

Cultural Resources

preserving and expanding

Charleston is well-known for its unique history and abundance of cultural resources. The City is a major port and a popular destination for visitors, and as Charleston's *Preservation Plan* states, "Historic preservation is an integral part of Charleston's history and will continue to inspire the City's vision and its approach to planning and development."¹

Historic Preservation

Founded in 1663 by English colonists, Charleston is home to hundreds of historic houses, churches, cathedrals, synagogues and cemeteries. In downtown Charleston, 1,785 acres are a part of the National Register Historic District. Eighteenth and nineteenth century homes, public buildings, and commercial structures populate the district. However, the City limits stretch well beyond Charleston Peninsula into West Ashley, the Cainhoy Peninsula, Daniel, James, Morris, and Johns Islands. A few well known cultural venues in the City limits include: the Battery, Charles Towne Landing, Waterfront Park, the City Market, King Street, Hampton Park, and Daniel Island Town Center.

National Register sites, districts, and other landmarks are also located throughout the City, such as historic plantations, a number of

The City of Charleston Preservation Plan—Ten Tenets of the Charleston Vision²

1. **Historic preservation is an integral part** of Charleston's history and will continue to inspire the City's vision and its approach to planning and development.
2. Charleston will sustain its rich and dynamic cultural heritage by **retaining its long-standing communities**. Housing affordability is a crucial part of this effort.
3. Charleston will look like Charleston, with recognition that the city's eras of development each have a **distinct and valuable character**, which collectively represent the continuity of its rich history.
4. The peninsula will continue to grow as a **dense and diverse urban community** consistent with its historic development patterns.
5. The **natural landscapes** in Charleston are important parts of the city's cultural and environmental heritage. These landscapes will be protected with planning and conservation tools.
6. Suburban neighborhoods are the potential historic resources of the future. They will be treated accordingly, with the goal of **reducing sprawl** through development consistent with traditional patterns.
7. **Dense urban architecture and infill development** will be encouraged where infrastructure supports such development. Publicly accessible open space is central to successful development.
8. Charleston's historic architecture sets a high and challenging standard. This tradition of **high-quality architecture** and building materials will be required in all projects in the city.
9. Charleston's policies will encourage a **balance of diverse, appropriate, and compatible uses** to make it a truly living city with continuing neighborhood vitality and livability.
10. Charleston will be a responsible **steward of its environment, both built and natural**: environmental and cultural sustainability will be considered in planning decisions that affect development.



North Central



Citadel Square Baptist Church



Wagener Terrace (Source: Preservation Plan)

Civil War era (and pre-Civil War) forts and archaeological sites. The City now recognizes that there are also numerous older neighborhoods in Charleston eligible for National Register status. In 2008, the City adopted the *Preservation Plan*, wherein the City proposes changes to the existing districts, to include these neighborhoods and parts of West Ashley, Johns Island and Cainhoj (see map of “Charleston Preservation Plan’s Proposed Changes to Protected Areas”). Area character appraisals for these neighborhoods and areas are currently underway.

The *Preservation Plan* (a.k.a. “Vision | Community | Heritage”) also presents key stewardship principles, growth and sprawl issues, diversity of place visions, historic neighborhoods descriptions, and new paths for preservation in sustainability, archaeology, housing affordability and disaster preparedness/recovery. Recommendations presented in the *Preservation Plan* mirror those that the City wishes to support in comprehensive planning.

Benefits and Challenges

Preserving historic buildings is essential to understanding the City and nation’s heritage. In addition, it is an environmentally responsible practice, develops an economy for heritage

tourism, creates jobs, and can boost property values. Charleston has found that preservation is a natural way to conserve resources by reducing new infrastructure, and recycling materials, and reusing existing structures.

