

Appendix B: Historic Preservation Chapter



NEW HISTORY

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION CHAPTER FOR THE CITY OF ALBERT LEA

September 2020



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A NOTE ON THIS DOCUMENT

The “finalized” version of the chapter is intended to be integrated into the upcoming Albert Lea Comprehensive Plan, which is anticipated for adoption in 2021/2022. It is anticipated that the “finalized” version of the chapter will be reviewed and potentially revised as the larger Comprehensive Plan is developed and the two documents are integrated.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THIS CHAPTER

Alter or Alteration: a change to the exterior of an existing Building, Structure, or feature that modifies its original appearance or construction with a change of material.

Building: any Structure having a roof supported by columns or walls intended for the shelter or enclosure of persons or property. When roofed structures are separated from each other by party walls and having no openings for passage, each separate portion shall be deemed a separate Building.

Contributing Resource: a Building, Site, Structure, or Object that adds to the historic architectural qualities or archaeological values for which a property or Historic District is considered significant.

Demolition: any act or process that destroys in part or in whole a historic resource. This includes the removal of any material constituting part of a structure that affects the exterior appearance of the structure, other than for purposes of ordinary maintenance or repair, as well as inadequate maintenance or any other action that reduces the stability or longevity of a structure or impairs its historic or architectural integrity.

Demolition By Neglect: the long-term neglect of a historic structure that contributes to a level of dilapidation so severe that rehabilitation of the structure no longer serves as a viable option and Demolition must be considered on account of the public health, safety and welfare.

Demolition Permit: a building permit that authorizes the demolition or removal of an existing Building or Structure from a site.

Designated Property: a property listed on the Inventory, and further categorized as either a Historic Property, Potential Historic Property, or Historic District.

Heritage Preservation: the process of identifying, preserving, and protecting buildings, sites, objects, and landscapes that are of historical and cultural significance.

Integrity: the ability of a property to convey its significance relative to the aspects of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship and association.

Historic District: a geographically definable area, possessing identified historically significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of a Site, Building, Structure, or Object united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

Historic Property: a Building, Site, Structure, or Object that is determined to be so essential to the historic fabric of the City and has a demonstrated quality of significance that it receives historic designation.

Non-Contributing Resource: a Building, Site, Structure, or Object that does not contribute to the historic architectural qualities or archaeological values for which a Historic District is considered significant.

Object: construction other than a Building or Structure that is primarily artistic in nature or small in scale and simply constructed. It may be by nature or design movable, but it is associated with a specific setting and environment.

Rehabilitation: making a Building or Structure sound and usable without attempting to restore it to a particular period appearance while retaining the character-defining features.

Relocation: moving a Building or Structure from its original historically significant or existing location to another location.

Repair: the limited replacement in kind—or with compatible substitute material—of extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features when there are surviving prototypes (for example, brackets, dentils, steps, plaster, or portions of slate or tile roofing).

Restore: the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period.

Significance: the documented importance of a property for its contribution to or representation of broad patterns of national, regional, or local history, architecture, engineering, archaeology and culture.

Site: the location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity of a Building or Structure, whether standing, ruined or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic, cultural or archaeological value regardless of the value of any existing Structure.

Standards: the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties.

Structure: a combination of materials to form construction for use, occupancy, or ornamentation, whether installed on, above, or below the surface of land or water.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last 15 years, Albert Lea has enjoyed increasing momentum related to the preservation and revitalization of its Commercial Historic District. The district is designated as a historic resource by the City of Albert Lea and also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It encompasses 91 buildings and is an important economic and tourism driver for the City of Albert Lea.

The activity in the Albert Lea Commercial Historic District has been no accident – rather it is the result of the City's concentrated and thoughtful approach to historic preservation.

The objectives, policies, and actions laid out in this chapter seek to build on the existing success in the Commercial Historic District by providing a framework for historic preservation planning efforts in Albert Lea over the next 15 years. Overall, the chapter is organized into objectives, policies, and actions to be undertaken during two working periods – the immediate future (2021-2031) and the farther future (2026-2036):

- 1) Build upon the existing strategies and successes that are in place for the downtown Commercial Historic District (2021-2031)
- 2) Lay the groundwork for future preservation efforts outside the existing district. (2026-2036)

RECENT ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSES

- Over 50 **Certificates of Appropriateness** have been reviewed and acted on by the Albert Lea Heritage Preservation Commission since 2015
- Nearly **\$250,000 in Broadway Ridge Grant Funds** (for façade improvements to buildings within the Commercial Historic District) have been distributed since 2015. Projects completed include repointing, window repair and replacement, and signage updates.
- In 2017, **Albert Lea hosted PreserveMN**, the state-wide historic preservation conference.
- In 2006, the City invested \$2,000,000 in the **Freeborn Bank Building** for repointing, window replacement, roof replacement, skylight work, and upgrades to water, sewer and electrical in the building. In 2017, Mortarr, a tech start-up, purchased the first two floors of the building, bringing 34 jobs to downtown Albert Lea. (The Freeborn Bank Building is located at the left of the image below).
- In 2017 - 2018, the City **installed wayfinding signs in downtown Albert Lea**. The project was funded by a Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage (Legacy Grant).
- In 2019 Albert Lea hosted for the first time the **Governor's Fishing Opener**. This event showcased the town as a vacation destination.



A view of the Albert Lea Commercial Historic District.

OVERVIEW OF ALBERT LEA HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT¹

The community of Albert Lea was established in the mid-nineteenth century along the shores of Albert Lea Lake. The name of the lake, later applied to the settlement, was chosen in honor of Lieutenant Albert Miller Lea, a topographer who had sketched the body of water during an 1835 U.S. military expedition through Freeborn County. Designated the county seat of Freeborn County in 1857, Albert Lea grew to a population of 262 individuals in 1860. The small community was officially designated a village in 1870. By 1880, a year after receiving its city charter from the Minnesota State Legislature, Albert Lea had 1,966 residents. Since the late nineteenth century, the city has functioned as a hub of manufacturing, retail, transportation, and jobbing in southern Minnesota. Several major railroads, including the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul, and the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, passed through the town, providing transportation for local industry and commerce. According to historian Norene Roberts, “manufacturing, wholesale groceries, sheet metal businesses, agricultural and houseware manufacturers, dairy products, meat processing, banking houses, and agricultural supply businesses provided an increasingly diversified economy from the 1870s onward.”²



Railroad depot in Albert Lea, c. 1900. Courtesy of LakesnWoods.com.

¹ This section on Albert Lea's history and development is based on the following sources: National Register of Historic Places, Albert Lea Commercial Historic District, Freeborn County, Minnesota, National Register of Historic Places Nomination #87001214, "History," City of Albert Lea, accessed May 15, 2020, <https://www.cityofalbertlea.org/about-albert-lea/history/>; City of Albert Lea, *Albert Lea Comprehensive Plan* (adopted by the Albert Lea City Council December 12, 2008); Prange Way, "Skyline Mall: Albert Lea, Minnesota," December 8, 2006, Labelsca: The Retail History Blog, <http://www.labelsca.com/minnesota/skyline-mall/>; Albert Lea Economic Development Agency, "Greater Jobs, Inc.," accessed May 19, 2020, <https://growalbertlea.com/economic-development-programs/greater-jobs-business-membership-program/>; Monte Castleman, "A History of Minnesota's Interstates, Part Two," Streets.mn, April 12, 2019, <https://streets.mn/2019/04/12/a-history-of-minnesotas-interstates-part-two/>.

