

Williamson House

325 Fairfax

ca. 1911 Craftsman design by architect Charles L. Thompson
Listed on 11/15/1984



Womack House

1867 South Ringo Street

ca. 1922 Craftsman bungalow built by an African-American doctor
Listed on 5/28/1999

Dr. Womack’s office was located at West 9th Street, in the black business district that flourished along that street for several decades. His wife, Myrtle, worked for a time as a clerk for the Mosaic Templars of America, the black fraternal organization that was headquartered at West 9th Street and Broadway.

As a professional, Dr. Womack was well-respected in Little Rock’s black community, and he was financially able to build a very nicely detailed Craftsman bungalow as his family residence. The Womack House is significant both for its association with Dr. Womack and for its unaltered Craftsman design.



Worthen Bank Building

401 South Main Street

1928 Neoclassical structure with Art Deco details

Listed on 11/13/1986

YMCA-Democrat Building

123 East Capitol Avenue

1904 Charles L. Thompson Renaissance Revival design for Arkansas’ first YMCA building, used since 1930 by the Arkansas Democrat (now the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Listed on 6/11/1992

Zeb Ward Building

1001-1003 West Markham Street

1881 brick commercial building

Listed on 4/19/1978

APPENDIX C – ZONING, LAND USE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Overview

As part of the historic preservation plan for the City of Little Rock, the purpose of this section is to provide a review of the City’s key land use and development documents to identify their impacts upon the community’s historic resources. Furthermore, suggestions for adjusting these policies to further the City’s preservation efforts are provided. The following key documents will be reviewed:

Future Land Use Plan
Master Street Plan
Subdivision & Zoning Ordinance
Zoning Overlay Districts
Capitol Zoning District Ordinance

For the purposes of understanding the planning context of Little Rock, it is also worth noting that the City has segmented the community into 30 distinct planning districts.

Future Land Use Plan

The City’s Future Land Use Plan was last revised on November 15, 2007, and serves as the basis for land use zoning in Little Rock. This plan establishes 22 different land use categories that are grouped under the following general headings: residential, office, mixed, industrial, commercial and other. These categories, as applied to the land use plan map, are relatively consistent with actual existing land use patterns. One characteristic of this plan that distinguishes it from the land use plans of most communities is that, when describing some land use categories, it references appropriate zoning district designations. Given that zoning is an outgrowth of a community’s land use plan, and most land use plans do not address their primary implementation tools – zoning, this situation is unusual. When zoning is addressed within a land use plan, it is usually at the end of the document in the context of “next steps” for plan implementation.

Residential Categories

As with most communities, the residential districts cover the greatest amount of land area. Since historic dwellings outnumber other types of historic buildings, these districts would be the most relevant to Little Rock’s historic resources. The following residential categories exist in the City’s Future Land Use Plan:

Residential Low Density (RL)

This category is applied to the highest percentage of Little Rock’s historic neighborhoods, and it provides for single-family homes at a maximum density of 6 dwelling units per acre. One example of the RL designation is the Central High Neighborhood, bound roughly by Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive (east), Thayer Avenue (west), West 12th Street (north), and Roosevelt Road (south). This neighborhood is designated as a National Register District, but not a local historic district. It has an existing development pattern of primarily 50 foot wide lots and a density of approximately 6 units per acre. Developed between roughly 1900 and 1930, the most prevalent architectural styles are Queen Anne Cottages, Bungalows, and Foursquares. Given that the only issues addressed for each land use category within this plan are the key uses and densities, the RL designation is appropriate as applied for most of the City’s historic neighborhoods.

Residential Medium Density (RM)

This category is applied to only very limited portions of Little Rock’s historic neighborhoods. It allows densities between 6 and 12 units per acre – nearly double the density permitted in the “Residential Low Density” (RL) district. Housing types include single-family detached, single-family attached, duplexes, townhomes, and multi-family buildings. Perhaps the most noteworthy application of the RM category is to the MacArthur Park Neighborhood, which is both a National Register and locally-designated historic district. Developed during the late-nineteenth century, this neighborhood is dominated by Queen Anne houses on 50 foot wide lots at a density of approximately 6 units per acre. Even though this district’s existing density is consistent with that of Little Rock’s many other historic neighborhoods, most of which are designated as RL (maximum of 6 units per acre), the RM is probably appropriate so long as the historic lot pattern/sizes are maintained. Unlike most other architectural styles, the large size and asymmetry of Queen Annes lends them to multiple units while still retaining the appearance of a single-unit house. Thus, so long as other design considerations are respected, the density range and unit-type diversity of the RM land use category can work for the MacArthur Park Neighborhood.



Because Queen Anne houses such as this one in MacArthur Park can accommodate more than one dwelling unit while retaining their historic integrity, the City’s Future Land Use Plan designation of Residential Medium Density is compatible with this historic neighborhood.

