



## Valdosta Historic District Design Guidelines



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# Design Review Guidelines for the Valdosta Historic District

Created for the City of Valdosta  
and the  
Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission  
By  
Jordan, Jones and Goulding  
Norcross, GA

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# Valdosta Historic District Design Guidelines

## *Section A: Introduction*

*History of Valdosta, Historic Districts, Subareas, Design Review,  
Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation,  
and Economic Incentives.*



North Patterson Street, October 29<sup>th</sup> 1899, Coach pulling musicians for the Georgia State Fair

Photographer Unknown

Courtesy Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, Image low047



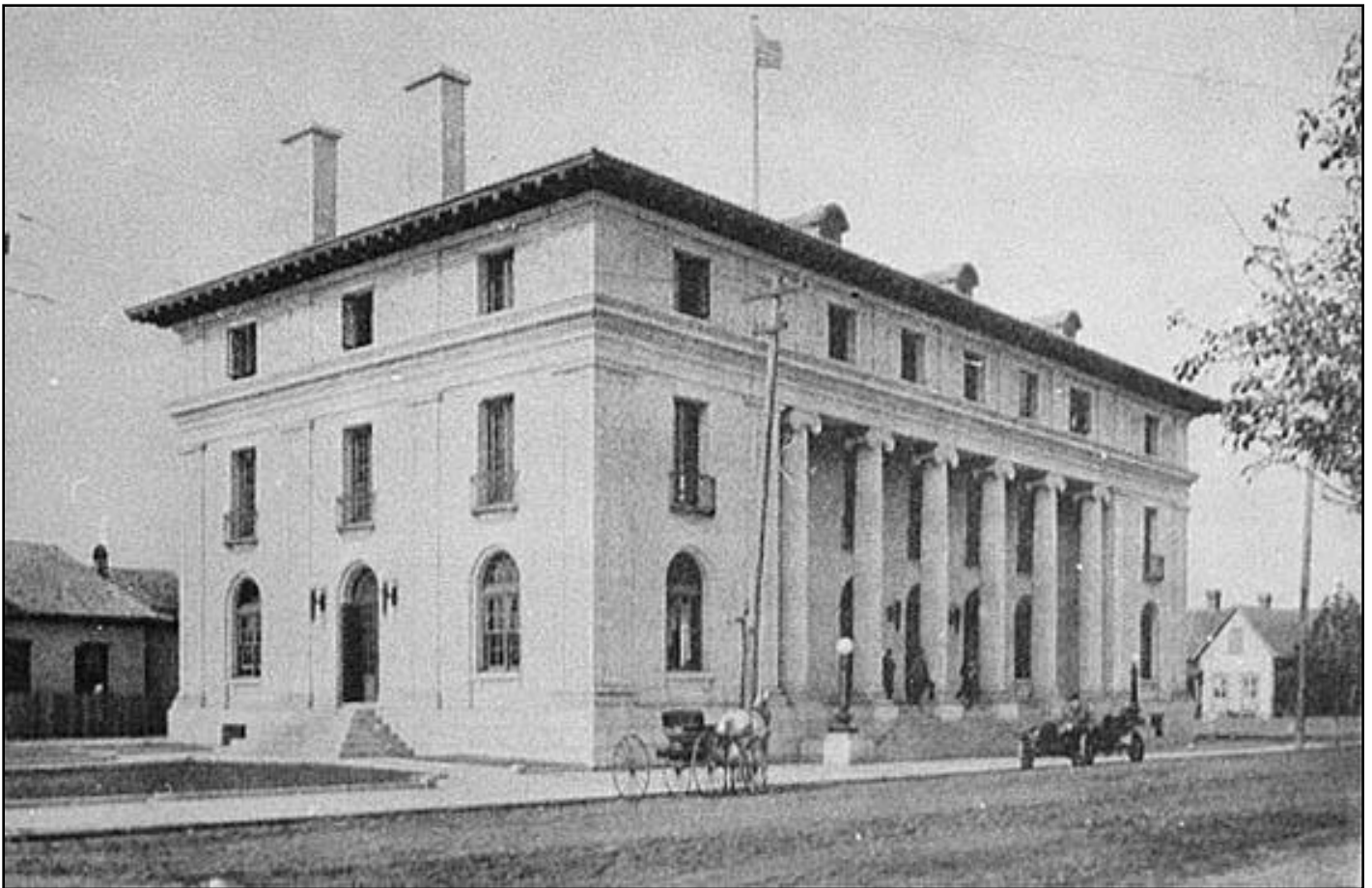


## *Introduction*

The City of Valdosta is a unique community, with an important and valuable history. The Valdosta Historic District recognizes the significance of the community by striving to maintain the built heritage within the city that connects the present to the past.

