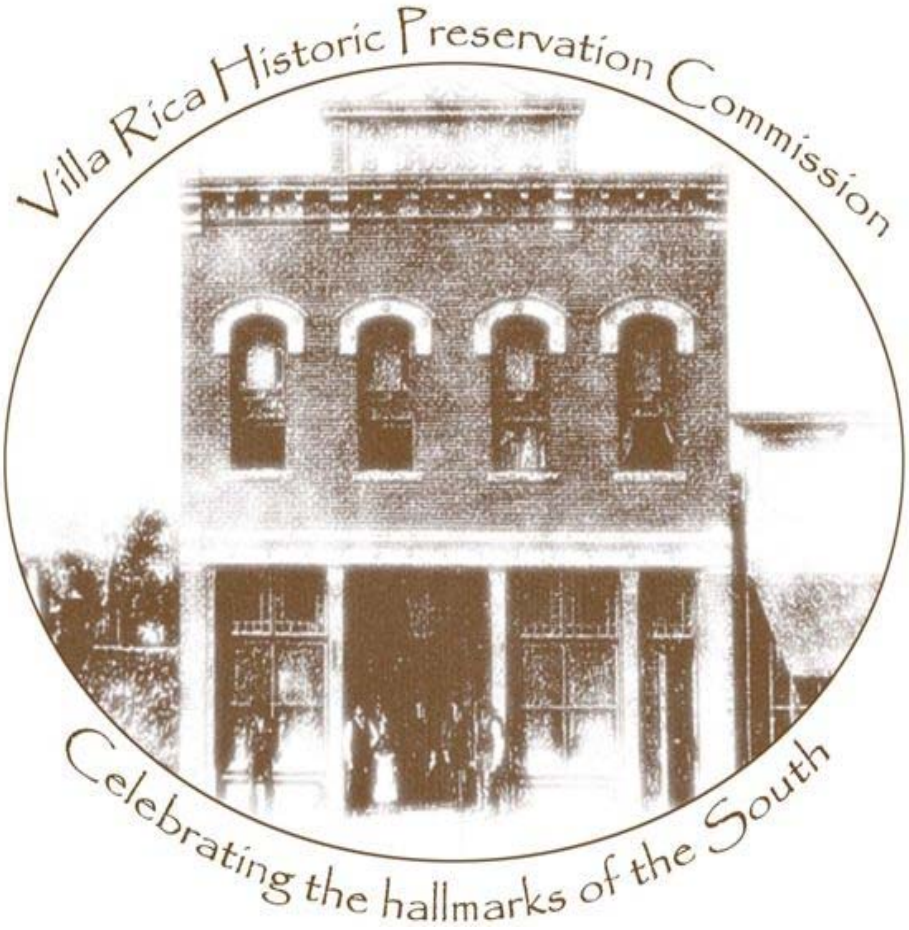
The City of Villa Rica



Downtown Commercial Design Guidelines Handbook

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I. Introduction

Effective January 1, 2008, the Villa Rica City Council adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance to establish a uniform procedure for use in providing for the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of places, districts, sites, buildings, structures, objects, and landscape features that have special historical, cultural or aesthetic interests or values to the city and its residents.

The Ordinance created the Villa Rica Historic Preservation Commission, and directed the Commission to adopt rules and standards for conducting its business and to develop Design Guidelines to be used for the consideration of applications for Certificates of Appropriateness to address preservation, restoration, new construction, and demolition.

After the designation by ordinance of a historic property or a historic district, no material change in the appearance of a historic property, or of a contributing or non-contributing building, structure, site or object within a historic district, shall be made or be permitted to be made by the owner or occupant until an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness has been submitted to, and approved by the Commission. The Ordinance states that a Building Permit shall not be issued without a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The following sections of this document provide recommendations as to the best practices to maintain the historic integrity of the downtown business district. Properly applied, the design recommendations help to protect the investment of property owners to prevent unnecessary alterations or changes that can have an adverse effect on other properties.

II. Preservation Goal

Villa Rica Historic Preservation Commission

A component of the Mission of the Villa Rica Historic Preservation Commission (VRHPC or Commission) is to develop measures to accurately and effectively preserve, protect and sustain the architectural integrity of the historic structures located within the city limits of Villa Rica, Georgia. To further these efforts, the Commission will aide in the planning and implementation of the preservation projects of property owners of historic structures in the community. The goal is to create an environment that protects the historical integrity of the built environment while supporting the growth and development of both residential and commercial districts throughout the city.

What Makes a Building Historic?

There is a common misconception about what does and does not make a building historic. In the early days of the National Register and state historic registries, structures that met academic requirements of a certain style were the only types of structures that were recognized as historic. For example, Queen Anne and Greek Revival houses were common house types that were regularly placed on the National Register.

These house types were considered important not only because of their architectural elements, but because they reflected trends and upper-class values during specific time periods in our nation's history. Most vernacular, or "ordinary," structures were ignored, unless someone famous had lived there or an important event had occurred there.

The mind set about what makes a structure important has changed dramatically in the past twenty years or so to include structures that reflect the middle and working class's contributions to society and architecture instead of just the wealthy and influential. Currently, there are ongoing efforts through various historic preservation agencies and societies to expand the list of notable structures to include vernacular house types, from shotgun houses found in mill villages to simple farmhouses.

In the last ten years and at least the next decade, ranch houses will make an appearance on state historic registers and on the National Register because of their significance to the post-World War II building boom in our country. As time goes on, structures that we overlook in today's society (such as "McMansions" and "Big Box" stores) will find their way onto state historic registers and the National Register. In Villa Rica, there is an impressive collection of both high style and vernacular types found in the commercial and residential districts, and a growing number of these are becoming eligible for listing on historic registers every year.

III. Design Review Guidelines

A. Why design review guidelines?

These guidelines are written for the primary use of the property owners of Villa Rica, Georgia. They are also for the Historic Preservation Commission and other City entities that make decisions about the appropriateness of changes, additions, restoration and other projects in both the North and South Historic Commercial Districts. Because nearly all of the buildings in the commercial districts share walls and have similar facades, the actions of one property owner can positively or negatively affect the value of an adjacent property. The goal is not to control or dictate what property owners are or are not allowed to do to their properties. Instead, the guidelines provide recommendations as to the best course of action to both property owners and the City so as to maintain the historic integrity of the downtown business district. Furthermore, these guidelines help to protect the investment of property owners and to prevent unnecessary alterations or changes that can have an adverse effect on other properties. These guidelines only pertain to the exterior of buildings, although property owners are encouraged, when possible, to retain as much of the interior historic fabric as they can.

B. What design review guidelines can and cannot do

Guidelines can...

- ✓ protect the historic character and integrity of the district
- ✓ provide guidance to design professionals and property owners undertaking construction in the district
- ✓ identify important review concerns and recommend appropriate design approaches
- ✓ provide an objective basis for review, assuring consistency and fairness
- ✓ increase public awareness of the district and its significant characteristics
- ✓ avoid demolition by neglect
- ✓ protect property owner investment by suggesting “best practices.”

Guidelines cannot...

