Chapter 3
Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation

Community Character and Identity

Community character and identity are formed by the collection of qualities that makes a place unique. In this era of sprawling growth, chain stores, and repetitive corporate architecture, the preservation of historic and cultural resources is critical to protecting community character and identity.

The homes, barns and commercial buildings constructed throughout Summit County reflect the area’s distinct history as part of Connecticut’s Western Reserve. Communities such as Bath Township, Peninsula and Hudson still reflect the New England development patterns of closely spaced village buildings transitioning gradually to suburban and rural residential areas. The Greek Revival architecture from the New England cultural influence (see photo of Bootie’s Dry Goods Store at left), neighborhoods of Irish canal workers, and the bank barns built by the German immigrant’s of the mid-19th century contribute to the area’s unique heritage. In much of Summit County, the natural landscape is defined by waterways and topography—the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas Rivers, the Portage Lakes, the Cuyahoga Valley, and the Ohio & Erie Canal.

When Summit County government officials were asked in a 2003 survey to identify “likes” and “dislikes” in their communities, “sense of community,” “community character,” and in some cases, “small-town atmosphere” topped the list of desirable qualities. Buildings constructed throughout Summit County a half-century or more ago, and their resulting sense of place, history and character are irreplaceable. They cannot be recreated.

This chapter of the Summit County General Plan encourages the concept of stewardship, in which people act responsibly towards protecting irreplaceable resources, and respect for historic resources to preserve our unique heritage and character.
Smart Growth and Preservation

Historic preservation has evolved beyond its original function of individually landmarking historically and architecturally significant buildings. Preservation is now seen as sustaining quality of life and protecting community identity - two key benefits of resource stewardship and smart growth. Smart growth recycles existing buildings and developed land, preserves open space and maintains local community character.

Typically, historic areas are densely built, pedestrian-friendly communities, which not only promote a greater sense of neighborhood, but offer the health benefits from more exercise opportunities and potentially less automobile traffic. The revitalization of traditional commercial areas reduces the demand for new strip malls and superstores, and the rehabilitation of existing homes and conversion of vacant downtown warehouses into apartments helps reduce demand for new housing located on once productive farmland. Such rehabilitation also eliminates the need to construct unnecessary and expensive infrastructure such as roads, schools, and utilities. This type of continued maintenance and revitalization is crucial to retaining a high quality of life, creating more livable communities, and keeping and attracting residents and businesses.

Communities will and should grow, but they should do so intelligently. Wise stewardship involves putting policies and practices into place that guide land use and development decisions promoting smart growth and preservation of resources.

Figure 2: Anna Dean Farm National Register District, Barn #1, Barberton
What is Historic Preservation?

"When you strip away all the jargon and rhetoric, historic preservation is simply having the good sense to hang on to something -- an older building or neighborhood or a piece of landscape, for instance -- because it's important to us as individuals and/or as a nation."

Historic preservation is the identification, restoration and protection of tangible elements from our past—the physical history—for future generations. These elements include historic and archaeological resources that are associated with important past events, themes, and people; that are representative of periods and types of architecture; that possess high artistic value; or that are likely to yield valuable information about the past. Such resources may be buildings or structures, sites or specific locations, or even landscapes and viewsheds.

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1 National Trust for Historic Preservation www.nationaltrust.org/primer/historic.html?cat=7
Why Preserve?

Planning for our future requires preserving our past. Preserving important aspects of our history not only maintains the character, individuality, and vitality of Summit County communities, but can also lead to tangible economic benefits.

Preserving our heritage is not just a romantic notion or pursuit. It helps combat many of the problems that plague our present-day communities by stabilizing neighborhoods, bringing people and businesses back downtown, providing affordable housing, stimulating private investment, attracting tourists, and strengthening community pride. Preservation of historic and cultural resources is a smart and powerful community economic development strategy that:

- Maintains community character
- Encourages additional neighborhood investment and revitalizes surrounding areas
- Returns life and vitality to already developed areas, reducing the need to consume new land and destroy natural resources
- Takes advantage of existing public infrastructure such as roads, sewers, and water lines
- Stabilizes or increases property values
- Increases the diversity of housing options in older neighborhoods
- Generates community pride

Compared with new construction, preservation keeps more money in the local community’s economy. New construction costs are typically 50% labor, and 50% materials, and costs of materials are usually incurred and taxed outside the community. Historic rehabilitation costs typically runs 75% labor and 25% materials. A higher percentage of labor costs means more money is earned by resident workers, spent inside the community, and taxed by the municipality or county.
Historic Cultural Resources

The National Register of Historic Places establishes guidelines for determining historically significant landmarks. Historic properties must meet three evaluation standards in order to be listed in the National Register:

- the property should be at least 50 years old;
- retain its basic historic integrity; and
- meet one of the four established National Register criteria.

