



City of Franklin

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Meeting Agenda

Civil War Historical Commission

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

10:00 AM

Eastern Flank Event Facility

Comments on agenda items may be made in person or by emailing PlanningIntake@FranklinTN.gov before noon on the day of the meeting. Emailed comments will be provided to the Commission and included in the minutes, but not read aloud in their entirety during the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

CITIZEN COMMENTS (Open for citizens to be heard on any issue or concern, including those related to items on the agenda. Please submit a Speaker Card at the beginning of the meeting if you would like to address the Commission. If you would like to speak on an agenda item, the Chair will hold your comment until the public comment period associated with the item. As provided by law, the Commission shall make no decisions or consideration of action of citizen comments for items not on the agenda, except to refer the matter to the Planning Director/Staff for administrative consideration, or to a schedule the matter for consideration at a later date. Those addressing the Commission are requested to come to the microphone and identify themselves by name and address for the official record. The Chair may restrict the period for public comment, including the length of the public comment period, the number of individuals who can speak and the length of time each individual may speak. When time allows, the standard individual public comment time is two minutes.)

Comments on agenda items may be made in person or by emailing PlanningIntake@FranklinTN.gov before noon on the day of the meeting. Comments will be submitted for the record.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion Of The Preservation Plan Update.

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURN

Anyone needing accommodations due to disabilities please contact the ADA Coordinator at 615-791-3277 at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.



Draft Themes Goals & Recommendations

April 21, 2026 (Version 3)

Preserving Franklin's Historic Resources

Franklin's buildings, landscapes, battlefields, and other physical resources embody and make visible the city's history. Together, these resources form the foundation of this Preservation Plan and the ongoing efforts to value and maintain them for future generations. Preserving historic resources takes many forms, including incentives and regulations, proactive documentation of understudied or unrecognized places, and ensuring that planning processes prioritize the places that matter to people.

Franklin's historic fabric is both a cornerstone of community identity, and a major influence on economic vitality, attracting residents, visitors, and reinvestment. In many ways, Franklin's historic character is its identity. As a result of saving so much of its history, the city has attracted an influx of population and real estate investment, intensifying development pressures in recent years. Among the most important functions of this Plan is to identify tools and policies that can help Franklin navigate the pressures associated with growth while sustaining the character that defines it.

As Franklin's preservation work advances, one of the issues to be addressed includes updating the documentation of existing resources through survey and inventory initiatives. Survey and inventory data should include baseline documentation (i.e., historical data, architectural descriptions, significance rating, condition, photographs, GIS mapping) as well as preliminary recommendations on the potential eligibility of identified resources for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or as part of the Historic Preservation Overlay.

Summary of Challenges:

- Some historic resources have not been documented or protected, which is challenging in a period of sustained development pressure and population growth.

- Conducting historic resource surveys can be challenging due to cost and time constraints.
- Many of Franklin's early and mid-20th century homes and neighborhoods are not protected by the Historic Preservation Overlay and are vulnerable to demolition and out of scale new construction.
- Several significant homes listed in the National Register that represent Franklin's early history and development are not locally designated as Local Landmarks, making them susceptible to encroaching development and demolition.
- In a time of accelerating land values and population growth, preserving historic fabric can be at odds with market pressures, leading to a loss of historic resources outside the HPO.
- Franklin's most vulnerable communities and areas susceptible to change require additional preservation tools and incentives that encourage preservation.
- Demolition by neglect sometimes results in prolonged periods of disrepair and the loss of historic buildings in cases where demolition is not otherwise permitted.

Goal: Develop a research design and methodology for the Historic Resource Inventory.

Recommendations:

- **Establish a structured framework and overall strategy for management of the historic resources inventory.**

The framework and methodology should be based on best practices for how often historic resource surveys should be updated, how non-surveyed areas will be added over time, and how future survey efforts will be planned, funded, and managed. Initial steps should include establishing a survey update methodology (e.g., describing

tasks and level of effort) and a prioritized survey schedule. The schedule may be adjusted based on local issues or threats to resources that may arise.

Survey work should be prioritized and phased into manageable scopes that align with available funding, staff capacity, and near-term planning and development activity.

- **Pursue grant funding to implement the framework and strategy.**

Certified Local Government (CLG) grant funding through the Tennessee Historical Commission (THC) can support phased updates to past surveys or new historic resource surveys. Funded survey projects require a 40 percent local match.

Goal: Update and expand Franklin's Historic Resource Survey and Inventory Program.

Recommendations:

- **Update areas where historic resource surveys are outdated.**

Existing surveys that are more than five years old should be updated. This includes the 2007 Historic Resources Inventory, which surveyed much of the community, and the 2017 Franklin Historic Resources Survey Update, which surveyed the Downtown Franklin Historic District and portions of Columbia Avenue. Examples include Highland Gardens, James Subdivision, Ewingville, West Meade, Battle Ground Park (Battle Avenue), as well as individual listings.

- **Conduct historic resource surveys and establish historic resource inventories in areas not previously surveyed.**

New surveys should prioritize places facing demolition or redevelopment pressure, such as historic resources adjacent to or near properties protected by Historic Preservation Overlays,

historically Black neighborhoods, mid-twentieth-century residential subdivisions, fringe neighborhoods, and farms. Survey initiatives are sometimes met with neighborhood opposition, so survey resources should also prioritize areas with public support for the effort. See the Future Survey Area map below.

Future Survey Areas may include (in approximate chronological order of development):

- **Survey Area 1: Hillsboro Road** (excluding Franklin High School). The survey area extends along Hillsboro Road between Del Rio Pike and Mack Hatcher Memorial Parkway and includes Ranch, Minimal Traditional, Colonial Revival, and Tudor Revival homes constructed between c. 1938-1961.
- **Survey Area 2: Hill Estates Subdivision** - Platted in 1953, the survey area is located north of Liberty Pike and includes Ranch and Split-Level homes.
- **Survey Area 3: West Meade Subdivision** - Platted in 1961, the survey area is located just west of West Main Street and includes Ranch homes and one-story brick apartment buildings.
- **Survey Area 4: Ewingville Subdivision** - Platted in 1963, the survey area is located south of Murfreesboro Road and includes Ranch, Split-Level, and Colonial Revival homes.
- **Survey Area 5: Harpeth Meadows Subdivision** - Platted in 1967, the survey area extends along Lancaster Drive west from Franklin Road ending in a cul-de-sac and includes Ranch homes - many in the Colonial Revival style.
- **Survey Area 6: Westfield Estates Subdivision** - Platted in 1968, the survey area is located west of Central Franklin and north of Highway 96 and includes Colonial Revival, Contemporary, Ranch, Massed Two-Story, and Split-Level homes.

- **Survey Area 7: Rebel Meadows Subdivision** - Platted in 1970, the survey area is located west of Hillsboro Road and adjacent to the north of the Magnolia Place Subdivision and includes Ranch homes.
- **Survey Area 8: Cadet Homes Subdivision** - Platted in 1971, the survey area is located north of Liberty Pike and includes Minimal Traditional, Cape Cod, Ranch, Split-Level, and Colonial Revival homes.
- **Survey Area 9: Royal Oaks Subdivision 1** - Platted in 1971, the survey area comprises the south half of the subdivision and is located east of Mack Hatcher Memorial Parkway and north of Murfreesboro Road and includes Ranch, Split-Level, Colonial Revival, and Classical Revival homes.
- **Survey Area 10: Royal Oaks Subdivision 2** - Platted in 1971, the survey area comprises the north half of the subdivision and is located east of Mack Hatcher Memorial Parkway and south of Liberty Pike and includes Ranch, Massed Two-Story, Colonial Revival, and Classical Revival homes.
- **Survey Area 11: Idlewood Subdivision** - Platted in 1974, the survey area is located west of Central Franklin and adjacent to the north of the Westfield Estates Subdivision and includes Colonial Revival, Contemporary, Ranch, Massed Two-Story, and Split-Level homes.
- **Survey Area 12: Magnolia Place Subdivision** - Platted in 1978, the survey area is located north of Del Rio Pike and west of Hillsboro Road and includes Ranch, Split-Level, and Massed Two-Story homes.
- **Survey Area 13: Yorktown Subdivision** - Platted in 1978, the survey area is located south of Murfreesboro Road and includes Ranch, Cape Cod, Massed Two-Story, and Colonial Revival homes.

- **Survey Area 14: Heritage Manor Subdivision (platted 1979) and Heritage Place Subdivision (platted 1981)** - The survey area is located east of Mack Hatcher Memorial Parkway and north of Murfreesboro Road and includes duplexes and the Heritage Place Apartments.

MAP of Future Survey Areas

- **Identify and survey special character resource types.**

Conducting historic resource surveys will allow the creation of inventories of resource types that add to the special character of Franklin, such as stone walls, roadside historic markers, memorials, monuments, cemeteries, and designed landscapes (e.g., parks, gardens, road corridors, farms). Surveys and inventories may include non-traditional documentation methods, such as spreadsheets and cloud-based databases that can be updated on a regular basis. Surveys should include GIS mapping.

- **Ensure historic resource survey and inventory data are available to the public.**

Historic resource surveys and inventories should be published on readily available public platforms and updated every 5-10 years so the survey data can inform privately funded residential and commercial developments, as well as local, state, and federal undertakings (e.g., telecommunication towers, electrical substations and transmission lines, underground utility lines, transportation improvements).

The survey data should also include preliminary recommendations by the City for Historic Preservation Overlay designation and formal determinations of eligibility by the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office (TN-SHPO) for listing in the National Register, which is crucial information for private developers to conduct due

diligence and for local, state, and federal agencies in complying with environmental regulations.

Goal: Establish a targeted and context-sensitive approach to expanding the Historic Preservation Overlay (HPO).

Recommendations

- **Define criteria for evaluating HPO expansion.**

Expansion of the HPO should be guided by a clear and consistent set of criteria that reflects Franklin's local context. In addition to architectural and historical significance, evaluation should consider factors such as development pressure, neighborhood cohesion, presence of contributing resources, and the degree to which designation would meaningfully influence outcomes. Not all eligible areas require the same level of protection, and designation should be applied where it can have the greatest impact in shaping change.

- **Focus on areas experiencing change or reinvestment.**

HPO expansion should be used proactively in areas where reinvestment, infill development, or land value increases are already occurring. Applying preservation tools in these contexts can help guide development outcomes before patterns of incompatible change become established. This may include areas adjacent to existing districts, historic neighborhoods outside the current HPO, or corridors where historic resources remain but are increasingly under pressure.

- **Align expansion with neighborhood readiness.**

Successful HPO expansion requires a level of understanding and support from property owners and residents. Early outreach and engagement as part of the evaluation process can ensure that communities understand what designation means, how it functions,

and what benefits and responsibilities it carries. More importantly, outreach efforts should proactively address common misconceptions and past misunderstandings about historic designation, providing clear, accessible information that builds trust and helps residents make informed decisions about participation. This will entail phased approaches and preparatory efforts that build awareness before formal designation is pursued.

- **Integrate HPO expansion with survey data and long-term planning.**

Expansion efforts should be closely tied to updated survey and inventory data, as well as broader planning initiatives. As new information becomes available, the City should regularly reassess areas of eligibility and vulnerability, using this data to inform both near-term designation opportunities and long-term preservation priorities.

This creates a more dynamic and responsive system where HPO expansion is part of an ongoing planning process rather than a one-time action.

- **Designate new Historic Districts through the Historic Preservation Overlay that are significant to Franklin's early and mid-20th century history and development.**

Franklin's expansion in the 20th century resulted in numerous neighborhoods featuring Bungalows from the 1920s, Minimal Traditional homes from the 1930s-1940s, and a mixture of Ranch and Split-Level homes from the 1950s-1970s. Architectural styles include Folk Traditional, Craftsman, Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, and Contemporary. These homes also represent a large portion of Franklin's smaller, more affordable housing options. Preserving these neighborhoods not only protects the city's early and mid-20th century architecture and development history but also ensures that these affordable housing types remain in use. Construction dates were obtained from the 2007 Franklin Historic Resources Survey

Inventory. See the Potential Landmarks and Historic Districts map below.

The consideration of new Historic Districts should include Murfreesboro Road from Pinkerton Park east to Ralston Lane (c. 1873-1970), including three homes on Eddy Lane; Columbia Avenue between Jennings Street and Fairground Street (c. 1900-1972); Battle Avenue (c. 1924-1960); eight homes at 413-431 North Petway Drive (c. 1925-1948); Cleburne Street (c. 1929-1965); Eastview Subdivision (c. 1939-1961); Green Acres Subdivision (c. 1940-1959); Highland Gardens Subdivision (c. 1941-1967); James Subdivision (c. 1954-1960); and School Manor Subdivision (c. 1954-1969).

