

**PLANNING AND  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Mark Burrows, Director  
Joy Fields, Planner  
Kalen Lawson, Program Assistant



98 East Morgan Street  
Brevard, NC 28712  
828.884.3205  
planning.transylvaniacounty.org

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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Transylvania County Joint Historic Preservation Commission  
**FROM:** Joy Fields, Planner  
**SUBJECT:** **REGULAR JHPC MEETING – November 8, 2016**  
**DATE:** November 1, 2016

Staff have followed up with the Camp Ramble, compiled information for the annual report and have been working to support the Allison-Deaver House repair project. In addition to receiving an update on this and more, at the next meeting we look forward to conducting a brainstorming/planning session to identify priorities for the coming year. Please let me know if you are not able to attend.

Please let Joy, know if you have any questions or if you will not be able to attend.

**Transylvania County Joint Historic Preservation Commission  
Regular Meeting  
November 8, 2016 at 4:00PM  
Community Services Building Conference Room**

**AGENDA**

- I. Call to Order, Welcome and Introduction, Chairman Ellen Harris**
- II. Approval of Agenda and Minutes (September 12, 2016)**
- III. Old Business:**
  - A. Camp Ramble – Update**
  - B. Annual Report – Draft**
- IV. New Business**
  - A. 2017 Strategic Plan - Brainstorming Session**
  - B. Other**
- V. Public and Board Member Comments**
- VI. Adjourn**

**TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY JOINT HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**November 8, 2016, 4:00 PM**

**I. Call to Order, Chair Ellen Pratt Harris:**

Ellen Pratt Harris called the meeting to order. Members attending were Ellen Pratt Harris, Jeff Mills, Jeff Carter, Aaron Bland, and John Huggins along with staff members Joy Fields and Mark Burrows. Marcy Thompson (excused), Lauren Wise (excused), Betty Sherrill, and Rick Lasater were absent. A quorum was present.

**II. Approval of Agenda and Minutes:**

Ellen Pratt Harris asked if there were any suggested changes to the agenda or meeting minutes. A minor change of the agenda to correct the second location for the date of the meeting was required. Jeff Carter made a motion to approve the modified agenda and the September 12, 2016 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by John Huggins and carried unanimously.

**III. Old Business:**

- A. Camp Ramble – Still planning for the end of April.
- Details will be discussed and solidified in January.
  - Once details are set, camps will be invited to a meeting to gauge their interest and willingness to participate.
- B. Annual Report – Two versions of the rough draft was handed out to JHPC members.
- JHPC members present preferred the version with three articles per side.
  - JHPC members were asked to provide any edits to the draft annual report to Joy.

**IV. New Business:**

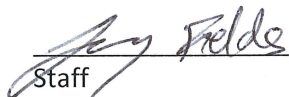
- A. 2017 Strategic Plan – JHPC began the planning for the upcoming year by reflecting on 2016.
- JHPC Reflection attached.

- V. Adjourn:** With the completion of reflecting and a time of 4:50pm, Aaron Bland made a motion to adjourn and Jeff Mills seconded the motion which carried. The meeting adjourned around 4:50pm. The next meeting is **Tuesday December 13, 2016 at 4:00pm.**

MINUTES APPROVED

  
Ellen Pratt Harris, Chair

1-10-2017  
Date

  
Joy Fields  
Staff

1-10-17  
Date

Role:

- Inventory
- Recommend Designations
- Review for appropriateness
- Education

Successes:

- Partnerships:
  - SHPO - Hosting CLG Training in April
  - Heart of Brevard - letters of inquiry and historic walking tour brochure
  - Transylvania Historical Society - joint meeting and the grant of \$11,000 for Allison-Deaver House Repairs (Total = \$17,000)
  - Transylvania County Library – outreach, Rowell Bosse remembrance, Architectural photos on Digital NC etc.
- Website update with pictures of all designated properties and JHPC forms.
- Local Designation of the Galloway-Radford House

Room for Improvement:

- City – presentations to City Council in addition to annual report
- County – presentations to County Commissioners in addition to annual report
- Follow-up with downtown property owners
- Work towards a unified historical voice in the County
- Embrace a leadership role in collaborative efforts for historic resources

Challenges:

- Designations
  - Lack of response to inquiries
  - Miss-understanding
  - Concern over private property rights
  - Local District – hesitation because of requirement for review of appropriateness
- Maintaining relevance with elected officials and community members
- Finding and retaining inspired board members
- Lost opportunities?

