FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS

CITYWIDE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

2009

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Preface: Why Preserve? The Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation

Preservation of older buildings has numerous benefits beyond enhancing the built environment. Dozens of studies conducted nationwide during the past twenty years demonstrate that historic preservation is an economically sound, fiscally responsible and cost-effective strategy that produces visible and measurable economic benefits to communities. In short, historic preservation makes good economic sense.

Historic Preservation Creates Jobs
Because rehabilitation projects are more labor intensive than new construction, historic preservation actually creates more jobs than new construction. In new construction, generally half of all expenditures are for labor and half are for materials. In a typical historic rehabilitation project, between 60 and 70 percent of the total cost goes toward labor, which has a beneficial ripple effect throughout the local economy.

Historic Preservation Promotes Downtown Revitalization
Historic preservation has proven to be an effective economic development strategy for downtown revitalization efforts across the country. The rehabilitation of historic buildings not only raises the value of a particular parcel, but it also reinforces and often raises the property values of adjacent properties. Restored historic buildings on average appreciate at a rate greater than that of the marketplace as a whole.

Historic Preservation Helps Stabilize Neighborhoods
Historic preservation helps neighborhoods by stabilizing property values, encouraging reinvestment, maintaining or enhancing tax revenue collections, and providing housing and jobs. Historic preservation reduces vacancies as the restoration of older homes provides affordable housing and increasing occupancy. Restoration of older homes also revives neighborhoods by beginning an upward cycle that improves the economic attractiveness of a neighborhood.

Historic Preservation Increases Property Values
Numerous studies across the country have shown that property values in designated National Register or local ordinance historic districts generally increase more rapidly than the overall market. In most cases, historic designation enhances property value.

Historic Preservation Supports Taxpayers' Investments
Allowing downtown and historic neighborhoods to decline is financially irresponsible. A town has already made an investment in infrastructure (lights, water and sewer pipes, utility lines, roads and streets, sidewalks and curbs). Underutilized or neglected infrastructure wastes taxpayer dollars. A fiscally responsible local government is one that commits to revitalization and reuse of historic neighborhoods and commercial areas.

Historic Preservation Encourages Tourism
Heritage tourism remains one of the fastest growing industries across the country. A growing number of tourists are interested in visiting and exploring the United States' small towns and cities, and the things they most want to see and experience are a community's unique historic sites, buildings, and neighborhoods.

I. Executive Summary

The Fort Smith community has reached a major decision point regarding the vitality and preservation of its historic structures and downtown neighborhoods.

The city boasts a rich stock of historic buildings. Heritage tourism resources in and around Fort Smith are increasing. An array of preservation tools and financial incentives are in place. The city's new convention center is a plus, as is the ongoing rehabilitation of many downtown buildings. There is real momentum on historic preservation.

This momentum is complemented by the city's renewed interest in and commitment to planning. Fort Smith's recently completed Comprehensive Plan places emphasis on the rehabilitation of historic buildings and the revitalization of downtown neighborhoods. The city's new maintenance code will require better upkeep of inner-city properties. In short, the stage is set for Fort Smith to move into a heightened phase of preservation, potentially enriching the city both culturally and fiscally. This is a fork in the road.

Unfortunately, long-term neglect of historic buildings is a serious problem in Fort Smith. Downtown neighborhoods are riddled with neglected properties, demolition sites and inappropriate infill. If Fort Smith is to develop an economically viable, livable and sustainable urban core, its downtown neighborhoods must be rehabilitated and protected. With work, Fort Smith can reclaim a unique, colorful and livable downtown where people live, work and play. To that end, we recommend these priorities:

• **Enhance protective zoning**. We recommend that the city and its agencies work proactively to enact local ordinance historic districts in historic neighborhoods. Where conservation zoning is more acceptable to landlords and homeowners, we recommend that overlay, rather than designation as a full-fledged local ordinance historic district.

• **Nominate more Fort Smith properties and neighborhoods to the National Register**. Given Fort Smith's diverse historic stock, the city is deeply under represented on the National Register. The Lutheran Duvall and Greenwood-Fishback neighborhoods are eligible and should be nominated first, and soon, to the National Register.

• **Improve downtown neighborhoods.** Downtown neighborhoods must receive added attention. These neighborhoods can contribute to the economic viability of the city if streetscapes are improved and if these neighborhoods are connected to each other and to downtown. In particular, Lutheran Duval and Belle Grove need to be connected to downtown by viable automobile and pedestrian corridors.

• **Create a regional preservation nonprofit group**. Finally, we recommend the formation of a regional nonprofit preservation organization. By working with Van Buren and possibly other communities on tourism and preservation promotion, a nonprofit group could bring the desired attention and resources to Fort Smith historic properties.

Goals and Objectives

Overall, the goals of this citywide preservation plan include the following:

Enhance Rehabilitation and Preservation of Fort Smith's Historic Neighborhoods

- Reduce abandonment and demolition through an urban homesteading program
- Promote rehabilitation through a revolving fund program
- Promote building rehabilitation by easing home occupation standards
- Promote appropriate rehabilitation through compatible weatherization
- Provide training for builders and contractors in historic rehabilitation methods and techniques
- Encourage new compatible construction in Fort Smith's older neighborhoods
- Adopt a conservation zoning provision and promote its use
- Revise and expand the publication *Design Guidelines for Historic Buildings*
- List eligible historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places
- Evaluate the significance of properties built after 1950 and identify those that meet National Register criteria

Enhance Rehabilitation and Preservation of Downtown Buildings

- Complete an architectural and historical survey of Fort Smith's commercial and industrial buildings
- Identify and list commercial and industrial properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- Integrate significant buildings into redevelopment areas

Increase Heritage Tourism in Fort Smith

- Utilize existing programs and coordinate with regional sites
- Research and promote Fort Smith's ethnic heritage
- Provide visitors with a driving tour of the city's historic sites
- Promote and interpret Fort Smith's historic cemeteries
- Integrate recreational trails and bike paths with historic sites
- Provide visitors with walking and driving tour brochures of the city's historic neighborhoods
- Encourage bed and breakfast accommodations

Increase Public Awareness and Support for Historic Preservation

- Encourage and promote neighborhood home tours
- Continue and expand annual historic preservation awards programs
- Partner with the Fort Smith Board of Realtors to promote historic preservation
- Integrate the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith History and Historical Interpretation degree program into local historic preservation projects

II. Fort Smith's Heritage: History & Architecture

Strategic Outpost: Fort Smith During Westward Expansion

The late 1700s saw an increasing mix of native tribes west of the Mississippi, not all of whom were on friendly terms. By 1817, heightened tensions endangered tribe members and fur traders and pioneers in the area, and the army sent troops to keep the peace on the western edge of the burgeoning United States. The troops constructed Fort Smith on the east side of the Arkansas River on a promontory called Belle Point, where the Arkansas meets the Poteau. The military presence allowed an influx of settlers from the east, and a community began to grow up around the fort.

Early settler John Rogers opened a trading post at Fort Smith, doing business with native people and trappers. Known as the Father of Fort Smith, Rogers became the settlement's first postmaster in 1829. He laid out Garrison Avenue, the city's primary commercial district and thoroughfare. In 1838, after the army abandoned the fort to move farther west into Indian Territory, it was Rogers who convinced the military to return and build a second fort.

Location played a major role in Fort Smith's viability and growth; a natural funnel to the Southwest, the Arkansas River Valley became the meeting point for many primary roads. As a result, in 1830, when President Andrew Jackson put into effect plans for the relocation of eastern native people, the resulting "Trail of Tears" passed right through the gateway community of Fort Smith. Military installations in the area assisted tribe members in rejoining their own communities or held them temporarily while land assignments were made.

The beautifully restored John Rogers House is located at 400 North 8th Street. Home of the city's founder, it is one of Fort Smith's oldest residences, dating to the 1840s.

During this period of rapid westward expansion, the federal government and its military viewed Fort Smith as a strategic site, and the town around the fort grew. Incorporated in 1842, Fort Smith served as a pivotal supply post for gold seekers heading to California, local trappers and farmers, and the military. Business boomed for merchants, wagon companies, and saddle makers who sold supplies to westward pioneers and to army units headed for action in the war between the United States and Mexico. During this decade, the town built churches, a hotel and a school. As the United States frontier advanced, Fort Smith served as a vital communication center with mail, stage, and steamboats passing through the town. By 1850, the town boasted nearly 1,000 citizens.

Deep Division: The Civil War

By 1860, the state of Arkansas had achieved a population of nearly half a million people—one quarter of them slaves of African descent. Inevitably, when Confederate states began to secede from the Union in 1861, Arkansas also severed ties with the United States. However, while more than 60,000 Arkansas residents joined rebel troops, at least 9,000 Anglos and more than 5,000 African Americans fought on the side of the Union in this conflict that divided communities and families.

Fort Smith was no exception. Its strategic location on intersecting rivers and roads made it both a valuable staging area as a Union outpost and a continuing target for Confederates. Beginning the war as a Confederate military installation, the fort was soon taken by Union troops. Union occupation was challenged in July of 1864. At Massard Prairie, eight miles southeast of Fort Smith, 600 Confederates caught 200 Union cavalrymen horseless as their herd grazed. Most were captured by the Confederates. Emboldened by success, the Confederates pressed on towards Fort Smith. They were repelled, however, by the Union's superior cannons.

In 1865, Confederate leadership officially turned Arkansas, Texas and Indian Territory over to the Union, and the town of Fort Smith, with a population of about 2,000, began the work of rebuilding. Union troops stationed at the fort worked to restore order on the frontier. In 1870 the federal government relocated the Western Arkansas Federal Court District from Van Buren to Fort Smith, and a succession of well-known, tough federal judges presided on the Fort Smith bench.

1870 to 1890: Fort Smith Prospers

In 1870, the United States military abandoned its installation at Fort Smith. The vacated status of the fort reflected the poor economic prospects of the town. The recent completion of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, bypassing Fort Smith, was drawing between $500,000 and $750,000 annually away from the town. Still, the town was large enough to support churches and schools. The Fort Smith Fire Department was established, and Adelaide Hall, which later became the posh LeFlore Hotel, was built on Garrison Avenue. Slowly but surely the population grew, reaching approximately 3,000 by 1880.

This period of relative economic torpor was followed by a rally, as Fort Smith became a distribution center for western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma. In the late 1870s, the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad was completed, giving Fort Smith access to the cities

of the East. Commercial trade and wholesale activity expanded. Garrison Avenue teemed with activity. Enterprises along the street included dry goods stores, wholesale grocers, restaurants, saloons, furniture stores, jewelers and druggists. In 1883, thirty businesses joined the new telephone exchange and the first mule-drawn streetcars began transporting citizens down the streets. During a single decade, the city's population nearly quadrupled, reaching more than 11,000 by 1890. The town's affluence was evident in the brick Italianate and Romanesque commercial buildings going up on Garrison Avenue and in the ornate Victorian homes constructed in the newly developed area of Belle Grove. There, just northeast of the commercial district, the city's businessmen built luxurious homes for their families. Construction began on Belle Grove School in 1884, with the federal government's gift to the city of the land formerly occupied by the fort.

The citizens of Fort Smith built a variety of house types in Belle Grove and other downtown neighborhoods as the city expanded. Popular styles of the mid-to-late nineteenth century included Folk Victorian, Italianate, Queen Anne and Second Empire designs.

Built in 1881 in the Belle Grove Historic District, this Queen Anne house on North Seventh Street features a wrap-around porch, wooden shingles and a corner tower.

Built in 1886, this Second Empire home at 423 North Sixth Street was the first house restored within the Belle Grove Historic District. It now houses the Fort Smith Art Center.

Fort Smith enjoyed electricity by 1885. By 1887, Garrison Avenue was lined with brick buildings from the river to Seventh Street. The discovery of natural gas in the area in 1887 drew manufacturers to Fort Smith, and The Missouri-Pacific Railroad Bridge across the Arkansas river opened in May of 1891. The city celebrated with a parade.

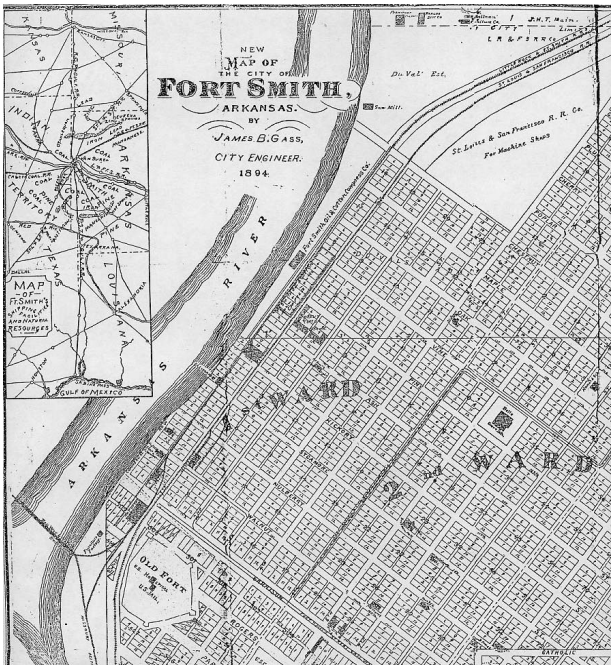
A bustling regional distribution center, Fort Smith promoted itself as safe and profitable for business. The town's economy remained strong through the panicky year of 1893. Of all points reached by the Wells-Fargo Express Company, only two made an increase in business in 1893 over 1892, and only one a material increase—that being Fort Smith. By then, electric streetcars ran the rails in Fort Smith. Six of eight lines began at the foot of Garrison Avenue, the bustling commercial center of the region.

Note the substantial brick buildings with Italianate windows and cornices featured on this postcard of Garrison Avenue, ca. 1900.

As Fort Smith became the distribution center for west Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma, it also became a regional financial center. Merchants Bank on North Sixth Street, shown here ca. 1887, was a mainstay of the Fort Smith economy.

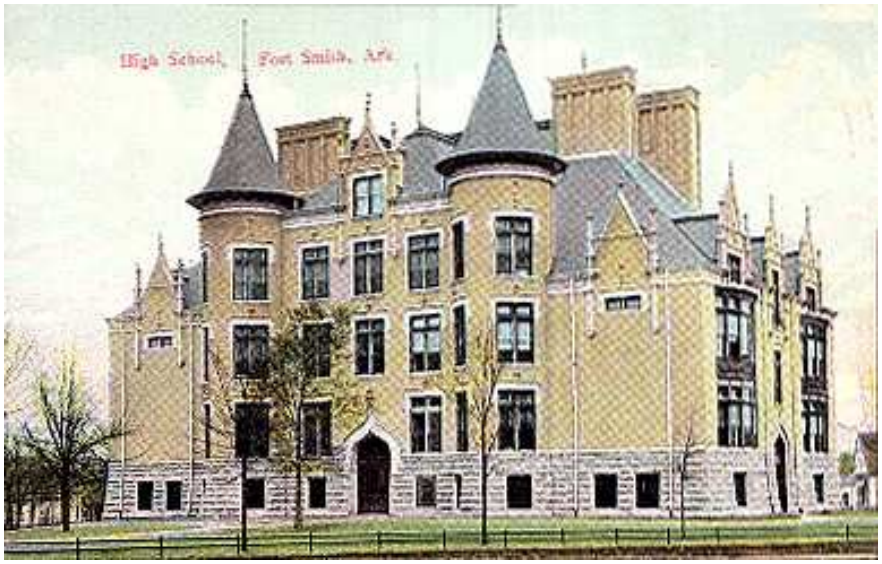
Despite growing amenities, western Arkansas was still a rough-and-ready place. Outlaw bands roved Arkansas and Indian Territory committing crimes from whiskey peddling to horse theft and murder. Fort Smith received national media attention with the trial of Belle Starr and her husband Sam for horse stealing.

In an effort to bring more law and order to western Arkansas, the city built a new court house and jail in 1887. The building is now part of the Fort Smith National Historic Site.



On this 1894 map, the second Fort Smith built in 1838 is visible, probably with its walls still intact at that time.

Occasional fires and disastrous weather challenged Fort Smith. An 1898 tornado destroyed the newly built Fort Smith High School and the Immaculate Conception Church. The school and the church were soon rebuilt.



This distinctive Gothic Revival-Chateau building, shown here in 1910, served as the Fort Smith High School.

Immaculate Conception Church, rebuilt after the tornado of 1898.

A New Century Begins

As the twentieth century began, Fort Smith continued to prosper; and the city grew rapidly. Between 1900 and 1910, its population nearly doubled. At the same time, the city continued to struggle with its reputation for lawlessness. First Street, the local vice district, was known for its saloons and bordellos, including the notorious Miss Laura's.

Elsewhere in the city, numerous institutions represented a more domestic Fort Smith. In 1908, Electric Park was built. This popular recreational destination featured a 2000-seat auditorium, tree-lined promenades, roller coaster rides and other diversions. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the Peabody School was built, and the city's Fortnightly club acquired a Carnegie grant to build a library.

The Belle Point Hospital, the first hospital in Fort Smith, shown here in 1903, was an example of Romanesque architecture.

In 1901, construction began on St. Anne's Academy, a notable example of Romanesque architecture. The building was demolished in 1974.

Many changes came to Fort Smith during the 1910s. Arkansas troops saw action in France during World War I, and came home with a broader view of the world, including an appreciation of European building styles. Prohibition closed the saloons along the river in 1919. That same year, boll weevils destroyed cotton crops in eastern Arkansas, resulting in the migration of share croppers and tenant farmers to northern cities in search of jobs. Fort Smith's population continued to grow, reaching 30,000 by 1920.

Meanwhile, automobiles became more common, and motorized transportation began replacing streetcars and horses. In 1922, the Arkansas-Oklahoma Free Bridge opened at the western end of Garrison Avenue.

The bridge completed in 1922 was the fourth to span the river at Fort Smith.

During the 1920s, Fort Smith entrepreneurs established thriving businesses based on the area's natural resources. Regional coal mines, oil and gas reserves and timber provided the city with considerable wealth, and its residential areas expanded in response.

During these years, the Greenwood-Fishback, Hillcrest and Park Hill suburbs were developed east and south of downtown. As the city built these new neighborhoods, architecture moved away from the asymmetrical, ornate forms of the nineteenth century, and Fort Smith citizens began building Colonial Revival homes. These dwellings were a return to designs based upon the simple, symmetrical house forms of colonial America.

This Colonial Revival home at 1105 Adelaide in the Greenwood-Fishback neighborhood is typical of early twentieth-century homes in Fort Smith.

The American Foursquare and Dutch Colonial Revival designs, subtypes of the Colonial Revival style, are strongly represented in Fort Smith. Two-story American Foursquare dwellings were built from 1900 to1920. They feature full-width porches, wide eaves and Colonial Revival detailing. Dutch Colonial homes are distinguished by steeply pitched gambrel roofs.

Fort Smith has many Dutch Colonial homes built before 1920. This house at 911 South 24th Street has a one-bay porch with Tuscan columns.

Bungalow and Craftsman styles became popular in Fort Smith and across the country after 1910. Built of brick or frame, bungalows have low-pitched roofs and wide eaves. Craftsman dwellings emphasize a diversity of massing and materials on the exterior and often have combinations of stucco, frame, stone, or brick.

This Craftsman home at 723 North Sixth Street features the wide eaves, extended rafters and decorative brackets that distinguish this style.

Pattern books from mail order companies such as Sears and Roebuck made Bungalows popular during the early years of the twentieth century. This classic Bungalow with its low-pitched roof and wide eaves stands at 418 North Sixth Street in the Belle Grove Historic District.

Throughout the 1920s, Fort Smith families built Spanish Colonial Revival and Spanish Mission style homes as well. Arches are common features in Spanish style dwellings, and terra cotta tile is the most common roofing material.

These dwellings illustrate the popularity of the Mission style in Fort Smith during the 1920s. Note the arched entrance and stucco surfaces of the house at left in the Park Hill community. The home at right with distinctive terra cotta roof tiles is in the Belle Grove Historic District.

During this period of diverse building, Fort Smith homeowners also adopted Tudor Revival and Prairie designs. Tudor Revival residences are based on English design and have steeply pitched roofs, prominent wall chimneys and casement windows.

This example of Tudor Revival design stands at 2222 South 25th Street in the proposed Hillcrest historic district. Note the steep roof, stone and stucco exterior and prominent wall chimney.

The Prairie style originated in Chicago around the turn of the century and spread throughout the country. Prairie design is characterized by low-pitched, hipped roofs, wide eaves, horizontal lines and massive square porch supports.

The low pitch of the roof, distinctive horizontal lines and substantial porch supports mark this home at 509 North Seventh Street as an example of Prairie design.

The 1929 stock market crash combined with dust bowl years hit the Arkansas economy hard, and unemployment was endemic. In Fort Smith, some residents built squatter shacks at the site of the old Belle Point fort. The infamous criminal couple, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow, were known to hide out in Fort Smith evading arrest. Many of their crimes were perpetrated in western Arkansas. Fortunately, the 1930s also brought New Deal projects that improved the quality of life for residents of the area. A Classical Revival federal courthouse and post office were built; and the construction of a dam in neighboring Crawford County provided a new source of water to the city.

In Fort Smith during the 1920s and 1930s the Art Deco and Art Moderne architectural styles emerged, exhibiting the streamlined sleekness of the airplanes and autos that were rapidly becoming part of American culture. Left: The Art Deco Sebastian County Court House and City Hall was built in 1937 with funding from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Right: This building at 2020 Midland Street features the horizontal emphasis and curved corners characteristic of Art Moderne.

Military Stimulus and New Industry

In 1941 in preparation for World War II, the federal government acquired 15,000 acres of land in Fort Smith for an army base. Camp Chafee, later Fort Chaffee, was activated in 1942, soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The Sixth, Fourteenth, and Sixteenth Armored Divisions trained there, and the base also served as a prisoner of war camp, detaining 3,000 Germans.