² National Register of Historic Places, Albert Lea Commercial Historic District, Freeborn County, Minnesota, National Register of Historic Places Nomination #87001214.

Industry and commerce supported the development of retail and services in downtown Albert Lea. By 1879, the city's retail district stretched along both sides of Broadway Avenue from Water Street on the north to Main Street on the south. Historians Elizabeth Gales and Charlene Roise note that "like most downtowns, Albert Lea's held a wide variety of services and goods. The buildings on Broadway Avenue housed established businesses owned by many of the city's leading families, and the architecture reflected the wealth and prominence of these businessmen. Banks, drug stores, jewelry stores, offices, an opera house, and a department store occupied the blocks from Main Street to Water Street."³ Geography limited further linear development along Broadway, and after 1900, new development downtown spread east and west to streets perpendicular to the main thoroughfare.



Broadway Avenue, c. 1905. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society Collection Online.

By 1935, over 3,000 jobs in the City were based in more than 40 wholesale and manufacturing businesses. In 1943, anticipating the end of World War II and return of American soldiers from abroad, the City established Jobs Inc. (a pilot project of the National Chamber of Commerce) to provide jobs for returning veterans. The project spawned notable local industries such as the Universal Milking Machine Division of National Cooperatives Inc. and the Streater Companies, and

³ National Register of Historic Places, Albert Lea Commercial Historic District, Freeborn County, Minnesota, National Register of Historic Places Amended Nomination #3001337, https://s3.amazonaws.com/NARAprodstorage/lz/electronic-records/rg-079/NPS_MN/03001337.pdf.

the expansion of existing industries such as American Gas and Stove Company. It also led to the creation of one of the first (if not the first) community industrial parks in the nation.

Following World War II, the rise of the automobile drew businesses away from downtown to highway strip developments. Skyline Mall, established in 1966 near the intersection of Highways 13 and 69, and then Northbridge Mall, established in 1987 along Interstate 90, also shaped the types and locations of the city's retail. In addition, construction on Interstates 90 and 35 during the 1960s and 70s put Albert Lea at the intersection of two of Minnesota's major Interstate highways.



Aerial view of Albert Lea, 1972. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society Collection Online.

City planning has evolved alongside the physical development of Albert Lea. A significant step in the city's planning efforts occurred in 1934, when the city drafted its first charter. The city's first comprehensive plan was written in 1948, and updated in 1972 to reflect the new conditions brought about by interstate highway development. Periodic amendments to the comprehensive plan followed, including the forthcoming plan anticipated for adoption in 2021/2022. Other planning efforts have included the establishment of a growth boundary in coordination with Freeborn County in 1982 and the development of a Strategic Action Plan in 2004.

CURRENT SNAPSHOT OF THE CITY

Today, Albert Lea is a southern Minnesota community of approximately 18,000 residents. Ranked third in Realtor.com's "Affordable Small Town[s] Where You'd Actually Want to Live," Albert Lea is located approximately 90 miles south of the Twin Cities, the city is situated at the junction of Interstates 90 and 35, which provide local companies with access to major Midwest markets such as Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Louis, and Milwaukee. Situated between six different lakes, the city's nickname "the land between lakes" reflects local opportunities for boating, fishing and canoeing; nearby Myre-Big Island State Park also offers outdoor recreation. In 2009, the city began its participation in the AARP/Blue Zones Vitality Project, an initiative to increase health and lifespan through a variety of community, health, and social programs.

The city is located within Freeborn County, a Metropolitan Statistical Area with a population of just over 30,000 people. The county's economic base is grounded in manufacturing, agriculture, utilities, retail, and health care, with major employers including Mayo Clinic, Albert Lea Select Foods, Minnesota Corrugated Box, and Interstate Packaging.



A view of the Albert Lea Commercial Historic District.

ANALYSIS OF PRESERVATION PLANNING IN ALBERT LEA

The City of Albert Lea recognizes that it missed a significant opportunity to include heritage preservation, and the downtown Commercial Historic District specifically, more fully into its existing Comprehensive Plan. An oversight that it has sought to remedy with this chapter. It must be noted that this does not mean that the City of Albert Lea does has not followed national standards for historic preservation planning in its efforts to identify and preserve its historic resources. In fact, through its Main Street program, its Broadway Ridge Renewal Grant Program, and its South Broadway Urban Renewal Grant/Loan Program, the City of Albert Lea has been able to offer preservation assistance that many cities in Minnesota have not. Further, as a Certified Local Government (CLG), through a partnership between the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and National Park Service (NPS), Albert Lea is eligible for federal grants that support historic preservation; this chapter is the result of one such grant. Albert Lea's existing historic resources and its preservation planning programs are discussed in more detail below.

National Register of Historic Places Listed Albert Lea Commercial Historic District

- The district was originally listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. The original district was comprised solely of properties located on Broadway Avenue.
- The boundary for the district was re-evaluated in 2003, resulting in the inclusion of over twice as many contributing properties within the district. The expanded district includes properties located on Washington Avenue, Newton Avenue, Clark Street, and William Street.
- The district currently includes 91 contributing buildings, 18 non-contributing buildings, and 5 non-contributing sites (surface parking lots).
- Contributing properties are generally 1-3 story commercial buildings constructed in late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial styles.

National Register of Historic Places Individually-Listed Properties

- In addition to the Albert Lea Commercial Historic District, four Albert Lea properties are listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places.
 - Albert Lea City Hall (212 North Broadway Avenue)
 - Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Depot (606 South Broadway Avenue)
 - H. A. Paine House (609 West Fountain Street)
 - Dr. Albert C. Wedge House (216 West Fountain Street)