- **Designate properties listed in the National Register or identified in previous historic resource surveys as Local Landmarks through the Historic Preservation Overlay.**

Franklin's individual National Register properties represent a range of architectural styles, building types, and development periods that reflect the city's long and diverse heritage. While most of these properties are protected through Historic Preservation Overlay designation, a small group of them - particularly along the city's periphery - remain unprotected. In addition, past surveys have identified properties that may qualify as potential Local Landmarks. Designating these properties as Local Landmarks can provide increased public awareness of Franklin's storied history and architecture while encouraging their preservation and preventing the loss of these important historic resources. See the Potential Landmarks and Historic Districts map below.

Potential Local Landmarks include the following National Register properties:

- 1400 Adams Street, in the Adams Street National Register Historic District but excluded from the Local Historic District

- 608 Fair Street, in the Hincheyville National Register Historic District but excluded from the Local Historic District
- Collins Farm and Park, 418 Lewisburg Avenue
- Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 615 W. Main Street, in the Hincheyville National Register Historic District but excluded from the Local Historic District
- Hamilton-Brown House, 845 Old Charlotte Pike
- Harris-McEwen House, 612 Fair Street, in the Hincheyville National Register Historic District but excluded from the Local Historic District
- Hodge, Robert House, 409 Madison Court
- Knights of Pythias Pavilion/Carlisle House, 1015 Carlisle Lane
- McGavock-Gaines House, Riverside, 1008 Culpepper Lane
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 510 W. Main Street
- Vaughn, Andrew House, 501 Murfreesboro Road

Potential Local Landmarks identified in past surveys:

- 425 Cummins Street
- 915 Columbia Avenue
- 919 Columbia Avenue
- 1005 Columbia Avenue
- 1029 Columbia Avenue
- 1224 Columbia Avenue
- 1261 Columbia Avenue
- American Legion Post 215, 510 11th Avenue N.

Map of Potential Landmarks and Historic Districts

Goal: Establish a proactive preservation forecasting and monitoring system.

Recommendations

- **Develop a vulnerability index for historic resources.**

Using its inventory of historic resources as a baseline, preservation advocates should monitor properties and areas showing indications of increased land value, heightened building permit activity, infrastructure expansion projects, and an increased number of demolition requests to develop a vulnerability index for historic resources. The index can serve as an early warning system for threatened resources to allow for proactive measures in curbing demolition through education and incentive programs or Historic Preservation Overlay designation. Consider utilizing a GIS-based mapping system to track key index indicators annually.

- **Establish a rolling coming-of-age property inventory.**

Mid-20th century neighborhoods and properties should be tracked as they become potentially eligible for listing in the National Register or for Historic Preservation Overlay designation. Consider using a GIS-based mapping system to track and prioritize neighborhoods and properties for designation or other historic preservation efforts.

- **Establish a rolling update of existing National Register nominations.**

National Register nominations should be revisited every 10 years to ensure that each district's property inventory is accurate, and to amend the boundary and period of significance, where applicable. Updates should include properties that have become eligible as contributing properties through restoration or the passage of time. Consider amending the Significance statement to reflect important stories, people, or events not included in the original nomination.

Coordinate revised nominations and inventories with the Tennessee Historical Commission.

- **Prepare emerging historic neighborhoods and property owners for future eligibility.**

Franklin is home to many mid-20th century neighborhoods that are now potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or designated as part of the Historic Preservation Overlay. Many property owners within these areas are likely unaware of their potential eligibility or the benefits of historic preservation, such as technical advice on building maintenance and rehabilitation, potential financial incentives, and the stabilization of property values through historic district designation. Creating an education and outreach program, that includes neighborhood histories, information on mid-century architecture and development, and the benefits of preservation can help prepare property owners for any future preservation or designation activities. This initiative may also be a way to identify future preservation leaders.

- **Periodically review the Demolition Approval Criteria as outlined within the Historic District Design Guidelines.**

The Historic District Design Guidelines outline the criteria to be used by the Historic Zoning Commission when reviewing a request to demolish a building within the HPO. Currently, the criteria include loss of architectural and historical integrity, economic hardship, and structural instability or deterioration confirmed by a structural engineer. The City should review these criteria on an annual basis to ensure they remain applicable or if additional criteria should be added based on new data, mitigating circumstances, and best practices.

Goal: Mitigate demolition by neglect to prevent the loss of historic properties through prolonged disrepair.

Recommendations

- **Assess common causes and patterns of building disrepair.**

Common causes of maintenance and repair issues in Franklin's historic neighborhoods may include absentee ownership, investor speculation, high rehabilitation costs, or complex family ownership. Understanding the underlying causes will help to develop targeted solutions for enforcement and support.

- **Adopt a Demolition by Neglect ordinance.**

The City should explore the creation of a standalone demolition-by-neglect ordinance or incorporate related regulatory language into its Zoning Ordinance. The ordinance language should clearly define what constitutes demolition by neglect, the property owner's affirmative responsibility to maintain the condition of their historic building, and outline specific fines, criminal penalties, or other remedies the City may take to ensure compliance. Conditions of neglect may include, but are not limited to, deterioration of roofs, walls, foundations, structural members, masonry, building enclosures, porches, exterior stairs, and architectural detailing.

- **Review common hardship provisions and accommodations.**

Hardship provisions may include income-based relief, delayed compliance schedules, grant or loan referrals, or other assistance. The City should determine how these could be incorporated into Franklin's Zoning Ordinance and regulatory framework.

- **Review existing City building codes, enforcement policies, and enforcement staff capacity.**

City building codes should be reviewed to identify gaps or challenges in enforcement efforts. This can include proactive enforcement, higher fines to deter investor neglect, nuisance mitigation agreements, and related tools. The assessment should be used to strengthen codes, enforcement, related regulations, and monitoring.

Protecting Community Character

Protecting community character means preserving the qualities of Franklin that attract people to live, work, and visit. These include preserving authenticity of place, protecting older and historic homes as attainable housing, reinforcing neighborhood fabric, promoting context-sensitive infill, maintaining the character of streetscapes and natural landscapes.

Protecting character in a city where land values continue to rise, and where market demand to live near the historic core remains strong, is a particular challenge. Higher land values and the attractiveness of historic neighborhoods have had an adverse effect on some buildings, encouraging the replacement of modest older and historic homes with larger new construction. The demolition and replacement of existing homes can result in gradual changes to the physical fabric of neighborhoods in and around the city's historic core.

New development also has the potential to gradually change the character of Franklin's streetscapes and natural environment. The city's roadways and corridors play an important role in shaping the connections between neighborhoods and destinations, expressed through historic paving patterns, street trees, signage, and property setbacks. At the same time, some streets and streetscapes present opportunities for improvement, such as adding sidewalks and other pedestrian-friendly features to better connect places. More broadly, natural elements, including hillsides, hilltops, ridgelines, farmland, and river corridors, have long defined Franklin's physical form. Together with key viewsheds, these features are essential to how both residents and visitors experience and understand the community as a place.

Franklin's continued success brings with it the responsibility to retain the city's character. This includes identifying and applying market-based tools, innovative planning approaches, public-private partnerships, and strategic regulations that help balance reinvestment with preservation of the qualities that define Franklin.

Summary of Challenges:

- High land values create a barrier to preserving attainable housing, particularly in the absence of targeted tools or market interventions.
- Rising property values are contributing to the loss of cultural and built heritage in historically Black neighborhoods as family descendants may be unable to afford property taxes or may prefer to realize the appreciation of their property by selling.
- Franklin's most vulnerable communities and areas most susceptible to change need meaningful preservation tools and incentives that mitigate, where possible, the cost of preservation.
- New and infill development should continue to enhance the character of the city, add to Franklin's quality of place, and reinforce Franklin's established character.
- Many of Franklin's cultural and historical sites lack sidewalk connectivity, which limits pedestrian access within and between locations.
- Ongoing new development has the potential to erode the historic character of Franklin's streetscapes and gateways.
- Natural landscapes, such as the rural and natural landscapes and viewsheds surrounding Franklin, remain at risk to ongoing growth and development pressures.

Goal: Facilitate the acquisition, rehabilitation, and affordable resale of older and historic homes.

Recommendations

- **Establish a preservation and affordability-focused revolving loan fund.**

A revolving loan can assist with the acquisition, rehabilitation, and affordable resale of older and historic homes in Franklin. The potential establishment of a fund could begin by designating a

working group to assess the opportunities and challenges associated with a revolving loan fund. The exploration may include conducting a revolving loan fund feasibility study to determine the scope, need, funding model, and lending policies for a fund. The 1772 Foundation, a national funder of preservation initiatives, offers grants to support revolving fund studies.

Further actions will include raising resources to capitalize the fund and identifying a lead organization to manage and implement the program. The management entity could be the City of Franklin, a local or regional housing and community development organization, or a community development finance institution. Local leaders should explore the revolving loan fund programs created and maintained in regional cities, such as Knoxville and Chattanooga.

- **Establish a Community Land Trust (CLT) to preserve long-term affordability in older and historic neighborhoods.**

Community Land Trusts can support housing access and attainability in neighborhoods experiencing speculative teardowns amidst rising property values. An exploration of feasibility should begin with the establishment of a working group of City officials, housing and community development organizations, and Franklin residents to assess the benefits and challenges of establishing a CLT. The process should include an evaluation of existing CLT models regionally and nationally - especially those CLTs with a focus on rehabilitating existing homes - for models and lessons learned applicable to Franklin.

Further exploration should include assessing potential neighborhoods or community areas that could benefit from a CLT. Likely candidates for a CLT are traditionally affordable neighborhoods now experiencing rapid rise in home values, speculative development, and tear downs - such as Hard Bargain, Natchez Street, and other areas adjacent to the HPOs.

Funding will need to be of an appropriate scale to support the acquisition and rehabilitation of homes to be added to the CLT. Recognizing that affordability anywhere in Franklin is a concern, property acquisition for inclusion in a CLT will be costly. Additional subsidy may be required to keep projects affordable in neighborhoods where prices are rapidly appreciating.

- **Establish a home repair resource program to provide education and technical assistance to homeowners.**

A home repair resource program offers technical assistance to homeowners (as distinguished from financial resources) making repairs to their older and historic residences. In addition to supporting homeowners with information, the program should also seek to educate them on best practices in preservation, including following the Secretary of Interior's Standards and the Franklin Historic District Design Guidelines. Programming might include:

- Hosting educational workshops and seminars on topics such as roof repair and replacement, masonry repair and maintenance, window repair and replacement, flood damage prevention, or energy efficiency.
- Producing reference materials or recommendations on home repair and rehabilitation topics such exterior home maintenance, kitchen and bath rehabilitation, historically sensitive additions, accessory dwelling units, and energy efficiency.
- Organizing "Ask an Expert" events with local architects, contractors, City inspectors, and historic preservation staff to help residents plan and evaluate home repair projects.
- Developing an accessible database of local preservation contractors, architects, window restoration companies, and other tradespeople and professionals with demonstrated expertise in the repair and rehabilitation of older and historic properties.

Goal: Strengthen the City's Emergency Repair Program to help low and moderate-income homeowners with critical repairs.

Recommendations

- **Identify and secure funds for the grant program.**

Historically funded through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement allocations, these grants have more recently been deployed to other City needs. New funding may come from municipal allocation or other sources.

- **Review the types of repairs eligible under the program, along with eligibility criteria.**

Repair projects such as porch and roof replacement; foundation repairs; upgrades to mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems; and other improvements necessary to correct active building code violations may be eligible for emergency repair funds. The City should review eligibility criteria (such as income thresholds, owner-occupancy requirements, and focused geographies) to get the maximum benefit from available funds.

Goal: Encourage a context-driven approach to infill development that supports local character and ensures compatibility with existing development.

Recommendations

- **Amend the section of Franklin's Zoning Ordinance that regulates transitional areas adjacent to Historic Preservation Overlay districts.**

Amending the relevant zoning (Chapter 8 of the Zoning Ordinance) can strengthen design guidance for residential infill and edge conditions, resulting in better outcomes.

The process should begin with an assessment of recent and ongoing development in the transitional zones adjacent to Historic Preservation Overlay (HPO) districts to identify potential compatibility issues in terms of height, massing, and scale relative to existing historic businesses and residences. Additional public outreach (such as listening sessions, interviews, and surveys) can help to gauge community preferences for the appropriate character and scale of new development adjacent to HPOs.

Using the information gathered, compare the findings of the development assessment and community preferences to what is currently required under Chapter 8 of the Zoning Ordinance and revise code requirements as needed to enhance planning and design in the transitional areas.

- **Ensure context-sensitive design for commercial and mixed-use infill.**

Where commercial and mixed-use developments are permitted in historic districts, infill buildings should be context-sensitive so they are of similar massing, scale, and character of the existing historic buildings around them. This ensures that new development complements, rather than detracts from, the historic structures in the district.