- × limit growth or development in the district
- × improperly affect or restrict the use of your property
- × regulate the design or alteration of interiors
- × apply to routine maintenance or to work which does not visibly affect the district
- × dictate stylistic design approaches which are based on individual preference

IV. Understanding the District Character

A. Overview of Downtown Villa Rica

Downtown Villa Rica is similar to other small towns along the Georgia Pacific Railroad, such as Tallapoosa and Douglasville. The architecture is typical of railroad towns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The architecture consists of mostly one-and-two story brick structures, many with large plate glass display windows. On each block that comprises the North and South Districts, the buildings are all connected. Some have been renovated and changed over the years and retain little of their historic fabric, while others retain much of their original architectural appearance. The South Villa Rica Historic Commercial District is separated from the North Villa Rica Historic Commercial District by the railroad tracks. The South District includes West Montgomery Street. In 2009, the Architectural Inventory Assessment determined it to be the historic core of the commercial district in the south part of Villa Rica. The North Historic District is comprised of parts of Main and Temple Streets, which are historically the commercial center of the northern part of Villa Rica.

Many of the buildings in both the North and South Villa Rica Historic Districts have a center entrance with display windows. For the most part, nearly all of these windows and a few entrances have been replaced, although some do retain their historic features. While the buildings in the districts are not highly ornate, many of them do feature decorative brickwork and parapets around the top of the buildings. There is little landscaping because the sidewalks between the buildings and the street are wide enough for only foot traffic.

Historically, the North District was the industrial center of Villa Rica, and the remaining buildings attribute that history. The Golden City Hosiery Mill was located on the corner of Temple and Main Street, but it was removed in the summer of 2009. It is now the location of The Mill amphitheater and green space that is used for community events. Although functional, the current space does not contribute to the historic district.

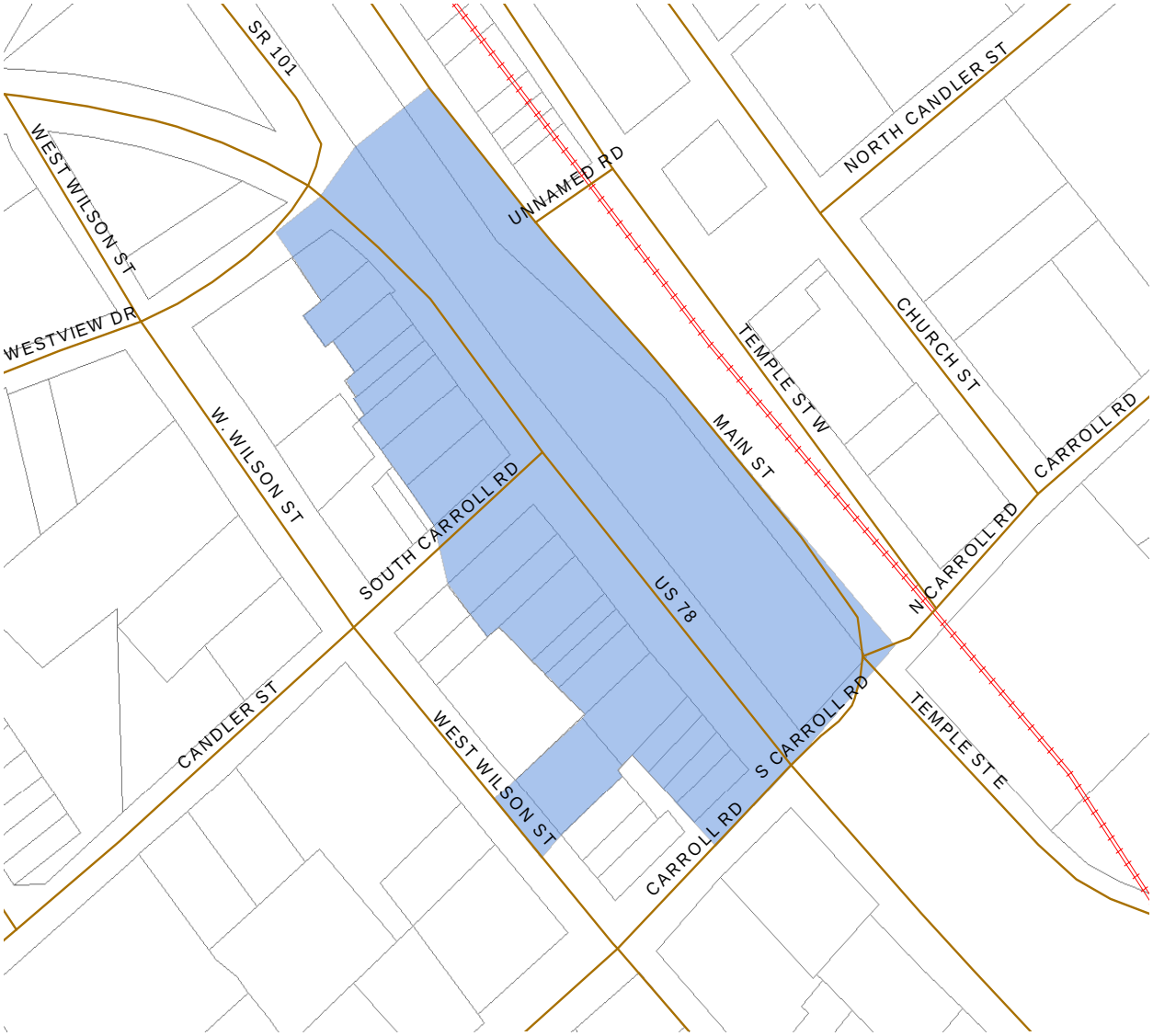
The South Villa Rica Commercial District consists of buildings that were constructed between 1899 and 1958. The buildings on this side of the tracks are similar to the ones found on the North side, as they have center entrances, large display windows, and decorative brick work. The 1923 Sanborn Map shows that the south side was where a majority of the stores were located. The City Hall was also located here, as was a bank, pharmacy, barber, restaurants, and an auto repair shop. By 1933 the businesses also included a movie house and auto sales.

The buildings on the south side date from 1899 (the McCreary Law Office) to 1958 (the west end of the 100 block of West Montgomery). The buildings on the north side were built between 1900 and 1929. Although many of the buildings downtown retains their historical integrity, there have been a few buildings that have been altered to the point that they have lost their historical significance. The McCreary Law Office is an example on the south side, whereas, the Holt-Bishop Justice Center and the police department are examples on the north side. With the city and property owners working together, the following guidelines will assist in retaining and reclaiming any lost historical integrity to both the North and South Historic Districts.

The North Villa Rica Commercial District

District	Contributing	Non-Contributing	Parcels
North Villa Rica Commercial	16	3	19

The South Villa Rica Commercial District



District	Contributing	Non-Contributing	Parcels
South Villa Rica Commercial	19	2	21

B. The Streetscape of Downtown Villa Rica

The streetscape of Villa Rica is as important to the overall effect as the individual structures themselves. The overall appearance of the streetscape is the result of the layout of streets and lots, the way buildings were placed on the land, and how the buildings relate to each other and open spaces. Villa Rica's commercial buildings typically have zero lot lines; meaning, the building covers the entire lot. They front the sidewalk with no setback or front or side yards, creating a pattern of street-curb-sidewalk-building. Commercial buildings share common “party” walls and are not seen as individual structures but as a series of facades in a block along the street. The stylistic elements of the downtown are fairly similar throughout in regards to store fronts, cornices and parapets; as well as awnings and canopies. Some of these elements have retained their historic character, while others have been lost through renovations and alterations over the years.