Other Residential Categories

The only other residential land use categories are the Residential High Density (RH) and the Mobile Home Park (MH). The RH areas – which allow 12 or more units per acre - tend to be fairly randomly located, including within historic neighborhoods and near commercial and mixed use areas. In total, they cover a relatively small land area. Their boundaries are typically formed by streets and they incorporate one or two block areas, as opposed to individual lots designated RH within a block dominated by some other land use classification. A sampling of RH areas revealed no negative impacts to historic resources. For example, the block on the southwest corner of 13th and Marshall is designated as RH, and it features an early-20th century Collegiate Gothic style school building that has been adapted into multi-family housing. As an-

other example, the block on the southeast corner of Schiller and 27th is designated as RH. It features single-family houses that lack sufficient architectural or historic significance and cohesiveness to warrant historic designation. The Mobile Home Park (MB) designation only applies to a few specific locations in Little Rock that have existing mobile home parks. Those locations are in very peripheral areas of the community and are not in areas with known historic resources.

Commercial & Mixed Use Categories

Most of Little Rock’s historic commercial buildings are designated within the City’s Future Land Use Plan as a mixed use or commercial designation. Below is a summary of such classifications:

Mixed Urban Use (MXU)

The vast majority of Downtown Little Rock has been designated within the land use plan as Mixed Use Urban. This category allows for “a mix of residential, office and commercial uses not only in the same block but also within the same structure.” While it is stated that this category is intended to accommodate older urban areas, it also allows for “high and moderate density developments,” including the application of Urban Use District zoning. That zoning district permits buildings as tall as 72 feet, with another 28 feet allowed if at least 20% of the building’s gross floor area is reserved for residential uses. Allowing buildings as tall as 100 feet clearly equates to a development pressure threat of demolition to two and three-story historic buildings unless such properties are already protected by special overlay zoning, such as historic zoning.



Without special overlay zoning protections, low-rise historic buildings such as this one in Downtown Little Rock on Markham Street are threatened by demolition when the City’s land use plan suggests buildings as tall as 100 feet.

Other Commercial & Mixed Use Categories

The land use plan features several other commercial and mixed use categories, including Commercial (C), Neighborhood Commercial (NC), Existing Business Node (NODE), Mixed Use & Commercial (MOC) and Mixed Use (MX). With the exception of the NC category, which suggests “small-scale commercial development,” these categories do not indicate the recommended scale or density/intensity of development. Thus, it is not possible to predict the impacts that might occur to historic resources as a result of these land use designations.

Other Land Use Categories

The two most significant categories relevant to historic resources that do not fall under residential or commercial/mixed use categories are institutional and industrial categories.

Institutional Categories

Given that Little Rock is the state capitol, it is no surprise that the City's land use plan would designate a significant amount of land, particularly within the downtown area, as Public/Institutional (PI). While this classification does not indicate permitted development scales and densities/intensities, the fact that historic public and institutional structures are designated as such offers a certain level of protection that other designations might not. For example, a historic school with a PI designation faces less of a demolition threat from commercial development pressures than would a commercial designation in the land use plan. However, the PI designation might also serve as a hurdle to the desirable adaptive reuse of a historic school for housing or other non-institutional uses.

Another institutional-related land use designation is Park/Open Space (PK/OS). This designation is clearly positive for such designated properties because it suggests their preservation. For example, MacArthur Park is Little Rock's oldest municipal park. It is home to the Arkansas Arts Center and the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History, in addition to being located within both a National Register and local historic district. This important property's PK/OS designation is undoubtedly appropriate for its future preservation.

Industrial Categories

Some of Little Rock's historic industrial structures have experienced alterations over the years that have lessened their architectural integrity. Nevertheless, there are many surviving significant industrial structures and most are designated as either Light Industrial (LI) or Industrial (I). These properties are located primarily to the east and southeast of the downtown. Some may be functionally obsolete for modern industrial uses, but those located in the right context could have potential for adaptive reuse for new uses if given an accommodating designation within the land use plan.

Master Street Plan

The City's Master Street Plan was revised in 2008, and it establishes six different street types: freeways, expressways, principal arterials, minor arterials, collectors, and local streets. These streets are determined based upon three criteria: street function, street spacing (from one another), and street width. Function and width are particularly linked, as high volume streets need a sufficient number of driving lanes, which translates into width. With regard to historic resources, the greatest threat to them is if a designation leads to a future street widening that might result in adjacent historic buildings being demolished. A less direct negative impact is street alterations that might make a particular historic property less attractive as an investment for acquisition and/or rehabilitation, resulting in a lost opportunity for preservation. For example, a street that transforms from a collector into an arterial might result in more noise and less safety, thereby reducing a property's quality of life potential and, consequently, value.

Implementation of the Street Plan

The first section of the plan – “Authority, Jurisdiction and Enforcement” explains how the plan might impact new private sector development. Item “E” (page 4) clarifies that “No provision of this ordinance shall be construed to deny a permit for the remodeling, repair or maintenance of any existing building not involving structural alteration or for the use of said lot or parcel for purposes not involving the construction or relocation of buildings.” While this provision is favorable for most preservation projects, it does not extend such treatment to historic rehabilitation projects that might entail a “structural alteration,” which would presumably include any additions. Thus, it is a preservation-friendly provision that has the potential to be revised to be even friendlier.