How to Overcome?

- Publicity – engaging stories
- Education – elected officials, general public etc.
- Advocacy
- Testimonials
- Investment of resources
- Examples of successes

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- Testimonials
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Needs:

- Inspiration
- Time - volunteers
- Advocacy?

Are We Satisfied with How Things Are Going/the Status Quo, Or Do We Want to Ramp It Up?



## 2016 Annual Report

### By-Laws -The What, Why and How Behind JHPC



#### Historic Spotlight: Mud Dabbers Pottery



#### Historic Designation Letters of Inquiry



#### Allison-Deaver House Restoration



#### Regional CLG Training



#### Picturing the Past Digitized

### JHPC Contact:

**Transylvania County  
Planning and Community  
Development Department**

98 East Morgan St.

Brevard, NC 28712

828-884-3205

[planning.transylvaniancounty.org](http://planning.transylvaniancounty.org)

## By-Laws: The What, Why and How Behind JHPC

**WHY:** Transylvania County's Joint Historic Preservation Commission (JHPC) is a board of nine county citizens, appointed by the county commissioners, who are charged with preserving historical properties. Originally created in 1994 through a local ordinance, the Transylvania County JHPC is one of over 80 certified local governments across NC that are authorized and governed by General Statute (G.S. 160A-400.1-400.14) to study and recommend local historic landmark designations.

**HOW:** The by-laws that govern how JHPC operates were written to ensure that JHPC conducted business in a way that is consistent with the local ordinance and state legislation. These by-laws were updated by JHPC in 2016. Because JHPC represents the entire county, the by-laws mandate that the appointed members represent the county along with the municipalities of Rosman and Brevard while also having a special interest, or experience in history, architecture or archeology.

**WHAT:** Historic structures, sites and buildings are a visual reminder and documentation of the important events that have taken place in our county's history. Knowledgeable and passionate members of JHPC help preserve the county's history and culture.

Historic properties and structures are reviewed by JHPC to determine if the requirements for local historic landmark designation or requirements for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places are met. If the structures are found to have historic significance and have retained their historic integrity, then the owners can voluntarily have their property listed. To receive the prestigious local historic landmark designation, the property owner agrees to maintain the historic integrity of the property's architecture and, in exchange, is eligible for a 50% tax deferral. Due to the recent legislation, properties with national designation may also have tax benefits this year. For more information visit: <http://planning.transylvaniancounty.org/historic-preservation-commission-1>

## Historic Spotlight: Mud Dabbers Pottery

On June 14, 2016 the JHPC Board met at [Mud Dabbers Pottery](#) for a presentation and tour of historic sites in the Dunn's Rock Crossroads area. Dr. Keith Parker, whose family has lived in the area for several generations, highlighted the history of the former Powell's Store & Garage which was built at its current location when the Greenville Turnpike changed routes and the old general store was no longer on the road. Dr. Keith Parker also shared history of the Old Federal Distillery, the Hume Hotel, and the Dunn's Rock Bridge.

After the presentation the group toured the store including outbuildings and the spring house. Crossing Greenville Hwy., previously Greenville Turnpike, JHPC visited the historic marker, saw the house that is sitting on the foundation of the old Hume Hotel and explored the dry crossing culvert built out of stone. The purpose of a tour was to learn more about the Dunn's Rock Crossroads history and view potential listings that could be contributing and non-contributing sites, structures, and buildings for local historic designation.