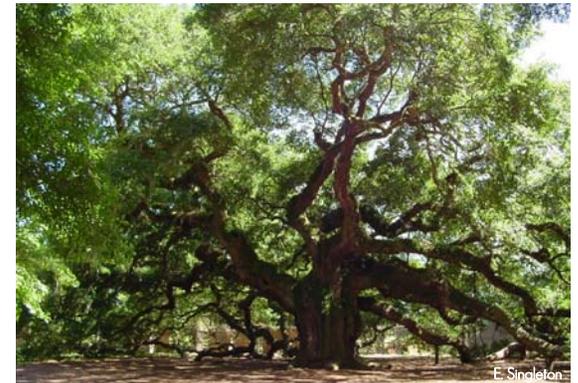
However, preservation is not without its challenges. Unprecedented growth in Charleston’s history and projections for future growth, threaten the City’s cultural resources. The *Century V Plan*, *Preservation Plan*, *Charleston Green Plan* and other planning initiatives have established practical steps in transportation, planning, and infrastructure to help overcome this challenge. **This comprehensive plan update aims to reinforce and build on these steps to overcome not only the challenges of growth, but also affordability, sustainability, and even natural disasters.**

Beyond the Buildings

Aside from preserving manmade structures, Charleston is home to many beautifully preserved and maintained gardens, plantations, farms and live oak trees. In West Ashley, tourists and residents alike enjoy the plantation districts, including Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, Middleton Place, and Drayton Hall. On Johns Island stands the majestic Angel Oak. Estimated to be as much as 1400-1500