Street & ROW Widths

The chart with numerical standards for street widths and rights-of-way (ROW) is found on page 8 of the plan. It is noteworthy that street and ROW width standards feature only the “minimum” width and fail to address the maximum width. This approach poses a potential threat to historic buildings adjacent to any streets. Below is a random sampling of key streets and representative streets to determine the potential impacts of their street classifications and design standards on adjacent historic buildings:

Broadway Street – Principal Arterial

Broadway is designated in the street plan as a principal arterial. Although this north-south corridor is flanked by many parking lots and other voids in the streetscape, there are also some random surviving historic buildings. The street profile consists of two driving lanes in either direction and a central continuous turn lane. There appears to be little designated on-street parking, with the exception of certain segments (such as the west side of the 300 block). It is estimated that the average paved cartway width of this street is approximately 60 feet (12' X 5 lanes). The adjacent sidewalk/setback widths are roughly 10 feet on either side, providing an existing ROW width of 80 feet. In contrast, the street plan requirements for principal arterials include a minimum 66 feet for cartway widths and 110 feet for ROW widths. Thus, the existing cartway width is roughly 6 feet less than the required width and the ROW is approximately 30 feet less than the standard.

Third Street: Minor Arterial

This street is designated as a minor arterial from its intersection with Boone Street on its west end to its termination just east of Interstate 530. As a minor arterial, this street’s required minimum pavement cartway width is 59 feet and its minimum ROW width is 90 feet. The existing condition for this street through some of its most historic segments, such as between Louisiana and Main, consists of two driving lanes in either direction with no designated on-street parking. As the street extends further east toward the core of downtown on-street parking occurs on one side of the street, and still further east it occurs on both sides, leaving just one driving lane in either direction. Regardless of the allocation of driving and parking lanes, the cartway width appears to be approximately 38 feet (11 foot driving lanes and 8 foot parking lanes), and the distance from the curb to the adjacent building façade on either side is approximately 11 feet. The total existing ROW is 60 feet. For comparative purposes, minor arterials per the City’s street standards must have a minimum cartway of 59 feet and a ROW of 90 feet. In short, if the City were to actually implement the adopted street standards for Third Street, the cartway would expand by roughly an additional 20 feet, leaving an average setback of only 5 feet for sidewalks on either side. The ROW would need to expand by an additional 22 feet, which would encroach approximately 10 feet into the depth of each flanking historic building.



This segment of South Main Street is between 16th and 17th Streets. Designated in the City's street plan as a minor arterial, this designation is an example of one that is appropriate for its adjacent historic buildings. The required minimum paved cartway is 59 feet, while the existing width appears to be approximately 60 feet (four 11' driving lanes and two 8' parking lanes).

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive: Collector

This north-south street is designated as a collector. It features only two driving lanes, one in either direction. Although both lanes appear to be relatively wide (roughly 14 feet), there appears to be no designated on-street parking. The paved cartway is approximately 28 feet. The adjacent historic resources vary and include bungalow houses set back as far as approximately 20 feet from the street and early-nineteenth century brick commercial buildings as close as roughly 7 feet to the street. The existing ROW from 12th to Wright is 60 feet in width, while the existing ROW from Wright to Roosevelt is 80 feet in width. These numbers compare with the City's adopted standards for collectors of 36 feet for cartways and 60 feet for the ROW. Expanding the 28 foot wide cartway to the mandated minimum of 36 feet would bring the street's edge to within roughly 3 feet of some historic buildings.

In summary, the City's current minimum street standards are incompatible with many streets in Little Rock's historic areas, and improving the streets to meet those standards would negatively impact countless historic buildings.

Intersection Curb Radius

Curb radii dimensions greatly impact the speed of automobiles turning a corner. The smaller (“tighter”) the radii, the slower the vehicle must travel. However, in many communities, street design standards are based primarily upon the desire to move vehicles efficiently and relatively quickly. Similarly, many such standards are based upon a suburban context rather than a more fine-grained and historic urban context. Given that urban corner buildings are traditionally located very close to their associated street’s corner, large radii requirements can threaten the existence of historic buildings. Little Rock’s street plan requires a 30 foot radius for principal arterials, minor arterials, and even collectors. Standards are not given for local roads. These are excessive dimensions for collectors and perhaps even for the minor arterials. Not only do they encourage speeding, but these standards are also a threat to historic corner buildings.

Subdivision & Zoning Ordinance

The Subdivision & Zoning Ordinance reviewed as part of this citywide historic preservation plan was dated July of 2006, and included supplements through Number 49.

Subdivision Regulations

The following regulations are citywide and not tied to any particular zoning districts:

Streets & Access

Section 31-210 – General access and circulation – contains standards consistent with those discussed above for the City’s street plan with respect to curb turning radii. It states that “Turning radii shall be thirty (30) foot minimum radius for areas subject to truck traffic.” While areas subject to truck traffic are not an easily defined notion, they would likely include minor arterials and collectors. Given that many existing historic areas feature streets with radii in the five to ten foot range, these standards are excessive and a threat to historic buildings located on corner lots.

Lots

Division 3 of the ordinance addresses the design of lots. Section 31-232 requires that all single-family detached residential lots, regardless of their zoning district or location, have a minimum width of 60 feet. Given that the average lot width of most of Little Rock’s historic neighborhoods is 50 feet, this requirement outlaws the city’s historic development patterns. While previously-developed properties would be “grandfathered in” with their current lot widths, the subdivision of any larger parcels within historic areas (including land assemblages and re-subdivisions) would be required to follow the 60 foot minimum. This section also requires that all residential corner lots have a minimum 75 foot width on both street frontages.