C. Elements of the Commercial Buildings in Downtown Villa Rica

Downtown Villa Rica is comprised primarily of one-story brick commercial structures, although there are a few two-story structures. There is not a particular academic style, such as Queen Anne or Gothic that is attributed to any of the buildings; however, there are certain stylistic elements that are featured on the buildings and were common for small railroad towns at the turn of the century. One-story structures were constructed with brick, a popular and plentiful resource in Georgia. The majority of these structures, especially in the South Commercial District, have decorative brick work around the windows, a decorative brick cornice around the top front of the building and a parapet at the roofline. There is also a brick sign panel above the store front. Most of the buildings have a center entrance with large plate glass display windows, and below the windows are bulkheads. While there are a few buildings that still display transom windows above the doors and display windows, some have been covered with awnings and are no longer visible from the street. Most of the awnings that have been added to the buildings are historically inaccurate and do not contribute to the historic features of the downtown.

The two-story Berry Building is a recent renovation rebuilt in 1958. The original building was lost after an explosion in 1957. In 2004, the building was renovated back to its original appearance. The elements are historically accurate, complete with decorative concrete stretcher and cornice across the top of the structure and a concrete stretcher across the top of the windows and entrance. The transoms are visible above the front display windows and the entrance is recessed.

In the National Register nomination, the two-story Masonic building on the north side was described as “a masonry building covered with stucco. One of its two street-level entrances and its four sash windows above are set within segmental arches.” The structure, which was re-built in 1914 after the original was destroyed by fire, was utilized as a cotton warehouse on the bottom while the Masonic meetings were held on the second floor.

V. Historic Preservation Principles and Approaches

A. The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

These standards have long been used as guidelines for federal projects for properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. They have been adopted by both state and local governments and historic commissions to guide the preservation process. Also known as “The Ten Commandments of Preservation,” these guidelines are an excellent reference for design review and rehabilitation. Property owners in the North Villa Rica Commercial Historic District, which is on the National Register, should follow the Standards in order to receive tax credits for rehabilitation projects.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterizes a property shall be avoided.

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings shall not be undertaken.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques, or examples of early craftsmanship that characterize the historic property, shall be preserved.

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

8. Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures must be taken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize a property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the messing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

B. Preservation Methods

Preservation is defined as the taking of steps to retain a building, district, object, or site as it exists at the present time. This often includes an initial stabilization effort necessary to prevent further deterioration as well as more general maintenance work. But “preservation” has become the term most often used when referring to a wide range of conservation practices.

Following is a list of the four principal preservation methods. The condition of the property, degree of authenticity desired, and the amount of funding available usually dictate the method used to preserve a historic property. Although “rehabilitation” and “restoration” might sound alike, the end result is quite different.

Stabilization entails making a building weather resistant and structurally safe, enabling it to be rehabilitated or restored in the future. Stabilization techniques include covering the roof and windows so that rainwater cannot penetrate, removing overgrown vegetation, exterminating, carrying out basic structural repairs, securing the property from vandalism, and other steps to prevent additional deterioration of the property. This approach is usually taken on a building not currently in use to “mothball” it until a suitable use is found.

Rehabilitation involves undertaking repairs, alterations, and changes to make a building suitable for contemporary use, while retaining its significant architectural and historical features. Rehabilitation often includes undertaking structural repairs, updating the mechanical systems (heating and air conditioning, electrical system, and plumbing), putting on additions for bathrooms, repairing damaged materials such as woodwork and roofing, and painting. Rehabilitation can accommodate the adaptive use of a building from residential to office or commercial use. Physical changes, such as additions for offices, parking lots, and signage, may result. If rehabilitation is sensitive, those changes are made in a way that does not detract from the historic character and architectural significance of the building and its setting.

Restoration includes returning a building to its appearance during a specific time in its history by removing later additions and changes, replacing original elements that have been removed, and carefully repairing parts of the building damaged by time. Restoration is a more accurate and often more costly means of preserving a building. It entails detailed research into its history, development, and physical form of the property; skilled craftsmanship; and attention to detail.

Reconstruction entails reproducing, by new construction, the exact form and detail of a vanished building, or part of a building, as it appeared at a specific time in its history.

C. Eight Steps to Complete a Preservation Project

The following is an outline of an accepted approach to planning and implementing preservation projects. Property owners should review these points carefully and consider their importance.

Step One: Inspect the Property and Make a Wish List
A thorough inspection of the structure or site will allow for an understanding of specific problems that may exist as well as special conditions and features that need to be considered. This inspection should also take into account the character of the surrounding area (area of influence), with special attention given to how the property in question relates to nearby buildings and sites. Develop a wish list of what needs to be done and what improvements and/or changes are desirable but not necessary to the physical soundness of the property. Existing conditions should be documented, through photographs, before any work is undertaken. This is especially true when tax credits are being sought for the rehabilitation of an income-producing property. Property owners should consult with the State Historic Preservation Office if they anticipate applying for federal tax credits.

Step Two: Define the Project and Develop a Preliminary Concept
At this stage the property must determine the type (stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, or reconstruction) and extent of the project to be undertaken. Cost will likely be an issue and therefore it is advisable to consult with an architect, landscape architect, interior designer, or preservation planner. These professionals can assist the owner in defining the basic components of the project. At this stage, the preliminary concept should be presented to the Historic Preservation Commission for initial comments.

Step Three: Refine Preliminary Concept and Develop a Master Plan
This is the final step of the planning process – the end result of which is called a master plan. The master plan should outline the principle goals of the project and the efforts needed to complete steps four through eight. At this point, the property owner should apply for the appropriate paperwork from the City.

Step Four: Stabilize the Building
Before any new work is undertaken, the property must be in stable condition with all deterioration halted. An example would be the repair of a leaking roof so that further moisture will not enter the structure after new work has been completed.

Step Five: Carry Out Structural Repairs
Once deterioration has been halted, any structural damage must be corrected. This type of work needs to be completed as one step rather than in phases. If the approved project involves addition to the building, it should be made only after all structural repair work has been completed.

Step Six: Carry Out Infrastructure Repairs
Repairs and improvements to mechanical systems (i.e. cooling and heating systems, electrical systems, and plumbing) are essential to achieving the highest degree of comfort and economy in any building. Attend to this type of work fairly early in the overall project rather than delaying or even neglecting to complete it. Infrastructure improvements can be costly, which is yet another reason for placing this work early in the project schedule.

Step Seven: Carry Out Energy Conservation Improvements
Most steps to improve energy efficiency are generally quite straightforward and sometimes surprisingly inexpensive. The type of work can, therefore, usually be put off until more complicated and expensive tasks have been completed.

Step Eight: Carry Out Cosmetic Work
Finishing work, such as exterior painting, minor siding repairs, and porch reconstruction, should be the final stage of a preservation or rehabilitation project. This is the work that will generally create the greatest visual impact, and it is essential that all preliminary work (stabilization, structural repairs, and infrastructure improvements) be completed beforehand so that nothing will have to be repeated.

