

The State of North Carolina

2025-2034 State Historic Preservation Plan



The State of North Carolina 2025 - 2034 State Historic Preservation Plan

A publication of the
North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
Office of Archives and History
Division of Historical Resources
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office

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Cover Photos:

Top Row, Left: Williford Cottage, Nags Head, Dare County. The 1934 Williford Cottage is a notable example of traditional cedar shake beach cottage architecture in the Nags Head Cottage Row Historic District. A 2021-2022 federal / state historic tax credit rehabilitation preserved the cottage for continued use by elevating the structure to match other elevated beach cottages along this barrier.

Top Row, Right: R.J. Whitley Store, Zebulon, Wake County. The two-story masonry commercial building was built in 1917 for use by R. J. Whitley's lumber business. A 2019-2022 federal / state historic tax credit rehabilitation in the newly listed Zebulon National Register Historic District upgraded the building for a coffee shop on the first floor and an office tenant upstairs.

Middle Row, Left: Streiby Congregational Church, Randolph County. Site visit by NC State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) National Register Coordinator Jeff Smith and Restoration Specialist Brett Sturm with constituents Margo Williams and Jerry Loughlin for a consultation to aid in National Register eligibility assessment and Restoration Services Branch's technical advice, both programs of the office.

Middle Row, Middle: Division of Historical Resources staff retreat, Raleigh. Held in December 2022 at the former All Saints Church in Raleigh, now an events venue, this event launched the state planning process with participation from the entire division, including State Historic Preservation Office (HPO), Office of State Archaeology (OSA), Historical Research Office, and the Eastern and Western regional offices.

Middle Row, Right: Korner's Folly, Kernersville. 2022 CLG grant project site visit by HPO staff Restoration Services Branch Supervisor Mitch Wilds, Local Government Coordinator Kristi Brantley, and Grants Coordinator Michele McCabe with representatives from Forsyth County government and its non-profit owner.

Cover Photo Bottom Row: Local Government Training for Certified Local Government Preservation Commissions, Swansboro. Participants and staff at a 2022 eastern regional training organized by HPO Local Government Coordinator Kristi Brantley and Grants Coordinator Michele McCabe.

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Vision Statement

That North Carolina's citizens, with their broad variety of backgrounds, roles, and aspirations, work together to support the identification, protection, and enhancement of the State's historic resources, which provide deep roots to support future development, help us better understand ourselves and others, and offer a sustainable tool to ensure stewardship of our State's history, economic growth, and a better future.

Mission Statement

The mission of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office is to help the state's citizens, private organizations, and public agencies identify, protect, and enhance North Carolina's historic resources and communities through a coordinated program of incentives and technical assistance for today and future generations.

Foreword

With deep appreciation for your interest in our state's rich history and unique historic communities, I invite you to enjoy and embrace the vision set by the State of North Carolina's official statewide historic preservation plan for 2025 through 2034, prepared by the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, the official state agency for historic preservation in North Carolina. Our state has a broad and ever-growing network of preservation constituents and advocates, and this plan reflects the input of North Carolinians just like you, from ordinary citizens to investors to members of not-for-profit organizations to government officials.

Why is a statewide historic preservation plan important? Our cultural history – available to all of us through our architecture, our landscapes, and our archaeological heritage – collectively give us our sense of place. Together they provide us with the context for our daily lives and one worth stewarding for today and future generations. Our latest plan gives us a compelling direction for how we can collaboratively preserve and steward the most valuable reminders of our shared history from Murphy to Manteo. Our plan endeavors to set clear, achievable goals for the next ten years that support community enhancement and economic vitality through the preservation of our state's legacy assets – its historic architecture and landscapes, and archaeological heritage. Ultimately, then, this plan is meant to serve as a guide for maintaining and enhancing the quality of life and recognizing the contributions of historic preservation in your community.

Like other states, North Carolina faces new challenges and opportunities that will continue to have an impact on the lives of its citizens. It is therefore important that we continue to emphasize as our basic mission a dedication to public service and efficiency. We strive to serve you enthusiastically and expertly with comprehensive information and services to enable you to go about preserving the landmarks, buildings, neighborhoods, landscapes and places left to us by past generations. We will focus on core objectives, such as continuing to identify, recognize, and enhance our historic communities by fostering local preservation efforts; growing and maintaining partnerships; providing expert assistance and support to North Carolinians for their historic preservation efforts; creating jobs and improving the economy through historic preservation rehabilitation projects; and encouraging a statewide appreciation for preservation of our state's history and the history of all North Carolinians.

