

Historic & Cultural Resources Element

Sumter has a storied past filled with prominent historical figures and events that have helped to shape the community we are today. It is important to understand who we are and where we come from in order to determine what our community values are. This understanding can help guide future growth and development that preserves and promotes the places, things, and events that are uniquely Sumter.

The purpose of this Element is to identify those buildings, places, and events that are community priorities and to develop goals, objectives, and policies that will allow community decision makers to promote and protect those resources while working towards positive community redevelopment and new development.

A comprehensive evaluation and understanding of the historic buildings, neighborhoods, districts, public places, and cultural events that the community values is vitally important when evaluating land-use and development decisions that impact the future of Sumter. To understand where we are as a community today, we must first acknowledge where Sumter started and how that has shaped our physical identity.



Photo: Sumter County Courthouse

Sumter County History

Sumter has a rich historical and cultural heritage that is linked to major events in South Carolina and United States history. In addition to its Revolutionary War link to General Thomas Sumter, Sumter County has the unique distinction of being the location of the last significant fighting of the Civil War in South Carolina. The City and County both have historical and architectural qualities which are unique, and a cultural legacy that should be preserved and protected for future generations.

What is today known as the City of Sumter is one of South Carolina's older midlands backcountry settlements that came into being during the late 18th Century. The City grew in size and importance as a commercial center in the early 19th Century, serving as a trade and transport center for the surrounding farms and plantations. It also played an important role in the development of the railroad system in South Carolina. The Wilmington & Manchester Railroad passed directly through the City, linking the area with Columbia to the west and the port of Wilmington, NC to the northeast. As the City prospered and developed, many fine residential structures and commercial buildings were erected that still stand today. These structures provide a concrete link to Sumter's past.

While the City of Sumter is the County seat, other municipalities and areas including Stateburg, Mayesville, and Pinewood are home to several locally significant historic properties and structures. Due to Sumter County's rich architectural heritage, Sumter is home to three National Register of Historic Places Historic Districts and many individual properties listed on the National Register.



Photo: Sumter Opera House circa early 1900's

National Register of Historic Places

South Carolina has over 1,400 listings in the National Register of Historic Places. These listings include buildings, sites, and historic districts. The National Register of Historic Places is a list of properties significant in our nation’s past. The list is maintained by the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. Properties are added to the list by nominations submitted by citizens nationwide through State Historic Preservation Offices.

National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Currently there are fewer than 2,500 historic places that bear this designation.

The Sumter community is home to 27 buildings, sites, and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Three of these listings bear the distinction of being National Historic Landmarks.

National Register of Historic Places
Benefits

- Provides prestigious recognition to significant properties.
- Encourages the preservation of historic places.
- Provides information about historic properties for local and statewide planning purposes.
- Helps promote tourism and economic development.
- Provides basic eligibility for financial incentives, including federal tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic buildings.

National Register Historic Districts

Three National Register Historic Districts exist within Sumter County, the Stateburg Historic District, the Mayesville Historic District, and the Downtown Sumter Historic District.

What is a National Register
Historic District?

A National Register Historic District is an honor bestowed upon a geographic area to recognize it’s historic value and to encourage continued stewardship. Unlike Local Historic Districts, improvements to properties within these districts are not regulated. However, certain incentives including tax credits for rehabilitation are available to contributing properties provided that the projects are carried out in accordance with federal and state historic preservation standards.

