

ARTICLE
WHITE COUNTY HISTORIC AREA OVERLAY DISTRICT

Section Intent

The purpose of this article is to recognize, help protect and plan for White County's historic areas. The county finds that its historic areas and their scenic surroundings are important cultural, recreational, and economic assets, critical to the public's long-term interest. Zoning standards and regulations should protect these areas while advancing community development goals and furthering and protecting the public's health, safety, and welfare. New construction in these areas should complement rather than interrupt, obscure, or otherwise damage or destroy the historic areas and their viewsheds.

Section Description of District

Historic Areas are those areas listed and described herein are delineated as a historic resources overlay map, which is incorporated and made a part of this ordinance.

Section Applicability

Historic areas will function as overlay districts. They may include, be contiguous with, or later become, local historic districts (adopted in accordance with the Georgia Historic Preservation Act of 1980), designated National Register properties or districts, or portions thereof, or areas determined to be historically significant by the White County Board of Commissioners. The regulations of such underlying districts and of the underlying zoning districts will be maintained and not affected, except in the event of conflict or discrepancy between the historic area and the underlying district or districts. In that case, the more stringent requirements will be observed, unless noted otherwise in this article.

Section Explanation of Historic Resource Categories

The White County Historic Area Overlay Districts are proposed to cover two separate categories of historic resources.

- **Category 1** will include any religious resources such as campgrounds, churches, and cemeteries and associated viewsheds as governed on page 3 of the Section Visual Compatibility Standards.
- **Category 2** will include any residential or historic site. Both categories may include any resource built before 1933 and associated viewsheds as governed on page 3 of the Section Visual Compatibility Standards.
- The 90-year benchmark for eligible resources in these two categories will be reviewed every five years from the initial proposed start of this effort in 2023

and updated accordingly in 2028 and so forth. See Section 5 on page 5 of Section Administration of this Article for individual nominations outside of the five-year nominating process.

Section Definitions

1. **Historic Area** means a geographically definable area that possesses form, character, and visual qualities derived from arrangements or combinations of topography, vegetation, space, scenic vistas, architecture, appurtenant features, or places of natural or cultural significance, that create an image of stability, comfort, local identity, and livable atmosphere, and which is listed and described within this article, and further delineated on the official zoning map.
2. **Viewshed** refers to the geographical area that is visible from a location. In urban planning, for example, viewsheds tend to be calculated for areas of scenic or historic value that are deemed worthy of preservation against development or other change.
3. **Period of Significance** refers to evaluating a property for a period of significance, a range is used to define the importance of a property to the history, architecture, or culture of a community.

Furthermore, when concerning building rehabilitation, the Standards for Rehabilitation guidelines through the National Park Service Technical Preservation Services states the period of significance: *states that “Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.” Materials, features, and spaces do not need to be original to be considered “historic” and “character-defining.” A property can be significant not only for the way it was originally constructed or crafted, but also for the way it was adapted at a later period or illustrates changing tastes, attitudes, and uses over a period of time. Buildings change over time, and these changes often contribute to a property’s historic significance. If a change is important in defining the property’s historic character, the change should be retained and preserved.”* (<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/successful-rehab/acquired-significance.htm>)

Section Local Government Policy Directives

Because White County finds that its historic areas are of special interest deemed desirable and necessary to conserve for present and future owners, the county may:

1. Incorporate into future White County Comprehensive Plan updates and short-term work plans, specific goals for the historic areas relative to land use, housing, community facilities, economic development and natural and historic resources;

2. As part of such planning, have special regard for and give special attention to the design, construction and maintenance needs of public thoroughfares, pedestrian ways, open spaces, landscape elements (including trees), recreation areas, viewsheds and comparable amenities of the area, and prepare plans, designs, sketches and/or models proposing public improvement of these facilities and areas;
3. Prepare special and detailed recommendations with respect to improved housing, education, employment, health, protection, and other human resource requirements of the historic areas;
4. Ensure appropriate communication among interested public agencies, and provide for the active participation by residents of the historic areas in the preparation of plan elements and program elements noted above;
5. Recommend to the county Board of Commissioners, by a certain date, ways and means by which the county should improve its maintenance and operating programs within the designated historic areas, if applicable; and
6. Ensure that no county program of any kind results in adverse impacts on the designated historic areas.

Section Visual Compatibility Standards

Buffer Zones refer to any land lot proposed to be subdivided or otherwise developed that is contiguous to a designated historic area should include a vegetative buffer between the lot to be developed and adjacent historic area. The buffer should be provided by the owner of the property proposed to be developed.

If the property proposed to be developed is located within the historic area itself, then the buffer should be between the lot to be developed and other adjacent lots in the historic area.

If the proposed development and adjacent historic area fall within different zoning districts, then an appropriate buffer should be specified as a condition by the Planning Department and appeals may be made to the Board of Commissioners.

If the two lots are both within the same zoning district, then a minimum buffer area of 50 feet would apply. The Board of Commissioners may waive this requirement, however, if it is found that:

1. The proposed new construction will be visually compatible with the Historic Area,
2. The historic area already has sufficient buffer area to protect it from visual intrusions, and/or
3. This buffer would adversely affect the character of the historic area, for example, isolation from its larger compatible surroundings.

Rural Landscape Design Elements such as trees, shrubs, fencing, and field walls should be utilized to maintain the historic or rural character and integrate new construction in the rural or historic landscape. Native or locally adapted species of flora and fauna should be used to help proposed development blend with the surrounding or neighboring resource.

Proposed setbacks should conform with existing setbacks unless buffers are required to minimize impact or provide environmental protection. Building placement, height, massing, roof shapes, window proportion, lighting and exterior materials should be compatible with surrounding historic resources and structural styles.

Historic Preservation

Purpose.

