

Historic Preservation and Design in Charlottesville

Introduction

Charlottesville's historic and cultural legacy anchor the City's unique sense of place and contribute to economic and cultural assets. Within the City are 60 individual properties and 11 historic districts listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) and National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Additionally, though most correspond to VLR and NRHP listings, the City has designated as historic 76 individual properties and 11 districts. Outside of the historic areas, the City has established twelve Entrance Corridors, road segments leading to the City's historic areas.

These recognized districts and other historic areas encompass Downtown, the West Main Street area, the University of Virginia and environs, and the historic neighborhoods of Fry's Spring, Woolen Mills, Rose Hill, Ridge Street, Martha Jefferson, and North Belmont. The impact of preservation on the City's character is extensive and significant.

Preservation contributes to private sector activity, proving both fiscal and economic benefits. Investment in historic neighborhoods and commercial areas results in the use and rehabilitation of historic properties. That economic activity generates value that invites redevelopment and new development. Tourism and interest in local history are catalysts for commercial activity and increased investment. The City has supported those efforts by creating local design control districts and corridors, developing guidelines for rehabilitation and new construction in design control districts, participating in the Commonwealth of Virginia's Certified Local Government (CLG) Program, by conducting an ongoing survey of historic resources, and by pursuing VLR and NRHP designations.

Charlottesville's neighborhoods and architecture represent the City's early development as an eighteenth-century seat of county government; its growth in the nineteenth-century through commerce, industry, and higher education; and its development through the twentieth-century as a more diverse regional center of population, goods, and services. Its history is intertwined with that of the adjacent historically rural counties as well as the University of Virginia, established by Thomas Jefferson in 1819. UVA's "Academical Village" and Jefferson's home, Monticello, are recognized by the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) as a World Heritage Sites.

The architecture, neighborhoods, and public spaces created by past residents reflects the physical and social development of the City, and enables the community to understand its historical identity. This identity encompasses the histories of its most prosperous citizens, also those who lived in the community as enslaved or freed individuals, and residents who migrated into the city from rural Virginia and other regions and countries to seek employment, as well as the generations of scholars who have come to the University of Virginia as faculty and students. The examination of the City's urban fabric also reveals the physical results of institutional racism and segregation. That examination requires looking back even further to when the City and much of the surrounding area were occupied by the Monacan Nation. There must be increased level of interpretation and presentation of this legacy of displacement, enslavement, and discrimination, such that City residents can move forward knowing a full and complete history of Charlottesville's past.

Goals

The goal of the City's preservation program is to identify and preserve resources that represent historically significant individuals, events, trends, and designs associated with the city's social development and built environment, that contribute to the City's distinct and characteristic physical and cultural heritage. The physical resources that remain serve as tangible reminders of Charlottesville's history. Preserving the City's older neighborhoods ensures that a complete story of the City's evolving history and development can be told. These resources should be systematically inventoried, analyzed and evaluated, and steps taken to preserve and rehabilitate them. Preservation goals can be accomplished by encouraging the rehabilitation and adaptive use of historic structures.

Through the design review process, designated Entrance Corridor—routes to the City's historic areas-- should be well-designed, respecting and complementing the community's cultural and economic assets.

Urban design is given new emphasis as the City develops and gains density. Public buildings, spaces, and other improvements should reflect the design values of the community. Attractive and distinct neighborhoods are encouraged to showcase Charlottesville's diverse heritage. Connected pedestrian environments promote a healthier community. Good urban design benefits everyone and should be a goal for the entire City, not just for historic properties or designated areas.

While preserving traditional materials and designs, contemporary design should be encouraged, demonstrating the City respect for the past and support for the creativity and design expressions of the present. The relationship of new and old should be complementary and add to the City's architectural vitality of our city through that represent our own time. Preservation and sustainability are also seen as complementary concepts, both should be pursued. Rehabilitation of a historic building is a more sustainable alternative to building new; it is epitome of recycling. For the new, "green" design and construction should be encouraged.