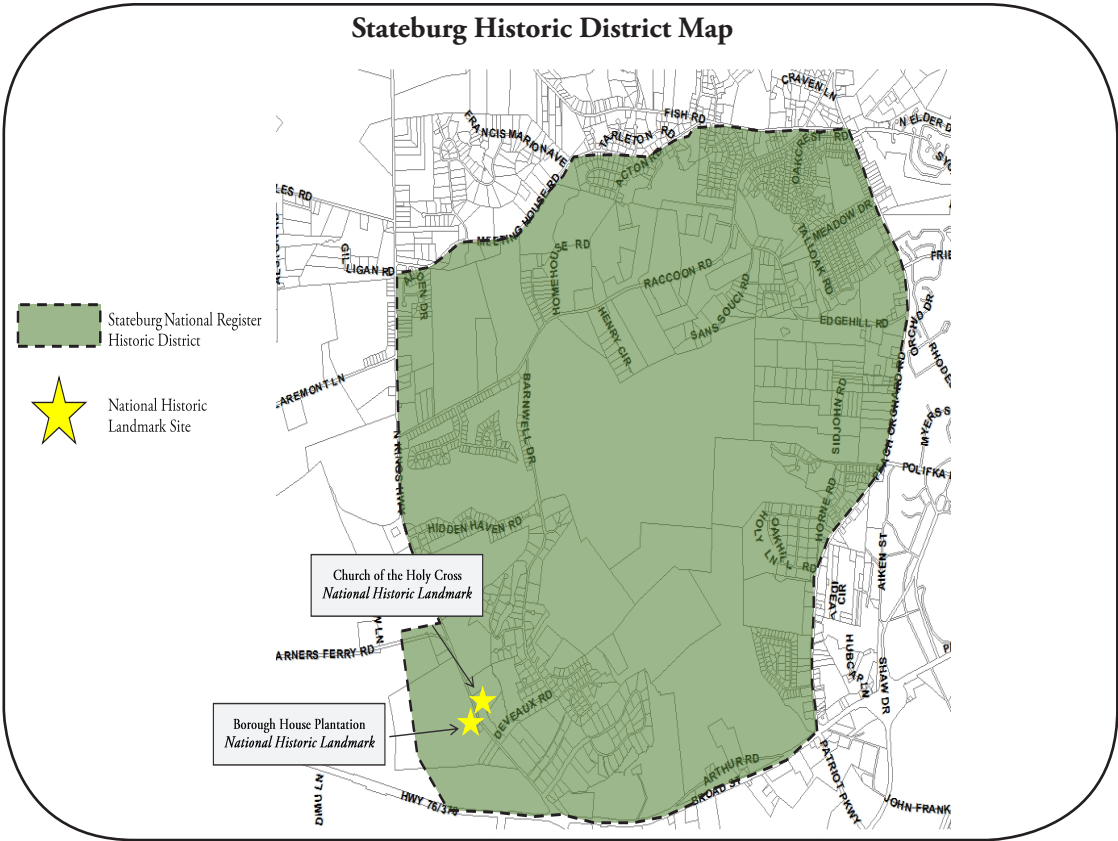
Stateburg Historic District

Prior to its founding as a town in 1783, Stateburg was primarily the site of summer homes for families from the Low County. A few individuals also settled there as early as 1735 via the nearby Kings Highway (SC Hwy 261). Located twelve miles west of the City of Sumter in the “High Hills of the Santee” along SC Hwy 261 one mile north of US Hwy 76/378, the Stateburg Historic District was listed on the National Register on February 24, 1971.

Stateburg derives part of its historical significance from its connection with Revolutionary War General Thomas Sumter. Sumter founded Stateburg in 1783 in the hopes that it would be chosen as the new state capital. Stateburg missed this distinction by a few votes in 1786 when the Legislature voted to locate the new capital in Columbia. The enclave was the site of much Revolutionary War activity, and was occupied by Generals Cornwallis and Greene.

From 1783 until 1800, the town was the county seat for Claremont County, and until the Civil War was thriving. Most of the structures that made up the Stateburg community were destroyed during the Civil War by Potter’s Raiders. However, some buildings located a distance from public roads were spared. The eleven contributing buildings and sites still standing today make up the core of the district. The Stateburg area holds significant recorded archaeological sites related to Sumter County and South Carolina’s history.