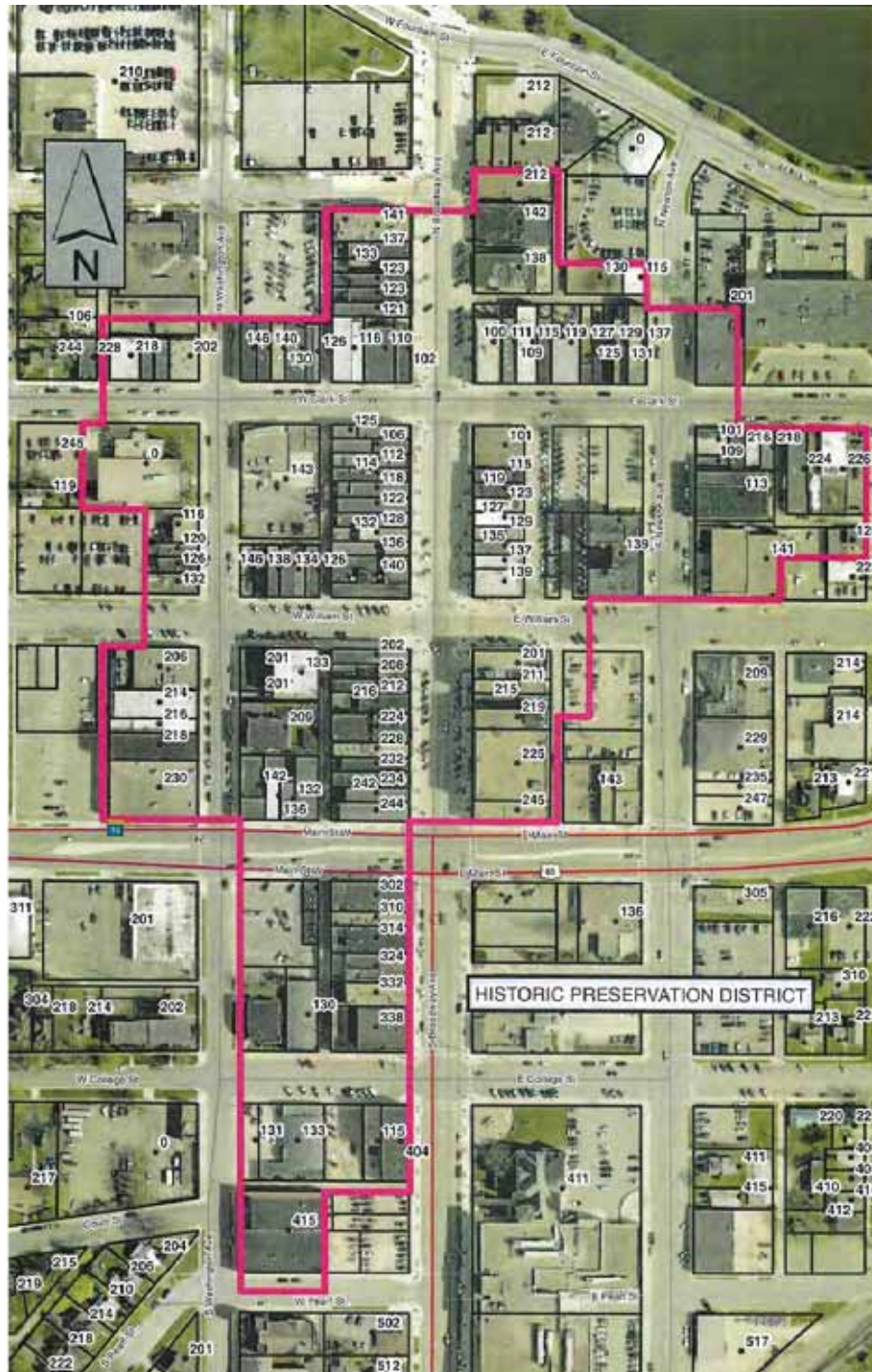
City of Albert Lea Heritage Preservation Commission

- The Albert Lea Heritage Preservation Commission was created in 2004.

Local Historic Designation of Albert Lea Commercial Historic District

- Local designation of the Albert Lea Commercial Historic District was also completed in 2004.
- The local historic district and National Register historic district share the same boundaries.

- The Commercial Historic District is the only locally designated property in Albert Lea and the only property currently under the purview of the Albert Lea Heritage Preservation Commission.



Design Guidelines for Albert Lea Commercial Historic District

- Design guidelines for the Albert Lea Commercial Historic District were developed and adopted in 2005 and last updated in 2011.

Main Street Community

- Albert Lea became a Main Street community in fall 2019. The Main Street program provides communities with a preservation-based framework to define and execute their downtown economic development strategy.
- Nationally, the Main Street program has been helping revitalize older and historic commercial districts for more than 35 years. Today it is a network of more than 1,600 neighborhoods and communities, rural and urban, who share both a commitment to place and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development.
- Since its inception, Albert Lea's Main Street program has worked in tandem with the Albert Lea Convention and Visitors Bureau on initiatives to support small local businesses, including a project to increase Albert Lea's Trip Advisor reviews, a small business gift card challenge, the promotion of local events such as Wind Down Wednesday, The Holiday Bazaar, and The Big Freeze, and, most recently, a survey to measure the impact of COVID-19 on Freeborn County's small businesses.

Certified Local Government Status

- Albert Lea has been a Certified Local Government with the National Park Service since 2005.
- The Certified Local Government (CLG) program is jointly administered by the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Offices, and CLGs are recognized as active partners in the Federal Historic Preservation Program. Each CLG gains access to benefits of the program and agrees to follow required Federal and State requirements. Benefits include:

Funding: States receive annual appropriations from the Federal Historic Preservation Fund. States are required to give at least 10% of their funding to CLGs as subgrants. These grants can fund a wide variety of projects including surveys, National Register nominations, design guidelines, educational programs, training, and feasibility studies, to name a few.

Technical Assistance: As a CLG, communities have direct access to SHPO staff for assistance with their commission, building assessments, surveys and nominations, and general preservation assistance. State staff and NPS offer regular training for CLGs as well, an added benefit of the partnership. Each SHPO has a designated CLG Coordinator.

Sustainability: Historic preservation has proven economic, environmental, and social benefits. Studies show that historic districts maintain higher property values, less population decline, more walkability and greater sense of community.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Broadway Ridge Renewal Grant Fund

- 50/50 matching grants for commercial property owners looking to make façade improvements to properties located within the Commercial Historic District. Grant funds were specifically targeted at properties on Broadway Avenue between Main Street and Fountain Street.
- The grant fund was established by contributions from the City of Albert Lea and Freeborn County in 2015.
- Designed for projects ranging from full façade rehabilitations to smaller projects such as window replacements, awning installation, and signage updates.
- 23 Broadway Ridge grants have been awarded to date.
- <https://www.cityofalbertlea.org/doing-business/broadway-ridge-renewal-fund/>

South Broadway Urban Renewal Grant/Loan Program

- Designed as an extension of the Broadway Ridge Renewal Grant Fund
- Intended for properties located on South Broadway Avenue between the Albert Lea Commercial Historic District and Todd Avenue, and improvements must be visible from South Broadway Avenue.
- 50/50 matching grants for façade and site improvements including masonry repairs, window replacements, awning installation, and signage updates, and architects plans and estimates.
- <https://www.cityofalbertlea.org/south-broadway-urban-renewal-grant-loan-policy/>

Federal and State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Programs

- Eligible projects receive a Federal and State income tax credit, each equal to 20% of qualifying costs
- The property must be listed on the National Register of Historic Places or determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places
- The completed project must be income-producing
- The owner must complete state and federal tax credit applications
- The project must meet the "[substantial rehabilitation test](#)"
- Project plans must be approved by National Park Service (NPS) and certified as meeting the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#).
- The completed work must be approved by the NPS
- <https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm>
- <https://mn.gov/admin/shpo/incentives/state>

Minnesota Legacy Grants

- The Legacy Grant program is intended “to preserve and enhance access to Minnesota's cultural and historical resources and to support projects of enduring value for the cause of history and historic preservation across the state.”
- Legacy Grants can be used by the following types of applicants:
 - 501(c)(3) non-profits
 - Units of state and local government
 - Federally-recognized tribes
 - Educational institutions
- Legacy Grants can be used on the following types of projects that increase public understanding of existing and potential historic resources:
 - Completion of a National Register of Historic Places nomination form for an individual property or landscape
 - Completion of a National Register of Historic Places nomination form for a historic district or boundary expansion
 - Completion of a National Register of Historic Places nomination form for an archaeological site or district, working from evaluation studies or other previous documentation
 - Research and preparation of a Local Designation Report (for communities with a Historic Preservation Commission whose ordinance allows for local designation)
 - Developing a context study through analysis of a community's history
 - Preparing a preservation plan for an archaeological historic district
 - Developing design guidelines for a locally designated or National Register-listed historic district
 - Creating or revising a local preservation ordinance
 - Developing a preservation plan for a community or writing a historic preservation chapter for a city's comprehensive plan
 - Reconnaissance Survey (Phase I) for historic and architectural properties
 - Phase I survey of an archaeological site
 - Resurvey of areas where the most recent survey or evaluation reports are more than 10 years old or where additional information warrants resurvey
 - Intensive Survey/Phase II for the evaluation of individual properties, historic districts, archaeological sites, or landscapes for listing in the National Register
- <https://www.mnhs.org/preservation/legacy-grants/about>

CURRENT CONDITIONS

During the planning phase for development of this Comprehensive Plan chapter, Albert Lea city staff and the Albert Lea Heritage Preservation Commission identified the following threats, trends and opportunities, framed as “constraints and opportunities,” currently associated with historic preservation in Albert Lea. The Preservation Plan presented in the next section of this chapter was developed with these constraints and opportunities in mind.

