



ACC Historic  
Preservation  
Home Page



ACC Historic  
Preservation  
Guidelines



ACC Historic COA  
Application  
and Other Forms



ACC Historic  
Preservation  
Resources

Dear Neighbor,

Welcome to your new home or business in one of Athens-Clarke County's locally designated historic districts or landmark properties! We know you will enjoy living and/or working in the beautiful and vibrant Athens community. Our town has a rich history, a top tier university, a vibrant music scene, and a wonderful range of architectural styles. The Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) wants to help you with resources to maintain the historic integrity of your property no matter what changes you may decide to make now or in the future. We can also help you discover more about your property including its age, architectural style, and how to find replacement materials and make sensitive repairs or exterior changes.

Included in this packet is information about and resources related to historic preservation in Athens. You will find an abundance of helpful information about the HPC, its role, how the process works for making any exterior changes to your property, and the design guidelines used in our decision making process by visiting any of the QR links included at left. Please review the guidelines for guidance on topics such as changing windows or doors, planning an addition or considering demolishing any structure on the property. If you would like to make changes that require approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness, you will need to submit an application that will be reviewed by Planning Department staff and may need to come before the HPC for approval.

One of the best opportunities to meet with HPC informally to discuss potential modifications to your property is by participating in a "concept review." These reviews, held at the end of each month's regular HPC meeting, are a great way to receive non-binding feedback on your proposal. You may find the application for this type of review in the "Conceptual Preliminary Design Review" section of the Applications and Forms link at left. You can also always contact Amber Eskew, Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Planner, at [amber.eskew@accgov.com](mailto:amber.eskew@accgov.com) or 706-613-3515 with any questions.

The regular Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Commission meetings are open to all and occur on the third Wednesday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department.

The mission of the Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Commission is to act as stewards to protect and preserve the history of Athens. This commission is charged with safeguarding the rich cultural and architectural history of our community. We hope we can help you celebrate your home or business' important place in history!

Sincerely,

The Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Commission

FAQ for  
Athens-Clarke  
County's Historic  
Preservation  
Commission  
Certificate of  
Appropriateness

**1. How do I know if I need a COA?**

A Certificate of Appropriateness, or a COA, is required for exterior changes to historic district properties and locally designated landmarks. Exterior changes include new construction, additions, building material changes, and site features such as new doors and windows, fences, retaining walls, or driveways.

**2. I don't know how to describe the project specifications. What should I do?**

If you are having difficulty describing project specifications it could be advisable to seek outside help. Many of the COA's that come before us are presented by a builder or design professional to represent the property owner.

**3. Should I have an architect represent me?**

It certainly is not a requirement to have a professional designer represent your COA at the monthly HPC hearing; however, due to the nature of the conversation that occurs during a hearing, it could be advisable to seek professional representation if you are not confident in your detailed knowledge of the project specifications, especially for larger projects.

**4. Do you suggest any particular architect?**

The HPC may not recommend any one architect or design firm. However, it would be advisable to make your decision based on their local historic district knowledge and process familiarity. Consult neighbors, Historic Athens, or peruse past agendas for repeat applicants.

**5. How do I know when work can start on my property?**

Once your application has been approved and issued, you will be able to pull your building permit on the next business day. You must proceed with any steps to have your COA issued within 6 months from the date of the approval.

**6. Do I need to do a concept review as well or is it optional?**

It is not required to do a concept review. However, for many projects that involve more complicated additions or restorations, it is recommended. It will help guide you and your architect or builder to know what the HPC might consider appropriate and give you an idea of how a final ruling might go before the time and expense of finalizing the plans for submittal. Concept reviews are free.

**7. Do I need to be present at the HPC hearing to represent myself?**

It is not required, but strongly advised. The conversation is more productive if it is two-way. Plus, if no one is present to answer questions or address concerns, then denial of the request may result. The HPC needs to hear your explanation for the changes you would like to make when questions arise.

**8. Can I send a representative in my place at the HPC hearing?**

Yes. However, it is recommended that even if you have a representative (such as an architect or builder or even a neighbor) speak on your behalf, that you be present. This is not required, but your representative will need to be well-versed in the project and able to make decisions about compromises or tabling that may arise.