Building Front Setbacks

Section 31-256 of Division 4 requires that all residential lots must have a front “building line” at least 25 feet from the “street property line.” For collector streets it must be at least 30 feet, and for minor arterials it must be at least 35 feet. Unless part of a special overlay district with design standards that supersede the underlying base zoning, such front setback requirements are too deep to be compatible with many of Little Rock’s historic neighborhoods.



The block bound by E.17th Street on the north, E.18th Street on the south, McAlmont Street on the east, and Vance Street on the west, is illustrated above and below. It clearly does not meet the City's minimum front setback standard of 30 feet (because 17th is designated as a "collector") or the minimum lot width requirement of 60 feet.



Zoning Regulations

Below is a summary of some of the key zoning districts impacting Little Rock's historic resources:

Urban Use (UU)

The UU district covers much of Little Rock's downtown. This district is clearly intended to accommodate dense mixed use development in traditional urban forms. In addition to including design standards for new development to promote good urbanism, it prohibits parking lots between a building and its street. Furthermore, the development of any commercial parking lot requires a conditional use approval, which potentially offers at least one layer of protection for historic buildings. However, the ordinance's criteria for a conditional use are not sufficiently clear to definitely protect historic resources. Moreover, this zoning allows

buildings to be as high as five stories, and with bonuses for various desirable features (housing, transit stops, etc.), they can be as tall as fifteen stories. This sort of development intensity is a serious threat to historic buildings lacking protective overlay zoning.

Residential Districts

Several different residential zoning districts have been applied to Little Rock's historic neighborhoods. The most prevalent in historic areas such as the Central High Neighborhood are the R2, R3 and R4 districts. For example, South Summit Street in the vicinity of 17th Street is a well-intact historic area with a high level of architectural integrity and cohesiveness. The lots are no wider than roughly 50 feet and no deeper than 150 feet, yielding lots averaging approximately 7,500 square feet in area. R2 zoning requires a minimum lot size of 7,000 square feet, a required front yard setback of 25 feet, and side yard of 5 feet (or 10 percent of the lot width), making this zoning relatively consistent with the historic development patterns. The R3 and R4 districts are equally friendly toward historic neighborhoods. The R3 district has a minimum lot area requirement of only 5,000 square feet, a front setback of 25 feet, and a side yard equal to 10 percent of the lot width. These standards are compatible with most, if not all, of Little Rock's historic neighborhoods. Although the R4 standards for lot areas and setbacks are similar to those of the R3 district, this district allows two-family houses. While duplexes can be designed to be compatible with single-family historic neighborhoods, there is no such requirement in the R4 zoning. The R-4A (Low Density Residential) district is intended to "protect existing developed residential neighborhoods. It is intended for single-family use with conversions to two-family units or the addition of accessory residential units." Much of the MacArthur Park district is zoned R-4A, although it is already protected by the City's only existing local historic district.

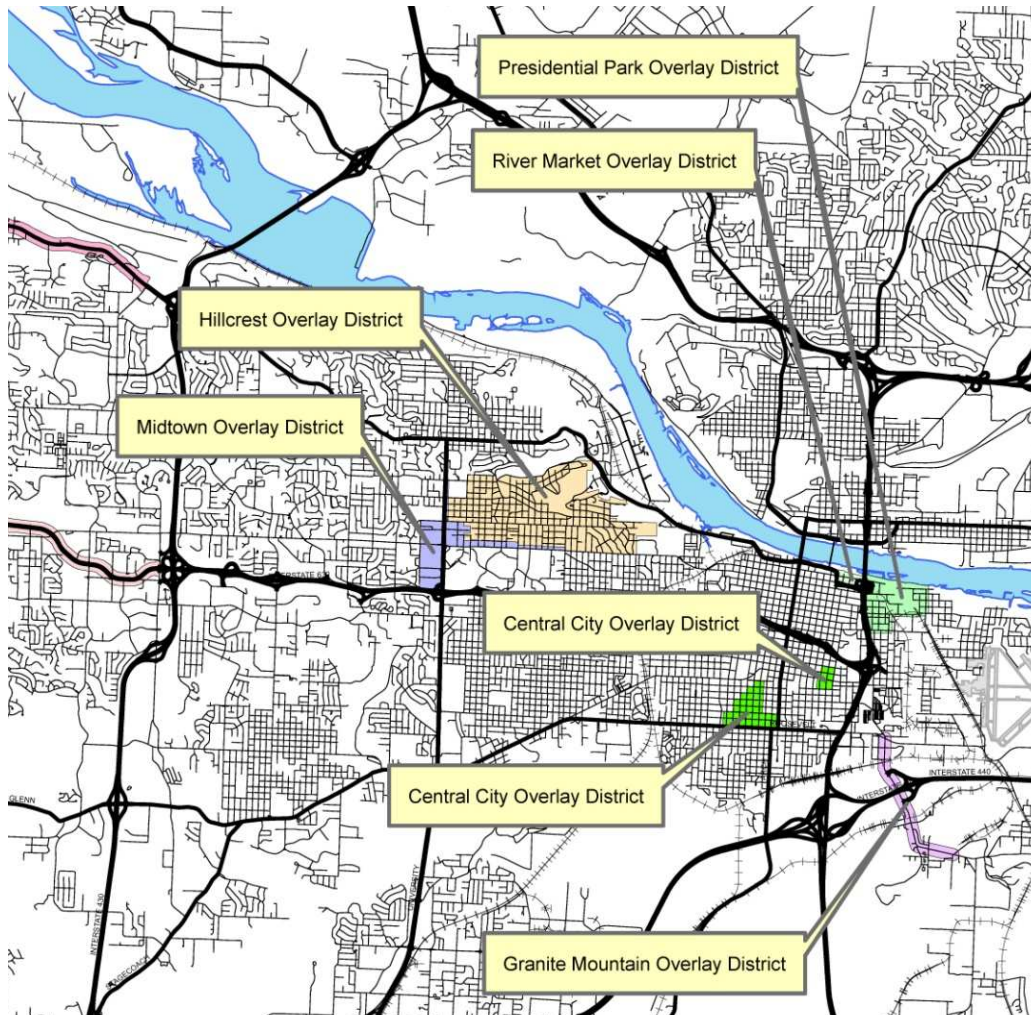
There is, however, one glaring threat to many of Little Rock's historic neighborhoods - there are no "maximum" standards. Thus, while a minimum 25 foot front setback might work for some neighborhoods, there is no maximum setback requirement that would preclude someone from building a house with a 50 foot front setback. Such a setback would be grossly out of character with most of Little Rock's historic urban neighborhoods. It is noteworthy that one provision in the code might help avoid such scenarios. Section 36-156(2)g states that "Where the developed lots in a block comprise forty (40) percent or more of the frontage of the said block and the buildings on those lots have an average variation in depth of not more than six (6) feet, the average of those depths on said lots shall be the standard depth for the balance of the block." This provision will insure compatible setbacks for substantially developed blocks, but not for those in which less than 40 percent of the lots are undeveloped. Also, this provision does not account for blocks with inappropriate infill development whereby such development sets the standard for the block.