As this plan acknowledges, we cannot accomplish much in the direction it points without your help. I invite all of you – from longtime friends to new and potential partners – to embrace and implement the elements of this plan to the greatest extent you are able. Through historic preservation we can all keep North Carolina the best place to call home. On behalf of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, I thank you for your interest in North Carolina's history and your commitment to preserving it for today and future generations.

Sincerely,

Dr. Darin Waters

State Historic Preservation Officer

Executive Summary

Required by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and as a condition of ongoing federal grant support from the Historic Preservation Fund, and pursuant to NC GS § 121-8, the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) through the State Historic Preservation Office prepares a decennial statewide historic preservation plan to constitute official State policy for the preservation, and the encouragement of the preservation, of important historic, architectural, archaeological, and other cultural properties in North Carolina. In turn, this plan sets goals and strategies to inform DNCR's work, particularly that of the State Historic Preservation Office and Office of State Archaeology, and serves as an aspirational document for preservation partners in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. This plan was created over a two-year public input period with final approval by the North Carolina Historical Commission, comprised of gubernatorial appointees. This plan is in effect from 2025 through 2034.

Importance of historic preservation. Recognizing the importance of historic preservation – and by extension, the shared humanity and dignity of the individuals who have come before us – today and into the future has been the foundation of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office's mission since its inception. Most of the individuals surveyed for this plan believe that preserving the tangible evidence of our state's history and those who lived it plays an important role in maintaining their individual communities' identity. Furthermore, historic preservation was seen as fostering a sense of shared history and providing us with an orientation to the present and to the future.

Beyond the intangible are historic preservation's economic contributions, ranging from heritage tourism to meaningful private investments in historic buildings, exceeding \$3 billion alone for historic tax credit projects since 1976. These efforts often support greater economic development in both rural and urban communities. Historic preservation helps to ensure the continuing authenticity and attraction of North Carolina as a unique place.

North Carolina's Historic and Cultural Resources. Our state's historic and cultural resources reflect the long and varied history of human habitation in North Carolina, spanning more than 12,000 years of human habitation, and includes indigenous settlements and sacred sites, places associated with the earliest European and African contact, and places of more recent history. The important role of multiple themes dominate, including agriculture; industry (particularly textile, tobacco, and furniture production); growth of transportation networks; spiritual practices by many various faith traditions; the military's presence; education; urbanization; and recreation and tourism. The recent past since WWII is also of particular note. Individual landmarks as well as historic districts represent the footprint of the past throughout the state, and residential neighborhoods and commercial districts boasting concentrations of historic buildings. Both archaeological and above-ground resources are encompassed in this plan.

Public feedback. The plan’s foundation is the public feedback received through both survey and listening sessions, and serve as a framework for the goals and strategies for 2025-2034.