VI. Commercial Historic District Design Guidelines

A. Recognizing the Prevailing Character of Existing Development

Every building, whether historic or modern, is a product of design. The design of buildings is determined by the way in which basic design concepts are utilized. The design concepts include building orientation and setback, shape, proportion, scale, directional emphasis, rhythm, and architectural and site elements. When a new structure is built among historic buildings and whether it contributes or detracts from the area, it will be determined by the ways in which its design recognizes the prevailing design expression in the area of influence. Many of the historic commercial buildings in Villa Rica have seen various changes through the years. Changes to the facade, doorways, and store front windows are examples. To preserve the existing historic fabric and prevent further inappropriate remodeling, the following guidelines will help the City and property owners understand how to preserve the historic buildings and streetscape in Villa Rica.

1. Building Orientation and Setback

Building orientation refers to the directional placement of a building on the site; while setback refers to how far back the building is from the street and side lot lines. Typically, historic areas have strong predominant orientations and setbacks. In Villa Rica, there is no variation in the distance between the front of the buildings and where they meet the sidewalk. If a new building must be constructed to replace one that has been torn down or destroyed, the new construction should be built in the same pattern as the rest of the buildings on the block. The orientations of all of the downtown buildings are street front. In other words, all the buildings face the street. New buildings should face the same direction as established buildings. The buildings in downtown Villa Rica were built connected to one another. To maintain the historical appearance of the downtown, new buildings should be constructed connecting to the established buildings when at all possible. If there must be spacing between buildings, the Historical Preservation Commission and the City may decide what the appropriate spacing should be.

2. Directional Emphasis

Most buildings are either vertical or horizontal in their building emphasis. This is determined by a building’s overall shape as well as by the size and placement of their elements and openings on the building’s front facade. Directional emphasis may also be influenced by surface materials and architectural detailing. The buildings in Villa Rica are similar in shape and form. To maintain this consistency, new construction should conform to the structures on the block.

3. Shape

A building’s surfaces and edges define its overall shape. The overall shape, in concert with the shapes of individual elements – roof pitch and window and door openings – is important in establishing rhythms in a streetscape. Shape can also be an important element of style. The roofs in downtown Villa Rica are flat, so new buildings should not, for example, have gables or a pyramidal shape. Also the facades of new buildings should conform to the existing historic structures.

4. Proportion

Proportion is the relationship of one dimension to another; for example, the relationship of the height to the width of a building, or the height and width of windows and doors. Individual elements of a building should be proportional to each other and the building. Although there is variation in height in downtown Villa Rica, the height of buildings on a particular block are consistent with each other. The exceptions are the Berry Building in the south side and the Masonic building on the north side. But historically, these buildings were the tallest buildings on their block. Furthermore, the buildings are similar in shape and form on each block. The proportions of a new building should be consistent with dominant patterns of proportion of existing buildings in the downtown.

5. Rhythm

Rhythm is the recurring patterns of lines, shapes, forms, or colors (materials) on a building or along a streetscape. For example, the rhythm of openings on a building refers to the number and placement of windows and doors on a facade. Rhythm also occurs on the larger scale of streetscapes as created by development patterns (orientation and setback) and details of individual buildings (directional emphasis, scale, height, massing, etc.). New construction in an historic area should respect and not disrupt existing rhythmic patterns.

6. Scale

Scale refers to the apparent relationship between two entities, such as the relationship of a building's height to human height, the relationship between different buildings' heights and sizes, or the relationship between the size of an addition and the building to which it is attached. In a historic district the two most important issues are (1) the relationship of the scale of a new construction to historic buildings and (2) the relationship of the scale of additions to the historic building to which they are being added. Three guidelines to follow are: (1) a proposed new building should conform to the floor-to-floor heights of existing structures if there is a dominant pattern; (2) new construction in historic areas should be consistent with dominant patterns of scale; and (3) additions to historic buildings should not overwhelm the existing building.

On the right is a recent view of eastern end of West Montgomery in the South Commercial District. Historically, this end of the street is very similar to the way it looked before the explosion.

B. Facades and Storefronts

With few exceptions, the buildings in downtown Villa Rica are one-story, connected masonry buildings with center entrances and display windows. Over time buildings are altered or remodeled to reflect current fashions or to eliminate maintenance problems. Sometimes these improvements are misguided and result in a disjointed and unappealing appearance. In other instances, improvements employ quality materials and sensitive design and may be as attractive as the original building. Often in these cases, these changes should be retained. The following guidelines will help determine what is worth saving and what should be rebuilt.

1. Conduct pictorial research to determine the design of the original building or early changes. Identify which elements remain on the building. Sometimes, this identification stage requires removing materials that have obviously been added to see what lies beneath.

2. Remove any materials, signs, or canopies that have been added and cover the facade.

3. Retain all elements, materials and features that are original to the building or that are sensitive remodeling. Repair as necessary.

4. Restore as many original elements as possible, particularly the materials, windows, decorative details, and cornices.

5. When designing new elements, conform to the configuration and materials of traditional storefront design.

6. Reconstruct missing original elements (such as cornices, windows, and storefronts) if documentation is available, or design new elements that respect the character, materials, and design of the building.

7. Avoid using materials that are incompatible with the district, including textured wood siding, unpainted wood, and artificial siding.

8. Avoid creating false historical appearances such as “Colonial,” “Olde English,” “Spanish” or other theme designs that include inappropriate elements such as mansard roofs, metal awnings, coach lanterns, small-paned windows, plastic shutters, inoperable shutters, or shutters on windows where they never previously existed.

9. Maintain paint on wood surfaces and use appropriate paint placement to enhance the inherent design of the building.

This store is an example of a historically accurate façade with the original position of the door and windows

C. Rears of Buildings

The area behind commercial buildings is often forgotten and neglected. This area may be a utilitarian space for deliveries and storage of discarded goods. However, in some cases the rear of the building may provide the opportunity for a secondary entrance, particularly if oriented to a public alley. The appearance of the back area then becomes important to the commercial district and to the individual business. In both the North and South Commercial Districts, the rears of the buildings are seen from the street, and on the North side, Church Street is immediately behind the buildings. It is therefore important that the rears of the buildings receive the same consideration as the fronts, even if the spaces behind the buildings are strictly utilitarian.

1. Examine the overall plan of a building to determine if the rear facade can provide primary access for building users and customers.

2. If the rear elevation can be used, alternate accommodations for freight delivery and pick-up need to be addressed if the use of the building requires this type of service.

3. Examine the current wall materials. Rear and side elevations are often of inferior materials. Determine whether current materials give an appropriate finished appearance for a front elevation. If not, refer to the new construction guidelines for appropriate new materials. For instance, soiled concrete may require painting or a new brick veneer.

4. Examine the interior and exterior to see if any windows have been enclosed. Often windows have been blocked in or been used for vents or other mechanical equipment. Reopen windows. Reuse original window frames and sash if they are in good condition. Remove any mechanical equipment within openings to other locations.

5. To determine if window replacement is necessary, conduct a condition survey of all the windows. If more than fifty percent are deteriorated beyond normal repair, consider replacement. If windows are replaced, ensure that the design and materials of the new window matches the historic window and has true divided lights. Avoid using vinyl windows when original wood windows must be replaced.