Map HCR-1



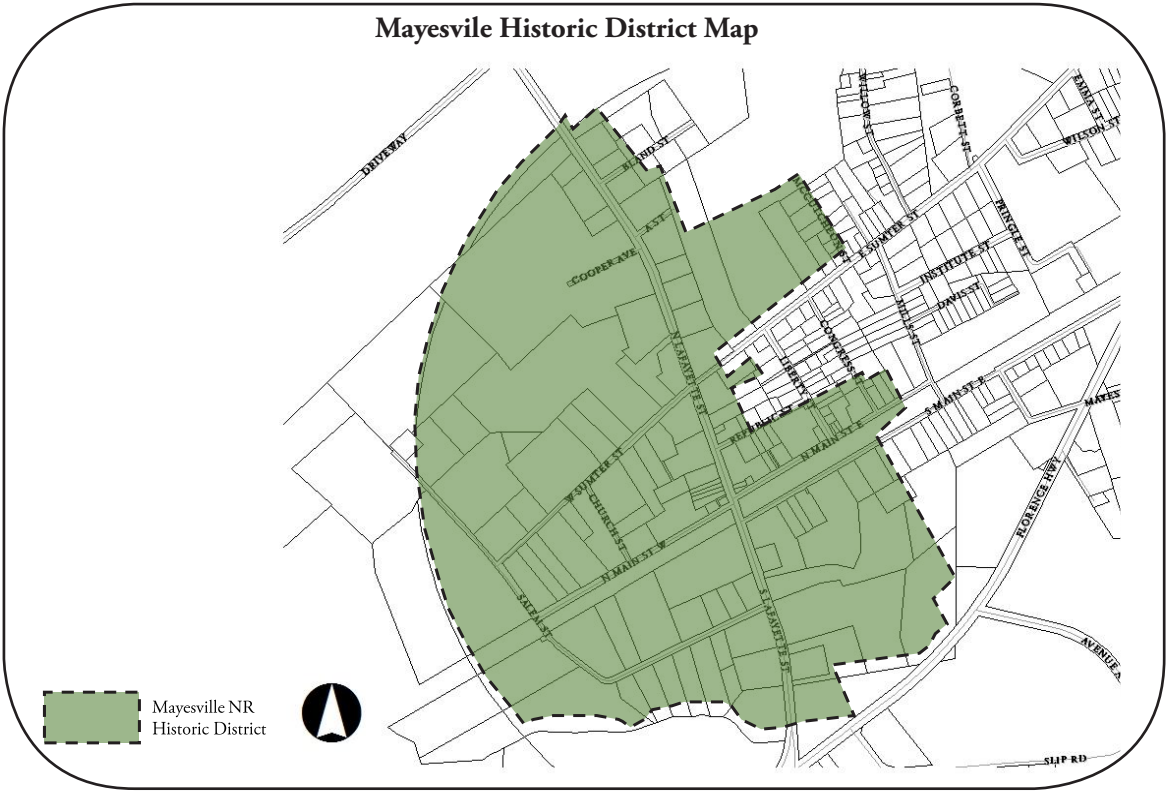
Mayesville Historic District

Named for Matthew Peterson Mayes, the Town of Mayesville is located in the northeast corner of Sumter County in a predominantly agricultural area. Circa 1820, Mayes built his home in the southern portion of his father in law’s plantation; it was around this home, which no longer stands, that the Town of Mayesville developed. The Mayesville Historic District was listed on the National Register on July 16, 1979. The district encompasses the western half of the town, and contains a concentration of structures which represents a broad range of late 19th and early 20th Century vernacular designs, including commercial, religious and residential examples. While not in the planning area for the Sumter 2040 Comprehensive Plan this National Register district is an important resource for all Sumter County residents.

The Mayesville Historic District is notable for its representation of the cultural, commercial, and architectural development of a small 19th century South Carolina community. During its early years, the community was little more than a scattering of homes of the Mayes family. In 1852, the Mayes Station Railroad Depot was established when the Wilmington, Manchester, and Columbia Railroad extended to the Mayes Plantation. The advent of the railroad spurred the growth of Mayesville leading to the creation of a small corridor focused around rail lines. Following the end of the Civil War and prior to the town’s incorporation in 1874, the Mayes plantation was subdivided into individual properties.

At the time of nomination to the National Register, the district contained 80 historic structures/sites with no major intrusions or alterations to its fabric. In addition to the 80 historic sites, there were approximately 11 sites with structures that were not survey eligible - many of which were constructed during and after the 1950s. Based on a review of recent aerial photography, it appears that several of the structures listed in the original nomination form have been lost. Without undertaking field work to document the state of the district, it is impossible to know its true condition.