During the World War II period, Fort Smith's population grew from 36,000 to 48,000. While the economy of Fort Smith was closely tied to the army base, city officials foresaw the need to become less reliant on Fort Chaffee and began recruiting industry to the area. In fact, Fort Chaffee closed temporarily in 1950. However, Fort Smith had already begun developing a thriving manufacturing sector, repositioning its economy to compensate for the loss of military activity. Thanks to the recruitment efforts of city boosters, twenty-five new companies located in Fort Smith in 1961 alone.

In 1962 the Norge Company, an appliance manufacturer, located in Fort Smith. This company was bought by Whirlpool, which continues to employ thousands of workers. Other industrial manufacturers established businesses in Fort Smith during the 1960s, including Baldor Electric and ABF Freight. Southern Steel and Wire also moved to Fort Smith, as did AFCO metals. The city population in 1960 reached 53,000. As Little Rock gained national attention for its integration crisis, Fort Smith integrated calmly and continued to attract new businesses throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Meanwhile, the influence of the automobile changed the built landscape in Fort Smith just as it transformed other cities across America. With greater mobility, residents began living and shopping in much expanded ranges. Development moved away from downtown and historic neighborhoods, spreading into the suburbs. By the 1970s, the decline of historic neighborhoods and the historic commercial district of Fort Smith was evident. In 1970, the construction of Central Mall, an enclosed shopping center three miles east of downtown, resulted in the decline of the Belle Grove neighborhood and the West Garrison Avenue Historic District. Fort Smith was at risk of losing historically and architecturally significant buildings.

III. Historic Preservation Efforts in Fort Smith

A. Previous Survey and Identification Projects

BELLE GROVE HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Belle Grove Historic District was established in 1973. It is the oldest neighborhood in Fort Smith, as well as the second oldest in the state. The district contains many fine examples of mid-to-late nineteenth century and early twentieth century architectural styles including Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, Second Empire, Eastlake Victorian, and Classical Revival. This twenty-two block area became a local ordinance historic district in 1974. Alterations to exteriors of buildings within the Belle Grove Historic District require a certificate of appropriateness and review of plans by the Fort Smith Historic District Commission (HDC).

This streetscape is typical of the Belle Grove Historic District

The Belle Grove neighborhood was developed before the Civil War as Fort Smith residents began moving away from the river. Affluent doctors, merchants, and politicians built stately homes for their families away from the river front, yet close to downtown.

Following the war, Fort Smith experienced great economic gains, evidenced by the ornate Victorian homes going up in Belle Grove. The neighborhood continued to thrive into the 1920s, when other areas of Fort Smith became more favorable for new development. Belle Grove began a decline by the middle of the twentieth century, resulting in the abandonment, razing, and compartmentalizing of several homes.

In 1973, the Fort Smith Heritage Foundation filed a petition for the establishment of a historic district. Since then, a large number of homes that span 130 years of varying architectural styles have been restored. The district today is a mix of historic and non-historic buildings and vacant lots where historic structures have been demolished. In his 2006 study, researcher Stan Kujawa documented each lot of the original neighborhood, photographing historic and infill buildings, and providing historic photos of demolished buildings.

Several homes within the Belle Grove Historic District have been restored and developed for public visitation. These include:

The Clayton House
514 North Sixth Street

The Clayton House, built in the 1850s, is an example of the Italianate style of the Victorian period when the Belle Grove neighborhood flourished. In 1874, William Henry Harrison Clayton was appointed by President Ulysses Grant as United States District Attorney of the Western District of Arkansas. Clayton moved his family from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, to Fort Smith and purchased the house. Over the years, the house became altered through additions. In recent years, it has been restored to its late-nineteenth century grandeur. The Clayton House is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its association with Clayton's role in local government. Open to the public, it is available for special events.

McKibben-Bonneville House
318 North Seventh Street

Also open for tours and events is the McKibben-Bonneville House, another Italianate style dwelling in the Belle Grove Historic District. Built in 1868 by David McKibben, the house became the home of Mrs. Susan Bonneville, widow of General Benjamin Bonneville, one-time commander at Fort Smith. The house is listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Darby House
311 General Darby
Street (North Eighth)

The Darby House is the boyhood home of General William O. Darby, leader of Darby's Rangers, the World War II unit that served as an experimental prototype for United States Special Forces units. Today the house serves as an archive for World War II ranger units, featuring exhibits that include historically significant documents, personal effects, and artifacts.

WEST GARRISON AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Garrison Avenue has been Fort Smith's center of commerce from the settlement's beginnings. Mercantile operations located here and supplied the many travelers who passed through Fort Smith. Upper floors housed shop owners, and hotels also located here. Builders typically constructed downtown buildings of bricks and used the popular Romanesque style. The National Park Service listed the West Garrison Avenue Historic District in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. Following a 1996 tornado, a survey of downtown Fort Smith occurred and resulted in the expansion of the West Garrison Avenue Historic District.

MAY-LECTA-SWEET HISTORIC DISTRICT

A study of May, Lecta, and Sweet Avenues was conducted in 2004 by Stan Kujawa. A Fort Smith city map depicts the neighborhood as platted by 1897. Standard sized blocks allowed for twelve lots on each side of May and Lecta Avenues, from Kent (Park Avenue) on the north to Presley on the south. The next block south to Little Rock Street had seventeen lots on each side of Lecta and May. However, 1901 Sanborn maps illustrate the use of three to four lots per dwelling. City directories, available in Fort Smith from the first decade of the twentieth century, trace the occupancy of the neighborhood since that time.

Development of the neighborhood began in the 1890s when Fort Smith was experiencing booming prosperity. At the time, the area was considered rural, it was located a mile from the commercial center of downtown Fort Smith. Soon, however, trolley tracks were laid for convenient access to the neighborhood, and the majority of the buildings were constructed in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Accordingly, the neighborhood contains familiar styles and forms of the late-nineteenth

and early-twentieth century, including Folk Victorian, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, American Foursquare, Craftsman, Bungalow, and an occasional Prairie style dwelling. As the neighborhood grew, schools were needed. The John H. Rogers Elementary School opened in 1920 at the corner of Kinkead and Lecta Avenues. Within two years, the Blue Bird School, offering kindergarten and first and second grade classes, opened. The stucco Mission style building was designed and equipped to modern standards.

The May-Lecta-Sweet neighborhood was mostly filled by 1950, though some post-World War II commercial architecture, apartment buildings and Ranch style dwellings can be found. The Central Presbyterian Church was dedicated in 1954. A few ca. 1990-2000 buildings such as drug stores and public buildings are also interspersed. As a whole, the neighborhood retains a high degree of architectural and historic integrity.

In 2008, the neighborhood was listed in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its local significance in Fort Smith's growth and suburban development and under Criterion C for its collection of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century residential architecture.

Built in 1890, the Abigale Sparks House on May Street is the oldest known dwelling in the May-Lecta-Sweet Historic District. It was the home of Major James H. Sparks, co-founder of the *Fort Smith Herald*.

SACRED SITES SURVEY

The 2001 Sacred Sites Survey effort documented Fort Smith's religious sites in Fort Smith, some of the city's most architecturally elaborative local buildings. The survey facilitated the listing of some of the buildings on the National Register of Historic Places.

B. Previous National Register Projects

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of properties important in the history, architectural history, archaeology, engineering, and culture of the United States. The National Register is maintained by the National Park Service, and expanded through nominations by individuals, organizations, state and local governments, and federal agencies. Within Fort Smith are twenty nine individual properties, three historic districts (two residential, one commercial), one National Historic Site and a National Cemetery that have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Atkinson-Williams Warehouse 320 Rogers Avenue – Listed 1979. This commercial warehouse building from 1906 is one of the few remaining early warehouses of Fort Smith. Originally housing the Atkinson-Williams Hardware Company, it dates to a period of great prosperity for Fort Smith. The building was listed in the National Register for its significance in commerce and trade during the early-twentieth century. The warehouse currently houses the Fort Smith Museum of History.

Ayers, William, House 820 North Twelfth Street – Listed 1999. This Eastlake Queen Anne dwelling was constructed in 1881 as the residence of William and Sarah Ayers. Upon arriving in Fort Smith, Ayers opened a general store, which he later sold to open a bank. He also was president of the Ketchum Iron Company. The house features decorative verge board, spindle woodwork and posts, roof cresting, and corbelled chimneys. The house remains a single-family dwelling.

Birney Safety Streetcar No. 224, 100 South Fourth Street – Listed 1994. Car #224 was built in 1926 by the American Car Company for the Fort Smith Light & Traction Company and ran in Fort Smith until the end of streetcar service there in 1933. In 1979, the Fort Smith Streetcar Restoration Association bought the trolley and began to restore it. The Fort Smith Trolley Museum provides historical interpretation of Fort Smith's suburban expansion during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, made possible largely due to the trolley lines.

Bonneville House 318 North Seventh Street – Listed 1971. The McKibben-Bonneville House was built in the Italianate style in 1868 by David McKibben. The house became the home of Mrs. Susan Bonneville, widow of General Benjamin Bonneville, one-time commander at Fort Smith. Located within the Belle Grove Historic District, the house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Open for tours and events, the Bonneville House is an excellent example of preservation through adaptive re-use.

Breckinridge, C. R., House, 504 North Sixteenth Street – Listed 1979. Built in 1903, the classically styled house is significant through its association with Clifton Rodes Breckenridge, an Arkansas congressman from 1883 through 1894. He then became the United States Minister to Russia, a post he held until 1897. Breckinridge built this dwelling in 1903 and remained there until the death of his wife in 1921. During these years, he was active as president of three commercial associations. The house is the only remaining structure associated with Breckinridge in Arkansas.

Christ the King Church, Greenwood Avenue at South S Street – Listed 1982. Built in 1930 by the architectural firm of Thompson, Sanders & Ginocchio, the church exemplifies the Spanish Mission style. Its exterior is faced in random course, native fieldstone, complementing the simplicity of its design. Its façade feature a central bell tower and arched entrance.

Clayton, W. H. H., House (East Side Branch), 514 North Sixth Street – Listed 1970. Built in the 1850s in the Italianate style, the house is significant for its association with William Henry Harrison Clayton. In 1874, Clayton was appointed by President Ulysses Grant as United States District Attorney of the Western District of Arkansas under Judge Isaac Parker. Over the years, the house became altered through additions, and has since been restored to its nineteenth-century appearance. The Clayton House is open to the public and available for special events.

Commercial Hotel, also known as the River Front Hotel, 123 North First Street – Listed 1973. Built at the end of the nineteenth century, the Commercial Hotel expresses many characteristics of the Second Empire style, including its Mansard roof, oeil-de-boeuf windows, and roofline cresting. In 1903, it became Miss Laura's, one of the most celebrated bordellos in the Southwest. Over time, the property declined, and it was abandoned by 1963; Donald W. Reynolds, founder of Donrey Media Group, saved this remnant of Fort Smith history from demolition. Today the building houses the Fort Smith Visitor Center.

Dodson Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, 1922 Dodson Avenue – Listed 2006. Also known as Goddard United Methodist Church, the church was built in 1930 in the Late Gothic Revival style by Fort Smith architects Haralson & Nelson. The construction utilized native materials. Dodson Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church South was established by thirty-nine charter members in 1908, at a time when residences were becoming more common south of town. The congregation worshiped in a wooden structure for twenty two years before relocating to the present site. Dodson Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church was renamed in October 1945 as Goddard Memorial Methodist Church, in honor of Dr. O.E. Goddard. As the church's pastor beginning in 1937, Goddard's leadership and wisdom guided the congregation through a potential foreclosure crisis during the Great Depression.

Echols Memorial Christian Church, 2801 Alabama - Listed 2006. Also known as **United Evangelical Lutheran Church**. The late Gothic Revival style Echols Memorial Christian Church was founded in 1911 with a $600 donation from Mrs. Elizabeth Echols. Her husband William founded the Merchants Bank of Fort Smith in 1882, and Mrs. Echols was active in the Fortnightly Club, which was instrumental in developing a public library. The church was built during booming growth in Fort Smith's population and is constructed of native materials. In 1928, the building was rented by the United Lutheran Evangelical Church, which changed its name to St. Luke Lutheran Church in 1940. This congregation held its last service here in 1948, at which time the May Avenue Church of Christ took ownership. The building changed hands again in 1988, becoming the Vietnamese Baptist Church.

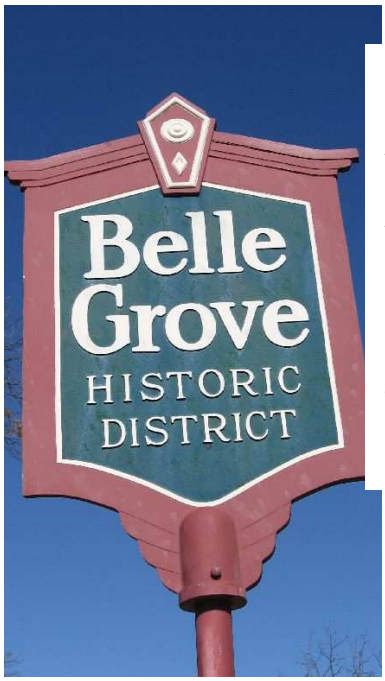
Ferguson-Calderara House, 214 North Fourteenth Street – Listed 1979. Built in 1904, this dwelling is significant for its association with A. L. Ferguson, owner of Ferguson Lumber Company. During a time of growth in business and population, Ferguson's company enjoyed the city's prosperity. The dwelling features simple classical styling on an irregularly massed structure.

Fort Smith Masonic Temple, 200 North Eleventh Street – Listed 1992. This Masonic temple was built in 1928-29 in the Art Deco style. Founder of Fort Smith, John Rogers, was among the small group to establish Belle Point Lodge Number Twenty. Meetings were held at various locations, including the fort barracks and St. Charles Hotel, before a permanent building was constructed and dedicated in 1889. The new temple housed Belle Point Lodge and other various Masonic groups until 1919 when it was destroyed by fire. A new temple was built, however, an expanding membership required larger facilities. In 1928, the Lodge purchased a half-block site on North Eleventh Street for $49,250.00 and built a new Art Deco temple. The first meeting in the new building was on September 10, 1929, and the new temple was officially dedicated by the Grand Lodge of Arkansas on September 16, 1929.

Fort Smith National Cemetery, 522 Garland Avenue and South Sixth Street - listed 1999. Dating to the early-nineteenth century, this historic cemetery contains the graves of more than 400 Confederate soldiers, including Generals Alexander E. Steen and James McIntosh. When Fort Smith was closed in 1871, President Grant ordered the cemetery to remain open for military funerals.

Fort Smith National Historic Site, listed 1966. Also known as **Fort Smith National Historic Landmark,** the site includes the foundation of the 1817 fort, the commissary of the second fort, the federal courthouse, and jail. It was the site of a federal court under the famous "Hanging" Judge Parker. In the early 20th century, after the court moved to new facilities, the remaining buildings fulfilled various purposes. In 1950, the City of Fort Smith began reclaiming and restoring the property, which was turned over to the National Park Service in the 1960s.

Fort Smith US Post Office and Courthouse, 30 South Sixth Street – listed 1999. The 1936-37 federal courthouse and post office illustrates the Classical Revival style characteristically used for New Deal era public buildings. The building replaced an 1889 Romanesque style federal courthouse into which Judge Parker's court moved from the historic Fort Smith site. Its construction was part of the local and national effort to provide employment opportunities through improvement of infrastructure.



Fort Smith's Belle Grove Historic District - listed 1973. The oldest neighborhood in Fort Smith, as well as the second oldest in the state, the district contains many fine examples of mid-to-late nineteenth century and early twentieth century architectural styles including Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, Second Empire, Eastlake Victorian, and Classical Revival. This twenty-two block area, bounded by North Fifth Street, North H Street, North Eighth Street and North C Street, became an local ordinance historic district in 1974. Alterations to exteriors of buildings within the Belle Grove Historic District require a certificate of appropriateness and review of plans by the Fort Smith Historic District Commission (HDC).

Ft. Smith Confederate Monument - listed 1996. Located on the Courthouse Lawn, near the intersection of Sixth Street and Rogers Avenue, this commemorative statue was listed for its significance in Social History. A simple sandstone column had been erected within the Fort Smith National Cemetery following the Civil War to honor Confederate Generals Alexander E. Steen and James McIntosh. When it was destroyed by a tornado, a smaller replacement monument was erected. The Varina Jefferson Davis Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy saved money for five years towards the creation of a monument to honor all fallen Confederate soldiers. In 1901, the idea of a Confederate monument in the National Cemetery was rejected by the Quartermaster Department of the United States Army. City officials agreed to locate the statue on the Sebastian County Courthouse lawn. It is inscribed, "Lest we forget."

Knoble, Joseph, Brewery, North Third and East Streets - listed 1972. Listed for its significance in Industry and Commerce, the Joseph Knoble Brewery was built ca. 1850 by German immigrant Joseph Knoble, supplier to thirty seven saloons in downtown Fort Smith. The three-story, stone building retains its original, underground beer vault, accessed by a stone tunnel to the main building. The brewery was restored to its nineteenth century state and now houses a restaurant.

Maumelle Ordnance Works Locomotive #1 100 South Fourth Street - Listed 2006. The locomotive was nominated under Criterion C for Engineering and Transportation with statewide significance. The War Department built Maumelle Ordnance Works in 1941 on 7,613.61 acres located near West Marche, Arkansas, for the production of picric acid and ammonium nitrate. The plant required small engines to perform switching duties on its rail system. The thirty-five ton, gas-mechanical Vulcan model was ideal for this purpose. Following World War II, the locomotive was sent to the Newport Army Air Field in Arkansas, before being bought by the Augusta Railroad. Donated in 1988 to the Fort Smith Trolley Museum, it is the only Vulcan gas-mechanical locomotive remaining in Arkansas.

May-Lecta-Sweet Historic District - listed 2008. The May-Lecta-Sweet Historic District is a residential neighborhood located just north of Rogers Avenue. This area developed in the late 19th century and contains examples of the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Neo-classical and Bungalow/Craftsman architectural styles. Many of the homes have been restored in recent years and it is one of the most recent listings on the National Register in Fort Smith.

McLeod, Angus, House, 912 North Thirteenth Street - listed 1978. Angus and Elizabeth McLeod purchased lots for construction of a new home in 1904. McLeod was the owner of the Fort Smith Contracting Company, which supplied railroad ties for the Fort Smith and Western Railroad. The Neo-Classical dwelling was completed in 1905. The cost of construction and imported materials is thought to have exceeded the 1914 sale price of $102,500. The dwelling has had only three owners since construction.

Murphy, William J., House, 923 North Thirteenth Street - listed 1979. This Classical Revival dwelling was designed by architect T. T. Reddick for William J. Murphy in 1895. Murphy founded the W. J. Murphy Saddlery and Harness Company, the foremost business of its kind in the Southwest. Murphy had the house built for his wife, Mollie, for hosting social events. The imposing brick structure features porches with Ionic columns and several jerkinhead gables on the roof.

New Theatre, 9 North Tenth Street - listed 1999. Architect; Builder: Boller Brothers of Kansas City, Klaw and Erianger. Built in the Beaux Arts style in 1911, the New Theatre was modeled after the New Amsterdam Theatre in New York City, and it offered a variety of entertainment in downtown Fort Smith until the 1980s. In its early years, it was a venue for vaudeville and minstrel performances, plays, and silent movies. Famed magician Harry Houdini and Shirley Temple were among the performers who graced its stage. From the 1940s through the 1960s, the theater was used as a movie theater. Music Fort Smith, Inc., a non-profit organization, purchased the building in 1995.

Oak Cemetery, Southeast of junction of Greenwood and Dodson Avenues - listed 1995. Oak Cemetery is a National Historic Landmark. Its oldest monument, the grave of Captain Gookin, dates to 1842, the year Fort Smith was incorporated. It is also the resting place of more than 100 marshals, deputies and court officials, some of whom lost their lives while serving the cause of justice. Also interred are twenty eight outlaws sentenced to hang by Judge Isaac C. Parker, Fort Smith founder John Rogers, an Arkansas governor, 14 mayors and 122 Confederate soldiers.

Rogers, Horace Franklin, House, 2900 Rogers Avenue - listed 1979. This Neo-Classical dwelling is listed for local significance related to prominent Fort Smith resident Horace Franklin Rogers. In 1880, Rogers became a surveyor for the Frisco Railroad between Fort Smith and Paris, Texas. Returning to Arkansas in 1889, Rogers purchased and operated coal mines. He married Stella Williams. They and their three children settled in Fort Smith in 1903. Rogers capitalized on the booming growth of Fort Smith, opening a rock-crushing plant and brickyard. It was there that Rogers made the special white-glazed brick for the house that he and Stella carefully designed. The house, with four massive Tuscan columns and double chimneys, was completed in 1904.

Saint Scholastica Convent, also known as Saint Scholastica Monastery 1301 South Albert Pike - listed 2006. Home to a community of Catholic Benedictine sisters, the convent was founded in 1879. During this period, railroad companies offered free land for the establishment of religious institutions, luring German immigrants to Arkansas. These communities contributed to the growth and culture of the state. The convent building, constructed of native materials, exemplifies the Gothic Revival architectural style. The building was dedicated in 1924.

Sebastian County Courthouse--Ft. Smith City Hall, 100 South Sixth Street - listed 1993. Though Sebastian County was established in 1851, its county seat was a matter of contention though the Civil War. Post-war, the county seat moved back and forth between Greenwood and Fort Smith. A permanent courthouse was constructed in Fort Smith in the late 1880s. A new building was needed by the 1930s. Funding for the 1937 building was supplied through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Architects Nelson, Bassham and Wheeler and Manhattan Construction Company built the impressive structure in the popular Art Deco style, characterized by clean lines, simplicity, and symmetry reminiscent of classic architecture.

