

Historic Preservation Objectives and Policies



Green Bay Smart Growth 2022

Historic Preservation Plan

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Historic Preservation Plan

Relationship to the Issues and the Concept Plan

The purpose of the Historic Preservation Plan is simply to enhance the quality of life in Green Bay by ensuring that the City's many historic buildings and older neighborhoods are recognized, appreciated, and preserved to the extent feasible. The plan recommends policies that will foster the preservation of the City's historic resources and actions that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and other public and private entities can initiate toward that end. Private actions will be directed through the City's review of development applications and amendments to the City's zoning ordinance.

The central tenet of the plan is the need for a deliberate, well-informed process for deciding how to preserve the City's historic resources. Historic preservation can engender controversy. It requires a series of compromises between preservation and development or redevelopment. Like land use planning, preservation attempts to establish a balance between property rights and the public interest. Activities such as changing the use of an older building in order to preserve its economic viability, allowing selective redevelopment in tandem with neighborhood conservation, or protecting a landmark building while accommodating contemporary needs with a sensitively-designed addition are all examples of this balance.

The plan recognizes that not every old building is a candidate for preservation. It also recommends that most preservation activities focus on historically significant commercial buildings and districts, rather than residential ones, which have generally tended to be adequately protected by their owners.

The Heritage Preservation component of the Comprehensive Plan is one of the few plan elements carried out by its own implementation body. The Green Bay Historic Preservation Commission is charged with the designation of historic buildings and districts.

The HPC was also created because Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 62 mandates that any city with buildings and/or historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places shall have an Historic Preservation Commission to regulate and preserve historic and archaeological landmarks and the character of historic districts.

As a municipally-appointed board, the HPC offers significant expertise through its members' knowledge of architecture, history and urban design. This plan suggests that the HPC become a stronger participant in planning implementation by focusing its activities to reinforce the actions identified both in this chapter and other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan.

Thus, most of the recommendations in this chapter are directed toward the HPC or pertain to the integration of HPC functions with related programs of other City departments.

Summary of Issues

The major preservation issues listed in the Analysis of Conditions are summarized as:

Level of Protection: Are the City's historic resources adequately protected from threats such as demolition, inappropriate remodeling, loss of economic viability, etc.? Do historic properties need additional levels of protection? (For example, review of site or development plans that might affect their integrity.)

Guidelines: Would design review guidelines provide a basis for evaluating alterations to historic properties and new construction in historic districts? (This approach has been suggested for the Broadway districts.) If so, should guidelines be voluntary, linked to City grants or loans, or mandatory? Would the HPC, Planning Commission or planning staff, neighborhood organizations, or other commissions be the most appropriate reviewers of proposals for compliance with guidelines?

Downtown Buildings: Do historic (but not designated) buildings in downtown Green Bay need some level of recognition, designation and/or protection?

Additional Studies: Should historic resources in other parts of the City, as recommended in the *Intensive Survey Report*, be studied for eligibility for designation (either as individual resources or districts)?

Integration into Other Programs: Should historic preservation considerations be integrated into other City programs and policies (housing, zoning, etc.)? How might this be accomplished?

Historic Preservation Commission Roles: How can the HPC begin to work with the Common Council, neighborhood groups and others to develop a better understanding of the benefits of heritage preservation? What, if anything, could the HPC do to strengthen its

educational role? Should the HPC pursue additional training opportunities? Is there support for development of a preservation plan to educate and establish roles, responsibilities and priorities for the Historic Preservation Commission?

HPC Support: What other responsibilities might be appropriate for the HPC? Should the HPC have the opportunity to review site or building plans for improvements or alterations to designated buildings or within districts? Should HPC review be integrated into other Planning Department activities?

Certified Local Government Designation: Should the HPC and City evaluate the costs and benefits of Certified Local Government designation? Can standards be developed that balance private property rights with community values?

Guidance from the Concept Plan

The Concept Plan for *Smart Growth 2022* provides this direction to the Urban Design Plan:

Historic Districts and Structures: The City should continue to protect and enhance historic districts and structures and incorporate the principles of historic rehabilitation into redevelopment.

Historic Preservation Commission: The City should support a more active role for the Historic Preservation Commission in review of redevelopment and infill projects.

Rural Character: The City should work with Brown County and the Towns to preserve significant farm structures and consider incorporation of such structures in new subdivisions where feasible. Preservation of farm structures and rural views should also be considered in areas newly annexed to the City.

Plan Overview

Summary of Objectives

Goal: To identify, protect, and preserve the community's historic resources in order to enhance the quality of life and economic well-being of current and future generations.

Objective 1 – Evaluation. Continue to survey and evaluate historic and potentially historic resources for designation or other forms of protection.

