

Department Source: Community Development - Planning

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff (on behalf of the Historic Preservation Commission)

Council Meeting Date: February 2, 2026

Re: Columbia Historic Preservation Plan - REPORT

Impacted Ward: Citywide

Executive Summary

In the Spring of 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) began the process of collecting public input on the drafting of the city's first historic preservation plan. Preparation of such a document is identified as item #22 of the HPC's 'duties and responsibilities' as outlined in its enabling legislation. The drafting of the plan was completed at the end of FY 2025 with the assistance of a preservation plan consultant and is now being prepared for final public comment and presentation to both the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council. This report seeks to provide an overview of the steps taken in the development of the plan and to obtain Council authorization to move forward with the tentative presentation schedule for acquisition of final public input and presentation of plan to both Commission and Council as outlined.

Discussion

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) was created in 1998 (Ord. 015651), after nearly two years of deliberations between the public, City Council, and a Council-appointed exploratory committee of 17 citizens representing a range of appropriate professional backgrounds. With their formation, the HPC was tasked with 18 'duties and responsibilities'; a list which was later expanded to 27 in 2007 (Ord. 019076). Item #22, from the revised list is, "To develop a preservation component in the Comprehensive Plan of the city of Columbia and recommend it to the Planning & Zoning Commission and to the City Council."

The HPC began the initial public input phase for the preservation plan in the spring of 2019, by conducting an engagement meeting with interested parties at the Blind Boone Home. At that meeting attendees were asked five questions intended to gather public input on what preservation plan components were most-desired. The five questions were:

1. How should historic preservation benefit you?
2. What should be Historic Preservation Commission's priorities?
3. Who should the HPC partner with to support preservation efforts?
4. How can the HPC better serve the public and remain relevant?
5. What can the HPC do to be more accessible?

The feedback generated was robust and informative. In regards to Question 1, those in attendance shared concerns over displacement of marginalized communities through gentrification of historic areas of town, loss of the 'living history' of Columbia in historic

properties to private redevelopment, and maintaining the established identities of Columbia and its neighborhoods.

When asked about HPC priorities, the group noted a need for taking stock of existing historic elements, as well as immediate threats to historic properties. They also felt a priority should be placed on an improved web presence for the HPC and its activities to bolster efforts in terms of public education and outreach.

Later in 2019, the HPC was reevaluated by Missouri State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff for compliance with the Certified Local Government program, for which Columbia was certified in 1999. In the evaluation, SHPO staff recommended that the HPC, "...proceed with development of the historic preservation plan, and begin utilizing the plan to inform broader city planning efforts and preservation ordinance review," and, "integrate architectural survey data into the City's strategic preservation planning efforts."

Given the significant funding needed beyond their annual budget, the HPC placed the project in their long-range programming priorities, with the intent to apply for a Federal Historic Preservation Fund grant to help fund the project. On November 7, 2022 (R- 176-22) the City Council authorized the submission of the grant application, expressing support for the project. The financial assistance agreement was then approved on October 2, 2023 (Ord. 025469). Due to a temporary halt in Federal funding for the Historic Preservation Fund in 2024, the project was placed on hold until the grant program was restarted in the fall of 2024. An historic preservation consultant was procured in late 2024, and the preservation planning process began with the consultant leading the first public input meeting on September 10, 2024.

Further public comments were accepted at each monthly HPC meeting throughout the plan preparation, and at two additional public input meetings at the 70% and 100% completion points within the preservation plan drafting process by the consultant. While many additional comments were generated, overarching themes remained consistent throughout the public input process. The public is interested in the adoption a preservation plan that informs citizens of the preservation tools available to them, and provides best practices for stabilization or rehabilitation of their historic properties. Other consistent themes included the need for an improved online presence for the commission and their activities and resources, as well as expansion of the commission's duties and responsibilities to empower them to be more proactive in their efforts to protect endangered properties and to establish local historic landmarks and districts utilizing the HP-O zoning overlay district.

The grant project was completed just before the end of FY 2025, after an amendment to the financial assistance agreement was passed by City Council (Ord. 026107) on September 15, 2025, in order to capture reimbursement for staff time devoted to the project. The consultant's services came in significantly under-budget; however, due to the project running significantly behind schedule, initial plans to subcontract graphic design services using the remaining project budget were abandoned and staff took over that responsibility.

The final reimbursement of \$12,937.43 was received by the City on November 19, 2025, and the grant project was closed by SHPO staff.

The HPC is now working to finalize the draft preservation plan for presentation to the public. One additional public input session is scheduled for February 7th, at the Columbia Public Library, in conjunction with the HPC's annual speaker series event. Input from that meeting will be considered by the HPC at their March 3 meeting and incorporated as-needed into the final plan document before being presented to the Planning Commission and the City Council.

As noted, the purpose of this report is to notify City Council that the final draft of the preservation plan will be presented to the Planning Commission for their review and comments during a work session; likely in late April or early May which happens to also coincide with National Historic Preservation Month. The HPC will review any input from the Planning Commission at their next regular meeting after this presentation and once those comments are satisfied the final preservation plan draft will be presented to City Council for potential consideration. The City Council presentation is likely to take place in June or July.

The 2019 CLG Audit Report, BeHeard survey responses and Project Report, and public comments are attached for review.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None anticipated.

Long-Term Impact: Long-term impacts are not anticipated to create additional City expenditures.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Reliable and Sustainable Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Resilient Economy, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Land Use & Growth Management, Secondary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities, Tertiary Impact: Economic Development

Legislative History

Date	Action
09/15/2025	Authorized amendment to financial assistance agreement with MO DNR associated with the preparation of new historic preservation plan.
10/02/2023	Authorized financial assistance agreement with the MO DNR to hire a consultant to prepare a historic preservation plan establish goals and priorities for the identification and registration of historic properties, and amended FY 2023 Annual Budget by appropriating funds.
11/07/22	Approved resolution expressing support for a historic preservation plan, and authorized submission of an FY 2023 HPF grant application. (Res. R 176-22)

Suggested Council Action

Accept the report.