# 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 2022 there are 16 local historic districts and 44 landmark properties. The districts are:

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

Interactive historic district story maps are available online at [accgov.com/208/HistoricPreservation](http://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.

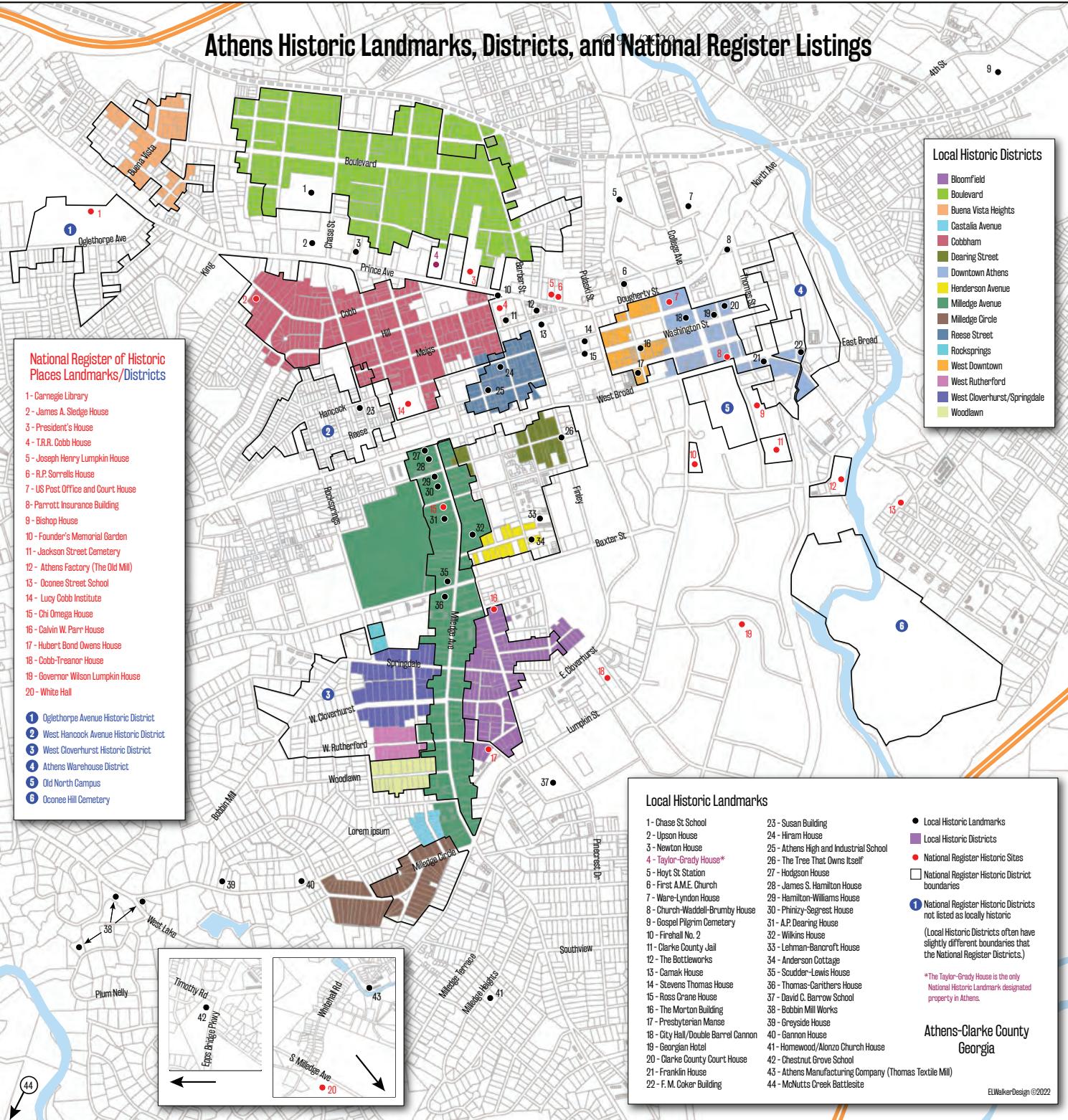
## **What about tax breaks for historic properties?**