Historic preservation, creative new construction and thoughtful urban design are necessary components of the City's vitality, and the possibilities have not yet been fully realized. To maximize the benefits, the City must continue to integrate these ideas into its planning and implementing them in the actions of both the public and private sectors.

Chronology of Historic Preservation and Design Activities in Charlottesville

Note: VLR = Virginia Landmarks Register. NRHP = National Register of Historic Places. List does not include properties on the Ground of the University of Virginia.)

- 1959: Charlottesville embarks on a preservation planning program and enacts an Architectural Design Control (ADC) Ordinance that establishes a "restricted design district."
- 1972: Albemarle County Courthouse Historic District (HD) listed on VLR and NRHP

- 1973: City creates Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) to survey historic properties and propose historic districts.
- 1980: City publishes the Historic Preservation Guide, intended to encourage historic and architectural preservation.
- 1981/1982: VLR and NRHP designation of Multiple Resource Area (MRA), providing a framework for registering individual properties that are outside established districts. By 1989, 35 individual properties are listed.
- 1989: Historic preservation chapter added to Comprehensive Plan
- 1990: Zoning Ordinance amended to include historic preservation provisions.
- 1990: City and the Historical Society publish From Porch Swings to Patios, an oral history anthology.
- 1991: Amended Zoning Ordinance consolidates various review boards into a single BAR. BAR charged with the developing a preservation plan. Ordinance also establishes Entrance Corridor Historic Overlay Districts for twelve corridors leading to the City’s historic areas.
- 1993: City adopts the Historic Preservation Plan, intended to protect historic resources and guide preservation activities.
- 1993: Charlottesville becomes a Certified Local Government (CLG).
- 1995: Historic District Design Review Guidelines adopted.
- 1998: Council appoints the Historic Resources Task Force to promote historic resources and the City’s historic preservation program.
- 2002: Historic Charlottesville Tour Book published by the Historic Resources Task Force in cooperation with the Albemarle-Charlottesville Historical Society
- 2006: Historic Resources Task Force made permanent and renamed the Historic Resources Committee (HRC).
- 2007: Charlottesville’s Historic Preservation Plan, created in 1993, added to the Comprehensive Plan
- 2009: City establishes Historic Conservation (HC) District, intended as a flexible alternative to ADC Districts.
- 2012: Charlottesville’s 250th anniversary. HRC sponsors monthly discussions “Where I Live – Stories from Yesterday and Today” and develops an audio tour of historic buildings.
- 2016: City Council accepts recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Race, Memorials, and Public Spaces.
- 2017: Historic survey of Starr Hill neighborhood. State Review Board recommends district eligible for nomination to the VLR and NRHP.
- 2020-2021: Archaeological examination at Gilmer/Craven/Hotopp Cemetery at Pen Park indicates possibility of over 40 unmarked burials outside the three family plots. Evidence suggests that most are the likely the graves of individuals enslaved at Pen Park between the 1780s and Emancipation.

Designated Districts

National, State, and Local Register of Historic Places

NRHP and VLR Historic Districts

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, is the nation's official listing of historically significant districts, sites, buildings, structures, and landscapes. There are eleven districts and 60 individual properties listed on the National Register in Charlottesville.

Unlike local historic designation, NRHP designation is primarily honorary, with no associated regulations. Listed resources are afforded some protection from projects that involve federal funds or actions; requiring a review to assess effects and identify ways to lessen or mitigate adverse impacts.

With the state and federal designations, properties do not fall under any regulatory requirements; however, rehabilitations may be eligible for state and federal tax credits.

Eight of the eleven National Register Districts are also protected by a local district designation. The University of Virginia Historic District is not under the City's jurisdiction. Three of the National Register Historic Districts are not locally designated: Fifeville, Fry's Spring, and North Belmont; however, within these the City has designated numerous Individually Protected Properties.

The eleven NRHP-listed historic districts and the 60 individually listed properties are also listed on the VLR. Similar to the federal listing, state designation is honorary. The VLR provides formal recognition of the Commonwealth's most prominent historic resources. While listing places no restrictions on the property, rehabilitation work may be eligible for state tax credits. Resources approved for the VLR are automatically nominated to the NRHP.