Constraints

- Misconceptions
 - “Downtown is in terrible shape/falling apart”
 - Financial commitment (real or perceived): “preservation is too expensive/more expensive”
- Education
 - Property owners in the Downtown Historic District and the general public need education related to the benefits of local preservation, the local preservation process, grant and tax credit funding opportunities and logistics, building code enforcement
- Skilled Labor
 - There is a lack of skilled labor (masons, wood windows, etc.) available in Albert Lea. This is an issue that reflects national trends and will require pragmatic solutions both locally and state-wide.
- Communication with SHPO
 - Identified need for better communication structures between building owners and SHPO during Historic Tax Credit projects

Opportunities

- Within the existing Downtown Historic District
 - Future areas to target for investment/revitalization include Washington Avenue, East and West Clark Street, and the 300 block of Broadway Avenue
 - Continued and increased promotion and use of the existing façade improvement grant programs
 - Increased Civic activation to take advantage of Commercial Historic District resources – Wind Down Wednesdays, Public Art, Pop-up parks/libraries/etc.
- Education. This is both a constraint and an opportunity (see above).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In order to confirm the constraints and opportunities described above, as well as to solicit feedback on this chapter of the forthcoming Comprehensive Plan, community engagement events were scheduled for May and June of 2020. Because of the risk associated with Covid-19, the community engagement process was revised to be a virtual process in order to protect the citizens of Albert Lea.

- The draft Heritage Preservation chapter of the forthcoming Comprehensive Plan was posted on the City's website for review. Comments on the chapter could be forwarded to City staff or New History. No written comments were received.
- The draft chapter and preliminary survey results were presented at the June 4, 2020 Heritage Preservation Commission meeting. The presentation from that meeting is included in this draft chapter as Appendix A.
- An online survey was circulated and the link posted on the City's website. The survey asked respondents to identify from a list the top five challenges to historic preservation in Albert Lea. The survey also asks respondents to choose a single issue and from the list and to offer suggestions for opportunities to mitigate the challenge. The survey was open for one month. The survey responses are included in this draft chapter as Appendix B.

Survey responses show common themes. Most notably,

- There is a lack of understanding around existing and potential historic resources in Albert Lea.
- There is a perception that historic buildings and current building code requirements are not compatible.
- Economic conditions, including a lack of clarity around different financial incentives and corresponding design requirements, make historic rehabilitation difficult.
- There is a perception that the public does not value historic preservation.

Most respondents did not provide a suggestion for mitigation of these threats. However, many of these threats can be mitigated by increased public education around historic preservation. Specific recommendations for each threat are identified below.

A lack of understanding of existing and potential historic resources.

- Update the Historic Preservation and HPC sections of the City's website to highlight Albert Lea's historic district, historic preservation financial incentives, and HPC activity.
- Pursue Minnesota Historic and Cultural Heritage Grants (commonly referred to as "Legacy Grants" and Certified Local Government (CLG) funding to expand the City's and the public's understanding of historic resources in Albert Lea.

Building code concerns

- Coordinate code official, SHPO, and city preservation staff project site visits.

The economy

- Update the Historic Preservation and HPC sections of the City's website to include overviews and links to the historic preservation funding opportunities and financial

incentives outlined in the “Historic Preservation Funding Opportunities” section of this chapter.

The public does not value historic preservation highly

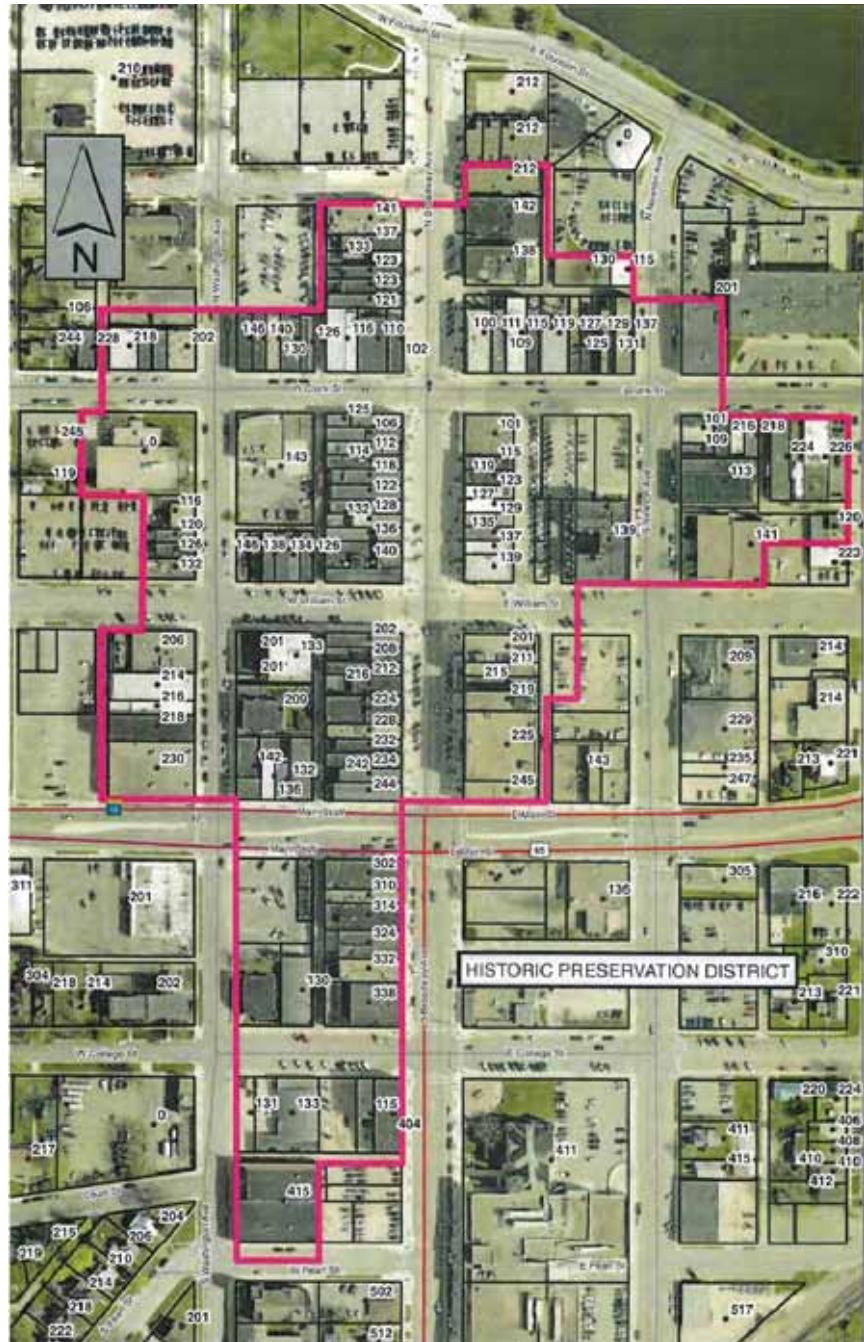
- Encourage the HPC, downtown building owners, and City staff to attend the annual Preserve Minnesota (SHPO) conference to learn more about historic preservation, <https://mn.gov/admin/shpo/conference/>
- Build on existing downtown programs, including Main Street and Wind Down Wednesday, to provide historic preservation education.

