



HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLANNING: WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

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Historic Preservation Planning involves a sequence of activities to identify, officially recognize, and protect historic resources. Without deliberate efforts to preserve physical reminders of the past, a city's cultural heritage can be eaten away over time by demolition and neglect. Historic resources can include buildings, structures, landscapes, archeological sites, and groupings of related resources called districts.

The planning process starts with development of historic contexts—the important themes that typified an area under consideration. Contexts inform plans to identify and evaluate those properties that best reflect the area's past. Historically important properties may be conferred landmark status and design guidelines developed to safeguard the resource's historic character. For guidance on carrying out these activities, refer to the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Preservation Planning](#). Keep in mind:

- **It's better to identify important historic resources in your community before development (or redevelopment) happens** than to discover there's an issue with them during the implementation process. For example, construction projects that require federal or state funding, permitting, or licensing will need to undergo environmental review under historic preservation laws to determine whether the project's activities have the potential to harm historic resources. Proactive identification of historic resources through the preservation planning process helps avoid unanticipated project delays. Remember to take into account known and possible undiscovered archaeological sites, as well.
- **Don't assume that, just because there are no properties in your city listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), your community doesn't have historic resources.** The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office maintains a database of inventoried properties, including archaeological sites. Some of these resources may have been determined eligible for listing in the NRHP as a result of environmental review under [Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act](#). To obtain a list of inventoried properties for your community, contact the Information Coordinator at the State Historic Preservation Office at thomas.cinadr@mnhs.org
- **Consider integrating historic preservation into relevant sections of the comprehensive plan,** rather than confining all preservation planning to a single area of the plan. For example, in the Redevelopment section of the Economic Competitiveness plan element (Metropolitan Council's *Thrive MSP 2040* plan), financial incentives for rehabilitation of historic buildings—such as historic tax credits—could be identified. For a discussion of the economic sustainability of historic commercial districts, see the report [Older, Smaller, Better: Measuring how the character of buildings and blocks influences urban vitality](#).
- **Engage heritage preservation commission members and preservation partners to help identify priorities.** They offer expertise and monitor the “pulse” of historic preservation in the community.



- **Refer to the Statewide Historic Preservation Plan** for guidance on salient preservation issues and priorities in Minnesota. Periodically, the State Historic Preservation Office updates the [Statewide Historic Preservation Plan](#), with input from preservation professionals and other stakeholders, to assess the current climate of historic preservation, identify best practices, recommend policy changes, and set goals for the near future.
- **Additional Resources:** The State Historic Preservation Office provides training and technical assistance to local governments that have enacted—or are considering—a local preservation ordinance. Grants are available for preservation planning activities to cities participating in the [Certified Local Government \(CLG\) Program](#). For more information, contact Michael Koop, Historic Preservation Program Specialist, at michael.koop@mnhs.org. The [Minnesota Historical & Cultural Heritage Grants](#) program also offers preservation planning grants. Additional guidance for local preservation planning can be found at the [National Alliance of Preservation Commissions](#) website.