The establishment of a local historic district and a design review process ensures that the historic building environment and distinctive character of Valdosta will continue to enrich the present and will survive for future generations. Through design review, the integrity of Valdosta's architectural history can be preserved for the cultural and economic benefit of the entire community.

These Design Guidelines are intended to assist property owners within the Valdosta Historic District. These Design Guidelines provide property owners, as well as builders and architects, with the tools and information to smoothly navigate the design review process.



Valdosta Federal Building and Post Office (now City Hall), after 1910

Photographer Unknown

Courtesy Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, Image low075

# Introduction

## *The History of Valdosta*

The City of Valdosta was incorporated in 1860 along the route of the Savannah, Albany and Gulf Railroad, and the railroad has continued to contribute to the economic vitality of the area.

European settlers first began to appear in Lowndes County around 1821, and by 1825, the county had been sectioned off from larger Irwin County to the north. The first county seat was located at Franklinville, a few miles east of Hahira, but the town was unsuccessful. By 1833, the county seat was moved to Lowndesville, near Ousley, but this location similarly failed. Troupville was formed in 1837, and the new location of the county seat became an important town within the region, as well as a major stop on the route to Florida.

Although the residents of Troupville had invested in the Savannah, Albany and Gulf Railroad stock in order to assure their inclusion within the route, in 1859 the railroad laid out the new line four miles to the south of town. The enterprising citizens determined that the best solution to this problem was simply to move the entire town south to the railroad line. Valdosta, the name of the new town, was derived from Val de Osta Plantation in Laurens County, which had been owned by the Troup family and maintained the connection to their name and the earlier town.

The first train ran through Valdosta in July 1860, and the town was incorporated as the county seat in December of 1860. By 1870, the census revealed that Valdosta already had a population of 166 people, indicating that the town had grown quickly. The railroad allowed Valdosta to develop as a regional trading center, specializing in the long-staple Sea Island cotton.

Two more railroad lines, the Georgia Southern & Florida and the Atlantic, Valdosta & Western, were constructed through Valdosta in 1889 and 1896, respectively, and represented Valdosta's growing importance as the major exchange for Sea Island cotton. By 1900, the population of Valdosta had reached over 5,600 people, and the city had begun several major improvement projects, including a public transportation system in 1899 and bricking the streets in 1903.

The boll weevil destroyed the cotton crop and decimated the Valdosta economy in 1917, but the region's farmers soon turned to other crops, including pecans, peanuts, tobacco and pine trees. The population of the city continued to grow, and Moody Air Field (now Moody Air Force Base) opened in 1941, bringing over 3,000 military personnel to the city. From the 1940s to the 1980s, much of the growth within Valdosta was located within suburban areas, and many important buildings within the downtown area were lost to demolition. Since the 1980s, Valdosta's historic downtown has been undergoing a revitalization that continues today.

Agriculture and forestry continue to be major contributors to the local economy, but the city also includes several major corporations as well as Valdosta State University, a regional branch of the state university system.<sup>1</sup>

1. Derived from the Downtown Valdosta Design Guidelines, Central Valdosta Development Authority, 1995, 8-10 and Wayne and Judy Dasher, "Early History of Lowndes County and Valdosta, Georgia," <http://www.rootsweb.com/~gagus/lowndesh.htm>, accessed 31 December 2007.

## *The Valdosta Local Historic District*

The City of Valdosta first adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance in 1980 and created the Valdosta Local Historic District upon the recommendations of the Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission.

The Valdosta Historic District encompasses the historic downtown core of the city and its surrounding residential areas. The City of Valdosta has recognized that this area is of extraordinary importance to the character and heritage of the city by designating it as a local historic district. Through the use of historic district status and design review, the built environment of Valdosta can be preserved for future generations.

## *Local Historic Districts and National Register Historic Districts*

Two types of historic districts exist within the City of Valdosta: the local historic district and the National Register Historic Districts (see maps on page 8 and page 9). The Valdosta Historic District is a local historic district, which means that it is subject to local regulations. The National Register Districts are part of the federal National Register of Historic Places program. Properties within the National Register Districts are not subject to local regulations, unless they are also part of the local district.

The National Register Districts in Valdosta are: the Valdosta Commercial Historic District, the Southside Historic District, the North Patterson Historic District, the Fairview Historic District, the Brookwood North Historic District, and the East End Historic District.

## *The Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission*

The Valdosta Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) was created by the City of Valdosta in 1980 when the Historic Preservation Ordinance was adopted. The HPC is made up of seven members, appointed by the Mayor and Council, who have demonstrated special interest, experience, or education in history, architecture, or the preservation of historic resources.