- **Promote Neighborhood Conservation Overlays (NCOs).**

Neighborhood Conservation Overlays can help maintain the scale of neighborhoods where use of the Historic Preservation Overlay (HPO) is not feasible or desired by residents. This includes mitigating the replacement of small homes with non-contextual larger homes (commonly called “teardowns”). The process should start with gaining an understanding of why existing NCO regulations are underutilized and the identification of neighborhoods that would benefit from a NCO. Neighborhoods with significant ongoing new development, resident preference for lighter regulation, or lack of support for historic designation are

likely candidates. Stakeholders have cited Natchez Street and Hard Bargain as potential opportunity areas for NCO designation.

Building local support for a NCO in priority neighborhoods will require extensive local outreach via block clubs, neighborhood associations, civic groups, churches, and others to educate residents and property owners about the benefits, requirements, and regulatory implications. Additionally, neighborhood residents, businesses, community organizations, and property owners should be engaged in the formation of community-based NCO development and design guidelines.

City staff and other preservation leaders should meet with preservation planners in peer and regional cities to discuss lessons learned and best practices with the development, community engagement, and administration of their NCO programs.

In addition to Natchez Street and Hard Bargain (which have previously been discussed as NCO candidates), other potential NCOs include:

- Carolyn Avenue (105-205) NCO - This potential NCO contains 12 houses on Carolyn Avenue, a street extending between Columbia Avenue and Adams Street. The street consists of mid-20th century Ranch homes built between 1948 and 1962, along with new homes at the east and west ends of the block. The character of the area is defined by modest sized homes setback from the street on narrow deep lots. New construction is taller with greater massing than neighboring existing homes.
- West End Circle (609-820) - This potential NCO contains 47 houses on West End Circle, an arcing street located off North Petway Street. The street consists of Minimal Traditional, Folk Traditional Cottages, and early Ranches built between 1930s and 1950s. A cluster of seven new homes anchors the northwest corner of the block. The character of the area is defined by

modest homes setback from the street on narrow, shallow lots. Recent construction is taller with greater massing than neighboring homes.

Goal: Strengthen streetscapes as a defining component of Franklin's historic character and pedestrian experience.

Recommendations

- **Invest in character-sensitive streetscape improvements.**

Streetscape investments should begin with an understanding of existing elements that contribute to Franklin's character, including historic paving patterns, street trees, building edges, signage, and small-scale features that define the public realm. These elements reflect long-standing development patterns and help reinforce a sense of place that is difficult to replicate once lost. Where these features remain intact, efforts should prioritize their maintenance, repair, and integration into future improvements. As enhancements are introduced, streetscape design should reinforce the architectural and cultural context in which it is located. In areas adjacent to or within historic districts, materials, lighting, furnishings, and plantings should be selected to complement the surrounding environment.

- **Prioritize filling sidewalk gaps within or near historic districts.**

Franklin has made ongoing investments in closing sidewalk gaps across the community, with recent improvements focused on key corridors, school connections, and links between neighborhoods and major destinations. These efforts address a broader pattern of incremental pedestrian networks that have emerged over time as the city has grown.

Building on this work, a targeted assessment should identify and prioritize sidewalk gaps within historic districts and along key

corridors that connect them to surrounding neighborhoods and destinations. Prioritization should consider safety, access to key destinations, and opportunities to strengthen continuity within the pedestrian network. Coordinating sidewalk improvements with broader streetscape and capital projects can help ensure that new investments contribute to a more connected, walkable, and context-sensitive public realm.

- **Define gateways and transitional areas.**

Transitions between different parts of the city are not always clearly legible, particularly where development patterns shift quickly. Streetscape elements such as gateways, paving materials, lighting, signage, landscaping, and street furnishings can be used to subtly signal entry into historic districts or culturally significant areas. Establishing a coordinated approach to these transitions can help reinforce a sense of arrival, strengthen identity, and provide visual continuity without relying on overly prescriptive or thematic design treatments.

Goal: Preserve open spaces and landscapes that contribute to Franklin's historic setting and identity.

Recommendations

- **Identify and prioritize defining landscapes.**

Franklin's identity is shaped as much by its landscape as its buildings. Hills, ridgelines, farmland, and open corridors, particularly along routes like Franklin Road and around areas such as Roper's Knob, frame the city and establish its transition from rural to urbanized. These landscapes are part of how Franklin is experienced and understood. As growth continues, defining landscapes should be prioritized for protection based on visibility, cultural significance, and vulnerability. This effort will also help to establish a guiding structure for future land use decisions.

- **Protect key viewsheds.**

Views to and from historic districts, battlefields, and landmarks are essential to preserving Franklin's sense of place. The visual relationship between downtown and its surrounding hills, as well as the experience of entering the city along scenic corridors, contributes to a layered understanding of its history and setting. Protecting these views goes beyond limiting height; it involves considering building placement, massing, setbacks, and landscape treatment. Maintaining these visual connections ensures that new development does not impact the broader historic context that gives meaning to individual sites.

- **Integrate open space into development review.**

Open space should function as part of the organizing framework for development. In areas shaped by environmental conditions, such as floodplains along the Harpeth River, or in corridors transitioning from rural to developed patterns, open space plays both a functional and cultural role. It supports stormwater management, reinforces historic development patterns, and provides relief within increasingly developed areas. Future development should be structured to work with these systems by clustering intensity, preserving natural features, and reinforcing the spatial patterns that define Franklin's landscape.

- **Expand partnerships to support land conservation.**

Franklin already has a strong foundation of preservation partnerships, as demonstrated through efforts like Harlinsdale Farm and ongoing land conservation initiatives. Expanding this approach will be critical as land values rise and acquisition becomes more challenging. The City should continue working with land trusts, nonprofit partners, and regional organizations to protect key landscapes through a range of tools, including conservation easements, strategic acquisition, land swaps, and incentive-based

approaches. These partnerships can help to ensure that important landscapes remain protected even when public ownership is not feasible.

Conserving Cultural Landscapes

In addition to the buildings, natural landscapes, and scale that shape Franklin's community character, Franklin's identity is equally expressed through its cultural landscapes. Often multi-layered, cultural landscapes sustain long-term histories between people and their environment. Combining works of nature and humankind, cultural landscapes preserve and protect traces of native or historic cultures that have disappeared and places that have spiritual or sacred value. Cultural landscapes may evolve over time, or they may express eras in which an evolutionary process came to an end, either abruptly or over a period.

In Franklin, cultural landscapes consist of places such as Native American archaeological sites, the Harpeth River corridor, the hills and ridges surrounding the city, cemeteries and burial places, military battlefields, and public spaces. Many of these cultural landscapes have layers of historical significance, such as Native American sites and Civil War battlefields or military encampments. The Harpeth River corridor is a dynamic natural resource important for its association with Native American sites, agricultural farmland, transportation history, and recreation uses.

As Franklin continues to grow and develop, cultural landscapes remain at risk, particularly those that are not easily identifiable or visible, including below-ground archaeological sites and unmarked burial places. Some landscapes also carry layered and often sensitive histories, including the Courthouse Square and Civil War battlefields. Franklin is challenged with finding the appropriate balance in protecting its historical significance while recognizing that growth and change may influence how these landscapes evolve over time.

Summary of Challenges:

- Cemeteries and burial places require additional identification and documentation, especially those with unmarked graves.
- Historic farms, agricultural lands, and scenic viewsheds are at risk of being lost or diminished due to ongoing rapid growth.

- Additional research and study are needed to document and interpret historic and archaeological resources along the Harpeth River.
- Franklin residents and visitors currently have limited recreational access to the Harpeth River and its historic and natural amenities
- Some Native American archaeological sites lack identification and protection. Advocacy is needed to ensure the conservation of these sites as sacred places to Native people and their descendants.

Goal: Identify and preserve Franklin's cultural landscapes.

Recommendations

- **Create a digital inventory of historic cemeteries for their preservation management.**

An inventory of cemeteries should be established, either through a City-led initiative or through a public-private collaborative. Responsibilities in conducting the inventories may vary depending on cemetery ownership. Once a lead entity is identified, it should establish the content and format of the database and link it with GIS-based mapping software for easy identification and assessment of cemetery locations. The entity should collect existing data on historic cemeteries from the Tennessee Historic Cemeteries Viewer, paper records maintained by the Williamson County Archives, and information shared by owners. As the database is compiled, efforts should be made to identify cemeteries eligible for listing in the NRHP and/or that should be protected by local preservation zoning overlays.

- **Create a digital database of historic farms and open spaces for preservation**

Historic farms and other character-defining open spaces should be inventoried. Database maintenance responsibility could be assigned to a City department or a public-private collaborative. Once a lead

entity is identified, it should establish the format and content of the database and link it with GIS-based mapping software for ready identification and evaluation of historic farm sites. The inventory manager should collect existing information on historic farms and longtime agricultural lands from the Tennessee Century Farm Program maintained by MTSU's Center for Historic Preservation, THC's historic resource survey, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, and other local repositories. As the database is compiled, efforts should be made to identify historic farms eligible for listing in the NRHP and/or that should be protected by local preservation zoning overlays.

- **Explore use of land trusts to preserve farmland at risk of future development**

Land trusts are nonprofit organizations that protect farmland, open space, and natural areas primarily through conservation easements. (This is a different type of land trust than recommended in the "Protecting Community Character" theme.) A conservation easement is a voluntary, legally binding agreement in which a landowner limits certain uses of their property, often restricting subdivision, commercial use, or other intensive development. In exchange, the landowner may qualify for federal, state, and/or local tax benefits and, in some cases, other financial incentives. The easement is held and enforced by the nonprofit land trust entity and is permanent, meaning it remains attached to the land even if ownership changes. As a result, the property continues to be protected (such as retaining its agricultural use) when it is sold or passed on to heirs.

Case Study: Leiper's Fork Conservation Easements

Leiper's Fork, an unincorporated rural village in Williamson County, has permanently protected scenic, agricultural, and historic land from development through the use of conservation easements.

These voluntary legal agreements were facilitated by The Land Trust for Tennessee for the purpose of maintaining rural landscapes and the easements permanently limit future subdivision and development. The Land Trust for Tennessee owns and holds the easements and performs yearly monitoring to ensure compliance with the terms.

Goal: Improve connectivity with the Harpeth River Corridor to facilitate recreational uses while simultaneously conserving the multi-layered cultural landscape.

Recommendations

- **Identify and preserve existing historical and archaeological resources along the Harpeth River corridor.**

Local preservation partners should commission an assessment for the Harpeth River Corridor to determine areas of high sensitivity for below-ground archaeological resources. This assessment should be done concurrently with a historic resource survey that documents and evaluates above-ground cultural resources. Based on the findings of these studies, local partners should develop a plan to incorporate cultural and natural resources into the conservation of the Harpeth River Corridor.

- **Amend Franklin's existing Archaeological Ordinance**

The City's Municipal Code should be amended to allow for the salvage of archaeological resources if development of sensitive sites occurs along the Harpeth River Corridor. The amended ordinance should clarify which department is responsible for regulatory enforcement. Additionally, the amended ordinance should have mechanisms in place to allow for the protection of undocumented as well as documented archaeological resources.

- **Expand public access to the Harpeth River Corridor to allow for passive recreational opportunities.**

As part of creating improved public access to the Harpeth River Corridor, consider creating low-impact multimodal walkways and interpretative signage along the river, whether through easements and/or land acquisition. This effort should be informed by the proposed Harpeth River trail segments outlined in the 2010 Franklin Greenway and Open Space Master Plan. Expansion of recreational river access should also consider accessibility needs for disabled populations.

Goal: Protect and preserve archaeological sites against potential development threats.

Recommendations

- **Develop funding strategies for archaeological investigations.**

Archaeological investigations will depend on identifying funding sources to support work in high sensitivity areas that are most likely to be subject to future redevelopment, such as agricultural farmland and embankments along the Harpeth River Corridor.

- **Expand the inventory of known archaeological sites and resources.**

The City and its partners should contract a Cultural Resources Management consulting firm to identify areas with known or suspected archaeological significance in Franklin. The identification methodology should include both prehistoric (Native American) and historic archaeological sites, such as military battlefields and homes of the enslaved. Research and evaluation should be conducted in cooperation with the Tennessee Division of Archaeology.

- **Study the potential for creating an Archaeology Overlay Zone.**

An Archaeology Overlay Zone (AOZ) would protect potential archaeological sites and resources from development. Because an AOZ could have significant impacts on costs and construction schedules for homeowners and developers, this process should begin with a study of methods, other model AOZs, and how the new zone(s) would be implemented and administered.

Preserving Civil War Resources

The Battle of Franklin, fought on November 30, 1864, was a defining moment in the Western Theater of the American Civil War. Confederate Gen. John Bell Hood's troops engaged U.S. forces commanded by Maj. Gen. John M. Schofield as part of Hood's effort to retake Nashville, which had been under Federal control since early 1862. Hood's late afternoon assault across a large swath of open farmland, sometimes referred to as the "Pickett's charge of the West" resulted in heavy casualties. Altogether nearly 10,000 soldiers were killed, wounded, and captured. Six Confederate generals were killed, one captured, and seven wounded, devastating their leadership. Federal forces withdrew to Nashville that night and left the battered and weakened Confederate army behind. The Confederates later advanced north, where they were ultimately defeated at the Battle of Nashville two weeks later.