1. Charlottesville/Albemarle County Courthouse Historic District – Comprised of the original fifty-acre town grid and expansion areas to the west of Court Square and north along Park Street. Charlottesville was established as the county seat in 1761, and a town grid was laid out adjacent to the new courthouse. Main Street emerged during the mid-19th century as the social and commercial heart of the City, much like it is today.
2. Ridge Street Historic District – This neighborhood began to develop in 1840. In the 1870-80s Ridge Street was the primary residential street for Charlottesville's wealthy merchants and other business owners and their families, as well as a home for many African-American households.
3. Wertland Street Historic District – An enclave of high-style Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Victorian homes near the University.
4. Rugby Road – University Corner Historic District – Once on the City's western periphery, this area developed after the 1890s with homes for University professors and local professionals. Homes in the district were constructed in various Arts and Crafts or revival styles. Many of the district's commercial buildings are situated on "the Corner" along University Avenue and were built in the 1920s.
5. University of Virginia Historic District – This district includes the university's original buildings and grounds designed by Thomas Jefferson and designated a World Heritage Site in 1987. While within the City boundary, properties associated with the University are predominately state-owned and the City has no jurisdiction.
6. Martha Jefferson Historic District – This district comprises land that had been a large farm known as Locust Grove, later subdivided. The neighborhood began to develop in the late 19th

century, especially after the establishment of Martha Jefferson Hospital in 1903. The hospital relocated to the County in 2010.

7. Fifeville and Tonsler Neighborhoods Historic District – Fifeville is a significant and relatively intact Reconstruction-era neighborhood, named for James Fife, former landowner, and Benjamin Tonsler, long-time Black educator and area resident. While middle class whites lived in the western portion of this district, professional and working-class African Americans constructed homes in the eastern section.
8. Oakhurst-Gildersleeve Neighborhood Historic District – Remarkable collection of houses and apartment dwellings that have housed University faculty and students for over 90 years.
9. Woolen Mills Village Historic District - The district contains brick mill buildings from the late 19th and early 20th centuries and brick and frame dwellings from the mid-19th and early 20th centuries for mill employees.
10. Fry’s Spring Historic District – The district was once farmland but around 1890, began to transform into a neighborhood centered around Fry’s Spring, a mineral spring known for its healing qualities. The district now contains a variety of dwellings constructed between 1890 and 1963.
11. West Main Street Historic District - Straddles the path of “Three Notch’d Road, an important transportation route across Virginia in the eighteenth century. West Main Street is still the primary east-west route across the City.

Local Historic Preservation and Design Control Districts

There are eight areas of the City where historic preservation and architectural design control (ADC) districts have been designated, three neighborhoods designated as historic conservation districts, and 76 individually protected properties. The ADC districts are: Downtown, North Downtown, Ridge Street, West Main Street, Wertland Street, The Corner, Oakhurst-Gildersleeve Neighborhood, and Rugby Road University Circle-Venable Neighborhood. Martha Jefferson Neighborhood, Woolen Mills Village and Rugby Road [north of Grady Avenue] are designated as a Historic Conservation Districts.

Properties in local architectural design control (ADC) historic districts are afforded protection from inappropriate alterations and demolition through a public review process. The Board of Architectural Review reviews all projects that would affect the exterior appearance of any locally designated property, using City Council-approved design guidelines based on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

Individually protected properties carry the same status as contributing structures within ADC districts, but they are located within an area where a district has not been created.

A second type of local historic district, a historic conservation district, was created in 2009. The designation is intended to protect the character and scale of the more modest historic Charlottesville neighborhoods that are facing increased development and demolitions. The designation requires review by the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) of all new construction, and certain additions and demolitions.

From time to time City Council may designate new local districts and individually protected properties, with recommendations offered by the BAR and the Planning Commission.