In addition to other duties, the HPC is responsible for performing design review and issuing Certificates of Appropriateness.

# Introduction

## *Subareas within the Valdosta Historic District*

The Valdosta Historic District is divided into several subareas in order to allow the HPC to better manage the diverse range of architectural styles and types within the district. The Subareas reflect the differing needs and requirements of different types of historic buildings, depending on their age, location, and architecture.

### Subarea I-

- Subarea I includes the historic residential neighborhoods of North Patterson, Brookwood North, and Fairview.
- Subarea I includes a high percentage of high-style homes with a high level of integrity. Preserving the character and integrity of this subarea requires a close adherence to the principles outlined in these Design Guidelines.

### Subarea II-

- Subarea II includes the historic residential neighborhoods of Leila Ellis, Kill Me Quick, Westside, and a small section of Cypress.
- Subarea II consists of a large collection of historic housing that significantly contributes to the character of the Valdosta Historic District. As vernacular housing forms designed for average families, more flexible guidelines are able to preserve the historic nature of these buildings, while maintaining affordability.

### Subarea III-

- Subarea III includes the historic downtown buildings, as well as the expanded commercial areas located around the Central Business District.
- Commercial buildings have unique needs and special provisions are required to accommodate the historic, economic, and public roles of these important resources.

## *Contributing and Non-Contributing Structures:*

The Valdosta Historic District contains two tiers of resources: Contributing and Non-Contributing. Changes to the exterior of both types of buildings require design review by the HPC.

- **Contributing Resources** are that are generally over 50 years old and adds to the historic character of the district. These buildings, sites, structures, or objects are intact, and few significant changes have been made to the visible exterior elevations.

- **Non-Contributing Resources** are than 50 years old or are historic buildings that have been so altered that they can no longer contribute to the historic character of the district.

## *Compatibility Rule:*

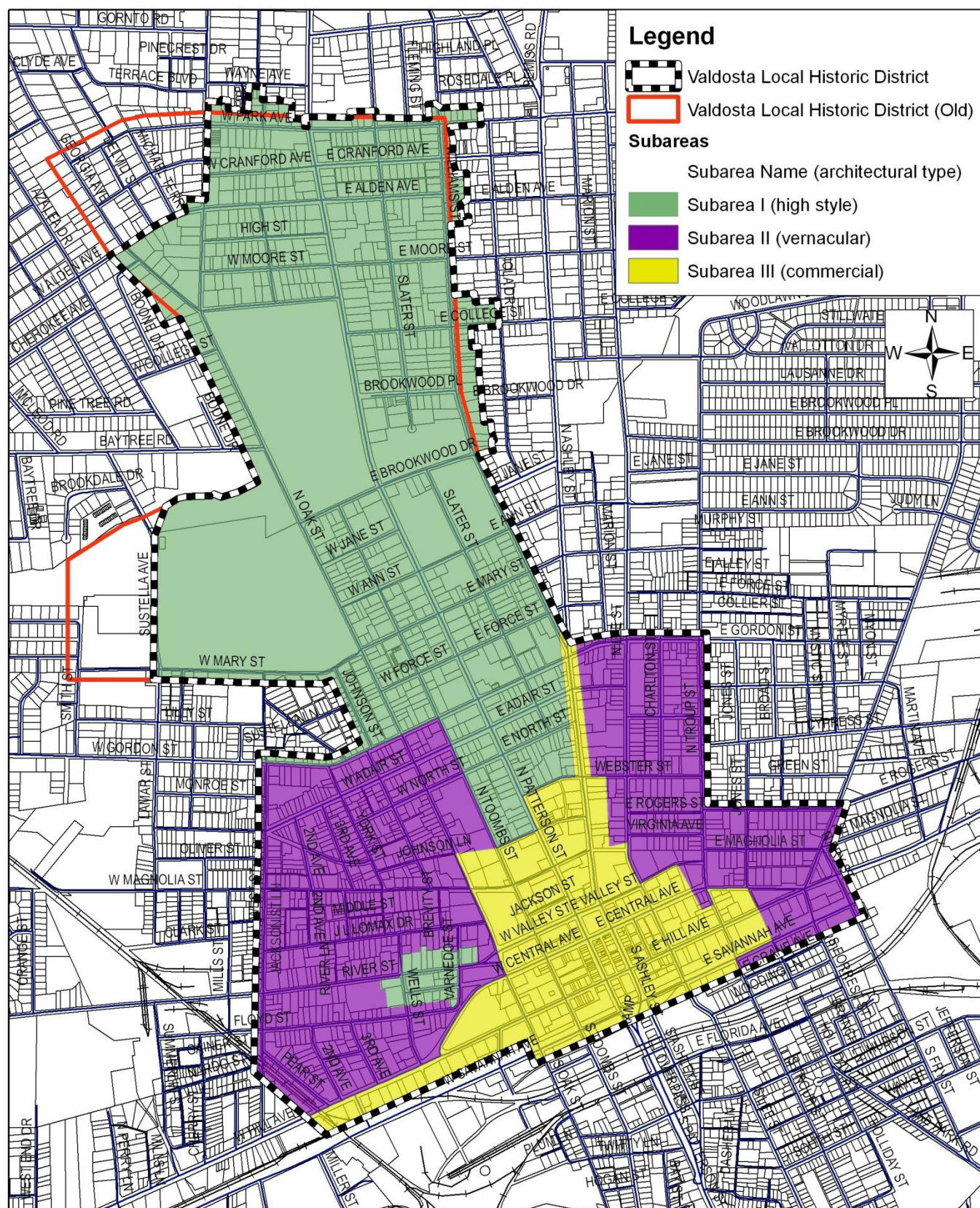
The Compatibility Rule is designed to ensure that the Valdosta Historic District maintains its unique character by requiring that alterations to existing buildings and new construction are compatible with the design, proportions, scale, massing, and general character of the block and Subarea within which the building is located.

