

Why Preserve?

Historic preservation preserves, adapts, and reuses our built environment. Individuals and communities pursue historic preservation to:

- stabilize and protect the character of a community;
- ensure continuing physical connections to the past;
- provide a framework for community revitalization and economic development;
- encourage economic development through heritage tourism; and
- create livable and sustainable communities.

Historic preservation can provide long-term educational, environmental, cultural, aesthetic, historical, and social improvements.

How Does Historic Preservation Revitalize Communities?

Numerous studies have underscored the important role that historic preservation plays in the revitalization of older neighborhoods and commercial centers throughout the U.S. It is often the quality and character of historic buildings and settings that attracts initial reinvestment in economically blighted areas. Initial reinvestment often starts with a number of small-scale, residential, or small business projects that eventually spark the interest of larger investors.

Historic preservation is a key component of successful and sustained community revitalization programs across the United States. Recent studies have proved that on almost all levels, historic preservation-based revitalization programs yield higher economic benefits and are more cost effective than any other economic development programs.

Facts:

in Virginia....

- \$1 million in new construction yields 16.9 jobs, while \$1 million in rehabilitation of historic buildings yields 19.9 jobs.
- \$1 million in new construction adds \$661,000 to local household incomes; while \$1 million in rehabilitation adds \$709,000 to local household incomes.
- A community could rehabilitate 2 to 3 percent of its building stock per year and have perpetual employment in the building trades.¹

Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits

Federal and Virginia credit programs provide incentives for historic preservation through targeted tax credits for owners who rehabilitate historic properties. For income-producing (commercial or rental) historic properties that are listed on the National Register individually, or are located within listed historic districts, property owners can apply for credits that equal 20%

¹ Financial statistics come from Donovan D. Rypkema's "The Economics of Historic Preservation," a conference presentation made in Danville, Virginia, September 13, 2008.

of the certified costs that they pay to rehabilitate their properties. These credits can be used to satisfy federal income tax obligations.

Virginia offers a 25 percent historic preservation tax credits at the state level. Since the Virginia program's inception in 1997, it has spurred private investment of approximately \$1.5 billion in the rehabilitation of more than 1,200 landmark buildings. This investment in turn has generated an economic impact of nearly \$1.6 billion in the Commonwealth and created more than 10,700 jobs and \$444 million in associated wages and salaries.²

The rehabilitated buildings provide needed housing (in many cases, low- and moderate-income housing), office, retail, and other commercial space. The communities benefit from property improvement, blight removal, and increased occupancy of buildings in historic core neighborhoods.

In Portsmouth, since 1997, 33 federal tax credit projects have been initiated or completed. One of the most successful was the Governor Dinwiddie Hotel at 506 Dinwiddie Street which re-opened in 2005 after an extensive rehabilitation.

[IMAGE – Governor Dinwiddie Hotel: <http://www.governordinwiddiehotel.com/>]

Economic Development through Historic Preservation

Main Street Program

In 1980, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a private, non-profit organization, established the National Main Street Center to save and revitalize communities' historic commercial areas. By focusing on historic preservation and retaining community character, the Main Street program has been extremely successful, becoming one of the most powerful economic development tools in the nation.

The Main Street program is designed to improve all aspects of the central business districts of U.S. towns and cities. Building on a downtown's inherent assets -- rich architecture, personal service, and most of all, a sense of place -- the Main Street approach strives to rekindle entrepreneurship, downtown cooperation, and civic concern.

Many experts believe that, since its inception in 1980, the Main Street program has been the most cost effective program of economic development in the U.S., leveraging nearly \$45 billion in private reinvestment in 2200 U.S. communities; creating 83,000 net new businesses; and generating nearly 370,000 new jobs.

² Donovan D. Rypkema's "The Economics of Historic Preservation," a conference presentation made in Danville, Virginia, September 13, 2008.



[IMAGE – Main Street logo -

Heritage Tourism

Historic preservation maintains and enhances the historic character of a community and helps to create places that attract visitors who are interested in experiencing local history. Heritage tourism is a rapidly growing sector of the travel industry and is a proven economic development tool for historic areas.

In Virginia, heritage tourists...

- visit twice as many places, and
- spend 2.5 times as much money as other visitors.³

Historic Preservation and Property Values

Opposition to local historic districts has often revolved around the argument that another layer of review will lead to a reduction in property values and disinvestment. Studies have consistently found that properties within local historic districts appreciate at rates greater than the local market overall and more rapidly than in similar, *non-designated* neighborhoods. Historic District properties have also proved to be less vulnerable to the volatility that usually accompanies rate fluctuations and economic downturns.⁴

³ Donovan D. Rypkema's "The Economics of Historic Preservation," a conference presentation made in Danville, Virginia, September 13, 2008.

