

Historic Preservation in Athens, Georgia

Many structures in Athens are fine examples of significant architectural styles. Many have played an important role in the history and development of Georgia. The government of Athens-Clarke County protects a number of these structures through local designation as either individual structures (local historic landmarks) or as groups of properties, such as neighborhoods or commercial districts (local historic districts).

Where are the locally designated historic districts in Athens?

As of September 1, 2020 there are 15 local historic districts.

- Bloomfield
- Boulevard
- Buena Vista
- Castalia
- Cobham
- Dearing Street
- Downtown
- Henderson Avenue
- Milledge Avenue
- Milledge Circle
- Reese Street
- Rocksprings
- W Cloverhurst/Springdale
- W Rutherford
- Woodlawn Avenue

Interactive historic district story maps are available online at accgov.com/208/HistoricPreservation.

Is National Register listing the same as being locally designated?

No. The National Register is an official list of historic properties in the United States, which provides limited protections. Locally designated properties are protected by ordinance through a design review process.

How are properties locally designated?

Under the Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Mayor and Commission are authorized to protect historically significant structures and districts through local designation. Through a public hearing process, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) reviews surveys and studies to recommend properties for local designation to the Mayor and Commission. They make the final decision to designate landmarks and districts.

What is the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and who serves on it?

The Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Commission functions as the official local steward of Historic Preservation in Athens. The Mayor and Commission appoint 7 HPC members, who are all residents of Athens-Clarke County. Their duties include making

recommendations for local designations, as well as reviewing plans for exterior changes to designated properties to ensure that they meet the ACC Design Guidelines. The ACC Historic Preservation Planner serves as Staff to the Historic Preservation Commission.

Can alterations be made to locally designated properties?

Yes! Local designation does not prevent updating or refurbishing properties to suit modern needs; it simply ensures that any exterior changes are historically appropriate. Interior renovations are not under the purview of the HPC, nor are exterior paint colors for buildings with previously painted exteriors. It does require that the HPC review and approve exterior changes to designated properties. All design guidelines are available for review on the ACC website.

What kinds of changes are regulated?

Exterior changes such as demolition, additions, fences, signs, and other work that alters the property and goes beyond routine maintenance must be reviewed and receive a **Certificate of Appropriateness** (COA). Some changes qualify for review at a staff level while other changes need to get approval from the HPC at a public hearing. All changes must have a COA before work proceeds.

Where can property owners get help when applying for a COA?

The Historic Preservation Planner at the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department is your first contact for technical assistance with designated properties. The Planner will guide COA applications through the approval process.

The HPC strongly encourages property owners to come before the commission for a **Conceptual Preliminary Design Review** before submitting a final COA application. This review is an open discussion between the owner or developer and the HPC to give preliminary feedback on proposed changes to the property. No final decisions are made at this review.

Are there any advantages to local designation?

Yes! Property values tend to be higher for both landmark and historic district properties. Preservation through local designation helps revitalize communities, creates jobs, attracts tourists and has had a positive effect on the local economy.

