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2024 HPC Members

CHAIR: Worth VanLinden
VICE-CHAIR: Ellen L. Walker
MaeLyn Ehrman
Bobbie Epting
Ted Rossier

Support Staff

PRESERVATION PLANNER: Amber Eskew

ASSISTANT PLANNING DIRECTOR:
Bruce Lonnee

ATTORNEY: Austin Jackson

All are invited to attend the HPC hearings held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm,
120 W. Dougherty Street, Athens, GA

www.acgov.com/208/Historic-Preservation



Athens-Clarke County, Georgia Historic Preservation Commission Annual Report 2024

A Commitment to Historic Preservation

By Worth VanLinden, HPC Chair

In 2020 I found myself seeking opportunities to give back to the town I love so much. I saw a posting for an open position on the Historic Preservation Commission and thought - why not me? Little did I know that in a few short years I would be in the position of chairman for the commission. This experience has been incredibly rewarding and I would encourage anyone who has an interest in giving back to apply for this commission and the many others that provide such an integral service for the county.

We have been a very proactive commission due largely to the impassioned commitment from us commission members.

Our endeavors over the last four years include a complete redesign of the Milledge Avenue and General design guidelines, the creation and implementation of a strategic plan for the commission and continued editing of guidelines and other materials to make it more understandable for applicants and interested community members.

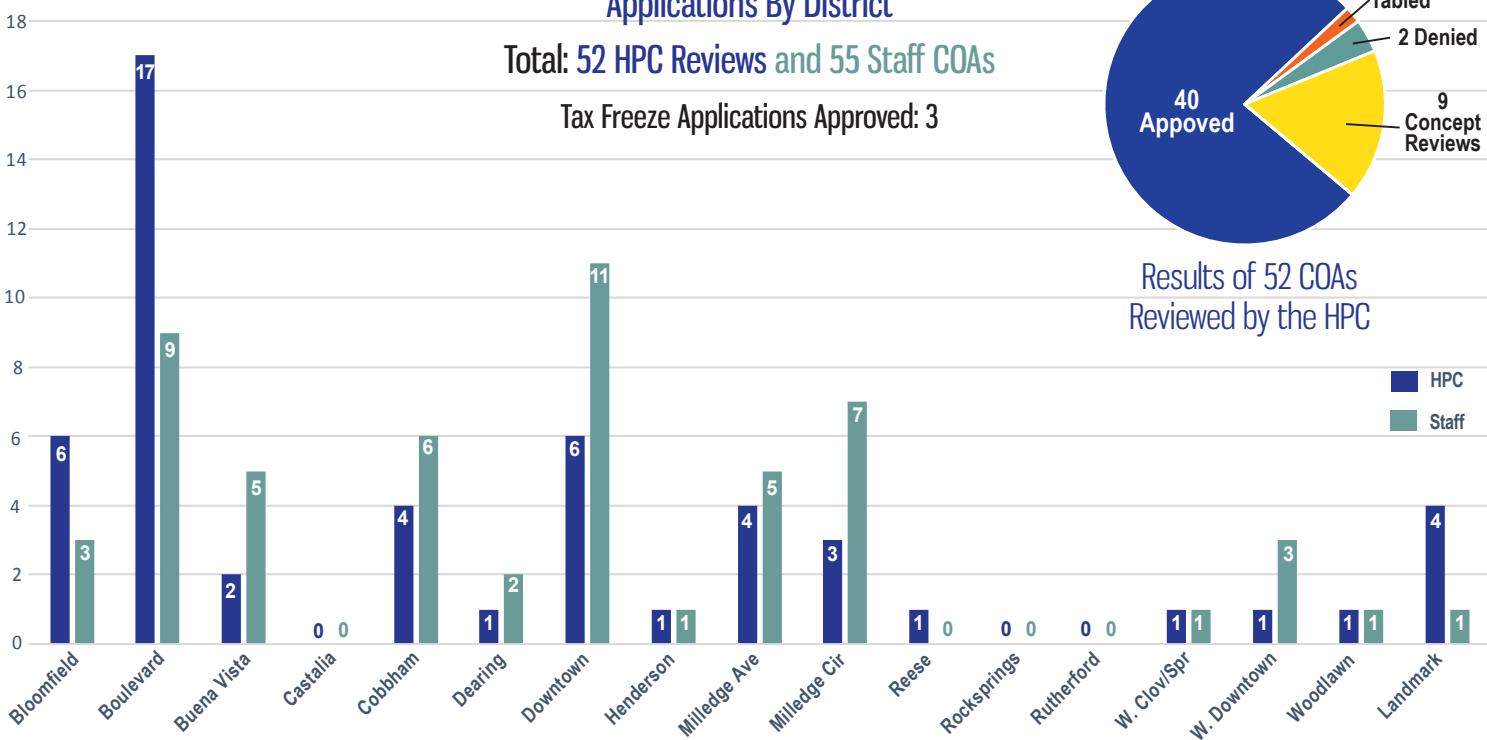
The work of historic preservation is one that can be very contentious but we as a commission, and especially myself as chair, make every effort to be unbiased and unemotional regarding each request we review.

