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 hearings held on the 3rd Wednesday
 of each month at 5:30pm,
 120 W. Dougherty Street, Athens, GA
[www.accgov.com/208/
 Historic-Preservation](http://www.accgov.com/208/Historic-Preservation)



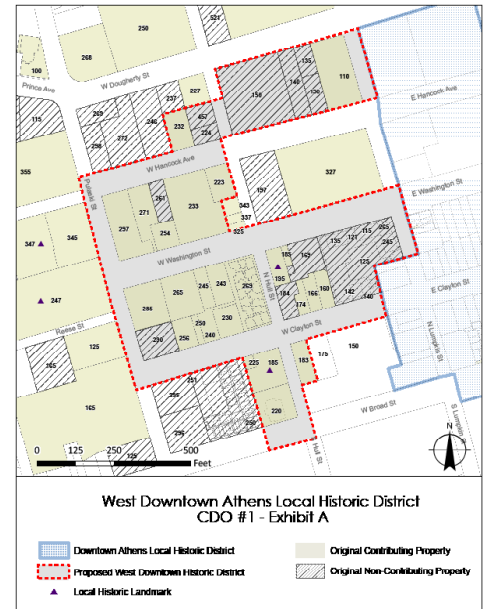
Athens-Clarke County, Georgia Historic Preservation Commission Annual Report 2020

Historic Preservation: Why Now?

By Heather M. Fletcher, HPC Vice-Chair

Historic preservation is not simply about protecting physical structures, rather it centers on telling the story of a community, of a people, across time. As we experience this precarious 'Age of COVID' (as I have come to describe the present moment), it may seem superfluous to concern ourselves with the fate of a handful of city blocks which now comprise the newly designated Western Downtown Historic District. One could ask the question 'Why now?' without taking the inquiry further to say 'Why did we wait until now?'

The process of preserving local historic resources is easiest to understand and support when it is a collaborative, community-led, proactive effort to honor a place of shared value rather than as a unilateral reaction to change. Perception is everything in the eyes of the public and while the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously to submit the aforementioned Western Downtown Historic



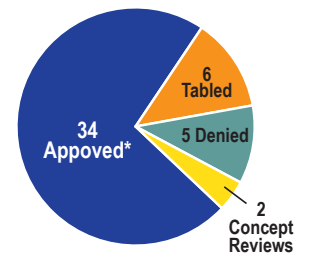
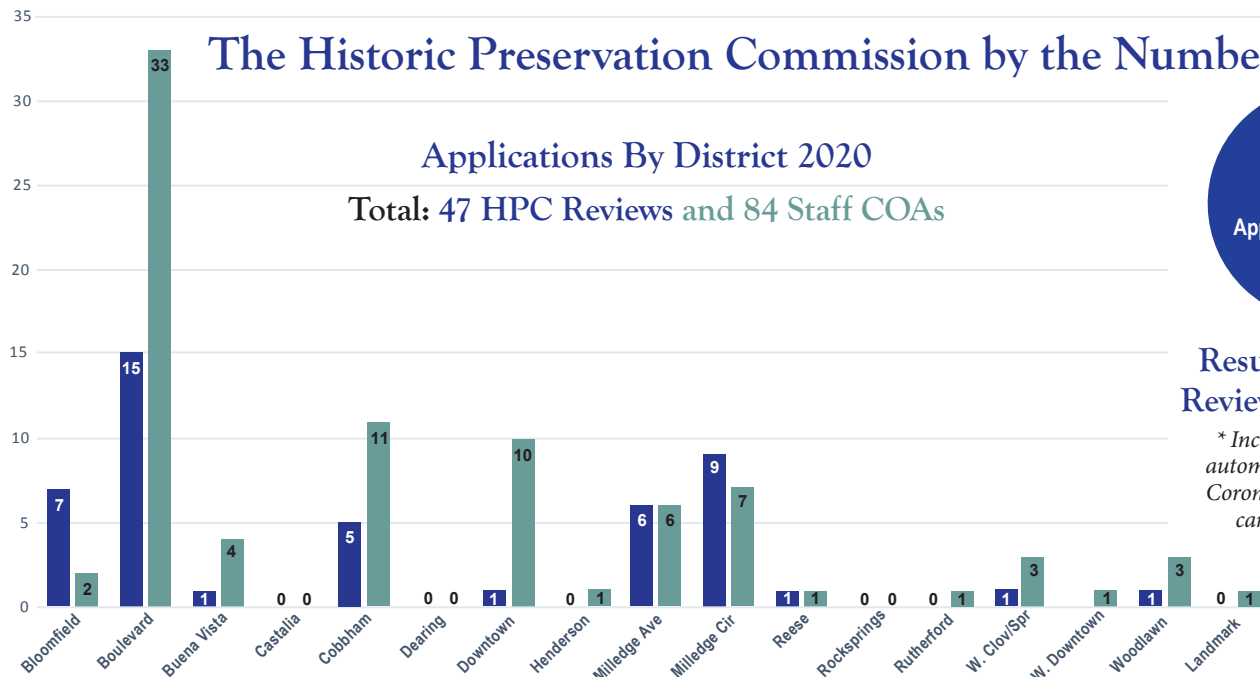
District designation to the Mayor and Commission in the Fall of 2019, I couldn't help but wonder why it had not been included in the original 2006 proposal for the local Downtown Historic District.