Additional information on the area is available in Dr. Parker's "This Old House: Dunn's Rock/Connestee Buildings" brochure available in the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room at the Transylvania County Library.



# JHPC

## 2016 Annual Report

### JHPC

#### Board Members:

Ellen Harris, Chair  
Lauren Wise, Vice-Chair  
Marcy Thompson, Secretary  
Aaron Bland,  
Jeff Carter,  
John Huggins,  
Rick Lasater,  
Jeffrey Mills  
Betty Sherrill

#### JHPC Chair Comments:

### Historic Designation Letter of Inquiry

JHPC, in partnership with the Heart of Brevard, sent letters of inquiry to a few of the historic properties in the national historic main street district. While these buildings are historic, if the property owners choose to apply for local or national designation, further research by the property owner and JHPC will determine if the structures have the architectural integrity and significance to support their designation.

Although JHPC took an active role in reaching out to these property owners, it is more common for property owners to approach JHPC about the potential of listing their property as a local, or national historic landmark. If you have a property you are interested in designating as a historic landmark, please feel free to contact JHPC about the application process.

### Allison-Deaver House Restoration

As a Certified Local Government (CLG) JHPC was able to apply for Historic Preservation Funds from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to help fund emergency repairs to the Allison-Deaver House. Built in 1815, the house has experienced water intrusion at the roof, and window sills along the north side of the house. The \$11,000 grant from the State Historic Preservation Office will help fund the Transylvania County Historical Society's efforts to prevent further water damage.



In addition to applying for the grant on behalf of the Transylvania County Historical Society, JHPC is supporting grant implementation.

### Regional CLG Training

April 15, 2016, JHPC hosted a regional training for historic commissions (CLGs) that provided an opportunity for commissions to learn from the experts at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Sessions by SHPO staff highlighted the basics about rules and responsibilities of commissions such as JHPC, tax credit programs open to properties on the national registry,

rehabilitation guidelines, and architectural surveys. In addition local history and a local historic structure were presented by JHPC members Marcy Thompson and Ellen Harris.

For more information about the training, or to request copies of the presentations please contact JHPC.

### Picturing the Past Digitized

JHPC architectural survey files are an excellent source of information for historical structures in Transylvania County.

Transylvania County's architectural survey was conducted from September 1990 to September 1991. A consultant, along with local history experts, combed the county identifying properties retaining historic and architectural integrity that were at least 50 years old at that time.

Thanks to the efforts of Marcy Thompson and many volunteers, nearly 1,500 images from Balsam Grove, Brevard, Cedar Mountain, Lake Toxaway, Penrose, Pisgah Forest,

Rosman and other areas of the county are now available online at [DigitalNC.org](http://DigitalNC.org). Hundreds of images depicting farm buildings—barns, chicken houses, corn cribs, silos, smokehouses, and spring houses—reflect the county's agricultural roots. Bridges, businesses, camps, cemeteries, churches, gauging stations, mills, and residential homes are among the other structures included in the survey. The entire collection of 489 property files is located in the [Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room](#) at the Transylvania County Library.



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# PRESERVATION PLANNING COMES OF AGE

FIFTY YEARS AFTER THE PASSAGE OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT, PLANNERS PLAY A ROLE IN SAVING OUR TREASURED HISTORIC PLACES.

By A. ELIZABETH WATSON, AICP

**T**HE LIST OF TOOLS for historic preservation is long: Section 106. National Register. Historic district. Architectural survey. Design guidelines. Landmark. Tax credits. CLG. Revolving fund. Preservation easement. Main Street program. Some states also have a list—usually woefully underfunded—of potential grant programs to tap.

Add to these tools the wide variety of historic resources themselves, coming from various time periods. There are residential, commercial, industrial, transportation, governmental, and religious places, just to name a few, and they're located in communities of all sizes.

Then there are the preservation specialties: archeology, architecture, cultural landscape assessment, hazard mitigation, real estate development, structural engineering, and more.