In short, an alteration or new building should be compatible with the buildings with which it is most closely associated by location, age, type, style or design.



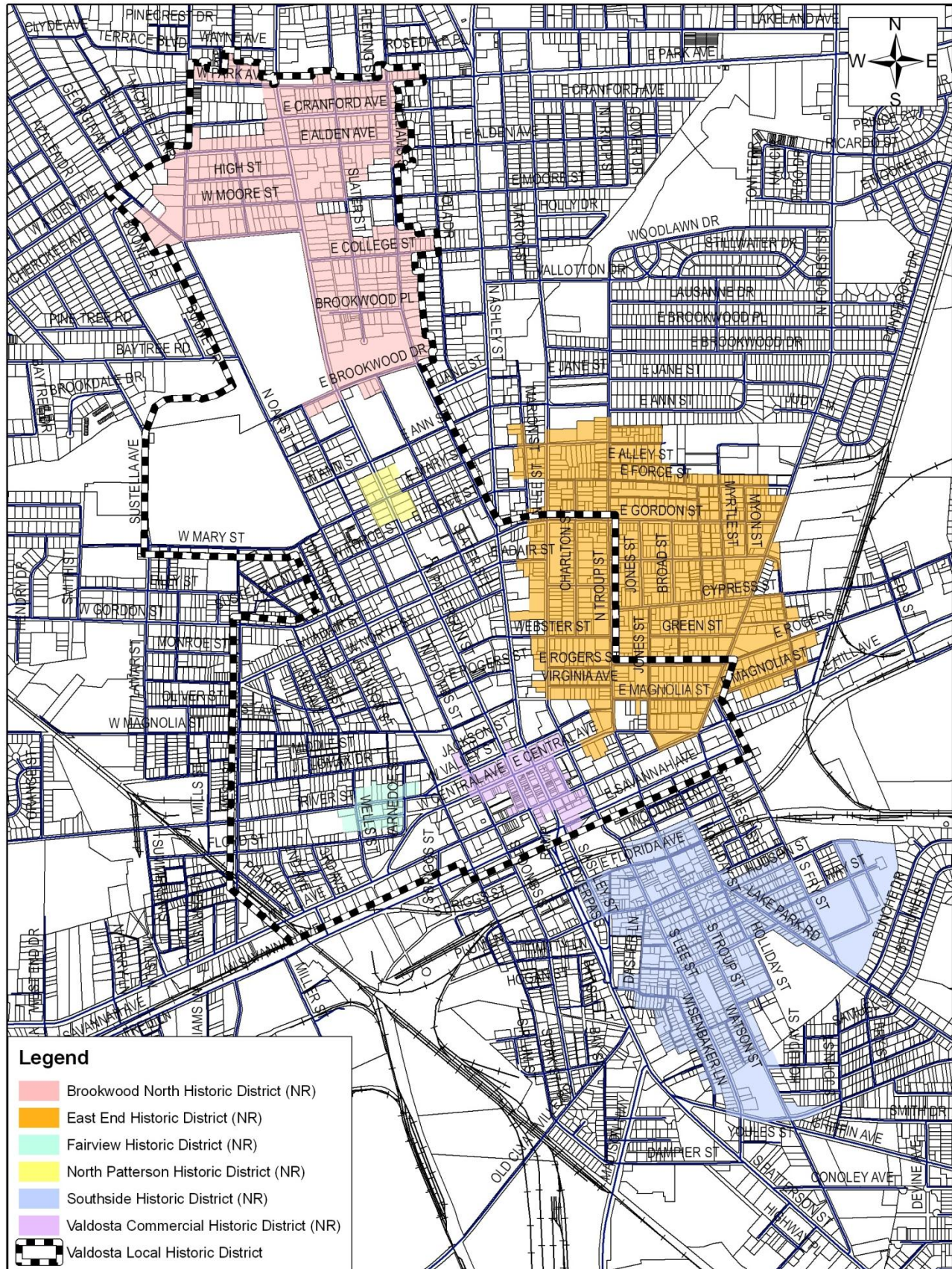
# Introduction

# Valdosta Local Historic District with Subareas





## Valdosta's National Register Historic Districts





# Introduction

## *The Design Review Process*

In order to make any material changes to the exterior of a building located within the Valdosta Historic District, or to relocate or demolish a building within the Valdosta Historic District, property owners must receive approval from either the HPC or the Commission Administrator, depending on the complexity of the proposed material change.

## *Certificates of Appropriateness*

Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs) are required for major material changes to the exterior of a building within the Valdosta Historic District, or for the relocation or demolition of a building within the Valdosta Historic District. Property owners must submit their plans for the proposed change in the form of a Certificate of Appropriateness Application. Once the Certificate of Appropriateness Application is approved by the HPC, they will issue a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) to the property owner for work on the project to proceed. A COA is required before a building permit will be issued by the Development Services Division for any project within the Valdosta Historic District.

Following are examples of projects that require a COA:

- Any major alteration that changes the exterior appearance of the building.
- Any addition to an existing building.
- New accessory buildings, new paved areas, new decks or porches.
- New construction.
- Demolition, Partial Demolition, or Relocation of any building within the historic district