Off-Street Parking

Article VIII of the zoning ordinance addresses all off-street parking and loading issues. As with virtually all zoning ordinances, it requires a specific number of parking spaces based upon the building area of each land use (one parking space per 300 square feet of retail space, etc.). Within at least one district, there are provisions for "shared parking" whereby it is recognized that specific land uses experience peak parking demands during differing hours of the day. In the Hillcrest design overlay district (DOD), only fifty percent of the spaces otherwise required may be waived because of differing peak demand hours for commercial and residential uses. Furthermore, the UU district, which encompasses much of downtown, has no parking requirements. Given that any regulations that lessen parking requirements reduce the odds of demolition of historic buildings, less stringent parking requirements should be considered for other historic mixed use commercial areas in Little Rock.

Design Overlay Districts

The City of Little Rock has eight “design overlay districts” that provide an additional layer of design standards beyond that normally provided for in the underlying base zoning. Section 36-342 of the ordinance, entitled “DOD design overlay district,” establishes the policy framework for the designation and regulation of individual DODs. This section states that DODs may “be used to protect or facilitate a particular design theme established through a certain architectural style or period.” However, nowhere within the list of purposes for DODs is the term “historic” used. Thus, while DODs are clearly intended to protect and/or establish a particular physical character, they are not intended for the same purpose as that of a conventional historic district.



This map identifies six of the eight overlay zoning districts most relevant to historic resources in Little Rock.

Only three of the districts feature a substantial number of historic resources. Below is a summary of the DODs with respect to their impacts on historic resources. A map illustrating the overlays within the more historic portions of Little Rock is provided above.

River Market Overlay District

This small district is bound roughly by the railroad tracks paralleling the river to the north, E. 2nd Street to the south, Interstate 30 to the east, and Cumberland Street to the west. The intent of this DOD is to “create” a vibrant mixed-use area that is attractive, pedestrian-friendly, and features high-quality architectural and urban design. There is no mention of historic buildings within the section on the DOD’s purpose. How-

ever, the standards are sympathetic toward historic buildings in many ways. For example, signs may not obscure architecturally significant features, historic and distinctive materials and architectural features may not be removed from a building, cleaning methods for historic materials must be gentle, and historic windows and storefronts shall be retained. With respect to new development, buildings must be designed in a manner compatible with their context, and the maximum building height is four stories or 48 feet. From an urban design perspective this height limit seems reasonable. While it is conceivable that one and two-story historic buildings might face demolition pressures for new development yielding more square footage, these standards are not as potentially impacting as would be the case if even taller buildings were allowed, and many of the one and two story older buildings have been well-maintained or rehabilitated for current uses. The DOD standards for this district are implemented by an appointed five-member Design Review Committee (DRC).



The River Market Design Overlay District (DOD) focuses more on urban design and aesthetics than historic preservation. Regardless, the district's design standards are relatively friendly toward the preservation of historic buildings.

Central City Redevelopment Corridor Overlay District

This designation is applied to two separate areas having similar characteristics. The larger of the two is an irregular shaped area bound roughly by Roosevelt Road on the south, Wright Avenue on the north, Broadway Street on the east, and High Street on the west. The other area is smaller and nearly rectangular in shape. It is bound approximately by 15th Street on the north, 19th Street on the south, Commerce Street on the east, and Cumberland Street on the west. As with the other DODs, the regulations are in addition to those contained in the underlying base zoning, but where conflicts occur, the DOD regulations shall apply. However, in those cases in which the Capitol Zoning District or MacArthur Park Historic District overlap the Central City Redevelopment Corridor Overlay District, the regulations of the former two shall apply.