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The Historic Preservation Commission by the Numbers

Applications By District 2020

Total: 47 HPC Reviews and 84 Staff COAs



Results of 47 COAs Reviewed by the HPC

* Includes 4 items receiving automatic approval when the Coronavirus Pandemic led to cancellations of several spring hearings.

“New ideas need old buildings” –JANE JACOBS

By Ellen Walker, HPC Member

On October 28, 2020, over 600 participants viewed the US Chamber of commerce Foundation’s video conference entitled, “Preserving the Past, Fortifying the Future: The Economic Case for Historic Preservation.”

The most interesting and enlightening presentation was by Donovan Rypkema, Principal of PlaceEconomics, a 30 year old private sector firm that exclusively performs analyses of the economic impacts of historic preservation in cities and states across the country. Rypkema focused his remarks on several areas of the economic benefits of Historic Preservation. A few significant findings of PlaceEconomics include the following:

- **Jobs and the Local Economy:**

- o **New construction:** for every 100 jobs generated there are another 135 jobs created elsewhere in the economy. For every worker who earns \$100 in new construction, \$145 of labor income is generated elsewhere in the economy.

- o **Rehabilitation of existing buildings:** for every 100 jobs created, there are another 186 jobs created elsewhere in the economy. For every worker who earns \$100 in rehab construction, \$174 of labor income is generated elsewhere in the economy.
- **“Revealed Preference:”** 3% of the land area of Indianapolis is historic districts but 16% of the jobs, and 28% of knowledge worker/creative class jobs are in those districts.




“Historic Preservation is a tangible economic force. The money spent rehabilitating historic buildings is an investment in the future. These structures become showpieces of a rejuvenated city.”



- **Foreclosures:** In the depth of the recession in Pittsburgh, 35 out of 1000 properties faced foreclosure but in national register districts it was a third of that and in local districts even less.
- **Environmental impact:** Using the Econlogic Footprint Aalysis, it is much more environmentally responsible to rehab an existing building than to build new.
- **Heritage Tourism:** In the top five areas of spending by tourists (hotel, transportation, retail purchases, admissions, recreation), more money was spent by heritage visitors to cities in each of those 5 categories than tourists in general.
- **Density and Human Scale:** 90% of Historic Districts in NYC have a density greater than the city as a whole.

Details and supporting documentation can be found at www.placeeconomics.com

The entire conference can be viewed on YouTube. Search for “The Economic Case for Historic Preservation.” 

Why Now?...cont from Page 1

Why did it take a demolition permit before anyone took an interest?

Unfortunately, the historic preservation movement is all-too-often defined by 11th-hour reactions to impending loss. It seems to be human nature to only act when threatened. Though it is undeniably easier to organize and inspire community action when there is a proposed demolition, such an approach creates a contentious landscape that prompts public outcry from both sides of the debate: local historic designation vs. private property rights. There is a false equivalency created by public sentiment that if you preserve history through local designation then you are giving up your property rights; but this equivocation is what preservationists must strive to correct through outreach and education. As community-minded conservators of the physical evidence of our shared local history, we must do a better




100 Block of West Clayton Street



200 Block of West Clayton Street

job of deliberately and inclusively planning our work and then working our plan. A planned approach to engaging property owners and the community-at-large in our future historic preservation efforts

will foster healthier discussion, produce collaborative results, and more effectively preserve the story of our community while minimizing the negativity of reactionary approaches to future designations. 

Historic Property Local Tax Incentive Program

By Amber Eskew, ACC Preservation Planner

A historic property local tax incentive program has been in place for Athens-Clarke County since 1995 utilizing a program authorized by the state of Georgia in 1990. The State authorization sets some requirements for qualification along with the particular benefits and duration. This program differs from some other tax programs offered by the State for historic properties in that it does not require rehabilitation of the historic structure to qualify.