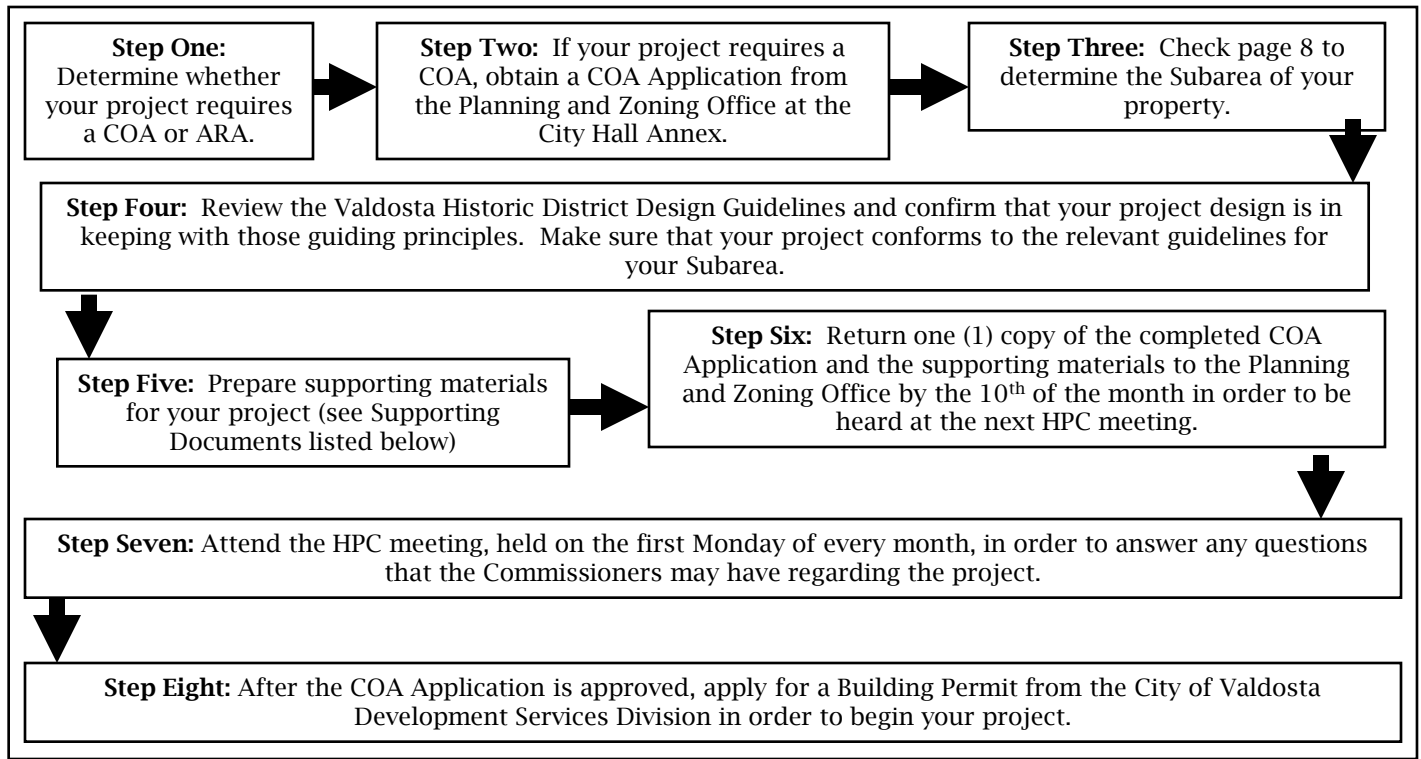
## *Administrative Review and Approval*

Certain minor exterior alterations can be reviewed and approved by the Historic Preservation Commission Administrator. For these material changes, property owners must submit their plans for the proposed change in the form of an Application for Administrative Review and Approval (ARA). Once the ARA is approved by the Commission Administrator, the property owner can proceed with work on the project. Certain types of work require a building permit, and the Development Services Division will not issue a building permit for any project within the Valdosta Historic District without an approved ARA.