PRESERVATION PLAN

OBJECTIVE #1: CONTINUE TO PRESERVE AND REHABILITATE THE ALBERT LEA COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Goals

1. Build upon past success and continuing momentum for downtown revitalization
2. Educate building owners, tenants, and the broader public about the benefits of downtown revitalization
3. Educate building owners, tenants, and the broader public about the local historic preservation process; local, state, and federal programs; and funding opportunities
4. Increase the diversity of uses for downtown buildings, including encouraging housing uses at upper levels



Policies and Actions

1. Façade Improvement Grants: Maintain and potentially expand the existing Broadway Ridge and South Broadway façade improvement grant program
 - a. Evaluate the programs on a recurring basis to see if they should be extended
 - b. Evaluate the programs to see if they should be expanded to include additional funding, properties, or types of work
 - c. Actively promote programs to building and business owners
 - d. Consider showcasing program through something like a presentation at the yearly PreserveMN (SHPO) conference or a Main Street event
2. Passive Education: Maintain and potentially expand passive education opportunities
 - a. Maintain the successful “Wind Down Wednesday” program, consider activities that may increase downtown visibility in other seasons
 - b. Interpretive Signage and other interpretive opportunities - seek grant or partnership funding to complete projects such as expanding the existing interpretive signage program downtown, developing complementary educational materials, building/district walking tours, etc.
3. Active Education: Utilize available active education opportunities
 - a. Main Street Program opportunities – utilize Main Street Program opportunities to increase education opportunities and exposure to the Downtown Historic District.
4. Integration: Ensure that heritage preservation oversight is integrated into other city processes
 - a. Ensure that City Building Official is familiar with and utilizing the Minnesota Conservation Code for Existing Buildings when completing code reviews at designated historic properties.
 - b. Work with City departments to develop strategies that help make second story residential development of designated historic properties financially feasible
 - c. Integrate goals for the Commercial Historic District into any future project plans for lakefront revitalization
 - d. Partner with Chamber of Commerce/Visitor’s Bureau to highlight and promote Albert Lea’s historic downtown

OBJECTIVE #2: LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR FUTURE HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES IN ALBERT LEA OUTSIDE OF THE COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Goals

1. Build upon the existing momentum for heritage preservation that has been generated by the revitalization of the Commercial Historic District to set the city up for its next complement of preservation efforts

Policies and Actions

Utilize programs like the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Grant (Legacy Grant) program and Certified Local Government grants to apply for funding for preservation planning projects such as

- Historic Context Studies
- Historic Resource Surveys
- National Register of Historic Places Evaluations
- Local landmark and district designation studies

that seek to identify, understand, and contextualize potential historic properties outside of the existing Commercial Historic District. Knowledge of potential historic properties outside of the existing Commercial Historic District can be used to develop HPC work plans and local designation priorities into the future.

1. Partner with existing collaborators such as the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office and Minnesota Main Street program to continue bringing education opportunities to Albert Lea city staff, Heritage Preservation Commissioners, and the general public

CONCLUSION

The “finalized” version of the chapter is intended to be integrated into the upcoming Albert Lea Comprehensive Plan, which is anticipated for adoption in 2021/2022. It is anticipated that the “finalized” version of the chapter will be reviewed and potentially revised as the larger Comprehensive Plan is developed and the two documents are integrated with each other.



NEW HISTORY

APPENDIX A: HPC PRESENTATION

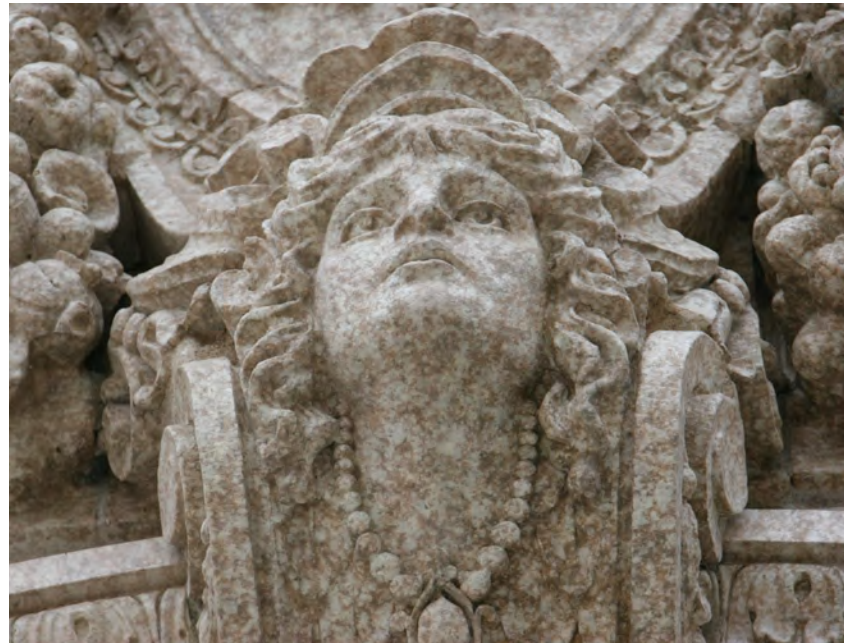
June 4, 2020



CITY OF ALBERT LEA

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CHAPTER: HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Heritage Preservation Commission Meeting, June 4, 2020



NEW HISTORY

AGENDA

- Who we are/why we are here
- How we got to where we are today
- Project Goals
- Success, Constraints, Opportunities
- Objectives
- The Chapter, the Survey and Feedback
- Next Steps



NEW HISTORY

PROJECT TEAM:

Peter Brown, Principal

Aubrie Gould, Director

Tamara Halvorsen Ludt, Historic Preservation
Specialist

MISSION:

We leverage history to unlock the economic,
community and cultural value of the built
environment.