The identification of Civil War sites in Franklin has extended well beyond key areas of conflict to include outlying earthworks and buildings adapted for use as hospitals. The entire town was impacted by the battle and its aftermath. Franklin has been hailed as a national model for battlefield preservation. Citizens, nonprofit organizations, and governments at the local, state, and national levels have been collectively involved over the years in a series of collaborative projects and investments resulting in a coordinated effort to acquire, restore, preserve, interpret, and promote Civil War resources not merely as landmarks, but as key assets in education and heritage tourism.

Summary of Challenges:

- Franklin's rapid growth and rising real estate values place increasing pressure on battlefield landscapes and associated historic resources, making long-term preservation more difficult.
- Existing survey data for Civil War-related resources is uneven and, in some cases, outdated, which may limit the effective use of National Register eligibility and other planning tools during federally funded or permitted projects.

- While many key sites have been studied, Franklin lacks a unified inventory documenting the full range of Civil War-related resources, including earthworks, encampments, medical facilities, and associated landscapes.
- Civil War resources traditionally tend to attract a devoted but limited audience, highlighting the need to broaden engagement with residents and visitors.
- Many Civil War sites and organizations operate independently, with limited coordination in marketing, ticketing, and programming, which may reduce opportunities to expand visitation and economic benefits.
- Preservation, interpretation, tourism, and education initiatives are frequently pursued separately, limiting opportunities for collaboration and shared impact.
- Many residents and visitors are not fully aware of the preservation work that has taken place in Franklin, which can weaken long-term public support for continued Civil War related efforts.

Goal: Preserve battlefield sites and associated resources that tell the story of the Battle of Franklin and the Civil War experience.

Recommendations:

- **Create an inventory of battlefield sites and associated resources to inform potential future acquisition, preservation, and interpretation.**

A GIS-based tool should be created that shows parcels, ownership, significance, and integrity, to prioritize opportunities for purchase and preservation. Features could include current boundaries, ownership, use, zoning, existing preservation easements, as well as additional site-specific data. A visually comprehensible understanding of outstanding real estate opportunities can help build consensus for action and be used to demonstrate need to funders.

- **Reassess current National Register status for Civil War-related sites.**

While National Register listing or determination of eligibility comes with limitations when preserving a historic resource, it can compel federal undertakings to take designated and eligible resources into consideration during the planning process and in that way afford them a measure of consideration, if not preservation. New National Register and National Historic Landmark nominations should be written, existing National Register nominations should be updated and revised, and where applicable, formal determinations of National Register eligibility should be prepared.

- **Explore the expanded use of easements and covenants among other protective tools.**

Franklin has been very successful in purchasing threatened properties. However, outright purchase of real estate (“fee simple ownership” being the most complete form of real estate ownership) can be very expensive, and some property owners are not interested in selling, even if they support preservation efforts. Easements (a form of ownership interest) and covenants can save key characteristics of properties without requiring outright purchase. This strategy allows properties to remain in private ownership and can leverage limited financial resources for greater impact.

Goal: Establish a clear and strategic approach for the expansion and acquisition of battlefield lands.

Recommendations

- **Create a map of already-protected battlefield lands.**

By identifying, mapping, and making publicly available an inventory of protected battlefield land, it will make more visible any potential gaps or areas that might be threatened by development. This will

also help inform future strategic decisions about battlefield preservation.

- **Define evaluation criteria for expansion priorities.**

Franklin should establish a consistent set of criteria to evaluate potential battlefield expansion opportunities. These criteria should go beyond general significance and include factors such as historical relevance to the Battle of Franklin, physical integrity of the landscape, visibility and interpretive potential, current land use, ownership conditions, and vulnerability to redevelopment. A defined framework will allow the City and its partners to make informed, transparent decisions about where to focus acquisition efforts, particularly in a context of rising land values and limited resources.

- **Create a prioritization framework for battlefield land acquisition.**

Not all acquisition opportunities can or should be pursued equally. A tiered prioritization system should distinguish between high, moderate, and long-term opportunities based on urgency, feasibility, and potential impact. The framework should also account for timing, including properties that may not be immediately available but should be monitored over time. Establishing a structured approach to decision-making can help align partners, reduce reactive acquisitions, and ensure that efforts are focused where they will have the greatest long-term benefit.

- **Align acquisitions with market conditions and ownership realities.**

Battlefield expansion often depends on working within a dynamic real estate market. An approach to acquisition or protection should be tailored based on ownership conditions, including willing sellers, properties at risk of redevelopment, and sites where partial protection may be more feasible than full acquisition.

This may involve coordinating early with property owners, understanding development pressures, and identifying

opportunities to act quickly when conditions shift. A more proactive and market-aware approach can optimize the ability to secure key properties before they are lost.

- **Strengthen coordination with funding and acquisition partners.**

Battlefield expansion in Franklin has historically relied on strong partnerships and this will remain essential moving forward. Continued coordination with organizations and local partners can help align priorities, leverage funding, and sequence acquisitions more effectively. Considering potential partners and funding mechanisms as part of the shared framework for evaluating and prioritizing sites can also improve communication among partners and increase competitiveness for grant funding and other financial resources.

- **Plan for site integration following acquisition.**

Battlefield protection efforts should consider not only acquisition, but also how newly acquired or protected lands will function over time. This includes decisions related to interpretation, access, maintenance, and long-term stewardship. Thinking through these elements early can help ensure that newly acquired properties contribute meaningfully to the broader battlefield system, whether through public access, educational programming, or preservation of the open landscape.

Goal: Broaden Civil War interpretation to reach wider and more diverse audiences.

Recommendations:

- **Launch a Reconstruction & Post-War Franklin interpretive initiative linked to Hard Bargain, McLemore House, and the Public Square.**

Preservation partner organizations, with the potential support of consultants, should assess the current research and documentation of Reconstruction Era Franklin and, if appropriate, research and write a historic context document addressing Post-War Franklin that extends to include applicable historic African American resources.

An ad-hoc steering committee should aid in the review of a context, or existing research as applicable.

Based on research and/or a formal context, the committee with assistance from staff or a consultant should develop strategies for interpretation with specific actions, budget and anticipated timeline.

- **Develop Civil War programs for younger audiences.**

Youth-focused field programs, scavenger hunts, augmented-reality learning, and other outreach strategies can appeal to younger audiences. The school system, Civil War partners, and preservation and heritage organizations are natural partners to collaborate for the development and implementation of these programs.

Partnerships among schools, youth organizations, and local historians can be used to develop field-based learning experiences at multiple battlefield and post-war sites across Franklin, including Carnton, Carter House, and other significant locations.

- **Expand on-site interpretation to tell a more comprehensive civilian-life and Reconstruction-era story.**

An effort to continue to develop stories and interpretations that augment traditional battlefield movement and troop position narratives will appeal to a broader demographic. It can be accomplished by elevating the stories of enslaved people, United States Colored Troops (USCT), women, and Franklin families whose lives were shaped by the war and its aftermath. Interpreting the Civil War home front experience, along with sites connected to African American history, offers opportunities to better understand the experiences of enslaved and formerly enslaved residents and to tell a fuller story of Franklin during and after the Civil War.

Goal: Strengthen coordination among battlefield sites, tourism entities, and downtown business partners to expand the overall economic impact of Civil War tourism, increasing multi-site, multi-day visitor engagement.

Recommendation:

- **Create a unified Civil War, African American History, and Downtown pass or ticket.**

A pass (digital or printed) could bundle site entry, tour, and local business discounts, facilitating visitation and encouraging spin-off revenue opportunities. Participating organizations and discounts would be determined collaboratively, and delivery methods established through online portals or designated ticketing locations. Following a pilot period and evaluation, the program could be expanded to include additional regional participation.

- **Strengthen communication and coordination between the Civil War Historical Commission (CWHC) and other local and statewide partners.**

While the Civil War Historical Commission has representatives from many Civil War preservation organizations, opportunities exist to expand collaboration with other local and statewide organizations so there is a widely shared understanding of what each is doing. This could also include nontraditional partners like downtown business associations, tourism entities, and more. Coordination could support joint programming and create new programs and opportunities to connect historic sites with the broader visitor experience in Franklin.

Goal: Strengthen public understanding, visibility, and stewardship of Franklin's Civil War and battlefield resources.

Recommendations:

- **Partner with battlefield organizations to expand periodic "behind-the-scenes" site tours.**

Special tours can highlight the preservation story of the Battle of Franklin, illustrate the progress that has been made, and highlight the multiple benefits of battlefield preservation. Additionally, granting access to "seldom seen" aspects of historic resources and preservation efforts creates a sense of ownership and builds a strong constituency for continued advocacy.

- **Reinstitute a field hospital marker program.**

Field hospitals were located throughout Franklin during the Civil War. In the recent past, flags marking these field hospitals were flown on significant dates. In addition to reinstating the flag program, a permanent marker/signage program could identify all remaining hospital sites and future interpretation could be enhanced by audio tours. Discreet signage could note buildings

without impairing current functions, allowing for interpretation with limited operational impact.

- **Document and interpret Civil War stories for sites undergoing development.**

Recognizing that not every resource can be saved, threatened sites should be appropriately documented (to Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)/Historic American Engineering Record (HAER)/Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) standards if applicable). Documentation could be incorporated into interpretive materials and publications, to support an expanded and more comprehensive study of Civil War related narratives. It will also greatly assist future research and interpretation.

- **Rebrand the Civil War sites in Franklin as “The Franklin Battlefield”**

By unifying all sites associated with the Civil War and the Battle of Franklin, visitors will have more clarity when navigating to Franklin and around town. For example, signs on I-65 and throughout Franklin should have the same branding so a visitor, instead of following different wayfinding systems to individual sites, is guided to the Franklin Battlefield. This effort would help visitors on their approach by unifying graphics and reducing the potential for sign clutter.

Preserving Stories in Franklin

Franklin's historic buildings, landscapes, battlefields, and other structures provide a physical record for telling Franklin's stories. At the same time, many historical events and periods are not, or are no longer, represented by physical evidence. These events and periods nonetheless remain integral parts of Franklin's history.

The telling of history is inherently complicated. People have limited attention and specific interests that vary by individual. Some stories have received greater attention than others - a result of history that is celebrated, ignored, suppressed, or forgotten. Because Franklin's history is complex, it is important that the broadest possible range of voices participate not only in telling the stories but also in deciding which stories to elevate.

Franklin also has a preservation story: the history of how the community worked together to save so much of its historic fabric. This story is told in the opening chapters of this plan, but it is one that will be told and expanded in the future.

Some of the challenges in preserving and sharing Franklin's stories include the loss of physical fabric, the presence of physical markers and monuments that have complicated origins, and the loss of storytellers who experienced Franklin but are no longer living or have left Franklin's historic neighborhoods. But some stories are simply hard to tell because they involve wrestling with difficult periods of our collective past and require thoughtful interpretation that reflects a shared perspective.

Summary of Challenges:

- Preserving stories where physical fabric has been lost (e.g., through the loss of buildings or structures), or where the physical fabric may not be visible (such as archaeological resources) can be challenging yet vital to telling Franklin's story.

- There is a need to document Franklin's stories captured in the memories of older residents.
- Broader community participation is needed to identify and share Franklin's stories.
- Telling difficult stories in ways that are historically grounded and meaningful to contemporary audiences remains challenging. This is particularly complicated in the interpretation of the Civil War era and the eras leading up to and following it.
- Franklin's history should be more accessible to everyone by finding new ways to tell stories using technology.
- In Franklin's robust preservation community, coordinating storytelling for consistency and impact among the many organizations, institutions, and community groups already engaged in this work can be challenging.

Goal: Improve coordination of research, interpretation, and storytelling activities to leverage efforts and expand program participation.

Recommendations

- **Establish a Franklin Storytelling Working Group.**

A storytelling working group could share updates on new or upcoming programs and identify opportunities for new partnerships and collaborations. Encourage participation by organizations working on projects related to Franklin's African American, Native American, and Hispanic heritage and communities. Semi-annual working meetings could be scheduled to share research, interpretation, and storytelling program plans and identify opportunities to collaborate and promote events to maximize participation.

Goal: Continue to support a deep and diverse Franklin narrative through ongoing research.

Recommendations

- **Create a resource hub to collect, expand, and formalize historic context research.**

A review of existing historic resource collections, archives, and documentation could identify materials that could be consolidated, and determine the willingness of resource holders to participate. Building partnerships will involve meeting with interested parties to determine an appropriate repository for physical records and archival materials (such as the Williamson County Archives).

- **Develop a coordinated research agenda and funding plan.**

A coordinated agenda should determine who will be responsible for conducting research (e.g., partner organizations or consultants) and maintaining the repository of data. A funding mechanism should be identified for conducting research through a phased approach and for retaining and managing research products.