Last—and far from least—is the intersection of historic preservation with a host of other planning issues. Think of historic preservation's important role in affordable housing, downtown revitalization, economic development, neighborhood conservation, the public domain, tourism, and transportation.

Historic preservation is complex, but its value is indisputable.

A recent report from the National Park Service notes that historic preservation saves cherished places that make communities special, creates jobs, creates (or preserves) affordable housing, spurs community revitalization, enhances property values, and helps generate revenues for federal, state, and local governments.

In most places, we have a wide variety of strong advocates to thank for these benefits. And their efforts have paid off—with dividends. Developers have invested more than \$78 billion dollars in more than 41,250 projects since tax credits for rehabilitation of income-producing historic properties were established in 1976. More than 1,600 small towns, mid-sized communities, and urban commercial districts have adopted Main Street principles, a holistic approach that includes historic preservation. Since 1980 the National Main Street Center claims \$65.6 billion in total reinvestment in physical improvements from public and private sources.

In some places, preservation and planning are fairly separate. In others, historic preservation and planning processes go hand in hand.

## The planner and the preservationist

Planners and preservationists had formed an “uneasy alliance” by 1984, as Eugenie Ladner Birch and Douglass Roby wrote in “The Planner and the Preservationist: An Uneasy Alliance,” in the *Journal of the American Planning Association*. They noted that “Historically, the planning and preservation movements have pursued distinct goals, served different populations, and experienced dissimilar patterns of organizational growth.”

That has shifted in the 30 years since, says Bradford White, co-author of the influential PAS Report, *Preparing a Historic Preservation Plan* ([planning.org/publications/book/9026810](http://planning.org/publications/book/9026810)), also published in 1984. “What’s changed is that historic preservation has been integrated more fully into more planning elements, so that it’s less necessary to have its own planning element.”

White worries that “preservation [as a movement] has the danger of becoming irrelevant—it has been accepted by many communities. How they execute that priority, however, is still open to question.” And he wonders, “Should there be specialized preservation planners, like transportation planners? Or should this be a part of any urban planner’s toolkit?”

Definitely the latter, says Randall F. Mason, director of the University of Pennsylvania’s program in historic preservation. “Preservation planning should be connected to the mainstreams of development and planning policy,” he wrote in “Preservation Planning in American Cities” (*Forum Journal*, Winter 2009). In a recent interview, Mason added that the long-term ideal might even be that historic preservation should disappear as a specialty and movement, becoming an ordinary best practice undertaken as a matter of course by all planners.

## A historic legacy

Fifty years ago this month, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the National Historic Preservation Act ([preservation50.org](http://preservation50.org)) into law. The goal was to combat what preservationists and visionary urban leaders saw as an assault on cities through the twin scourges of unrestrained urban renewal and highway building. The act has had a major positive impact on the fate of historic resources affected by federally funded, licensed, or permitted activities.

With the stroke of his pen, Johnson established what is today





**JOHN & MARY RITCHIE HOUSE, TOPEKA, KANSAS, LISTED 2015**

The John and Mary Ritchie House was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places for its local significance in the areas of social history and architecture. Under Criterion B, the property is significant as the sole surviving property associated with John and Mary Ritchie, who were important figures in the founding of Topeka, the regional network of the Underground Railroad, and in local reform efforts concerning temperance and women's suffrage.

The building is a rare surviving example of vernacular architecture associated with the formative years of Topeka and Kansas history. Although its date of construction is undetermined, the property is one of the oldest surviving buildings in the city. In 2014, a ramp that complies with historic preservation rules was added to make the facility accessible to all users.

a highly interrelated federal-state-local preservation system. Key features of the 1966 law were the new National Register of Historic Places—which gave important impetus to the historic district concept—and the establishment of state historic preservation officers, who administer matching federal funds and guide state coordination of federal preservation activities (see more definitions in “Historic Preservation Tools” on page 35).