HOW WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE TODAY

- **October, 2019:** City of Albert Lea awarded a CLG grant to develop a Historic Preservation chapter in advance of the forthcoming 2021 Comp Plan update
- **November 2019:** New History was awarded the contract
- **January 21:** Kickoff meeting with staff
- **January 27:** Project meeting with HPC
- **March 17:** HPC Community Engagement meeting CANCELLED/STAY AT HOME ORDER ISSUED
- **April 9:** Draft chapter submitted to SHPO for review and comment
- **May 27:** Revised chapter submitted to SHPO and posted to the City's website; Community engagement survey goes live

PROJECT GOALS

- Chapter is Actionable, Concise, Focuses on Maintaining and Building on Existing Momentum in the Downtown Historic District
- Chapter promotes preserving existing buildings and the economic benefits of historic preservation
- Stakeholder Engagement that includes the HPC, public stakeholders, and the SHPO
- Chapter Meets Grant Requirements



WHAT WOULD SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Continued momentum for revitalization in the Downtown Historic District
- No more empty/boarded-up buildings
- Increased diversity of uses including more retail and housing on upper floors
- Positive public acceptance of preservation in the Downtown Historic District
- Support for the HPC to consider designation of properties outside the existing District



CONSTRAINTS

- **Misconceptions:** Financial commitment and perception that downtown is falling apart
- **Education:** Property owners are often unaware of benefits of preservation, available resources
- **Skilled Labor:** Loss of crafts/tradespeople with relevant skills
- **Communications with SHPO:** Need to ensure alignment between project needs and review outcomes



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Within the Historic District:**
 - Promote the existing facade improvement grant program
 - Target new areas beyond Broadway Ave.: Washington Ave, East and West Clark Street, and the 300 block of Broadway Ave.
 - Increase civic activation e.g. Wind Down Wednesdays, public art, pop up parks/libraries, etc.
- **Expand the District:** To include the lakefront
- **Education:** Property owners, city officials, the public



OBJECTIVE 1 (5-10 YEARS):

Continue to Preserve and Rehabilitate the Downtown Albert Lea Historic District

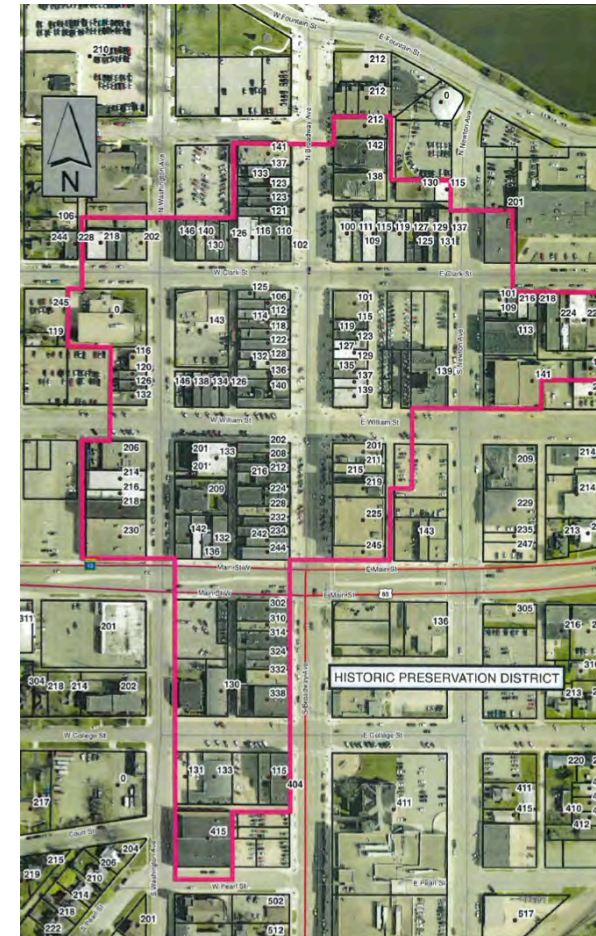
- Maintain and expand the existing façade improvement grant program
- Expand education and civic engagement opportunities such as Wind Down Wednesdays
- Form partnerships to develop active education opportunities
- Integrate historic preservation into other city processes – code review, lakefront revitalization, and tourism



OBJECTIVE 2 (TEN YEARS AND OUT):

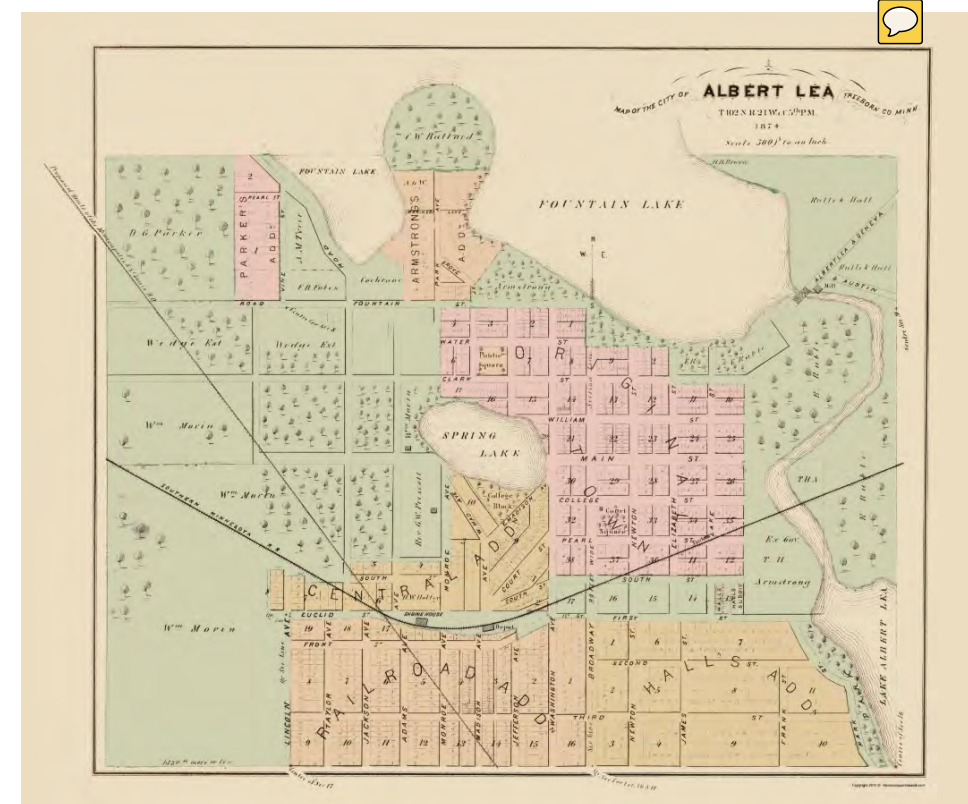
Lay the Groundwork for Future Historic Preservation Activities

- Build upon the existing momentum to set the the next stage for the next phase of historic preservation efforts
- Utilize programs such as MN Legacy Grants and Certified Local Government (CLG) grants to fund projects such as:
 - Historic Context Studies, Historic Resource Surveys, National Register of Historic Places Evaluations, and Local landmark and district designation studies
- Consider expanding the district to the lakefront and designating properties outside the district



