homes that reflect the best of period design.

4. Local Historic Designation

Consider the local designation of properties and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. When assisting property owners in the preparation of a National Register Nominations, local designation of such properties will be a priority.

Properties and districts that have been designated by the ECLC are listed in Appendix B in the Assessment of Conditions and Issues report.

Study areas outside the boundaries of existing or potentially eligible National Register Districts to assess whether such areas may be eligible for local designation even if not eligible for the National Register.

Consult with the Wisconsin Historical Society to evaluate whether this additional research may warrant reconsideration of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.

Study these areas:

- Eau Claire's Central Business District
- Water Street Commercial District
- West Grand Avenue Commercial District
- The area north of the Randall Park Historic District
- Portions of the North Side Hill Neighborhood
- Portions of the East Hill Neighborhood
- Cemeteries in the community
- The eastern portions of the Third Ward Neighborhood

Criteria for the consideration of local designations is set forth in Chapter 2.65 of the City Code.

Consider amendments to Chapter 2.65 of the City Code pertaining to recommendations made by the Commission in the 2011 Report to the City Manager that relate to encouraging a more streamlined process for the voluntary reinstatement of opted-out properties and reviewing the procedures used for the designation of historic districts.

5. On-Going Designation Program

Consider annual goals for the consideration of local designations in order to maintain an on-going designation program.

6. Historic Sites

Research the location and significance of historic sites in the City.

Such sites may be locations of important events that occurred in the City's past, the location of significant buildings that have been demolished, cemeteries (or portions thereof) in the community, etc. Consideration will be given to designating significant archeological sites, while other sites should be recognized with a historic marker.

7. Status of Opted-Out Local Landmark Properties

Work to restore the continuity of the two locally landmarked districts and the individually landmarked properties that were removed from their local designation in 1992 by considering the recommendations of the Commission’s 2011 report to the City Manager that would restore the local designation of these properties through a phase-in process. By restoring the continuity of the two historic districts, all properties in the districts would be governed equally by the same provisions. Eau Claire is the only city in Wisconsin that allowed properties to opt out of the local designation, which has compromised the integrity of the districts and preservation of these properties.

Work with property owners and the neighborhood associations to strengthen their support for the re-establishment of the local districts in their entirety and designation of all the individually significant properties. This is intended to promote the broader, neighborhood-wide importance and benefits of the local preservation for the older neighborhoods.

The goal of the City is to restore the continuity of the two locally landmarked historic districts and the individually landmarked program.

8. Review Guidelines

Continue to follow review guidelines found in Chapter 2.65 of the Municipal Code and in the historic district plans pursuant to the review of exterior alterations, remodeling, new construction and demolition of locally designated individual properties and properties in locally designated historic districts.

These guidelines are based on the “Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation”.

Regularly consult with the Wisconsin Historical Society regarding updates or interpretations of these standards and update Chapter 2.65 and district plans as needed. This includes the use of new building materials that may vary from traditional building materials.

In interpreting these guidelines, it shall be the policy of the ECLC to follow the direction of the Wisconsin Historical Society regarding the application of new materials not addressed in existing guidelines.

9. Update Section 106 Agreement with Wisconsin Historical Society

Update the Programmatic Agreement for HUD funded activities between the City and the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation as needed.

This agreement was first negotiated in 1996 and enables the ECLC to review City sponsored-housing rehabilitation programs using Community Development Block Grant funds and ensure that such activities conform to the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

Objective 2 -- Role of Eau Claire Landmarks Commission

Work to expand the role of the ECLC to utilize its expertise in assisting in the implementation of other elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

This plan suggests that the ECLC become a stronger participant in Eau Claire planning and the implementation of this chapter as well as assisting in the implementation of other chapters of the *Comprehensive Plan*. Their knowledge and experience can provide important contributions to City housing programs and revitalization efforts in older residential and commercial areas.

Policies

1. Neighborhood and Area Planning

Include a member of the ECLC or consult with the ECLC in the preparation of neighborhood or area plans to ensure that heritage preservation issues are addressed in such plans.

The preservation of historically or architecturally significant buildings and sites is an important tool that has helped maintain the unique character and identity of the City. Involvement of the ECLC in planning activities would better ensure that information about historic buildings and sites is considered in conjunction with the preparation of the plans. The ECLC may have funding or informational programs that can assist or provide incentives when pursuing revitalization strategies in older residential or commercial areas.