1. Downtown ADC District – The Downtown Architectural Design Control District was first established in 1985. All properties are within the central section NRHP Charlottesville/Albemarle County Courthouse Historic District.
2. North Downtown ADC District – First established in 1959, all properties are within the northern section of the NRHP-listed Charlottesville/Albemarle County Courthouse Historic District.
3. Ridge Street ADC District – Established in 1995, the local district follows the boundaries of the NRHP Ridge Street Historic District.
4. West Main Street ADC District – This ADC District was created in 1995.
5. Wertland Street ADC District – The Wertland Street ADC District was established in 1999 and follows the boundaries of the NRHP Wertland Street Historic District.
6. The Corner ADC District – The Corner ADC District was created in 2003 and comprises the southern section of the NRHP Rugby Road-University Corner Historic District.
7. Oakhurst-Gildersleeve Neighborhood ADC District - This ADC District was created in 2005.
8. Rugby Road–University Circle–Venable Neighborhood ADC District – This local district was created in 2006 and encompasses the northern section of the NRHP Rugby Road-University Corner Historic District.
9. Martha Jefferson Neighborhood Historic Conservation District – The district was created in 2010.
10. Rugby Road Historic Conservation District – The Rugby Road Historic Conservation District in Venable neighborhood was created in 2014. It is not yet listed on the VLR or NRHP. All resources were built between 1889 and 1961 and the district features an exceptional representation of late- Victorian and Colonial Revival residential and ecclesiastical architecture, including designs by prominent local architects Eugene Bradbury and Stanhope Johnson
11. Woolen Mills Village Historic Conservation District - The district was created in 2017 and follows the boundaries of the NRHP Woolen Mills district.

Local (Regulatory) Historic Overlay Districts & Individually Protected Properties

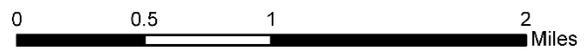


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City of Charlottesville



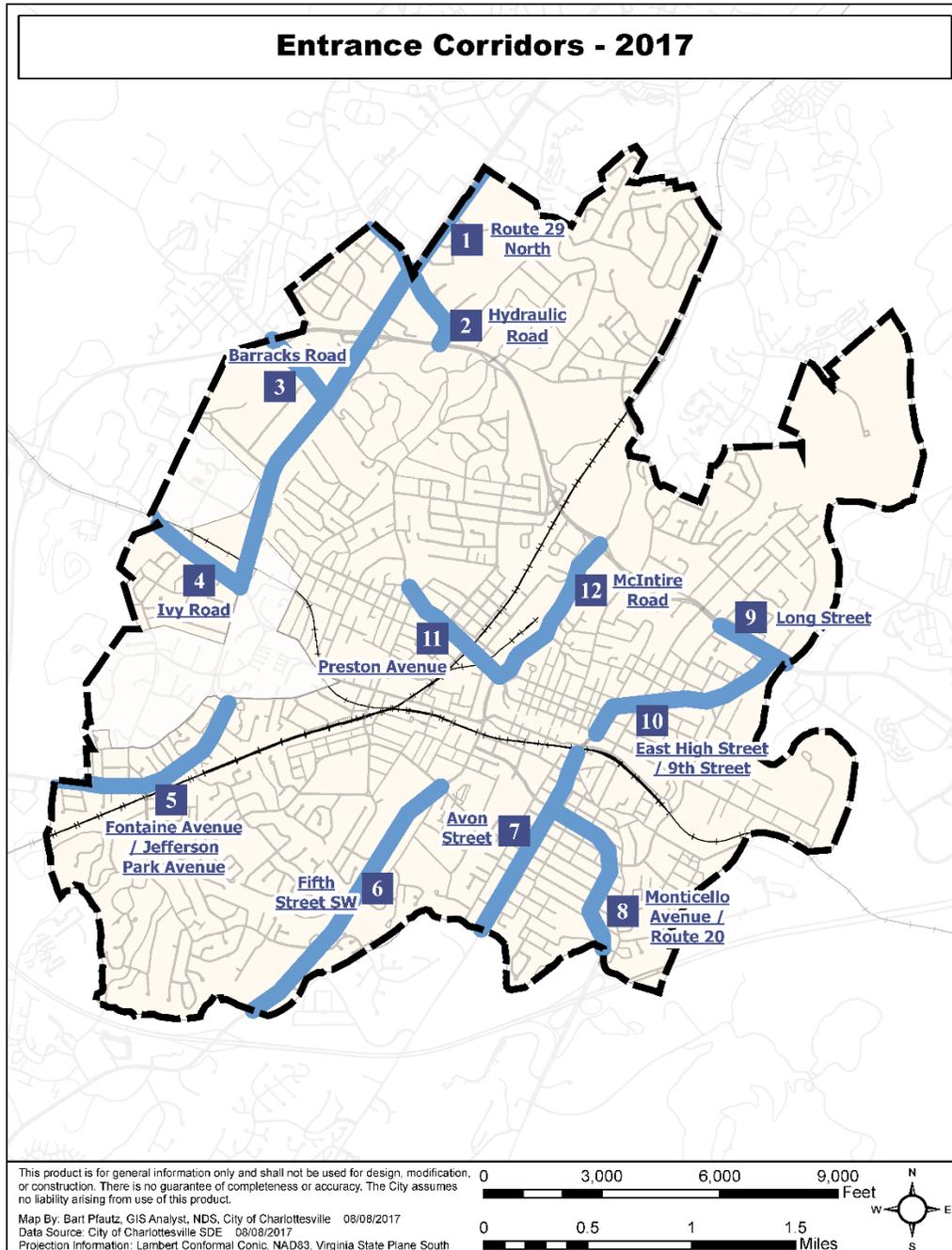
- Individually Protected Properties
- Architectural Design Control (ADC) Districts
- Historic Conservation Districts