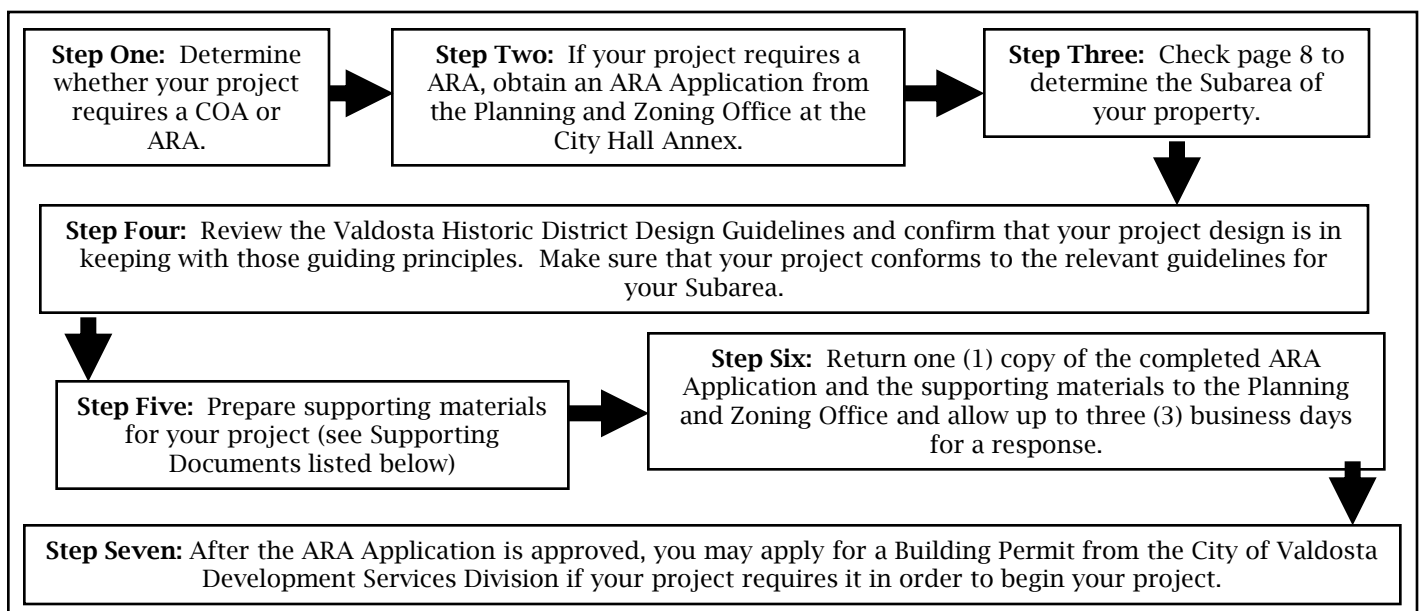
Following are examples of projects that require an ARA:

- Ordinary exterior repair and maintenance, such as minor repairs and in-kind replacement of small sections of siding, or minor architectural elements.
- Removal or replacement of roofing materials with similar materials.
- Installation of any fence not requiring a variance.
- Installation of signs and awnings.
- Resurfacing of an existing paved area.
- Landscaping.
- Demolition, relocation, construction or removal of non-historic secondary structures under 20'X20' located in the back yard.