⁴ Donovan D. Rypkema's "The Economics of Historic Preservation," a conference presentation made in Danville, Virginia, September 13, 2008.

Historic Resources in Portsmouth

[IMAGE – Portion of “Bird's eye view Norfolk & Portsmouth, Virginia 1873. Drawn and published by C. N. Drie. Library of Congress.]



Six historic districts listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places:

- Olde Towne (locally regulated)
- Truxton (locally regulated)
- Port Norfolk, (locally regulated)
- Park View (locally regulated)
- Cradock (locally regulated)
- Downtown Portsmouth/High St. Corridor.

[IMAGE – entire city with Districts outlined]

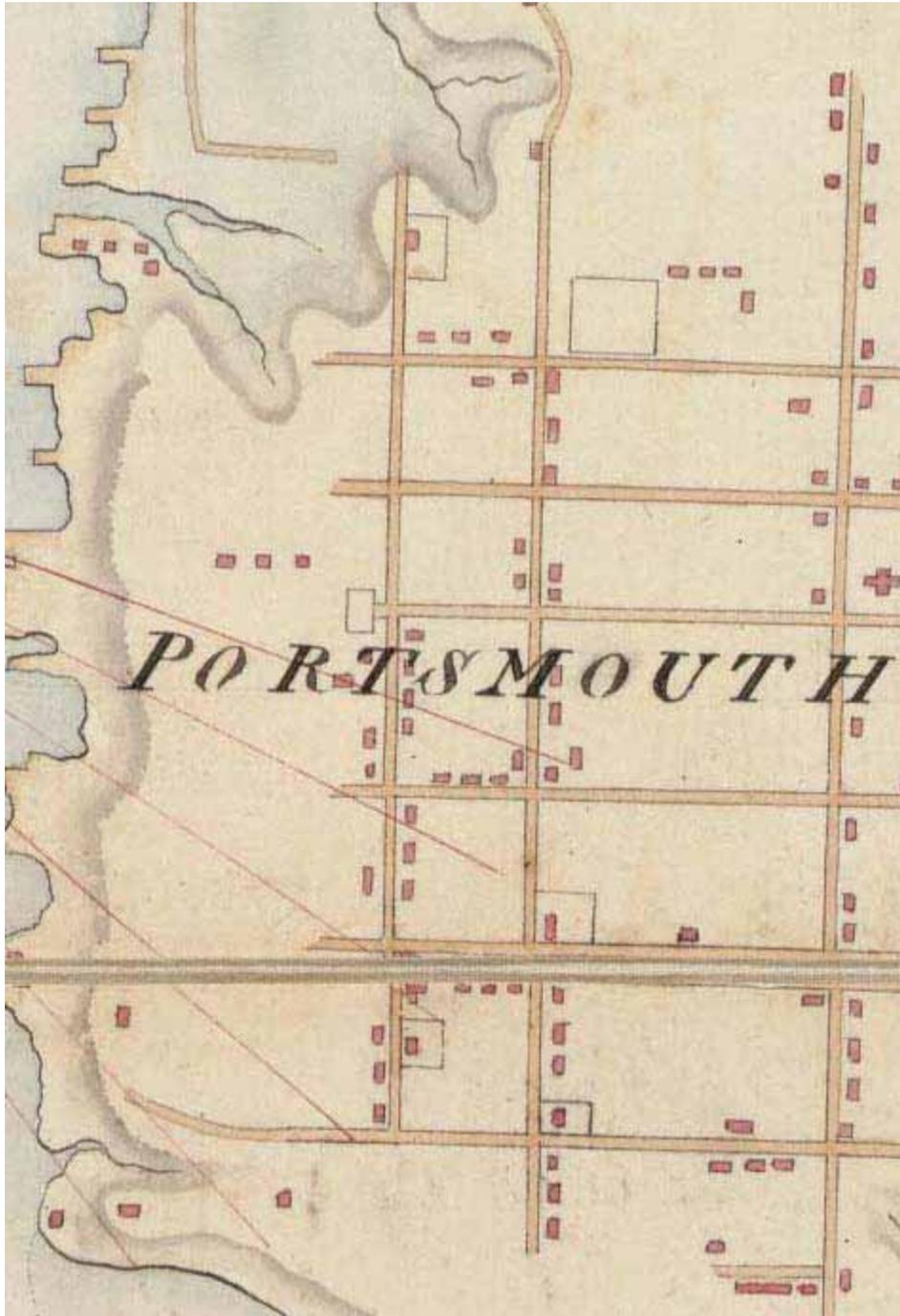
<http://www.portsmouthva.gov/planning/2005CompPlan/07%20-%20Land%20Use.pdf#page=4>

Olde Towne, Truxton, Port Norfolk, Park View, and Cradock are locally designated and regulated districts. The Downtown Portsmouth Historic District is a state and nationally

designated district, but NOT a locally designated historic district. However, it is within one of two Downtown Design Districts (D-1) which is regulated by the City's Downtown Design Committee (DDC).

