### Smart Growth Self-Assessment for Rural Communities

### *Section VIII: Preserve Historic and Cultural Resources*

### *This tool is part of the Smart Growth Self-Assessment for Rural Communities, developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. EPA suggests that communities using this tool complete Section I: “Revitalize Village and Town Centers,” before filling out other sections. For more information and the tool’s other sections, see* *<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-self-assessment-rural-communities>.*

Reusing buildings, especially those with historic value, contributes to a community’s distinctive identity, which can attract tourists and new residents. These buildings are often in the village or town center, so redeveloping them can bring new life to these places and absorb demand for residential, office, and retail space that might otherwise be satisfied at a more distant location. Preserving a community’s cultural icons can also help attract tourism while promoting healthy living, beauty, and community pride.

| Goal: Preserve Historic and Cultural Resources | Adopted? | Add or Improve? | Context [[1]](#footnote-1) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Preserving Sites and Areas of Historical Significance*** |  |  |  |
| **Do codes create a process for designating and protecting historic properties and districts?[[2]](#footnote-2)** |  |  |  |
| Strategy 1: A local administrative body is established to oversee historic preservation.[[3]](#footnote-3),[[4]](#footnote-4) *[Enter optional notes in gray boxes for all strategies]* |  |  | 1,2,3 |
| Strategy 2: Codes or guidelines establish criteria for designating a property or neighborhood as historic.[[5]](#footnote-5) |  |  | 1,2 |
| Strategy 3: A local historic district or overlay zone has been adopted by ordinance.[[6]](#footnote-6),[[7]](#footnote-7) |  |  | 1,2 |
| Strategy 4: The administrative body reviews proposed additions, demolitions, new construction, rehabilitation projects, or other alterations to sites or buildings in the historic district.[[8]](#footnote-8) |  |  | 1,2 |
| Strategy 5: Codes establish criteria for issuing demolition permits for historic structures.395 |  |  | 1,2 |
| *Respecting Important Historic and Cultural Resources* |  |  |  |
| Do codes establish design guidelines for new development? |  |  |  |
| Strategy 6: Design standards apply to new residential and commercial development in historic or cultural districts to require design features that are consistent with the historic architecture or natural features of the area.[[9]](#footnote-9), [[10]](#footnote-10) |  |  | 1,2 |
| Strategy 7: Design standards apply to the renovation of historic properties to ensure complementary features are integrated into new elements of the building.[[11]](#footnote-11),7 |  |  | 1,2 |
| **Do codes and policies encourage reuse or redevelopment of historic buildings?** |  |  |  |
| Strategy 8: Codes allow rezoning to allow historic buildings be repurposed for a mix of uses.[[12]](#footnote-12) |  |  | 1,2 |
| Do codes protect views of natural, historic, or culturally significant features? |  |  |  |
| Strategy 9: Establish a review process for development in protected viewsheds (areas with views of attractive features such as ridge lines, water bodies, or landmarks).[[13]](#footnote-13) |  |  | 1,2,3 |
| Strategy 10: Local codes regulate the height and size of signs and billboards in protected viewsheds.[[14]](#footnote-14) |  |  | 1,2,3 |
| Strategy 11: Subdivision codes encourage techniques, such as cluster subdivisions, to protect viewsheds.[[15]](#footnote-15),[[16]](#footnote-16) |  |  | 1,2,3 |
| *Preserving Historic and Cultural Resources Through Comprehensive Plans and Local Government Policies* |  |  |  |
| Have significant historic or cultural features been identified? |  |  |  |
| Strategy 12: Develop an inventory of historic buildings, landmarks, and neighborhoods.[[17]](#footnote-17) |  |  | 1,2 |
| Strategy 13: The local government has established a historic district recognized by the National Register of Historic Places.[[18]](#footnote-18) |  |  | 1,2 |
| Strategy 14: Develop an inventory of significant viewsheds.[[19]](#footnote-19) |  |  | 1,2,3 |
| Strategy 15: Develop an inventory of cultural heritage tourism sites.[[20]](#footnote-20) |  |  | 1,2,3 |
| *Preserving Historic and Cultural Resources Through Programs and Services* |  |  |  |
| Does the local government promote the rehabilitation and enjoyment of historic and cultural resources? |  |  |  |
| Strategy 16: Historic structures and sites have interpretative signs and are included in the community’s wayfinding signs.[[21]](#footnote-21) |  |  | 1,2,3 |
| Strategy 17: A self-guided historical walking tour is available to the community.[[22]](#footnote-22) |  |  | 1,2,3 |
| Strategy 18: A façade improvement and landscaping grant program is available for historic properties.[[23]](#footnote-23),[[24]](#footnote-24) |  |  | 1,2,3 |
| Strategy 19: A tax credit or tax abatement is available to buy and/or renovate historic properties.[[25]](#footnote-25) |  |  | 1,2,3 |
| Strategy 20: A revolving loan fund is available to buy and/or renovate historic properties.[[26]](#footnote-26) |  |  | 1,2,3 |
| Strategy 21: Offer tax incentives to developers who redevelop historic buildings in city and town centers and maintain their historic character.[[27]](#footnote-27) |  |  | 1,2 |