Map HCR-2



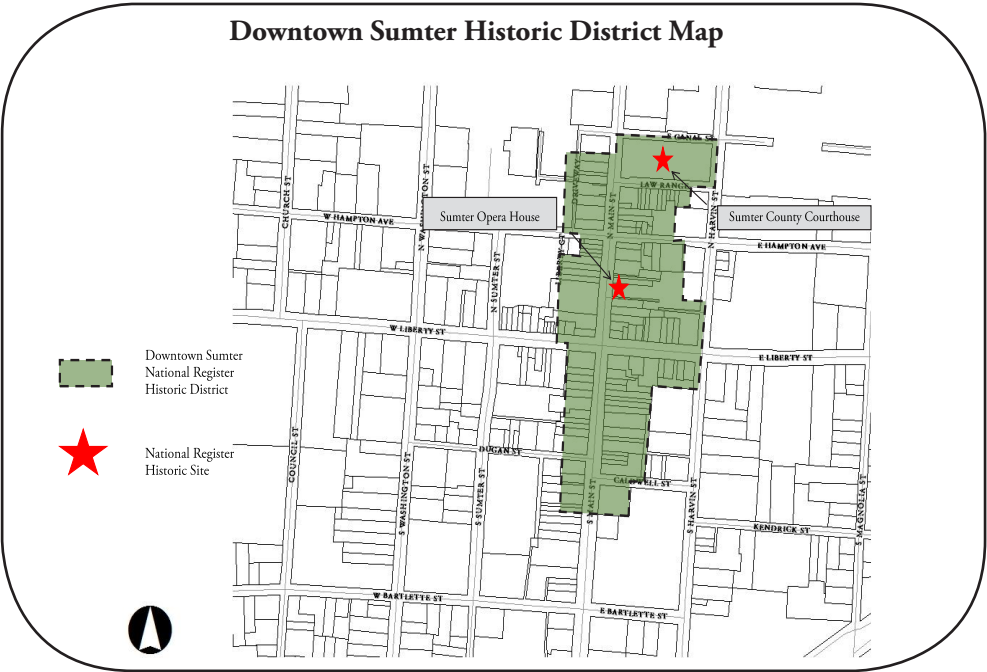
Downtown Sumter Historic District

The Downtown Sumter National Register Historic District is located within the City of Sumter Central Business District. The boundaries of this district are generally bounded by Calhoun St. to the north, Caldwell St. to the south, Harvin St. to the east, and mid-block between Main St. & Sumter St. to the west.

According to the 1975 nomination form, the Downtown Sumter Historic District consists of approximately 84 structures. The time of construction for buildings within the district ranges from 1828 to present. 21 structures can definitively be dated between 1880 and 1912, many others can be tentatively dated within this same period. The majority of the remainder of the buildings were constructed prior to 1930.

The Downtown Sumter National Register Historic District contains iconic buildings, such as the Sumter Opera House and Sumter County Courthouse that are at the fore front of the identity of the Sumter community at large. With recent revitalization and investment in the Central Business District, two significant additions have been added within district boundaries. Namely, the Hyatt-Place Hotel and the new Sumter County Economic Development Building.

Map HCR-3



Photo(s): Various Downtown Sumter locations

Local Historic Districts

Two local historic districts are present within the City of Sumter, the Hampton Park Historic District, and the Historic Downtown Design Review District. Both districts were established City Council to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public by providing a mechanism for the identification, recognition, preservation, maintenance and enhancement of existing historic and architecturally valuable structures, properties, and neighborhoods. These places serve as a visible reminder of the social, cultural, economic, political and architectural history of the City and County. In addition to the two designated local historic districts, there are neighborhoods located in the core of the City that are host to more of Sumter’s architectural history. Some of those structures predate what is currently protected by the City’s historic design review overlay.

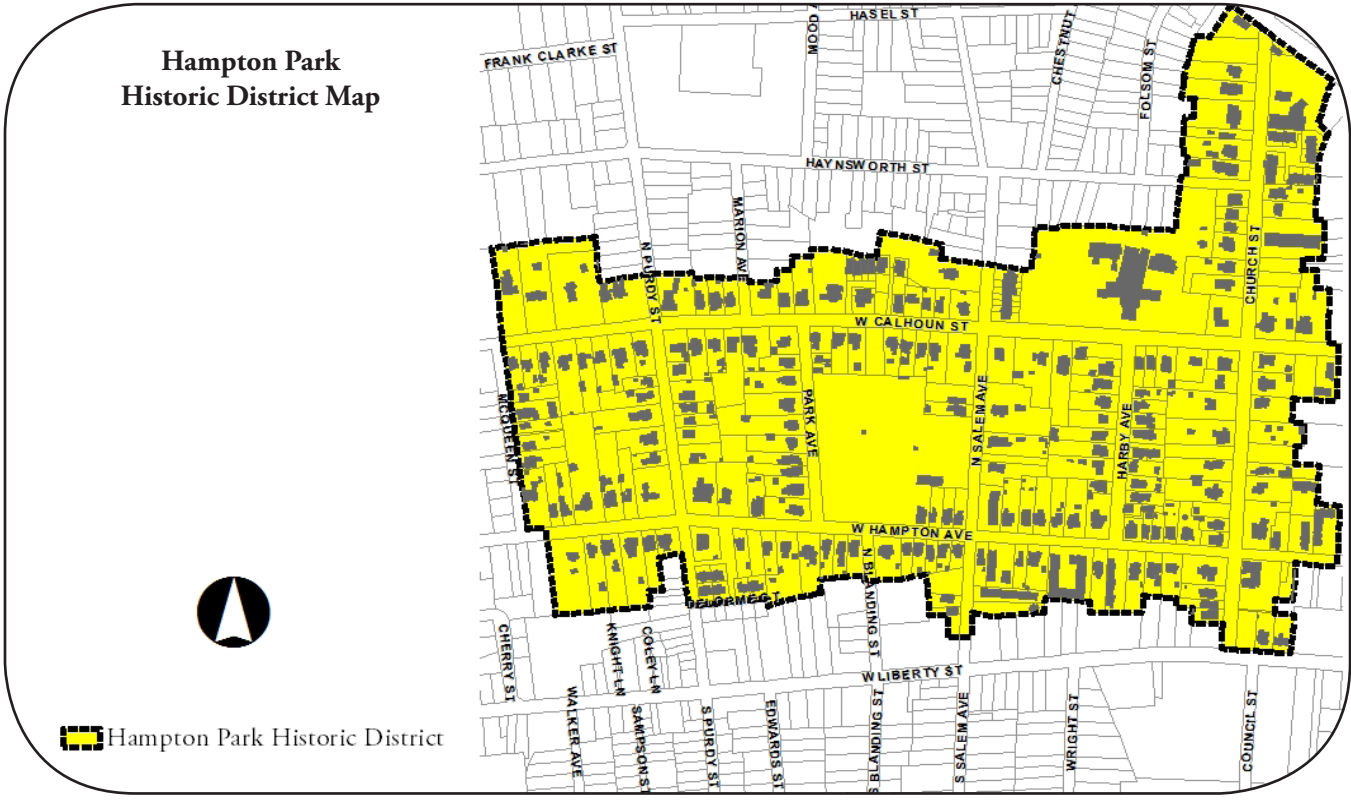
What is a Local Historic District?