6. If installation of storm windows is necessary, see the section on windows that follows.

7. If security bars need to be installed over windows, choose a type appropriate for the window size, building style, and required level of security. Avoid using chain link fencing for a security cover over the windows.

8. Ensure that rear porches are well maintained; and if used as upper floor entrance(s), are well lit and meet building codes while retaining their historic character.

9. If the rear window openings need to be covered on the interior for merchandising display or other business requirements, consider building an interior screen panel to maintain the character of the original window's appearance from the exterior.

10. For rear elevations to become inviting for customers and tenants, the ground floor needs to have attractive entrances, or storefronts for retail display. Loading dock doors can be converted to storefronts and entrances.

11. Some rear elevations include exterior fire stairs. Ensure that any fire escapes meet safety regulations and that no site elements inhibit proper egress. In the case of large rehabilitation projects, these stairs will probably be removed and new interior fire stairs will be added. Where they remain, paint the stair to coordinate with the overall color scheme of the facade.

12. Install adequate lighting for customer and store security. Ensure that the design of the lighting relates to the historic character of the building.

13. The addition of decorative elements, such as trim and cornices, depends upon the date and style of the building. Rear elevations in the historic area should retain their simple design quality in most cases. However, the use of awnings and attractive signage will make the elevation more appealing for pedestrian traffic.

The rears of these buildings are neatly maintained.

D. Sites Behind Buildings

1. Keep entrances uncluttered and free from unsightly items, such as trash or recycling materials not in containers.

2. Leave enough space in front of the rear entry for pedestrians to comfortably enter the building and meet all handicapped requirements.

3. Consolidate and screen mechanical and utility equipment in one location as much as possible.

4. Consider adding planters or a small planting area to enhance and highlight the rear entrance. Create an adequate maintenance schedule for them.

E. Foundation

The foundation forms the base of a building. On many buildings, it is indistinguishable from the walls of the building. On some, it is a different material or texture or is raised well above ground level.

1. Keep crawl space vents open so that air flows freely.

2. Retain any decorative vents that are original to the building.

3. Ensure that land is graded so that water flows away from the foundation; and, if necessary, install drains around the foundation.

4. Remove any vegetation that may cause structural disturbances at the foundation.

5. Where masonry has deteriorated, take steps as outlined in the masonry section of the guidelines.

F. Windows

Windows add light to the interior of a building, provide ventilation, and allow a visual link to the outside. They also play a major part in defining a building's particular style.

1. Retain original window, if possible. Ensure that all hardware is in good operating condition. Ensure that caulk and glazing putty are intact and water drains off the sills.

2. Repair original windows by patching, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing. Wood that appears to be in bad condition because of peeling paint or separated joints can, in fact, be repaired.

3. Uncover and repair covered up windows and reinstall windows where they have been blocked in. If the window is no longer needed, the glass should be retained and the back side frosted, screened, or shuttered so that it appears from the outside to be in use.

4. Replace windows only when they are missing or beyond repair. Conduct a condition survey to determine if more than fifty percent are beyond repair. Reconstruction should be based on physical evidence or old photographs. Replace deteriorated wood windows with new wood windows; avoid using vinyl units. If windows have already been replaced with a non-historic design or material, consider replacing them with designs of the original configuration and material.

5. Do not use materials or finishes that radically change the sash, depth of reveal, muntin configuration, the reflective quality or color of the glazing, or the appearance of the frame.

6. Use true divided lights to replace similar examples. Do not use false muntins in the replacement.

7. Do not change the number, location, size, or glazing patterns of windows on primary elevations by cutting new openings, blocking in windows, or installing replacement sash that does not fit the window opening.

8. Improve thermal efficiency with weather stripping, storm windows (preferably interior), caulking, interior shades, and, if appropriate, for the building, blinds, and awnings.

9. If using awnings, ensure that they align with the opening being covered. Use colors that coordinate with the rest of the district.

10. Preserve original transom windows. There are several instances in Villa Rica where the original transom windows have been covered. Assess whether transom windows can be rebuilt or the past alterations can be covered. Retain later period transom windows that match significant modern styles of storefronts with important retail history or those using quality modern materials. If the design of the original transom windows cannot be determined using photographs or historic resources, frame in custom replacement windows. Generally, custom replacement windows should have glazing that is proportionate to the window glass, and mullions of the transom windows should be true divided glass panes; wood is preferred.

Although the original windows have been replaced, the transoms over the windows and the door remain.

Although the windows have been replaced on this storefront, too, not only do the transom windows remain, but the black tile under the display windows are in excellent condition, as well.

G. Entrances

Besides storefronts, commercial buildings have other types of entrances on their street-level facades that provide a welcoming introduction to the business establishment within. In Villa Rica, most of the entrances are flush with the sidewalk, and are primarily commercial businesses.

1. Retain original entrances and their configurations when rehabilitating a building's intact facade. Preserve or replicate, if necessary, any storefront plan (angles, depth, recessed, flush, or other).

2. Original entrances should not be covered or infilled. Determine and retain if necessary the original entry ceiling height, door transoms, materials or placement of doors original to the storefront, and/or those changes to entrances that have gained historic significance over time.

3. Determine and retain or replicate if necessary the original entry exterior floor original to the storefront, and/or those changes to entry floors that have gained historic significance over time.

4. If replacement or reconstruction of entrance area doors, windows, and details is required, the replacement features should be compatible in size, scale, materials, and arrangement to original or similar historic features.

These stores are all good examples of retaining the original configuration of the entrance to the business.

H. Roof and Cornice

Sometimes the junction between the roof and wall is decorated with brackets and moldings, depending on the architectural style. This junction is formed in many ways, sometimes with a cornice that may be simple or highly articulated. Other times, the wall extends above the roofline forming a parapet wall that may be decorated to visually complete the design. Cornices also occur above windows and storefronts.

1. Repair rather than replace a cornice. Do not remove elements, such as brackets or blocks that are part of the original composition without replacing them with new ones of a like design.

2. Match materials, decorative details, and profiles of the existing original cornice design when making repairs.

3. Do not replace original cornice with a new one that conveys a different period, style, or theme from that of the building.

4. If a cornice is missing, the replacement should be based on physical evidence, or barring that, be compatible with the original building.

5. One of the most important elements of a structure, the roof serves as the “cover” to protect the building from the elements. Good roof maintenance is absolutely critical for the roof's preservation and for the preservation of the rest of the structure. In Villa Rica, all of the roofs are flat and do not show from the street. Routine maintenance and inspection of a flat roof is critical to its care.

6. Retain elements, such as chimneys, skylights, and light wells that contribute to the style and character of the building.

7. Do not create or construct a roof line that is inconsistent with the building's style or that is dramatically different from the original roof line.

8. Maintain critical flashing around joints and ensure proper functioning of the gutter system.

9. Ventilate the attic space to prevent condensation.

10. Place any solar collectors and antennae on non-character defining roof or roofs of non-historic adjacent buildings.

11. Do not add new elements, such as vents, skylights, or additional stories that would be visible on the primary elevations of the building.