- Overwhelmingly, the public acknowledged the rapidly changing nature of North Carolina, recognizing that the **“sense of place”**, so foundational to defining the state’s identity, and accordingly that of its communities and citizens, is a source of orientation, social cohesion, shared memory, mutual respect, and pride. “Sense of place” is critical to identifying and informing the very threats to and opportunities for historic preservation in North Carolina.
- Feedback painted the picture of **two North Carolinas** – one with great economic vitality and dynamism fueled by new residents and development that reshape the very appearance of a place within a short time, and another where abandonment and neglect reflect economic disinvestment and shrinking and shifting populations. Some worried that ignorance of a place’s history – what is unknown or unrecognized – may lead to **apathy and less appreciation for historic places**. Loss of a sense of personal and community identity was also seen to threaten an equal sense of belonging, concepts that touch deeply on individuals’ self-identity.
- **Development pressures** ranked high in both the survey and listening sessions as a critical concern. On one hand, respondents acknowledged that not all development is bad development, and that **development that collaborated with historic preservation efforts was often a positive force in their communities**. Likewise, development signals economic activity in an area and can guard against abandonment and neglect of historic buildings and places; many historic tax credit projects are development projects, contained within and using a historic building. Historic preservation was seen as an **economic driver** for many communities, including maintaining and ensuring a core of heritage tourism venues, and an underrecognized source of affordable housing. **Natural disasters** were also flagged as an **emerging threat to historic preservation efforts**.
- What we are *not* preserving or not preserving *well* that should be preserved confirmed corollaries to concern over rapid development and change. A triad of places topped survey responses, leading with **farms and rural landscapes, cemeteries and burying grounds, and natural / scenic landscapes**. Interestingly, the third most popular response was not a place but rather a means to record history – **oral histories**. Respondents saw the threats to these sorts of historic places as linked to the transformation of once undeveloped areas into new housing as well as commercial and industrial developments.
- Overall, **the State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) and Office of State Archaeology (OSA)** were urged **to continue their efforts to make more people aware of preservation values** and, if possible, to increase that effort. As to **what DNCR should do to further preservation**, participants related **that staff outreach, training and expertise** together with an **ability and willingness to partner with third parties** were welcome strengths. Constituents warned that **lack of staff capacity** – related to understaffing and high workload – **threatens effectiveness**.

- The question – *what one thing would you like to do in your role that you believe would enhance preservation efforts in North Carolina in the next 10 years?* – revealed a deep interest in continuing **public engagement with as broad a swath of the public as possible**. Education was seen as the key to fostering a fundamental knowledge of the various communities throughout the state, and in turn an understanding of the unique sense of place in a particular locale.
- Program staff within DNCR’s Division of Historical Resources echoed public observations, acknowledging **many competing priorities, need for technology and digitization investments, broad expertise paired with resilience and strong partnerships**. Fewer preservation professionals available to take on the work represents a ready threat along with loss of institutional memory from retirement of long-serving staff. The **passion for the work of preservation and a strong public service commitment** were deeply held strengths that aid the public and historic preservation goals. **New and greater collaborations** in support of historic preservation with multiple sectors and **heightened communications** with others were seen as opportunities.

Based on the feedback, the **primary threats** to successful preservation within North Carolina have not largely changed from our last plan cycle: **lack of awareness and funding**. What has come to the forefront even more is the **rapid pace of change in the state** because of new development, matched only by change because of lack of investment, and **the threat to a larger “sense of place” that varies widely from community to community**.

Vision, strategies and goals for 2025-2034.

The Vision: *That North Carolina’s citizens, with their broad variety of backgrounds, roles, and aspirations, work together to support the identification, protection, and enhancement of the State’s historic resources, which provide deep roots to support future development, help us better understand ourselves and others, and offer a sustainable tool to ensure stewardship of our State’s history, economic growth, and a better future.*

Incorporating the public input gathered through our “plan the plan” process, the plan adopts the following goal areas with more specific objectives with action items designed to make those goal objectives a reality or to strengthen current efforts and programs in years to come:

GOAL 1 Outreach/Communication

OBJECTIVE 1 **Heighten the public’s knowledge of the HPO’s role as the State’s official historic preservation agency**

- Increase the social media profile of the HPO together with that of OSA

- Create and distribute “flyers” that highlight new National Register listings, key rehabilitation tax credit projects, CLGs, grant awards, and historic preservation success stories
- Better integrate the news and services of HPO and OSA through the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources’ marketing department

OBJECTIVE 2 Expand access to HPO services and incentives to increase participation in historic preservation efforts across North Carolina

- Work efficiently with local and regional partners to offer historic preservation educational opportunities that are widely publicized
- Continue to host an annual planner workshop for local preservation staffs
- Create and offer an approved realtor training curriculum for historic preservation
- Participate and make presentations at allied professional conferences, such as North Carolina Planning Association, etc.

