

ROUND ROCK 2030

HISTORIC PRESERVATION



INTRODUCTION

Historic assets play an essential role in shaping the identity of a place. Historic buildings, streets, parks, and other important vestiges of the past define a unique and special sense of character in a community. As Round Rock continues to grow and mature as a mid-sized city, its historic resources are an important part of the community's identity. Since the first iteration of the city's *Historic Preservation Plan* in *Places & Spaces: Round Rock General Plan 2020* (the 2010 Comprehensive Plan), preservation activity in the city has grown.

Historic preservation encourages the continued use of older properties, safeguards the existence of significant historic elements, and contributes to community development objectives such as quality of life, sustainability, and economic development. Historic elements are not necessarily architectural but could reflect the way of life in a certain era.

The purpose of this section is to establish a ten-year plan to preserve and enhance local historic resources for the benefit of residents and visitors to the city, as well as to reflect upon historic preservation accomplishments of the past decade. This section was developed so it can serve both as a part of the city's Comprehensive Plan, *Round Rock 2030*, and as a standalone historic preservation plan.

Public Engagement

The city provided opportunities for public input throughout the *Round Rock 2030* planning process. In the third phase of input, from mid-April through mid-June 2019, the city used Polco, an online public engagement tool. During National Preservation Month in May, Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff posted a historic preservation survey to both educate the public about the city's historic preservation program and to gather input to update the city's *Historic Preservation Plan*. The survey had 229 respondents and 89% agreed or strongly agreed that preservation of historic buildings benefits the city culturally, educationally, and economically. The public input process also resulted in the development of twelve planning policies for *Round Rock 2030*, one of which is directly related to historic preservation and many of which have implications for historic preservation.

For more in-depth information about the public input process for *Round Rock 2030*, refer to the appendix of *Round Rock 2030* and the Historic Preservation Polco Report, available on the *Round Rock 2030* website.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

Historic Character

Round Rock's architectural history can be considered in five eras, each defined by the prevailing transportation mode and available building techniques: Pioneer Era, Pre-Railroad Settlement, Railroad Era, Highway Era and Freeway Era.

Pioneer Era

- Several nomadic Native American tribes use the area for hunting.
- In 1840 President Lamar tasks Colonel Cooke with establishing a road between Austin & Fort Inglish (Bonham).
- In the 1840s Jacob Harrell, Dr. Kenney, Captain Merrell, Washington Anderson and others claim headrights in the area.
- Buildings are intended to be temporary: log cabins, Kenney Fort. Few exist today.



Cabin in Old Settlers Park

Pre-Railroad Settlement (Old Town)

- Texas joins the United States in 1845 and Williamson County is established in 1848. Swedish farmers begin settling Palm Valley. Cattle drives begin after the Civil War.
- Regular stagecoach service begins on Colonel Cooke's road. Jacob Harrell begins selling parts of his property along Brushy Creek. Commercial services, including general stores, blacksmiths, and liverys are established.
- Permanent structures are built by skilled traditional craftsmen. Materials are simple hand-cut stone and peeled or split logs. Sawn wood and manufactured hardware used sparingly.



Barker-Porter house, built 1872



Stagecoach Inn, built 1848-1853

Railroad Era (New Town)

- I&GN Railroad extends to Round Rock in 1878. Its land company plats downtown in regular blocks and lots.
- Round Rock Avenue leads directly to Old Town and the Austin-Georgetown Road (formerly Colonel Cooke's road).
- First structures are built using traditional methods and local stone, similar to Old Town. Later buildings use materials (brick, corrugated metal, large glass windows) made available by railroad.



200 E. Main built 1904

Highway Era

- Mays Street is extended north over Brushy Creek in 1937 as Highway 81.
- Round Rock lobbies for highway to pass through Round Rock instead of Taylor.
- Gas stations, auto service, motor courts, and Henna car dealership open on Mays Street.
- Commercial traffic bypasses Old Town.



Broom Factory converted to auto sales

Freeway Era

- In the 1960s IH-35 divides Old Town and New Town.
- IH-35 brings Round Rock within shorter commuting distance of Austin.
- Development is auto-oriented with front parking lots and garages.
- Entire shopping centers and subdivisions are built rather than individual buildings.