The Qualifications

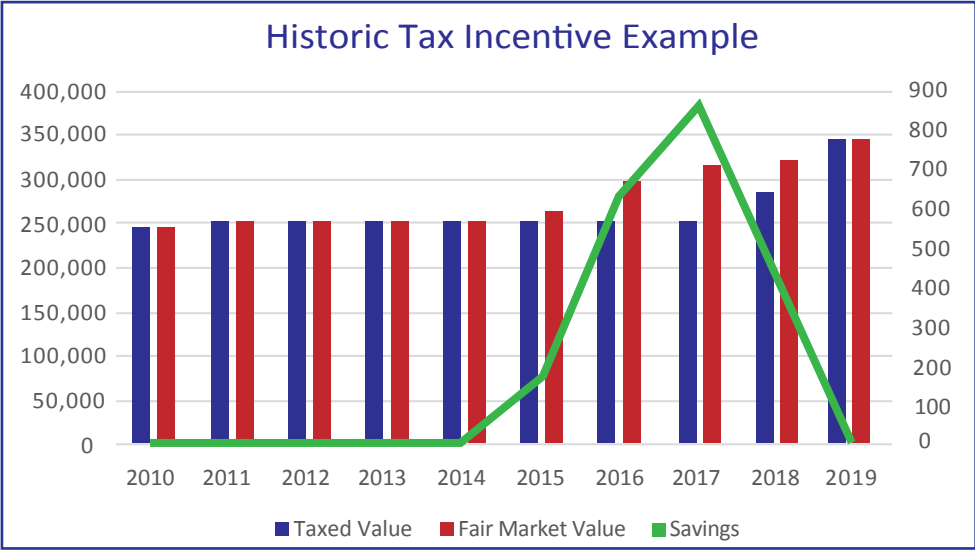
- A residentially zoned property must be used in compliance with the zoning designation. For instance, in a single-family zone the property is not used as a non-conforming duplex or including a garage apartment. No use restrictions are in place for commercial or industrial zoning designations.
- A property is considered contributing to the local historic district or landmark in which it is located.
- A property is considered contributing to the district or individual listing within either the Georgia Register of Historic Places or the National Register of Historic Places.
- The property is not currently receiving historic tax benefits from the State of Georgia for a rehabilitation. These programs can be used sequentially, but not simultaneously.

The Benefits

- The value of the property on which the tax assessment is based is frozen for 8 years and for the 9th year is set at the mid-point between the frozen value and the current market value.

The Details

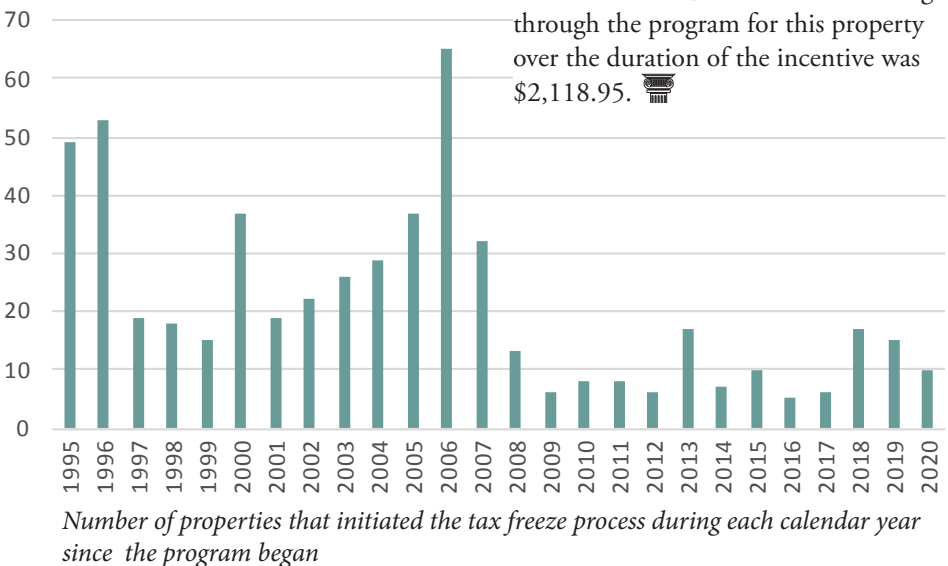
- The value that gets frozen is the higher of the acquisition cost or the assessed value at the time the application to the program is received.



- The value of any rehabilitation to the historic structure during the freeze would not be reflected in the taxed value, but added value through additions or other new structures on the property would be reflected on the assessed value.
- The assessments of the property continue as usual despite the lack of the taxed value changing. If an assessment is disputed, an appeal must be filed by the deadline set for that assessment and not wait until the end of the tax incentive.
- The incentive period is not impacted by any changes in ownership. The incentive is only available one time per property.
- There is a \$50 application fee for this tax incentive program.