## *The Design Review Process: Certificate of Appropriateness*



## *The Design Review Process: Administrative Review and Approval*



# Introduction

## *Design Review Process: Supporting Documents*

The following supporting documents need to be attached to either a Certificate of Appropriateness or Administrative Review and Approval Application:

- One (1) copy of a Site Plan showing dimensions and locations in relation to nearby buildings, structures, and streets.
- One (1) copy of a Sketch of the proposed work, including elevations, floor plans, details, signage, or any other features to be altered.
- One (1) set of photographs documenting the existing site, structure, setting, and adjacent properties.
- One (1) copy of a description explaining the proposed materials for the project, or one (1) set of sample materials for the project.
- If the COA Application is for DEMOLITION or RELOCATION, one (1) set of plans detailing the proposed new construction on the site.

## *Frequently Asked Questions:*

### **1. What are the advantages of a property being located within a local historic district?**

- Local historic districts protect the historic and cultural resources within the district and ensure that the character and historic fabric of the area is maintained. In addition to these social values, local historic districts have also been found to:
  - Protect the investment of property owners by preventing insensitive changes to the district and maintaining property values.
  - Encourage high-quality design within the district.
  - Encourage the revitalization of neighborhoods.
  - Promote local tourism.
  - Enhance business recruitment.

### **2. Am I required to restore my building?**

- No, there are no requirements that any building within the district must be improved. However, the ordinance does allow for the City to require a property owner to undertake reasonable measures of maintenance in order to prevent demolition by neglect or a public safety hazard.

### **3. Are there any restrictions on the interior of my building?**

- No, there are no restrictions or design review on interior changes.

## *Frequently Asked Questions:*

### **4. Are there any restrictions on the use of my building?**

- No, the use of a property is not restricted by the Historic Preservation Ordinance. The City of Valdosta Zoning Ordinance continues to apply to any building within the city.

### **5. Does the ordinance control paint color?**

- No, paint color is not regulated by the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

### **6. Will it be more expensive for me to repair or remodel my building?**

- Not necessarily. Repairs or renovations of a similar quality cost the same, whether within or outside of a local historic district. High quality repairs or alterations cost less over time, as these products require less maintenance, repair and replacement. In addition, the repair of existing historic features is significantly less expensive than their replacement with similar features.

### **7. Why is my non-contributing building included within the district? Why is my non-contributing building subject to design review?**

- Local historic districts are designed to be contiguous, and non-contributing buildings are included because of their location.
- Non-contributing buildings are subject to design review to ensure that any further changes to the district complement the historic character of the district, rather than detract from it.

### **8. How does the Valdosta HPC make determinations on Certificates of Appropriateness?**

- The members of the Valdosta HPC have demonstrated a special interest, experience or education in history or architecture and several members are professionals in the disciplines of architecture, history, architectural history, historic preservation, planning or other related disciplines.
- The HPC uses these design guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (see page 14) to make their determinations.

# Introduction

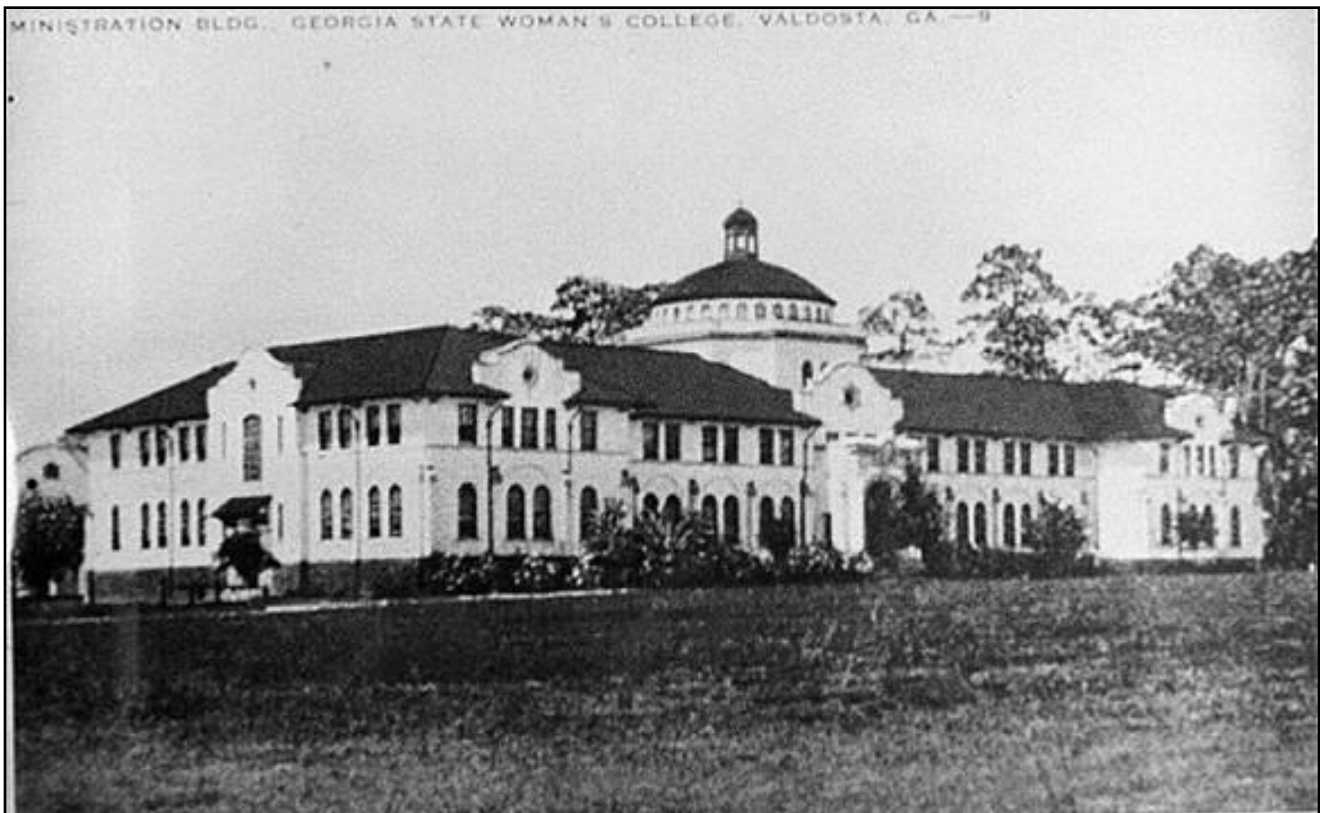
## *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are guidelines established by the federal government, outlining the best practices for rehabilitating historic buildings. These standards were first established to determine the eligibility of an historic building rehabilitation project for the federal tax credit program (see page 16), and the guidelines have become the basis for historic rehabilitation practices throughout the country.