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

*continued on reverse*



# 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](http://accgov.com/208/Historic-Preservation)

## ACC Planning Department

120 West Dougherty Street  
Athens, Georgia 30601  
706-613-3515

[accgov.com/151/Planning-Department](http://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](http://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](http://historicathens.com)

## Historic Property Tax Programs and Incentives

Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
770-389-7844  
[georgiaishpo.org/tax-statecredit](http://georgiaishpo.org/tax-statecredit)

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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](http://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.

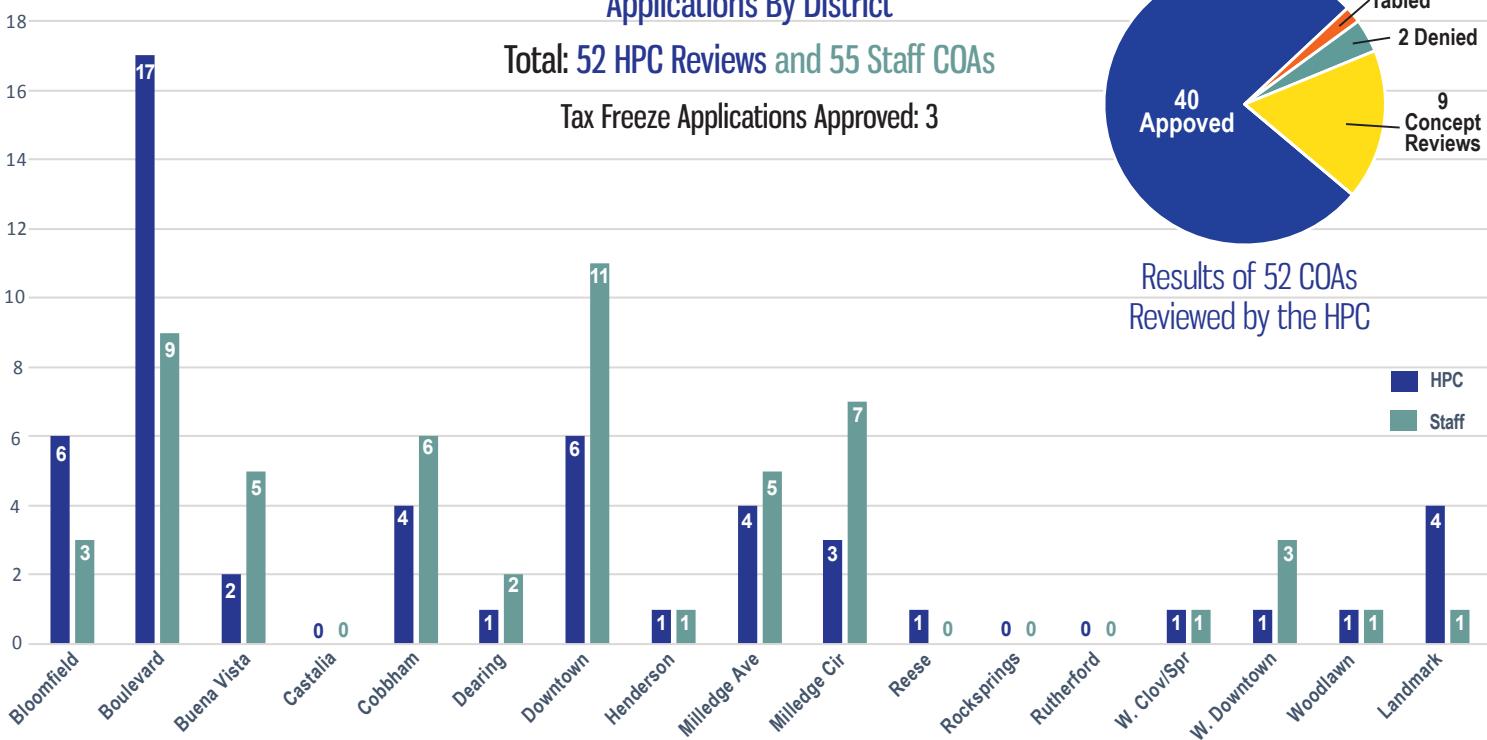


## The Historic Preservation Commission by the Numbers 2024

### 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

**O**n 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.

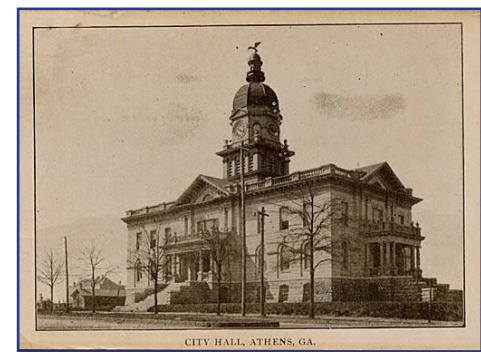
## Be Proactive

See [www.napcommissions.org/resources](http://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 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.



# Historic District Designation

This brochure seeks to share basic insights about the historic designation process and what the impact might be for property owners and residents, if approved.

The historic, cultural, and aesthetic heritage of Athens-Clarke County (ACC) is among its most valued and important assets. Protection, support, and promotion of this heritage benefits the entire community. The most effective means of offering this protection is through historic designation of districts and landmarks. This protection was first authorized by the City of Athens in 1988 and continued after unification in 1990.

Local historic designation follows the state mandated process administered by the ACC Historic Preservation Commission with approval from the Mayor and ACC Commission. The process includes multiple opportunities for impacted property owners and other concerned parties to learn about designation requests and offer comments. While the designation doesn't legally require owner approval, the input from property owners and community is highly valued and a critical part of the designation process.

For more information, contact the  
**Athens-Clarke County  
Planning Department**  