Shaw, Tillman, House, 500 South Nineteeth Street - listed 1988. Tillman Shaw was a saloon keeper in Fort Smith around the turn of the twentieth century. The Shaw House, constructed in 1909, was located in the Fitzgerald Addition, named for seller of the land tract, Bishop Edward Fitzgerald. As many Catholic Europeans were lured to Arkansas by the promise of free land to church entities, this particular area developed with a high concentration of Catholic immigrants. The neighborhood contained a convent, a Catholic church, school and cemetery. The neighborhood consisted mostly of smaller cottage type dwellings, and the Shaw House appeared a mansion among them. The dwelling is also impressive for its craftsmanship and incorporation of Mission style and Prairie School elements. Shaw was forced to sell the house when Prohibition undermined his saloon business.

South Side Baptist Church, 2400 Dodson Avenue, also known as South Side Education Building - listed 2006. South Side Baptist Church was founded by a group of 125 Baptists who originally met at the Sebastian County Court House. Their decision to build the church on Dodson Avenue reflects the growth of Fort Smith to the south and east during the middle of the twentieth century. The two-story, 50' x 100', brick building was completed at a cost of $57,000. The architectural style combines sleek Art Moderne lines with a large Romanesque arch.

Sparks, James, House, 201 North Fourteenth Street - listed 1972. Also known as Taliano's Italian Restaurant. Built in 1887 by Jim and Nina Sparks. James Sparks was a prominent Fort Smith businessman and civic leader. His wife Nina was grand-daughter of Captain John Rogers, founder of Fort Smith. The house features Romanesque Revival arches at the porch and windows, including a Palladian group in the gable dormer on the façade.

Spirit of the American Doughboy Monument, 4901 Midland Avenue - listed 1997. The Spirit of the American Doughboy Monument commemorates the noble character of World War I soldiers and the establishment of the American Legion, honoring all branches of veterans. The Fort Smith American Legion Post was named for Victor Ellig, the first Fort Smith soldier to die during World War I. The Ellig Post actively supported parks and playgrounds in Fort Smith. The Post promoted the installation of the Doughboy memorial, originally located in Tilles Park, where 2,000 people attended the 1930 dedication ceremony. Fort Smith's Doughboy monument is currently located at the Ellig Post and is based on a design by E. M. "Dick" Viquesney, whose Doughboy sculptures can be found in thirty five states.

St. Louis San Francisco (Frisco) Railway Steam Locomotive #4003, 100 South Fourth Street - listed 2004. The history of the Frisco Railroad began in 1866 with the chartering of the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad (A&P). The Missouri portion of the line became the St. Louis & San Francisco Railroad. By 1895, the St. Louis, Arkansas & Texas Railroad brought Fort Smith into the Frisco railroad system. Locomotive #4003 was used on this line between Fort Smith and Monett, Missouri. This engine was of the 2-8-2-A Mikado design developed under the auspices of the United States Railroad Administration, a federal committee that was established in 1917 to address the shortage of locomotives in use. Locomotive #4003 was built in 1919 at the American Locomotive Company plant in Schenectady, New York, at a cost of $53,619. The relatively large engine was ideal for hauling up steep grades through the mountains.

United States Air Force Locomotive #1246, 100 South Fourth Street - listed 2006. Builder: General Electric. For: Transportation/Engineering. 1950s. During the 1930s and 1940s, railroad companies began replacing steam locomotives with diesel engines. After World War II, General Electric teamed with Alco to produce and market a forty-four ton diesel-electric switch model. The Arkansas Valley Railroad was among the first to purchase the most popular of GE's locomotive designs. The Navy was the first military branch to purchase the GE 44-ton switcher, followed by the Army at the Pine Bluff Arsenal in Arkansas. Locomotive #1246, one such model, was built in 1953 for the Air Force. The small locomotive was ideal for negotiating the tight curves of track lines between buildings.

West Garrison Avenue Historic District, 100--1200 Garrison Avenue - listed 1979. From 1825. For: Architecture, Community Planning And Development, Commerce. Garrison Avenue has historically been Fort Smith's center of commerce. It was laid out by city founder John Rogers in 1838 as the main thoroughfare of Fort Smith. The merchants of Garrison Avenue provided assorted supplies to westward wagon trains, cattle drivers, California gold rushers, and various travelers on the Butterfield Overland Stage road. Many shop owners resided in the upper floors of the businesses, and the avenue also offered hotel accommodations. Many of the brick buildings from the turn of the century were constructed in the Romanesque style, including the ca. 1900 buildings that housed W. J. Murphy Saddlery and Harness Company, the Williams-Echols Dry Goods Company, the Speer Hardware Company, and the J. Foster Wholesale Grocery Company. The Grand Old Opera House was the avenue's crowning glory. The West Garrison Avenue Historic District represents the old town of Fort Smith, the point where the United States met Indian Territory.

C. Creation of the Fort Smith National Historic Site

The evolution of the Fort Smith National Historic Site began in 1898 when the Board of Public Affairs of the city urged the mayor and Board of Directors to purchase the old commissary building from the second fort. The two-story, stone building, constructed in 1839, was first used to store food for troops stationed in the West, soldiers fighting in the Mexican War, and parties surveying for the trans-continental railroad. During the Civil War, the building served as a hospital, and during Judge Isaac C. Parker's tenure as federal court justice, the second floor of the Commissary was his chambers.

In 1898 the commissary building was auctioned to the City of Fort Smith for $800.00. Beginning in 1910, the building was leased annually for one dollar to the Old Commissary Museum Association. The city appropriated $1000 for repairs to the building. Great care was taken to preserve original materials such as the hand-hewn timbers supporting the second floor, which came from the first fort built in 1817-1818. The museum secured a fifty-year lease from the city in 1939; however, in 1960, the association relinquished its lease in order for the commissary to become part of the Fort Smith National Historic Site.

The fort barracks and federal courthouse stand a short distance south of the commissary. Constructed in 1851, the barracks building was converted into a courthouse and jail in 1872. It served as the Federal Court of the Western District of Arkansas until 1889. At that time, the court was moved to a new courthouse and post office building, and the barracks came to be used as a women's prison. The building and grounds were donated to the city of Fort Smith in 1920. During 1955, the Fort Smith City Committee appointed a committee to study the possibility of restoring Judge Parker's courtroom and gallows.

By this time, historic Belle Point had declined into a slum area often called Coke Hill in reference to its reputation for drug sales. Jointly, the city of Fort Smith, Sebastian County and the local chamber of commerce raised money to purchase the land from residents, many of whom were squatters or claimed property rights through verbal agreements from previous residents. Before clean up of Belle Point began, people residing there were relocated to new homes. As the work progressed, the National Park Service was called in for advice. Archaeological exploration was conducted to ascertain the location of the 1817 fort.

The shoddy shacks and vague property titles of the squatter and slum period of Belle Point proved useful to archaeological goals, as lack of development had preserved the terrain. In 1959, the fort's original stone foundation was discovered. In 1961, with the former Coke Hill cleared and Judge Parker's courtroom and gallows restored, Arkansas Congressman James Trimble introduced legislation to authorize the establishment of the Fort Smith National Historic Site. It was enacted September 13, 1961.

D. Creation of the Fort Smith Historic District Commission

The Fort Smith Historic District Commission (HDC) plays a vital role in the city's historic preservation efforts. The Fort Smith Board of Directors established the HDC in 1974 to promote and regulate preservation efforts in the city. Consisting of five members appointed by the mayor, the HDC promotes the educational, cultural and economic welfare through:

- the preservation and protection of historic buildings, sites, places and districts
- the maintenance of such landmarks, and
- the development of appropriate settings for such buildings, places and districts.

The Historic District Commission is authorized to make an investigation and report on the historic significance of the buildings, structures, features, sites or surroundings included in any proposed historic district. The Commission is also authorized to recommend an area or areas to be included in a historic district, and from time to time recommends amendments to established districts or additional districts.

With a HDC and at least one designated local ordinance historic district, Fort Smith has been designated a certified local government (CLG) by the United States Department of the Interior. One of the benefits of being a CLG is eligibility for various grant funds each year. Ten percent of a state's annual preservation appropriation by Congress must be available in the form of CLG grants. CLG's are required to attempt to appoint preservation-related professionals to their historic district commissions, to the extent available in the community.

Another important role of the HDC is to advise and assist owners of historic properties on aspects of preservation, renovation, rehabilitation, and reuse as well as on procedures for listing properties on the National Register of Historic Places. The HDC reviews and makes decisions on applications for certificates of appropriateness as to exterior architectural features, including architectural style, general design, and general arrangement of the exterior of the structure. Such features include the textures of building materials and the type and style of all windows, doors, light fixtures, signs and other appurtenant fixtures. The style, material, size and location of outdoor advertising signs and bill posters within a historic district is also under the control of the commission. The commission does not consider interior arrangement or use except for the purpose of preventing the construction, reconstruction, alteration, moving or demolition of structures or other appurtenant fixtures obviously incongruous with the historic aspects of the district.

The HDC reviews proposed zoning amendments and applications that affect historic properties. With Board of Directors approval, the HDC has the power to acquire historic properties and preserve, restore, maintain and operate those properties. The HDC can apply for federal, state and local funds to rehabilitate, preserve, improve or stabilize properties within Fort Smith's historic districts.

The primary powers, duties, and responsibilities of the HDC are as follows:

- Maintain a system for the survey and inventory of Fort Smith properties for the purpose of identifying those structures, areas or sites of architectural, historic or prehistoric significance
- Investigate and recommend to the planning and zoning commission and to the Board of Directors the adoption of ordinances designating properties or structures having special historic, cultural or architectural value as "sites"
- Investigate and recommend to the planning and zoning commission and to the Board of Directors the adoption of ordinances designating areas as having historic, cultural or architectural value as historic districts
- Keep a register of all properties and structures that have been designated as sites or historic districts, including all information required for each designation
- Determine an appropriate system of markers for historic sites and districts
- Request from the Board of Directors funds to support the preparation and publishing of maps, brochures, and other descriptive material about historic sites and districts
- Advise and assist owners of sites or other historic structures on physical and financial aspects of preservation, renovation, rehabilitation and reuse, and on procedures for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places
- Review and make decisions on any application for a certificate of appropriateness or, through commission designee, for a certificate of no material effect, and require presentation of such plans, drawings, elevations and other information as may be necessary to make such decisions
- Review proposed zoning amendments and applications for special use permits and applications for zoning variances that affect proposed or designated sites and structures within historic districts
- Make a recommendation to the State Office of Historic Preservation for the listing of an historic district or site in the National Register of Historic Places and conduct a public hearing thereon.

In addition to duties and powers specified above, the HDC may, with Board of Directors approval:

- Accept gifts and donations of real and personal property, including money, for the purpose of historic preservation
- Acquire by purchase, bequest, or donation, fee and lesser interests in historic properties, including properties adjacent to or associated with historic preservation
- Apply for federal, state and local funds for the rehabilitation, preservation, improvement or stabilization of sites or structures in historic districts located within the city
- Preserve, restore, maintain and operate historic properties, under the ownership or control of the commission

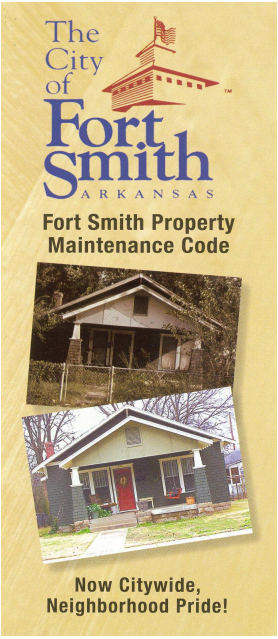
- Lease, sell and otherwise transfer or dispose of historic properties subject to rights of public access and other covenants and in a manner that will preserve the property
- Contract, with the state or the federal government or other organizations
- Cooperate with the federal, state and local governments in the pursuance of the objectives of historic preservation
- Provide information for the purpose of historic preservation to the governing body
- Promote and conduct an educational and interpretive program on historic properties within its jurisdiction

E. Previous City Planning Efforts and Their Impact on Historic Preservation

Fort Smith has conducted planning efforts in recent years that recommended specific actions affecting historic building rehabilitation and new construction. These include plans for the entire community, the downtown area and particular neighborhoods. In some of these plans, issues surrounding historic preservation efforts are examined in detail while in others historic preservation is a peripheral issue. The most relevant planning efforts are presented in this section along with summaries of their impact on historic preservation.

Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan

In 2002, the Fort Smith Board of Directors adopted the Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan, which outlines goals, policies, and land planning principles for guiding the future of Fort Smith. The plan included several goals such as improving the appearance of Fort Smith, preserving and revitalizing neighborhoods, expanding park land and recreational programming to reflect or exceed national standards, adopting design standards, planning future development and improving the function and aesthetics of commercial corridors. One goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to protect neighborhoods via a property maintenance code. In 2004, the Property Maintenance Code was implemented in a limited area of the city, including the Belle Grove Historic District, downtown, and the Lutheran-Duval neighborhood. The Code was adopted city-wide in 2007.



The Property Maintenance Code requires that a building be of sound structure, kept in good repair, protected from the elements and kept in sanitary condition. The Code fosters the upkeep of all buildings in the city, reinforcing a preservation ethic relating to historically significant structures.

UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE (UDO)

In 2008, the City of Fort Smith proposed a unified development ordinance (UDO) to promote orderly growth and expansion in the city. These regulations are designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Stabilize and conserve property values
- Protect streets, schools and utilities from overloading
- Provide locations for each land use that are properly related to traffic, utilities and other land uses
- Separate conflicting types of traffic by requiring the proper relation of land uses
- Reduce congestion by providing off-street parking and loading spaces
- Improve quality of life and aesthetics by providing light, air and open space.

Recommendations included constructing public sidewalks, installing landscaping, improving building design, setting aside land for park space in residential neighborhoods, considering the traffic impact of large developments and increasing public notices to neighborhoods. Although general in nature, these goals are consistent with the best practices of historic preservation planning. The emphasis on neighborhoods is central to these recommendations, and both rehabilitation and compatible infill are encouraged.

The UDO's 27-416 regulation specifically addresses historic neighborhoods. Its purpose is to promote the educational, cultural, and general welfare through the preservation and restoration of the traditional architectural character and historic significance of structures located in the Residential Historic (RH) District. RH Zoning Districts are appropriate in any category of the Master Land Use Plan. To be zoned as RH, a property must be recommended to be part of an historic district by the Historic District Commission. After rezoning, all RH properties shall be subject to the architectural design review requirements set forth in the ordinance, thus providing for the preservation of historic streetscapes and neighborhoods.

The architectural character of properties such as this one at 205 Sweet Avenue in the May-Lecta-Sweet Historic District would be preserved by the creation of a Residential Historic (RH) zone under the Unified Development Ordinance.

IV. Current Status of Fort Smith Preservation Efforts

The status of Fort Smith's historic areas is decidedly mixed. On the positive side there is increased attention to preserving historic neighborhoods. Using the slogan "Go Downtown," an excellent Downtown Development organization encourages reuse and rehabilitation of Fort Smith buildings. Heritage tourism efforts through various local, state and federal programs are also underway.

In the past, Fort Smith has not had the support for historic preservation that its rich heritage deserves. For a city its size, Fort Smith is woefully underrepresented by properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This is detrimental not only because of the resulting lack of recognition for the city's historic resources, but also because it denies property owners the economic incentives of federal and state tax credits for rehabilitation. In many neighborhoods, inappropriate remodeling and the use of synthetic sidings have resulted in a loss of character. Rental conversions in particular have been widespread with little or no regard for maintaining a property's architectural design. Only the Belle Grove Historic District has a local ordinance historic district, and even in this neighborhood historic buildings have been demolished, and there are ample vacant lots and non-historic structures.

To facilitate rehabilitation and revitalization in the city, various governmental and private agencies have created an array of programs and incentives. Some of these programs have met with general success while others have not been fully utilized. However, there is a commitment on the part of these agencies to devise methods and programs that enhance the community, including the preservation and rehabilitation of the city's historic resources.

Additional local ordinance historic districts would prevent the decline and decay of buildings such as this one on North Sixteenth Street.

A. What's Working Now?

Fort Smith has a large inventory of well built houses.
According to the 2000 Census Bureau profile of Fort Smith, approximately 12,334 of the city's housing units were built prior to 1960. This represents over thirty-five percent of the units in the city. Given the thousands of pre-1960 houses in Fort Smith, the city must determine which neighborhoods should be prioritized for assistance in historic preservation efforts.

Pre-1960 buildings are characteristically of high quality, built of long-lasting materials such as hardwoods, plaster and brick. The majority of the pre-1960 dwellings in Fort Smith are of frame construction and can last indefinitely so long as they are maintained and protected from water infiltration.

Older homes can be readily adapted to meet today's standards.
The high quality of Fort Smith's older houses allows them to be readily adapted to the needs and requirements of twenty-first century families. Issues regarding the rehabilitation of older houses include updating mechanical features such as electrical, plumbing and HVAC, weatherization to conserve energy and retrofitting houses to accommodate smaller families.

Many of the houses in Fort Smith are now 100 years old or older, and thousands more will reach this milestone during the next two decades. During the past century, the coal-fired furnaces in these dwellings have generally been replaced with furnaces using natural gas. Original knob and tube electrical wiring has largely been replaced with modern wiring, and central air conditioning has been installed. Basements, crawl spaces, and attics generally afford room for continued retrofitting of modern mechanical upgrades. With proper care, these homes can last another century and more.

A study in contrasts: The house on the left in the 300 block of South Fourteenth Street has been covered in vinyl siding, erasing character defining details and trapping destructive moisture inside the structure. The house on the right, at 611 North Fifth Street, has its shingle siding preserved and painted.

Fort Smith's downtown presents significant opportunity for rehabilitation.
Despite the loss of key buildings over the years, downtown Fort Smith retains many significant properties. Rehabilitation efforts have increased in recent years, and the Downtown Development association has been of particular assistance in these efforts.

Loft apartments and condos are emerging.
In addition to retail and office conversions underway, there is a renewed interest in lofts and condominiums downtown and in adjacent neighborhoods. These projects include the conversion of vacant upper floor space in older commercial buildings into apartments. The building at Ninth Street and Rogers Avenue is in the process of conversion into the Stuart-Daniel Lofts. Additional loft conversions are planned in the historic Kress Building within the West Garrison Avenue Historic District. Both conversion projects are being undertaken by the R. H. Ghan Company.

Left: Stuart-Daniel Lofts. Right: the Kress Building

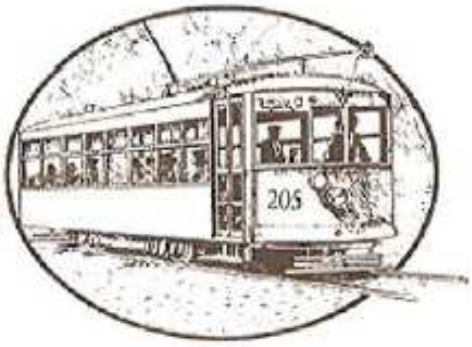
Compatible infill projects are underway.
Until recently, Fort Smith's older neighborhoods saw few new construction projects. Those that were completed were seldom in keeping with the character of adjacent historic buildings in terms of scale, massing and architectural detail. Fortunately, several projects now underway are sensitive to their historic surroundings and provide for a more compatible and cohesive streetscape. The West End Lofts in particular are an excellent example of architectural design appropriate for and complementary to the city's older neighborhoods.

The West End Lofts at 109 North Third Street reflect the design of historic row houses. These dwellings are compatible to the historic landscape in their scale, orientation to the street, porch configuration and window and door size.

Various agencies are committed to downtown redevelopment.
As noted earlier, the City of Fort Smith is working with various private and public agencies to facilitate mixed urban design development. Fort Smith's Downtown Development Association is the primary driving force engendering business, employment and housing opportunities in the downtown area. The organization focuses attention on the Central Business Improvement District, an area that includes the West Garrison Avenue Historic District, along the waterfront, and down Towson to Dodson Avenue. The Downtown Development Association promotes downtown restaurants, hotels, events and commercial activities. The agency works closely with the Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Fort Smith Convention Center, Belle Grove property owners, and the Fort Smith Museum of History.

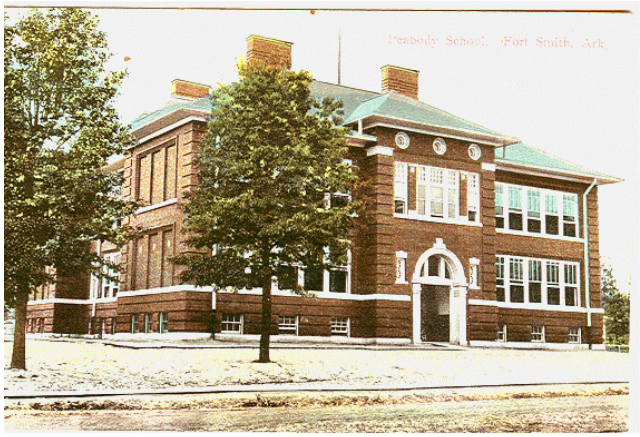
Fort Smith's Riverfront is an attractive setting for events and recreation.

The Fort Smith Trolley Museum is an avid promoter of downtown events and heritage tourism. The museum promotes the significance of streetcars and railroads in local history. Offering trolley rides between various downtown sites, the museum is a powerful advocate of historic preservation and heritage tourism. In celebration of its thirtieth anniversary, the Fort Smith Trolley Museum is planning special celebrations.



The Trolley Museum's Dinner Train is an annual event bringing people back downtown.

Schools and public buildings provide spaces for adaptive reuse.
With their large scale, central-hall configurations and high ceilings, former school buildings are particularly well suited for adaptive reuse as housing units. Large, open-plan classroom space is readily converted into meeting or living space. One excellent example is the Peabody Elementary School. Built in 1905, the school is named for George Peabody of Massachusetts, who contributed heavily toward the building of the first school of the same name. The new building, pictured below, had eighteen classrooms. Located between South Twentieth and Twenty First Streets off Rogers Avenue, the building serves as the district's adult education center.



The former Peabody Elementary School has a second life as an adult education center.

Belle Grove School has been rehabbed as apartments.