1. Self-assessment topics and recommendations apply to one or more of the following scales: 1 – large town/small city (population of approximately 10,000 or greater); 2 - village/small town (population typically under 10,000); 3 – rural (very low density places, working lands, and natural areas outside of towns, villages, and cities). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The New York State Historic Preservation Office provides information on a wide range of topics related to historic preservation (<http://nysparks.com/shpo/>). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This body is typically a historic preservation review commission or design review board for a designated historic district. An administrative review by local government staff is also an option. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Montpelier Historic Preservation Commission (<http://www.montpelier-vt.org/group/68/Historic-Preservation-Commission.html>). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Rockville, Maryland Historic Designation Criteria (<http://www.rockvillemd.gov/index.aspx?NID=625>). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. A Model Historic District Ordinance for Local Governments in Pennsylvania (<http://conservationtools.org/libraries/1/library_items/944-A-Model-Historic-District-Ordinance-for-Local-Governments-in-Pennsylvania>). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Lynchburg, Virginia Historic Districts Ordinance, Guidelines, Descriptions, and Maps (<http://www.lynchburgva.gov/historic-districts-ordinance-guidelines-descriptions-and-maps>). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Boulder County, Colorado: Permit Process for Demolition and Alteration of Historic Structures (<http://www.bouldercounty.org/property/build/pages/historicdemo.aspx>). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The Town of Dryden, New York has developed commercial and residential design guidelines. They are available from the town’s website (<http://dryden.ny.us/departments/planning-department/planning/design-guidelines>). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Context sensitive zoning and development standards based on analysis of historic development patterns ([http://www.ci.benicia.ca.us/index.asp?Type=B\_BASIC&SEC={D87C20DD-AE9B-41D5-84A7-D29CAD93E9F3}](http://www.ci.benicia.ca.us/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC=%7bD87C20DD-AE9B-41D5-84A7-D29CAD93E9F3%7d)). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The strategy refers to renovations of historic buildings, where substantive changes to or additions of doors, windows, façade elements, ceilings, and interior materials need to complement, but not necessarily match, the structure’s historic elements. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Duvall, Washington Old Town – Mixed Use Zoning District (<http://www.duvallwa.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/519>). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Napa, California has a Viewshed Protection Program that aims to protect views of the area’s ridges. Chapter 18.06 of the city’s zoning ordinance describes it and it can also be found in the viewshed permit (<http://www.countyofnapa.org/pages/departmentcontent.aspx?id=4294968649>). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Keuka Lake Waterfront Revitalization and Scenic Viewshed Protection Plan (<http://www.stcplanning.org/usr/Program_Areas/Water_Resources/KeukaLake/Waterfront%20Revitalization%20and%20Scenic%20Viewshed%20Protection%20Plan_opt.pdf>). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. Model Zoning Ordinance for Rural Cluster Development (<http://www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPC/communityassistance/ModelOrdinancesGuides.htm>). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Conservation Subdivision Design Handbook (<http://conservationtools.org/libraries/1/library_items/349-Conservation-Subdivision-Design-Handbook>). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Santa Monica, California: Historic Resources Inventory (<http://www.smgov.net/Departments/PCD/Historic-Resources-Inventory/>). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources (<http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/>). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Hancock County Scenic Assessment Inventory and Analysis (<http://www.hcpcme.org/environment/view/>). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. State of Utah Cultural Heritage Tourism Planning (<http://www.planning.utah.gov/CRMPHeritageTourism.htm>). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Best Practices for Developing Interpretive Signs (<http://www.watershedco.com/blog/interpretive-program-from-start-to-finish/>). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Alexandria Walking & Guided Tours (<http://www.visitalexandriava.com/things-to-do/tours/>). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Portland, Maine Façade Improvement Program (<http://www.portlandmaine.gov/557/Facade-Improvement-Program>). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. City of Yreka, California: The Miner Street Grant Program (<http://ci.yreka.ca.us/business/miner-street-grant-program>). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Rockville, Maryland: Historic Tax Credit Program (<http://www.rockvillemd.gov/index.aspx?NID=627>). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. City of Dubuque Historic Preservation Revolving Loan Fund (<http://www.cityofdubuque.org/index.aspx?NID=773>). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Creating American Prosperity through Preservation Act of 2013 (<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s1141>). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)