Today more than 2,300 American communities have some kind of local ordinance for historic preservation, according to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's William Cook. Of these, 85 percent qualify as Certified Local Governments—the third element of today's three-part federal-state-local system.

### **Planning's role**

Fast-forward a half century, and relatively few communities with historic preservation programs have undertaken formal preservation planning.

Mason looked into the extent of historic preservation planning in 2008, when he studied preservation planning in the 100 largest cities in the U.S.

“Historic preservation activity has become a key ingredient of successful cities and city planning. Yet distinct, free-standing preservation plans—providing guidance for linking and expanding the different parts of this infrastructure—are rare,” his report says. “Too often, historic preservation planning is pursued as a separate



'It's more than just protecting a building. How do you use planning to help tell the story of our history and culture?'

— BILL FIANDER, AICP, TOPEKA PLANNING DIRECTOR

activity, not linked to core planning and development functions, and relegated as an adjunct to urban planning policies dominated by economic development concerns."

He did find some notable preservation plans, in Los Angeles; San Francisco; Fort Worth, Texas; Phoenix, Arizona; Kansas City, Missouri; Seattle; and Salt Lake City. Charleston, South Carolina, where the historic district was invented in 1931, has one of the nation's most celebrated preservation programs, which includes formal preservation planning.

"Preservation planning is the best way to set priorities," says Asheville, North Carolina, planner Stacy Merten. "Especially when you have limited resources and lots of ideas." Merten oversaw Asheville's preservation plan in cooperation with Buncombe County. Completed last year, it was a first for the joint city-county historic preservation program. Before that time, Asheville, like most U.S. communities, approached historic preservation by starting with the standard processes and rules. "We simply used the state law as our sole guide until then," Merten notes.

Plans undertaken in the first couple of decades following the NHPA tended to be compilations of survey information and explanations of preservation tools and processes. That approach fails to account for the strategic planning and collaborative dialogue needed to tie those tools to other planning processes and set priorities. This is where planners, and good planning, come in.

### Preservation planning 2.0

Topeka, Kansas, completed its second preservation plan in 2013 ([topeka.org/planning/histpre.shtml](http://topeka.org/planning/histpre.shtml)). Bill Fiander, AICP, Topeka's planning director, describes its first, adopted in 1998 with the launch of the city's landmarks commission, as little more than that commission's work program. "We were just trying to get going, to fight inertia and establish some preservation culture in the community. So it was the cradle plan but a little regulatory," Fiander says.

"For our second plan, we graduated into a different realm. As we got a little more sophisticated and serious, we began to see that we really are less of a regulatory body for preservation matters and more advocacy preservation planners," he adds.

Topeka planners asked themselves: How would we embed preservation in other city activities, such as code enforcement, economic development, and tourism? "It's more than just [protecting] a building. How do you [use planning to help] tell the story of our history and culture?"

As one result of its preservation plan, Topeka decided to pursue National Register status for the entire downtown, and is now at work on downtown design guidelines. The initiative complements the Kansas Avenue Redevelopment Project, a two-year arts-and-infrastructure project. The historic downtown's new entry in the National Register is already drawing developer interest in rehabilitating older buildings to take advantage of federal tax credits. The lively new arts backdrop helps.

### Asheville's experience

Mason says that when preservation planning occurs, either a community includes it in its comprehensive plan—the more common approach—or it creates a freestanding plan.

The latter is the route taken in Asheville, North Carolina. Like many preservation commissions, the Asheville-Buncombe County Historic Resources Commission is responsible for a broad mission of encouraging historic preservation throughout the city and county.

In North Carolina, as is typical nationwide, all-volunteer, appointed historic preservation commissions study and recommend designation of local historic districts and landmarks, inventory historic properties, remove historic designations, and review and act upon proposals in historic districts or designated landmarks.

In practice, however, the Asheville HRC had been focused on the monthly barrage of applications for proposed changes to properties in the city's four historic districts. One district, Montford, includes more than 600 buildings.

