

# [PLAN]DC

THE DC OFFICE OF PLANNING



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### OVERVIEW

Washington, DC's legacy is shaped not only by historic buildings, places, and neighborhoods, but also by plans for the evolving and inclusive City itself. As soon as the first cornerstones were laid and the first avenues, circles and squares were plotted, planning efforts moved beyond the vision of a hallowed monumental city to a reality of urbanization. Officials had to address the needs of residents while supporting the development of housing, commerce, industry, and culture. The City's historic neighborhoods and landmarks are real treasures which must be preserved. There are more than thirty neighborhood historic districts, from Anacostia to Washington Heights. These neighborhoods help to tell the story of the city and define the future of the nation's capitol.

The Historic Preservation Element of the Comprehensive Plan strives to preserve the legacy of these plans and places while accommodating growth and responding to future needs. As the District has grown and evolved over time, the definition of a historic property and issues related to historic preservation have also changed. Since the adoption of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, the District has experienced dramatic population growth. This growth has brought new life to communities, but has also created new challenges.

While preservation and planning take place within the District, it is up to the community and its leadership to define progress. Communities are encouraged to seek workable solutions that allow for change. They must also ensure that cherished buildings and places are preserved for the use and continued enjoyment for future generations.

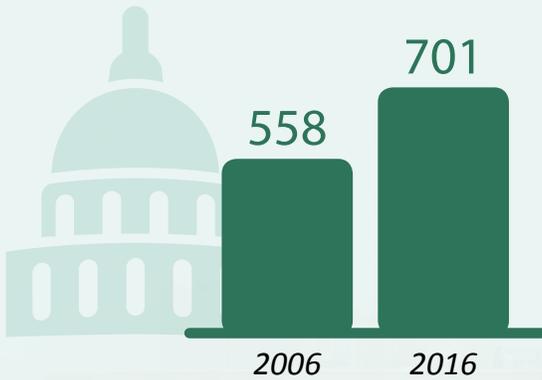
### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES



Concerns about how growth might affect the District's historic buildings, resources, and culture were expressed during the seven "Plan DC" citywide community meetings in the fall of 2016 and throughout various engagement forums last year. "Overall, there was a general agreement that improvements are needed throughout the District, but there was also a shared sentiment that growth should not take place at the expense of neighborhood history and character. Suggestions were shared by community members on how to preserve the District's history through maintenance of existing structures, encouraging compatible architecture, and promoting education and community awareness of historic resources. There was also a focus on achieving preservation without displacement of longtime residents and potential adverse impacts on the social and cultural character of DC neighborhoods.

# BACKGROUND + FACTS

## # OF HISTORIC LANDMARKS



Source: DC Office of Planning

## # OF HISTORICAL DISTRICTS



Source: DC Office of Planning

## # OF HISTORIC LANDMARKS AND PROPERTY OWNERS WITHIN HISTORIC DISTRICT

30,000

buildings that are either historic landmarks or are within historic districts

19%

of total buildings in the District

34,600

owners of historic property in the District

22%

of total property owners

Source: DC Office of Planning and DC Office of Tax and Revenue

Source: DC Office of Planning and DC Office of Tax and Revenue

## GOVERNMENT PROPERTIES THAT ARE HISTORIC

8% of District properties

19% of federal properties

80% of embassy-owned properties

Source: DC Office of Planning and DC Office of Tax and Revenue

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW

400

Federal Projects

+

360

District Projects

→

Historic Preservation Review

In 2016, government agencies submitted nearly 400 federal projects and 360 District projects to the DC Historic Preservation Office for historic preservation review.

Source: DC Office of Planning

## DC HISTORIC LANDMARKS



Residential buildings account for 36% of all DC historic landmarks, and the vast majority of buildings in historic districts.

Source: DC Office of Planning and DC Office of Tax and Revenue

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW

25%

increase in 2016 of historic preservation reviews of private construction projects over the past 10 years

Source: DC Office of Planning and DC Office of Tax and Revenue

# COMP PLAN DIRECTION

The Historic Preservation Element guides planning for the protection, revitalization and perpetuation of the city's valuable historic assets. It addresses the District's role in exercising preservation leadership, as well as in recognizing historic resources and ensuring compatible design in historic neighborhoods. The Element also recognizes the importance of community outreach, development collaboration, partnerships, and education. Examples of the current policy direction on historic preservation from the Comp Plan are as follows.

**PRESERVATION AND PROGRESS.** Historic preservation can create successful neighborhoods. It helps drive economic development, preserve neighborhood character, create diverse housing choices, provide space for new small businesses, and foster community engagement in local planning decisions. The quality of life in historic neighborhoods helps to attract new residents, and provides a competitive advantage relative to newer communities.