An Example

A property located in the Boulevard Historic District was studied for this example. The property owner filed and was approved for this tax incentive in 2010. At that time, the property had an assessed fair-market value of \$243,089. In 2011 a new screened porch was added to the historic structure. The added value of the new porch was not frozen and the assessed fair-market value on which the tax bill was based was raised to \$249,042. No new assessment valuations were done until 2015 and continued annually thereafter. As the assessed fair-market values increased, the value on which the taxation was based stayed at \$249,042 until 2018 when the midpoint of the frozen value and the current fair-market value increased the value for taxation to \$283,954. The total savings through the program for this property over the duration of the incentive was \$2,118.95. 🏛️



In a year when it has been brought into stark focus America's unmet need to acknowledge, celebrate, protect, and preserve the lives and experiences of Black Americans, all sectors of society and government have a past to confront, including in historic preservation. We need to recognize the enormous role Black Americans have played in our cultural, historical, architectural and place history by acknowledging the contributions, sacrifices, lives lived, and foundations they built.

When the National Trust for Historic Preservation was founded on Oct 26, 1949, its charter included the mandate to, "facilitate public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings, and objects of national significance or interest." However, there was little acknowledgement of African-American contributions to this end. And while the Trust has grown exponentially in terms of outreach, demonstration projects, educational programs, etc., it had admittedly fallen far behind in recognizing and supporting sites, histories, and cultural events tied specifically to African Americans.

Finally, on November 17, 2017 the National Trust created the **African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund** (AACHAF) which is "a multi-year initiative . . . to make an important and lasting contribution to our cultural landscape by elevating the stories and places of African-American activism and achievement." The AACHAF (and the National Trust as a whole) depends solely on private and corporate grants to accomplish its mission.

This new branch of the National Trust is headed by Demond "Brent" Leggs, an African American architectural historian and preservationist from Paducah, Kentucky. Leggs became the first African American

to complete the University of Kentucky's graduate program in historic preservation. He believes that historic preservation must move beyond the focus on an often-narrow view of American architectural history and move toward an empowerment of people in under-represented communities. His guiding view is that "when the past is blanched and distorted through lack of diversity and representation, it affects both our understanding of today's issues and our capacity to grow in the future."¹

Call it the house of the National Trust . . . Call it a house. Our house. We all live in the same house. We all may not all live in a shotgun house, but we all live in the same house. We all live on this little piece of real estate. It doesn't matter whether we are Black or white or Latino or Asian American or Native American. We are one people, we are one family, we are one house. And we must keep this house together. We must celebrate our diversity. We must preserve our diversity. All of us must be included."

—REPRESENTATIVE JOHN LEWIS
2009 speech to the National
Preservation Conference in Nashville

and landmarks recognized by either the National Trust or by local ordinance, only 9 can be tied directly to the lives of Black Athenians (and only 7 of these are locally protected). We can set a goal to increase our understanding of and commitment to the history of Athens through the lens of the experiences of its Black citizens by recognizing more of the places and events that shaped our collective history. 🏛️

Sources:

¹ <https://www.essence.com/culture/saving-african-american-places-history/>

https://savingplaces.org/african-american-cultural-heritage#.X_HeNi9h2u4

https://savingplaces.org/brent-leggs#.X_HeFi9h2u5

https://savingplaces.org/stories/we-all-live-in-the-same-house-congressman-john-lewis-at-the-2009-national-preservation-conference#.X_HnjS9h2u4

By Ellen Walker, HPC Member

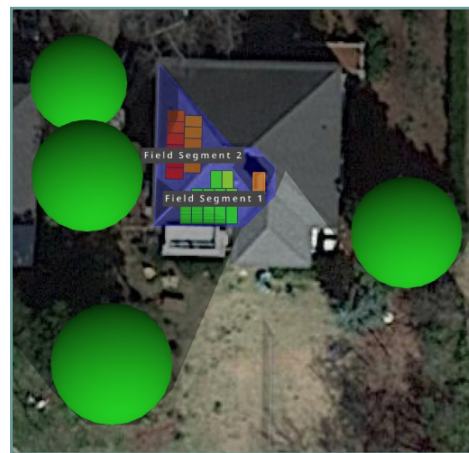
NOTEWORTHY COA APPROVALS IN 2020



420 Barber Street is a new construction mixed-use project designed by Arcollab for Michael Songster. HPC approval was granted in October of 2020.



115 E. Broad Street is a new construction mixed-use project designed by Studio BNA for investor Peninsula Fund. The project was originally approved in 2019 with revisions to the design receiving approval in July of 2020.



825 Hill Street is one seven solar panel projects to receive staff level approval in 2020. 🏛️

HPC meetings are currently being held digitally via WebEx with public attendance to view and participate available from the Planning Auditorium.