Also fueling the need for a more comprehensive approach—a plan—was concern about educating the community, maintaining a supportive constituency, and being ready for change.

"The preservation plan was an opportunity to step back from our day-to-day responsibilities and think about our needs," says Stacy Merten. The plan ([tinyurl.com/jxyd7nc](http://tinyurl.com/jxyd7nc)) is clear about the importance and role of history in the city's future. "Over the next thirty-five years, the practice of historic preservation continues to offer much of value as Asheville and Buncombe County enter a new period of growth," it reads.

Asheville's vaunted Art Deco downtown was one special issue



Asheville's Montford neighborhood is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is also designated as a local historic district. Montford has more than 600 buildings, most of which were built between 1890 and 1920, and includes a variety of architectural influences reflecting the cosmopolitan character of Asheville during the turn of the 20th century. This late-Victorian Queen Anne style house was built in 1908.



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION TOOLS

If you aren't sure about some of the common terms used in the introductory paragraph, here are some definitions and useful tools.

**Section 106.** This is the key part of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment ([achp.gov/work106.html](http://achp.gov/work106.html)).

**National Register.** Shorthand for the National Register of Historic Places, this is the nation's official list of historic places worthy of preservation, administered by the National Park Service. A property must meet the National Register's Criteria for Evaluation, based on the property's age (generally at least 50 years), integrity, and significance ([nps.gov/nr/national\\_register\\_fundamentals.htm](http://nps.gov/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm)).

**Historic District.** There are actually two kinds of historic districts. The National Register includes many historic districts, both urban and rural, which can then be protected from adverse *federal* action through Section 106 (described above). *Local* historic districts, however, are established by local historic preservation ordinances; more than 2,300 communities across the nation have these ordinances. A preservation ordinance establishes a local commission that, working through local government, conducts architectural surveys (inventories of buildings, sites, memorials, etc., that reflect a community's history), establishes the boundaries of districts worthy of recognition and protection, creates design guidelines, and generally works to manage change within districts through the permitting of demolitions (usually with a delay), new buildings, or changes to old buildings. A historic district is typically considered an "overlay" district under local zoning—that is, local historic districts usually do not address uses, only appearance.

**Design Guidelines.** These provide the basis for a local historic district commission's reviews and issuance of permits that are generally called "certificates of appropriateness." Learn more about the important work of preservation commissions through the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions at [napcommissions.org](http://napcommissions.org).

**Landmark.** There are two kinds of landmarks, too. National Historic Landmarks, listed in the National Register, are nationally significant historic places that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting U.S. heritage. Today, just over 2,500 historic places bear this distinction ([nps.gov/nhl](http://nps.gov/nhl)). Locally, historic preservation commissions typically designate both historic districts and individual sites, usually known as "landmarks," a designation that could include eligibility for local property tax abatement.

**Tax Credits.** This usually refers to the federal program supporting the rehabilitation of commercial properties listed in the National Register with a 20 percent tax credit. Unlike the Section 106 process, buildings must be listed, not just eligible. The program ([nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm](http://nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm) and [tinyurl.com/jhnpr2q](http://tinyurl.com/jhnpr2q)) has pumped billions into the national economy and is responsible for sparking urban revitalization around the country since its establishment in 1976. Projects must conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Historic Rehabilitation ([tinyurl.com/jm27waf](http://tinyurl.com/jm27waf)). Many states also have rehab tax credits ([tinyurl.com/gp6kfof](http://tinyurl.com/gp6kfof)).

**CLG (Certified Local Government).** This is federal recognition of a local government's system for historic preservation—generally the local ordinance and commission carrying out the duties of the ordinance. Standards are applied state by state in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer. It can take some effort and time to receive this certification, but it's worth it. The designation puts CLGs into the limited applicant pool in each state to share 10 percent of the SHPO's annual federal grant ([nps.gov/clg/index.html](http://nps.gov/clg/index.html) and [nps.gov/clg/become-clg.html](http://nps.gov/clg/become-clg.html)).

