

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCE PLAN

Introduction

The City of Danville has a unique history as a southern manufacturing and tobacco center that has defined its cultural and architectural heritage. Victorian mansions, tobacco warehouses, worker housing, and textile mills are the remnants of an industry that has almost completely disappeared from the region and the nation as a whole. For this reason, the preservation and promotion of these cultural artifacts is a key component of both preserving Danville's heritage and promoting its revitalization. The City faces a tough balancing act between the preservation of historically significant resources and protecting the health, safety and welfare of its citizens by addressing derelict structures and substandard housing¹ in a challenging economic climate. Therefore, the preservation of historic and cultural resources must be addressed concurrently with blight eradication and economic development efforts that are addressed elsewhere in the comprehensive plan.

Historic and Cultural Resource Preservation Goal:

Promote historic and cultural resources by preventing deterioration, promoting rehabilitation and reuse, and promoting heritage tourism in the City.

Policies / Objectives

The policies/objectives established in support of this goal are:

- Prevent the deterioration and demolition of historic structures.
- Incentivize the rehabilitation of historic structures.
- Promote Danville as a heritage tourism destination.

¹ The issue of blight and unsafe housing conditions is addressed in more detail in the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan.



The Final Home of the Confederate Government

Existing Historic and Cultural Assets

The Historic Resources Map found after page 74 demonstrates the wealth of resources located within the City. Local preservation efforts have leveraged private and public funds to restore and reuse many historic buildings and entire districts. Success stories include the Old West End, the Tobacco Warehouse & Residential District and the Downtown District. These areas have repurposed old buildings into new cultural landmarks, attracted new residents and promoted the city as a place to live, work and play. But there are many other historic districts that have not yet “turned the corner” and even the aforementioned districts remain in transition and have suffered from the impacts of the national economic downturn.



Threats to Historic and Cultural Resources

Deferred maintenance, outdated building types, and converted/subdivided residential units have been a symptom of the economic disinvestment that has plagued the city for decades. These trends have impacted historic neighborhoods disproportionately. The preservation of privately owned property cannot be separated from economic and market constraints. Therefore the city must pursue a wide array of measures to reach its stated goal regarding its historic and cultural resources.

The Structural Conditions Maps following page 76 identify all structures constructed before 1946 and assigns colors based on their structural condition and occupancy status. Structures are identified on a 4-point scale from “poor” to “severe” condition based on any combination of four factors identified through the City’s 2010 Housing Survey: poor roof condition, poor foundation condition, boarded, abandoned. Structures that were built before 1946 without any of these conditions are colored green, and considered to be in good to fair condition.

Existing Historic and Cultural Preservation Measures

The City and state partners are providing the following planning and support measures for the preservation and promotion of resources.

Targeted neighborhood improvement plans. The City is creating plans for the revitalization and renewal of historically and culturally significant neighborhoods. A plan for the River District was adopted in 2012 and plans for the Monument-Berryman Neighborhood, Old West End, and the Grove Street Neighborhood are currently being addressed. The River District Plan provides an overarching vision with related objectives for the revitalization of the former industrial portions of the Tobacco Warehouse & Residential District and the Downtown District. The plan outlines funding sources and redevelopment options for several historic commercial and industrial



Tobacco Warehouse Historic District

buildings and includes adopted design guidelines that will direct future construction and rehabilitation efforts in the District. The Monument-Berryman Neighborhood (the single family residential portion of the Tobacco Warehouse District) is currently being studied to identify future conservation and redevelopment options which include the rehabilitation of historic worker housing. The Old West End (OWE) is located within a local, state, and nationally recognized historic district. The goals established for the OWE focus on stabilizing the existing housing stock and providing safe and sanitary housing for existing residents.

Provide incentives and options to property owners in economically stressed neighborhoods. The City recognizes rehabilitation and maintenance of historic structures in depressed neighborhoods is financially challenging and occasionally infeasible. Rehabilitation is incentivized through the Real Estate Tax Abatement Program which defers increased taxes related to the increased assessed value of



Comprehensive Plan

restored structures. In addition, the historic districts in the city that have received state and federal recognition has allowed the extensive use of Historic Tax Credits to help propel renewal of Danville neighborhoods. State and federal Historic Tax Credits have been a major component of the renovation and reuse of historic buildings in the Tobacco Warehouse, Downtown, and Old West End districts.

Preservation Task Force. The Preservation Task Force is a joint effort between the City and local preservation organizations to tackle the challenges of preservation and revitalization together. The Preservation Task Force is currently focused on structures threatened by building dilapidation, crime, and disinvestment in the Old West End district. The task force is in the process of developing processes and policies that will promote and preserve this and other neighborhoods for the future.

In addition to these measures the following steps should be considered as they relate to each of the three primary policies.

1) Prevent the deterioration and demolition of historic structures.

- a. Closely monitor aging structures for Property Maintenance Code violations and utilize all remedies allowed under local and state codes and ordinances.
- b. Closely monitor aging structures for unlawful subdivision of property and strictly enforce existing zoning densities.
- c. Review and update existing design guidelines to allow for flexibility when addressing deteriorating properties.
- d. Adopt and incorporate the spot blight abatement and the new receivership process as allowed under the Code of Virginia into the City's current Derelict Structures Ordinance.

- e. Develop a formal and transparent prioritization process for neighborhood preservation and rehabilitation. The Structural Conditions Inventory maps found after page 76 shows the highest concentrations of endangered historic structures in relation to historic districts. This map can help guide the prioritization process along with criteria adopted by the Preservation Task Force.

2) Incentivize the rehabilitation of historic structures.

- a. Expand the existing Real Estate Tax Abatement Program to include additional targeted neighborhoods or provide the benefit citywide.
- b. Develop a user-friendly guide for owners of derelict and historic properties that will outline all related requirements and incentives. The guide will include a step-by-step process for rehabilitation.
- c. Maintain a list of contractors qualified to perform rehabilitation work on historic properties.
- d. In cases of demolition, create a photographic record of the property prior to demolition and retain historically and architecturally significant artifacts in coordination with local preservation groups.

3) Promote Danville as a heritage tourism destination.

Heritage Tourism is defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the... past and present."² Promoting Danville's current assets and unique history is an

² [PreservationNation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org) 2012. National Trust for Historic Preservation. 28 Aug. 2012 <http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/economics-of-revitalization/heritage-tourism/>



important aspect of neighborhood revitalization and economic development as well as historic preservation. The region already has active organizations that are pursuing the promotion and preservation of these resources. Partnerships with the City's Economic Development Department, the Virginia Tourism Corporation, and Preservation Virginia will be important means to create new initiatives and leverage tourism marketing grant funds that will effectively serve the city's goals as set forth in the Comprehensive Plan.

- a. Prioritize and define the City's tourism market.
- b. Develop strong partnerships with Preservation Virginia, Virginia Tourism Corporation, and other appropriate organizations that share the goal of developing and marketing the City as a travel destination.
- c. Develop heritage tourism attractions and tour and strengthen marketing and promotion of these assets.