School buildings can also be readily adapted as apartments. If a former school building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of redevelopment, it becomes a certified historic building eligible for federal historic tax credits (HTC). This was the case when the historic Belle Grove School building was converted into the Belle Grove School House Apartments. This adaptive reuse project serves as an example of Fort Smith's many opportunities for historic rehabilitation.

For more than thirty years, the Arc Arkansas (the ARC) has been an active non-profit organization that works to provide affordable housing opportunities to senior and disabled citizens through the rehabilitation of abandoned historic buildings.

On several occasions, the ARC has used the federal HTC to convert historically relevant buildings such as former hospitals and schools in Arkansas' downtown areas into lofts and apartments. In 2004, the ARC used the federal HTC as part of its financing to convert St. Anthony's Hospital in Morrilton into twenty-three apartments for people fifty five and older, with eighteen of these set aside for low-income residents. The 18,785 square foot building was built in 1937 and was last used previously in 1970. In January 2006, the ARC converted into housing the Hot Springs High School building that was in use when president Bill Clinton was a student there. The Gothic Revival building dates to 1914 and stood vacant for many years. The ARC's many success stories serve as excellent models for adaptive reuse of historic buildings in Fort Smith.

Increased Emphasis on Heritage Tourism

Downtown Fort Smith has experienced a renaissance in response to a growing tourism and convention market. The Fort Smith Downtown Development Association has invested considerable energy recruiting businesses into the area and increasing valuation of properties. The agency and Fort Smith citizens are responsible for $55 million in improvements to the Fort Smith Convention Center, the Riverfront Development and Garrison Avenue.

A Rich Collection of Tourism Resources, and Growing Revenues

Fort Smith offers an abundance of historical sites within walking or trolley-ride distance of each other, including the Trolley Museum, the National Cemetery, the Fort Smith Museum of History and the Fort Smith National Historic Site. Fort Smith's recognition of its historic resources as tourism attractions has translated into a notable increase in revenue. In 2004, visitors to Sebastian County spent more than forty-four million dollars—an increase of six percent from the previous year. Those numbers may well increase. In these difficult economic times, Fort Smith may attract even more visitors as people save money by staying closer to home and visiting regional and local historic sites.

Fort Smith National Historic Site

In 2006 attendance at Fort Smith National Historic Site was 77,014. A recent 7.5 million dollar renovation of the site will certainly increase the draw to this popular attraction. The

History Channel's "Hanging Judge" episode is one of the network's most fascinating programs to viewers. Parker's gallows are the physical remnants of the judge's reputation as a stern adjudicator on the frontier. Visitors are reminded of outlaws such as the James, Dalton, and Younger Gangs, Belle Starr, Cherokee Bill, and the Rufus Buck Gang who frequented the streets of Fort Smith and, sometimes, Judge Parker's courtroom. Inside the one-time federal courthouse, exhibits tell the story of a lawless Indian Territory tamed by Judge Parker and deputized United States Marshals.

U. S. Marshal Service National Museum

Another positive contribution to the area's heritage tourism efforts is the proposed Marshal Museum. In 2007, the United States Department of Justice selected Fort Smith as the new location of the U. S. Marshal Service National Museum. The U. S. Marshal Service is the oldest federal law enforcement agency in the nation, serving as a division of the Justice Department since 1789. The selection of Fort Smith as the museum site underscores the significance of city's role in creating law and order when the nation was young.

Belle Starr's saddle, shown here in a traveling exhibit, will have a permanent home in the new U. S. Marshal Service National Museum coming to Fort Smith.

Fort Smith National Cemetery

The Fort Smith National Cemetery, started in the early nineteenth century, is another key attraction for visitors to Fort Smith. With more than 400 Confederate graves, the cemetery is of interest to Civil War aficionados and researchers. Judge Parker is also buried in the cemetery. The cemetery consists of twenty-two acres and includes a marble memorial to Unknown Confederate Dead and a Vietnam veterans monument of granite and bronze.

Arkansas Civil War Heritage Trail

With funding from an American Battlefield Protection Program planning grant, the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program established the Arkansas Civil War Heritage Trail (ACWHT). Statewide, organizations promote public awareness of Arkansas' role in the Civil War and work to protect the tangible reminders of that conflict. Employees of the

National Park Service, Arkansas State Parks and other public agencies are members of ACWHT, yet the majority of members are private citizens motivated by an interest in Civil War history. Many are also members of Confederate descendant organizations such as the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Heritage tourism efforts by ACWHT groups include installation of wayside interpretation exhibits, the development of brochures, and inclusion in the Civil War Preservation Trust's National Civil War Discovery Trail. In this way, battlefield preservation can serve Arkansas and Fort Smith as an economic development tool. The West Central ACWHT group is working with a city commission to protect and develop the Massard Prairie battlefield in Fort Smith, and was instrumental in having that battlefield and a series of rifle pits listed on the Arkansas Register of Historic Places.

Fort Smith Museum of History
The Fort Smith Museum of History has been keeping and telling the history of the city since 1911. The museum acquires, preserves, exhibits, and interprets objects of historical significance relevant to the founding and growth of Fort Smith and the region. Located in the former Atkinson-Williams warehouse, the museum is an integral component of downtown preservation and tourism.

A Preserve America Community
Eighty-three communities were designated as Preserve America Communities by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation in 2006. The award recognizes communities that protect and celebrate their heritage, use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization, and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs. Both Fort Smith and neighboring Van Buren were designated Preserve America Communities in 2006.

Together, these resources comprise a rich and colorful array of heritage tourism opportunities. Even the city's name—Fort Smith—speaks to its history and essential role on the American frontier. These resources already attract many visitors to the city, and with additional development and promotion, they can further enrich the community both financially and culturally.

B. Current Challenges

Continued Abandonment and Neglect of Housing Stock
Throughout Fort Smith's older neighborhoods are many vacant and abandoned dwellings. Vacant houses affect neighborhoods adversely by increasing the perception of crime, lowering adjacent property values and blighting the streetscape. Abandoned and condemned houses are often demolished, removing a property from the tax rolls as well as opening gaps along the street and hastening a neighborhood's decline. The city has taken a number of steps to combat the abandonment and neglect of properties, yet even within the historic districts, numerous demolitions have occurred.

Historic Housing Stock Compromised by Short-Sighted Remodeling
In addition to abandonment and neglect, dwellings in Fort Smith's older neighborhoods suffer from deferred maintenance and inappropriate remodeling. For older dwellings, a lack of maintenance can result in the deterioration of exposed frame elements such as porches, windows and siding, compromising the original character of the structure.

Another problem is the subdivision of older houses into apartments. In order to maximize their income, some owners subdivide property into as many units as possible and reduce operating costs by deferring maintenance. This stresses buildings and hastens their deterioration.

A former single-dwelling building subdivided into eight apartments.

Improper weatherization is also a problem for many of Fort Smith's older dwellings. Large houses with numerous windows and minimal insulation pose particular challenges in the face of increasing energy costs. In order to lower energy costs property owners have added synthetic sidings, replaced original windows and enclosed porches. These actions often result in a loss of a property's architectural character. More cost-effective alternatives such as increased attic insulation, storm windows, repairing and reglazing original windows and other methods are often overlooked by property owners.

Belle Grove and Central Business Districts Impacted by Social Service Agencies

The Belle Grove Historic District is located to the northeast of downtown and on the edge of the district are a variety of public and non-profit organizations serving the homeless and needy. These organizations are clustered together resulting in substantial transient populations in the historic district. Unfairly or not, this image has had a negative impact on the public perception of Belle Grove's safety and livability. This perception also impacts the adjacent Central Business District and affects safety concerns about Garrison Avenue and downtown. In the future, dispersal of social service agencies to other sections of the city should be considered so they do not all primarily impact Belle Grove and the downtown area.

Tax Incentives Not Utilized due to Lack of National Register Listings

Fort Smith contains hundreds of properties that possess sufficient architectural and historical significance to meet National Register criteria; yet only a handful of the city's eligible properties have been listed. Listing on the National Register brings with it the option for property owners to rehabilitate properties and receive federal credits in return.

In 2004 an economic impact study was conducted by the Center for Urban Policy Research of Rutgers University to analyze the profile and magnitude of historic rehabilitation in Arkansas. The results of the analysis are summarized below:

• In 2004, an estimated total $1.25 billion was spent on rehabilitation in Arkansas: $404.8 million on residential properties, $624.0 million on nonresidential properties, and $228.4 million on public properties.

• Of the $1.25 billion spent on rehabilitation, an estimated $62.2 million, or about 6% of the total, was spent on historic private properties (properties listed on or eligible for historic designation on national, state, and/or local registers of historic sites). An additional $12.3 million of rehabilitation was spent on historic public buildings, resulting in an *estimated* $74.5 million in total historic rehabilitation.

• The total economic impacts from the $74.5 million spent in 2004 on statewide historic rehabilitation included the following: 1,876 new jobs; $51.67 million in income; $137.2

million in output; $77.6 million in gross domestic product; and $16.75 million in taxes. Arkansas garnered almost two-thirds of these economic benefits and, as a result, captured $48.2 million in in-state wealth. The other effects were distributed outside Arkansas.

DIRECT IMPACTS	INDIRECT IMPACTS	INDUCED IMPACTS
Purchases for: • Architectural design • Site preparation • Construction labor • Building materials • Machinery & tools • Finance & insurance • Inspection fees	Purchases of: • Lumber & wood products • Machine components • Stone, clay, glass, & gravel • Fabricated metals • Paper products • Retail & wholesale services • Trucking & warehousing	Household spending on: • Food, clothing, day care • Retail services, public transit, utilities, car(s), oil & gasoline, property & income taxes, medical services, and insurance

Lack of Awareness of the Positive Benefits of Historic Preservation and the Importance of the Historic District Commission

In the past three decades there has been an increase in the appreciation and understanding of the positive role historic preservation plays in Fort Smith. However, despite the large percentage of old buildings in the city, historic preservation has yet to be as fully integrated into community development and overall civic goals as it has in similar communities in the region. The perception of historic preservation as a positive factor in economic development rather than a hindrance is still evolving.

The importance of the Historic District Commission in Fort Smith's development is also not fully understood. The HDC is a volunteer board and members have limited time and resources to devote to the many duties the positions require. Because of these limitations, the public presence of the HDC in the community is hindered and its work sometimes goes underreported and underappreciated. The completion of annual reports detailing the work of the HDC as well as compiling statistics on historic building rehabilitation downtown and in local ordinance historic districts would help publicize the importance of historic preservation and the HDC.

Low Owner-Occupancy Rate

Currently in Fort Smith, the rate of owner occupancy of single-family dwellings is just 56%, which is below the state average. Rental units make up 44% of Fort Smith's buildings, largely concentrated in the city's older neighborhoods. While some owners and landlords are good stewards of their property, others have subdivided and/or remodeled older homes with little regard to their architectural character. Several assistance programs have been developed to increase home ownership in Arkansas, however, few incentives are available to landlords to spur appropriate rehabilitation beyond the state and federal tax credits.

C. An Array of Tools for Historic Preservation

A number of financial incentives exist to aide and encourage business and property owners who wish to improve their downtown Fort Smith properties. These include tax advantages as well as low-interest loan programs and other forms of financial assistance. These incentives are excellent tools that allow property owners to enhance their investments in downtown and add to the overall revitalization of the downtown area. Eligibility for these different incentives depends upon property type and other requirements. Listed below are some of the most available programs in Fort Smith.

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Programs
For properties listed on or eligible for the National Register, the most important financial incentives are Federal and State income tax credits. A Federal tax credit of 20% is available for the certified rehabilitation of historic structures that are income-producing. Properties must be rehabilitated according to standards set by the Secretary of the Interior, which ensure that the property retains its historic architectural character and appearance. A 10% tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of non-historic commercial buildings that were constructed prior to 1937. Presently, the 10% tax credit does not apply for rental-residential developments.

The federal historic tax credit (HTC) has been used fairly extensively in Arkansas to support the renovation of historic housing, office, and retail space in the state. Between 2000 and 2006, the federal historic tax credit program has supported 57 projects totaling more than $54 million in renovation (in 2006 dollars). The size of projects supported by the HTC has varied from approximately $10,000 to $10 million in 2006 dollars.

Rental housing has comprised the majority of federal HTC projects in Arkansas with the renovations for 43 projects costing more than $42 million. Commercial projects were the next most common usage with renovation costs for the eight projects totaling more than $2 million, although this figure was less than a third of the approximately $7 million cumulatively spent on the four hotel projects. Projects have covered a variety of uses, including office buildings, retail, farming, and inns. While the majority of projects are located in Pulaski County, the federal HTC in Arkansas has also been used in nine other counties: Benton, Bradley, Clark, Conway, Garland, Quachita, Searcy, Union, and Washington.

In 2000-2001 in North little Rock, the Argenta Community Development Corporation (CDC) used a combination of federal HTC and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) to restore 15 units as part of a larger 31 unit scattered site neighborhood rehabilitation project in downtown Little Rock. Building types rehabilitated in the district on the National Historic Register included single-family homes, duplexes and small apartment buildings. While the CDC has always placed a high priority on preserving historic

character, the use of the HTC made it financially feasible to provide housing units at below the market rate. The organization worked with both a preservation architect and neighborhood historian to ensure the construction work accurately captured the historic character of the neighborhood. The rehabilitation effort became a major turning point in the overall development of the neighborhood, transformed from "shabby" to "niche." Rehabilitating such a large number of properties in North Little Rock stimulated a "waterfall" of additional private investment in the district. Since 2001, property values have increased as much as 100 percent.

By applying the Preservation Economic Impact Model (PEIM) implemented by the Center for Urban Policy Research, the total $54 million in 2000-2006 federal HTC-attributed direct spending translates into economic benefits for the state of Arkansas. These included 767 jobs; $22.4 million in income, $72.5 million in output, and $44.6 million in GDP. The state also benefits from the receipt of $1.1 million in state and local taxes related to federal historic tax credit spending.

Arkansas Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit

In 2009, the Arkansas legislature passed a bill to create a historic tax credit program. The purpose of the program is to encourage economic development within existing infrastructure and to promote the rehabilitation of historic structures. It is designed to work in conjunction with the federal tax credits. As the federal historic tax credit has supported a fair amount of rehabilitation in Arkansas, the addition of the state credit is expected to greatly expand the types of projects that are allowed. The state tax credit will provide another avenue for individuals owning homes in historic districts to maintain the quality and historic character of their properties. The key elements of the state tax credit include:

- Allows for a credit on state income taxes equal to twenty-five percent (25%) of the total qualified rehabilitation expenses that are:
    - incurred by the property owner to complete a certified rehabilitation of buildings that are listed or are considered eligible by national, state, or local designation
    - in excess of $25,000 annually
    - up to $500,000 for a commercial property
    - up to the first $100,000 for a residential property

The tax credit can be transferred, sold or assigned and any unused tax credit may be carried forward for five consecutive taxable years.

The Arkansas Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit provides another valuable financial incentive for restoring historic properties. Private property owners rehabilitating their own properties can take up to a $25,000 tax credit towards their state taxes if they exceed $100,000 in qualified expenditures while owners of income producing properties can take up to $100,000 in credits.

This program is administered by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program and follows the application process currently used for the federal rehabilitation tax credit. Property owners must submit photographs showing the current condition of the property and an application that details their rehabilitation plans. Once the application is approved, property owners complete their work and submit photographs of the finished work. Once the state certifies the rehabilitation, property owners claim the tax credit.

In states that have passed similar tax credits, rehabilitation expenditures on historic buildings has often doubled. This holds tremendous potential for historic preservation efforts in Fort Smith and across the state.

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION GRANT PROGRAMS

I. **Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council (ANCRC).** These funds are used only for state-owned property and are funded by Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT).

II. **Courthouse grants, Model Business Grants, and Historic Preservation Restoration Grants.** (These 3 programs are all funded by Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT).

a. Courthouse (CH) grants are used for county courthouses only. No match is required.

b. Historic Preservation Restoration Grants (HPRG) go to the rehab/restoration of a variety of non-profit & public (city, county, school district) owned structures. A select few HPRGs have also been used for restoration work on private property. All HPRGs require a 1:2 cash match. (Grantees must provide $1 for every $2 of grant funds.)

c. Model Business (MB) grants are passed through local Main Street organizations for rehab/restoration of downtown commercial structures. All MBs require a 1:1 match. At least 50% of the required match must be cash.

III. **Downtown Revitalization Grants & Slipcover grants**. Like Model Business, these are passed through local Main Street organizations for downtown commercial restoration projects.

a. Downtown Revitalization (DTR) grants are funded by RETT. They require a 1:2 match, up to 50% of which may be in-kind. DTR is used for a variety of other downtown activities; only those dealing with brick & mortar projects are included here.

b. Slipcover (SC) grants are used exclusively for the removal of slipcovers on downtown commercial properties. These are funded by the state's General Improvement Fund (GIF). They require a 1:4 match, up to 50% of which may be in-kind.

IV. **Certified Local Government (CLG)** are grants used for brick-and-mortar projects. Fort Smith is one of a number of communities across Arkansas that is a Certified Local Government (CLG). The CLG program is part of a local, state, and federal partnership that promotes historic preservation at the grassroots level. An incentive for participating in this program is the pool of matching grant funds available annually for CLG communities. These grants may be used for surveys of historic buildings, the preparation of National Register nominations, the development of design review guidelines, and structural assessments of properties. Though usually funded by the federal Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), the state of Arkansas has supplemented this program with allocation from RETT as well as the state's 1/8 cent conservation tax. Of course, all CLG projects pass through local governments. CLG grants range with regard to match, though are commonly a 1:1 match.

Total Direct Investment in Arkansas State Preservation Grant Programs 1989-2006

Grant Program	Total Direct Investment
Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council	$49,294,196
Courthouse grants, Model Business grants, and Historic Preservation Restoration grants	$17,592,997
Downtown Revitalization grants & Slipcover grants	$656,647
Certified Local Government grants	$1,187,554
Territorial Restoration grants	$117,622
Total	**$68,849,017**

By applying the Preservation Economic Impact Model (PEIM) implemented by the Center for Urban Policy Research, the total $68.8 million in historic preservation grant-attributed direct spending—the *total investment* over 1989-2006 (in 2006 dollars)—translates into economic benefits for the state of Arkansas. These included the creation of 1,420 jobs, $37.9 million in income, $55.3 million in gross state product, and $6.8 million in taxes (including $1.6 million in state and local taxes). These impacts translate into a total in-state wealth creation of approximately $50.1 million.

FEDERAL HOUSING PROGRAMS

Many housing programs, though designed to assist low-income residents in the purchase of an affordable home or a neighborhood in community improvements, have peripheral association to historic preservation. Often, older, inner-city neighborhoods fall into decline. Through allocation of federally-funded grants, these communities can be rehabilitated and returned to a vital state, effectively preserving their historic buildings.

One of the primary concerns of both residents and city officials is housing condition. In order to combat vacant and deteriorated housing issues, the city has worked to provide residents with various levels of assistance. State and Federal funding is available through Community Development Block Grants, HOME funding, and Economic Development Initiatives.

HOME Program

Created by the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 (NAHA), HOME is a federally funded, large scale grant program for housing. The intent of HOME is to:

- expand the supply of decent, safe, sanitary and affordable housing
- strengthen the abilities of state and local governments to provide housing
- assure that federal housing services, financing and other investments are provided to state and local governments in a coordinated, supportive fashion.

The HOME Program must be used to promote low-income, affordable housing activities (defined as 80% or less of area median family income, adjusted for family size)

Community Development Block Grant

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) was created by Congress with the Passage of Title I of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Act of 1974. HUD's CDBG program was intended to consolidate programs and services, replace existing Urban Renewal and Model Cities programs, and place more responsibility in the hands of local governments concerning the expenditure of federal funds.

CDBG funds can be used to improve streets, drainage and infrastructure facilities. With Community Development Block Grant funding, the City of Fort Smith is implementing a 5-year strategic action plan to address affordable housing issues to increase resources for the homeless in the metropolitan area. A number of the plan's strategies seek to increase the income of workers in relation to their rental or mortgage burden. Tactics include promotion of General Education Development (GED) programs that serve adults, encouragement of higher education for workers, and provision of quality childcare services that allow parents to work outside the home.

ARKANSAS STATE PROGRAMS FOR FIRST-TIME SINGLE-FAMILY HOME-BUYERS

Home To Own Program

- Type of Loan – First Mortgage (FHA, VA, Conventional, RD)
- Interest Rate - subject to change with advance notice.
- Loan Term – 30 years only (No Prepayment Penalty)
- Purchase Price Maximum - $ 200,160.
- Income Limits – Based on county where property is located and the number in household.
- Must be a first time homebuyer except in targeted counties.
- Buyer must occupy property as primary residence.
- Two – 100% Loan Products. VA & Rural Development with No MI.

Down Payment Assistance (DPA)

- Type of Loan - Second Mortgage
- Purpose of Loan – cover down payment, closing costs and prepaids.
- Loan Amount - $ 1,000 to $ 6,000.
- Interest Rate - 5.5% subject to change
- Loan Term – 10 years
- Homebuyer counseling class (8 hours) is required.
- Cash back to borrowers at closing to cover expenses paid up front.

American Dream Down Payment Initiative- (ADDI Program)

- Purpose of Loan – Down payment and closing costs and prepaids.
- Amounts up to 6% of the purchase price not exceeding $ 10,000.
- Must be first time homebuyer.
- Income limits – Based on county where property is located and number in household.
- Homebuyer counseling class (8 hours) is required.
- **NOTE:** ADDI funds can be used without using the Bond Program first mortgage To access the ADDI funds, contact ADFA's HOME Department at 501-682-5900.
- **ADDI Income limit for Sebatian County (HUD HOME PROGRAM 03/2008):**

NUMBER OF PERSONS/MAXIMUM HOUSEHOLD INCOME AT 80% OF MEDIAN INCOME

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
25,600	29,250	32,900	36,550	39,450	42,400	45,300	48,250

Sebastian County/Fort Smith Assistance Programs

The Crawford-Sebastian Community Development Council, Inc, is a community action agency whose purpose is to make improvements in the lives of low-income individuals and families and the communities in which they live. Mutual Self-Help Housing, which groups families and individuals together who then assist one another in the building of their new homes. "Sweat equity" accounts for 65% of costs.

