

Historic Preservation in Valdosta

Historic preservation is a proven method of maintaining and teaching local history and preventing the loss of irreplaceable community landmarks. It is also a means of downtown revitalization, neighborhood stabilization, tourism generation, job creation, and affordable housing, and by its very nature, is a “green” and sustainable alternative to new construction.

Valdosta’s role in the history and development of Georgia is reflected in its diverse historic resources. Approximately 150 blocks containing a majority of these resources are included in the Valdosta Historic District, established in 1981. Through its historic preservation ordinance, the City of Valdosta is working to protect and maintain its historic resources. The ordinance, originally adopted in 1980, and now a part of the City of Valdosta Land Development Regulations (Title 2, Chapter 238), established the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), a citizen advisory board responsible for designating landmarks within the City and reviewing any changes made to them. The purpose of the program is to foster planning that encourages the continued use and preservation of historic sites and structures. The Planning and Zoning Division, Community Development Department administers the historic preservation ordinance and provides staff support for the HPC.

In 1984, Valdosta was named a National Main Street Community, and its Main Street program continues to be a vital component of downtown revitalization. The City was designated a Certified Local Government on March 13, 1985, and is one of only seventy-seven Certified Local Governments in Georgia. Jointly administered by the National Park Service and Georgia Historic Preservation Division, the Certified Local Government program affords member governments access to an expanded level of service, information and funding sources.

Historic Preservation Ordinance

The City of Valdosta adopted a historic preservation ordinance in June 1980, shortly after the Georgia Historic Preservation Act (O.C.G.A. 44-10-20 et. seq.) was enacted. Similar to the Georgia Historic Preservation Act, Valdosta’s Historic Preservation Ordinance was created for the purpose of preserving, protecting, recognizing, and rehabilitating the City’s historic resources and stimulating revitalization of the City’s historic areas. The ordinance established the Historic Preservation Commission and provides for its responsibilities and purview. Along with establishing the process necessary to designate historic properties and districts, the ordinance provides procedures and guidelines for design review within the Historic District, known as the Certificate of Appropriateness process. Special considerations and exceptions given to historic buildings for compliance with applicable building codes are also provided in the ordinance. Since its adoption in 1980, the historic preservation ordinance has been amended or revised 5 times: in 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, and 2008.

Historic Preservation Commission

The Historic Preservation Commission is an official citizen advisory board, consisting of seven city residents appointed by the Mayor and City Council who have a demonstrated special interest, experience, or education in history, architecture, or the preservation of historic resources. Commissioners are volunteers and serve three-year terms. The Commission is mainly responsible for recommending properties for local or national historic designation to the Mayor and City Council and reviewing and approving or denying Certificates of Appropriateness applications. The Valdosta Historic District Design Guidelines were developed to assist the Historic Preservation Commission make logical and impartial decisions during their review of Certificate of Appropriateness applications. In addition to the Design Review Guidelines, the Commission follows the nationally-accepted Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The Commission is also charged with several other duties prescribed by the Georgia Historic Preservation Act, such as maintaining a historic resources inventory, promoting the acquisition by the City of façade and conservation easements, conducting public education programs about historic preservation and Valdosta's historic properties, and seek out funding opportunities for historic preservation activities. The Commission meets on the first Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m. in the City Hall Annex Building Multi-Purpose Room. Additionally, work sessions for the Commission are held on a quarterly basis. The City of Valdosta's Special Projects/Historic Preservation Planner administers the Commission and coordinates Commission activities.

Valdosta Historic District

Established in 1981, the Valdosta Historic District contains approximately 1,038 buildings that contribute to its historical and architectural character. Inclusion in a historic district as a "contributing" property indicates that the building is worth protecting by virtue of its historic importance or architectural quality. The 1,113-acre Valdosta Historic District features a diverse assortment of residential, commercial, religious, and institutional properties, as well as streetscapes and open spaces that contribute to Valdosta's cultural identity and built heritage. In 2008, the Valdosta Historic District boundary was expanded to include contributing properties within the Brookwood North National Register District, and contracted on its northwest corner to exclude non-historic properties that did not contribute to the character of the district.

In addition to its locally-designated historic district, the City of Valdosta is proud of its six historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places: Brookwood North, East End, Fairview, North Patterson, Southside, and the Valdosta Commercial Historic District. Additionally, several properties are listed individually on the National Register, including the Barber-Pittman House, the Carnegie Library of Valdosta, the Converse-Dalton House, The Crescent, Crestwood, Dasher High School, the First Presbyterian Church, the Lowndes County Courthouse, and Sunset Hill Cemetery. Many of these landmarks and districts were nominated by the Valdosta Heritage Foundation.