Charleston Farmers Market, Marion Square Downtown

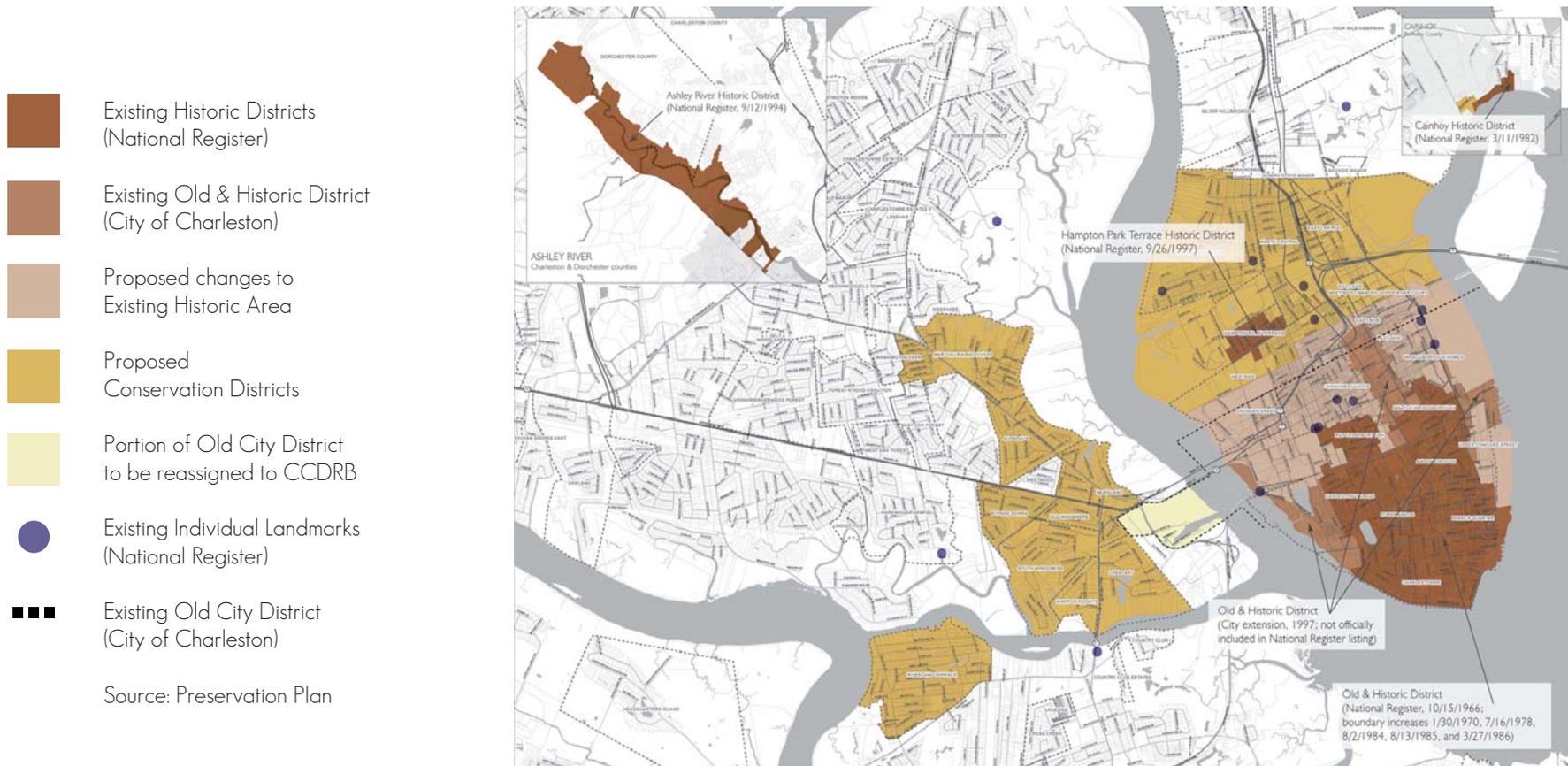


Angel Oak, Johns Island



Drayton Hall, West Ashley

Charleston Preservation Plan's Proposed Changes to Protected Areas



Proposed changes to protected areas, including historic districts expansions and conservation districts creations.

The passage of time, additional research, and an assertive annexation policy have resulted in a greater number of buildings in the City being recognized as potential historic resources. The *Preservation Plan* proposes changes in the protected areas of Charleston to include expanded historic districts and new conservation district. The Mid-Peninsula, Upper Peninsula, West Ashley, and James and Johns Islands contain built resources that speak to the city's history. Though some of these resources may be less traditionally "historic" than the Lower Peninsula, they should be recognized and protected. The above map illustrates the new areas being proposed. (Source: *Preservation Plan*)



Piccolo Spoleto Concert at Custom House Steps



Riverdogs game at "The Joseph P. Riley, Jr. Baseball Stadium



South Carolina Aquarium

years old; the tree towers 65 feet high, has a circumference of 25.5 feet, and an area of shade spreading over 17,000 square feet.

Downtown nestled beneath beautiful trees of Marion Square, the Farmers Market comes to life each Saturday morning and offers an abundance of the freshest local produce, plants, herbs and crafts. Also supporting the local economy and promoting sustainability, Daniel Island hosts its own Thursday Farmers Market. One is expected to open in West Ashley in 2010.

Artistic Expression

The City of Charleston also has many artistic resources. The City of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs is responsible for providing access to the arts for all citizens. It advocates the work of local artists, performers, and writers; supports and serves as a convening agency for local arts organizations; partners with Charleston County Schools to provide arts education opportunities; and works on several major events. Events include Spoleto USA, Piccolo Spoleto, MOJA festival, Annual Food and Wine Festival, Charleston Fashion Week, Southeastern Wildlife Exposition and the Cooper River Bridge Run. There also are numerous performing arts companies in the

City utilizing performance venues such as the newly renovated Dock Street Theater, Gaillard Auditorium, and the College of Charleston. In 2010, the City announced its plans to revitalize the Gaillard Auditorium into a world class performing arts center and exhibition hall, and included plans to expand the building footprint to house most City of Charleston general offices.

Special Attractions

A number of professional, minor league, and amateur sports teams including the Riverdogs baseball team and Battery soccer team reside in Charleston. Other attractions include the South Carolina Aquarium (opened in 2000), Family Circle Cup Stadium (opened in 2001), and the The Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge (opened in 2005). The City also houses a number of significant museums as well, such as the Charleston Museum (the nation's oldest), the Gibbes Museum of Art, the Children's Museum, and future home of the International African American Museum. In addition, many historic houses in the City serve as house museums, profiling significant architectural styles and historic events.

Cultural Resources Goals

Charleston will sustain its rich and dynamic cultural heritage.

Recommendations

1. Build, maintain and preserve an array of first class cultural facilities and sites.
2. Support and implement recommendations from the Charleston Preservation Plan including landscape scale preservation efforts on Johns Island and the Cainhoy Peninsula.
3. Encourage public and private investment in cultural preservation, development and diversity.
4. Support the growth and development of Charleston's arts community.
5. Support policies, incentives and plans that encourage and stimulate preservation and growth of cultural resource opportunities, including the economy for heritage tourism.

NOTE: Specific recommendations for the cultural resources element were not outlined in the 2000 Century V Plan.

Sources

¹*Vision | Community | Heritage: A Preservation Plan for Charleston, SC.* City of Charleston. Page 6. Adopted 2008.

²Ibid.