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) match individual savings with government funds that can be used for a down payment on a new home, college tuition or starting a small business. The City of Fort Smith Home Rehabilitation Program brings substandard homes up to state and local building codes, then sells the house at market value. Additional down payment assistance may apply. Purchaser must be under Low Income Guidelines, not to exceed 80% of the median income for the county. These programs are funded through CDBGs and HOME programs.

V. Future Goals and Action Steps for Historic Preservation in Fort Smith

Fort Smith's rich heritage as a nineteenth-century center of justice and commerce is reflected in its older buildings and neighborhoods. Thirty-five percent of the city's existing buildings pre-date 1960, and the city has an impressive collection of building styles and property types from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Buildings from this time period are some of the best built that the United States will ever have. They contain materials and details difficult and expensive to duplicate. While dwellings throughout the city have been altered with added siding materials, rebuilt porches and other alterations, their basic form and plan remain intact. Their original appearance can be reclaimed.

Fort Smith has laid a strong foundation for historic preservation efforts. Active for thirty-five years, the city's Historic District Commission plays an important oversight and advocacy role. The active Downtown Development association has effectively promoted revitalization and new housing opportunities. Numerous financial programs are in place to assist property owners with rehabilitation in the downtown area and neighborhoods.

Using this foundation, Fort Smith can enhance its historic resources hand in hand with overall civic improvements and economic development. Many goals of the city's comprehensive plans are consistent with historic preservation objectives. Integrating historic preservation more fully into these planning efforts will benefit all parties as the city endeavors to make downtown more attractive to businesses, residents and visitors.

This section outlines the objectives and action steps proposed for four major goals:

A. Enhance Rehabilitation and Preservation of Fort Smith's Historic Neighborhoods

B. Enhance Rehabilitation and Preservation of Downtown Buildings

C. Increase Heritage Tourism in Fort Smith

D. Increase Public Awareness and Support for Historic Preservation

A. Enhance Rehabilitation and Preservation of Fort Smith's Historic Neighborhoods

Goal: Reduce Abandonment and Demolition through an Urban Homesteading Program
The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 is a United States law that, among other provisions, authorizes the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist with urban homesteading programs. The Act emphasized rehabilitation, preservation, and gradual change rather than demolition and displacement.

Urban homesteading began as a city program in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1973. The federal government adopted the program under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. Programs were begun in twenty-three cities whereby Housing and Urban Development (HUD) made funds available for individuals to acquire its foreclosed homes, encouraging their re-hab and re-use. After the purchase of a HUD home for the cost of one dollar, the new owner agreed to bring the home into codes compliance within eighteen months and reside in the home for three-to-five years. Over time, changes were made to the program, which became HOPE3 in 1990. The most obvious change involved the sale of the property. Instead of costing one dollar, a fair market value, post-rehab, was applied to the sale of the home.

An Urban Homestead program in Lakeland City, Florida, is designed to allow properties seized by the city for unpaid taxes to be sold to families of any income range, in an effort to create a mix of incomes in inner city neighborhoods. The purchaser must be a first-time homebuyer, however, and agree to reside in the single-family residence for ten years. The family size must not exceed appropriate numbers for the subject house (no more than two persons per bedroom). The head of household must also agree to attend homebuyers education classes. The plan also applies to vacant lots, on which the buyer would build a new home following local codes.

The urban homesteading concept offers fresh options for city officials burdened with abandoned houses that cut their tax base and encourage deterioration of neighborhoods. In Detroit, Michigan, in 1999, for example, there were 39,000 abandoned homes, including 6,224 that the city government had slated for demolition. In response to the crisis, the Michigan state legislature signed into law the Michigan Urban Housing Initiative, a homesteading program that allows a low- or moderate-income family to buy an abandoned house for as little as one dollar, if they can re-hab the home within five years.

Participation is simplified into a few basic requirements: A family must be below median income and include at least one employed adult; all school-age children must be enrolled and attending classes. No family member can have a drug felony conviction during the preceding three years. If the family has a history of credit problems, they must attend credit counseling. Those living in government-subsidized single-family homes who meet the same requirements would be eligible for the same program. If

they live in subsidized apartments, they could form a condominium association to make the purchase.

In studying the feasibility of implementing an urban homesteading program, the state of Michigan identified a major impediment to urban revitalization lay in an 1893 law for handling tax-delinquent real estate. Designed to protect homeowners and farmers who were having temporary financial difficulties, the law failed to address issues of abandoned urban houses. According to the law, a government office could not act to seize a property until its property taxes were delinquent for six years. In the case of an abandoned house, six years allowed extensive degradation to occur, from harsh winter weather and from looting of materials. The Michigan Urban Housing Initiative streamlined the process and halved the time involved before a city or county office can act to secure an abandoned house.

In 2000, the City of Fort Smith had a vacancy rate of 11.3% in its housing stock. Under Fort Smith's Unified Development Ordinance, 27-201, abandonment of a building is defined as follows:

> the cessation of a nonconforming use of structure or the cessation of a nonconforming use of land. The ceasing shall be deemed to be established by the failure to obtain or renew an occupation registration for a period of at least one (1) calendar year or the termination of city utility services for at least one (1) calendar year or the ceasing of a nonconforming use due to a felony conviction of the owner or the authorized representative of the owner and which felony conviction is related to the subject use. Ceasing may also be established by a written statement of intention to abandon the use by the owner or the owner's representative.

The language in the UDO defines what constitutes an abandoned property and allows the City of Fort Smith to act on such properties expeditiously, potentially pre-empting degradation of the property and enrolling it in a homesteading inventory. Houses available through most Urban Homesteading programs are generally valued from $75,000 to $150,000 after rehabilitation. Houses of various sizes are targeted for these programs. Most Urban Homesteading plans require that family (consisting of at least one steadily employed person who is 21 or older) must have good credit and qualify for a low-interest loan. Generally, the family must be a first-time buyers owning no other real property. Program guidelines also prescribe minimum and maximum incomes such as combined gross family income being at least $35,000 - $40,000 per year. According to guidelines established by HUD (the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development), a homesteading family can earn no more than 80% of the median family income (based on family size).

Urban Homesteading Programs rejuvenate neighborhoods by improving one building at a time. This type of incremental revitalization typically has a longer lasting impact on areas than more traditional large-scale projects. Urban Homesteading is cost-effective in that it utilizes existing resources. It can also have a positive ripple effect by enhancing neighborhoods and encouraging additional housing rehabilitation. Homestead programs build community pride and identity by maintaining the historic character of a neighborhood and strengthening residents' commitment to the area. Below is an example of an urban homesteading plan from Arkansas City, Kansas.

Urban Homesteading Land Bank
Arkansas City, Kansas
Objective: To encourage and provide opportunities for redevelopment of older residential neighborhoods.

Key Features and Policies

The City will accumulate residential lots in older neighborhoods where the City acquires property through:

- o Acquisition of flood damaged property
- o Foreclosure on property without structures with assessments for removal of dangerous structures or other code conditions
- o Other donations or acquisitions deemed appropriate by the [City] Commission

The City will make the property available for placement of new residential dwellings or other uses on the following basis:

- o Without charge to persons wishing to construct a new residential dwelling on the lot or lots
- o For a nominal charge of $500 per lot for owners of adjacent lots wishing to substantially remodel or add on or enlarge adjacent dwellings or to construct detached accessory buildings that enhance the use and value of the main dwelling structure
- o When deemed appropriate because of the unlikely use of the property for new dwellings or additions, lots will be sold for expanded yard area for a price equal to or above the appraised value. When an owner expresses an interest in such acquisition, the [City] Commission will advertise the lot according to its standard procedure and negotiate sale to the highest bid with a beneficial use
- o Preference will be given to owner/occupied uses of donated property.

Non owner/occupied uses will require approval of the City Commission.

An urban homesteading program can result in restoration and occupancy of vacant homes like this one at 1018 North Fifteenth Street.

✓ **Action** – Review urban homesteading programs in other communities and adopt the provisions best suitable for Fort Smith. This may include acquisition and rehabilitation by the city or acquisition and sale for a nominal fee to homesteaders. Such a program can reduce the number of abandoned houses and provide fiscal benefits back to the city.

Goal: Promote Rehabilitation through a Revolving Fund Program

The establishment of a non-profit revolving fund program serving the Sebastian-Crawford Counties region would be an effective tool to stimulate preservation of historic properties.

A revolving fund is a pool of capital created and reserved for a specific activity with the condition that the money be returned for additional activities. Normally administered by a non-profit or governmental unit, a revolving fund program establishes a monetary basis on which property can be bought, improved, maintained, and sold. The revolving fund monies are loaned at an interest rate several points below the prime and are subsequently returned for new projects through the sales, rentals, loan repayments and interest.

A model for a revolving fund program can be found in Arkansas' neighbor state of Missouri. Since 1980, the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office has used this tool to help preserve endangered properties, such as the Ulysses S. Grant house which, threatened by encroachment, was restored. The fund, allows the state to play a direct role in the preservation of Missouri's heritage through means such as acquisition and resale, short-term loans and the acquisition of options or easements. To qualify for fund assistance, properties must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places or be eligible for listing. Properties typically are endangered or threatened in some way in order to merit assistance. In addition, projects must have strong community support and a viable long-term preservation plan.

In most revolving fund programs, eligible properties are 50 years old and contribute to the character of their historic neighborhood. Rehabilitation must be in keeping with the city's historic design review guidelines. Loan amounts can range from $10,000 to $30,000 with terms of 2% or 3% for ten to 15 years.

Funding to create a revolving fund is available through the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This fund provides below-market-rate loans of up to $150,000 to nonprofit organizations and public agencies to help preserve properties listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Funds may be used to create local revolving funds, for site acquisition or rehabilitation work.

A Revolving Fund program could assist in purchasing and renovating vacant historic buildings such as 410 South Fourteenth Street.

✓ **Action** – Review Revolving Funds programs in other communities and establish a non-profit regional program serving the Sebastian-Crawford Counties area. Such a program can promote rehabilitation and increase the tax base within the region.

Goal: Promote Appropriate Rehabilitation through Compatible Weatherization

All homeowners are becoming increasingly concerned with energy consumption and costs. When seeking ways to increase energy efficiency, owners of historic buildings must be additionally attentive to the preservation and maintenance of their homes' historic building materials and character-defining elements such as windows and doors. The various housing rehabilitation programs available to Fort Smith homeowners should promote and encourage appropriate weatherization of older dwellings. Owners of historic buildings should aim to achieve energy savings that do not negatively impact building character. Retaining original windows and adding storm windows can often offer the same thermal efficiency as replacement vinyl windows, and be more cost effective. Additionally, homeowners should be aware of heat loss through their attics.

The Crawford-Sebastian Community Development Council, Inc. (C-SCDC) provides assistance via the Arkansas Weatherization Program (AWP). AWP was developed to provide improvements in homes severely inefficient in energy use. The program helps customers reduce energy use. AWP requires that participating homeowners be members of a participating utility and have owned the home for at least one year. The results of an energy audit are entered into a computerized energy audit program, which lists recommendations for making the home more energy efficient. A complete invoice with the itemized costs will be sent to any customer who wants to implement the recommended measures. The utility providing energy to the home pays 25% of the cost, up to $741. Participating utility providers in Fort Smith and Sebastian County are Southwestern Electric Power Company, Oklahoma Gas & Electric, Arkansas Western Gas, Arkansas Oklahoma Gas, and CenterPoint Energy.

✓ **Action** – Encourage owners of historic buildings to take advantage of the AWP. Fort Smith should also consider partnering with the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith to create a pilot program to educate residents, builders and contractors on how to effectively weatherize historic buildings while preserving their character. The program should stress the importance of retaining historic windows.

Weatherization programs should stress preservation rather than adding siding and replacing original doors and windows (323 South Fourteenth Street).

Goal: Provide Training for Builders and Contractors in Historic Rehabilitation Methods and Techniques

As historic buildings age, owners are faced with decisions that affect their historic character. The most common dilemmas include the preservation of wood siding vs. the application of vinyl siding and rebuilding original windows vs. replacing them. It is a challenge for homeowners to find contractors and builders knowledgeable in historic building renovation, and experienced craftsmen need opportunities to contribute their expertise in preservation rehabilitation techniques.

The HDC should prepare a list of contractors and builders who have demonstrated their awareness of appropriate historic building rehabilitation. This list should be available to the general public at HDC meetings and on the web. The list should be accompanied by a disclaimer stating that the list does not constitute an HDC endorsement, but does point homeowners towards skilled rehab professionals.

Because 35% of the city's buildings were built pre-1960, the City of Fort Smith is encouraged to work with the University of Arkansas - Fort Smith's History Department to develop continuing education programs with classes in masonry restoration, plaster repair, and basic maintenance for historic buildings. The University has shown interest in resurrecting a defunct program formerly offered through the Arkansas Building Preservation Trades Institute of Helena. With the recent passing of the state historic tax credit, more property owners interested in rehabilitating historic buildings will be seeking professional assistance. Such classes will engender the creation of jobs in the preservation trades profession.

Together the city and the University should also contact the Preservation Trades Network, www.ptn.org, about hosting this non-profit group's annual International Preservation Trades Workshop. This annual event, the only one of its kind in North America, brings together the foremost practitioners of traditional trades employed in conservation of the built environment. This event affords the host city the opportunity to showcase its historic resources and provides a unique opportunity for trades people, students, educators, preservationists and others to share their experiences and skills.

✓ **Action** – In consultation with the HDC, the city should 1.) offer to host Preservation Trades Network's annual meeting 2.) provide grants to craftsman and builders to learn and share rehabilitation techniques and 3.) work with the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith to develop a program teaching preservation trades.

Goal: Encourage New Compatible Construction in Fort Smith's Older Neighborhoods. Demolition in Fort Smith's older neighborhoods has resulted in numerous vacant lots. Even prestigious Belle Grove has not been immune. New infill construction should be encouraged on vacant lots with attention to building design that is compatible with adjacent architecture. This approach is consistent with historic preservation goals and is part of overall economic and revitalization efforts.

This map of the Belle Grove Historic District indicates lots now vacant (in green)after the demolition of historic structures (in red), as well as lots used for parking (in gray).

Infill is not a threat to the character of a historic district. It can even reinforce the original composition of a neighborhood. At present in Fort Smith, compatible contemporary new construction is recommended, but only the Belle Grove Historic District has design guidelines for new construction. The result is a mixture of infill that complements the character of a neighborhood and infill that distracts from it. Appropriate new construction emulates the form and scale of historic structures in the neighborhood, has similar windows and doors as historic structures, uses similar materials and shares a similar orientation. Inappropriate infill does not share these traits with adjacent architectural design.

This ca. 1970 apartment building is an example of inappropriate infill next to a historic dwelling.

These houses in the 1200 block of North Fourteenth Street illustrate a more appropriate attempt at infill within an historic neighborhood.

✓ **Action** – In Belle Grove Historic District, encourage infill, directed by existing design guidelines, on vacant lots. In all of Fort Smith's older neighborhoods, encourage appropriate infill that is in keeping with the character of overall architecture.

Goal: Adopt a Conservation Zoning Provision or Apply Limited Local Ordinance Historic Districts

Aside from the Belle Grove Historic District, no historic areas in Fort Smith are protected from demolition or inappropriate new construction. We recommend the creation of local ordinance historic districts for areas eligible for listing on the National Register. If property owner support does not materialize, we recommend a lesser overlay such as conservation zoning or a limited application of a local ordinance historic district. Conservation zoning is widely used throughout the country, but it has yet to be enacted in Arkansas. This type of zoning provides for the review of proposed new buildings, proposed additions to historic properties and proposed demolition. It is hoped that a

conservation zoning provision will be approved at the state level in coming years. Even without this legislation, a local ordinance historic district's guidelines could be written to accomplish this same level of review. Such an overlay would stabilize property values and encourage revitalization. The process of instituting design review districts should include ample time for public meetings and discussion.

✓ **Action** – Where local ordinance historic districts do not receive support, encourage the use of some form of a Conservation Zoning provision or a limited application of local ordinance historic district guidelines to guide new construction.

Conservation Zoning would ensure that new construction on vacant lots like this one be compatible with adjacent historic properties.

Goal: Encourage the Development of New Local Ordinance Historic Districts

Fort Smith's HDC governs the rehabilitation of historic buildings and new construction only within the Belle Grove Historic District. Belle Grove is not only a National Register district, but also a Local Ordinance Historic District with design guidelines. Ideally, any National Register historic district should consider becoming a Local Ordinance Historic District for the preservation of design elements within its boundaries. For example, the May-Lecta-Sweet National Register Historic District has no overlay protection.

As neighborhoods are identified as eligible for listing as National Register historic districts, we encourage additional designation as a Local Ordinance Historic District. At present, the West Garrison Avenue Historic District has design guidelines, but these are not enforced under the city ordinance. These guidelines should emphasize the use of traditional materials, as application of modern materials detracts from the historic character of the commercial district.

✓ **Action** – As neighborhoods in Fort Smith are identified as eligible for listing as National Register Districts, reinforce their preservation through their development as Local Ordinance Historic Districts.

Goal: Revise and Expand the Design Guidelines Publication as Needed

The city's Historic District Commission (HDC) is responsible for reviewing rehabilitation projects, demolition, new construction and other design elements in local ordinance historic districts.

When the HDC was established in 1974, it used the *Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation* as the basis of its design review. In 2003, the publication "*Guidelines for Rehabilitation and New Construction for Belle Grove Historic District*" was completed and these guidelines provide recommendations for a wide variety of actions affecting historic buildings. Over time, as new building materials are introduced and changes occur in the approach to design review, the guidelines should be reviewed, expanded and updated. The Fort Smith HDC should consider revisiting its design guidelines publication in another five years, with an eye to addressing new materials, clarifying new approaches to design review and eliminating ambiguities.

✓ **Action** – The regular review of design guidelines is important to increase public support for historic preservation, clarify the decision making process of the HDC and enhance the design standards for new construction in local ordinance historic districts. Review current design guidelines in five years.

Goal: List Eligible Properties and Historic Districts on the National Register of Historic Places

Historic and architectural surveys in Fort Smith have identified numerous properties which met the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. As previously noted, Fort Smith is represented in the National Register through individual buildings such as residences, commercial buildings and industrial buildings as well as large residential districts.

National Register listing creates a strong sense of pride and community. Studies have shown that historic district designation translates into higher property values and resale prices. National Register listing also confers on subject properties tax incentives for savvy developers and owners who rehabilitate properties, rent them out for five years and then sell them. Through this approach dwellings are rehabilitated in keeping with their architectural character, the owners or developers reap the 20% federal tax credit for their rehabilitation expenditures and by holding on to the property for five years there is no recapture of any of the tax credit. With the passing of legislation for a state historic tax credit, an additional 25% is extended to property owners for the rehabilitation of their own historic dwellings. The combination of these tax credits greatly benefit property owners in Fort Smith's National Register listed historic districts.

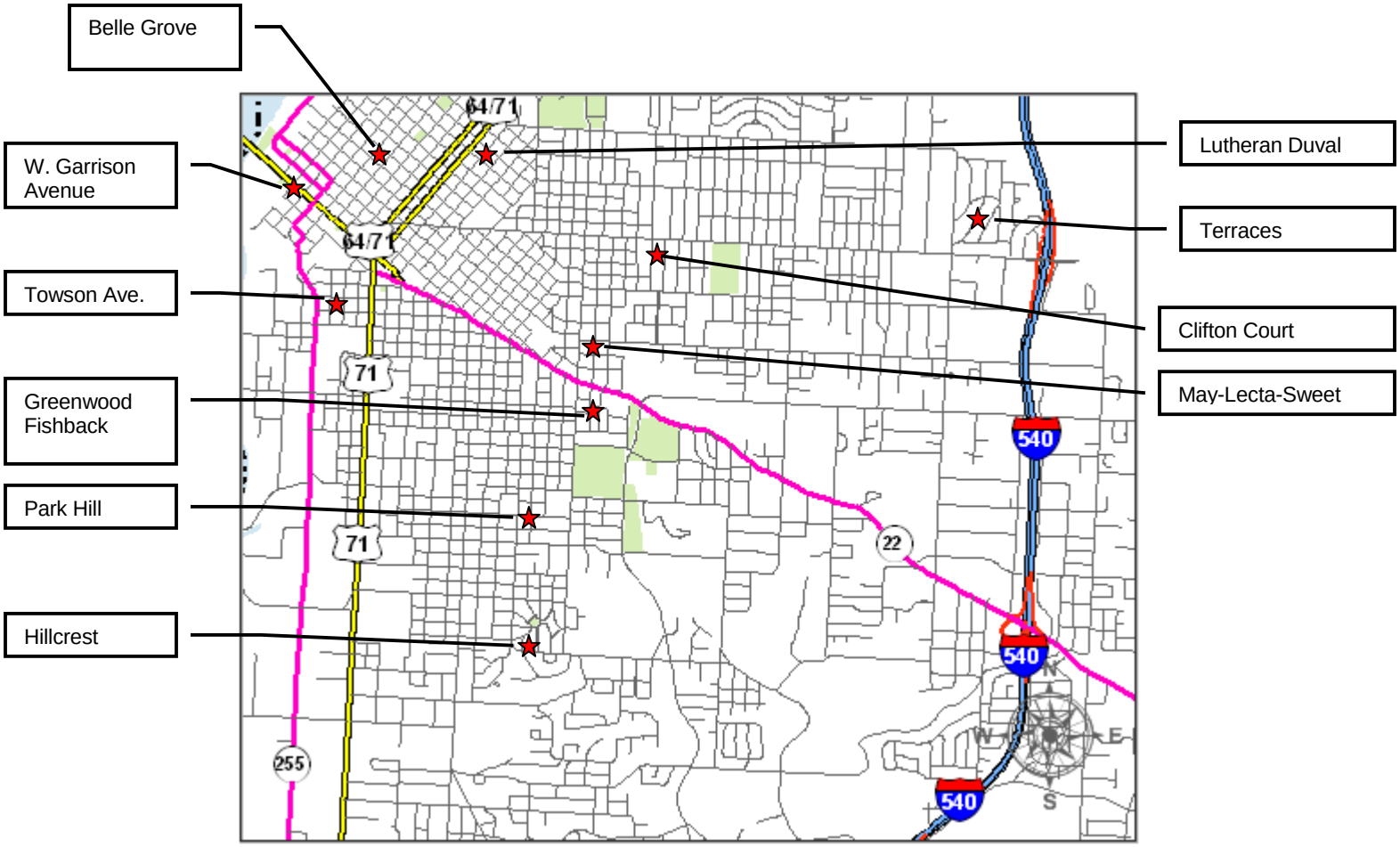
Fort Smith has two residential areas, the Belle Grove Historic District and the May-Lecta-Sweet Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The city has several other residential areas that probably meet National Register criteria, including the Lutheran Duval and Greenwood-Fishback neighborhoods. As part of this project, additional areas were identified as eligible or potentially eligible following discussions with the Arkansas SHPO Architectural Historian.