OBJECTIVE 3 Continue building a constituency that supports historic preservation as a civic virtue vital to community development, economic vitality, and quality of life

- Engage people across the state through awareness, events, education and technical assistance programs
- Seek out new constituencies among realtors, attorneys, local government officials, neighborhood groups, planners, youth, all demographic groups including American Indian tribes and Native peoples, and small businesses and provide targeted information and training opportunities for them, including continuing education credits
- Encourage local preservation groups and historical societies to foster incorporation of local history into K-12 curriculum and to establish local historic field trip opportunities (like Tarheels Go Walking in Wilmington)

GOAL 2 Partnerships

OBJECTIVE 1 Enhance and nurture existing HPO partnerships

- Encourage non-Certified Local Governments to move towards certification, increasing participation in the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program
- Partner with preservation funding entities to connect funders and preservation advocates
- Continue to work with internal state government partners within the Departments of Natural and Cultural Resources, Commerce, Agriculture and Consumer Services, Transportation, and Public Safety
- Strengthen existing relationships with Tribes and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and representatives of Native peoples, including but not limited to continuing NAGPRA repatriation efforts

OBJECTIVE 2 Develop new partnerships to leverage the HPO's impact and broaden all North Carolinians' participation in historic preservation efforts

- Develop and foster mentorship program for local government planners
- Develop and conduct realtor training on historic preservation matters
- Foster greater partnerships with and among local historic cemetery stewards
- Seek opportunities to collaborate with other state agencies when funding sources are layered and streamline applications and reviews if possible
- Maintain existing and explore new partnerships with land trusts, environmental groups, county governments, tribal entities, and property owners on opportunities for preserving neighborhoods, open space, farmland, and other historic and cultural resources as a revitalization and growth management strategy
- Build new relationships with Tribes and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and representatives of Native peoples, including but not limited to continuing NAGPRA repatriation efforts

GOAL 3 Identification/Designation

OBJECTIVE 1 Identify the state's historic resources so that they become better known and understood and are incorporated into community, regional, and state planning

- Maintain data entry and mapping for HPOWEB
- With OSA, continue development of an archaeological equivalent to HPOWEB, taking into account the special issues of site location and security
- As priority survey areas for undocumented areas or those in need of an update, survey Alexander, Anson, Avery, Bladen, Caldwell, Columbus, Dare, Graham, Madison, Mitchell, Moore, Robeson, Swain, Tyrrell, Warren, and Wilkes counties, including un-surveyed municipalities within those counties, to work towards fulfilling the long-term goal of completion of a comprehensive architectural survey for all 100 NC counties
- Proactively document historic places, particularly those previously unsurveyed or newly historic, to support local planning efforts, redevelopment, and compliance review
- Continue to work to identify neighborhoods within previously surveyed cities and towns that were not surveyed or surveyed adequately during the HPO's first round of surveys in the 1970s and 1980s
- Continue to make available and update the digital application for architectural field surveys

OBJECTIVES 2.1 AND 2.2

After appropriate evaluation, designate eligible historic resources through the National Park Service (NPS) and/or other programs to allow for greater recognition, access to preservation incentives, and probability of survival

Foster identification and designation efforts at the local level and for all North Carolinians

- Encourage National Historic Landmark nominations for meritorious properties
- Encourage more National Register nominations with an archaeological focus
- Identify, with land conservation partners, areas worthy of preservation for their historic landscapes as well as historic buildings and/or archaeological resources
- Work to foster a holistic, all-encompassing representation of North Carolina communities and people through National Register nominations
- Investigate funding sources for non-CLG governments for preservation projects, including National Register nomination

OBJECTIVE 3 Make decades of research, survey, and information about North Carolina’s historic resources as accessible as possible, utilizing cutting-edge technology

- Endeavor to secure funding for proposal to digitize HPO architectural history files, which includes scanning files and creating a web portal for the database, and execute the proposal
- Continue providing historic resource data that is easily discoverable and easily incorporated by constituents into their own projects
- Fill existing gap in recordation and recognition through identification and encouragement of meritorious survey and designation projects, and encourage incorporation of oral history in these projects
- Complete and maintain the OSA Cemetery GIS layer

GOAL 4 Education/Technical Services

OBJECTIVE 1 Provide timely and expert assistance on matters related to historic preservation in North Carolina

- Offer more historic preservation workshops and training through webinars and similar technological services
 - Preservation 101s
 - Cemeteries

- As time and budgets permit, provide on-site assistance to individuals, groups, or governmental agencies involved in preservation projects
- Provide technical assistance from the state Highway Historical Marker Program to foster local historical marker programs in individual municipal or county jurisdictions