A local historic district is a geographic area established by the governing body of a municipality for the protecting the historical assets of the district. Often applied as an overlay zoning district, local historic districts provide exterior design controls on new projects to insure the compatibility and protection of the historic fabric of the district. Exterior building rehabilitation, new construction, and site work are required to go before an appointed historic preservation design review committee for approval.

Hampton Park Historic District

Established by Sumter City Council in January 1979, the Hampton Park Historic District is the only primarily residential local historic district. The Hampton Park Historic District is approximately 120 acres in size and encompasses more than six city blocks. It contains 268 individual parcels and is defined geographically by Church St. to the east, Hampton Ave. to the south, McQueen St. to the west and Calhoun St. to the north.

Map HCR-4



The Hampton Park neighborhood is historic by virtue of its collection of turn of the century residential structures of nearly every conceivable architectural style - Queen Anne, Victorian, Italianate, Craftsman, Mission, and Gothic to name a few. Historian Bruce Harvey wrote, “Sumter contains a particularly rich mix of residential styles”.

The Hampton Park District is threatened today by a host of local and regional factors. The national real estate market, the local economy, permissive land use policies, absentee ownership, property neglect, suburban sprawl, perception of low quality schools, and high crime rates are among many likely causes of the slow decline of Sumter’s only local residential historic district.

For the last three decades Sumter has grown in a westerly fashion, away from the downtown and towards Shaw A.F.B. and Columbia. This suburban development pattern has had a negative effect on the Hampton Park Historic District. This westward expansion and loss of investment in Sumter’s historic residential core has taken its toll on the state of the area. The virtually unlimited supply of land, permissive annexation policies, and unconstrained utility expansion have encouraged movement away from more compact identifiable city form, which in turn has made infill development less attractive in the older residential areas of the city, like Historic Hampton Park.