I. Masonry

The vast majority of commercial buildings in downtown Villa Rica are masonry structures, predominantly brick. Over time, some of the brick veneer has been covered with another, non-historic material, such as stucco. Ideally, those coverings should be removed and the original brick restored. For those buildings that have retained their original brick veneer, it should be maintained and preserved. Although brick is one of the most durable historic building materials, it is susceptible to damage due to harsh or abrasive cleaning methods. The mortar used to bond the brick together is also very vulnerable to inappropriate repair or maintenance techniques. Correct and timely maintenance of masonry exteriors is vital to the structural health and architectural integrity of historic masonry buildings. Masonry is used on cornices, pediments, lintels, sills, and decorative features, as well as for building walls, retaining walls, and chimneys. Color, texture, mortar joint type, and patterns of the masonry help define the overall character of a building. Most of the major masonry problems can be avoided with monitoring and prevention. Prevent water from causing deterioration by ensuring proper drainage, removing vegetation too close to the building, repairing leaking roof and gutter systems, securing loose flashing around the chimneys (if applicable), and caulking joints between the masonry and wood. Repair cracks and unsound mortar with mortar and masonry that matches the historic material.

1. Retain historic masonry features that are important in defining the overall character of the building.

2. Repair damaged masonry features by patching, piecing in, or consolidating to match original, instead of replacing entire masonry feature, if possible. The size, texture, color, and pattern of masonry unities, as well as mortar joint size, color, and tooling, should be replaced.

3. Repair cracks in masonry as they allow moisture penetration and, consequently, deterioration. Ensure that they do not indicate structural setting or deterioration.

4. Carefully remove deteriorated mortar and masonry in a way that does not damage the masonry piece, or the masonry surrounding the damaged area. Duplicate mortar in strength, composition, color, and texture. Historic mortar mixes were not as hard as modern materials and Portland cement. Avoid using modern materials as the repaired area may become stronger than the surrounding historic mortar and cause structural cracking to occur.

5. Clean masonry only when necessary to remove heavy paint buildup, halt deterioration, or remove heavy soiling. Use chemical paint and dirt removers formulated for masonry. Use a low-pressure wash, equivalent to the pressure in a garden hose, to remove chemicals and clean the building.

6. Do not sandblast any masonry.

7. Leave unpainted masonry unpainted.

8. Use knowledgeable cleaning contractors. Check their references and methods. Look for damage caused by improper cleaning, such as chipped or pitted brick, washed out mortar, rounded edges of brick, or a residue of film. Have test patches of cleaning performed on the building and observe the effects on the masonry.

J. Wood

The flexibility of wood has made it the most common building material throughout much of America's building history. Because it can be easily shaped by sawing, planing, carving, and gouging, wood is used for a broad range of decorative elements, such as cornices, brackets, shutters, columns, storefronts, and trim on windows and doors. In addition, wood is used in major elements, such as framing, siding, and shingles.

1. Retain wood features that define the overall character of the building. Repair rotted sections with new wood, epoxy consolidates, or fillers.

2. Replace wood elements only when they are rotted beyond repair. Match the original in material and design or use substitute materials that convey the same visual appearance. Base the design of reconstructed elements on pictorial or physical evidence from the actual building rather than from similar buildings in the area if it can be found.

3. Avoid using unpainted, pressure-treated wood except for structural members that will be near the ground and outdoor decking. Recent studies have determined that this material has hazardous ingredients and new products are now available. If pressure-treated wood has been used on a building and is not painted, consider painting it. Allow pressure-treated wood to season for a year before painting it. Otherwise, the chemicals might interfere with paint adherence.

4. Wood requires constant maintenance. The main objective is to keep it free from water infiltration and wood-boring pests. Keep all surface primed and painted. As necessary, use appropriate pest poisons, following product instructions carefully. Re-caulk joints where moisture might penetrate a building. Do not caulk under individual siding boards or windowsills. This action seals the building too tightly and can lead to moisture problems within the frame walls and to failure of paint. Consult local architects and builders regarding appropriate installation of vapor barriers to prevent condensation and rot.

5. To test for rotten wood, jab an ice pick into the wetted wood surface at an angle and pry up a small section. Sound wood will separate in long fibrous splinters while decayed wood will separate in short irregular pieces. Alternatively, insert an ice pick perpendicular to the wood. If it penetrates less than 1/8 inch, the wood is solid; if it penetrates more than ½ inch, it may have dry rot. Even when wood looks deteriorated, it may be strong enough to repair with epoxy products.

K. Paint Color Selection and Placement

Paint and paint color is a critical component contributing to the integrity of an historic district, building preservation and restoration within the district. The pathway to determine a building's historical paint specifications should involve a site specific investigation of the property and adjacent or nearby buildings. Each building has a story to tell regarding its place in the story of how our town developed. Because of the importance of the contribution of paint to a structure in the historic district, all new painting or, change of color, must undergo review and receive a Certificate of Appropriateness. As a general guideline, bright colors should only be used in small amounts. Inappropriate colors may be intense, bold primary colors as well as extremely bright, or "dayglo" type colors.

Historically, the brick buildings in Villa Rica were not painted. However, the trim around windows and doors may have been, and many are today. Paint enhances a building by accentuating its character-defining details. Painting is one of the least expensive ways to maintain historic fabric and make a building an attractive addition to a historic district. Many times, however, buildings are painted inappropriate colors or colors are placed incorrectly. Some paint schemes use too many colors but more typical is a monochromatic approach in which one color is used for the entire building.

1. Choose colors that blend with and complement the overall color schemes on the street.

2. In general, use one color for trim and a contrasting color for the walls. The numbers of colors should be limited. Doors and shutters can be painted a different color than the walls and trim.

3. Color palettes can differ according to architectural style. Many paint manufacturers have historic paint charts that are helpful in choosing appropriate paint palettes in historic areas.

4. Bright primary colors are not recommended for wall or trim colors of a building. If used at all, they are more appropriate for accent colors on doors, signs, or awnings.

5. In general, if masonry was originally unpainted, it should not be painted. Exceptions may be made for severely damaged brick (as from sandblasting) or if the masonry is heavily stained and cannot be adequately cleaned.

6. Choose quality paint, and use the same manufacturer for primer and finish coats. Ensure that new paint is compatible with old. For instance, use an oil-based primer on old surfaces if existing paint type is unknown or if switching from oil to latex.

7. In some cases on historically and architecturally significant buildings, paint analysis may be undertaken to determine original colors and finishes of a structure and its interior spaces. This analysis is usually done by removing small samples of paint and studying them with various microscopes and other special equipment.

L. Metal

Although metal is not a prevalent decorative element in Villa Rica, the possibility exists that property owners may want to rehabilitate or restore a building using decorative metal elements. Metal should not be used when historically a building did not use metal elements, such as on a roof or as an awning.

1. If metal exists, and it becomes necessary to clean it, use the gentlest means possible. Do not sandblast copper, lead, or tin.

2. Do not remove the patina of metals, such as bronze or copper, since it provides a protective coating and is a historically significant finish.

3. Repair or replace metals as necessary, using identical or compatible materials. Some metals are incompatible and should not be placed together without a separation material, such as nonporous, neoprene gaskets or butyl rubber caulking.