The Historic Preservation Commission by the Numbers 2024

Applications By District

Total: 52 HPC Reviews and 55 Staff COAs

Tax Freeze Applications Approved: 3



Meet Your New HPC Commissioners



Maelyn Ehrman

Tell us a little about your background; where you grew up, how you came to live in Athens, what your job is now.

I am originally from Atlanta and came to Athens as an undergraduate at UGA. After graduating with a BFA in Interior Design and a certificate in Historic Preservation, I decided not to leave! I went to work for a local architecture firm, Architectural Collaborative (Arcollab), as an Interior Designer and Historic Preservation Specialist. Today, I am still working for this firm and have had opportunities to work on historic

rehabilitations, restorations, and reconstruction projects throughout the state.

What prompted you to apply to be on the HPC?

The transition from UGA student to Athens resident can be tricky, requiring a change in viewpoint of a town you've lived in for years. After making this transition, I was looking for a way to get more involved with my community. Given my background and passion for historic architecture, the HPC seemed like the perfect opportunity. I'm excited to engage with a wider pool of Athens residents about the preservation of our community's tangible history.

What has been the most surprising or interesting thing about being on the HPC?

As a UGA historic preservation student and then a design professional working on historic buildings in Athens, I have been well versed with the HPC, its processes, and responsibilities coming into the com-

By Ellen Walker, HPC Vice-Chair

mission. It's been exciting to get to know everyone as fellow commissioners and begin to navigate how we work and interact together as a single body.

What would you like to see the HPC do in the coming year?

I'm interested in reviewing new designations for properties and/or historic districts. While the HPC makes recommendations only and does not have final decision-making power for designations, proposals indicate which areas or types of structures the community values and wants to protect at a point in time.

What do you see as one of the biggest challenges for historic preservation in Athens?

Creating a mutually beneficial symbiosis between development pressures and preservation. Athens continues to grow each year and finding a balance of mindful growth and preservation of our tangible historic resources will continue to be a challenge in the coming years.

Ted Rossier

Tell us a little about your background; where you grew up, how you came to live in Athens, what your job is now.

I lived in several states growing up, but if I had to pick a 'hometown' it would be Tulsa, Oklahoma. I went to undergrad and law school at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, and lived and practiced law there for about 20 years. I specialized in representing state and county government agencies in employment discrimination and civil rights cases.

My family and I moved to Athens in 2017 so that I could attend graduate school at UGA (this was my mid-life crisis). My wife Leslie took a job as a math professor at UNG-Oconee, and has since been awarded tenure there. After I received a Ph.D. in

Political Science from UGA, I began teaching at UNG as well. My son Jack graduated from UNG last year and still lives in the area.

What prompted you to apply to be on the HPC?

I applied for the HPC at the suggestion of a colleague who knew of my interest in historical architecture. The way that buildings and homes are designed reflects the cultural zeitgeist of the time in which they are constructed, and buildings serve as a link to the past -- a reminder of where we've been, for better or worse.

What do you see as one of the biggest challenges for historic preservation in Athens?