National Register listing places no restrictions on owners. This is a crucial—and often misunderstood—point. National Register designation and Local Ordinance Historic District designation are often confused, leading to hesitancy on the part of property owners to have their properties included in the National Register. Prior to initiating a nomination's preparation, property owners should be fully informed as to the effects of National Register listing through neighborhood meetings and/or information sheets or summaries.

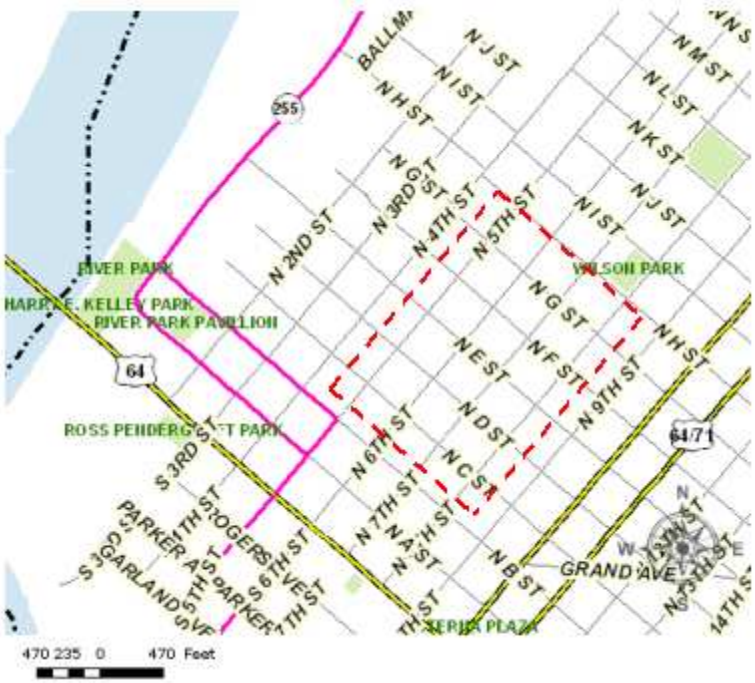
✓ **Action** – Prepare National Register nominations for eligible properties. Complete sufficient research and analysis to identify other areas that may qualify for the National Register. Create a Multiple Property Documentation Form "Historical and Architectural Resources of Fort Smith, Arkansas," identifying registration requirements, period of significance, contextual information and descriptions of relevant property types.

National Register listing recognizes the significance of historic areas and also provides property owners with potential state and federal tax credits (1105 Adelaide Avenue).

Listed and Potentially-Eligible National Register Historic Districts



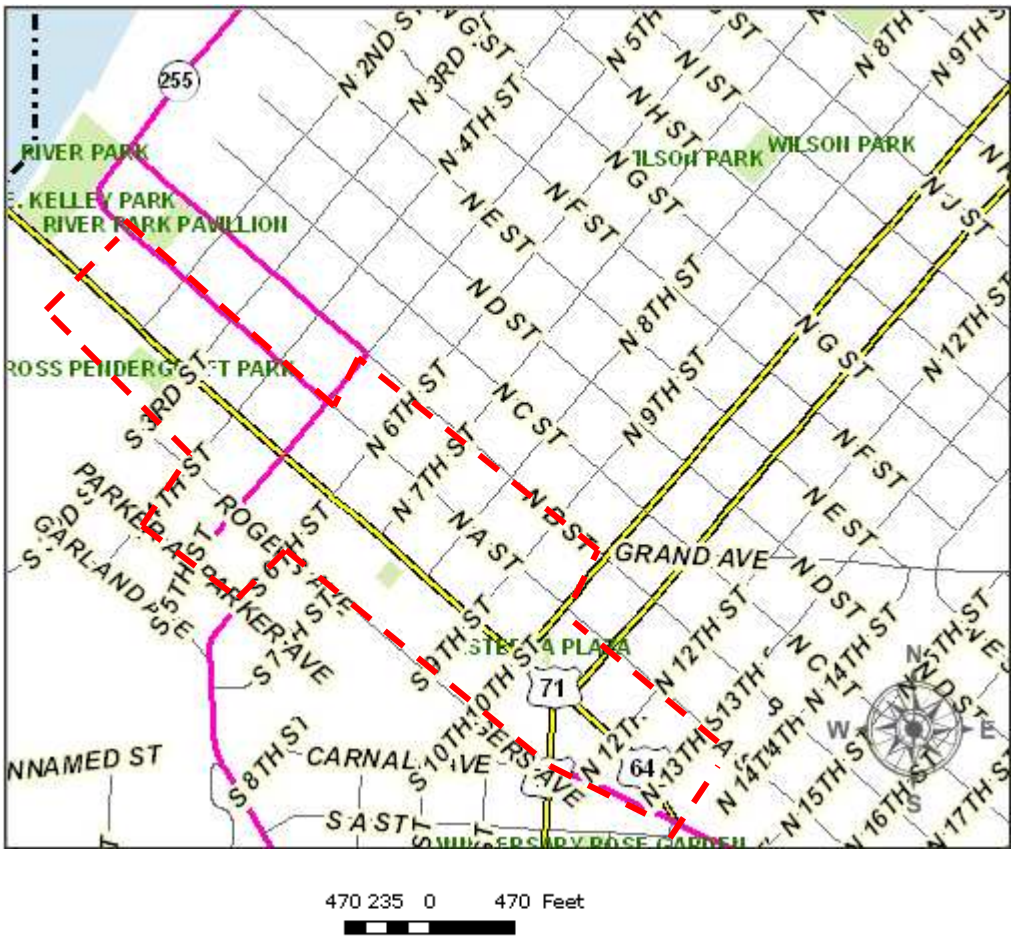
Currently listed – Belle Grove Historic District



The Belle Grove Historic District is not only a National Register district, it is also a city overlay district with design review guidelines. It is bounded by Fifth Street, North H Street, Eighth Street, and mid-block between North B and North C Streets.

Left: 423 North Seventh Street represents the Queen Anne style.
Right: 515 North Sixth Street is Romanesque Revival.

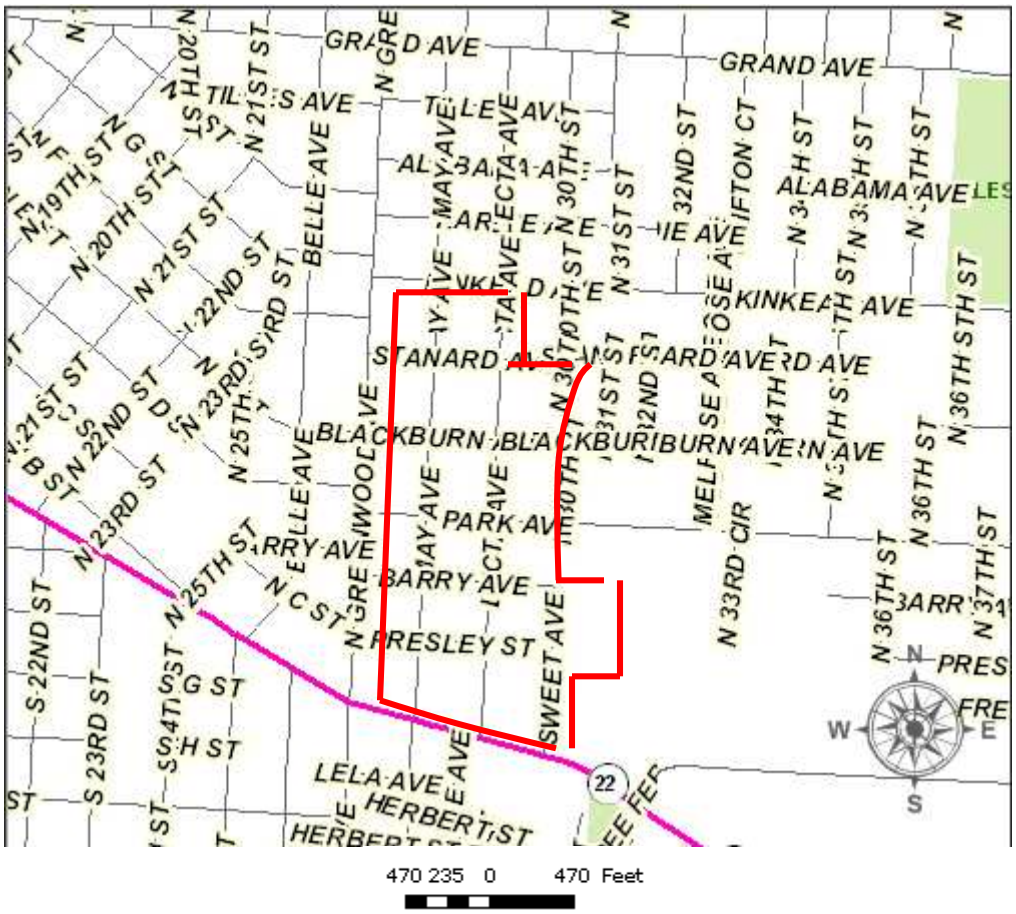
Currently listed – West Garrison Avenue Historic District



The West Garrison Avenue Historic District was originally listed on the National Register in 1979 with 27 buildings representing a period of significance beginning in 1825 through 1924. The district was expanded in 2001 to include additional commercial buildings as well as government and residential buildings. It is roughly bounded by 13th Street, North B Street, First Street, and Parker Avenue. The district represents Fort Smith's center of commercial activity.

Left: 500 block of West Garrison was included in the original boundary; right: the 800 block of West Garrison was included in the expansion that increased the number of resources within the district to 63 buildings.

Currently listed: May-Lecta-Sweet Historic District



The May-Lecta-Sweet Historic District is Fort Smith's second residential neighborhood listed on the National Register. Located east of downtown, the neighborhood developed beginning at the turn of the twentieth century as the city grew and residents moved away from downtown. The district is bounded by May Avenue, Kinkead Avenue, Sweet Avenue, and Rogers Avenue.

Left, 208 Lecta Avenue: Right, 205 Sweet Avenue

Potentially Eligible – Lutheran Duval Historic District

The Lutheran Duval neighborhood is roughly bounded by North F Street, North TwelfthStreet, North L Street, and North Fifteenth Street. This area meets National Register criteria for its collection of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century residential architecture. The neighborhood contains fine examples of the Queen Anne style, Colonial Revival style, Craftsman style and other designs. Like most older neighborhoods in Fort Smith, many of the properties have been altered but the area overall retains sufficient integrity to meet National Register criteria.

Left: Queen Anne influenced dwelling at 715 North Twenfth.
Right: 1007 North Thirteenth Street is an example of the Dutch Colonial style.

Potentially Eligible – Greenwood-Fishback Historic District

The proposed Greenwood Fishback National Register District is bounded by Dodson Avenue, South Twenty Third Street, Rogers Avenue, and South Thirty First Street. This neighborhood contains an excellent collection of early twentieth century architecture and includes examples of Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, Craftsman and other styles and house forms. The Fishback area also includes good examples of the Ranch style. Residents in the neighborhoods may prefer to have two separate historic districts but this entire area is contiguous and should be considered for one nomination.

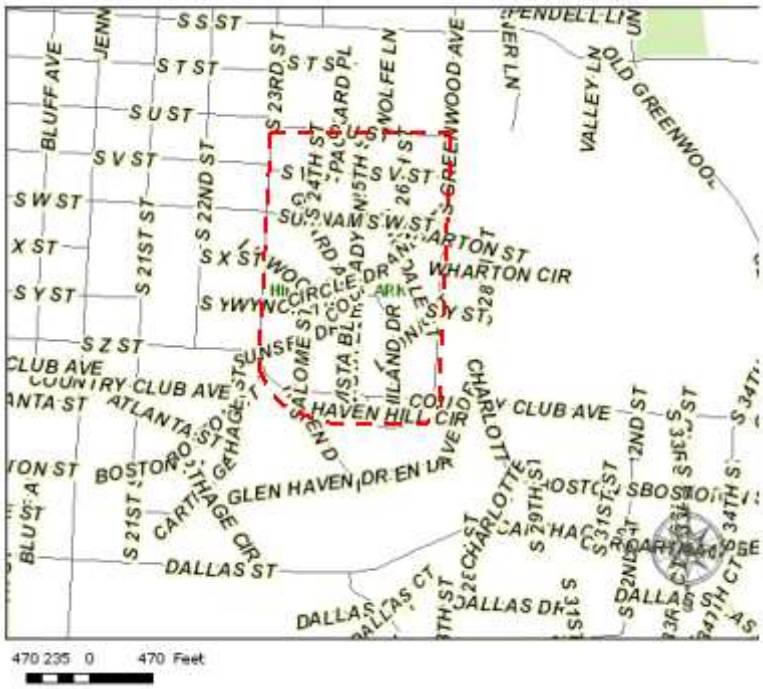
Left: Dutch Colonial style dwelling at 911 S. 24th Street;
Right: Craftsman style dwelling at 818 South 26th Street.

Potentially Eligible – Park Hill Historic District

The proposed Park Hill District is bounded roughly on Jenny Lindy Road, Dodson Avenue, South Greenwood Avenue, and Country Club Avenue. This large area contains hundreds of dwellings built primarily from 1905 to 1950. The district contains examples of the Tudor Revival style, Colonial Revival style, Craftsman style, Minimal Traditional style, Cape Cod and other styles and forms of the period. Most of the houses are modest in size and have uniform streetscapes in terms of the size of the lots and setbacks. The integrity of the neighborhood is particularly high and this appears to be the largest residential area in Fort Smith that qualifies as a historic district.

Tudor Revival style dwelling at 2201 South T Street and a fine row of Craftsman homes in the 2000 block of South L Street.

Potentially Eligible – Hillcrest Historic District



Located to the southeast of Park Hill, the proposed Hillcrest Historic district is bounded by Haven Hill Circle, South Twenty Third Street, South U Street, and South Greenwood Avenue. Hillcrest is a planned development of the early twentieth century and was designed with a number of streets connecting around a central park. Vista Avenue was also designed with a landscaped median. The neighborhood is composed primarily of Tudor and Colonial Revival style dwellings and Craftsman designs. Hillcrest has high integrity and is significant for both its planned design and architecture.

The Hillcrest Neighborhood contains many examples of the Tudor Revival style such as at the 30 block of Vista Boulevard and 43 South Hiland Drive.

Potentially Eligible – Clifton Court Historic District

The proposed Clifton Court district is a small historic district one block in length between Grand and Kinkead Avenues. This street was laid out as a planned development ca. 1920 and was designed with concrete gate posts at the south entrance. All of the dwellings were designed in the Craftsman style and most feature similar detailing such as porches with tapered wood posts on brick piers, exposed eave rafters, and multi-light windows. Most dwellings retain their original form and plan and collectively this street meets National Register criteria.

The Hillcrest Neighborhood contains many examples of the Tudor Revival style such as at the 30 block of Vista Boulevard and 43 South Hiland Drive.

Potentially Eligible – The Terraces Historic District

The proposed Terraces Historic District is bounded by Cross Lane, North Waldron Road, Grand Avenue, and I-540. This area is one of Fort Smith's most notable mid-twentieth century residential neighborhoods and reflects suburban developments in the city after World War II. This planned development contains streets that angle and curve with the topography and most houses are sited on large lots with extensive landscaping. Designs in the neighborhood include Minimal Traditional and Colonial Revival but most dwellings reflect the Ranch style of the 1950s. These houses were built in low, horizontal plans and with both gable and hipped roofs. Many display large picture windows and have integrated garages. This district retains much of its integrity and meets National Register criteria for its architecture and planning.

Ranch style dwellings at 1500 North Fifty Fifth Terrace & 1219 North Fifty Sixth Terrace.

Potentially Eligible – Towson Avenue Historic District

The proposed Towson Avenue Warehouse District is bounded by South Ninth Street, South A Street, Towson Avenue (Highway 71), and South D Street. Within this proposed district are a series of brick commercial buildings facing Towson Avenue as well as warehouse and commercial buildings in the blocks directly west. This area contains a good collection of early twentieth century commercial buildings and warehouses that retain sufficient integrity to meet National Register criteria. Most of the commercial buildings were designed in Tapestry Brick forms or with simple Colonial Revival detailing. This area is located to the south of the convention center and provides opportunities for rehabilitation using the federal and state tax credits.

The 200 block of Towson Avenue contains both one- and two-story brick buildings built in the early twentieth century.

Other Areas To Survey for National Register Eligibility

This large area southeast of downtown contains hundreds of properties built prior to 1950. Despite the large number of older buildings in this neighborhood there does not appear to be a readily definable historic district. This is due to the large number of vacant lots, many incompatible post-1960 apartment buildings and extensive alterations to historic dwellings. There may be individually eligible properties within this large area that would be identified through an intensive level survey.

This area of the city contains properties that may meet National Register criteria such as the house at 702 North Eighteenth Street.

This large area south of downtown also contains hundreds of older dwellings but it has been significantly impacted by demolition, inappropriate new construction, and extensive alterations to the historic building stock. No concentrations of historic buildings in these blocks appear to meet the criteria as a historic district, but there may be some properties that could be identified as individually eligible.

Notable examples of late nineteenth and early twentieth century styles can be found in this neighborhood. This dwelling at 312 South Fourteenth Street has lovely Eastlake trim.

The section of Free Ferry Road between Rogers Avenue and North Albert Pike Avenue contains a number of notable dwellings built from the early- to mid-twentieth century. Representative architectural styles include Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival and Neo-classical. Several of the homes along this street have been remodeled with large additions and an intensive survey would result in the identification of properties retaining sufficient integrity to meet National Register criteria. If not eligible as a district, there may be properties eligible individually for their architectural significance or association with persons important in Fort Smith's history.

Dutch Colonial style house at 3700 Free Ferry Road (left) and Tudor Revival style dwelling at 3825 Free Ferry Road (right). These houses are sited on large lots with extensive landscaping.

Goal: Evaluate the significance of properties built after 1950 and identify those that meet National Register criteria.

As time passes, our sense of what is historic and architecturally significant evolves. At present, many communities across the country are examining structures from the 1950s and 1960s with new eyes. The decades were boom years in construction nationwide, and Fort Smith was no exception. More than 10,000 residences were built in the city between 1950 and 1969. These dwellings located in neighborhoods south and east of downtown reflect popular house forms of the period such as Ranch, Split-Level, and Cape Cod. The Terraces is one notable example.

Given the thousands of properties that need to be inventoried, we recommend first conducting a reconnaissance-level survey to identify notable concentrations and outstanding individual examples of 1950-1965 architecture. This should be combined with a study of plats and overall city history to discover which areas developed during this period and any particular design or planning principles utilized. This approach can flag areas or buildings that warrant more intensive survey and National Register evaluations.

✓ **Action** – Complete a reconnaissance-level survey of buildings constructed from 1950 to 1965 and identify properties that warrant further review or meet National Register criteria.

Ranch style dwelling at 2901 Reeder

Goal – Investigate and Inventory Archaeological Sites

The history of Fort Smith is recorded not only in its buildings and structures but also in the ground. Most notably, excavation of the Fort Smith National Historic Site yielded valuable information about the location of historic structures. Evidence of prehistoric sites often exists surprisingly near the surface. In Fort Smith, archaeological excavation can reveal significant information on Fort Smith's growth and development. Under downtown pavement and parking lots are building foundations and earlier components of infrastructure that could yield artifacts related to Fort Smith's early history. Below ground features, such as privies and cisterns, were often used as convenient receptacles for household waste. Their excavation often produces remnants of bottles, dishes and other discarded items that reveal details, for example, about their user's social status, period trends, and materials in use. Fort Smith's many demolished and vacant industrial sites may yield rich insight into the material culture of the city's early years.

When projects use federal funds or require federal permits, archaeological investigations are generally required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 470 *et. seq*.). However, city officials should consider what affects all projects may have on archaeological resources and conduct a background check on sites marked for development before groundbreaking begins. The city should consider including the addition of archaeological site protection in future land use plans, zoning, subdivision approvals and general environmental regulations. The city should also consider appointing an archaeologist to the Historic District Commission.

✓ **Action** – Require archaeological investigations prior to land disturbance and new construction. Archaeological investigations should be conducted by professionals that meet the Secretary of the Interiors Standards (36 CFR Part 61, Appendix A) but the utilization of volunteers from the affected neighborhoods or downtown area is also recommended.

B. Enhance Rehabilitation and Preservation of Downtown Buildings

Goal – Complete a comprehensive architectural and historical survey of Fort Smith's Commercial Buildings

Downtown Fort Smith retains many examples of late 19th and early 20th century commercial architecture. Most of these buildings are within the existing National Register historic district along Garrison Avenue. This district includes the majority of significant buildings in the downtown area, however, there are additional properties surrounding the district that should be surveyed and evaluated for their National Register potential. In particular the area along Towson Avenue to the southwest of the historic district should be surveyed to determine its potential eligibility. The nomination for the West Garrison Avenue Historic District should be updated to include any buildings adjacent to the district identified in the survey as potentially eligible. This updating should also reassess properties built in the 1950s and early 1960s as contributing to the district.