YOUR FEEDBACK

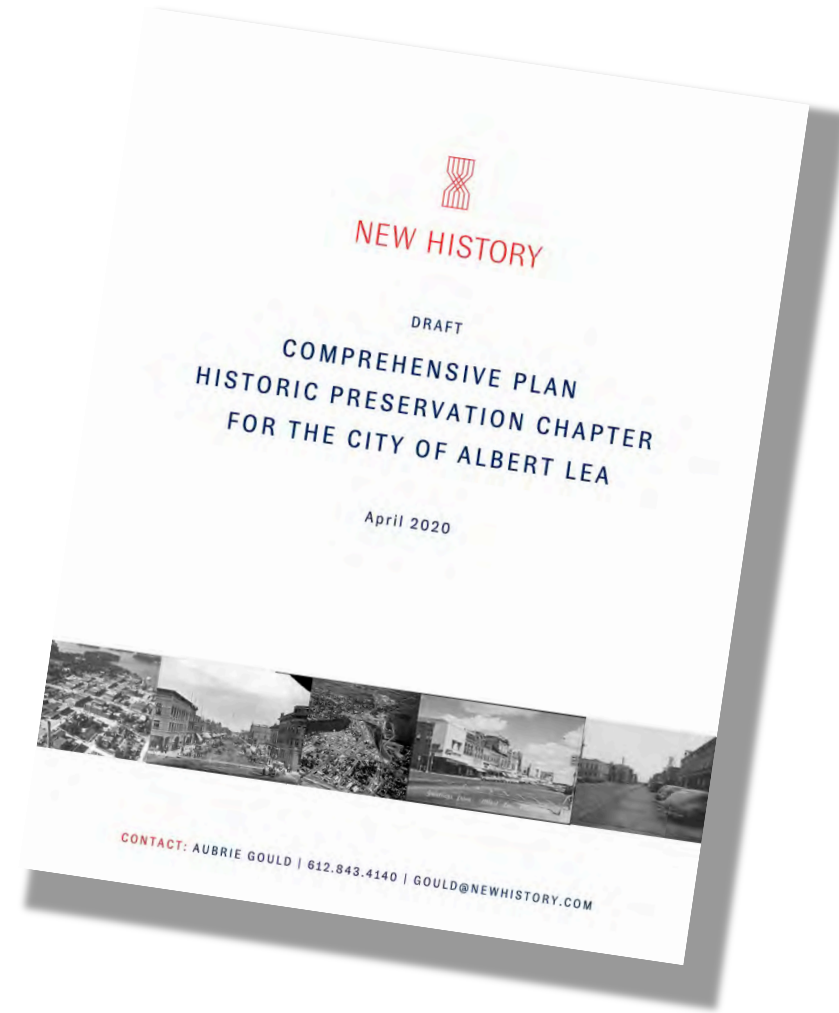
- What would **success** look like for you?
- What are the **constraints**?
- What are the **opportunities**?
- How can we **continue to preserve** (Objective 1)?
- How can we **plan for the future** (Objective 2)?



HOW YOU CAN HELP – READ THE DRAFT CHAPTER!

<https://www.cityofalbertlea.org/wp-content/uploads/Draft-Comp-Plan-Chapter.pdf>

- Introduction
 - Overview, process, successes, constraints, opportunities, the future
- Objective 1: Continue to Preserve
- Objective 2: Plan for the Future
- Conclusion
- Send your comments to:
- ludt@pvnworks.com



HOW YOU CAN HELP – TAKE THE SURVEY!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BJ9DPD5>

- The Following Questions were developed by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office as a part of developing the Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for 2020-2030. **Please identify the top five threats** to historic preservation in Albert Lea.
- Please choose one of the threats that you identified in Question 1 and **provide a suggestion** on what could be done to mitigate that threat.

- ☐ Public does not value historic preservation highly
- ☐ Lack of understanding of existing and potential resources
- ☐ Low lawmaker interest in historic preservation
- ☐ The economy
- ☐ Too much emphasis on development
- ☐ In-and-out migration of rural communities
- ☐ Too many other priorities
- ☐ Shifts in the state's racial and ethnic makeup
- ☐ Not enough people do preservation work
- ☐ Under-representation of certain groups or cultures
- ☐ Perception that new is better than old
- ☐ Building code concerns
- ☐ Natural disasters or climate change
- ☐ Site vulnerability
- ☐ Housing needs, including affordability
- ☐ Gentrification and displacement
- ☐ Public infrastructure changes and needs
- ☐ Changes in worship, recreation, transportation, and other cultural norms
- ☐ Other (please specify)

SURVEY DATA – 21 RESPONSES SO FAR...

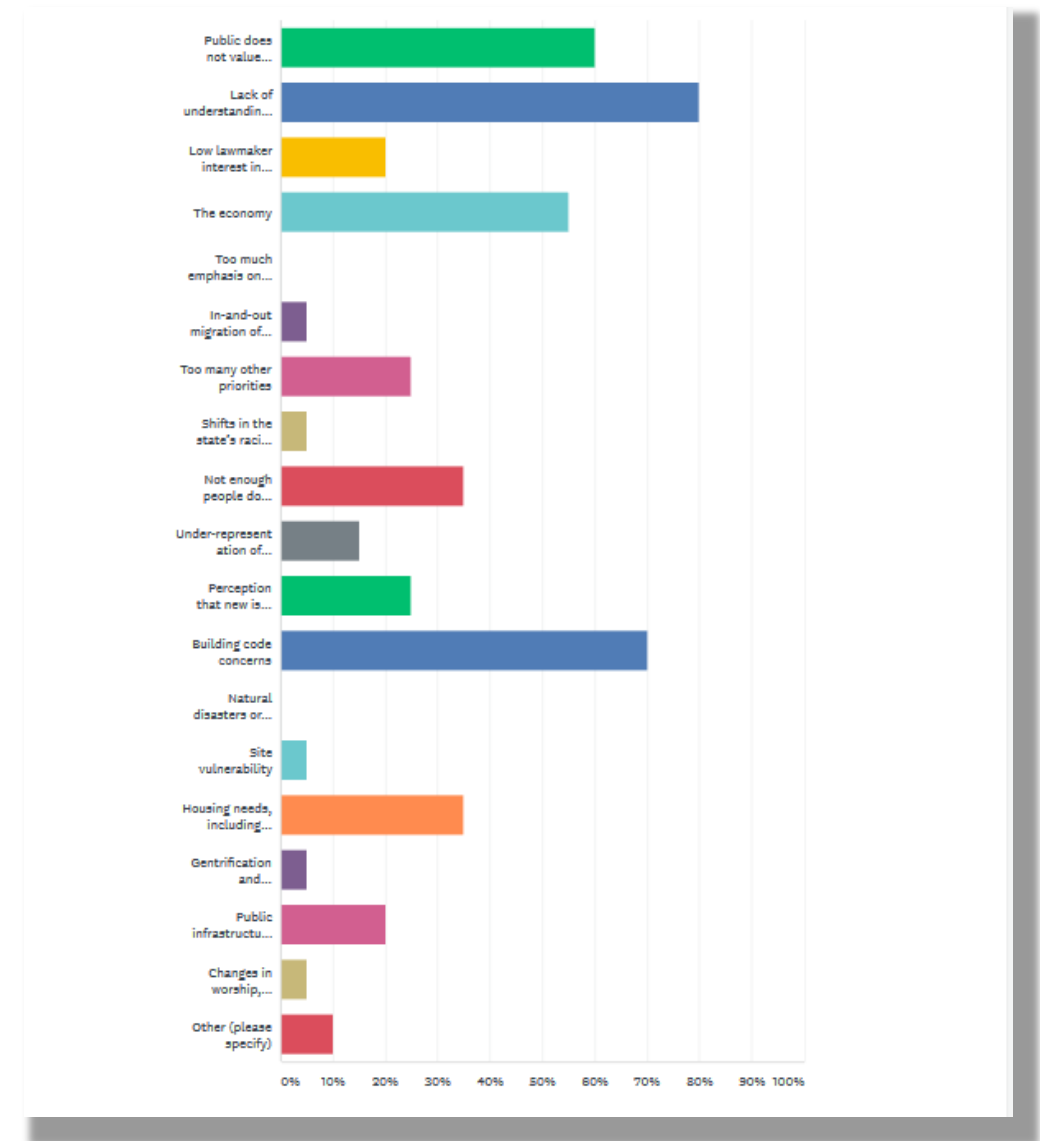
Lack of understanding of exist/potential resources	80%
Building Code concerns	70%
Public does not value historic preservation highly	60%
The Economy	55%
Housing needs, including affordability	35%
Not enough people do preservation work	35%

...MORE SURVEY DATA...