2. Design Standards and Guidelines

Provide assistance in design related issues pertaining to architectural changes required due to code requirements, Housing Authority rehabilitation programs, infill development and redevelopment in older residential and commercial areas of the City that have unique and important character, but have not been designated as a historic property or district.

Although, such areas are not designated historic, many still play an extremely important role in defining the fabric and unique appearance of Eau Claire's residential and commercial areas.

3. Applicability of Zoning Regulations in Older Neighborhoods

Review and consider amending zoning regulations in older neighborhoods to accommodate the non-conforming status of dwellings because of setback requirements and area requirements that are generally applicable to newer residential neighborhoods.

Some zoning regulations may create difficulties for property owners to properly maintain and upgrade structures in these areas due to their non-conforming status.

4. Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Zoning Districts

Evaluate the use of neighborhood conservation overlay zoning districts as a tool for the protection of older residential and commercial districts that are not designated as historic districts but could benefit from some level of review.

Such districts have been used with success in many cities to provide a middle ground between locally designated historic districts where design review can be quite detailed to areas where design review of any degree is non-existent.

These zoning overlay districts are sometimes used to protect distinctive neighborhood characteristics and are useful in areas that contribute significantly to the overall character and identity of the Town but may presently lack sufficient historical, architectural or cultural significance to be designated a Historic District.

A neighborhood conservation zoning overlay could consist of either advisory, non-enforceable guidelines, or it could be mandatory regulations that supplement the normal regulations for the various zoning districts in a designated area.

Some of the older residential or commercial areas may benefit from some limited design review for major building alterations or new construction, which could radically alter the character of an area. If a conservation district were created, the ECLC could be involved in the design review for the district.

The Urban Design Plan chapter of this *Comprehensive Plan* also emphasizes the importance of Eau Claire's older established neighborhoods. This element states that "one of the strengths and beauties of older neighborhoods is the close-knit, compact mixture of different forms of housing, shops, offices, services and employment areas". Conservation districts may be applicable in certain locations to retain the character of these areas.

5. Historic Markers

Continue and expand programs and activities such as the historic marker program along the recreational trail. This is a non-traditional program for the ECLC as it provides information about sites along the recreational trail and the City in general. Programs such as this do not focus specifically on designated properties or districts but, instead, encourage a broader appreciation of Eau Claire's past. Also, work to incorporate web-based applications to assist in the identification of historic properties.

A similar idea would be to create signs and a brochure to guide people among the sites important to the City's saw milling heritage.

Likewise, the route of the log flume that once led from the Chippewa River to Half Moon Lake and discharged downstream could be marked on the ground with the cooperation of the property owners.

Objective 3 -- Community Support

Increase community support for heritage preservation and the work of the ECLC.

Support for the City’s heritage preservation program comes from several organizations in addition to the City plus a broad base of citizen goodwill.

Policies

1. Relationships with Other Organizations

Continue to foster good working relationships with other preservation organizations in the community.

This includes organizations such as:

- The Chippewa Valley Museum
- The Eau Claire Historic Preservation Foundation (HPF)
- Paul Bunyan Camp
- Waldemar Ager Association
- UWEC Geography Department
- UWEC Area Research Center.

This could be accomplished by sharing information such as meeting minutes and by working jointly on projects and activities. Since the ECLC and Preservation Foundation share common goals relative to education and promotion of Eau Claire’s past, it is recommended that both organizations strive to select a person that will serve on both the Commission and HPF Board of Directors in order to facilitate coordination and communication.

Maintain regular communication with other organizations that may use and promote the benefits of heritage preservation in a more limited capacity. Such organizations would include:

- Friends of the Chippewa River State Trail
- Downtown Eau Claire, Inc.
- Water Street BID
- West Grand Avenue BID
- Neighborhood associations
- The Apartment Association
- Visit Eau Claire
- Realtors Association
- South Barstow BID
- North Barstow / Medical BID

2. Economic Incentives

Continue to explore and promote opportunities related to tax credit programs, historic building codes, state and federal loans and grants-in-aid programs that encourage the re-use and restoration of designated historic properties. Also study the use and creation of economic stimulus programs that use local funding, which create incentives to re-use older buildings.

Do not discourage the re-use of historic buildings involving the change of use, provided that the architectural character of the building is retained.