Approximate Number of Historic Structures Designated on National/State and Local Levels			
NRHP and VLR Historic Districts	Contributing Resources	Non-Contributing Resources	Total Number of Resources
Charlottesville-Albemarle County Courthouse	349	0	349
Ridge Street	42	9	51
Rugby Road-University Corner	177	48	225
Wertland Street	25	5	30
Fifeville	267	71	338
Martha Jefferson	156	42	198
Woolen Mills Village	104	65	169
Oakhurst-Gildersleeve	78	11	89
University of Virginia	28	1	29
Fry's Spring	300	37	337
West Main Street	42	8	50
North Belmont	392	88	480
Individually Designated Properties	60	0	60
Total National Register Structures	2020	385	2405
Local Historic Districts			
Downtown ADC District	79	8	87
North Downtown ADC District	238	18	256
Ridge Street ADC District	71	0	71
West Main ADC District	26	36	62
Wertland Street ADC District	45	0	45
The Corner ADC District	44	16	60
Oakhurst-Gildersleeve Neighborhood ADC District	86	12	98
Rugby Rd- University Cir- Venable Neighborhood ADC District	181	104	285
Martha Jefferson Historic Conservation District	155	55	210
Rugby Road Historic Conservation District	30	5	35
Woolen Mills Historic Conservation District	67	53	120
Individually Designated Properties (Minor Design Control Districts)	76	0	76
Total Locally Designated Structures	1098	317	1405

Entrance Corridor Overlay Districts

The City has designated twelve significant routes of tourist access as Entrance Corridors to ensure through design review and quality of development compatible with the City's historic, architectural, and cultural resources. The Planning Commission was designated as the Entrance Corridor Review Board (ERB) in 2003. Entrance Corridor Guidelines were adopted by City Council on August 1, 2005, and were updated on March 7, 2011.



Administration of Preservation Programs

City Agencies and Boards

The City has several departments and boards that deal with historic preservation issues.