Athens is a very eclectic city, and the challenge of the HPC as I see it is to preserve evidence of the different eras through



which we have come, but at the same time allowing for growth and sustainability. Often the two are at odds, but that tension can be navigated with good government. My desire is for the residents and property owners of Athens to see the HPC as a partner, not an adversary.



Notable Projects Reviewed In 2024

Two renovation projects at prominent intersections in Athens-Clarke County received approval from the Historic Preservation Commission in 2024.

110 E. Clayton Street, known to many as either the Bank of America Building or the Old Holman Hotel, received approval in June for an addition at the recess on the eastern side of the building to allow for a new stairwell and elevator, necessary infrastructure to allow rooftop activation and the potential to consider a residential component to the eight upper floors. Brett Nave with Studio BNA was the applicant on behalf of James Whitley and 110 E. Clayton LLC.

As of the end of 2024, this project has not begun the Plans Review process for commercial projects.

815 N. Chase Street, the former Heirloom Café location, received approvals from the Historic Preservation Commission in September of 2023 as well as January and February of 2024 for renovation of the space including additional canopy seating area for a new restaurant use. Gabe Comstock with Arcollab was the applicant on behalf of Bruno and Lourdes Rubio.

The project, known as Pollo Criollo, is currently working through the Plans Review process for commercial projects.



Left: The Bank of America Building, as originally constructed in 1913. Top: The building as it now looks.



NAPC Webinars Provide Many Educational Opportunities for HPC Members

Every year, the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC) provides numerous trainings in the form of Webinars for its members. All ACC HPC members are required to take at least one of these courses, but most of our commissioners participated in several. Here is the list of programs offered in 2024:

- The ABCs of Historic Designation Pt. 2 - Local Designation - January 11, 2024
- Incorporating Art Into Historic Districts - February 29, 2024

- Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors: Evaluation and Considerations for Use - March 21, 2024
- Preservation Synergy: Unlocking the Power of Nonprofit and Historic Commissions Collaboration - April 18, 2024
- Housing and Historic Preservation: A Joint Webinar with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions - May 23, 2024
- Participate in Important Policy Changes: ACHP's Proposed Program Comment on Accessible, Climate-Resilient, Connected Communities - September 19, 2024
- Protecting Historic Cemeteries through Recordation, Regulation, and Community Outreach - October 9, 2024
- Practical Solutions to Legal Issues for Commissions - November 13, 2024
- Navigating ADU Development in Historic Districts - December 12, 2024

Preserving the Past: Protecting Athens' Historic Cemeteries

By Ellen Walker, HPC Member

On October 9, 2024, the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions held a webinar entitled, "Protecting Historic Cemeteries through Recordation, Regulation, and Community Outreach." This session was led by preservation archaeologists Emma Dietrich and Emily Jane Murray.

Cemeteries differ from graveyards in that graveyards are generally associated with or near a place of worship. Cemeteries came into existence only when these "church yards" became full, often by the mid-1800s. They were generally situated outside of a town or city and owned and cared for by the municipality. Often referred to as Memorial Parks, these cemeteries were frequently designed as open spaces not just for the interment of the dead, but for the enjoyment of the living. They often had paths, groves of trees, or were near a water feature of some sort. It was a peaceful place for families to gather to honor and memorialize their dead and were often places of celebrations, picnics, and gatherings.

Cemeteries have long been a source of fascination by historians, archaeologists, taphophiles, genealogists and sculptors. These burial grounds reflect the times in which they are active and can be seen as "outdoor museums" that tell stories of a community. They show us how past generations laid their dead to rest and provide a glimpse into the communities they served. They are often full of elaborate headstones, above ground tombs, and memorial sculptures that are unique art forms that provide in-

formation beyond the birth and death dates of an individual by including small stories, scenes, and anecdotes about their lives and values. Preservationists have always seen these cemeteries as a part of a community's history, health, growth, culture, beliefs, religious trends, funerary traditions, and often the last evidence of a community in the landscape. We can get a picture of a community and its struggles by correlating death dates with epidemics, natural disasters, and other events.