Historic Downtown Design Review District

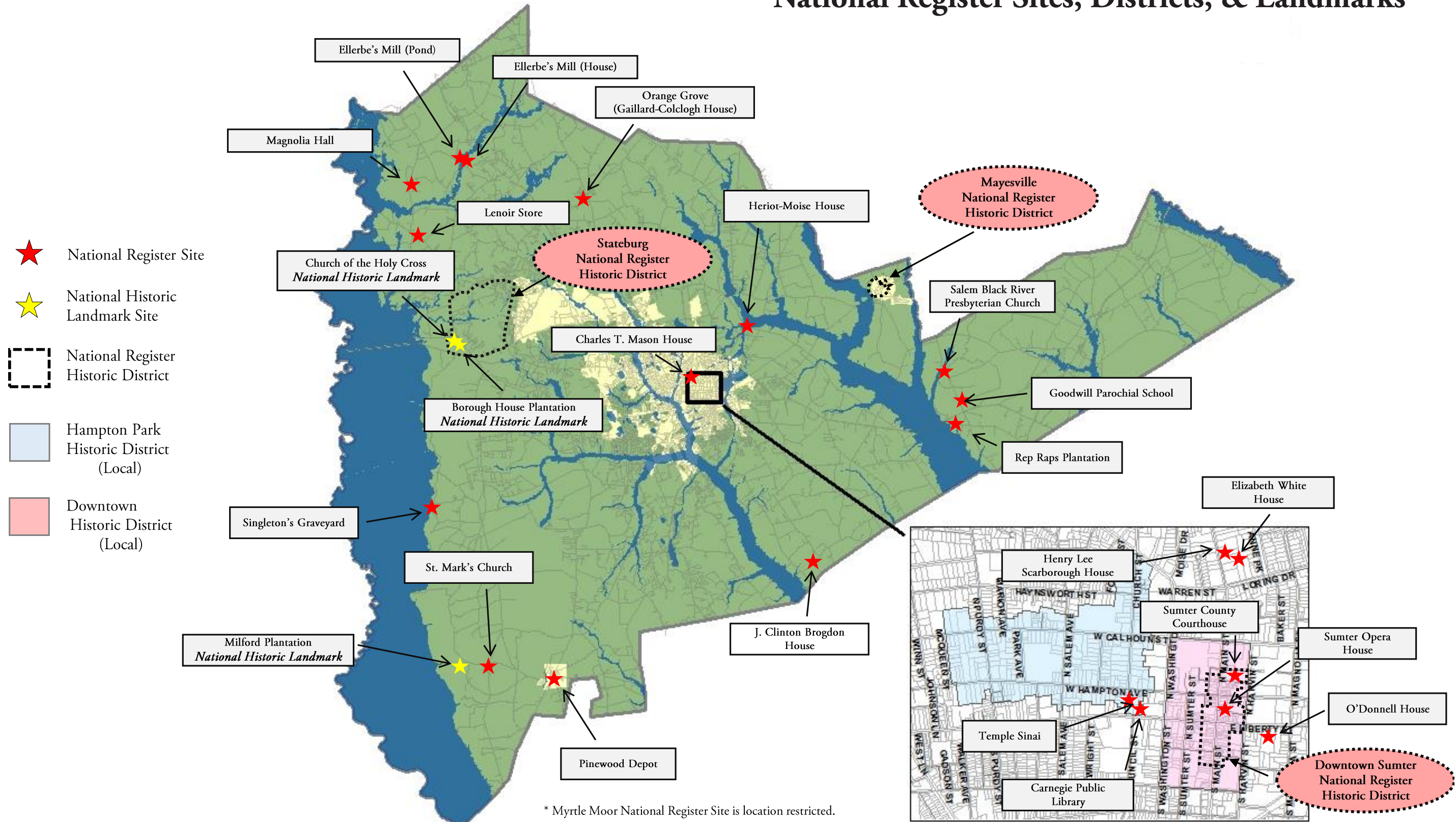
The Historic Downtown Design Review District consists of a vast majority of the Central Business District, commonly just referred to as Downtown Sumter. This area is bounded to the south by Bartlette St., to the east by Washington St., to the north by Calhoun St. and to the west Harvin St. It completely includes the Downtown Sumter National Register Historic District as well as other areas that represent the historic core of the city.

Map HCR-5



Map HCR-6

Sumter County
National Register Sites, Districts, & Landmarks



**Historic Preservation
Organizational Resources**

Sumter County Government sponsors two entities committed to historic preservation - the Sumter County Historical Commission and the Sumter County Museum. In addition to these two entities, the City of Sumter utilizes the Historic Preservation Design Review Committee, a standing Board responsible for reviewing and approving exterior designs for new construction, exterior changes to existing buildings, and building demolitions in the city's two designated historic districts.

The Sumter County Historical Commission's mission is to encourage the study and transmission of the history of Sumter County and to identify and protect its historic resources. The Commission is actively involved in several activities related to historic education and tourism as well as supporting efforts to clear and preserve old cemeteries in the County. In addition, the Commission is the coordinating agency for the state historical markers program. The Commission is responsible for erecting and maintaining the markers. The Historical Commission also has designated a standing Historic Preservation Committee. The Preservation Committee is responsible for establishing links with the State Historic Preservation Office, developing review requirements, making historic preservation/cultural impact studies part of the development process, and developing a historic preservation plan for Sumter County.

The Sumter County Museum was organized by the Sumter County Historical Society in 1972. Its mission is to promote the history of the Old Sumter District through the preservation and exhibition of objects, manuscripts, and documents, which relate the story of this area of South Carolina. The museum complex consists of 14 buildings, including the Williams-Brice House, the Old Carnegie Public Library, and Carolina Backcountry Homestead. The Sumter Genealogical and Historical Research Center is located in the Carnegie Public Library building. In 2018, the Sumter County Museum in partnership with Temple Sinai opened the Jewish History Center within the historic Temple Sinai building.