Goal: Broaden Franklin's storytelling presence in the digital and physical realms.

Recommendations

- **Expand digital storytelling, especially for lesser-known resources, through a coordinated media platform.**

A meeting with collaborators could help determine the appropriate repository for a media platform (e.g., stand-alone website, existing website, or partner organization). Identify preferred formats for distributing digital content (e.g., video, podcasts, audio tours, oral histories, digital photo archives, etc.) and how they can be accessed

by a range of potential users (e.g., QR codes at historic sites, centralized website, etc.). This process will also involve identifying technological needs, such as a GIS interface and scanners to digitize content, and costs for webhosting, web design, and content administration.

Determine what stories have sufficient content developed already and what stories need further research. Storytelling on shared platforms will also benefit from policies and standards for content, including what can be posted, who writes it, who reviews it, and who edits it. The effort should also consider external distribution opportunities like partners' social media feeds, links on partner or other websites, e-newsletters, and other communication channels.

- **Offer community micro-grants for interpretation.**

Micro-grants are a way to leverage the content already available from local preservation partners. Setting up a micro-grant program will involve determining if the project will be administered in-house (i.e., by the City staff) or by a partner entity and identifying appropriate sources and levels of funding. Other needs will include developing a grant application and portal, grant agreement, application review process, program standards, and reporting mechanisms. The program should include attention to design and branding of content and consideration of where digital content will live. Technical assistance can support the creation of digital storytelling content and the design and production of physical signage and exhibits. Sources of funding will vary by project type, but historical interpretation initiatives are often funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Tennessee Historical Commission's Marker Program, Humanities Tennessee Opportunity Grants, among others.

- **Continue to share the social history of the contemporary historic preservation movement in Franklin.**

Support ongoing efforts to expand the collection of oral histories with key preservation leaders and stakeholders in Franklin. Oral histories document and enrich key events, strategies, and partnerships of Franklin's preservation movement. Methods of collecting and sharing of these histories may include:

- Identify a lead institution or organization to spearhead the effort and determine an appropriate repository for preserving recordings and transcripts.
- Develop interview scripts and conduct audio and video interviews.
- Augment interviews with documentary research for a publication about Franklin's Preservation Story.

- **Develop public art-based storytelling for downtown and other historic districts.**

Locations, themes, and partnerships for artworks that interpret Franklin's layered history could contribute to placemaking. A framework should be established for artist selection, coordination with preservation guidelines, and collaboration with local cultural organizations. Potential examples include interpretive murals reflecting agricultural heritage, sculptural installations tied to Reconstruction-era stories, artist-designed trail markers along historic routes, and temporary exhibits or performance-based works that activate underutilized public spaces.

- **Create guidelines for public art.**

Standards for public art can help to ensure balance, legibility, and respect for the historic environment while providing a clear framework for evaluating new proposals and contextualizing existing markers. Managing the process of adding new public art

should be codified as a set of guidelines and, for art on public property visible on rights-of-way, as a section within the zoning ordinance. Guidance should address appropriate location, scale, materials, and relationship to surrounding historic resources so that interpretation reinforces the meaning of a place and remains closely connected to its historic setting. Guidelines should inform quality and placement, mitigating visual clutter or impact on historic buildings, sites, and landscapes.

- **Create guidelines for public monuments.**

Standards for monuments and interpretive signage should establish appropriate placement on public and private property, especially when new monuments or signage will be placed in historic districts, adjacent to historic resources, or visible from rights-of-way. Guidelines for monuments and interpretive signage in public spaces should also reference a cohesive set of standards for telling Franklin's history. Consider only placing interpretation where events occurred or where historic patterns can still be understood, while using coordinated markers, trails, or digital tools to connect sites across the city when needed. New guidelines on monument placement should seek to mitigate visual clutter, particularly in areas where monuments and signage are already prevalent.

Cultivating Heritage & Cultural Tourism

Franklin has established itself as one of the most successful heritage tourism destinations in the United States. The city's nationally recognized downtown, preserved battlefields, historic homes, and cultural landmarks attract visitors from across the country while reinforcing the community's strong identity as a place where history is both protected and actively shared. Tourism tied to these historic resources generates a significant economic impact, with visitor spending in Williamson County totaling more than \$1.32 billion annually and supporting thousands of local jobs. Over several decades, intentional preservation efforts, thoughtful interpretation, and strong partnerships have positioned Franklin as a model for how historic preservation and tourism can work together to support economic vitality while maintaining authenticity.

A heritage tourism destination requires attention to many factors that influence the visitor experience, including attracting a potential visitor's interest and providing information to plan a visit, making it easy to find the destination, offering an engaging and authentic experience at sites that are well preserved and interpreted, and maintaining ongoing communication with the visitor to encourage return visits and word of mouth recommendations to others.

Heritage tourism brings together three of Franklin's strengths: An abundance of tangible assets, a wealth of intangible cultural heritage and stories, and partnerships that preserve and share those tangible and intangible assets. Additionally, a successful heritage tourism program requires constant consideration of the wishes of residents to ensure a high quality of life and support for tourism in the community.

A successful heritage tourism program achieves three interrelated outcomes. It preserves a community's tangible and intangible legacy by supporting the stewardship of historic buildings, landscapes, and cultural traditions, allowing visitors and residents alike to experience the places where history unfolded, hear the voices and stories of the past, observe traditional crafts and practices, and participate in community celebrations. It also attracts visitors by

encouraging travelers to seek out destinations that connect them to a specific time and place that continues to shape the identity of the community and the nation today. Finally, heritage tourism builds community pride by engaging residents in learning about their own history and encouraging them to become advocates for preservation and ambassadors who share their community's culture and heritage with others.

By multiple measures, Franklin and Williamson County meet these three primary goals. As with many communities with successful heritage tourism programs, Franklin and Williamson County work to balance the benefits of attracting visitors and the resulting economic impact with maintaining a high quality of life for residents.

Summary of Challenges:

- With an increasing number of visitors comes a natural tension between maintaining the quiet and historic character that attracts people to Franklin to live and the historic sites, cultural events, and commercial amenities that people come to experience.
- Telling the stories of slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights era continues to be challenging and, in some cases, painful. This has been the guiding principle behind "The Fuller Story" movement. Structures and monuments associated with slavery and the Confederate period are contextualized in some cases, but the preservation of sites and the stories that are shared with visitors remain fractured.
- Information on current and potential visitors is limited, making it difficult to accurately identify and reach target markets.
- Accessibility for visitors with disabilities has not been comprehensively addressed to ensure that sites are available to all visitors.

Goal: Ensure that the benefits of heritage tourism support the quality of life of residents and property owners.

Recommendations:

- **Balance heritage tourism and residents' quality of life.**

Heritage tourism is central to Franklin's economy. Heritage tourism is also a means by which Franklin shares its unique history with the world. While tourism helps the local economy, it can also have adverse effects on the lives of full-time residents. To help assess and address these issues, preservation and tourism partners should create a monitoring checklist or dashboard that tracks key tourism-related concerns such as parking, traffic, noise, trash, streetscape and infrastructure conditions, and short-term rentals amongst other categories. This data can be used to chart changes and trends over time and to develop new policies and procedures or target mitigation efforts to specific sites or neighborhoods.

Visit Franklin hosts an annual meeting where it reports on the positive impacts of heritage tourism. These meetings could also be opportunities to engage residents and invite their input on tourism challenges and the best ways to mitigate any adverse effects.

- **Strengthen the regulation and enforcement of short-term rentals.**

Franklin should strengthen the regulation and enforcement of short-term rentals in residential neighborhoods to ensure they do not negatively affect neighborhood stability or housing availability. In addition to improving enforcement of existing requirements, the City should consider regulatory tools that help manage the overall concentration of short-term rentals. These may include establishing a cap or temporary moratorium on new short-term rental permits, requiring minimum spacing or distance between rental units, or limiting the percentage of short-term rentals permitted within a defined area or neighborhood. These measures can help maintain a

healthy balance between tourism accommodations and long-term residential uses while protecting the character of Franklin's historic neighborhoods.

- **Encourage local visitation to heritage sites and destinations.**

Franklin's historic and cultural sites are important educational, recreational, commercial, and entertainment venues for full-time residents. However, some residents may avoid these destinations if they perceive them as too busy or difficult to access. Preservation and tourism partners should develop special events or incentives that encourage residents to visit historic sites throughout the year. This could include offering Downtown Discount Days that encourage shopping on Main Street or free/discounted admission days for historic sites or tours. (See also "Supporting Economic Vitality and Small Businesses.")

Goal: Improve interpretation and access to Franklin's heritage tourism sites.

Recommendations:

- **Develop a city-wide interpretive plan.**

The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) defines interpretation as "a purposeful approach to communication that facilitates meaningful, relevant, and inclusive experiences that deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire engagement with the world around us." Franklin's heritage tourism experiences can be strengthened by the development of a citywide interpretive plan that achieves NAI's definition of interpretation. The plan can ensure that visitors receive accurate information and are encouraged to continue to explore and learn about all of Franklin's historic eras.

Development of an interpretive plan should include strategies to make sites come alive through a variety of interpretive tools such as exhibits, signage, tours, programs, events and other experiences. The plan should also include strategies to assist sites in developing interpretation through workshops and other training. The interpretive plan should be based on a comprehensive history of Franklin and developed by a committee of subject matter experts that include historians, scholars, archaeologists, curators, interpretive specialists, humanities specialists, folklorists, educators and others engaged in researching and documenting the community's history.

- **Implement and connect Franklin's heritage trails and establish a walkable heritage trail with downtown as its anchor.**

Several heritage trails have been proposed and studied, including trails to connect sites for the March to Freedom and the Fuller Story. Franklin also contains or connects to several existing heritage trails, including the Williamson County History Trail, Tennessee Civil War Trails, and Historic Parks trails. Implementing planned heritage trails and promoting the connectivity of trails can enhance the visitor experience and generate economic impact by encouraging longer visitor stays.

In addition to the trails above, Franklin should consider establishing a new walking heritage trail, with downtown as its anchor. As a first step in this process, a committee should be organized to develop plans, oversee implementation, and support ongoing management of the trail. The committee should include representatives from the City, historic sites, museums, tourism, and other community stakeholders, especially those within walking distance of downtown. The committee should be charged with defining the trail route, identifying key stories and themes, developing interpretive materials, and helping to secure funding to support the trail.

- Ensure that Franklin’s heritage tourism sites are widely accessible to people with disabilities.

Franklin’s historical and cultural sites should be accessible to visitors and residents that are blind, deaf, have a learning disability, or a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities. Accessibility for tourists falls into three categories:

- **Physical** - Buildings and landscapes at tourist attractions should be accessible with ramps, seating, restrooms, etc.
- **Digital** - Websites and apps should be usable by those with hearing, visual or cognitive impairments.
- **Communication** - Information is provided in multiple formats for those with hearing, visual or cognitive impairments (interpreters, audio guides, signage language).¹

Preservation leaders and partner organizations should form a committee to address accessibility for visitors to Franklin. The committee should include planners, tourism experts, representatives from historic sites, museums, downtown businesses, and other community stakeholders. As a first step, the committee should be empowered to identify and select a consultant with expertise in accessibility to tourism attractions - in particular to historic sites - to conduct a study of tourist destinations in Franklin. The committee should then use the results of the accessibility study to develop a plan to work with sites to increase accessibility for visitors. This might include identifying resources for placing benches along walkways, adding closed-captioned language to films, making restrooms accessible, or offering guided tours in American Sign Language.

¹ “Understanding the Need for Accessibility in the Tourism Industry,” Michael Halpin, Recite Me, <https://reciteme.com/us/news/accessibility-in-tourism/>

Goal: Enhance marketing and awareness of Franklin's heritage tourism sites.

Recommendations:

- **Increase the understanding of visitors to Franklin to inform future tourism strategies.**

Visit Franklin collects data on the impacts of tourism and the demographic profiles of visitors, primarily through mobility data providers like Placer.ai. Most of the data monitored is for Williamson County, with some components specific to Franklin (especially downtown). However, the last survey of visitors was conducted in 2019. As a result of the pandemic and other factors, the travel industry has changed significantly since 2020. While an expensive undertaking, an updated visitor study examining visitor trends and experiences at Franklin's cultural and heritage attractions could help inform future heritage tourism planning and would complement the quantitative data collected through third-party data services. The study could benefit from engaging a consultant and should be led by Franklin's tourism professionals in partnership with representatives from historic sites, museums, and other stakeholders.

- **Strengthen marketing of Franklin's national designations and heritage tourism connections.**

Franklin's national significance is reflected in three national heritage tourism designations: recognition as a Great American Main Street; inclusion in the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area; and the Natchez Trace Parkway, an All-American Road that passes through Williamson County. Enhancing the message of national significance through promotion of the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area and Natchez Trace Parkway offers opportunities to reach new markets by showcasing these unique visitor experiences.