Sadly, communities often do not have the resources to protect, maintain, and document an entire area of burials. Often it is unknown what the full physical extent of the cemetery is, especially if abandoned. Preservationists are realizing how essential it is to tell the story of a community through preserving, protecting, recording and sharing the information that can be gathered from these spaces.

There are 83 known cemeteries in Athens but only 3 are on the National Register of Historic Places, (Georgia has a total of 31 on the National Register) and only one is included as a Landmark and afforded the protections of the Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Commission and its ordinance—Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery off of 4th Street. The other two cemeteries in



Athens listed on the National Register are the Old Athens Cemetery (also known as Jackson Street Cemetery on the campus of the University of Georgia) and Oconee Hill Cemetery. However, being listed on the National Register of Historic Places does not afford any protections beyond what Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act specifies.

Section 106 of the NHPA is one of the main laws protecting cemeteries in the US. This section of the NHPA requires communities to consider the impact of any projects that use federal funds on historic resources. This includes cemeteries. It also requires states to inventory their historic and archaeological sites under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and protects resources located on federally owned property.

However sacred and important a cemetery may be to a community, there are numerous issues facing their preservation and care. Some of these include property development, vandalism, unclear ownership, lack of perpetual care, funding constraints, vegetation encroachment, animal disturbance, ground water inundation, climate change, and the demise of communities that once cared for them. Many cemeteries—small family plots, underserved community parcels, and rural or abandoned areas to name a few—are not known and therefore cannot be protected.

In a follow-up article, we will discuss ways to find, inventory, document, and maintain cemeteries in our communities and the particularly urgent need to preserve and protect historically African American burial grounds and cemeteries in Athens and Clarke County. We, as a community, need to do more to protect and preserve these historic spaces.

Photos are from Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery, Athens, Georgia.



HPC Visits the Special Collections Library

"The mission of the University of Georgia Special Collections Libraries is to acquire, organize, preserve, and provide access to unique and rare materials related to the history and culture of Georgia."

In May, several HPC members visited the University of Georgia Special Collections Library which includes the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, and the Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection. The behind-the-scenes tour of the various collections included the exhibition halls, the reading room and the below-ground vault with 340,000 cubic feet of storage space for its various collections. This library is the first stop for anyone interested in conducting research of any kind related to Georgia's history and citizens.



HPC Members and staff, past and present, from left: George Runkle, Amber Eskew, Ellen Walker, Joanna Beckman, Bobbie Epting, Thomas White.

Mission and Vision of the ACC Historic Preservation Commission

Our Mission

The mission of the Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Commission is to serve as a steward to protect and preserve the tangible history of Athens. The HPC is charged with safeguarding the rich cultural and architectural contributions of our community.

approved March 30, 2022 by the HPC

Our Vision

The vision of the ACC HPC is to engage with our community to promote an appreciation of historic preservation. We will achieve this by:

- guiding future development that is sensitive to our collective and individual histories
- identifying new areas that would benefit from local historic designation
- providing education on the economic and community benefits of historic preservation

Digging into the COA Numbers for 2024

Of the 52 HPC Reviews:

- 1 total demolition was reviewed. (1130 Blvd in February.)
- 1 new construction of a primary structure approved (382 N. Chase Street in June); 2 more received concept comments – 1130 Blvd in June, and 997 S. Milledge in November.
- 23 reviews included some degree of an addition to an existing primary structure.
- 3 of these included activating an upper level and 7 included extending 2nd level area.
- 11 of the addition reviews included some degree of demolition being involved.
- 4 new accessory structures included in reviews; 1 of these included a 2nd level guest suite.

Of the 55 Staff Level Reviews the following projects were approved:

- Material changes: 21
- Hardscape: 9
- Modify previous submission: 14
- Fencing or walls: 11
- New sheds: 3
- Small rear additions or decks: 1
- Signs: 10

Tax Freeze Applications

Approved: 3

New HPC Member for 2025

Lauren Olliff will be joining the HPC in January 2025. She has a Master's of Historic Preservation degree from UGA and five years of working experience as an architectural historian. For her thesis, she wrote a history of mid-century commercial architecture in Athens and surveyed buildings throughout the area for their preservation potential. Lauren interned for the HPC while in graduate school from 2018-2019. We are excited to welcome Lauren.

