



# BUILDING IN HISTORIC MANASSAS

*Founded in 1873, the City of Manassas is a city rich in history, tradition, and architecture. Preserving the architecturally and historically significant properties of our city is important in maintaining the unique character of Manassas. To those wishing to build or modify structures in the historic district, please read over the following frequently asked questions:*

## **Is my property in a historic district?**

There are two different kinds of historic districts: National Register districts and locally designated districts. National Register districts are recognized by the Federal government but there are few, if any, impacts from National Register designation on a property. However, locally designated historic districts can impose regulations on the development and alterations of historic properties. There is one National Register historic district in Manassas and three local historic districts. The Manassas Local Historic District is the largest of the three and is composed of the traditional downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods, including over 300 structures. The other two districts are the Mayfield Fort Historic District and the Liberia Mansion Historic District. The Manassas National Register District is located within the boundaries of the Manassas Local Historic District and includes approximately 225 structures.

## **What is a “contributing structure”? Is my building “contributing”?**

When the Manassas Local Historic District was established, all of the existing buildings were catalogued and evaluated. Contributing structures are those structures over 50 years old deemed to represent the period in which it was built by material, design, or other physical features, or is a place of significance that preserves, protects, or enhances the character of the Historic Overlay District. Extra attention is given to contributing structures and they can only be altered or demolished after careful consideration. Contact staff to determine if your building is a contributing structure.

## **What is a “historic landmark”?**

There are 90 properties in the Local Historic District which have been designated as historic landmarks. Each of these structures is at least 50 years old and meets a minimum of one of the eight criteria for designation listed in Section 130-403 of the City of Manassas Zoning Ordinance. Historic landmarks may also be contributing properties. Designation as a historic landmark adds an extra level of protection from demolition.

## **My property is located in a historic district. Does this mean I can’t modify it?**

Properties located in the historic district can be modified. However, exterior alterations to the building are subject to review and approval (interior modifications are exempt from review). Some minor changes, many items of normal maintenance, or in-kind repair and replacement can be approved administratively by staff. Substantial alterations must be approved by the Architectural Review Board in a public meeting and receive a Certificate of Appropriateness before work can begin. Contact staff to determine if your planned work requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. Most modifications which require a Certificate of Appropriateness also require a building permit.

## **What is in-kind repair and replacement?**

When the need arises to repair or replace a portion of a historic building material, the preferred practice is to use the same material in type, design, dimension, texture and detail. The goal is to prevent as much loss of historic materials as possible. The replacement of sound or repairable historic material is not recommended.

## **But, aren’t modern materials better?**

Modern replacement materials are typically implied to be superior to historic materials as a more economical, durable and longer-lasting alternative. In reality, properly and routinely maintained historic materials are generally durable and serviceable materials. Their continued widespread existence on tens of thousands of historic buildings is proof of this. Maintenance, repair and retention of historic materials is always the most architecturally appropriate and usually the most economically sound measure to preserve the unique qualities of historic buildings.

## **I own a vacant property in a historic district. Does this mean I have to build a home like my neighbors houses?**

No. New construction in a historic district is not expected to be a copy of historic architecture. New construction is required to conform to the character of the district in terms of scale, mass, lot standards and other criteria, but can be contemporary in design.

**Need more info?** City staff is always available to answer questions. Please call (703) 257-8278 or visit [www.manassascity.org](http://www.manassascity.org). Applications, maps of the historic districts, copies of the design guidelines, and additional information can also be found on the City’s website.