**Revolving Fund.** A special fund maintained—generally by a nonprofit preservation advocacy organization—in order to buy threatened historic properties. Fund managers resell these properties to new owners who carry out preservation agreements used to execute the sale and restrict the property's use and preservation. The funds therefore "revolve," becoming available for subsequent transactions to preserve other properties, but they rarely grow without fundraising to supplement this activity ([tinyurl.com/hpsuq58](http://tinyurl.com/hpsuq58)).

**Preservation Easement.** Preservation easements are recorded in deeds and are permanent restrictions tailored to a property's needs for preservation. This is one technique used to structure a revolving fund transaction. Preservation easements are also independently used by property owners in concert with nonprofit or governmental organizations willing to act as qualified easement holders; donors can seek tax deductions ([tinyurl.com/hxt6s3o](http://tinyurl.com/hxt6s3o)).

**Main Street Program.** This nearly 40-year-old local economic development program is structured around insights for saving and enlivening historic "downtown" commercial areas, generally in concert with the National Main Street Center (a subsidiary of the National Trust; [mainstreet.org](http://mainstreet.org)), often with support from state-level agencies. The approach focuses on four issues: economic vitality, promotion, design, and organization ([tinyurl.com/zz47d3c](http://tinyurl.com/zz47d3c)).

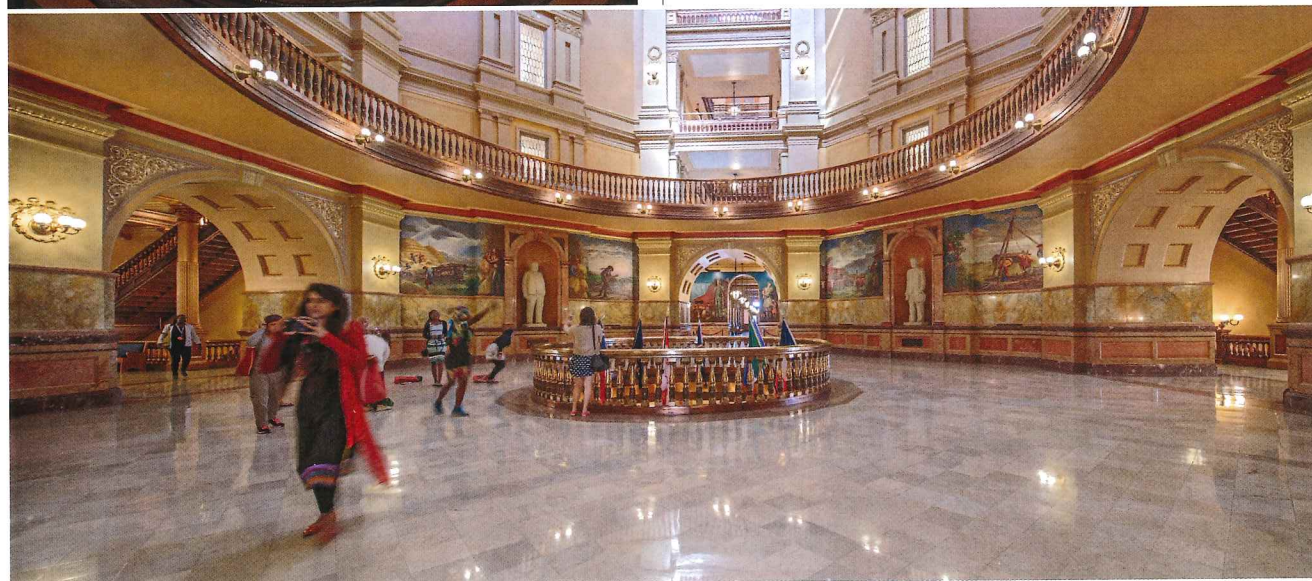
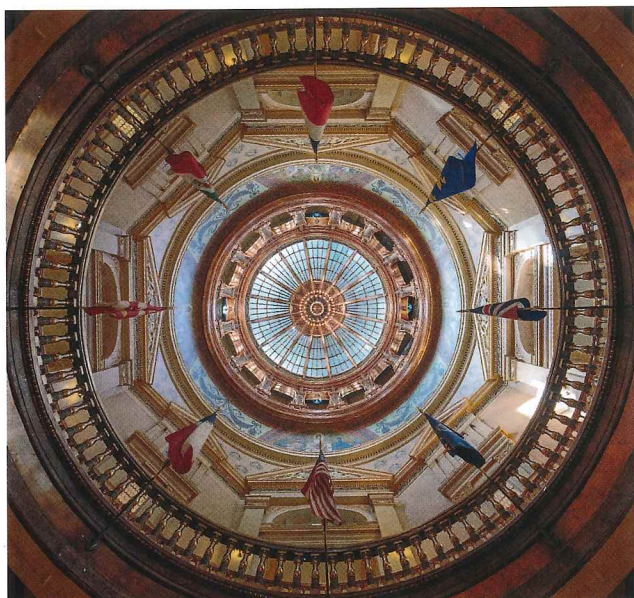