USGS Map 1982



Wag-A-Bag on US Highway 79 built 1971

LEGAL BASIS FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Framework

The historic character of Round Rock is maintained through an established preservation program with a corresponding legal framework at the federal, state, and local levels. The city is aware of legislative changes that impact this framework and responds accordingly. This section provides a brief overview of the government responsibility at each level. More specific information about the requirements can be found in the documents referenced in this section and/or through federal and state agencies and PDS.

FEDERAL BASIS

The National Historic Preservation Act, The National Register of Historic Places, *The Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historically Significant Properties*

Federal Framework

The National Historic Preservation Act, passed in 1966, established the first federal historic preservation program in the country. The Act created the National Register of Historic Places, which provides guidelines for the designation of historic districts and individual historic landmarks. Federally designated properties are subject to the *Secretary of the Interior Guidelines for the Treatment of Historically Significant Properties*, which establishes best practices for preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Every state that has a historic preservation program must have a State Historic Preservation Office that enforces regulations and administers programs on behalf of the federal government.

STATE BASIS

The Texas Historical Commission, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Program, Certified Local Government Program, *Texas Local Government Code*

State Framework

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) is the agency responsible for historic preservation programs at the state level. The THC is responsible for the statewide designation and review of historic sites under the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Program. The THC also serves as the State Historic Preservation Office which is tasked with administering federal programs at the state level. This includes the enforcement of federal designations and review processes, administration of grants, and the management of the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program for Texas. The *Texas Local Government Code* enables municipalities to regulate historic preservation as one of their zoning powers.

LOCAL BASIS

Round Rock Development Code, Historic Preservation Commission, *Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial and Residential Districts & Properties*

Local Framework

The local historic preservation program in Round Rock is enabled by the Round Rock Development Code. The Code establishes a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), which is a citizen commission appointed by the City Council to preserve, protect, and promote the City of Round Rock's historic resources through preservation, public education, community partnerships, and heritage tourism. The HPC is responsible for evaluating Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA) applications for proposed changes to historically designated properties, including alteration, relocation and demolition. Its duties also include evaluating and recommending properties and districts for historic designation, recommending City Council action concerning applications for local incentives for historic property owners, and administering the requirements of the CLG Program.

The Round Rock Development Code establishes the requirements and procedures for the CofA review process. A CofA confirms that proposed changes to a property with Historic Overlay (H) zoning are appropriate for the structure and consistent with the city's adopted guidelines. Code amendments were adopted in 2012, 2014, and 2018, including a CofA process for relocating historic buildings, administrative review for certain types of CofAs, and other amendments to clarify existing processes. Both the HPC and PDS staff rely on the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, as well as a set of City Council-adopted *Design Guidelines for Historic Commercial and Residential Districts & Properties* to make decisions about the appropriateness of exterior alterations. The city's design guidelines place an emphasis on the compatibility of alterations with the historic fabric, acknowledging that consistency with the style of the historic structure is often a good way to achieve compatibility.

The Round Rock Development Code also specifies the requirements for the Partial Tax Exemptions for Historically Significant Sites program. This program is administered jointly by the City of Round Rock and the Williamson Central Appraisal District. Under the program, property owners receive a 75% exemption of municipal property taxes. The program encourages owners of historic properties to use money saved on taxes to provide regular maintenance and/or repair to their historic structures.

PDS staff works to support the historic preservation program by administering the Partial Tax Exemptions for Historically Significant Sites program, advising the HPC on CofA cases, implementing the education and awareness program and holding special events. PDS staff also works to support the HPC's mission and annually adopted goals.

ROUND ROCK HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Evolution

Over the past few decades, Round Rock has increasingly recognized the importance of historic places in the community. When the city adopted its historic preservation ordinance in 1979, it paved the way for an upswing in historic preservation and restoration efforts in the 1980s and 1990s. The Partial Tax Exemptions for Historically Significant Sites program was established in 1982 and the Round Rock Downtown Commercial District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

In 1989, the city was designated as a CLG by the THC, which has made Round Rock eligible for federal grants. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the city received several CLG grants to improve the historic preservation program. Examples of the projects include:

- A historic resource survey identifying and documenting historically significant sites;
- An interactive website for the preservation program;
- Creation of design guidelines for residential and commercial properties; and
- Establishment of a preservation education and awareness program.