**City of Sumter
Design Review Guidelines**

In August 2017, the City of Sumter adopted updated Design Review Guidelines. The City of Sumter Historic Preservation Design Review Committee uses these guidelines to determine the compatibility and appropriateness of new projects within both the Hampton Park Historic District and the Historic Downtown Design Review District. These guidelines apply to renovations and improvements to the exterior of buildings, new building construction and demolition, signage, and any other site improvements that may impact the integrity of the district. Interior renovations and improvements do not fall under the purview of local historic district design review. While guidelines largely remained the same, the update greatly improved the quality and quantity of graphic design illustrations to assist in undertaking projects within the historic districts. Additionally, the update provides summary information on applicable National Park Service Preservation Briefs. This document is invaluable to property owners and stakeholders within Sumter's local historic districts.

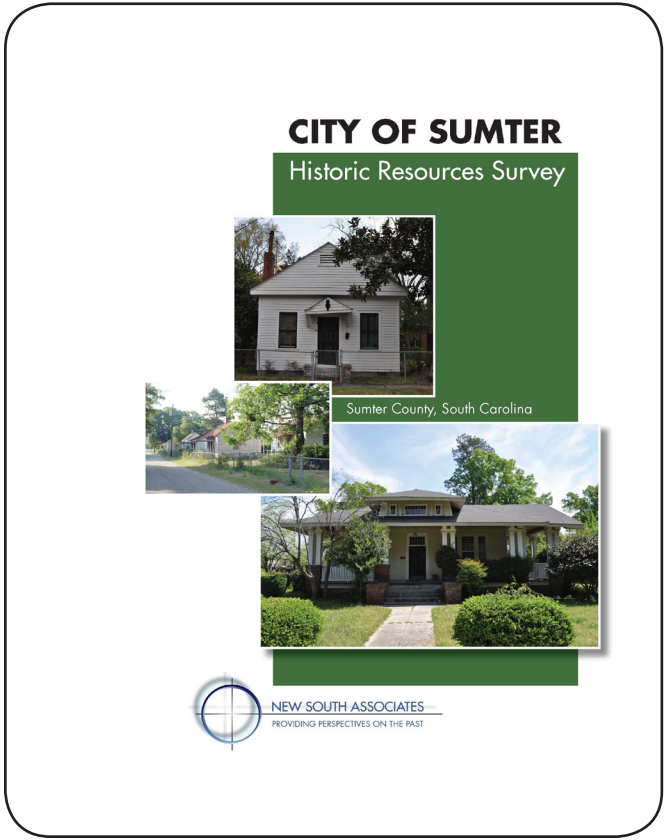


Historic Resources Survey

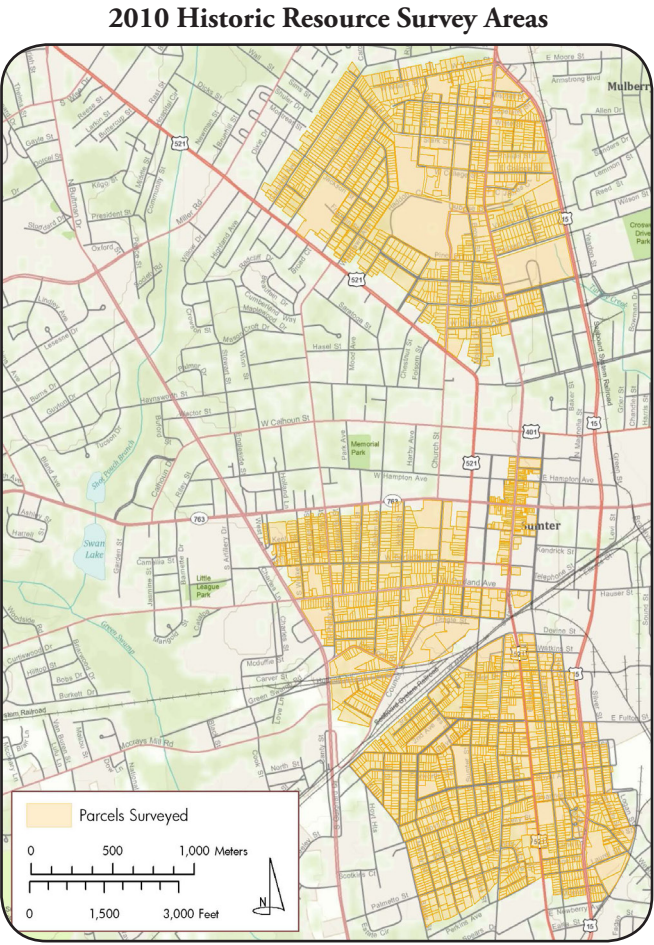
In 2010, the City of Sumter completed an historic resources survey with the intent of inventoring historic architectural resources within municipal limits. This survey builds upon a reconnaissance-level architectural assessment of the City of Sumter, which was completed in 1997.