Identifying properties eligible for listing on the National Register is important to Fort Smith's downtown revitalization efforts. The 20% federal tax credit and 25% state tax credit for historic rehabilitation often tip the scale of economic viability for a project. A survey to assess National Register eligibility of commercial buildings in Fort Smith should be undertaken in the blocks adjacent to the boundary of the West Garrison Avenue Historic District, as these may meet the criteria of the National Register as a historic district.

The survey of Fort Smith's industrial and commercial buildings would also enhance heritage tourism efforts and other local and state initiatives. A comprehensive inventory of these buildings would inform interpretation of Fort Smith's commercial and industrial history through wayside exhibits, driving and walking tours, and site markers.

✓ **Action** – Complete an architectural survey of the city's remaining commercial and industrial resources to identify properties that may meet National Register criteria and those that should be a focus of heritage tourism efforts.

A comprehensive survey of the city's commercial buildings would assess the significance of buildings such as the First Federal Savings and Loan (ca. 1960) at 542 Garrison Avenue.

C. Increase Heritage Tourism in Fort Smith

Goal - Utilize Existing Programs and Coordinate with Regional Sites
Heritage tourism refers to tourists and visitors who specifically seek out historic sites, historic districts and cultural activities when they travel. These are the kind of tourists who stay in bed and breakfast accommodations, tour historic downtown areas and visit museums and cultural sites unique to an area. Heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing areas in the tourism field. Arkansas revenue from taxes related to tourism grew by 3.8% in 2008, as tourists reduced long-distance travel and took more driving vacations.

"The Historic/Cultural Traveler, 2003 Edition" reported that 118 million travelers included culture on their trips. The report also stated that 30% of historic and cultural travelers chose their destination based on a specific event or activity. Not only is the population of heritage tourists growing, the amount of money spent by this category of visitors surpasses that of the average tourist. According to the 2001 Travel Industry Association of America study, cultural and heritage visitors stayed longer at their destinations and spent an average of $623 per trip, as compared with $457 for average U.S. tourists.

The study found that of 92.7 million adult travelers who included a cultural event on their trip, 32% (29.6 million travelers) added extra time to their trip for a cultural, arts, heritage or historic activity. The study also found that travelers who include cultural events are different from the typical U.S. traveler in that they are more likely to have household incomes above $50,000 (46% versus 40%) and to have completed college (33% versus 28%). *(Source: Partners in Tourism and Travel Industry Association of America.)*

Fort Smith's heritage offers a unique opportunity to showcase the history of a frontier town, and its location in the middle of the country makes it accessible via Interstate-40, a major east-west thoroughfare. On 2004, visitors to Sebastian County spent more than $44 million--an increase of 6% from the previous year. Visitors can spend part of a day as they pass through to other destinations, or make Fort Smith the central location of an Ozark excursion. The city is ideally located as the point where the "New South meets the Old West."

Fort Smith's appeal as a tourist destination relates to it history as a military and justice center on the frontier. As a 19th century town on the border of the Indian Territory, Fort Smith represented the boundary between the edge of the nation and the wilderness landscape. In this dichotomous setting, spectacular Victorian homes were juxtaposed with notorious outlaws. Today, Fort Smith recognizes its historical resources and their role in heritage tourism. The City was actively involved in the clean-up of Belle Point, the site of the original and second Fort Smith, as well as the federal courthouse. Today, the Fort Smith National Historic Site draws thousands of visitors annually (over 77,000 in 2006). Fort Smith, recently restored at a cost of $7.5 million, and the gallows where 79 criminals were executed are popular Fort Smith attractions.

The United States Department of Justice selected Fort Smith in 2007 to be the new location of the U.S. Marshall Service National Museum. The U.S. Marshall Service is the oldest federal law enforcement agency of our nation. As a division of the Justice Department, it has served as a link between the executive and judicial branches of government since 1789. The selection of Fort Smith as the museum site underscores the significance of the city's role in carrying our justice on the border of civilization. The museum will certainly enhance the draw of visitors to Fort Smith.

Fort Smith has a number of opportunities to take advantage of the heritage tourism market. Several tourism promotion programs have been created in Fort Smith and the region. These provide opportunities for grants, partnerships, and rehabilitation. Potential sources and partnerships include:

Preserve America

Fort Smith has earned the honor of being designated a *Preserve America* Community. The *Preserve America* program is a White House initiative announced by Laura Bush in 2003. Its purpose is to create interest in the country's cultural and natural heritage and to support communities that utilize such resources for the improvement of the local economy and quality of life. *Preserve America* Communities are areas recognized for protecting and celebrating their heritage, using their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization, and encouraging people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs. To date the White House has designated 295 Preserve America Communities.

A Preserve America Community benefits from White House recognition and a number of publicity and promotional opportunities and materials to enhance the visibility of the city. These include *Preserve America* signs, flags and banners, a *Preserve America* Community road sign, and listing in the program's web-based directory. The *Preserve America* website provides brief community profiles with local history and related resources and sites of interest to visitors. Fort Smith can also add links to websites for the city, its "Go Downtown" development association, local museums, and other cultural and heritage organizations and sites.

As a Preserve America Community, Fort Smith is also eligible to apply for grants through the Preserve America grants program. These 50/50 matching grants can be used towards the development of resource management strategies that support local preservation efforts, integrate heritage preservation and economic development, and create intergovernmental and public-private partnerships. These grants stimulate local government and private investment in the community with the end goal of bolstering heritage tourism and community's sense of place.

These various funding opportunities could help support a wide range of projects that would enhance Fort Smith's built environment. Possible projects could include continued survey and documentation of historic resources, rehabilitation and restoration projects, and wayside exhibits, informative signs that offer historical interpretation to tourists.

Arkansas Tourism Development Act

ARKANSAS
Economic Development Commission

In 1997, the Arkansas General Assembly passed the Arkansas Tourism Development Act to encourage growth in the state's tourism industry by offering economic incentives to qualified private development projects. The Act provides state sales and use tax credits and income tax credits to businesses initiating approved tourism attraction projects.

"Tourism attraction" includes:

1. A cultural or historical site;
2. A recreational or entertainment facility;
3. An area of natural phenomenon or scenic beauty;
4. A theme park;
5. An amusement or entertainment park;
6. An indoor or outdoor play or music show;
7. Botanical gardens; and
8. Cultural or educational centers.

Eligible minimum project costs must be $1 million, except in high unemployment counties, where it is $500,000. The sales tax credits are calculated based upon 15 percent of eligible project cost for projects spending more than $1 million; credits are 25 percent of eligible project cost for the projects in high unemployment counties. The income tax credits earned may be applied against the company's Arkansas state income tax liability for the succeeding nine (9) years or until the credit is entirely used, whichever occurs first. More information is available through the Arkansas Economic Development Commission in Little Rock at (501) 682-7675.

SAFETEA-LU

SAFETEA-LU
Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act:
A Legacy for Users

One of the largest potential sources of funding for historic preservation and interpretation is the transportation enhancement provision of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Initially called the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and later the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21, the federal transportation bill provision sets aside 10% of the Surface Transportation Program for "transportation

enhancement activities." The provision recognizes that roads and railways can sometimes have a detrimental effect on historical and cultural resources, and it sets aside funds to protect and preserve such resources.

In 2005, Congress reauthorized TEA-21 as SAFETEA-LU. Proposed projects eligible for SAFETEA-LU funding must have some relationship to transportation systems. The property must either serve as a transportation route, be located next to or visible from a transportation route, or be affected by a transportation route. Eligible activities include a variety of preservation activities including the purchase of easements on historic properties, rehabilitation of historic buildings, landscaping in historic areas, and archeological planning and research. The establishment of transportation museums is also eligible as is the development of tourist and welcome center facilities. SAFETEA-LU funds can also be used to create and maintain recreational trails for bicyclists and pedestrians, including pedestrian walkways and safety and educational activities. In Fort Smith, SAFETEA-LU funds should be considered for historic preservation related activities such as driving tour brochures, markers and exhibits, and connecting historic sites via urban trails.

✓ **Action** – Fort Smith's Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Fort Smith Convention Center, Belle Grove Property Owners, Fort Smith Museum of History, and Downtown Action Committee all play important roles in heritage tourism efforts. These groups and agencies are encouraged to meet together at least once a year to prioritize city tourism promotion projects and identify sources of funding or partnerships to accomplish these goals.

Annual Arkansas Governors Conference on Tourism

The Arkansas Governors Conference on Tourism is the largest in-state meeting of travel and tourism professionals. The annual conference brings together different communities of people, attractions, destinations, hoteliers and bed and breakfast owners, chambers and convention & visitors bureaus, governmental agencies, media and others. The conference provides great opportunities for meeting tourism industry partners, networking and gaining new knowledge about the tourism industry. The City of Fort Smith and the Fort Smith Convention Center were chosen to host the 35th annual conference for 2009, allowing the city to showcase itself as a travel destination.

Opened in 2001, the Fort Smith Convention Center is located in the heart of historic downtown. It is within walking distance of the National Cemetery, National Historic Site and adjacent Fort Smith Museum of History and a short distance from River Front Park. With 40,000 square feet of open space, the Convention Center offers theater seating for up to 5,200 people, banquet seating for 2,700, and a state-of-the-art performing arts theater that seats 1,331 people. With the Center, Fort Smith enhances its ability to draw visitors to its downtown. Conference and events attendees are likely to return to Fort Smith for personal travel after previewing the city's amenities and attractions.

✓ Action – Fort Smith's Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Fort Smith Convention Center, Belle Grove Property Owners, Fort Smith Museum of History, and Downtown Action Committee all play important roles in heritage tourism efforts. These groups and agencies are encouraged to meet together annually to prioritize city tourism promotion projects and identify sources of funding or partnerships to accomplish these goals.

Goal – Research and Promote Fort Smith's Ethnic Heritage

Fort Smith's heritage includes Native American and African American histories that have not been fully explored. The history of Native Americans in Arkansas dates to the first recorded encounters between European explorers and various tribal peoples. The creation of Fort Smith itself, as a peacekeeping army post, is attributed to conflict between the Osage and Cherokee tribes. With the passage of the federal Indian Removal Act in 1830, an estimated 60,000 Indians, African slaves, white spouses, and Christian missionaries traveled through Arkansas over the next decade. Fort Smith was the last stop on the Trail of Tears for thousands of Native Americans before entering so-called Indian Territory.

(National Park Service)

Fort Smith was the final U.S. point on the major water route of the Trail of Tears.

Today, the Fort Smith National Historic Site provides an interpretation of the Trail of Tears and Native American history. Hundreds of men, including African Americans and Native Americans, served as deputy U.S. marshals in Indian Territory, and at least 100 lost their lives in the line of duty.

Cultural venues of Fort Smith have embraced African American heritage. In 1992, two major exhibits in Fort Smith celebrated the black experience in the city as part of the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the first fort. "Fort Smith Celebrates Black History, Culture and Arts" and "Arkansas Treasures Looking Forward, Looking Back" were presented in recognition of February as Black history month. The former included interviews within the black community of Fort Smith and gathered together local folk art, photographs, and memorabilia. "Arkansas Treasures" was a traveling exhibit highlighting the cultural contributions of outstanding black Arkansans including poet Maya Angelou, athlete Al Joyner, and opera star Barbara Hendricks. Historic figures such as U.S. Deputy Marshall Bass Reeves and jazz musician Alphonso Trent were honored, as well.

The Fort Smith Museum of History continues to honor famous Fort Smith African Americans during Black History month. In its 2009 exhibit, the museum told the stories of the first four black soldiers who arrived at Fort Smith in 1817 to help establish the first fort, African

American Deputy Marshals during Judge Parker's tenure as federal Justice, and contemporary figures like Barry Youngblood, a Fort Smith native who has choreographed for many pop culture icons.

The Fort Smith Symphony garnered high critical praise with its recording of William Grant Still compositions. The American composer, born in Mississippi in 1895, came from African and Native American heritage. Growing up in Little Rock, it was in Arkansas that Still developed an interest and ear for music, influenced by his stepfather's musical interests. Still played in W.C. Handy's band in Memphis, attended the prestigious Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and arrived in New York City as the Harlem Renaissance cultural movement was emerging. His own personal style of composition and arranging blends characteristics of African American and traditional European music. Still's compositions reflect his African American heritage and Arkansas roots, as in "Levee Land," and his famous "Afro-American Symphony," elevating the simple blues idiom to symphonic jazz. He achieved international acclaim and in the process opened many doors for minorities.

Fellow African American musician and contemporary of Still, Alphonso Trent was a native of Fort Smith. The nationally renowned jazz pianist toured the country, made multiple recordings, and had a lengthy engagement at the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas, Texas. After World War II, Trent and his wife settled permanently in Fort Smith. Limiting his musical performances to local clubs, Trent became manager of the city's first housing project, Elm Grove Homes, in 1953. He is buried in the city's Oak Cemetery.

Fort Smith indeed has a rich African American heritage that has received some attention through historic and cultural venues in the city. However, there are concerns among the African American community in Fort Smith and across Arkansas that the collective memory of that heritage is eroding. In response, groups such as the non-profit Arkansas African American Historic Preservation Alliance have been formed to identify, protect and enhance African American contributions to Arkansas history, culture, and architecture.

The Fort Smith Black Historical League, organized in 1981, was created to help preserve resources relating to the city's African American community, a strong presence since the 19th century. Black neighborhoods established north of downtown Fort Smith flourished from that time into the mid-20th century, when segregation and integration created racial strife for residents. Black businesses faltered, and houses, schools, and churches suffered from disrepair and abandonment. The League is concentrating efforts in the area of North 9th Street, an enclave of the African American community threatened by vacancy. This nucleus of resources should be assessed and marked for rehabilitation before more of them are lost.

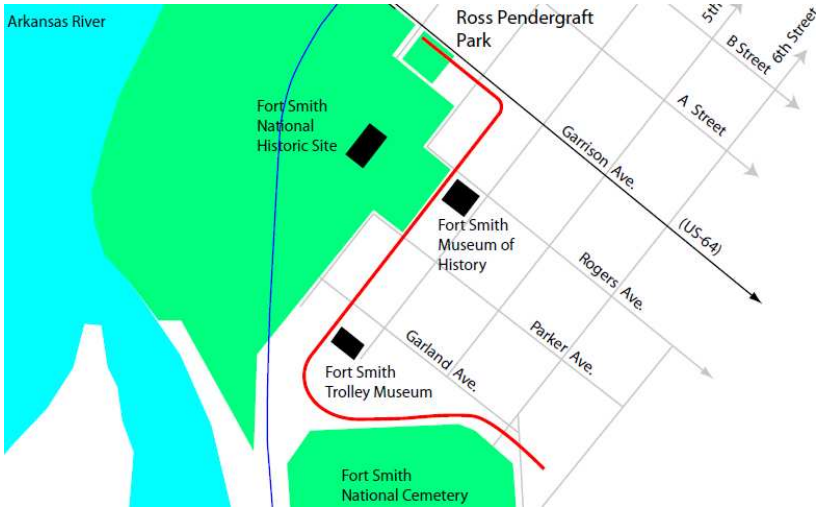
Resources at 719 North 9th Street (left) and Quinn Chapel AME Church at 723 North 8th Street are examples of African American contributions to Fort Smith's architecture and history.

✓ Action – The ethnic history of the city should be more fully researched and assessed to identify buildings and sites that are of particular significance in this theme. Residents are encouraged to assist in the funding of the African American and Native American historical interpretation that would assist overall heritage tourism efforts.

Goal – Provide visitors with a trolley tour of historic commercial and residential buildings
Trolleys played an important role in Fort Smith's development, making their first appearance in 1893. The period was one of tremendous growth for Fort Smith, as the population jumped from 3099 in 1880 to 11,311 by 1890. Streetcars enabled the expansion of the city, allowing residents to build homes further away from town. Thirty-three miles of tracks served the city with eleven different routes, most originating from Garrison Avenue. One line crossed the river into Van Buren. Another line catered to residents south of town to areas with rutted, unpaved roads.

While most of the trolley cars were scrapped following the discontinuation of their use in Fort Smith in 1933, a handful remained in use for other purposes. Car #224, for example, was used as a restaurant. When the old streetcar came up for sale in 1979, the Fort Smith Streetcar Restoration Association was formed for the acquisition and restoration of former Fort Smith trolleys. The association recovered a few more cars and built a car barn at 100 South Fourth Street, which became the Fort Smith Trolley Museum. By the early 1990s, overhead electric lines were installed in downtown Fort Smith to allow Car #224 to loop between the trolley museum and the Fort Smith History Museum. As the streetcars once enabled residents to reach outlying area, today, some of the same cars are involved in transporting visitors to historic sites.

In 2005, the City of Fort Smith assisted with the lengthening of the trolley route from the Fort Smith Convention Center to Pendergraft Park at Garrison Avenue and Third Street. The City should continue to assist with the expansion of the trolley lines to include Miss Laura's Visitor Center, the West Garrison Avenue Historic District, and Belle Grove Historic District.



Current trolley route (in red)

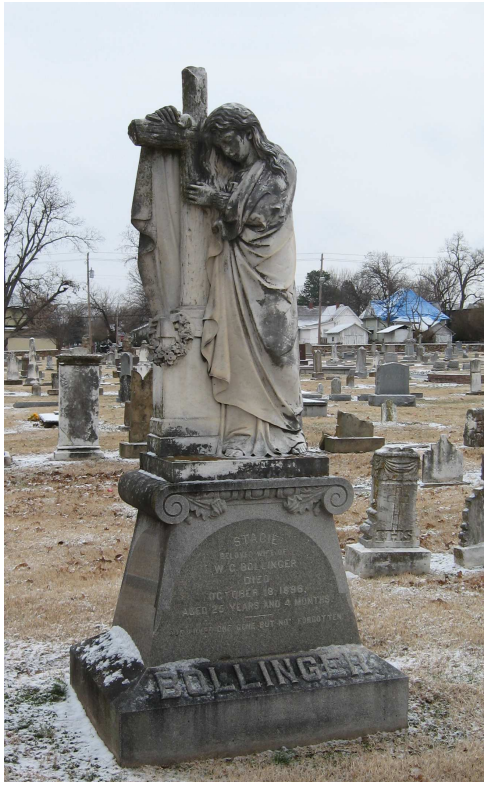
✓ Action – Develop plans to extend the trolley route to include the city's historic commercial and residential district with stops at key buildings such as the Vaughn-Schaap House and the General William O. Darby House.

Goal: Promote and Interpret Fort Smith's Historic Cemeteries

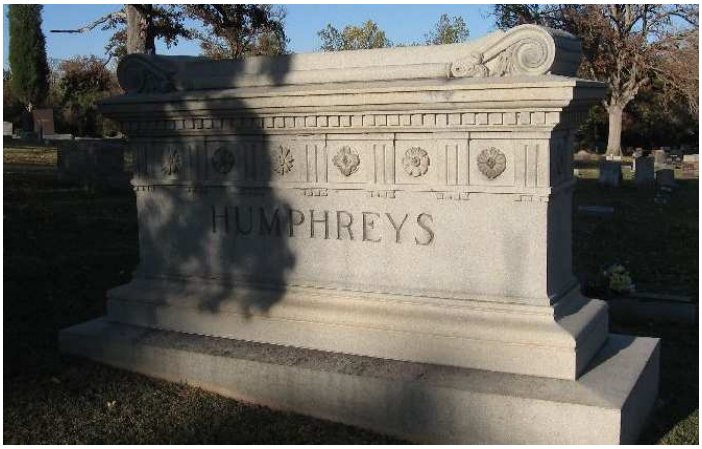
Fort Smith's cemeteries contain artistic funerary art in addition to the graves of notable Fort Smith and Arkansas citizens. Cemeteries and other sacred places have long been tourist destinations, as they provide scenic and peaceful settings for quiet reflection and also communicate local, state, and even national history. The Fort Smith National Cemetery, for example, is associated with the early fort and Civil War history and enjoys steady tourism. Oak Cemetery is the final resting place of Captain John Rogers and many other famous Fort Smith natives. It is individually listed on the National Register and is the host of Fort Smith's annual "Tales from the Crypt" event. Clearly cemeteries are naturally linked with and readily incorporated into heritage tourism efforts through their artistic value and potential for wayside exhibits relating to famous citizens.

Other cemeteries in Fort Smith contain notable examples of statuary, vaults, headstones and ledger graves that reflect architectural and design styles of the 19th and early 20th centuries. These include Calvary Cemetery and Fairview Cemetery. Their quality may qualify both cemeteries as National Register-eligible for their artistic merit alone. Conservation and repair programs should also be initiated as part of heritage tourism efforts.

✓ **Action** – Prepare walking and driving tours of the Oak, Fairview and Calvary Cemeteries to identify graves and markers of particular artistic or historical significance. Promote both cemeteries in heritage tourism information. Evaluate both cemeteries for their National Registers eligibility.



Statue in the Cavalry Cemetery.



Sarcophagus in Fairview Cemetery.

Jewish Section of Calvary Cemetery.

Goal: Create a Driving Tour of Fort Smith's Religious Architecture

Fort Smith has many historic churches that contribute to the impressive collection of architecture in the city. Many of these do not benefit from inclusion within current or potential boundaries of historic districts, however. To showcase religious architecture, a driving tour of the city's churches and religious buildings should be created, using resources identified in a sacred sites survey from 2001. These buildings constitute a collection of some of the City's most architecturally significant buildings, reflecting high-style design on a mass scale.

✓ Action – Create a driving tour of Fort Smith's historic churches.

The First Christian Church – Darby Community Center from ca. 1886 is located where the Belle Grove Historic District meets the West Garrison Avenue Commercial District. This building was restored following years of neglect that led to a collapsed roof. The City of Fort Smith undertook its reconstruction at a cost of $460,000, of which $120,000 came in the form of a grant from the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. The former Gothic ecclesiastic-style church is now home to the Darby Community Center.