Objective 2 – Community Support. Build community support for preservation activities and for the HPC.

Objective 3 – Design Standards. Develop design standards and provide for review of site plans in commercial historic districts, to ensure that the character and distinctive features of these districts are maintained and reinforced by new construction.

Objective 4 – Integration. Integrate Historic Preservation Commission functions into neighborhood planning and zoning processes and housing programs.

Objective 5 – Heritage Tourism. Explore the benefits of heritage tourism as part of the City's economic development strategy.

Objective 6 – HPC Role. Assess avenues for the potential broadening of HPC roles and responsibilities.



Objectives and Policies

Objective 1 – Evaluation

Continue to survey and evaluate historic and potentially historic resources for designation or other forms of protection.

Recommended Policies:

- 1. Surveys:** Consider initiating surveys of potential historic districts identified in the *Intensive Resource Survey*. These include districts surrounding a number of churches, the Astor Park district (surrounding the Astor district proper), and the downtown itself. Given the many alterations to downtown streets and buildings, it may be preferable to pursue designation of additional individual buildings rather than a district.

Although some individual downtown buildings are designated, many others (including the YMCA, the Architects Building and the Green Bay Press-Gazette Building) are not, and could benefit from evaluation and documentation before they are threatened by demolition, neglect or inappropriate alterations.

The economic benefits of National Register designation should be evaluated with regard to specific buildings that are in need of rehabilitation.

- 2. Intensive Resource Survey:** Seek funding for an update of the *Intensive Resource Survey* conducted in 1988. Some of the buildings listed in that survey have been demolished, while others have been restored. A survey update could be combined with surveys of potential historic districts (see above). The survey could also be made more widely available through the City's web site or other venues as a way to build support for historic preservation. The Wisconsin Historical Society offers

grants for historic architectural surveys and evaluations of specific buildings that do not require Certified Local Government status (see below). One of the Society's priorities is to assist in preservation efforts that contribute to Wisconsin's Smart Growth objectives and to local Smart Growth comprehensive plans.

Objective 2 – Community Support

Build community support for preservation activities and for the HPC and its responsibilities.

Recommended Policies:

- 1. Information Materials:** Provide informative materials to the public and decision-makers about the heritage preservation process and its potential benefits for Green Bay. The HPC has already initiated a heritage plaque program that property owners may request. Similar actions could include creating and distributing brochures or postcards, organizing workshops or seminars for property owners, and reporting to the City Council and Planning Commission on HPC activities.
- 2. Owner Assistance:** Focus on assisting owners of historic residential properties with practical advice on cost-effective and context-sensitive rehabilitation techniques. In updating older homes to meet today's needs, it is often difficult to make informed choices about appropriate techniques, materials and even paint colors without expert advice.

The HPC, along with the Brown County Historical Society, can help provide this advice through resource fairs, house tours, seminars and other events. Outreach and education directed at building contractors and craftspeople would be equally valuable.

Objective 3 – Design Standards

Prepare design standards and provide for review of site plans in commercial historic districts, to ensure that the character and distinctive features of these districts are maintained and reinforced by new construction.

Recommended Policies:

- 1. Design Standards and Guidelines:** There is an increasing level of interest in establishing design standards or guidelines for building renovation, rehabilitation and new construction in the City's commercial historic districts (primarily the Broadway districts) as these areas continue to redevelop.

Site plan review – the review of proposals for new construction, major remodeling, or other major changes to a site – can be a useful method for ensuring that new construction is compatible with its surroundings, and that other site facilities such as parking and service areas are appropriately screened. The City does not currently employ site plan review except when reviewing new parking areas and large planned-unit developments. However, the Land Use Plan recommends the addition of site plan review standards to the zoning ordinance. This could provide a vehicle for review of development proposals in the Broadway districts, and in other commercial districts as appropriate.

The HPC should work with planning staff and On Broadway, Inc., to develop design guidelines that are specifically applicable to buildings in this area.

Design review could be accomplished entirely by City staff, as part of the site plan review process, but it would be more desirable to have a Design Review Board with representation from the HPC, On Broadway, Inc., and other interest groups.

Guidelines can be written to be essentially mandatory but to allow for some flexibility in their interpretation. For example, guidelines may be waived for properties with specific physical constraints that make compliance difficult, or applicants may propose alternative ways of achieving design objectives. Compliance with guidelines can also be linked to City or district funding programs such as façade grants.



Objective 4 – Integration

Integrate HPC functions into neighborhood planning processes and housing programs

Recommended Policies:

- 1. Staff Functions:** Reassign staff functions for the HPC to the Planning Department and assign them a staff planner. Responsibilities would include updating the HPC on proposed development projects, answering resident or business questions about the HPC ordinance, and otherwise facilitating the HPC's tasks and interests. (If desired, secretarial support could remain in the City Attorney's office, but could probably be accomplished more efficiently in one location.)
- 2. HPC Ordinance:** Consider revising the HPC ordinance to find the middle ground between the purely advisory and the heavily regulatory.