M. Guidelines for Signs

Similar to paint, Signage is a critical component of the integrity of an historic district, building preservation and restoration within the district. Because of the importance of the contribution of signs to a structure in the historic district, <u>all new signs must undergo review and receive a Certificate of Appropriateness.</u> Murals and other art works on any building in the historic district are considered signage.

1. Retain historic signs whenever possible, particularly when they have a historic association for the community or are significant for their design.

2. New signs for historic buildings should respect the size, scale, and design of the historic building and should not overpower the building.

3. New signs should not obscure significant features of a historic building, such as transoms, windows, or other architectural details.

4. New signs should be attached to a building carefully to avoid damage to historic fabric. Fittings should penetrate mortar joints rather than the masonry.

5. Sign materials should be characteristic of a building's period and style. A building's historic features and details can often suggest a motif for new signs.

VII. Guidelines for New Construction and Additions

The historic core of downtown Villa Rica retains most of its historic structures. However, with the loss of the historic mill buildings, there is room for growth west of the North Historic District. Furthermore, fires or damaging storms could destroy historic buildings. New construction should be designed to be compatible with its historic surroundings by borrowing design characteristics and materials from adjacent buildings and integrating (not copying) these into modern expression. Before designing new development, take time to evaluate what makes the property and its surrounding area distinctive. Then decide how the new development can best be designed to complement the property and area. The underlying guideline for new construction and additions is to consider one's neighbors and nearby structures and to reinforce the existing historic character through sensitive, compatible design.

A. Defining the Area of Influence

Define the area of influence of the new development and what visual impact the new construction will have on the surrounding historic setting.

B. Building Orientation and Setback

The orientation of a new building and its site placement should be consistent with the dominate patterns within the area of influence.

C. Directional Influence

A new building's directional emphasis should be consistent with dominant patterns of directional emphasis within the area of influence.

D. Shape

1. Roof Pitch

The roof pitch of a new building should be consistent with those of existing buildings within the area of influence.

2. Building Elements

The principal elements and shapes used on the front facade of a new building should be compatible with those of existing buildings in the area of influence.

3. Proportion

The proportions of a new building should be consistent with the dominant patterns of proportion of existing buildings in the area of influence.

4. Rhythm

New construction in a historic area should respect and not disrupt existing rhythmic patterns in the area of influence.

5. Scale

A proposed new building should conform to the floor-to-floor heights of existing structures if there is a dominant pattern within the area of influence. New construction in the historic areas should be consistent with the dominant patterns of scale within the area of influence. Additions to historic buildings should not overwhelm the existing building.

E. Architectural and Site Elements

New construction should reference and not conflict with the predominant site and architectural elements of existing properties in the area of influence. The following elements should be considered: roofs, walls, windows and entrances, details, materials, and landscape elements.

F. Respecting the Prevailing Character When Designing New Development

1. New Construction

Build a structure to the rear of a historic building where it will have little or no impact on the streetscape. If the new building will be visible from the street, respect the established setbacks and orientations of the historic buildings. Landscaping associated with a new structure should be compatible with that of the surrounding area. New construction should reference predominant design characteristics that make an area distinctive in order to achieve creative and compatible design solutions that are more than mere imitations of existing buildings.

2. New Additions to Historic Buildings

Additions to historic buildings should not be placed on the main historic facade or facades of the building. Locate the proposed addition away from the principal public view, ideally to the rear of the building. Respect the proportions of the building so that an addition does not dominate its historic environment. Do not obscure character-defining features of a historic building with an addition. Set an additional story well back from the roof edge to insure that the historic building's proportions and profile are not radically changed. Additions should respect the character and integrity of original buildings and incorporate design motifs that relate it to the historic building. They should always be of quality workmanship and materials. An addition should be designed so that at a later date it could be removed without compromising the character of the historic building. While the addition should be compatible, it is acceptable and appropriate for the addition to the clearly discernible as an addition rather than appearing to be an original part of the building. Consider providing some differentiation in material, color, and/or detailing and setting additions back from the historic building's wall plane.

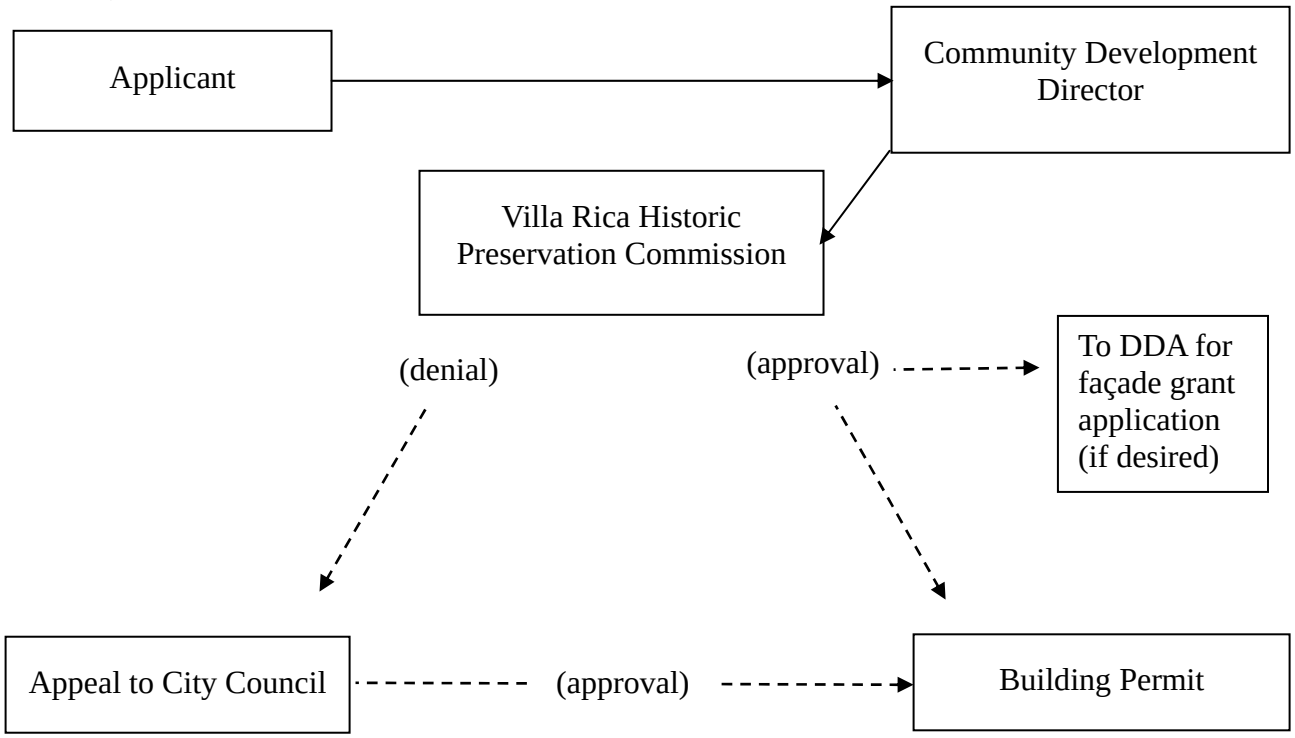
The Berry Building is an example of a historically accurate restoration.

3. Alterations to Non-Contributing Historic Buildings within the Historic District

Do not add false historical details to try to make a non-historic property fit into a historic area but make every effort to insure that additions and alterations to the property do not detract even further from the character of the historic environment.