The four National Register criteria are: (1) the property has significant association with historic events or broad patterns of history; (2) the property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; (3) the property has architectural merit; or (4) the property has the potential to yield information important in history or prehistory (archaeology). Once a historically significant resource has been identified, it is typically recorded in one of two databases in Ohio—the National Register or the Ohio Historic Inventory.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of properties recognized by the federal government as worthy of preservation for their local, state, or national significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture. Although the National Register is a program of the National Park Service, each state’s Historic Preservation Office administers it at the state level. In Ohio, the Ohio Historic Preservation Office administers the National Register program.

The Ohio Historic Inventory was developed to serve as a more encompassing, continuing record of the architectural and historic properties currently existing in the state, and is used to record basic information on historic properties in Ohio. Since 1974, over 70,000 historic properties have been entered into the records of the Ohio Historic Inventory. These listings include those officially recognized on the National Register.

Ohioans value historic preservation. The Ohio Preservation Plan reveals that Ohio ranks third in the country in the number of National Register listings with approximately 3,600 listings for sites, buildings, structures, objects and districts. This is crucial, as eligibility for or listing on the National Register of Historic Places serves as the threshold for consideration under many federal and state programs.

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2 The full text of the Ohio Historic Preservation Plan can be viewed online at www.ohiohistory.org.
Summit County has 148 listings in the National Register of Historic Places, ranging from historic homes, farms, and churches to town squares, bridges and canal locks. Three common themes that are hallmarks of Summit County development are represented in these listings: (1) canal-related development; (2) Western Reserve/New England heritage; and (3) planned industrial communities and neighborhoods. It is highly likely that additional built resources of these themes are still present and not yet identified in other Summit County communities.

The majority of the current Summit County National Register listings are located in the northern and central portions of the county, with two additional clusters of historic places in Barberton and Clinton. Akron has the largest number of listings (44) followed by Peninsula (24) and Clinton (11). The Ohio Historic Inventory, by definition, encompasses a much broader range of historic resources and includes nearly 3,000 listings for Summit County. The Archeological Survey identifies 374 sites in Summit County, including sites such as Hale Village and the Jaite Paper Mill.

Some of the well-known and not-so-well-known historic resources in Summit County include the following (see Map 3.1 National Register of Historic Places and Districts.)

- Akron YMCA (Akron)
- Stan Hywet Hall (Akron)
- Quaker Oats Cereal Factory (Akron)
- Goodyear Airdock (Akron)
- Anna Dean Farm (Barberton)
- Copley Depot (Copley Twp)
- Western Reserve Academy (Hudson)
- Northfield Town Hall (Northfield)
- Everett Rd. Covered Bridge (Peninsula)
- Twinsburg Institute (Twinsburg)
- Ohio & Erie Canal Locks (Boston Twp, Clinton, Peninsula, & Sagamore Hills)

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3 In comparison, other urban counties in Ohio have National Register listings as follows: Cuyahoga County (339), Franklin County (299), Hamilton County (322), Lucas County (88), and Montgomery County (129).
Map 3.1 National Register of Historic Places and Districts

Source: Ohio Historic Preservation Office, January 2004
Modern Cultural Resources

The appeal of preserved historic areas is apparent in many nationally-known city neighborhoods such as Ohio City and the Warehouse District in Cleveland and German Village and Short North in Columbus. Summit County communities such as Hudson, Peninsula and Clinton are attractive in the same fashion. All are vibrant, eclectic places with a variety of residential, commercial and cultural uses.

In addition to the historic cultural resources, there are also a number of important modern cultural and community resources that contribute to Summit County's uniqueness and high quality of life. Such resources include schools, museums, music venues, theaters, civic organizations and religious facilities. A short list of key modern cultural resources in Summit County includes:

- Blossom Music Center, summer home of the Cleveland Orchestra
- The National Inventors Hall of Fame
- Akron Art Museum
- Akron Civic Theatre
- Akron Area Arts Alliance
- Lock 3 Park, outdoor festival space

The Akron Area Arts Alliance (AAAA) is a non-profit organization that fosters cooperation among arts and cultural groups, generates greater awareness of arts and cultural events throughout the area and advocates for financial investment in the arts by local governments. Among its 39 organizational members are museums, theatres, visual and performing arts groups, university arts departments plus environmental and scientific organizations serving Summit, Portage and Medina Counties. Membership also includes individual artists and arts supporters.

Since its founding in 1991, the Akron Area Arts Alliance had been aware of the need for a community arts center. The dream among the arts community had been to develop a center that would offer affordable studio, workshop, classroom and rehearsal space for artists; economical office space and shared facilities for arts organizations; and a public gallery devoted to local art. Such a center would also serve as an incubator to nurture/mentor local talents, as a headquarters for collaborative art projects throughout Summit County and as an exciting and welcoming gathering place for artists and the public. Similar facilities established in
communities across the country have proven to be valuable economic development tools helping to revitalize downtowns, initiate development in marginal neighborhoods, create jobs and attract tourism.