The Importance of Resilience and Disaster Planning in Preserving Historic Resources

As many communities begin to experience the effects and challenges of climate change, it is imperative to be prepared. Every community and individual should have a plan for how to adapt, mitigate, recover, fund, and thrive in a time of uncertainty. Athens is increasingly vulnerable to flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, drought, and extreme heat. It is prudent to educate ourselves and our community on best practices for preparation in the event a natural disaster occurs.

The National Alliance of Preservation Commissions has gathered a number of resources to help communities create multi-tiered plans to respond to threats. While the focus of these plans is on protecting historic resources, the suggestions are useful for our entire community's ability to withstand and recover from any disaster.

Athens-Clarke County has an Emergency Preparedness Office and a detailed plan, but historic resources often require a different type of support in protection and recovery. The HPC is concerned about preserving these historic properties and cultural resources in Athens. The U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, has provided the following list of actions that can be done ahead of any threats:

1. Know Your Partners

The field of disaster planning, response, and recovery has numerous players with varied roles and responsibilities. Find out who your Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Coordinator is and how to contact them.

2. Know Your Hazard Mitigation Plan

FEMA requires that State, Tribal, and Local governments create and adopt Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans. These

plans are created to identify policies and activities that can be implemented in an effort to reduce risk and losses from a disaster. It is critical that cultural resources be included in the plan. It must identify, determine risks, assesses replacement costs, and provide recommendations to lessen the impacts to cultural and historic resources.

3. Local Level Planning

While there is often a focus on what federal and state government provides a community, the reality is that most critical decisions are made at the local level. The more nimble our local government is in responding to cultural issues such as historic district design review, expedited environmental compliance, and supporting local preservation efforts, the more likely historic resources will have successful outcomes post-disaster.

4. Property Owner Resources

Every property owner is a curator of a collection of important cultural resources, whether that be family photographs, furnishings, wedding certificates, decorative arts, etc. Knowing how to protect them ahead of and care for them after a disaster, can help save these irreplaceable items. A historic home or commercial building also requires special considerations post-disaster. Know who to call to help stabilize and repair these resources.

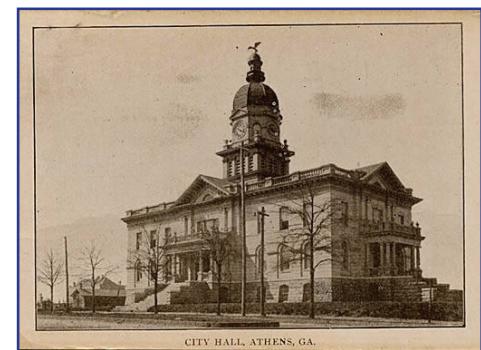
Be Proactive

See www.napcommissions.org/resources for a list of resources available to governments and citizens. There are samples of some community plans as well as best practices to follow in preparing for possible threats. Be an advocate in your community to protect these vital historical resources.

Notable Building Birthdays and Designation Anniversary Milestones in 2024

2024 marks the 120-year birthday for City Hall, completed in 1904. The yellow-brick building features elements of Beaux Arts Classicism and a location at the highest ground downtown. Beaux Arts Classicism features many classical aspects such as symmetry and columns but includes a variety of decorative elements from other architectural styles that offer more ornament than found on the classical styles. City Hall features columns and pediments as part of its symmetry but also arched windows, balustrades with decorative elements, and a cupola roofed clock tower.

Augusta architect L.F. Goodrich designed the building as his entry into a design competition held for a new City Hall. Athens City Engineer J.W. Barnett was responsible for the construction. This building replaced one on this site that was built as a dwelling but served as City Hall after being purchased in the mid-1850s to replace the first town hall that was located in the middle of Washington Street (then called Market Street) about a block to the west.



CITY HALL, ATHENS, GA.

City Hall as well as the Double-Barreled Cannon that shares the property were designated as local historic landmarks in 1988.

2024 also marks the 25th anniversary of the 1999 local historic designations for the Henderson Avenue Historic District, the West Cloverhurst-Springdale Historic District, and the McNutts Creek Battlesite designations.