Relative to the River Market District addressed previously, this district has much less detailed design standards and only addresses the following issues: roofline, materials, building orientation, entrances, parking and non-residential setbacks. Because of the overall simplicity of these standards, they are implemented administratively by the Director of the Department of Planning and Development rather than by a design review body. As written, the actions that are reviewable are unclear. Section 36-370 states that “These regulations apply to all new construction,” and new construction is defined as “Construction that is characterized by the introduction of new buildings or structures.” “Buildings” are defined elsewhere in the ordi-

nance as free-standing structures, but the definition for “structures” is somewhat vague. This section also states that “Routine repairs, maintenance and interior alterations shall not require compliance with this section.” Thus, it is unclear whether a new building addition, porch, dormer or similar component would be reviewable. Because of the focus of this district on new construction, it would appear to have no significant impact upon historic buildings.

Hillcrest Design Overlay District

This is Little Rock’s most recently adopted DOD, as it was established in 2008. It is bound roughly by Markham on the south, Kavanaugh and Lookout on the north, Cedar Hill Road on the east, and Grant and Fillmore on the west. Its stated intent is to “help maintain the built environment in a neighborhood that is rich in history and architectural character and consists of both a vital residential area and a thriving commercial sector. The district’s standards, which are above and beyond those of the underlying base zoning, are triggered by any exterior work requiring a building permit and not considered to be routine maintenance. The design standards of this DOD are based upon the historic development pattern, and a fifty percent waiver is permitted for parking requirements. While some of the details of the design standards could be tightened up to better insure the protection of the area’s historic quality, it is generally well-written and comprehensive.

Other Overlay Districts

The other five overlay districts are located in areas that have a very limited number of historic resources. Below is a brief overview:

Highway 10 Scenic Corridor Overlay District

This district is located on the west side of the city. It is intended to minimize unattractive strip commercial development and to provide a more appealing gateway into the city. Key focuses include minimizing curb cuts, providing landscaping, and avoiding excessive signage.

Chenal/Financial Center Parkway Urban Corridor Overlay

This district is very similar to the Highway 10 overlay. It too has only a limited number of historic resources and it is focused on enhancing the form and aesthetics of a key gateway into town.

Midtown Overlay District

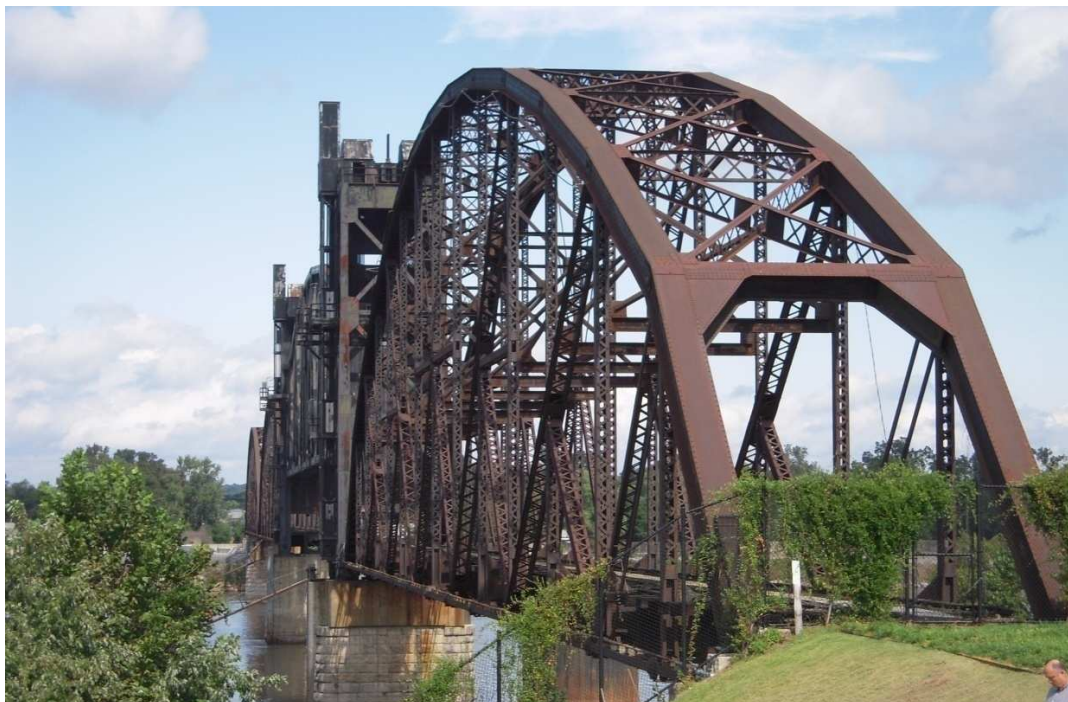
The majority of this area is bound by I-630 on the south, Father Tribou Street on the north, McKinley on the west and University on the east. It also includes an east-west oriented segment extending east of University along the north side of West Markham Street. This district is dominated by very automobile-oriented suburban development, including shopping malls, office buildings, and apartments.