These Design Guidelines are based on the principles of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and are intended to provide property owners with concrete and useful interpretations of those standards for use in the City of Valdosta.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards can provide invaluable guidance to any project involving a historic building. Additional standards exist for the preservation, restoration, and reconstruction of buildings. An expanded version of the Standards, with additional guidelines and illustrations, is available at:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standards/index.htm>



Administration Building, Valdosta State University, after 1917

Photographer Unknown

Courtesy Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, Image low084

## *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and their visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.



# Introduction

## *Economic Incentives*

Property owners undertaking the rehabilitation of a historic building in Valdosta may be eligible for financial incentives to reduce the cost of the project.

Buildings that are listed on the National Register, either individually or as part of a district, and buildings that are eligible for the National Register can qualify for the Federal or State incentive programs (see map on page 9). Each program has specific eligibility criteria and requirements.

When considering the rehabilitation or restoration of a building in Valdosta, the property owner should consider the available economic incentives. Before planning a project using these incentives, first contact the VHPC Administrator for more information. The Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources can also be contacted for information on these programs.

See the following table for more information.

Name of Program	Source	Benefits	Criteria for Eligibility	Contact (see Appendix C)
Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit Program (RITC)	Federal Government-National Park Service and Internal Revenue Service	Federal Income Tax credit equal to 20% of qualified rehabilitation expenses	Income-producing, Certified Historic structures either eligible for or listed on the National Register. Property must be income-producing. "Substantial Rehabilitation" test. Rehabilitation must be certified by the National Park Service.	Valdosta Main Street Director, Valdosta HPC Administrator, or HPD
Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit Program (RITC)	Federal Government-National Park Service and Internal Revenue Service	Federal Income Tax credit equal to 10% of qualified rehabilitation expenses	Income-producing, Non-historic buildings built before 1936. Physical wall retention test. "Substantial Rehabilitation" test. Only for non-residential commercial buildings.	Valdosta Main Street Director, Valdosta HPC Administrator, or HPD
Georgia Preferential Property Tax Assessment Program for Rehabilitated Historic Property	State of Georgia	8½ year property tax assessment freeze	Property must be eligible for or listed on the Georgia Register of Historic Places. Residential and commercial properties are eligible. Rehabilitation must be certified by HPD.	Valdosta Main Street Director, Valdosta HPC Administrator, or HPD
Georgia State Income Tax Credit Program for Rehabilitated Historic Property	State of Georgia	State Income Tax credit equal to 25% of rehabilitation costs, up to \$100,000 for residential and \$300,000 for commercial	Property must be eligible for or listed on the Georgia Register of Historic Places. Residential and commercial properties are eligible. Must meet the "Substantial Rehabilitation" test. Rehabilitation must be certified by HPD.	Valdosta Main Street Director, Valdosta HPC Administrator, or HPD