

Frequently Asked Questions about Historic Preservation

Why Preserve Valdosta's Historic Properties?

Above and beyond their historical significance, why are Valdosta's historic properties valuable resources? Why should they be preserved? The answers are many, and varied.

Historic properties are tangible evidence of our city's history. They bring history to life in ways that no written or even audio-visual materials can do. In doing so, they help people better understand who they are, as individuals and as a people, and how things got to be the way they are.

Historic properties contribute to a sense of place. They help make one place different from another in unique and tangible ways. They reinforce the lessons of history while strengthening cultural identity. They provide a framework for new development and add variety to everyday surroundings.

Historic properties also represent an enormous investment of time, energy, and materials; resources that should be wisely used and conserved. Additionally, historic properties can continue in productive service in everyday life, either for the use for which they were originally intended or adapted to new uses.

Historic properties enrich the quality of people's lives by presenting for their benefit a variety of architectural styles, construction materials, and craftsmanship that appears nowhere else in their physical environment. They provide a link with the past and serve to remind and educate the present generation about those who came before. Historic properties are a continuous source of inspiration for interpreting and reinterpreting the past. They literally embody historical data knowledge about people and their past, as well as themselves which can be recovered for the benefit of all through careful archaeological or architectural investigation and conservation.

What's the difference between a National Register Historic District and a Local Historic District?

The City of Valdosta has one local historic district and six National Register historic districts. In determining the differences between these two types of districts, it is important to remember is that a National Register district *identifies*, and a Local Historic District *protects*.

A National Register historic district is a historic district that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is our country's official list of historic places worthy of preservation. It includes individual buildings, structures, sites, and objects as well as historic districts that are historically, architecturally, or archaeologically significant.

National Register listing recognizes the significance of properties and districts. By doing so, it identifies significant historic resources in a community. Boundaries of National Register districts are tightly drawn to encompass only concentrated areas of historic properties. Information compiled to nominate a historic district can be used in a variety of planning and development activities. National Register listing also makes available specific preservation incentives and provides a limited degree of protection from the effects of federally funded, licensed, or permitted activities.

The National Register is maintained by the U.S. Department of the Interior. In Georgia, the National Register program is administered by the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources. Districts and other properties are listed in the National Register through a 17-step process that involves identification, documentation, and evaluation. National Register historic districts most commonly encompass central business districts, residential neighborhoods, industrial areas, rural areas, and occasionally, entire communities.

A local historic district is a district designated by a local ordinance, which falls under the jurisdiction of a local historic preservation review commission. A local historic district is generally “overlaid” on the existing zoning classifications in a community. Therefore, a local historic district commission deals only with the appearance of the district, not with the uses of those properties.

According to the 1980 Georgia Historic Preservation Act which makes such local designations possible, a local historic district is a “geographically definable area, urban or rural, which contains structures, sites, and/or works of art which have special historical or aesthetic interest or value; represent one or more periods or styles of architecture typical of one or more eras in the history of the municipality, county, state, or region; and cause that area to constitute a visibly perceptible section of the community.”

The designation of a local district protects the significant properties and the historic character of the district. It provides communities with the means to make sure that growth, development, and change take place in ways that respect the important architectural, historical, and environmental characteristics within a district. Local designation encourages sensitive development in the district and discourages unsympathetic changes from occurring. This happens through a process called design review, whereby the historic preservation commission approves major changes that are planned for the district and issues Certificates of Appropriateness which allow the proposed changes to take place

Local districts and National Register districts are different, but complementary, and can work effectively by themselves or together to meet a community’s historic preservation needs. Following is a detailed analysis of what both National Register districts and local historic districts are and the ways in which they can be used as preservation planning tools.

National Register District	Local Historic District
Identifies significant properties and districts for general planning purposes	Protects a community’s historic properties and areas through a design review process
Analyzes and assesses the historic character and quality of the district	Protects the historic character and quality of the district with specific design controls
Designates historic areas based on uniform national criteria and procedures	Designates historic areas on the basis of local criteria and local procedures
Sets district boundaries tightly, based on the actual distribution pattern of intact historic properties in the area	Sets district boundaries based on the distribution pattern of historic resources plus other preservation and community planning considerations
Makes available specific federal and state tax incentives for preservation purposes	Provides no tax incentives for preservation purposes unless such are provided by local tax law
Provides a limited degree of protection from the effects of federally assisted undertakings	Provides no additional protection from the effects of federally assisted undertakings
Qualifies property owners for federal and state	Does not qualify property owners for federal or

grants for preservation purposes, when funds are available	state grants for preservation purposes
Does not restrict the use or disposition of property or obligate private property owners in any way	Does not restrict the use to which property is put in the district or require property owners to make improvements to their property
Does not require conformance to design guidelines or preservation standards when property is rehabilitated unless specific preservation incentives (tax credits, grants) are involved	Requires local historic preservation commission review and approval, based on conformance to local design guidelines, before a building permit is issued for any "material changes" in appearance to the district
Does not affect state and local government activities	Does not affect federal, state, or local government activities
Does not prevent the demolition of historic buildings and structures within designated areas	Provides for review of proposed demolitions within designated areas; may prevent or delay proposed demolitions for specific time periods to allow for preservation alternatives

What determines the boundaries of Valdosta’s Local Historic District? How do I know if I'm in the District?

Generally speaking, the boundaries of a local historic district follow the development pattern of the neighborhood or community and contain historic resources that are distinctive to that place and defined by similar characteristics. Valdosta’s Local Historic District Boundaries were created when the Valdosta Historic Preservation Ordinance was adopted. At that time, the area was determined to contain the highest concentration of historic resources within the City. A map of Valdosta’s Local Historic District can be found [here](#).

I own property in Valdosta’s Local Historic District. How does this affect me?

All material changes to the exterior appearance of a structure located within Valdosta’s Local Historic District require a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). Additionally, any new construction, demolition, relocation of a building, and some site features (including new fences, significant paving, and signs) require a COA. COA applications can be found [here](#).

Regular maintenance and repair do not require a COA. Color changes do not require a COA. Any changes to a building’s interior which has no effect on the exterior does not require a COA.

What if I live in the Local Historic District but my house is not historic?

All structures within the Local Historic District have been evaluated and determined to be "contributing" or "non-contributing." A contributing structure is one which is typically older than 50 years and adds to the historic or architectural value of the district. A non-contributing structure is typically less than 50 years old and does not add to the historic or architectural value of the district.

Alterations to non-contributing structures do have to meet certain design standards, but this is to ensure that any changes made are compatible with the character of the district. Standards for non-contributing structures are significantly different from the design standards for contributing structures.

For example, there are no restrictions on the demolition of non-contributing buildings, while standards prohibit the demolition of contributing buildings that are historic and define the character of the district.

What if something on my property does not meet the standards? Do I have to remove it?

No, design standards would only be reviewed when you want to make a change to your property. Standards are not retroactive and you will not have to un-do any changes already made.

What other communities in Georgia have local historic districts?

As of November 2006, 126 communities in Georgia have historic preservation ordinances. Many of these have multiple historic districts within their community. Please click here for a full list.

What are the economic implications of historic preservation?

Donovan Rypkema, an internationally respected expert in preservation economics, recently gave a lecture entitled Preservation Economics in Coastal Georgia. You can link to a video of his 40 minute talk by clicking here: http://www.coastalgeorgiadc.org/planning_rypkema_v2_small.html