Granite Mountain Corridor Overlay District

This corridor overlay follows much of Confederate Blvd., which is located southeast of the downtown area. The road is essentially undeveloped, with the exception of some light industrial uses randomly located. The district’s stated purpose is to “enhance the scenic quality of the corridor and to create a distinctive atmosphere that complements the Audubon Arkansas nature center building, outdoor nature trails, and wildlife and night sky viewing areas...” The primary focus of the district’s design standards is landscaping and outdoor lighting.

Presidential Park Overlay District

Located immediately east of the River Market Overlay District and anchored by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library, this area lacks a substantial number of historic resources. The key exception is the abandoned railroad bridge adjacent to the library, although the library itself may now, and will certainly one day, be considered historic. Otherwise, the area is dominated by open park-like spaces, contemporary buildings, and industrial areas.



With the exception of this retired historic railroad bridge spanning the Arkansas River, the Presidential Park Overlay District is essentially devoid of historic resources.

Capitol Zoning District Ordinance

The Capitol Zoning District (CZD) was created in 1975 by the General Assembly to protect and improve two specific areas: the Capitol Area and the Mansion Area. The Capitol Area is a triangular-shaped district anchored by the State Capitol building. The Mansion Area is located southeast of the Capitol Area and is anchored by the Governor’s Mansion. The nine-member CZD Commission regulates all land use and development within the CZD in accordance with the Capitol Zoning District Ordinance. As stated in Section 2-110, the CZD ordinance “supersedes all provisions of the city of Little Rock Code of Ordinances. However, unless specifically dealt with as provisions of this ordinance, all other regulations, requirements and codes of the city of Little Rock shall continue to be in force in the Capitol Zoning District...” A Design Review Committee evaluates all proposals for new construction and rehabilitation of existing buildings and makes recommendations to the Commission.

General

In most respects, the CZD is very similar to a local ordinance historic district. For example, most actions within the district require the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, and the focus of design review is anything visible from the public right-of-way. A Design Review Permit is required for any new structure or site improvements, including walls, fences, and gazebos. Also, a Demolition Permit is required for the demolition of any structure, and among the considerations for review are “the architectural, historical or cultural significance of the structure or improvement.” Section 2-106 even contains “Demolition by Neglect” provisions to protect against owners allowing a historic building to deteriorate out of existence. Ap-

peals are CZD staff actions/decisions are made to the CZD Commission, and appeals of their decisions are made to the Circuit Court of Pulaski County. Not only does the CZD appear to be modeled after a prototypical municipal historic preservation program, but it reflects the best of the “best practices” for such programs. For example, many municipal preservation ordinances are not so progressive as to include a demolition by neglect provision or to send appeals to the Circuit Court – an approach that tends to lessen political influences relative to appeals made to the municipality’s governing body.



One of the many objectives of the Capitol Area plan and design standards is to maintain views of the Capitol Building so they are not obscured by future development.

Planning & Regulatory Documents

The documents that plan for and regulate the CZD are well-organized, comprehensive, thorough, highly-illustrated, and strong substantively. They include a set of General Standards (which includes zoning) that apply to both the Capitol Area and the Mansion Area, as well as a set of Rehabilitation Standards that also apply to both areas. Both areas also have a Framework Plan and an implementing set of Design Standards specific to each area. Also, because each of the two areas is not homogenous in their development patterns and character, each features a series of sub-districts having their own specific land use regulations and design standards. A review of these documents revealed that they are, not surprisingly, preservation-friendly and no concerns have been raised with respect to their impacts on historic resources within their respective areas.



The Railroad Call District does not even come close to meeting the City's minimum front setback standard of 25 feet or the minimum lot width requirement of 60 feet per the Little Rock Subdivision and Zoning Ordinance. However, because it is within the Capitol Area district of the CZD and the applicable standards are context-sensitive, these properties on Pulaski are not considered to be non-conforming.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered:

Future Land Use Plan

The majority of Little Rock's historic resources are older houses found within historic neighborhoods. This plan's treatment of such area is, for the most part, not a threat to historic resources. The only exception might be Residential Medium Density (RM) areas, which suggest a range of housing types and densities between 6 and 10 units per acre. As applied to historic neighborhoods such as MacArthur Park (which is already protected by historic zoning), this designation would not be harmful if density is kept closer to 6 units per acre and attached housing is designed to be compatible with existing historic buildings. Thus, a statement added to the City's current Future Land Use Plan to clarify the need to be compatible with historic contexts might suffice.

Recommendation: Revise the Future Land Use Plan's section on Residential Medium Density areas to note that, as applied to historic neighborhoods, the density and design character must be compatible with that of the neighborhood. Consider applying similar language to all residential areas addressed by the plan in case similar issues exist for other residential land use categories.

More problematic is the Mixed Urban Use (MXU) designation, which defers to the City's existing Urban Use (UU) zoning district as a guide. Because this classification suggests building heights substantially taller than most existing historic commercial buildings (as high as 100 feet), it can apply development pressure on such properties that make this designation a serious threat.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the language for this category be revised to not reference an existing zoning classification (UU) and instead address it more generally, noting the need to consider the preservation of historic buildings. Also, because other commercial and mixed use categories within the plan fail to describe the recommended scale or density/intensity of development, descriptions should be provided.