- **Expand cross-promotion among heritage sites and visitor destinations.**

Visitor research for Franklin shows a high rate of return visitation. It is especially important to make these repeat visitors aware of sites they may not have explored on previous trips. For first-time visitors, being able to learn about all that Franklin has to offer will also encourage them to stay longer and experience more attractions. Travel industry research consistently shows that travelers often make decisions about places to visit after arriving at a destination. Developing strategies to encourage cross promotions can increase visitation to heritage sites, encourage return visits and longer stays. Cross promotions could include actions such as offering free admission to front-line employees, providing regular updates to front-line employees and attraction employees, and creating displays and small exhibits to place at locations throughout the community highlighting places to visit.

Supporting Economic Vitality & Small Businesses

Franklin's award-winning downtown with its walkable scale, independent businesses, historic architecture, and its compelling story of revitalization make it a destination for visitors and beloved by Franklin's residents. It is a genuine success story, as is often cited as an example of how strategic investment can transform undervalued historic commercial buildings into thriving assets.

Downtown Franklin's continued success has brought new challenges. Rising property values in and around downtown place greater financial demands on historic commercial spaces, requiring businesses to generate higher revenues to support rent, taxes, and ongoing upkeep. Highly successful downtowns like Franklin's can reach a tipping point where market pressures set in motion a cycle of gentrification resulting in the loss of independent businesses and district authenticity. Supporting downtown's economic vitality and long-term health will require strategies to manage the commercial ecosystem for balanced growth.

Summary of Challenges:

- Recent and rapid increases in commercial property taxes have intensified the financial pressures facing small businesses in downtown Franklin.
- Downtown Franklin has long hosted a small number of chain businesses. As their presence grows, however, the character of downtown can begin to shift. A higher concentration of chains can make a shopping district feel more generic, while chains' ability to pay higher rents can place upward pressure on commercial leases and make it harder for independent businesses to compete.

- As a result of Franklin's high cost of housing, many employees of downtown businesses cannot afford to live in the city. Business owners report that their employees commute from other cities and counties.
- Downtown's popularity with visitors has made it less appealing to some residents. They find it to be too crowded, hard to get a restaurant reservation, or simply find dining or shopping among tourists unappealing. This presents a challenge: how can downtown remain a first choice for Franklin's residents?

Goal: Encourage independent and locally owned downtown businesses.

Recommendations

- **Limit chain businesses in Downtown Franklin through zoning or other regulatory tools.**

Many cities across the country have adopted formula business regulations to help preserve local character and maintain a diverse mix of businesses. In Franklin, the growth of chain businesses is not currently acute, but it is a foreseeable challenge as market pressure continues. Establishing a limitation on chain businesses can help preserve downtown's vibrant economy and its appeal to locals and visitors. (See formula business case study.)

Case study: Formula Business Restrictions

The first known instance of a formula business restriction was enacted in 2000 in Coronado, California, an oceanside community adjacent to San Diego that is a popular tourist destination. At that time, Coronado responded to a growth in chain fast food restaurants by defining these a new regulated category of "formula businesses." These are chains and franchises where each store is the same as every other store in the group in name, brand, and

function. A new ordinance capped the number of formula fast-food businesses at 10, the number that existed at the time of enactment.

Since then, many other communities have adopted formula (chain) business ordinances. Some regulate the number or percentage of formula businesses in a geographic area and some regulate distancing (e.g., that formula businesses must be separated by a specified distance).²

- **Establish leasing incentives that help preserve independent businesses.**

Franklin's small businesses have been experiencing pressures associated with rising rents and property taxes. In theory, rents and building values are a function of the revenue that a commercial space can generate. Sometimes rents and revenue potential misalign, or sometimes an independent business simply cannot increase their sales to a level that supports a market-rate rent. Recognizing the importance of maintaining locally owned retailers and restaurants, Franklin can consider creative tools to offset tenant costs based, including targeted rent subsidies. Such interventions can be controversial, but several cities have enacted them. (See Prosper Portland case study.)

Case Study: Prosper Portland: Affordable Commercial Tenanting Grant

Portland's *Affordable Commercial Tenanting (ACT) Grant* helps local small businesses move into ground-floor storefronts by providing funding for tenant improvements and build-out costs. It applies to new leases and leases in negotiation and provides reimbursement grants for tenant expenses like drywall, improvements, space-

² The Institute for Local Self Reliance has published research on this topic which is available at <https://ilsr.org/rule/formula-business-restrictions/>.

related soft costs, and permitting support to ready a space to open for business. For the business to receive the grant benefit, a property owner provides a discount of 15% to 25% on market-rate rents for at least three years, or a period of rent abatement, or capped rent escalations. The program is funded via Tax Increment Finance and from the City's General Fund.

- **Foster local entrepreneurship through a storefront business incubator.**

An incubator provides a lower-risk environment where entrepreneurs can test their brick-and-mortar concepts. It is challenging to do this in a high-value market like Franklin, but opportunities may exist. Options include designating a commercial space in a City-owned property as an incubator, or negotiating with a new downtown development to reserve a small retail space for emerging businesses. (See South Orange, NJ case study.)

Case Study: Co-Lab Business Incubator (South Orange, NJ)

The Co-Lab in downtown South Orange, NJ, opened in 2019 in a 2,000 square foot storefront space with an intention to help local entrepreneurs, artisans, and makers incubate their ideas as startup brick-and-mortar businesses. The below-market lease was a concession for a new mixed-use development on the site. Co-Lab operates as a 501(c)3 nonprofit, with its own board of directors and paid management. By creating the shared commercial space, it lowers some of the costs and other hurdles in bringing a new business to market. Co-Lab also provides marketing support and fosters community building through events, workshops, and other opportunities that bring people together.

Goal: Reinforce downtown as a welcoming and inclusive place Franklin residents choose to shop and dine.

Recommendations

- **Encourage downtown dining by promoting one weeknight as a “Friends and Neighbors” night.**

A designated weekday could highlight special offerings for Franklin and Williamson County residents, such as complimentary desserts, a glass of wine, specialty cocktails for locals, or other forms of recognition. Participating restaurants, bars, and cafes could also incorporate games, small events, or informal gatherings that encourage interaction and reinforce downtown as a social hub for residents.

- **Create a local shoppers marketing program.**

A “shop local” program, common in many downtowns and main street communities, could be reimagined in Franklin to bring, in addition to local spending, a purpose of community-building. (This would be in addition to DFA’s participation in “Small Business Saturday,” an annual promotional program of Main Street America and American Express, which occurs on the Saturday after Thanksgiving.) Often shop-local programs highlight “First Fridays” or weekends. In Franklin, it would be more helpful to businesses to incentivize weekday shopping and dining. In addition to incentives such as discounts, a shop local program in Franklin could foster social connection through events like “meet the maker” events, owner spotlights, storytelling about local businesses, curated shopping suggestions for locals, and partnerships with schools, employers, and community groups.

Goal: Increase the supply of attainable housing downtown.

Recommendation

- Encourage the development of workforce and attainable housing in areas in Central Franklin.

Communities facing similar real estate pressures have supported housing for local employees in nearby neighborhoods and corridors that remain connected to downtown through short commutes, transit access, or walking and biking routes. This approach can help support downtown businesses while expanding housing opportunities across the broader community.

Partnerships, Advocacy, and Education

Franklin today is the result of decades of shared commitment to preservation. Many of Franklin's most significant preservation achievements have been made possible through collaboration among public agencies, community organizations, and dedicated preservation advocates. Sustaining this collaborative approach will remain essential as Franklin continues to grow its preservation program.

Advocacy is equally important to sustaining Franklin's preservation legacy. As the city continues to experience population growth, rising property values, and development pressure, historic preservation priorities must remain visible in community decision-making. A coordinated advocacy effort can help reinforce the importance of preserving Franklin's historic resources while ensuring that preservation perspectives are included in broader discussions about growth, economic development, housing, and infrastructure.

At the same time, for partnerships to grow and advocacy to gain traction, Franklin residents must understand the purpose and goals of historic preservation within the community. They should be informed about the advantages of historic designation, how to navigate the City's permitting and review processes, and the resources available to support building rehabilitation. Without this knowledge, both new and long-term residents may be less inclined to support historic preservation efforts in the future.

Franklin can also take steps to cultivate the next generation of preservation advocates and professionals. Leveraging the city's extensive historic resources, local preservation organizations can provide meaningful opportunities for high school and college students, as well as individuals interested in preservation trades. These educational and workforce training programs could offer hands-on experience, and a deeper connection to Franklin's preservation ethos, while contributing to the documentation, protection, and upkeep of important local historic properties.

Summary of Challenges:

- Franklin benefits from a strong network of preservation organizations and partnerships, but coordination among organizations often occurs informally rather than through a consistent structure.
- Numerous organizations contribute to preservation, education, tourism, and cultural interpretation, but opportunities for collaboration and information sharing are sometimes limited.
- Preservation priorities can compete with other community priorities as Franklin continues to grow and develop.
- Franklin's current generation of preservation advocates is aging, leading to potential gaps in leadership and institutional memory if new advocates are not constantly cultivated.
- Franklin's rapid growth is attracting new residents who are often less familiar with the city's preservation legacy and may not value the need to expand preservation efforts.
- Some owners of historic properties are often not familiar with Franklin's preservation processes and regulatory requirements, leading to confusion, delays, and frustration when they undertake repair and rehabilitation projects.
- Preservation trades are declining across the country as workers age and retire, leaving property owners with limited access to contractors familiar with historic repairs and experienced in navigating historic review processes.

Goal: Strengthen coordination among preservation-minded organizations and reinforce advocacy for historic preservation in Franklin.

Recommendations:

- **Convene a Franklin Preservation Roundtable.**

A wide range of organizations support ongoing historic preservation efforts in Franklin. This includes non-profit preservation organizations, heritage tourism partners, cultural institutions, neighborhood organizations, economic development groups, and educational institutions. These stakeholders should convene a Franklin Preservation Roundtable to share updates, discuss emerging preservation challenges, coordinate initiatives, and identify opportunities for collaboration on research, interpretation, and community engagement. These Roundtable meetings could occur periodically, quarterly, biannually.

A core focus of the Franklin Preservation Roundtable should be advocacy, particularly for the protection of the city's historic resources. Establishing a shared framework for communicating preservation priorities can help strengthen these efforts. Preservation partners should work together to identify key priorities and reinforce consistent messaging to residents, decision-makers, and community stakeholders. Coordinated advocacy can help ensure that preservation perspectives remain part of broader discussions about growth, housing, infrastructure, and economic development.

- **Develop a shared preservation calendar.**

Franklin holds a wide variety of preservation-related events annually. Sometimes these events overlap with each other or address related topics. Preservation stakeholders can better plan and collaborate on outreach and education by setting up a shared

calendar to facilitate coordination of preservation-related events. This will require evaluation of shared calendar platforms for their functionality and cost, agreement on policies and procedures for using the platform, and coordination in planning and scheduling events. It will also require an assigned calendar administrator to manage the platform.

- **Strengthen collaboration across preservation, development, and stewardship efforts.**

Franklin already benefits from a strong network of organizations and institutions involved in preservation, tourism, and cultural programming. Opportunities exist to strengthen collaboration by improving coordination across groups that influence how historic resources are maintained, interpreted, and adapted over time.

This includes fostering stronger alignment between preservation efforts and those involved in development, design, and construction to ensure that rehabilitation, infill, and new development are informed by a shared understanding of preservation goals and expectations. It also includes improving coordination among organizations responsible for interpretation and storytelling to present a more cohesive and comprehensive narrative of Franklin's history.

An additional opportunity exists to strengthen the connection between historic preservation and economic development. Franklin's historic resources are a key driver of economic activity, particularly in Central Franklin and along key corridors. Greater coordination can help ensure that reinvestment strategies, small business support, and redevelopment initiatives reinforce historic character rather than work at cross purposes. This may include aligning preservation priorities with continued downtown vitality efforts, supporting adaptive reuse of historic buildings for commercial purposes.

Goal: Expand public education and awareness of preservation tools, resources, and best practices in Franklin.

Recommendations:

- **Develop a “Preservation 101” program for Franklin homeowners.**

Establishing a “Preservation 101” program offers the opportunity to further orient and educate new and long-time residents to historic preservation in Franklin. The program might address local and National Register historic designation, researching house histories, navigating the City’s historic review process, and using the Franklin Historic District Design Guidelines. The program should offer a mixture of digital and in-person content that meets residents’ diverse schedules and preferred learning methods. Digital content could include topical videos, fact sheets, and subject-related FAQs, while in-person content might involve seminars and workshops.

Attention should be given to identifying funding, staffing, and partnerships required to support a “Preservation 101” program. Additionally, programming should be coordinated with the Historic Zoning Commission.