**Example:**

*Policy HP-2.4.3: Compatible Development: Preserve the important historic features of the District while permitting compatible new infill development. Within historic districts, preserve the established form of development as evidenced by lot coverage limitations, yard requirements open space, and other standards that contribute to the character and attractiveness of those areas. Ensure that new construction, repair, maintenance, and improvements are in scale with and respect historic context through sensitive siting and design and the appropriate use of materials and architectural detail.*



**ADAPTING LANDMARKS FOR NEW USE.** Historic properties are assets that were built to last. The Comp Plan supports neighborhood vitality through the adaptive reuse of historic properties for modern needs. It encourages uses that are consistent with the character of the property and design standards that account for different levels of historic significance and different types of historic environments. Greater flexibility is suggested for properties that can accommodate greater intervention or more dramatic new design.

**Example:**

*Policy HP-2.4.1: Rehabilitation of Historic Structures: Promote appropriate preservation of historic buildings through an effective design review process. Apply design guidelines without stifling creativity, and strive for an appropriate balance between restoration and adaptation as suitable for the particular historic environment.*

**PROTECTING NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER.**

District and federal preservation standards strive to protect historic architectural features and respect historic context. This does not mean that additions and new construction must mimic historic buildings. The key is to achieve harmony with historic surroundings through a building's scale, mass, and materials, while paying close attention to the characteristics of the surrounding historic environment. Good contemporary architecture can fit within this context—it is necessary in an evolving and dynamic city and is welcomed as an expression of our time.

**Example:**

*Policy HP 3.4.3: Neighborhood Revitalization: Utilize historic preservation programs and incentives to encourage historic preservation as a revitalization strategy for neighborhoods and neighborhood business districts.*

*Policy MC-1.2.6: Mid-City Historic Resources: Protect the historic resources of the Mid-City area, with particular attention to neighborhoods that are currently not protected by historic district designation and are thus at greater risk for demolition or inappropriate re-development.*

## A RESOURCE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Financial incentives are sometimes necessary as a means of achieving preservation of historic properties, especially for affordable housing. Existing preservation incentives include the federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, and New Market Tax Credits. District programs include revolving loan funds such as the targeted Historic Homeowner Grants for owners with low and moderate incomes.

### Example:

*Policy HP-3.5.A: D.C. Preservation Incentives: Implement and promote the District's targeted homeowner grants through an active program of outreach and public information. Monitor and evaluate the program to assess its effectiveness and to guide the development of other appropriate incentives and assistance programs.*

## POLICY IN ACTION!

Affordable housing providers are the primary users of federal historic preservation tax credits in the District. Since 2006, affordable providers have renovated 1,397 affordable housing units, of which 599 were not previously affordable. Renovation of another 319 units using the credits was in progress at the end of 2016.

**EXPLORING COMMUNITY HERITAGE.** Broad public awareness of historic properties is vital to a successful historic preservation program. It promotes understanding and appreciation of local history and heritage, allowing communities to take pride in their past and residents to value the history of their own homes.

### Example:

*Policy HP-3.2.4: Cultural Tourism: Celebrate the cultural history of District neighborhoods. Recognize cultural preservation as an integral part of historic preservation, and use cultural tourism to link neighborhoods and promote communication between diverse groups.*

*Policy HP-3.2.A: Preservation Outreach and Education: Sustain an active program of outreach to the District's neighborhoods. Develop educational materials on the cultural and social history of District communities as a means to engage residents and introduce historic preservation values and goals. Promote public understanding of not just the principles for preserving properties but also the social and community benefits of historic preservation.*

*Policy AW-1.2.5: African-American Heritage: Recognize and highlight the role of Lower Waterfront neighborhoods in the history of the District's African-American community. This role should be commemorated and recognized through markers, heritage trails, and cultural facilities.*

**BETTER ACCESS TO INFORMATION.** Historic Preservation Office records contain information from decades of historic resource surveys, documentation efforts, and historic designations. Better access to this information helps communities and residents appreciate local history. It also provides greater certainty to property developers contemplating major investment decisions, thus lessening the potential for conflict over demolition and redevelopment.

### Example:

*Policy HP-3.1.A: Internet Access to Survey Data and Designations: Increase Internet access to documentation of historic properties, including historic landmark and historic district designation forms, National Register nomination forms, and determinations of eligibility for designation. Expand and improve HistoryQuest DC, the GIS-based interactive Internet map that provides basic historical documentation on individual properties throughout the city.*