Master Street Plan

This plan includes design standards for the six different street type categories. In many instances, expanding these streets within historic areas to the recommended minimum paved cartway width and ROW width would negatively impact adjacent historic buildings. Furthermore, this plan needs to include “maximum” widths, rather than only minimum widths.

Recommendation: It is recommended that maximum cartway and ROW widths be added to street standards, rather than addressing only the minimum widths. Also, an overall statement should be added to the plan that recognizes historic corridors and states that the application of street standards will be intended to avoid negative impacts to historic resources.

Likewise, a plan amendment should point out the threat that the City’s adopted turning radii standards have on historic corner buildings. Although, in practice, the City currently considers impacts to historic buildings on a case-by-case basis, not having such language in the plan to formalize the process puts it at risk should future elected officials and staff not value preservation to the same extent. The adoption of an administrative review process for addressing such streets should also be considered.

Recommendation: Add language to the plan indicating that the City’s adopted turning radii standards will be relaxed when their implementation might negatively impact historic corner buildings.

Subdivision & Zoning Ordinance

Subdivision Regulations

Section 31-210 – General access and circulation – contains curb turning radii standards consistent with those found in the City’s street plan. It states that “Turning radii shall be thirty (30) foot minimum radius for areas subject to truck traffic.” Because many existing historic areas feature streets with radii in the five to ten foot range, these standards are excessive and a threat to historic buildings located on corner lots. As noted above with regard to the City’s Master Street Plan, even though the City currently considers impacts to historic buildings, that practice may not be sustained in the future with personnel changes.

Recommendation: Amend this section of the regulations to note that exceptions to the turning radii standards will be made for historic areas in which corner historic buildings would be adversely impacted.

All single-family detached residential lots, regardless of their zoning district or location, are required to have a minimum width of 60 feet. Given that the average lot width of most of Little Rock’s historic neighborhoods is 50 feet, this standard should be revised to 50 feet. This section also requires that all residential corner lots have a minimum 75 foot width on both street frontages. That standard should be reduced. With respect to front setbacks, it is required that lots fronting collector streets must be at least 30. The setback must be at least 35 feet for minor arterials. Because such setback requirements are too deep to be compatible with many of Little Rock’s historic neighborhoods, these setbacks should either be reduced or a special provision should be made for historic areas. Also, maximum setbacks should be addressed, not just minimum setbacks.

Recommendation: Revise the subdivision regulations to require a minimum lot width of 50 feet rather than 60 feet, and add a maximum width requirement that insures that historic lot patterns are maintained. Corner lots should not be required to feature additional widths. Also, front setback standards should include a new provision stating that, for historic areas, average front setbacks shall be followed.

Zoning Regulations

The Urban Use (UU) zone requires a conditional use approval for the development of any commercial parking lot. Language might be added to this section to state that the proposed demolition of historic buildings will be one consideration for such conditional uses. This zone also allows buildings to be as high as five stories, and they can be as tall as fifteen stories with bonuses for various desirable features. It is recommended that either special provisions to help preserve historic buildings be added to this zone, or a local ordinance district should be applied to relevant areas.

Recommendation: Amend the conditional use provisions for commercial parking lots in the UU zone to include the goal of saving historic buildings when considering approvals. If there is insufficient support to apply a local ordinance district to the historic core of downtown Little Rock, the UU zoning should be amended to not allow density bonuses for sites on which the demolition of a historic building is proposed. The City should also consider a lower height limit for sites featuring historic buildings, such as three stories.

Some historic residential areas are zoned R4, which allows two-family houses. Where applied to historic areas, R3 should be considered as an alternative unless provisions can be added to the R4 zone to require design compatibility. Also, “maximum” standards should be applied to these districts.

Recommendation: Historic neighborhoods zoned R4 should be treated in either of the following two ways: 1) They should be rezoned to R3 if allowing duplexes is not a significant priority; or 2) A design overlay district (DOD) or local ordinance district should be applied to historic areas zoned R4 to require that duplexes be designed in a manner that has the appearance of a historic single-family house. Finally, maximum lot sizes and setbacks should be included in all residential zoning to reflect historic development patterns.

With the exception of the Hillcrest DOD, the City’s parking standards appear to presently lack “shared parking” provisions that would allow less parking when lots serve multiple uses that have staggered peak demand hours. This omission should be rectified, as decreased parking demands typically result in decreased threats to historic buildings.

Recommendation: Conduct a detailed evaluation of the City’s parking standards with the goal of adding new standards that allow urban mixed use areas to get by with fewer parking spaces because of “shared parking” opportunities and on-street parking relative to the parking needs of single-use suburban areas. In addition to the Hillcrest DOD, this issue does not apply to areas zoned UU, which does not feature parking requirements.

Zoning Overlay Districts

These districts, which do not include local historic districts, are applied to only three places having a high ratio of historic buildings – the River Market, Central City and Hillcrest DODs. While they could all be improved slightly if scrutinized enough, they are all generally favorable toward preservation. However, should sufficient time and/or money become available sometime in the future, a detailed analysis and revisions should occur for those three districts.

Capitol Zoning District Ordinance

This zoning is very friendly to preservation. In fact, it appears to be modeled after preservation zoning programs. Not only does a stringent design review process occur, but the ordinance even features provisions for issues such as demolition by neglect. No recommended changes are offered here.