These CLG projects were important for Round Rock's historic preservation program because they provided the necessary tools and funding for the city to build a foundation for the program. The historic preservation program identifies annual funding priorities and even though the city has not received CLG grants this decade, city grant-matching funds have still been allocated to fund portions of these preservation-related projects such as the creation of markers for locally designated historic landmarks in Round Rock.

Round Rock conducts additional annual preservation-related programming. These programs help to bring awareness to the historic preservation program:

- The Local Legend Award Program which recognizes individuals, families, businesses, groups, publications, or organizations that have had a positive and lasting impact on the culture, development, and history of Round Rock; and
- Recognition of National Preservation Month every May, in which several historic preservation related events are held to engage the community.

In 2017, the city provided a one-time allocation from Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funds for the relocation of the Stagecoach Inn. The building was set to be demolished for the realignment of RM 620. Instead, the structure was moved in 2018 from its original location at the intersection of RM 620 and Chisholm Trail Road to its new location at the Bathing Beach Park, located approximately 1000 feet to the south.



The Stagecoach Inn crossing Brushy Creek before reaching new location at Bathing Beach Park

PROGRAM MILESTONES SINCE 2010

2010

Places & Spaces: General Plan 2020 is adopted and is the first comprehensive plan for the city to include a historic preservation chapter, serving as the city's *Historic Preservation Plan*.

The *Downtown Master Plan* is adopted, establishing a design and policy strategy for a thriving town center. The Plan includes design guidelines for historic residential character and other historic areas downtown. The Plan also includes an updated resource survey.

Historic Preservation Minutes, a series of videos developed as a part of the education and awareness plan, are released to the public.

2011

As a result of the *Downtown Master Plan's* historic resource survey, new historic designations are recommended:

- The proposed East End Historic District included 96 properties, 54 of which were contributing. The City Council opted not to adopt the designation.
- The Texas Baptist Children's Home property was recommended as a local historic district. Trustees did not support the designation.
- The Henna House was identified for potential local designation, but was not pursued further.

2012

The Certificate of Appropriateness process, outlined in the Round Rock Development Code, is amended to allow for administrative review of certain applications and to allow for the relocation of historic buildings in certain circumstances.

2013

The city publishes several educational brochures about the historic preservation program in Round Rock.

2015

The latest International Existing Building Code is adopted by the city, which is beneficial for maintenance and rehabilitation of historic properties.

2016

Round Rock Preservation is established as a historic preservation nonprofit in the city.

The SF-D (Single-Family - Downtown) district is established in the Round Rock Development Code. It provides for traditional residential development and includes standards to reinforce the scale and design of an established residential neighborhood with numerous historic structures.

2017

The city celebrates the 150th anniversary of the Chisholm Trail.

The Williamson Museum opens a second location on the Chisholm Trail in Round Rock, bringing educational exhibits and programs about the history of the county to the city.

Markers are installed at locally designated historic landmarks.

Language for demolition by neglect is added to the Round Rock Development Code, establishing procedures for the HPC and Chief Building Official to inspect properties where deterioration is thought to be causing harm to structures or character-defining features.

2018

The Stagecoach Inn is relocated in an effort to preserve the building. This is the first project to use the new CofA for relocation process.

2019

The HPC section of the Round Rock Development Code is amended to require seven commissioners.

IMPLEMENTATION BACKGROUND

Preservation Program Challenges

In the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, it was determined that Round Rock's capacity for properly preserving its historic resources was mainly compromised by four factors:

- A lack of public awareness of the benefits of historic preservation;
- Rapid growth that threatens historic buildings with demolition for new development;
- Limited funding for preservation programs and activities; and
- Insufficient community partnerships.