3. Commission Membership

Strive to have a broad based membership of persons on the ECLC, including people having a variety of interests pertaining to heritage preservation and who live in various neighborhoods.

Membership on the Commission is established in Chapter 2.65 of the City Code that specifies that a real estate agent, architect and historian serve on the Commission. In addition, a City Council representative also serves on the Commission. The remaining three members may come from any discipline.

4. Education

Involve people in preservation programs through the development and implementation of educational programs pertaining to historic and heritage preservation.

This has proven to be an effective means of gaining positive public support and getting people involved See also Objective 4.

5. Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions (WAHPC)

Continue to be a member of WAHPC and actively be involved with the organization.

Membership with this organization provides a valuable network of communication with other communities in the State. In addition, the organization provides valuable training opportunities for staff and Commission members.

6. Recognition of Preservation Efforts

Provide recognition of people and organizations that are involved in heritage preservation in Eau Claire.

This may include letters of commendation to property owners completing restoration or rehabilitation work on their properties or for positive preservation activities undertaken by a group or organization.

7. Historic Preservation at the County Level

Support efforts to develop a historic preservation commission at the county level charged with the preservation of architecturally and historically significant properties in rural areas, the smaller towns, villages and un-incorporated areas.

Significant structures located in these rural areas have no protection and are being lost with little consideration. Neither Chippewa County nor Eau Claire County has historic preservation commissions, whereas counties such as La Crosse County have a very successful commission that has preserved a number of rural sites and structures.

8. Evaluate the Landmarks Commission Loan Program

The ECLC should review the requirements for its Historic Residential Loan Program and determine if modifications could be made to encourage greater utilization of the program. The Commission should also determine if the scope of the program could be expanded to include designated commercial properties and non-profit or religious institutions.

9. Public Facilities

Set an example and be a leader in the ensuring that public capital improvements are undertaken and completed in a sensitive manner that retains the integrity of the facility or area.

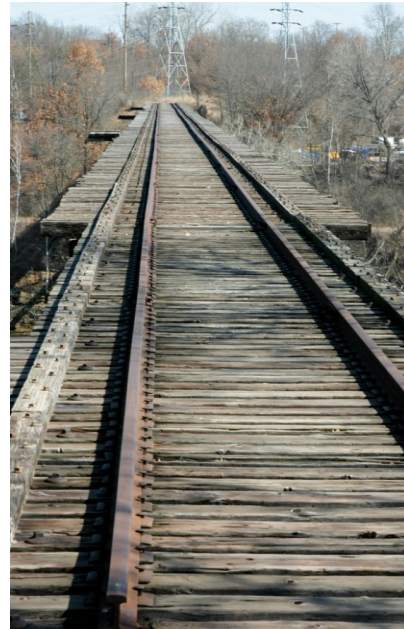
Review improvements affecting historic properties and districts.

This would include work completed on historic buildings and site work in the vicinity of these historic buildings.

Infrastructure improvements such as for streets located in older residential and commercial areas should also be sensitive to maintaining the character of the area.



The Eau Claire City Hall is an adaptive re-use of an architecturally-significant library building.



This old railroad bridge over the Chippewa River is now owned by the City and was adapted in 2015 for bicycling and walking.

Objective 4 -- Heritage Education

Continue to provide and expand upon programs and activities that will instill an appreciation and pride in Eau Claire's past.

Increased community awareness of and support for heritage preservation will likely pay dividends in terms of local funding and regulatory support

Policies

1. Work with School Districts

Work with the Eau Claire and Altoona School districts to refine the Third Grade curriculum about the history and development of the Eau Claire area and re-introduce it in the two school districts.

In 1987, the ECLC prepared this curriculum and copies were provided to each elementary school. The Commission should meet with the school district representatives and assess the effectiveness of the materials prepared by the Commission and determine what improvements should be made.

2. Workshops and Programs

Continue to sponsor informative workshops and programs for owners of designated historic properties and the general public that address a variety of topics ranging from the maintenance and upkeep of older structures to assistance programs that are available to presentations about various aspects of Eau Claire's heritage.

Such activities should not be limited to only "Preservation Week." Efforts to co-sponsor such events and activities are encouraged.

3. Informational Materials

Continue to prepare and disseminate information pertaining to heritage education.

This may include brochures, posters, websites, web applications, and programs relating to: buildings, cemeteries, historic sites, information about the Federal and State income tax credit program, the State Historic Building code, etc.