VII. Appendix

A. Design Review Process



Applicant

The applicant uses the Design Review Guidelines Handbook as a reference when completing the Certificate of Appropriateness Application Form. Submits completed form to Community Development Director at least 45 to 20 days prior to next scheduled Commission meeting.

Community Development Director

The Community Development Director or his designee transmits the application to the Historic Preservation Commission.

Villa Rica Historic Preservation Commission

The VRHPC uses the Design Guidelines as an objective basis for reviewing the application. The Commission may approve, deny, or approve the application on certain conditions. If approved, the applicant may apply for a Building Permit. If denied, the applicant may request an appeal from the Villa Rica City Council.

Building Permit

Once the applicant receives a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Commission or the City Council, the project is subject to existing zoning and building regulatory process.

Appeal to City Council

The City Council shall review the appeal at a public hearing. At that time, the City Council may approve or deny the request. The City Council shall grant the appeal if it finds that the decision was made improperly. If approved, the applicant may apply for a Building Permit.

B. Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Certificate of Appropriateness?

A Certificate of Appropriateness is a permit to allow the construction, demolition, or alteration of any property that is designated in a Historic Preservation District. A Certificate helps ensure the preservation of the historic character and architectural integrity of these buildings and sites. The Villa Rica Historic Preservation Commission (VRHPC) makes a recommendation to the Community Development Director or his designee who is the Review Authority for the Certificate of Appropriateness. The Community Development Staff is available to answer any questions you may have about the requirements, fees, or procedures for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

What changes require approval?

Any changes that requires a building permit requires approval from the Historic Preservation Commission. Within the Historic District, a building permit may be issued only after the proposed project has been approved by the Historic Preservation Commission.

While ordinary maintenance does not require approval, you will need to seek approval for any changes to the exterior of the building. Seemingly unimportant changes, like adding a chain link fence or enclosing a porch, can have a dramatic effect on the visual character of the District. The following is a list of changes that should be brought before the Commission:

- adding a dormer or bay window
- installing storm windows
- paint color selection and placement
- erecting a sign
- creating parking
- demolition
- relocation

Before going ahead with a project it is always best to check with the Community Development Director or his designee to see if approval is necessary.

How do I apply for approval?

- Complete the “Application for Certificate of Appropriateness” application form – a copy of this form is provided in this section. You can also obtain a copy from the Community Development Department.
- For minor changes you need only provide a written description of the proposed changes.
- For major changes and new construction, drawings, plans, and /or photographs may also be required in order to give the Commission a clear idea of your proposed change.
- Submit the completed form to the Community Development Director (phone 678.840.1213).

When are applications due?

An application may be submitted at any time, but for it to be considered at the next regular meeting of the VRHPC it should be in the hands of the Community Development Director or his designee 45 to 20 days prior to the next scheduled meeting. This will provide enough time for the notification process. Meetings are held monthly at the Holt-Bishop Justice

Center, at 101 Main Street. Contact the Community Development Department for the schedule. Occasionally, the Commission calls a special meeting.

Will the Commission take into account cost and affordability?

In specific cases where affordability becomes an important issue to the application, the Commission will seek alternatives that should be satisfactory to all.

How does the review process work?

At least seven days prior to review of the application, the Commission will inform the owners of any property likely to be affected and will give the application and such owners an opportunity to be heard. When necessary, the Commission may hold a public hearing. The Commission evaluates the proposed change using the Design Guidelines as objective criteria for their decision. The Commission must approve or reject the application once it is filed within 45 days. Failure of the Commission to act within 45 days will constitute approval. If the application is denied, the Commission will state reason for denial and may give alternative suggestions. Upon denial, the applicant may make modifications to the plans and resubmit the application at any time.

Are there any changes that the Commission will automatically reject?

Each application will be considered on its own merits and within the context of the properly involved and its surroundings. However, the Commission is likely to look unfavorably on:

- demolition (purposefully or through neglect)
- removing original features (doors and windows)
- installing plastic illuminated signs
- installing a satellite (TV) dish or tall antenna in a visible location

What happens if I make a change without applying to the Commission?

Community cooperation and knowledge are important if the Commission is to accomplish its purpose. If the project is still in-progress a stop work order may be issued. If the Commission becomes aware of a change within the District which was made without approval, it will, as a matter of policy, notify the owner and request an explanation. Depending on the specifics of the project, the City of Villa Rica may take remedial action. This could take the form of a fine or could result in an order to restore the original condition of the building.

Is Design Review constitutional?

The courts have recognized the importance of preserving the character of a community. In 1978, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the legality of preservation as a planning tool. It stated, “The objective of preserving areas with specific historic or cultural significance is an entirely permissible goal. States and towns may enact land use restrictions or controls to enhance the quality of life by preserving the desirable aesthetic features of a town.”

C. Design Review Checklist

The following is a list of questions which can serve as a checklist for evaluating an application against the Design Guidelines. A yes answer means proceed.

Procedure

Yes	No	1.	Was the application received at least 20 days prior to the scheduled meeting?
Yes	No	2.	Does the application form and additional materials (photos, plans) provide enough information to make a decision?
Yes	No	3.	Have nearby property owners been notified of the application?
Yes	No	4.	Has the applicant and affected property owners been given the opportunity to be heard at the meeting?
Yes	No	5.	Have members of the Commission made a site visit?

Landscape and Setting

Yes	No	6.	Does it conform to the setback of nearby buildings?
Yes	No	7.	Does it maintain the existing relationship between buildings and open spaces?
Yes	No	8.	Will vehicle be screened so that they are not visible from the road?
Yes	No	9.	Is the signage compatible and complimentary to the nearby buildings?
Yes	No	10.	Does it maintain the existing pattern of landscape features?
Yes	No	11.	Is fencing or screening compatible to the district?
Yes	No	12.	Is the entrance oriented in the same direction as nearby buildings?

Changes to Existing Buildings

Yes	No	13.	Does it retain original features?
Yes	No	14.	Will additions or changes which are over 50 years old be retained?
Yes	No	15.	Will examples of historic craftsmanship be preserved?
Yes	No	16.	Will historic features be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible?
Yes	No	17.	Will harsh methods of cleaning such as sandblasting be avoided?
Yes	No	18.	Is the proposed change likely to help the long term physical condition of the building, trees or landscape, or other Buildings?

Additions and New Construction

Yes	No	19.	Does it confirm to the height and width of nearby buildings?
Yes	No	20.	Is the proportion and size of features compatible to existing buildings?
Yes	No	21.	Is the pattern of window and door openings similar to nearby buildings?
Yes	No	22.	Is the proposed material common to the district?
Yes	No	23.	Does it use any of the typical features of the district?
Yes	No	24.	Is the style complementary to the other buildings within the district?
Yes	No	25.	Does it contribute to the overall existing character of the district?

Demolition and Relocation, Maintenance

Yes	No	26.	Is demolition the absolute last resort?
Yes	No	27.	Is relocation of the building the only alternative to demolition?
Yes	No	28.	Is this application covering more than ordinary maintenance?

General

Yes No 29. Does the application meet the design guidelines?

D. Certificate of Appropriateness Application