

STAFF REPORT

TO: Planning and Economic Development Committee June 16, 2015
FROM: Stacy Merten, Director of Historic Resources, Planning and Urban Design
SUBJECT: Historic Preservation Master Plan for Asheville and Buncombe County

Summary: The Historic Resources Commission is presenting the final draft of the Historic Preservation Master Plan for Asheville and Buncombe County for your review and recommendation. You may access the plan by following this link on the City's Project Page. http://www.ashevillenc.gov/Portals/0/city-documents/communityrelations/Asheville%20HP%20MPlan_3-6-15_FINAL2_lo-res.pdf.

Review: This plan represents the work of many individuals, conducted over the past 18 months with the assistance of Heritage Strategies, the planning consultants. The work of Heritage Strategies has been guided by an advisory committee chaired by Brendan Ross, the current chair of the Historic Resources Commission (HRC). Membership of the advisory committee represented a diversity of interests including Buncombe County, the Asheville business community, Asheville neighborhoods, the Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County and the HRC. The community was further engaged through a series of public meetings, focus groups and individual interviews to gather information for input and preparation of the plan.

Although the HRC currently has a successful preservation program, which has been in place since 1979, this plan will help guide the future work of the commission and further historic preservation efforts as supported through the city's adopted comprehensive and downtown development plans. This will ensure that historic preservation remains integral to quality urban design, sustainability and the strategic planning vision of Asheville and Buncombe County.

The following goals were identified early in the process and all subsequent strategies outlined in the plan are intended to facilitate these four overarching goals.

- Heighten public appreciation of Asheville and Buncombe County's heritage and historic resources.
- Ensure that public sector initiatives and actions are models for best practices in the preservation and treatment of historic resources.
- Support private initiative as a primary method ~~major way~~ through which historic resources are recognized, preserved, and enhanced.
- Enlist historic preservation in the quest for great 21st century growth – make historic preservation central to Asheville and Buncombe County's understanding of the ways and means of achieving a high quality of life and economic and environmental sustainability.

The HRC recommended approval of the plan at their meeting on March 11, 2015, with the understanding that the Downtown Commission would also make a recommendation in advance of review by the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Planning and Economic Development (PED). The Downtown Commission moved to recommend support for the plan at their meeting on April 2, 2015 and the Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval at their meeting on May 6, 2015.

HRC staff has also consulted with city staff from Planning and Urban Design, and Economic and Community Development, as well as staff from the Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County to gain support for the specific strategies involving those agencies.

Planning staff from Buncombe County were also involved in the planning process and it is the intent of the Historic Resources Commission to work with Buncombe County on adoption of the plan well.

Pros:

- Provides a clear focus and direction for historic preservation work in Asheville and Buncombe County
- Promotes quality urban design that reflects Asheville's architectural legacy
- Identifies opportunities and partnerships to enhance the historic preservation program
- Outlines strategies for neighborhood and small area planning efforts

Cons:

- Increased staff capacity will be required to fully implement the proposed neighborhood planning strategies
- Proposed SB-25, the *Zoning Design and Aesthetic Control Bill*, currently moving through the NC State Legislature appears to eliminate the ability for local government to enact conservation overlays that would impact single family neighborhoods

Fiscal Impact: There is no known fiscal impact associated with this action.

Action Step: Staff is asking that the Planning and Economic Development Committee make a recommendation for the plan to move forward for review and acceptance by the Asheville City Council.