- **Establish a DIY preservation training academy for homeowners.**

Many homeowners and property owners are interested in playing a direct role in the physical preservation of their buildings but lack the necessary training to complete the work themselves. Local preservation organizations should create a DIY preservation training academy where residents can participate in the rehabilitation of a historic home to learn skills directly applicable to the needs of their property. Work on the home should be divided into a series of topical modules (e.g., masonry repair, window repair, wood siding repair, and painting), and taught by experienced preservation contractors. Homeowners could attend the complete series or just register for those applicable to their project needs.

The DIY preservation academy could involve a partnership between a local housing organization or trade organization that can hold the building for an extended period and potentially sell it affordably to an income-eligible homebuyer.

- **Establish a Preservation Education Seminar for real estate brokers.**

Real estate brokers can be a critical source of frontline information about historic preservation. The quality and accuracy of this information can impact people's willingness to purchase and invest in historic residential and commercial properties. Opportunities may exist to partner with local and regional real estate associations to develop a preservation-focused education seminar. The curriculum should address preservation myths vs. facts, what historic property owners can and cannot do with their buildings, preservation incentives, and preservation resources like the Franklin Historic District Design Guidelines. The seminar should count towards continuing education requirements for participants.

Goal: Build a long-term preservation education and workforce pipeline.

Recommendations:

- **Establish STEM-based historic preservation pathways for local high school students.**

The purpose of this program is to engage local high school students in STEM-based programming that also enhances their understanding of the city's unique and historic built environment and, ideally, encourages them to pursue a career in a preservation-related field. The program could also address architecture, urban planning, and construction as focus areas for students. An exploration of feasibility should begin with engaging the Williamson County School District to create a curriculum, identify qualifying coursework, and identify program costs and funding sources.

Additional effort should be made to partner with local development, design, planning, construction, and preservation organizations to provide field-based education and experiential learning opportunities for students.

- **Establish a preservation trades training program in Franklin.**

Given an aging trades workforce and rising interest in the adaptive use and rehabilitation of older and historic buildings, there is a growing national demand for trades professionals experienced in traditional building techniques. Determine the feasibility of establishing a preservation trades program at a Franklin area college or university: If a school-based curriculum is not feasible, explore opportunities to partner with a local or regional workforce development agency to pilot a preservation trades training program. The Campaign for Historic Trades is developing an open-source trades curriculum and may be able to provide guidance on potential training models.

Once a program is established, pair participants with opportunities for hands-on, field-based training. This could involve supporting the maintenance, repair, or renovation of local historic resources like the Hiram Masonic Lodge or the Greenbook House under the supervision of faculty and experienced contractors. Additional efforts should be made to provide program graduates with career counseling and job placement support.

- **Establish a Franklin-based summer preservation field program.**

A summer field program could offer a practical introduction to historic preservation practices, historic trades work, and archaeology for those participating in high school or college-level coursework in historic preservation in Franklin (see above recommendations) or potentially from across the Southeast. The summer curriculum should be aligned with supporting the documentation, maintenance, or repair of local historic resources in

Franklin, especially those in communities underserved by traditional preservation programs.

Case Study: Living Trades Academy (Detroit, MI)

A 2018 workforce development program of the Michigan Historic Preservation Network, the Living Trades Academy (LTA) provided under- and unemployed residents of Detroit hands on training in historic preservation trades. Over the course of 10 weeks, program trainees worked to stabilize and repair a home and abandoned church in Detroit's North End neighborhood while learning carpentry, masonry repair, plaster repair, and window repair. They also received entrepreneurship and business training. LTA participants were referred to the program by local non-profit organizations, had to take mandatory pre- and post-training tests to evaluate their skills, and were paid an hourly wage of \$10/hour plus a \$100 bonus. Upon completion, LTA graduates received a training certificate and job placement support.

- **Cultivate emerging preservation leaders and advocates.**

Franklin has long benefited from strong preservation leadership and community advocacy. Sustaining this legacy will require continued engagement of new community members and future leaders. Preservation partners could explore opportunities to involve new arrivals and emerging professionals in preservation initiatives through volunteer programs, advisory roles, internships, and leadership development opportunities. Creating pathways for participation in preservation organizations, planning efforts, and community initiatives can help ensure that new voices continue to shape Franklin's preservation efforts while strengthening long-term community stewardship of the city's historic resources.

Special efforts should also be made to engage Franklin's youth in preservation-based activities. They may offer unique insights into buildings or places in need of additional protection or outreach

strategies that can broaden the preservation audience. Conduct listening sessions, classroom discussions, or small-group workshops to hear their perspectives and co-create meaningful opportunities for involvement rather than assuming what will interest them.

Program Administration

The City of Franklin's strength in administering a successful historic preservation program relies on *Chapter 4: Historic Preservation Overlay District (HPO)* and *Chapter 19: Historic Zoning Commission (HZC)* of the Franklin Zoning Ordinance. These chapters establish the processes through which the Planning and Sustainability Department oversees the implementation of local HPO designations and the Certificate of Appropriateness review process, including the implementation of the Historic District Design Guidelines. Conducting an ongoing review of procedures and guidelines can provide clarity and peace of mind for property owners when planning a project, create opportunities to streamline reviews, and ensure the process is clear and consistent.

Effective Design Guidelines are a valuable tool in assisting the HZC and City staff in communicating appropriate methods for the maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation of Franklin's significant buildings and places, as well as thoughtful review of additions and new construction within the HPO. Design Guidelines can also serve as an important resource for educating property owners on best practices for the stewardship of historic resources.

Summary of Challenges:

- Applicants currently are not required to participate in a preliminary design meeting with City Preservation Staff prior to developing plans, which can result in proposals that do not align with the Historic District Design Guidelines and lead to revisions, delays, and additional costs.
- Guidance within the Historic District Design Guidelines is not always presented in a way that is direct and easy for applicants to interpret, particularly when translating standards into specific design decisions.
- While the Historic District Design Guidelines include visual examples such as photographs and illustrations, there is room to expand and refine these elements to further improve clarity and usability for property owners, as noted by key stakeholders.

- Design Review Committee (DRC) meetings can be lengthy due in part to the absence of established meeting and item time limits or adjournment thresholds. This can contribute to decision fatigue and complaints from the public about the process.
- Opportunities for ongoing education and training for Historic Zoning Commission members and City staff are not consistently structured, which can impact alignment with evolving preservation best practices.

Goal: Ensure that historic preservation review and approval processes are clear, accessible, and efficient.

Recommendations

- **Refine the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Review Process.**

The Certificate of Appropriateness process plays a central role in preservation review but can sometimes be difficult for property owners and applicants to navigate. Improving clarity around procedures, expectations, and timelines can help ensure that preservation standards remain strong while making the process more predictable and accessible.

The City should review the existing COA process to identify opportunities to improve clarity and efficiency. This effort may include documenting the full review pathway for applicants, further clarifying submittal requirements, and identifying areas where the sequence of reviews or feedback could be streamlined. Developing a clear and visually accessible “roadmap” of the COA process for homeowners, contractors, and developers would help applicants understand what materials are required, how reviews occur, and what timelines to expect.

The current review structure includes Design Review Committee (DRC) meetings that occur prior to Historic Zoning Commission (HZC) consideration. While these meetings provide helpful early

feedback to applicants, the guidance provided during preliminary discussions does not always align with comments raised during the formal COA review. Strengthening continuity between the DRC and HZC Meetings could improve clarity and predictability for applicants.

- **Expand administrative review for routine maintenance and limited exterior work.**

Certain types of routine maintenance, repair, and limited exterior improvements that clearly meet the Historic District Design Guidelines may be appropriate for administrative review by City staff rather than requiring review by the Historic Zoning Commission. Expanding administrative review for clearly defined project types can streamline approvals for routine projects while allowing the Commission to focus its attention on larger proposals involving larger additions, new construction, or substantial alterations.

Review past COA applications to identify types of work that are consistently approved by the Historic Zoning Commission. Based on this analysis, the City may prepare a list of project types that could be eligible for administrative approval and present these recommendations to the Commission for consideration as amendments to the Historic District Design Guidelines.

Examples may include in-kind repair or replacement of deteriorated elements using matching materials, limited exterior repairs consistent with the Design Guidelines, and work that is not visible from the public right-of-way. Clearly defining these categories can improve efficiency for routine projects and reduce application timelines, while maintaining the integrity of Franklin's preservation review process.

- **Review and Refine Historic District Design Guidelines**

Franklin’s Historic District Design Guidelines are widely regarded as a thoughtful and well-structured resource that has helped guide preservation efforts across the community. As the city continues to grow and new districts and development contexts emerge, there is an opportunity to review the guidelines to ensure they remain clear, accessible, and usable for a typical homeowner, building owner, or layperson navigating the review process.

This review should focus on identifying opportunities to simplify language, clarify expectations, and expand the use of visual examples to make the guidance easier to interpret. While the existing document is comprehensive, some community members perceive the guidelines as heavily focused on the downtown historic district. Future updates could more clearly highlight how the guidelines, as they stand today, apply across Franklin’s multiple historic districts. Additional illustrations and graphics could also help clarify expectations.

The review process should incorporate input from a range of individuals who regularly interact with the guidelines, including Historic Zoning Commission members, developers, architects, contractors, property owners, and homeowners. Gathering perspectives from these groups can help identify areas where the guidelines are working well and where additional clarity may be helpful. Community engagement may also include a workshop to review portions of the existing guidelines and discuss accessibility and clarity, along with an online survey to gather feedback from individuals who have used the guidelines in the past.

- **Differentiate COA pathways for administrative and Historic Zoning Commission review.**

The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process currently serves as the primary mechanism for reviewing proposed work within the

Historic Preservation Overlay, but not all applications require the same level of review. There is an opportunity to more clearly distinguish between applications that can be reviewed and approved administratively and those that warrant review by the Historic Zoning Commission (HZC). Creating a clear and consistent distinction between administrative and HZC-level COA review can improve efficiency, better utilize staff expertise, and allow the Commission to focus on more complex and impactful proposals, while maintaining the integrity of Franklin's preservation program.

Some applications include both changes eligible for administrative review and changes requiring a COA. A potential solution could separate such projects into two applications: one for administrative approval and another for HZC. This will involve trade-offs (e.g., extra effort on the part of the applicant) but may result in shortened meetings.

- **Provide specialized training for the use of historic tax credit programs.**

Historic tax credit programs represent a significant opportunity to support the rehabilitation and reuse of historic properties, yet they can be complex for both applicants and staff to navigate.

Strengthening staff's familiarity with available federal and state tax credit programs can improve the City's ability to guide applicants and support preservation-oriented investment. Explore training opportunities to better understand eligibility requirements, application processes, and how tax credit programs align with local preservation goals and review processes.

Goal: Maintain an ongoing preservation education and training program for the Historic Zoning Commission and City staff.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen and formalize ongoing training for the Historic Zoning Commission and City staff.

City of Franklin staff and Historic Zoning Commission (HZC) members are recognized as local experts in historic preservation and are relied upon for guidance and advice in preservation-related matters and decisions.

Training opportunities already exist, including participation through the Certified Local Government (CLG) program, which requires at least one commission member to attend an annual training session. However, there is an opportunity to build a more consistent and structured approach to ongoing education. As best practices, materials, and regulatory considerations continue to evolve, a more intentional framework can help ensure that staff and Commission members remain equipped to address contemporary challenges and achieve successes. This may include budgeting for additional training opportunities, encouraging broader participation beyond minimum CLG requirements, and coordinating training topics to reflect local priorities and recurring review issues.

Preservation education and training opportunities are provided online and in-person through the CLG program, the Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program sponsored by the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, the American Planning Association, and others. Budget for at least one training session for each HZC and City staff member.

- **Facilitate continuing education for other City departments and staff on historic preservation practices.**

Maintaining and preserving Franklin’s historic building stock is crucial to retaining the character and heritage for which Franklin is famous. Several departments in addition to Planning and Zoning (e.g., including building and fire inspectors, code enforcement officers, and others) have significant responsibilities to maintain Franklin’s historic buildings from a safety and emergency management perspective. There is an opportunity to establish a more consistent approach to continuing education across departments to strengthen understanding of preservation principles, codes, and appropriate alternatives. Improved coordination and shared knowledge can support more collaborative decision-making when buildings require significant rehabilitation and help reduce the likelihood of unnecessary demolition, particularly for properties outside the Historic Preservation Overlay.

Disaster Mitigation

Franklin has experienced a range of natural hazards over the past several decades. Since the early 1970s, the city has recorded more than ten large-scale natural disasters, including severe storms with straight-line winds and tornadoes, heavy rains and flooding, and severe winter snowfall and ice events. Franklin is also exposed to additional risks such as extreme heat, drought, geological hazards including sinkholes and mudslides, and the potential for earthquake activity.