The Commission should also promote the importance of resource conservation relating to preserving the high quality construction materials and craftsmanship in older buildings.



The Waldemar Ager house was saved and relocated for use as an historic museum and educational center.

4. Design Assistance

Provide the expertise of the ECLC members to owners of historic and older non-historic structures regarding questions relating to exterior rehabilitation or additions. Also disseminate information to the public from the Commission’s resource library.

The ECLC can help provide this advice at their regular meetings, resource fairs, seminars, etc.

5. Web Site Development

Upgrade the information and materials currently on the City’s web site pertaining to historic preservation.

6. Community Television Programming

Study the feasibility of developing programming for Community Public Access Television pertaining to heritage education.

Partnerships with such organizations as the Chippewa Valley Museum, Eau Claire Preservation Foundation should be encouraged. In lieu of regular programming, the ECLC should request that Community Television record workshops and programs sponsored by the ECLC or other preservation organizations and request that they be broadcasted periodically.

7. Commission Member Training

Explore opportunities for training and continued education of the ECLC members.

This could include programs offered by such organizations as the Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commission and the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Planning Association. Occasional meetings could be requested with representatives of the Wisconsin Historical Society to discuss topics of special concern.

The use of new building materials that vary from traditional or standard materials could be studied. Representatives of the building material industries could be invited to speak to the Commission.

Objective 5 -- Heritage Tourism

Explore alternatives to enhance heritage tourism in the City and area.

Policies

1. Downtown and Milling History Guides

Work with Downtown Eau Claire, Inc., to prepare and install building markers for historic downtown buildings and prepare a paper or web-based brochure for a walking tour. Include all four quadrants of downtown and Banbury Place.

Such markers and brochure would describe the history and architecture of the buildings plus those that have been lost. This program could be paired with markers and a brochure describing the early saw mills and the milling era. The milling era, being so closely linked to the rivers and the north woods, could serve as a central element of any tourism marketing and city branding campaign.

2. Economic Benefits

Study the economic impact of heritage preservation in Eau Claire as an important means of gaining support for such programs.

The benefits are two-fold as preservation programs provide positive economic benefits through increased tourism. In addition, reinvestment in older areas of the City provide a stimulus for others to make improvements in their properties.

3. Coordination with Other Organizations

Work with organizations such as the Eau Claire Area Conventional Tourism Bureau and Chippewa Valley Museum to explore various means that the Commission could assist in expanding the heritage tourism sector of the economy.

4. Plaque Recognition Program

Continue the City's plaque program recognizing historic districts, properties and sites in the community.

This has included street signs, individual building plaques and the trail marker program. Funds from the State Historical Society marker program should also be utilized.

It is possible to envision how a log flume from the Chippewa River once discharged into Half Moon Lake at this site. Most residents are unaware of this colorful aspect of their community's heritage, but a plaque, map and on-the-ground markings could bring it to life.



Plan Action Steps

The City will take the following steps to implement the recommendations of the Historic and Cultural Resources Plan.

**Table 11-1
Historic Resources Plan Actions**

Action	Timing
Survey. Regularly update the historic resource survey	2015—2020 <u>Continuous</u>
National Register. Prepare additional National Register nominations for properties and districts as warranted by survey results	Continuous
Local Designations. Continue to consider additional local designations particularly those properties listed on the National Register	
Opt-Outs. Work with Present options to City Council related to the status of the opted-out <u>property owners</u> properties from historic districts and individual properties <u>to re-designate these landmarks</u>	2016 <u>Continuous</u>
Landmarks Ordinance. Discuss possible amendments to the Landmarks ordinance with the City Manager and City Council. N/A	2016
Federal Funding. Update the Programmatic Agreement for HUD-funded activities between the City and the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation	2016
Design Advice. Continue to provide design advice in neighborhood and downtown planning and in the structural rehabilitation of historic and older non-historic buildings	Continuous
Amend Zoning Regulations. <u>Consider amending zoning in older neighborhoods to accommodate the non-conforming status of dwellings because of setback requirements and area requirements that are generally applicable to newer residential neighborhoods</u>	<u>2022 - 2025</u>
Markers. Expand the historic markers program	Continuous
Relationships. Sustain working relationships with allied organizations	Continuous
Education. Continue educational outreach and interpretative efforts	Continuous