

# Historic Preservation



## Vision

Historic preservation connects us to our heritage, enabling us to learn from and appreciate the stories and context of our past. Preserving our historic resources contributes to our long-term cultural awareness and sustainability as a unique resort.

## Philosophy

Preserving the historic built environment is vital to our culture: We are all stewards of our history. Through effective outreach and education, we strive to raise community awareness so that all of us feel responsible for the preservation of our history. While the overall goal of preservation is foremost, the process should be one of balance, predictability, fairness, consistency and integrity.

Preservation of historic structures and sites connect us to the people, patterns, and events that are the fabric of our town in a way that photographs cannot replicate. In preserving our history, we ensure our culture and legacy is imparted to future generations. A respectfully restored historic structure or site honors the history and culture of our town, whereas a demolished one erases a piece of the Aspen story forever.

Historic preservation is also aligned with our environmental ethic. Energy is saved by retaining existing structures and making them more efficient rather than demolishing the structure and building anew.

Mass, scale, and building proportions directly influence how people perceive our town. We must build on what we have by authentically preserving historic structures and creating thoughtful new buildings that are compatible with that feeling of historical continuity. While creativity in development is encouraged, additions and new buildings must be sensitive to historic patterns.

## What's Changed Since 2000

Over the past ten years, historic preservation policies have undergone significant changes.

In 2005, Pitkin County passed a significant revision to the Land Use Code providing for the voluntary protection of the important historic properties within the Urban Growth Boundary. These code provisions have been successful in encouraging historic preservation. In 2008 the county completed work on the Historic Preservation Handbook, which includes background information on the history of the county, a description of the incentives available to historic property owners and a listing of good preservation practices.

In December 2006, the City Council established an emergency moratorium on building permits in the Commercial Core (CC) zone district while staff researched options on preserving the interiors of historically designated buildings. In December 2008, the City Council lifted the moratorium without taking specific action on the issue.

In July 2007, City Council placed temporary protections on post-war properties that might be worthy of preservation. In January 2011, after hearing recommendations from a Historic Preservation Task Force, City Council approved changes to the Historic Preservation Program to recognize the importance of both Victorian and Modern (post-war) buildings. Referred to as AspenModern, the preservation of Modern or midcentury buildings is entirely voluntary, similar to the Pitkin County program, which requires owner consent for designation. AspenModern seeks to incentivize the preservation of important buildings representative of Aspen’s early ski era, its emergence as an intellectual center, and development as a vacation resort.

## What’s New in the 2011 AACP

There are no substantive differences in the 2011 AACP compared to the 2000 AACP. Historic Preservation continues to be an important community goal. One new policy calls for further exploring methods to preserve historically significant interiors in publicly accessible buildings.

## Linkages

This plan recognizes that community goals are often inextricably linked: sometimes they complement each other, and at times they come into conflict. Historic preservation is an important element of the resort economy because it helps us to physically illustrate our cultural legacy, enabling us to “tell our story” to future generations. “Heritage Tourism” is a widely accepted positive element in attracting visitors. Also, the preservation and maintenance of historically designated buildings is environmentally responsible compared to recent trends toward demolition and replacement. Historic preservation can include providing benefits to facilitate historic designations; and people may disagree on whether such trade-offs are positive or negative in a given neighborhood setting.

### Aspen Through the Years

Aspen has an exciting history of pioneering spirit and innovation, including its establishment as a silver mining town in 1880 and its mid-century renaissance with the creation of the ski industry in the late 1930s and the Aspen Idea after World War II.

Between 1880 and 1892 Aspen grew to become the third largest city in Colorado, behind Denver and Leadville. In 1893, Congress repealed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act and Aspen’s development as a silver mining community quickly declined. Aspen’s population dropped from 12,000 residents in 1893 to just 3,300 by 1900. The town settled into its quiet years until the creation of a downhill ski run by Andre Roch aptly called “Roch Run Trail” or “the Roch.” Just after World War II in 1946, Aspen permanently carved out a place among international ski resorts in Europe with the longest chairlift in the world – Lift 1. Around the same time, industrialist Walter Paepcke and his wife Elizabeth began promoting Aspen as an intellectual center. The Paepckes had a clear vision for the town and brought influential and celebrated artists, writers, and thinkers to Aspen which led to the creation of the Aspen Institute, Aspen Center for Physics, and Aspen Music Festival to name a few, and ultimately led to the development of the Aspen Idea – the pursuit of mind, body and spirit.

# Historic Preservation Policies

# Policy Categories

## I. SHARING THE ASPEN STORY

I.1. Raise public awareness and appreciation for the Aspen story.

*Collaborative Initiative*

## II. UPDATING THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

II.1. Ensure that city codes support innovative development while respecting the historic integrity of designated structures and ensuring compatibility with the surrounding context in terms of site coverage, mass, scale, height and form. (See Managing Growth/Commercial Sector/Policy IV.1)

*Work Program for Planning, Proposed Code Amendment*

II.2. Ensure that the Historic Preservation Benefits Package encourages owners of landmark property to preserve structures to the highest possible degree of historic integrity while minimizing adverse impacts to the neighborhood.

*Work Program for Planning Department*

II.3. Maximize the use of the City's Historic Transferable Development Right Program (TDR) as a method of preserving the historic integrity of designated structures.

*Work Program for Planning Department*

## III. PUBLIC SECTOR

III.1. The public sector should set an example as a responsible steward of preservation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings.

*Work Program for Planning and Asset Management Departments*

## IV. PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE INTERIORS

IV.1. Explore code changes to preserve exceptional character-defining historic interiors in publicly accessible buildings.

*Proposed Code Amendment*

## V. REVIEW PROCESS & ENFORCEMENT

V.1. The Historic Preservation Commission's review process should be positive, productive and fair, with a high level of integrity, consistency and collaboration.

*Work Program for Planning Department and HPC*

V.2. Routinely and fairly enforce property specific approvals.

*Work Program for Planning Department and HPC*

# Historic Preservation Policies

# Policy Categories

## VI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM EDUCATION

VI.1. Improve public awareness and understanding of the City and County Historic Preservation Programs.

*Collaborative Initiative*

## VII. ENERGY EFFICIENCY

VII.1. All existing and future historic landmark properties should be maintained in a manner that improves energy efficiency while maintaining historic integrity.

*Proposed Code Amendment*