In consultation with the South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH), three target areas were selected for an intensive pedestrian survey. According to New South Associates, the consulting firm who led efforts to complete the survey, the three target areas presented historical themes within the City of Sumter that were underrepresented in the city's collective history and represented portions of the City not protected by local, state, or federal historic designation. In addition to the intensive survey of the three target areas, the Sumter Downtown National Register Historic District was formally surveyed for the state register maintained by SCDAH.

The inventory and survey work completed shows that historical resources abound within the City of Sumter, and are not just limited to areas that are designated historic districts or that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



2010 Historic Resource Survey



Cultural Resources

There is no doubt that Sumter is rich in cultural resources represented by the buildings, structures, and sites valued for their historic significance, but Sumter is also home to a community rich in the arts. The arts community is supported by countless private organizations as well as the Sumter County Cultural Commission and the Sumter County Museum of Art. Sumter County promotes the arts through financial support for the Sumter County Cultural Commission as well as the Museum of Art.



Photo: John Berry Performing at the Sumter Opera House

The Cultural Commission provides services to local arts organizations and artists, and information to the general public. It also maintains a community cultural calendar, offers a quarterly small grant program, provides artists-in-residence in local schools, and provides opportunities for creative expression in literature, play writing, film, the visual arts, and the performing arts. The Commission’s mission is to promote, produce and provide financial support for cultural activities and arts programming for the benefit of the entire Sumter Community. Its primary focus is on celebrating the rich cultural and ethnic diversity of the community through art education, visual arts, literary arts and the performing arts. Through the Cultural Commission’s leadership role in the Sumter area arts community it encourages partnerships and coalitions between Sumter area schools and arts related organizations for the life enrichment and education of all citizens regardless of social, cultural and economic standing.

Sumter’s art community is home to multiple public and private entities dedicated to the performing and visual arts. In addition to City and County facilities, such as the Sumter Opera House and Patriot Hall, these organizations help to keep Sumter’s cultural offerings diverse:

- The Center for Oral Narration, USC Sumter
- South Carolina Traditional Arts Network, USC Sumter
- Sumter County Cultural Center, 135 - 155 Haynsworth St.
- Sumter County Gallery of Art, 200 Hasel St.
- Sumter Little Theatre, 14 Mood Ave.
- Sumter Community Concert Band, P.O. Box 2564, Sumter, SC 29151
- Sumter Civic Chorale, P.O. Box 3157, Sumter, SC 29151
- Sumter Shaw Community Concert Association, 32 E. Calhoun St.
- Manning Avenue Free Studio, 241 Manning Ave.
- USC Sumter, 200 Miller Rd.
- Morris College Fine Arts Festival
- Iris Festival
- Festival on the Avenue
- Central Carolina Technical College Gallery
- Fourth Friday Concerts, Downtown Sumter
- Amen Art Center, 426 Boulevard Rd.
- Sumter Civic Dance Company, 527 N. Guignard Dr.
- Miss Libby’s School of Dance, 155 W. Wesmark Blvd.

Historic & Cultural Resource Policies

1. The City will consider opportunities to expand or adjust local, state or federal historic designations in the City of Sumter, including but not limited to areas such as Downtown Sumter, the Hampton Park area, the Anne Park area, and Oakland and Bartlette neighborhoods. These are areas of distinct architectural and historic relevance for the City of Sumter and are in danger due to blight, abandonment, and demolition by neglect.
2. Protection of existing historic resources within the City of Sumter is a top community priority. The City will continue to pursue the protection and enhancement of the established Hampton Park Neighborhood and surrounding residential areas through zoning enforcement, implementation of the City’s property maintenance code, and stabilization of surrounding corridors.
3. The City and County will work with appropriate State and Local entities to identify and catalog additional historic and cultural resources that may be available to protect and enhance National Register and National Historic Landmark properties in the County.
4. The City and County will consider impacts on historic and cultural amenities when evaluating land use applications and projects.
5. The City will support the Sumter Design Review guidelines for the Downtown Historic District and the Hampton Park Historic District.

This page left intentionally blank