Historic resources require particular attention within this broader discussion of resilience. Many of Franklin's historic buildings were constructed using traditional materials and building techniques that predate modern building codes and contemporary weather-resistance standards. While these structures have often demonstrated remarkable durability over time, they can be vulnerable to hazards such as prolonged flooding, high winds, and moisture intrusion. In addition, historic buildings contain irreplaceable materials, craftsmanship, and cultural meaning that cannot easily be replicated if damaged or lost. For these reasons, protecting historic resources should be an important component of Franklin's broader disaster preparedness and resilience efforts.

Among disasters, fire is the most common risk to historic buildings. In downtown, the Franklin Fire Department reports that nearly half of all buildings on Main Street have been sprinkled as of 2026, and progress continues: each year, approximately one additional historic commercial building on Main Street has added sprinklers in recent years.

One of the most significant recurring natural hazards facing Franklin is flooding associated with the Harpeth River. The most catastrophic event in recent history occurred in May 2010, when record rainfall caused the river to rise dramatically, resulting in widespread damage across the community. The flood impacted hundreds of properties, caused significant economic loss, and highlighted the extent of Franklin's vulnerability to extreme rainfall events.

More recently, flooding in early March 2021 reinforced these ongoing risks. While less severe than the 2010 event, the 2021 flood still caused more than \$16.5 million in damage to over 440 buildings and prompted nearly 400 water rescues, particularly in the Fieldstone Farms area. During this event, the Harpeth River rose more than twenty feet, further underscoring the community's continued exposure to flooding. These disasters prompted improvements in floodplain management and increased awareness of the risks associated with the Harpeth River.

Franklin is also located within a region prone to tornado activity. Since 1990, nearly thirty tornadoes have been recorded in the city, a significant increase compared to the previous century. Although these events have resulted in relatively limited damage within Franklin itself, surrounding communities to the north and south have experienced deadly and destructive tornadoes. In recent years, tornadoes have damaged or destroyed many historic buildings across Middle Tennessee.

Summary of Challenges:

- Communities across the country, including Franklin, are experiencing more frequent and intense storms, flooding, and extreme temperature events. These conditions place historic resources at greater risk of damage, particularly buildings constructed with older materials and systems.
- Franklin's proximity to the Harpeth River exposes portions of the community to flooding during major storm events. Historic buildings located in flood-prone areas face ongoing risks of water damage and deterioration.
- Franklin lies within a tornado-prone region where high winds can cause significant damage to roofs, chimneys, windows, and other historic building elements.
- Historic buildings often require ongoing maintenance and specialized repair techniques. Deferred maintenance or lack of access to

preservation trades can increase vulnerability to storm-related damage.

- Historic communities across the country face challenges when adapting buildings to modern resilience needs while maintaining the architectural character that preservation programs are intended to protect.
- Many communities lack disaster preparedness and recovery plans tailored specifically to historic buildings and cultural landscapes. Without advance planning, emergency response and recovery efforts may overlook preservation considerations, increasing the risk of damage or loss to significant historic resources.

Goal: Protect cultural resources from natural disasters.

Recommendations

- **Develop a Historic Resilience Plan for protection of cultural resources in Franklin.**

The City should develop a Historic Resilience Plan to prepare for natural disasters and extreme weather events such as tornadoes, fires, earthquakes, sinkholes and flooding that could impact local historical and cultural resources. Creation of this plan should be in conjunction with the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office, the National Park Service, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), building on established best practices for integrating historic preservation into hazard mitigation planning. The following action steps are adapted from FEMA's *Integrating Historic Property and Cultural Resource Considerations into Hazard Mitigation Planning State and Local Mitigation Planning How-To Guide* and the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources *A Handbook for Historic Resilience Community Planning*.

The plan should identify areas most vulnerable to natural hazards and assess the exposure of historic resources using available GIS

tools and updated survey data. It should also evaluate how existing plans, policies, and regulations support or limit resilience outcomes, ensuring that preservation considerations are better integrated into broader planning efforts. Community engagement should play a central role in this process, helping to elevate the value of historic resources and incorporate local knowledge into prioritization efforts.

Based on this analysis, the City should establish a clear framework for prioritizing resources and identifying appropriate resilience strategies. These may include technical guidance for property owners, targeted design considerations, and approaches that support both hazard mitigation and preservation goals. The plan should also outline implementation steps, funding considerations, and coordination with local and regional partners, with regular updates to ensure it remains responsive to changing conditions.

Elected officials and the public should be updated annually on the status of the Plan. In turn, the Plan should be reviewed on a periodic basis to ensure implementation measures remain the most effective.

- **Revise existing Emergency Repair Program for improved response to natural disaster damage.**

The City's Emergency Repair Program should be revised so that it is nimble enough to respond to natural disasters. The City should conduct targeted outreach on disaster recovery focused on vulnerable historic resources, including creating procedures to deploy emergency repair resources following major storms or disaster events. Procedures may include expedited intake, temporary stabilization measures, coordination with emergency management agencies, and alignment with state or federal disaster assistance programs. Training and recruitment of already-certified contractors should be held annually in advance of a natural disaster.

- **Implement Williamson County’s Hazard Mitigation Plan.**

The City should continue working with federal, state, and county partners to implement the strategies and priorities outlined in the 2024 Williamson County Hazard Mitigation Plan. As part of this effort, the City should ensure that historic buildings, cultural landscapes, and archaeological resources are considered when hazard mitigation strategies are developed and implemented. Coordination with county emergency management, planning staff, and preservation partners can help align hazard mitigation initiatives with Franklin’s historic preservation goals, ensuring that efforts to address flooding, severe storms, and other natural hazards also support the long-term protection of the community’s historic resources.

Goal: Strengthen Disaster Preparedness and Recovery for Historic Resources.

Recommendations

- **Develop disaster preparedness guidance for historic property owners.**

Many historic property owners are unfamiliar with how to prepare their buildings for potential natural disasters. Develop guidance materials that outline preventative measures, maintenance practices, and preparedness steps tailored specifically to historic buildings. These resources may include checklists, technical guidance on flood protection and wind mitigation, and information on how to secure historic features prior to major storm events.

- **Establish post-disaster preservation response protocols.**

Natural disasters can place historic buildings at risk not only during the event itself but also during emergency response and cleanup efforts. Establish procedures for rapid post-disaster assessment of historic resources, coordination with the Tennessee SHPO, and

temporary stabilization of damaged structures. These procedures should also help prevent unnecessary demolition of historic buildings that may be repairable.

- **Conduct outreach and training on disaster preparedness for historic resources.**

By working collaboratively with preservation organizations, emergency management staff, and local contractors, Franklin could grow its capacity and preparedness of personnel. Periodic training can improve recovery strategies for historic buildings impacted by disasters. These efforts can improve awareness of preservation-sensitive repair techniques and ensure that qualified contractors are available following disaster events.

Goal: Strengthen the response to environmental conditions of Historic Buildings and Cultural Landscapes.

Recommendations

- **Develop climate adaptation guidance for historic buildings.**

Historic property owners may need guidance on how to improve building resilience while maintaining historic character. The City should develop technical guidance addressing flood adaptation, moisture management, roof reinforcement, storm protection measures, and mechanical system upgrades that are compatible with historic materials and design. Guidance should align with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and related National Park Service technical resources.

- **Assess and protect historic landscapes and archaeological resources from climate impacts.**

Franklin's cultural resources include not only buildings but also landscapes, battlefields, cemeteries, parks, and archaeological sites that may be vulnerable to erosion, flooding, and severe storm

events. Evaluate these resources as part of its resilience planning and identify measures to reduce risks associated with tree loss, soil disturbance, flooding, and other environmental impacts.

- **Develop a Tree Management Plan.**

Franklin should work with state and federal agencies such as Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation to develop a Tree Management Plan as part of resiliency efforts to protect archaeological resources within public parks and protected sites such as Glass Mounds, Fort Granger, City Cemetery and Resthaven Cemeteries. As part of this plan, landscapes should be tree stumped to prevent uprooting during severe storms, particularly at places where known below-ground archaeological resources could be adversely impacted by uprooted trees.

Goal: Reduce catastrophic risk to historic resources through proactive building safety and risk mitigation.

Recommendations

- **Prioritize mitigation of catastrophic and preventable risks, especially fire.**

Fire poses an immediate and irreversible threat to historic resources. Franklin should prioritize initiatives that directly reduce the likelihood of catastrophic loss, recognizing that once historic fabric is destroyed, it cannot be replaced. This includes emphasizing early detection systems, fire suppression, and proactive safety measures as essential components of preservation. In doing so, Franklin should position risk mitigation as a foundational element of preservation policy, ensuring that protection of life and property is treated as a prerequisite to long-term stewardship. This approach should also guide how resources are allocated, prioritizing interventions that reduce the potential for total loss over those that address only incremental improvements.

- **Integrate fire protection and life-safety systems into preservation practice.**

Fire protection systems such as sprinklers, alarms, and detection technologies represent the most effective means of protecting historic structures. Franklin should support the integration of these systems in a manner that is sensitive to the historic character while reinforcing that life-safety and building survival are fundamental to preservation efforts. This may include encouraging discreet or concealed system installations, identifying code-compliant alternatives where standard approaches conflict with historic conditions, and providing clear guidance to property owners navigating these decisions. Where feasible, Franklin should also explore incentives, partnerships, or technical assistance programs that reduce barriers to installing fire suppression systems, particularly in older buildings where retrofitting can be complex or cost prohibitive.

- **Address high-risk conditions during rehabilitation and construction.**

Historic buildings are often most vulnerable during periods of rehabilitation, when exposed materials and construction activities increase the risk of ignition. Regulations should strengthen requirements and guidance related to construction-phase fire risk, particularly for activities involving open flame, heat, or sparks. This includes reinforcing best practices such as hot-work permitting, on-site fire watches during and after active work, and maintaining temporary fire protection or water supply systems while buildings are under construction. Additional coordination between contractors, inspectors, and fire officials can help ensure that safety measures are consistently applied. Recognizing that rehabilitation is a critical moment in the lifecycle of a historic structure, these measures should be positioned as standard practice.

- **Reduce risks associated with vacant and underutilized buildings.**

Vacant historic buildings face increased exposure to fire, vandalism, and delayed emergency response, making them particularly vulnerable to catastrophic loss. Franklin should establish strategies for securing and monitoring vacant structures in ways that protect historic materials while reducing risk. This may include maintaining active alarm or suppression systems where feasible, implementing regular inspection protocols, and requiring property owners to stabilize and secure buildings to prevent unauthorized access. Consideration should also be given to how vacancies are tracked and addressed over time, including coordination with code enforcement and public safety departments.

- **Facilitate fire hazard mitigation coordination across departments to support a unified approach.**

Effective risk mitigation requires coordination across City departments, including Fire, Planning, and Building & Neighborhood Services. Franklin should continue to strengthen a unified approach to code interpretation, project review, and property owner guidance, ensuring that safety, preservation, and regulatory requirements are aligned rather than conflicting. This may involve establishing clearer internal protocols, improving communication across departments, and creating shared guidance that reflects a balanced approach to safety and preservation. Providing consistent messaging to property owners can reduce confusion, streamline project timelines, and support more effective implementation of safety measures without compromising historic character.

- **Reduce fire risks through a more deliberate approach to material selection and maintenance.**

Building materials play a critical role in how fire spreads, particularly in areas where historic structures are in close proximity to one another. Franklin should place greater emphasis on how both

existing and new materials contribute to overall building safety, especially within and adjacent to historic districts.

For existing buildings, efforts should focus on maintaining and, where materials are vulnerable or deteriorated, replacing them in a manner that improves fire resistance without compromising historic character. Replacement should prioritize in-kind materials matching the original appearance.

For new construction and additions, material selection should be carefully considered to reduce fire spread and exposure risks to adjacent historic resources. This includes evaluating exterior cladding, roofing materials, and other building components to ensure they contribute to a more fire-resilient environment, particularly in denser areas.

- **Incorporate lightning protection for vulnerable historic structures.**

While less frequent than other hazards, lightning strikes can pose a significant risk to certain historic structures, particularly those with prominent rooflines such as steeples, chimneys, and cupolas. Franklin should consider the use of low-profile lightning protection systems that can be integrated in a manner that minimizes visual impact while providing an added layer of protection. These systems can help disperse electrical energy and reduce the likelihood of ignition in vulnerable areas, particularly in buildings with dry attic spaces or exposed structural elements. Improvements should not adversely impact the architectural profile of a building's roofline.

- **Establish post-incident stabilization and recovery protocols**

Following a disaster, historic buildings are often at risk of unnecessary demolition due to safety concerns or lack of coordination. Franklin should establish clear protocols for post-incident response that prioritize rapid assessment, stabilization, and informed decision-making. This may include coordination

between the Fire Department, Building & Neighborhood Services, and preservation staff to evaluate structural conditions and determine appropriate next steps. Temporary stabilization measures should be deployed where feasible to prevent further deterioration and allow time for proper assessment. Establishing these protocols in advance can help ensure that salvageable historic resources are not lost prematurely and that recovery efforts support both public safety and preservation goals.