Design regulations for Historic Preservation are not designed to prevent creativity or mandate a particular style of dwelling. Rather, they are essential to the goal of reducing visual impacts of development while ensuring the compatibility with existing Historic properties, areas and viewsheds.

Building heights.

No building is permitted to exceed 40 feet from the natural grade of the land, as measured perpendicular from the highest point on the structure to the point of natural grade on the ground. Chimneys and power poles are not included in the height calculations. No building should extend above the existing tree canopy.

Outdoor lighting.

While lighting outside of homes is often necessary, it can be quite obtrusive in the night skyline. Historic properties, areas and viewsheds have a certain character and should be maintained as such even in the presence of development. The following guidelines should be adhered to when placing outside lights:

- (1) All lights need shielded fixtures that direct the light downward. These shields these shields are intended to eliminate scattered light and excessive glare.
- (2) Light poles should not exceed the height of surrounding buildings.

Landscaping.

Because the Historic properties, areas and viewsheds of the county are largely valued for their natural beauty and historic presence, it is the intention of these regulations to preserve this quality. Any new development will create areas that will temporarily be deforested and/or unsightly.

- (1) No construction equipment or development is permitted in areas outside those designated and approved for land disturbance. Such areas outside those portions of the lot designated and approved for land disturbance should be left in their natural state. A natural state is defined as the condition prior to

development or other human activity.

(2) Re-vegetation is required on all disturbed areas that remain after construction, including areas around permanent structures, resurfaced areas such as driveways and areas of cuts and fills, pursuant to land disturbance regulations.

(3) All stream buffers are to be maintained in a natural state pursuant to county soil and erosion regulations and state water quality control rules.

(4) Color choices need to blend in with the surroundings of the historic property, area and viewshed and require minimum replanting of vegetation for screening purposes. Color choices that stand out against the colors of the surrounding area are considered intrusive and will be highly discouraged. If an intrusive color is used it requires screening with natural vegetation to minimize the effect on the surrounding area. The amount of screening required will be reviewed and approved by the director of community development or designee but will in no way require screening of more than 50 percent of the structure as a whole. Planted vegetation must achieve the required screening percentage within two years of planting and must be done within six months of the main structure receiving a certificate of occupancy.

(5) Trees eight inches, or greater, in diameter that are cut for view will be done in a staggered fashion to eliminate the tunnel effect caused by clear cutting. Reducing clear cuttings, reduce the potential for erosion, stormwater runoff and landscaping and grading costs. Keeping mature greenery is recommended wherever possible to provide immediate aesthetic, historic, environmental, and potentially monetary value.

(6) Remedies and penalties for violation.

(a) In the event that any person, firm, or corporation violates any provision of this overlay district, the county may, in addition to other remedies, institute injunction, mandamus, or other appropriate action or proceeding to prevent such unlawful act or to correct or abate such violation in accordance with Appendix C, Article XXI Section 2105 of White County Code.

Section Administration of this Article

1. Provisions of the Overlay District shall be administered by the White County Planning Department.
2. Proposals to designate additional historic rural areas may be submitted by the White County Historic Society, White County Planning Commission, White County Board of Commissioners, White County residents, or owners of property in White County.
3. Proposals to establish special visual compatibility standards for proposed or designated historic areas may be submitted by the White County Historic Society, White County Planning Commission, White County Board of Commissioners, White County residents, or owners of property in White County, other provisions of this zoning ordinance and other applicable law notwithstanding.
4. All proposals to designate historic rural areas and/or establish visual compatibility standards for those areas must be submitted to the White County Planning Department.

5. Proposals to designate historic rural areas and/or establish visual compatibility standards for a historic resource will follow land use procedures and be reviewed by the White County Planning Commission and approved or disapproved by the White County Board of Commissioners after public hearing per requirements of this ordinance. Notice of the public hearing on the proposed designation of the historic area shall be mailed to all adjoining owners of property adjacent to the proposed area in addition to being posted on the property and a legal notice published in the County's legal organ per land use procedures. Originator of proposal to designate historic rural areas shall be responsible for providing a list of all property owners to be notified. **(Applicants shall be charged a \$250 application fee to cover cost associated with the plan review process.)**
6. The Board of Commissioners may offer a 30-day period every 5 years (beginning in 2028) where newly eligible properties that meet the 90-year-old threshold can apply for designation with an application fee.
7. Prior to the initial Historic Preservation Overlay Map being approved, White County will notify in writing those property owners whose property has been recommended for inclusion by the White County Historic Preservation Committee. Those property owners will be invited to public meetings conducted by the White County Planning Department staff, where they will have to option to opt out of the Historic Preservation Overlay map. Property owners will also be able to opt out by requesting in writing through the Planning Department. The Planning Department will accept the opt-outs for a 30-day period from the conclusion of the public meetings. Once the final draft of the map is determined, it will be presented in a public hearing before the Planning Commission and then sent to the Board of Commissioners for final approval.
8. The White County Board of Commissioners, after consultation with the White County Planning Commission may revoke the designation of any historic area that subsequently loses its historic character or visual integrity.
9. Decisions by the White County Board of Commissioners may be appealed in the manner described in this zoning ordinance.

Section Application and Process

Pre-application meetings with the planning department are required for all permits and approval for all development proposed in the historic overlay district.

In order to facilitate the review of a proposed development, an applicant shall consult with the Planning Department to hold a pre-application meeting and review requirements prior to preparing all plans related to the proposed development. This would include site plans, layouts, and designs for the site; a description of the area or historic resource characteristics, analysis of the existing conditions, and the proposed site impacts on the historic site or resource(s) and any applicable viewsheds. Applicant shall discuss optional concepts for site layout.

The application for Historic Preservation designation will follow the land use procedures.