In 2001, Summit County Executive James McCarthy offered a vacant, county-owned building at 140 East Market Street as a possible site. This historic, art deco building, which was built in the 1920s as the first home of the Beacon Journal newspaper, is conveniently located near the Akron Art Museum. In July 2002, Summit County Council approved lease of the gallery space. With generous support from the Summit County, Akron Community Foundation, GAR Foundation, City of Akron and OMNOVA Solutions, Summit Artspace opened its Inaugural Exhibition September 21, 2002 displaying over 100 works by 50 Akron area artists.

An environment that cultivates the arts, music, nightlife, and historic integrity results in places that are fun and interesting; places that we all want to experience as residents and visitors. In his 2002 book, The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life, Richard Florida argues that this type of place attracts the “creative class”, which in turn is linked to economic vitality and job growth.

Figure 8: Akron Art Museum
Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal is to safeguard the heritage of Summit County by preserving those aspects of our built and natural environments that embody important elements of our culture and history. A secondary goal is to promote the use and conservation of these areas for the education, pleasure, and enrichment of all who visit or live and work in Summit County. The measures and efforts discussed in the following Sections 3.7 and 3.8 of the Summit County General Plan should be proactive, not reactive.

The goals and objectives listed below are intended to assist Summit County and its constituent communities in the recognition and preservation of our heritage. They will guide townships, villages and cities in the preparation of specific local land use goals, priorities and policies to protect, restore and promote their significant historic and cultural resources. The goals and objectives are not listed in order of priority but are considered equally important.

The Ohio Historic Preservation Office recently completed a preservation plan for the State of Ohio. Entitled A Future For Ohio’s Past: The Ohio Historic Preservation Plan, the plan outlines several goals and the numerous action steps necessary to implement those goals. Where appropriate, the local action steps identified in the state plan are incorporated here to ensure continuity and coordination of efforts.

A. Identify, evaluate and protect historic, scenic and cultural features throughout Summit County.

B. Encourage individual communities to take ownership and facilitate the preservation of their historic resources.

C. Recognize and reinforce each community’s unique character and identity.

D. Encourage rehabilitation and preservation of privately- and publicly-owned buildings and structures.

E. Establish minimum property maintenance guidelines and standard building codes to encourage and support historic preservation.

Figure 9: Stan Hywet Hall, Akron

4 The full text of the Ohio Historic Preservation Plan can be viewed online at www.ohiohistory.org.
F. Establish the groundwork for adopting or strengthening local historic preservation ordinances.

G. Increase public awareness and education to enable Summit County residents to discover, understand and preserve their historic places.

H. Recognize outstanding preservation efforts.

I. Partner with existing agencies and organizations to share data and resources and coordinate implementation measures.

J. Assist Summit County communities with heritage tourism and related economic development opportunities.

K. Position Summit County as a fun, interesting and rewarding place by nourishing arts- and culture-related organizations.

Figure 10: Wallace Farm Barn, Sagamore Hills Township (above); Wallace Farm Barn, now renovated as part of the Inn at Brandywine Falls (right)
Implementation Strategies

Efforts to preserve Summit County’s cultural and historic resources require strong leadership and desire at the local level, as well as effective collaboration with state, national and other local partners. Strategies may be applicable at the county and/or local level(s).

A. Identify and preserve the historic and non-historic cultural resources important to your community, including buildings, structures, landscapes, views, vistas and local landmarks.

B. Create a survey of historic properties; develop and maintain a GIS database of historic & cultural resources.

C. Develop clear, realistic and specific preservation goals for your community.

D. Nominate eligible historic resources to the National Register of Historic Places.

E. Establish a Main Street program for downtown revitalization.\(^5\)

F. Establish a point person or contact to coordinate historic preservation activities.

G. Encourage the use of historic easements and tax credits for rehabilitation.

H. Ensure infill development is compatible with the positive character and development patterns of the neighborhood.

I. Encourage rehabilitation and reuse of vacant, historic structures (i.e., surplus schools, warehouses/industrial buildings, old homes).

J. Create, adopt and utilize local enforcement tools such as local historic preservation ordinances, historic zoning district or overlay district regulations, and design guidelines encouraging the preservation of and sensitivity to historic resources.

K. Adopt and utilize property maintenance regulations that encourage the preservation of and sensitivity to historic resources.

L. Utilize the Summit County General Plan Toolbox resources to identify existing organizations, gather resources and work together. Partner with existing organizations such as the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and the Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor Coalition to generate ideas and leverage resources.

M. Enhance capability of the Summit County Department of Community and Economic Development to coordinate preservation activities with planning, economic development, community development and housing activities.

N. Make historic preservation information available to professionals, educators, elected officials and the public. Educate them about the economic benefits of historic preservation by highlighting successful rehabilitation/restoration projects.

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\(^5\) Additional information on the Main Street program can be found at [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org) and Downtown Ohio, Inc. [www.heritageohio.org](http://www.heritageohio.org).

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