identified early in the planning process. Although it is a large historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the area was not a locally designated historic district and thus did not fall under the purview of the HRC.

Local preservation leaders worried that the city's separate downtown design review commission lacked the proper tools to address increasing development pressures. Many downtown property owners, however, were reluctant to accept what they saw as potentially more onerous regulations as a local historic district.

Also at issue were the historic neighborhoods outside the four existing local historic districts—some 2,000 buildings across the hilly, spread-out city could qualify. Moreover, some were already listed in the National Register without the protections offered by local designation.

The National Register does not address adverse change that can result from privately funded projects and the actions of private owners. A special local historic preservation ordinance often is needed to gain the level of control that will encourage high-quality private investment.



The renovation of the Kansas State Capitol building in Topeka and its magnificent dome was completed in 2014 at a cost of more than \$325 million. The renovation also updated the building's infrastructure and office space.

Merten says the preservation plan has helped reinforce the value of good design. "There are so many different viewpoints about what preservation is supposed to be. Working with the downtown more [now], I see that some people believe preservation is about enshrining something forever. I think it's important to recognize the evolution of good design, and preservation is the way to educate people about that concept."

The historic preservation firm Heritage Strategies, LLC, guided the planning process, working with Merten and other planning staff to ensure that conversations addressing the definition and role of preservation took place as the plan unfolded. The final plan included chapters dedicated to Asheville's downtown and neighborhoods, the needs of rural Buncombe County, public outreach and advocacy, and heritage tourism.

The plan also addresses the "preservation context"—that list of preservation tools without which no plan would be complete, and highlights the critical economic benefits encouraging more developers to use the historic tax credit.

The plan notes how valuable historic preservation has already proved to be. Between 1979 and 2014, combined federal and state tax credits helped rehabilitate more than 173 income-producing buildings and encouraged the rehabilitation of more than a hundred homes. In the Downtown Asheville National Register Historic District, 68 buildings have been rehabilitated, "at a reported value of nearly \$142 million in 2014 dollars," the plan states.

In the end, the plan did not create a new downtown historic district. But it does offer developers and planners a number of ideas for refining design and demolition permitting in the downtown and other commercial areas.

The bottom line? Merten says the plan has "had the effect of, at least within the planning department, elevating preservation's role in planning. Over the past 10 years or so, it had felt more isolated. [The plan] brought preservation into the eyes of the city." ■

A. Elizabeth Watson is a regional planner with Heritage Strategies, LLC. She led the planning team for the *Asheville-Buncombe County Historic Preservation Master Plan* and participated in the *Topeka Historic Preservation Plan*. She also coauthored *Saving America's Countryside*.