A revised ordinance could:
 - Establish the HPC role of participating in site plan review for buildings in commercial historic districts (currently the Broadway districts).
 - Authorize the HPC to establish design guidelines for restoration, renovation and rehabilitation of historic buildings in specific districts.
 - Establish a review process for demolition permits. The process could require an owner to demonstrate that the building could not feasibly be used or reused for any purpose.
- 3. Program Linkages:** Link other City programs to preservation objectives, including programs for rehabilitation of existing housing and new (often modular) infill housing. Although Green

Bay's traditional neighborhoods are not, for the most part, historic districts, they demonstrate distinctive housing styles and character that should be taken into account in new housing or rehabilitation programs. (See discussion of conservation districts.) The HPC should have the opportunity to review plans for new construction or housing rehab within their neighborhood context, before these plans are implemented.

- 4. Neighborhood Conservation Districts:** Evaluate the use of neighborhood conservation districts as a tool for protection of older neighborhoods that are not designated historic districts but could benefit from some level of review.

Conservation districts are increasingly used in many cities as a middle ground between a full-fledged historic district and conventional residential zoning. According to the American Planning Association, "conservation districts can be used to protect neighborhoods or districts that have significant architectural and historic merit and a distinct character but that do not qualify for historic district status or have lost some of their integrity through incompatible additions and new development."

A conservation district ordinance generally provides for design review of new construction and major alterations, but without the detailed level of review common in historic districts. Design review may be conducted by the HPC or by planning staff or the Planning Commission, or by a separate Design Review Board. Guidelines are written to ensure that new construction is sensitive to its context, in terms of height, setbacks, scale and massing, roof shape, proportion and rhythms of doors and windows, and other key elements of building and site design.

Objective 5 – Heritage Tourism

Explore the benefits of heritage tourism as part of the City's economic development strategy.

Recommended Policies:

1. **Heritage Tourism:** Develop heritage tourism as a component of the City's marketing and economic development efforts. As Wisconsin's oldest city, Green Bay could capitalize more effectively on its heritage. Initiatives such as guided or self-guided tours of historic sites and districts, heritage tourism "packages," seasonal events, and cooperative efforts with other historic Fox River towns such as De Pere are all potential marketing strategies. The interest in the comparatively recent historic sites associated with the Packers indicates the potential for reaching a wide range of audiences.



Objective 6 – Role of the Historic Preservation Commission

Assess avenues for the potential broadening of HPC roles and responsibilities.

Recommended Policies:

1. **Training and Empowering the Historic Preservation Commission:** The HPC should explore a variety of avenues for increasing its knowledge base, its access to financial and technical assistance, and its visibility. HPC members have attended training sessions offered by the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS), and are aware of the Society's programs. Training should be offered on a regular basis, and should be provided to all new members. The HPC should also evaluate the opportunities and constraints associated with Certified Local Government status.

Certified Local Governments (CLGs) in Wisconsin are eligible for specific grants for educational and preservation planning activities through the WHS. However, to become eligible as a CLG, a local government must strengthen its preservation ordinance to include specific design standards for historic properties. The advantages and disadvantages of this approach will be investigated further as part of this planning process.

Implementation Program

This section describes the major actions involved in implementing the *Smart Growth 2022* Historic Preservation Plan and indicates the relative priority of each, the responsible agency and any required coordination. Numerous specific actions are described in the body of this plan while the items listed below are only the major short- and long-term actions.

Table 27-1: Implementation Program for the Historic Preservation Plan

Priority	Action	Lead and Coordinating Agencies
3	Evaluation: Update the 1988 Intensive Resource Survey and initiate surveys of potential historic districts identified in that survey.	Planning Department Historic Preservation Commission
1	Community Support: Publish materials, conduct workshops and provide individual advice to property owners as to how they can appropriately rehabilitate their old or architecturally-significant buildings and avail themselves of federal tax credits.	Planning Department Historic Preservation Commission
2	Design Standards: Improve historic building design guidelines and apply them during site plan reviews and City-assisted redevelopment.	Planning Department Historic Preservation Commission
1	Participation by the Historic Preservation Commission: Reassign the functions of the HPC to the Planning Department and revise the HPC ordinance to provide more specific guidance in the site plan review.	Planning Department Historic Preservation Commission Law Department
3	Role of the Historic Preservation Commission: Improve the expertise of the members of the Historic Preservation Commission through education and training sessions.	Planning Department Historic Preservation Commission