Perception that new is better than old	25%
Too many other priorities	25%
Low lawmaker interest in preservation	20%
Public infrastructure changes and needs	20%
Under-representation of certain groups or cultures	15%

YOUR FEEDBACK

- Please identify the **top five threats** to historic preservation in Albert Lea.
- Please **choose one of the threats** that you identified in Question 1 and **provide a suggestion** on what could be done to mitigate that threat.



THOSE LINKS, ONE MORE TIME...

Read the Draft Chapter:

<https://www.cityofalbertlea.org/wp-content/uploads/Draft-Comp-Plan-Chapter.pdf>

• Send your comments to:

• ludt@pvnworks.com

Take the Survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BJ9DPD5>

NEXT STEPS

- Comments on Draft Chapter due by June 22nd
- Survey closes on June 30th
- Comments and survey results will be integrated into the final chapter
- Submit final chapter to the SHPO for review
- Grant is closed
- The City of Albert Lea begins work on an updated Comprehensive Plan in 2021



THANK YOU!



NEW HISTORY



NEW HISTORY

APPENDIX B: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

July 2020





NEW HISTORY

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

July 2020



Introduction

As part of the community engagement process for the preparation of the City of Albert Lea's Comprehensive Plan chapter on Historic Preservation, an online survey designed to identify the top threats to historic preservation in Albert Lea was developed in May of 2020. The survey was circulated and the link posted on the City's website; the survey was live for one month. The survey asked respondents to identify from a list the top five challenges to historic preservation in Albert Lea. The survey also asks respondents to choose a single issue and from the list and to offer suggestions for opportunities to mitigate the challenge.

Survey responses show common themes. Most notably,

- There is a lack of understanding around existing and potential historic resources in Albert Lea.
- There is a perception that historic buildings and current building code requirements are not compatible.
- Economic conditions, including a lack of clarity around different financial incentives and corresponding design requirements, make historic rehabilitation difficult.
- There is a perception that the public does not value historic preservation

The survey questions and responses are included on the following pages. The top threats to historic preservation in Albert Lea were consistent across the responses to both survey questions and to the issues identified by stakeholders in public meetings and interviews. Most respondents did not provide a suggestion for mitigation of these threats. However, many of these threats can be mitigated by increased public education around historic preservation, recommendations for which have been included in the Comprehensive Plan chapter on Historic Preservation.

Survey Methodology

- Survey questions were adopted from those developed by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as a part of developing the Statewide Historic Preservation Plan for 2020–2030.
- The scope and intent of the survey was confirmed with the SHPO.
- The survey was posted online through SurveyMonkey, an online survey platform.
- City staff notified approximately 80 stakeholders of the online survey via an initial email and a follow up message.
- The importance of the survey was reiterated during the early June presentation to the Albert Lea Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) and stakeholders were encouraged to participate.
- The two-question survey was live for one month.
- Results were evaluated and compared to feedback received in public engagement meetings and interviews. Common trends were identified and recommendations for mitigating the identified threats were included in the Comprehensive Plan chapter on Historic Preservation.

Survey Results

The top four threats to Historic Preservation in Albert Lea, as identified by at least 50% of respondents to the online survey are:

1. A lack of understanding of existing and potential historic resources
2. Building code concerns
3. The economy
4. The public does not value historic preservation highly

Question 1. Please identify the top five threats to historic preservation in Albert Lea.

Answer	Percentage of Respondants
Public does not value historic preservation highly	52%
Lack of understanding of existing and potential resources	82%
Low lawmaker interest in historic preservation	17%
The economy	56%
Too much emphasis on development	0%
In-and-out migration of rural communities	4%
Too many other priorities	26%
Shifts in the state's racial and ethnic makeup	4%
Not enough people do preservation work	34%
Under-representation of certain groups or cultures	21%
Preception that new is better than old	21%
Building code concerns	69%
Natural disasters or climate change	0%
Site vulnerability	4%
Housing needs, including affordability	39%
Gentrification and displacement	4%
Public infrastructure changes and needs	21%
Changes in worship, recreation, transportation and other cultural norms	4%
Other	0%

Question 2. Please choose one of the threats that you identified in Question 1 and provide a suggestion on what could be done to mitigate that threat.

- City, working with Zoning and Building Admin. and giving non-profit organizations time to raise money to do the projects they say needs to be done. There has been someone in those buildings all along, but then they will shut you down if you don't do them immediately after buying the building.
- Lack of information on existing and potential resources. There are a few buildings in our historic district that could be restored to their former glory and be brought back to a state that is similar to its original, but adapted for modern use. For example the historic bessessen building that was once an opera house with very nice apartments above that belonged to the owners. I don't believe that everyone has access to potential financing resources or even information on best ways to begin the process of fund raising for projects, the right ways to restore, etc.
- Public infrastructure changes and needs: Too often the changes needed to update historic buildings for ADA, code compliance, and other needs outweigh the cost to build something new.
- Giving people more time to make changes and more financial help. Be supportive of businesses and not punitive when they have trouble meeting requirements.
- Getting a more diverse group of people vested in saving these places.
- Leniency on how updates are made
- Not enough people do preservation work... This can apply to both contractors doing the work and investors for business owners willing to put the time and money into restoring historic properties. Also organizations and cultural groups have a hard time raising funds to restore historic properties.
- Lack of understanding of potential and existing resources. More articles of the history of each site selected for preservation in the tribune and the magazine.
- With what is going on currently world wide I am unsure how we can help the economy
- The economy of our town, taxes are outrageous to businesses and homeowners. Without better paying jobs and a workable workforce the money just isn't there.
- The city inspector and preservation group is difficult to work with. Keep the standards established but take into consideration each rehab is different. Work WITH people NOT against them.
- Public education on building code meanings, purposes, and enforcement can positively impact historic and modern development alike.
- More comprehensive loan or grant options.
- More money to restore buildings - Talk of tearing down one whole block on Broadway across from banks - That will totally destroy a lot of history for Albert Lea
- Lack of understanding of existing and potential resources. Explaining the benefit of preserving the old versus building new. Cost benefits, community wealth building, tourism etc.

- More propaganda on the beauty of these old buildings and information on their beginnings and what businesses were in them.
- Cultural festivals
- Education
- Lack of understanding of existing and potential resources – education, marketing, and materials available to provide all options for historic preservation of downtown buildings in Albert Lea.
- Newer is better: The signage rules & regulations are tight and difficult to mitigate from a marketing & advertising perspective. If you want your sign to really speak for your business, there are tight restrictions and it feels stifling I believe in the grand scheme of importance in keeping historical preservation, signage is a small concern vs having a business move in, be successful and have enough cash flow to tuck point their brick or replace windows so that the building remains in tact for the future. Housing needs; there is a vast need for market-rate housing and no incentives for building owners to deliver to this market (while retaining the buildings' character).
- The City of Albert Lea has been very good at encouraging renovation and providing assistance with owners wishing to renovate. Likely, more yet will need to be done with monetary assistance or low interest long term loans to make more renovations happen in the Historic District.