Over the past ten years, the city refined the historic preservation program and addressed many of the issues that were noted a decade ago. Today, the challenges identified for the future of the historic preservation program over the decade include:

- Complex CofA case reviews for HPC and staff for the following reasons:
 - Requests for alterations often incorporate new technology and building materials which may not be appropriate; and
 - Redevelopment of historically significant properties may threaten historic integrity. This is especially concerning downtown, which has the highest concentration of the city's historic resources. A number of redevelopment projects downtown involve changing the original use of a building from a residential to commercial use, necessitating alterations to accommodate the new use.
- Lack of funding for historic preservation projects:
 - For city-owned properties, such as the Stagecoach Inn; and
 - To support owners of historically significant properties.
- Need for documentation of structures if proposed to be moved or demolished.
- Acceptance and recognition of significance for reasons other than architecture.
- Neighborhood preservation for older neighborhoods.
- Lack of awareness of city historic preservation efforts is a perpetual issue and is compounded due to the city's rapid growth.

Policies

Round Rock 2030 includes a historic preservation policy which states "Preserve buildings and sites that contribute to Round Rock's history". This policy was highly rated during all phases of public input. In the policy discussion exercise at the Quadrant Meetings, the historic preservation policy was the third most popular policy. For the online version of the policy discussion exercise that was posted to Polco, the historic preservation policy was the most popular policy, with 95% approval.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

In order to implement the goals of *Round Rock 2030*, this section outlines the implementation strategies related to historic preservation:

- Explore means for financing the city's historic preservation program including a new dedicated annual allocation in the city's budget.
- Complete the restoration of the Stagecoach Inn.
- Consider new incentive programs specifically to assist property owners and developers with maintenance and rehabilitation of historic properties.
- Continue administering the Partial Tax Exemptions for Historically Significant Sites program and guide property owners through the application review process.
- Consider expanding the number of historically designated properties. Review the designation criteria in the Round Rock Development Code to adapt the definition of historic significance. Identify structures recently annexed into the city and mid-century structures which are now, or will soon be, eligible for designation.
- Explore establishing a historic district for the *Downtown Master Plan* area which regulates exterior building materials for all structures.
- Establish a policy to address whether performance advances in building materials could, in certain circumstances, justify the application of non-historic materials to aid the long-term preservation of historic structures.
- Establish methods, guidelines, priorities, and a dedicated funding source for preservation of city-owned historically designated properties.
- Contribute historic preservation expertise to ensure the development surrounding the Water Tower is contextually appropriate and does not diminish the Tower's historic integrity.
- Advise the Parks and Recreation Department regarding historic features of the Bathing Beach Park and Heritage Trail projects.
- Foster a network of preservation advocates and allies, like the city's nonprofit Round Rock Preservation, by collaborating with preservation partners at the local, regional, and state levels.
- Support the Williamson Museum's efforts to continue local history programming in Round Rock.
- Partner with other preservation organizations to create a local historic preservation award program to recognize preservation success stories.
- Create opportunities to record and celebrate the history of the city through a local history archive and resources at the new library.
- Increase focus on heritage tourism citywide through promotion of the city's historic assets. Consider becoming a designated Preserve America community.
- Capitalize on historic assets as an economic engine for Round Rock by promoting historic sites to areas outside of the city.
- Increase stakeholder and public awareness of the city's historic preservation program by providing training opportunities, hosting public events, and creating educational materials.

CONCLUSION

As the historic preservation program continues in Round Rock over the next decade, PDS staff expects to raise awareness of the city's history and historic preservation efforts. Public engagement conducted during Plan development confirmed that Round Rock values historic preservation as a means to showcase its identity and unique past. The historic preservation program should continue to provide technical support to owners of historic landmarks and assist them through the CofA and partial tax exemption review processes. Ultimately, in order to continue the success of the historic preservation program, the city should pursue additional funding for historic preservation projects. The city can strengthen its historic preservation program by executing the implementation strategies provided in this section.

When incorporated into *Round Rock 2030*, the *Historic Preservation Plan* serves as a section of the Comprehensive Plan and relates to other long-range policies and implementation strategies for the next decade. These same historic preservation implementation strategies in the *Historic Preservation Plan* will be included in the implementation section of *Round Rock 2030*.