OBJECTIVE 2 Increase the number of quality preservation projects

- Conduct a pre-CLG grant application webinar to solicit more applications
- Work with constituents to provide technical support and assistance regarding historic tax credit and grant projects

OBJECTIVE 3 Provide technical support for resilience and natural hazard adaptation efforts in historic communities

- Collaborate as invited with North Carolina communities to provide assistance for cultural heritage documentation, mitigation strategies, and adaptation of historic places
- Support the incorporation of historic and cultural resources in the development of local hazard mitigation plans
 - Encourage local disaster mitigation plans to include a complete inventory of historic and cultural resources susceptible to disaster risks along with those that present the greatest estimated financial and replacement loss to the community in order to understand preservation priorities in the aftermath of a disaster
- Foster wide knowledge and use of the Historic Resilience Project deliverables developed in partnership with the UNC – School of Government and NC State University for greater knowledge of resilience and natural hazard adaptation techniques, especially for community development directors and emergency management personnel, preservation partners, public facility managers, museums and tourism site operators, and owners of historic properties
- Develop case studies to demonstrate adaptation strategies of historic buildings and communities
- Conduct periodic training and orientations on integrating historic preservation with local disaster planning
- Encourage risk assessment practices for locally funded preservation projects to avoid preventable damage to historic and cultural resources, such as fires caused by human error
- Partner and collaborate with state agencies, local colleges and universities, counties and councils of government, and municipalities on updating GIS data and mapping that

incorporates historic and cultural resources and their locations in floodplains or disaster risk areas

- Make GIS-based mapping of historic resources in disaster-prone areas widely available and accessible to property owners and preservation partners
- Use previously prepared base maps for documenting hazard areas and the location of historic and cultural resources when GIS technologies are not available locally
- Utilize GIS and survey data on historic properties and resources as part of disaster recovery efforts, in particular regarding decision-making on which historic properties may be worthwhile for repair and rehabilitation.
- Update property surveys and GIS mapping as needed and feasible as updates and revisions occur to local disaster preparedness plans.

OBJECTIVE 4 Support efforts to train future generations in historic trades, skills, craftsmanship, and public history

- Offer meaningful internships that provide a professional experience and result in a useful product or tool
- Jointly sponsor hands-on workshops in the preservation trades/crafts
- Convene a statewide gathering to seek solutions to lack of historic tradespeople,
- Work with larger parent agency and educational partners – including State History Day program, and colleges and university – to incorporate historic preservation, public history, and archaeology career path presentations into curriculums, career fairs, and mentoring, including making Division staff available for class lectures in appropriate disciplines
- Convene agency discussion regarding possibility of periodic Youth Summit for public history
- Continue to participate in field school and lecture opportunities with North Carolina public and private universities, such as the UNC-Greensboro field schools in Wilson and archaeological field schools at state-owned properties.
- Training of Historic Sites / Parks staff in historic preservation matters with an encouragement towards historic architectural / archaeological surveys of State Parks' holdings
- Establish an annual internship program for all sections within the Division of Historical Resources

GOAL 5 Advocacy

OBJECTIVE 1 Help protect North Carolina’s historic and archaeological resources

- Work with local, state, and federal agencies to incorporate consideration of historic properties and archaeological sites into early project planning
- Make available HPOWEB GIS to all governmental agencies for incorporation into their GISs and use in local planning
- Monitor easements acquired on tracts through Save America’s Treasures, Preserve America, or battlefield protection grants
- Offer training workshops/presentations on Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and NC General Statue 121-12(a) for agencies, consultants, commissions, and others
- Encourage all North Carolinians to cultivate support for historic preservation among elected officials
- Advocate for the use of CDBG and other funding sources to support housing rehabilitation and conservation of affordable historic housing

OBJECTIVE 2 Foster public input into required review of administrative rules

- Work with the North Carolina Historical Commission and the public through the periodic administrative rules review process to draft common sense administrative rules for the Division of Historical Resources that foster and support historic preservation efforts in North Carolina

Implementation and next steps. This plan also outlines outreach approaches and tracking for implementation of the plan.

Appendices. Appendix A outlines the accomplishments during the last decennial plan cycle, and Appendix B are raw survey responses from the public.