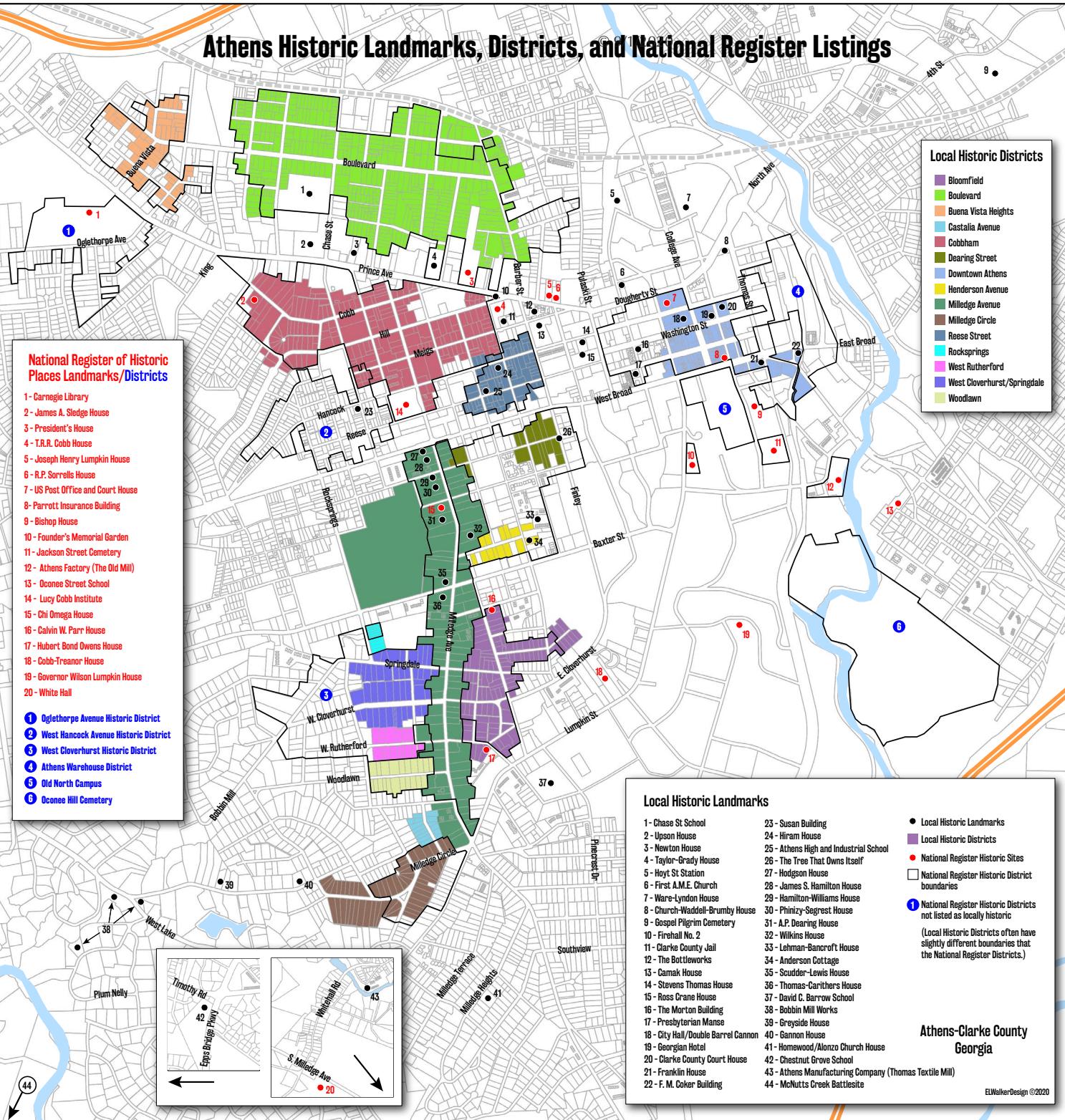
What about tax breaks for historic properties?

Some properties do qualify for tax incentives. Some incentives are run through the Georgia Department of

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Athens Historic Landmarks, Districts, and National Register Listings



Natural Resources, generally related to rehab projects. A tax assessment freeze program is locally managed and available to some properties that have both a local designation and a state or national designation. Contact the Historic Preservation Planner for more information.

ACC Historic Preservation Commission

accgov.com/208/Historic-Preservation

ACC Planning Department

120 West Dougherty Street
Athens, Georgia 30601
706-613-3515
accgov.com/151/Planning-Department

Building Permits

Athens-Clarke County Building Inspections & Permits Dept.
120 West Dougherty Street
Athens, Georgia 30601
706-613-3520
accgov.com/135/Building-Permits-Inspections

Local Historic Preservation Programs and Initiatives

Historic Athens
489 Prince Avenue
Athens, Georgia 30601
706-353-1801
historicathens.com

Historic Property Tax Programs and Incentives

Georgia Department of Natural Resources
770-389-7844
georgiaashpo.org/tax-statecredit