- City Council - Responsible for adopting ordinances and plans dealing with historic preservation, approving design guidelines, creating and amending design control districts, designating individually protected properties, deciding appeals of BAR and ERB decisions, and appointing members to the Board of Architectural Review, and other boards, commissions, task forces and committees.
- Planning Commission - Appointed by City Council, the Commission serves as the Entrance Corridor Review Board (ERB), responsible for the design review of projects within the Entrance Corridors. and to City Council concerning proposed changes to those overlay districts. The Commission is also responsible for reviewing amendments to the zoning ordinance, including those related to design review and historic preservation and making recommendations to City Council adoption.
- Board of Architectural Review - Created in 1991 by City Council by consolidating three existing review boards. The Board, which is composed of nine members, reviews all applications for changes affecting the exterior appearance of any individually protected property, or any structure located in a local architectural design control (ADC) district. Their review includes new construction, additions, rehabilitations, moving and demolitions. In addition, the BAR is responsible for recommending additional surveys for historic districts, acting in an advisory role to City Council, and developing a historic preservation plan and design guidelines for adoption by City Council.
- Historic Resources Committee - Created in 1998 as a task force by City Council to promote and help develop the historic resources of the community. They were made a permanent committee in 2006. Their mission is to advocate for historic preservation; to promote an appreciation of local historic resources, both tangible and intangible; and to encourage and coordinate, with appropriate municipal agencies, civic organizations, institutions and individual scholars, the documentation and interpretation of local history.
- PLACE (Placemaking, Livability, and Community Engagement) Task Force - Created in 2012 by City Council to act as an advisory board to City Council and the Planning Commission in matters pertaining to urban design and placemaking, particularly public improvements.
- Department of Neighborhood Development Services (NDS) - Provides staffing for the Board of Architectural Review, the Entrance Corridor Review Board, and the Historic Resources Committee. From time to time, NDS contracts the services of architectural historians to inventory and evaluate historic resources in the City. Working with the Board of Architectural Review, NDS staff is responsible for preservation planning and reviewing and proposing amendments to the preservation ordinance as needed. NDS is also responsible for educating property owners about the requirements of the historic preservation ordinance, and their responsibilities as stewards of historic properties in the City.

Preservation Advocates and Organizations

Charlottesville's preservation successes have relied on property owners and a variety of public and private groups. Historic preservation ideas are represented at the neighborhood level by individuals, neighborhood associations, and local interest groups; at the city level by public agencies and non-profit organizations.

Such local preservation partners include the Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society, Preservation Piedmont, the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, and the Preservers of the Daughters of Zion Cemetery.

Statewide organizations like the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (the state historic preservation office) and private organizations such as Preservation Virginia also advocate for and provide technical assistance for preservation issues.

Nationally, the Department of the Interior administers federal historic preservation programs, while the nonprofit National Trust for Historic Preservation offers guidance on historic preservation policies and activities.

Protecting Charlottesville's Archaeological Resources

Charlottesville's archaeological resources are an integral part of the City's cultural history. Examples of archaeological resources include human remains, and objects such as tools, bone, bottles, dishes, and nails, which are representative of prehistoric and historic periods. Areas that contain these objects are also archaeological resources and include graves, wells, privies, trash pits, quarries, back yards, basements, and foundations. Examples of archaeological sites within Charlottesville that might contain archaeological resources are prehistoric camps, historic residences, schools, farms, cemeteries, roads, railways and Civil War camps and hospitals.

Archaeological resources may be protected in designated districts, similar to historic resources. Ultimately any comprehensive list of archaeological districts should reflect what the residents of Charlottesville hold valuable. There are many sites within Charlottesville that contribute significantly enough to be identified as archaeological districts. Three examples are the Venable Lane area including the historically African-American residential area called "Canada"; the Charlottesville Woolen Mills area and vicinity; and the site of the Delevan House, or "Mudwall", at the intersection of 7th and West Main Streets, the location of the present First Baptist Church.

When archaeological resources are identified and protected, it fosters a sense of pride, identity and continuity with our city's historic resources. This link with history is often considered a defining characteristic of the distinctiveness of particular neighborhoods. Archaeological sites are educational and can contribute to the general history of Charlottesville and the particular histories of its inhabitants.

Currently, the City is limited in being able to require assessment, evaluation the resources to manage known or known archaeological sites. Ultimately, Charlottesville's cultural and historic resources contribute significantly to how the city is perceived by both visitors and its residents. Our historic resources provide the city with a unique identity and sense of place and distinguish us from other

localities. Archaeological resources are a significant part of this identity and actively contribute to the history of Charlottesville, complementing both documentary records and historic architecture.