The Olde Towne and most of the Downtown Portsmouth historic districts are encompassed within the Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Strategy study area. Together, the two districts encompass the original 1752 plat of Portsmouth and its 1763 addition. Portsmouth is a unique resource within Hampton Roads and the region; it is the only intact 18th century townscape in Hampton Roads and one of the largest concentrations of architecturally significant 19th and 20th century buildings between Alexandria and Charleston, South Carolina.

[IMAGE – A plan of Portsmouth Harbour in the province of Virginia shewing the works erected by the British forces for its defence, 1781. Copied from the original of Lieut. Stratton, engineer. Library of Congress online.]



The City has many important historic associations, including links to important Revolutionary and Civil war era events, and its longtime role as an important maritime, industrial, and transportation center. Located at a deepwater port, Portsmouth is home to the nation's first federal shipyard and dry dock established in 1794. The City's historic districts and landmarks are tangible links to these important historic events. They are places where residents and visitors can sense their connection to the past and can visualize life in an evolving maritime community from the 19th century through the mid-20th century.



From Olde Towne Historic District design Guideline, p. 3.







Architecturally, the districts contain a significant collection of residential, commercial, and institutional buildings that illustrate the evolution of this dynamic port city from the late 18th century through the mid-20th century. The street layout and block divisions remain from the original 1752 layout. Important Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne style residential buildings; Classical Revival, Romanesque Revival, and Streamline Modern commercial buildings populate the district and create a visual museum of style.

History Matters' Initial Impressions

Portsmouth has a strong collection of historically and architecturally significant buildings, protected historic districts, and attractive cultural and heritage destinations. Some examples:

- Hill House
- Pass House
- Ball-Nivison House
- 315 Court Street (William Peters House)
- Courthouse Gallery
- Lightship Portsmouth
- Historic places of worship
- African American sites and history,

- Path of History
- Naval Shipyard & Naval Shipyard Museum
- Naval Medical Center
- Museum of Military History

This compelling collection of historic resources should form the framework for defining Portsmouth's sense of place and for marketing it to visitors.

Redevelopment in the second half of the 20th century of areas south of High Street and east of Middle Street has erased the historic waterfront character of the City. Opportunities exist to redevelop portions of this area in a way that acknowledges the City's maritime heritage and connects this area to the historic districts to the north and west. Attempts should be made to highlight connections between the waterfront (as an attraction and amenity) to the rich historic character of the Olde Towne and Downtown Portsmouth historic districts. The scale, streetscape, materials and massing of new construction as well as the streetscapes and urban context should relate to the city's historic development patterns without directly replicating the past.

Portsmouth should cultivate partnerships with other localities, private museums, and heritage groups to link the City's historic resources and attractions to other regional tourism efforts. Opportunities exist to partner with local colleges and universities to promote heritage education within the city. These might include lecture series or research and archaeological studies that would raise Portsmouth's profile and draw outsiders to the downtown.

Comparable Cities

Comparable cities that have successfully leveraged their heritage resources and sense of place to create compelling communities to live in, to work in, and to visit include:

- Portland, Maine - The American Planning Association named Commercial Street in the Old Port historic district of Portland as one of the 10 Great Streets in America for 2008

*"It is a place where moored fishing boats, lobster pots and fishing gear, and crying seagulls mix with downtown office employees going to work, residents living in dockside condominiums, and tourists visiting restaurants and boutique shops."*⁵

- Savannah, Georgia

"APA has singled out Bull Street as one of this year's 10 Great Streets in America for the historic architecture and craftsmanship, diversity of uses, and integration of a variety of

⁵ APA website.

transportation alternatives — as well as the commitment of Savannah to preserve the street's legacy.” (APA, 2007)⁶

- Wilmington, North Carolina – Named to the National Trust’s Dozen Distinctive Destinations List for 2008

“Wilmington is a rare breed among travel destinations,” said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. “The city’s charm exudes from every corner and it is, by far, one of the most historically interesting and culturally diverse places along the eastern seaboard. A visit to this community is memorable, and not one soon forgotten.”⁷

⁶ APA website.

⁷ NTHP website: “Dozen Distinctive Destinations 2008.”