Below left: The Ninth Street Baptist Church at 1023 North 9th Street was built in 19th century . Below Right: The Mallilaue ME Church was built in 1921.

Goal: Integrate Recreational Trails and Bike Paths with Historic Sites

Bike paths, recreational trails, greenways, and other leisure pathways are increasingly common and popular elements of urban planning. These venues enhance a city's scenic value, contribute to the local quality of life, and enhance a visitor's impression. Pathways and trails often pass near historic resources and sites, presenting an opportunity for interpretation of these sites.

The City of Fort Smith initiated the Fort Smith Bikeway Plan in 1999, using TEA-21 grant monies, which provided 80% of the funding, matching the City's 20% of funding. The Plan includes recreational bike paths, as well as street transportation lanes. Greenway-type bike paths include the Rice Carden Levee Trail, along the Arkansas River, and the Ben Geren Bike Path southeast of downtown. Many more bike paths in Fort Smith are located along existing roadways and can be used to access parks, libraries, schools, and bus stops, as an alternative to vehicular transportation. Numerous sites associated with Fort Smith's heritage and culture are located near or along the trails, and integrating the sites and the trails will enhance both and bolster local revitalization efforts. The City's plans to expand on the bikeway system should take into consideration access to historic sites and cultural destinations.

The scenic Rice Carden Trail.

- ✓ Action – It is important that Fort Smith city government, private citizens, organizations, and community groups become involved and contribute to this effort. The development of interpretive exhibits along the existing trails system is a unique opportunity for increasing heritage tourism in Fort Smith. Development of interpretive exhibits also fosters local interest, pride, and identification with the city's heritage and can play a part in the revitalization of neighborhoods and commercial districts. Individuals and groups can become involved by sponsoring specific exhibits or helping with maintenance and upkeep of these sites. New locations, exhibits, and interpretive themes may also be identified in the future.

Goal: Provide visitors with walking and driving tour brochures of the city's historic neighborhoods

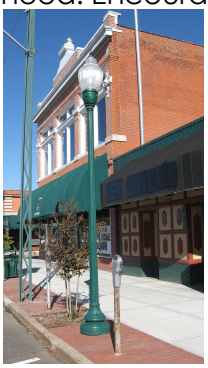
Fort Smith's should promote its historic resources with walking tour brochures for visitors Brochures should be available for the downtown area as well as for the city's historic residential neighborhoods. Historic Districts such Belle Grove and Lecta-May-Sweet contain some of the city's most notable historic residential architecture. Additionally, other neighborhoods, such as Park Hill, Hillcrest, Lutheran Duval, and Greenwood-Fishback, of note, as well. Walking tours for individual neighborhoods should be linked under an overall driving tour among the various neighborhoods. These tours should provide visitors with historical and architectural information, highlighting significant buildings.

✓ Action – Complete driving and walking tour brochures for the city's National Register-listed and –eligible residential historic districts. These would include Belle Grove and May-Lecta-Sweet, and Park Hill, Hillcrest, Lutheran Duval, and Greenwood-Fishback neighborhoods. These brochures should be available to tourists at the Chamber of Commerce, Miss Laura's Visitor Center and other area attractions.

Goal: Connect Garrison Avenue and the Belle Grove Historic District through streetscaping projects

The city's oldest neighborhood, Belle Grove, was historically connected to the city's commercial district by virtue of the affluent professionals who worked along Garrison Avenue and resided in Belle Grove. Today, however, many vacant lots between the two districts have created a separation. While infill is recommended through the city's encouragement, there are additional means of joining the two areas. The streetscaping that has occurred on Garrison Avenue should be extended to the north, to lead visitors between the downtown and the Belle Grove neighborhood. Consistent curbing, streetlights, and added signs will connect the two areas and will encourage pedestrian traffic from the commercial district into the neighborhood.

✓ Action – Continue streetscaping from Garrison Avenue to Belle Grove neighborhood. Encourage new construction on vacant lots in between the two.



The Belle Grove Historic District and downtown are disconnected due to large open lots and non-historic buildings. This view is looking towards downtown from 5th and B Streets.

Streetscape improvements such as landscaping of parking lots would assist in creating a more pedestrian friendly experience to connect downtown and Belle Grove than currently exists. This view is towards the historic district from 8th and B Streets.

Goal: Encourage Bed and Breakfast Accommodations.

As of April of 2009, Fort Smith had only one bed and breakfast establishment within the city, the Beland Manor Inn on Albert Pike Avenue. The stately Colonial Revival Beland Manor offers lodging accommodations and business meeting facilities, across the street from the St. Scholastica Monastery.

The Beland Manor Inn is the only bed and breakfast establishment currently in operation in Fort Smith.

The use of historic residences for bed and breakfast lodgings has increased dramatically in the past two decades throughout the country. Heritage tourists often seek out bed and breakfast accommodations that provide alternative lodging experiences in older homes. Bed and Breakfast operators are typically a wealth of information for out-of-town guests and serve as hosts for their city as well as their home. Fort Smith should encourage and assist in providing information for the development of Bed & Breakfast operations. Planning and Zoning officials should support any needed variances for conversions of older dwellings for bed and breakfast establishments. These conversions are generally compatible with neighborhood revitalization efforts.

✓ Action – Neighborhood associations should consider supporting conversions of dwellings into bed and breakfast establishments as long as access and parking issues are well planned. These types of conversions are often compatible with a property's architectural design and may also result in appropriate rehabilitation of the property.

D. Increase Public Awareness and Support for Historic Preservation

Goal: Encourage and Promote Neighborhood Home Tours

As noted previously, several historic homes of Fort Smith are open to the public. However, regular home tours throughout Fort Smith's historic neighborhoods should be organized. In 2008, for example, several homeowners in the Lutheran Duval neighborhood organized a tour of homes. In many communities house tours have become popular annual events that highlight historic buildings and rehabilitation. Usually five to ten homeowners in a neighborhood coordinate an open home tour over a one or two day period. Opening historic homes to the public is an effective way to increase public awareness of a community's historic properties and encourages investment in older neighborhoods. Successful tours can also provide much needed funds for neighborhood groups.

✓ Action – Neighborhood associations should consider homes tours on an annual or biannual basis. Such tours could be particularly valuable in the city's National Register-listed and –eligible historic districts. Tours are generally most successful during the spring and fall.

Home tours can include houses already rehabilitated, houses undergoing restoration, or houses awaiting rehabilitation.

Goal: Promote the Work of the Historic District Commission

Municipal historic preservation commissions across the country generally conduct routine business, only making headlines during an especially heated dispute over a design review or demolition issue. Such limited public exposure creates an inaccurate impression of the function of the commission and obscures its positive impact on the community. Fort Smith's Historic District Commission would benefit from clarifying and promoting its role in city government and in the community at-large.

There are a number of successful approaches other communities have used to correct mistaken public perception and build public support. One is to complete an annual report summarizing the actions and activities of the HDC and its accomplishments. This should include the number of Certificates of Appropriateness approved by the HDC and the dollar value of these improvements. This information should be publicized via local media and not just receive perfunctory mention in a city report. The HDC can increase its

visibility in a number of settings, including at ribbon cutting ceremonies of new businesses opening in historic buildings and at marker dedications when new historic districts are approved. The HDC should also create a power point presentation showing before and after photos of rehabilitation in the city for presentations before civic groups and elected officials. The amount of investment in downtown historic buildings should also be regularly updated and publicized. A brochure outlining the role of the HDC and design review standards will also become necessary in coming years as the number of local ordinance historic districts increases.

✓ Action – The Historic District Commission should take time to publicize their good work and accomplishments as often as possible. HDC members should be available at building dedications, ribbon cuttings, etc. The HDC should also develop a power point program and brochure describing its operations and contributions to the City.

Goal: Initiate Annual Historic Preservation Awards Programs

One means of encouraging historic preservation activities is through the implementation of annual awards programs. Awards can be presented for building rehabilitation, volunteer services, building preservation, outstanding craftsmanship, and preservation publications. An annual awards program would recognize individuals, organizations, and companies for their contributions to city preservation efforts. These types of awards recognize champions of historic preservation and increase public awareness of preservation efforts in the community. The Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas Annual Awards Program serves as a model for recognizing preservation efforts across the state. Below is a partial list of the Alliance's awards, providing a few examples of the categories Fort Smith should implement in an annual awards program. Nomination forms are available online at the Alliance's website. Fort Smith should create a similar nomination form and make it available through the Historic District Commission.

An awards program would recognize and commend preservation and rehabilitation efforts in the city.

Sampling of Alliance of Arkansas Annual Awards Program Categories

Outstanding Service in Neighborhood Preservation recognizes an activity or project that has made a significant contribution to an historic area in Arkansas. Examples would include an effort to save a critical structure, creation of a revolving fund, or the establishment and maintenance of a neighborhood newsletter.

Outstanding Work by a Craftsperson recognizes high-quality work that demonstrates an understanding of the principles and practice of preservation techniques on a specific project. It is not intended to reflect lifetime achievement [which is recognized through the ***Parker Westbrook Award***].

Outstanding Achievement in Preservation Advocacy- Any entity is eligible for this award for having made a notable contribution to championing the cause of preservation. This award is intended to honor individuals (including public officials), publications, organizations, etc. that have had a strong impact on preservation through advocacy efforts.

Outstanding New Construction in an Historic Setting- Any contemporary building located within an historic context is eligible, including a major addition to an historic building. The project is expected to respect and complement the historic integrity of its setting.

The ***Ned Shank Award for Outstanding Preservation Publication*** combines excellence in writing with preservation achievement. It recognizes authors, editors, and publishers who write or create books or significant journal articles about preservation in Arkansas.

✓ Action – The Historic District Commission should create an awards program to identify and honor individuals and companies within the Fort Smith community who are leaders in historic preservation endeavors. Awards should be presented at an annual banquet, and awards recipients should also be highlighted in the local newspaper and other media.

Goal: Partner with the Fort Smith Board of Realtors to Promote Historic Preservation

With 35% of the city's buildings at least fifty years old, many realtors in Fort Smith engage in buying and selling older properties on a regular basis. As the number of historic districts increases, the City should develop a partnership with the Fort Smith Board of Realtors. This partnership could create brochures for prospective buyers containing information on

National Register properties, financial incentives available for older homes, and design review standards for local ordinance historic districts. Power point programs should also be prepared for presentations. As local ordinance historic districts are enacted in the future, it may also be helpful to work with the Board on including information concerning local ordinance historic districts on the purchase agreement form, abstract, and deed to clarify design review standards and owner's rights and responsibilities.

✓ Action – The HDC and City should partner with the local Board of Realtors to provide information on local ordinance historic districts and available financial incentives.

Goal: Create a Non-Profit Historic Preservation Organization to Serve Fort Smith and the Region

Many communities and regions across the country are well served by a non-profit historic preservation organization. These types of non-profit groups play a valuable role in promoting historic preservation policies, assisting in heritage tourism efforts, and providing programs such as revolving funds and public education. These types of organizations also offer a voice for preservation beyond government entities such as the Historic District Commission.

The creation of a non-profit preservation organization is encouraged to serve not only Fort Smith but also Van Buren and other historic communities in the region. Some of the roles and responsibilities of such a historic preservation non-profit would include:

- Fund raising for projects.
- Awards programs.
- Advocacy on a regional basis.
- Identifying endangered properties.
- Public education programs.
- Administering a revolving fund program.
- Obtaining grants for rehabilitation projects.
- Purchasing and restoring buildings.

There are numerous grants and assistance programs through the National Trust and other organizations to assist in the formation and development of historic preservation non-profits. Historic preservation non-profit organizations can be all volunteer or have one or more staff members. Fort Smith and the surrounding region has impressive historic and architectural resources and a regional non-profit organization would assist in their preservation and promotion.

✓ Action – Interested citizens in Fort Smith, Van Buren and other area communities should form a regional non-profit historic preservation organization with assistance from the National Trust, the Arkansas HPP and local businesses.

Goal: Integrate the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith Public History Program into Local Historic Preservation Projects

The University of Arkansas – Fort Smith initiated a Historical Interpretation program in 2004. As part of the program students are encouraged to complete internships in the area. These internships require students to work on a particular site or with an agency, as at the Clayton House, which is open to the public. Students receive credit hours as well as practical experience.

A valuable project that should be considered for student involvement is the documentation of Fort Smith's historic resources through a National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). A MPDF is a cover document that serves as a guide for nominating groups of related significant properties. This document defines specific historic contexts and identifies property types that represent those contexts. Historic contexts are the broad patterns or trends in history by which a specific property is understood and its significance is demonstrated. These contexts are designed to identify those properties that have particular significance in the architectural or historical significance of the community based upon readily identifiable time periods and trends in the city's growth and development.

The MPDF provides a general background history on each of these contexts and identifies property types associated with each theme. Known examples of properties are provided. The document also establishes registration requirements for listing properties associated with each context to the National Register. Generally, these registration requirements address issues of significance and integrity and require that properties retain a high degree of historic physical character and be of notable historic or architectural importance within the established contexts.

MPDFs are designed to be flexible tools for nominating properties to the National Register, and a multiple property listing can be revised, refined, and expanded over time as new information is acquired and new properties are identified. Continued surveys and research within Fort Smith may identify additional contexts for further recognition and study.

One particular existing multiple property survey in Arkansas should also be considered for a student project. This is the "Arkansas Highway Historical and Architectural Multiple Property Survey." Roadside architecture includes gas stations, diners, drive-ins, and motels (as well as their signs) built as the use of automobiles increased and influenced their demand. Fort Smith contains several examples of roadside architecture that should be surveyed and evaluated for inclusion in this MPS.

Student survey projects should include roadside architecture (left: Bel Aire Motel, 2824 Midland) evaluation and preparation of NR nominations such as for the Hillcrest Neighborhood.

The Historical Interpretation Program should be utilized as a resource for a variety of historic preservation projects depending on the needs of the city and the interests of the students. Potential projects could include assistance in the research and survey for the preparation of National Register nominations, research projects on specific commercial and industrial buildings, creating exhibits and presentations on Fort Smith history for museums and schools, and other preservation promotion projects.

✓ Action – The Historic District Commission should prioritize goals and needs on an annual basis and list possible preservation projects suitable for internships. The HDC and the Historical Interpretation Program should work together on an ongoing basis to develop mutually beneficial projects.

Goal – Adopt a Formal Commitment to Historic Preservation as an Essential and Fundamental Strategy for Community Development

Adopting a formal commitment to historic preservation is a fiscally responsible approach to community development. Embracing historic preservation strategies such as urban homesteading, tax abatement, and revolving fund programs, sends the message of commitment to provide financial incentives to owners to improve their properties. A commitment to historic preservation would bolster downtown revitalization efforts and would support neighborhood efforts to improve the appearance of existing buildings and construct new homes of quality and compatibility. A commitment to historic preservation ultimately benefits the city through an increased tax base, increased heritage tourism, and civic pride.

✓ Action – The Fort Smith Board of Directors and mayor should adopt a formal resolution that includes historic preservation strategies as part of overall community development. Such a resolution would assist in raising public awareness of the importance of preservation as well as provide an ethic for integrating preservation in future goals and objectives.

Fort Smith's quality and quantity of historic buildings should be recognized as a basic part of future development strategies.

VI. Conclusion

Like many cities across the country, Fort Smith is repositioning itself for economic growth and development for the 21st Century. With 35% of its buildings now fifty years of age, Fort Smith must continue to revitalize its older neighborhoods and downtown area. Plans for reversing abandonment and neglect are key in a number of neighborhoods, as is providing incentives for building improvements. Neighborhoods with rehabilitated properties and an active downtown will be valuable assets as Fort Smith promotes its economic viability and potential for growth in the future.

Rehabilitation and revitalization must be a key part of Fort Smith's economic future (423 North 16th Street).

In conclusion, the primary goals and objectives of the Fort Smith Historic Preservation Plan are compatible with the Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan. Priorities of urban planning are in sync with historic preservation's aims of neighborhood and downtown revitalization and economic development. The goals outlined in the Fort Smith Preservation Plan complement those of the Comprehensive Plan:

Goal 1: Enhance Rehabilitation and Preservation of Fort Smith's Historic Neighborhoods
Approach: Create or adopt measures that protect existing neighborhoods.

- G1.1 Reduce Abandonment and Demolition Through an Urban Homesteading Program
- G1.2 Promote Rehabilitation Through a Revolving Fund Program
- G1.3 List Eligible Historic Districts on the National Register of Historic Places
- G1.4 Adopt a Limited Local Ordinance Historic District Provision and Promote its Use
- G1.5 Encourage New Compatible Construction in Fort Smith's Older Neighborhoods
- G1.6 Promote Appropriate Rehabilitation Through Compatible Weatherization
- G1.7 Periodically revisit design guidelines and consider enacting Local Ordinance Historic Districts
- G1.8 Evaluate the Significance of Properties Built After 1950 and Identify Those That Meet National Register Criteria

G1.9 Provide Training for Builders and Contractors in Historic Rehabilitation Methods and Techniques
G1.10 Investigate and Inventory Archaeological Sites

Goal 2: Enhance Rehabilitation and Preservation of Downtown Buildings
Approach: Survey commercial and industrial architecture and create new historic districts.

Complete an Architectural and Historical Survey of Fort Smith's Commercial and Industrial Buildings and List Eligible Districts and Individual Properties on the National Register of Historic Places

Goal 3: Increase Heritage Tourism in Fort Smith
Approach: Explore and expand on proven means of promoting Fort Smith's heritage.

G3.1 Utilize Existing Programs and Coordinate with Regional Sites
G3.2 Research and Promote Fort Smith's Ethnic Heritage
G3.3 Provide Visitors with a Driving Tour of the City's Historic Industrial Buildings
G3.4 Promote and Interpret Fort Smith's Historic Cemeteries
G3.5 Integrate Recreational Trails and Bike Paths with Historic Sites
G3.6 Provide Visitors with Walking and Driving Tour Brochures of the City's Historic Neighborhoods
G3.7 Encourage Bed and Breakfast Accommodations

Goal 4: Increase Public Awareness and Support for Historic Preservation
Approach: Publicize the accomplishments of the HDC and create opportunities to work with relevant organizations and universities.

G4.1 Encourage and Promote Neighborhood Home Tours
G4.2 Promote the Work of the Historic District Commission
G4.3 Initiate the Annual Historic Preservation Awards Programs
G4.4 Partner with the Fort Smith Board of Realtors to Promote Historic Preservation
G4.5 Create a Non-Profit Historic Preservation Organization to Serve Fort Smith and the Region
G4.6 Integrate the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith Historical Interpretation Program into Local Historic Preservation Projects
G4.7 Adopt a Formal Commitment to Historic Preservation as an Essential and Fundamental Strategy for Community Development

The Fort Smith Historic Preservation Plan recognizes that preserving a community's historic buildings requires diligence. Our culture often values new buildings over old ones in need of rehabilitation. However, as the Green Movement builds, many are recognizing that preserving historic buildings is the more fiscally sound and ultimately more rewarding approach. The Fort Smith Historic Preservation Plan provides property owners and civic

leaders with clear goals and objectives in a united commitment to economic development while honoring Fort Smith's heritage.

APPENDIX – FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Arkansas Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program

Arkansas Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit

In March of 2009, Arkansas enacted a state historic rehabilitation tax credit providing the credits toward state income taxes. This bill was passed following several years of requests by a variety of supporters including the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas. The key elements of the state tax credit include:

- Allows for a credit on state income taxes equal to twenty-five percent (25%) of the total qualified rehabilitation expenses that are:
  - incurred by the property owner to complete a certified rehabilitation of buildings that are listed or are considered eligible by national, state, or local designation
  - in excess of $25,000 annually
  - up to $500,000 for a commercial property
  - up to the first $100,000 for a residential property

- The tax credit can be transferred, sold or assigned and any unused tax credit may

  be carried forward for five consecutive taxable years.

The Arkansas Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit provides another valuable financial incentive for restoring historic properties. Private property owners rehabilitating their own properties can take up to a $25,000 tax credit towards their state taxes if they exceed $100,000 in qualified expenditures while owners of income producing properties can take up to $100,000 in credits.

This program is administered by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program and follows the application process currently used for the federal rehabilitation tax credit. Property owners must first submit photographs showing the current condition of the property and an application that details their rehabilitation plans. Once approved, property owners complete their work and then submit another set of photographs when they are finished. Once the state certifies the rehabilitation then property owners can claim the credit.

In states that have passed similar tax credits the amount of rehabilitation expenditures on historic buildings has often doubled, and this holds tremendous potential for historic preservation efforts in Fort Smith and across the state.

Federal Investment Tax Credit Program

Over the past twenty-five years, more than 29,000 buildings have been rehabilitated across the country, generating over $25 billion in private investment in historic buildings nation-wide. There are two types of ITCs available: 20% for a certified historic structure

or 10% for a non-historic structure. Investment Tax Credits are available to the owners or certain long-term renters of income-producing properties.

The 20% ITC reduces the cost of restoration and rehabilitation to the owner of an income producing historic property as an income tax credit. The credit is 20% of what an owner spends rehabilitating the building, not including acquisition costs.

To qualify for the 20% credit:

- The building must be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or listed as a contributing structure within a National Register Historic District.
- The rehabilitation project must meet the "substantial rehabilitation test," which means you must spend the adjusted value of the building or $5000, whichever is greater. The figure is derived by subtracting the value of the land from the cost of the building and land together.
- After rehabilitation, the structure must be income producing for five years (commercial, rental, B&B).
- The rehabilitation must meet *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings.*

To qualify for the 10% credit:

- The structure must have been built before 1936 and not "historic" (must not be listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places).
- The structure must retain 50-70% of external walls and 75% of internal walls.
- The rehabilitation must meet the "substantial rehabilitation test" as in the 20% credit.
- The structure must be used for five years as income producing but NOT housing.

For additional general information on the Investment Tax Credit program, see the National Park Service's ITC web-site at http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/.

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