**120 W. Dougherty Street**  
**Athens, GA 30601**  
**706-613-3515**  
[www.acgov.com/planning](http://www.acgov.com/planning)

## Summary of the Designation Process

1. Submission of a Study List Application by a property owner, or neighborhood association for a specific landmark or district to be considered.
2. The Designation Committee of the Historic Preservation Commission discusses the potential for designation. Clear potential to qualify for designation is needed to continue the process.
3. Working with the ACC Commissioner for the area to garner support from property owners for the concept of designation is highly encouraged at this point before proceeding.
4. The history of the area is thoroughly researched and analyzed including architectural surveys for each property or building. This work is best accomplished by a professional or experienced individual. The funding for this work is the responsibility of those seeking designation unless specific funding and authorization is provided by the Mayor and Commission to the Planning Department.
5. The designation report and architectural survey drafts are reviewed by the Designation Committee for completeness and boundaries for the designation are drafted based on the findings.
6. An open house is held to allow for public review and comment on the proposed designation. Any necessary revisions or additional research needed would follow.
7. The proposed designation is reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission at a public hearing to offer a recommendation to the Mayor and ACC Commission.
8. The Mayor and Commission hold a public hearing to make a final determination on the proposed designation. If approved, the designation means that the protections of designation, including the need for obtaining Certificates of Appropriateness, are in place.

## Benefits of Designation

- Enhances neighborhood design
- Ensures thoughtful and sensitive project planning
- Stabilizes property values
- Protects investment with upkeep and improvements
- Enables community input on projects in the district
- Gives peace of mind that project review will occur
- Offers potential tax assessment value freeze for qualifying properties.

## The Historic Property Tax Incentive

This tax incentive is often referred to as the tax freeze for qualifying properties. The value is frozen at the assessed value on file at the time the tax incentive application is processed. Some important information to know:

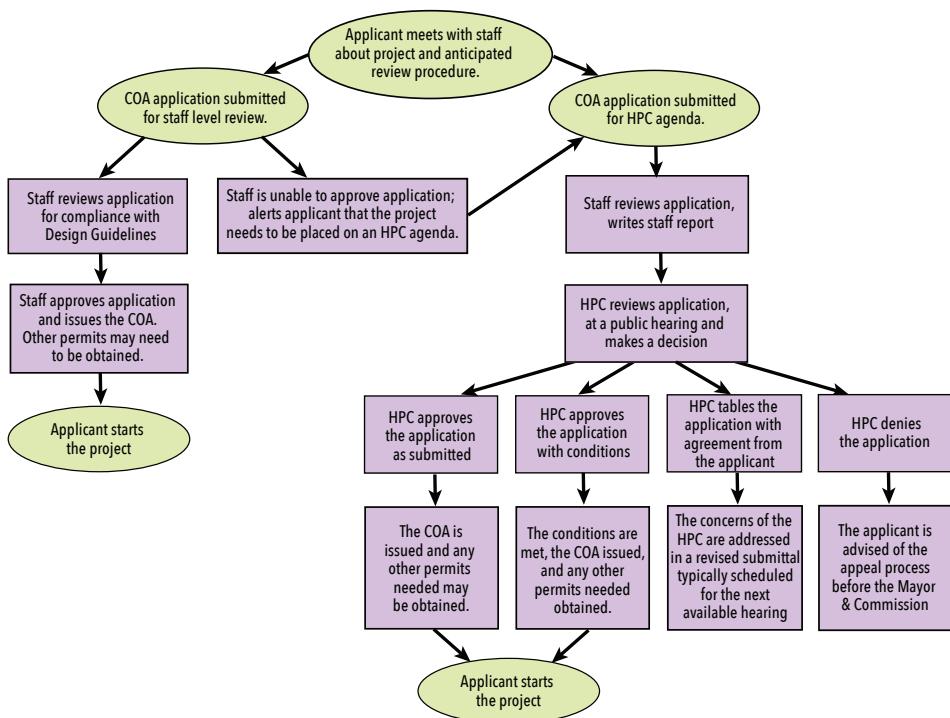
- The property must be considered contributing to the local and state or national designations.
- Residential property must conform with local zoning.
- This tax benefit may be sequential with other benefits such as the State Rehabilitation Act, but may not be received simultaneously.

- Value assessments will continue to be made during a freeze period and any dispute of those amounts must be made at that time rather than when the freeze has ended.
- While the property assessed value on which the taxes are based will be frozen, the millage rate is not - so the actual annual tax bills paid may vary.
- The tax incentive is only available once per qualifying property. It will transfer with the property, should ownership change.

## Certificates of Appropriateness

Historic designation requires review of exterior changes to ensure that the very character being lauded is retained. The application for these exterior changes is a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). This review certifies that the changes proposed are appropriate. Design Guidelines are used to guide the designer planning a change and the HPC members or staff doing the review. The Design Guidelines used may be a separate document specific

to a district or are the general set that includes a summary of the special character of a district or landmark. COA Requests with less potential impact on historic character are reviewed by staff, while those with more potential impact go before the Historic Preservation Commission at a public hearing. Application deadlines and fees vary with the type of project.



## Local, State or National Register Designation

Property may be designated at only one level or all three. Each level offers its own incentives, rewards, and challenges. For properties in Athens-Clarke County, local designation means that protective measures are in place to review changes for their appropriateness and compatibility. This is the Certificate of Appropriateness process. Another aspect of local designation, in tandem with a state or national designation, is the potential to qualify for the Historic Property Tax Freeze. Property designation as historic is possible on the National, State, and Local levels.

National designation means that a property, site, or district is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. National

Register listing does not place obligations on private property owners to rehab structures, nor does it require any review of renovation or new construction on the property. Various grants or tax incentives may be possible for projects at listed sites depending on the project and available monies at that time.

State level designation means that a property is listed in the Georgia Register of Historic Places. The Georgia Register uses the same criteria and documentation procedures as the National Register of Historic Places. Properties listed in the National Register are automatically listed in the Georgia Register.

**Districts** - A definable geographic area where properties contain special character, historic interest or representative architecture.

**Landmarks** - Usually a single parcel or building. Landmarks need to be an outstanding example of its type, one of few remaining examples, associated with an important person or event, or of a natural or aesthetic quality that contributes to the local culture or heritage.



# Path to Historic Landmark Designation for a Single Property in Athens

