

# PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

May 5, 2025



PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION

**Project Name & Address:** Five-Year Check-In on City of Madison Historic Preservation Plan

**Legistar File ID #** [83866](#)

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## Background

The Common Council adopted the [City of Madison Historic Preservation Plan](#) in 2020. While staff provides information in our annual reports to the commission on work that addresses priorities from the preservation plan, here at this five year point of operating under the plan is an opportunity to talk about how we have been implementing the plan. Below is a brief discussion of the priority items from the preservation plan.

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## Preservation Plan Priority Strategies

1A-i. Place plaques at existing buildings and places, lost buildings, and cultural sites to identify significant historical events and locations.

This is partially addressed with our landmark plaques, but is also going to be implemented with our new historic marker program. Work on this item is ongoing.

1A-iii. Develop tourism marketing and branding materials that highlight historic attractions in the city.

We have made our [Underrepresented Communities Historic Resources Survey](#) and our [Cultural Walking Tours](#) available on our website for public use. In addition, our community partners and some businesses are making use of this research to promote and educate on Madison's heritage.

1D-i. Coordinate an urban design program to visually promote City-owned historic buildings and places.

This item is partially addressed with the [Engineering Division's page on historic preservation](#) with city-owned properties.

2A-i. Determine which types of buildings and places are underrepresented in the current historic resources inventory.

This is being addressed in our ongoing survey projects in the City. Work is ongoing with this item.

2C-ii. Develop a "Top 10 Historic Buildings and Places to Preserve" exhibit or program.

3A-i. Develop a database of properties that are eligible for historic tax credits.

While an initial phase of this work appears on the landing page for the City's historic preservation program, we need to make it more user-friendly and searchable. Work is ongoing with this item.

3A-ii. Encourage adaptive reuse as an affordable housing option.

This is addressed in the [2019 Equitable Development](#) study.

4A-iii. Develop a document that outlines the development proposal review process and criteria for historic properties to educate staff, departments, committees, and the public.

Staff has developed an archaeological compliance training for City agencies and information on the landmarking process is available on our website. Proposed areas of significance appear in the [Area Plans](#). There is detailed guidance and a video on our website to help property owners navigate the Certificate of Appropriateness process. More work is needed on compiling the development review process.

4D-iii. Prepare illustrated design guidelines for buildings and places within historic districts, including those outside period of significance.

The design guidelines are complete, [available on our website](#), and we regularly direct property owners to them as they plan their projects. This has been very successful.

4E-i. Consider properties with existing National Register of Historic Places designation and those identified through future survey work for local designation.

With the [Area Plan](#) process, staff is providing information on properties with historic value and identifying properties that could benefit from each of the types of historic designation. The Area Plans include information on the benefits of each type of designation and the recommendation that we are happy to work with property owners to accomplish a historic designation. Our community partners, primarily the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation, has also been working with property owners who wish to seek Madison Landmark designation.

5A-i. Utilize a variety of tools, both digital and in-person, to gather and post information about Madison's history, diversity, and culture.

Staff engages in public presentations, both in-person and virtual, and we have modified our website to include previous walking tours the City helped to develop. In addition our community partners provide information on Madison's rich and diverse history. Work is ongoing with this item.

5B-i. Reach out to local underrepresented groups to gather additional information about buildings, places, or events that should be part of Madison's story.

This work is happening under ongoing survey work. Work is ongoing with this item.

5B-iii. Utilize social media to announce events and engage the public on historic preservation practices, events, policies, and projects.

With our new public information officers for the City, this process has become easier. Our community partners also engage with the public. Staff also participates in webinars and outreach events for the public and preservation professionals.

6A-i. Create interactive websites, online articles, exhibits, and tours on the benefits of preservation.

Our community partners and some businesses are utilizing the information that we have available on our website for talking about the benefits of historic preservation. We also regularly update our website to try and make it more accessible and informative. There is more work we could be doing on this front.