



**CITY OF GRAND HAVEN
GRAND HAVEN, MICHIGAN**

**AGENDA FOR
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

**GRAND HAVEN CITY HALL*
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
519 WASHINGTON AVE**

**June 15, 2026
7:00 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

3. PRESENTATIONS

A. Historic Commission PA 169 – Chad Fisk, Chair HCDC

4. ADJOURNMENT

Creating a Grand Haven Historic District

A New Path to Preserving and Protecting Grand
Haven's Historic Sites

Prepared by the Historic Conservation District Commission





Agenda



- Background
- Critical Review
- HCDC Impacts
(successes and failures)
- Proposal
- Timing
- Summary

Background



The Historic Conservation District Committee and the City's preservation ordinance were founded in 1984 via adoption of Chapter 19 of the City's Charter.

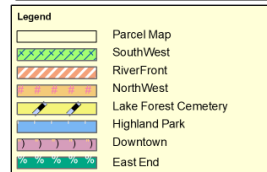
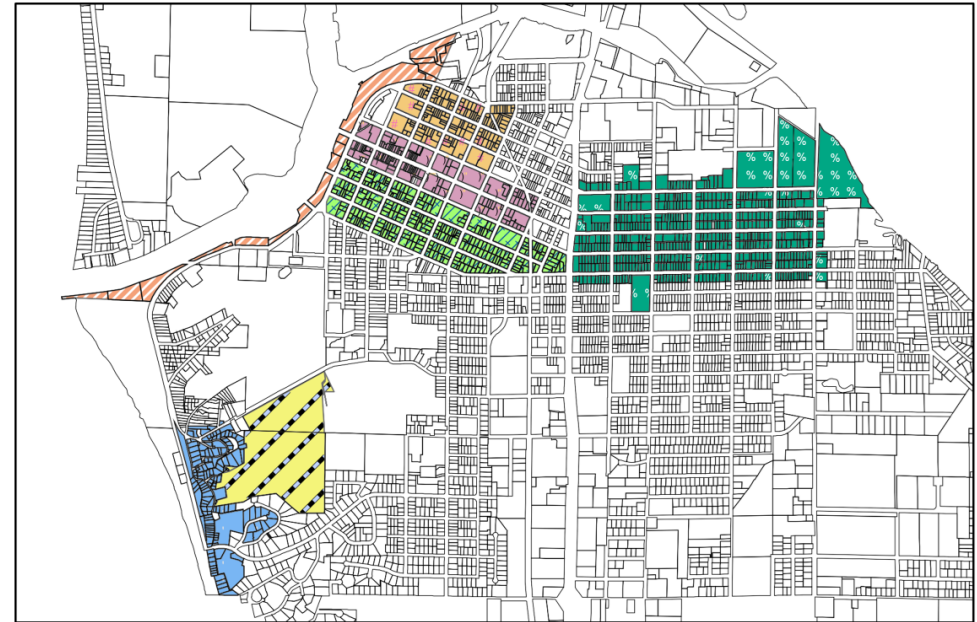
The intent for preservation ordinance was to safeguard the heritage, beauty, and relevance of Grand Haven by preserving historically significant landmarks and sites.



Background

There are 7 distinct Historic Conservation Districts in the City:

- Downtown
- SouthWest
- NorthWest
- East End
- Riverfront
- Highland Park
- Lake Forest Cemetery



Grand Haven Historic Districts



The Problem

After a thorough review, we found the current preservation ordinance has not protected our historic sites nor maintained our historic districts over the last 50 years.



- Limited protection of historic sites – Chapter 19 only protects City designated landmarks (13 landmarks currently protected, see appendix).
- No economic incentives for property owners due to lack of a state recognized local Historic District.
- Lack of legal protection for historic sites
- Noncompliance with Michigan’s Public Act 169 prevents pursuing Certified Local Government (CLG) status.



Lost History

223 Washington - Grand Haven State Bank

-Recognized on the National Registry of Historic places as the only remaining example of FDR era neo-classic civic architecture on Washington Street, built in the same style and time period as City Hall.





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Lost History

Properties that have been altered, demolished or proposed to be demolished since the HCDC was formed

Multiple homes and buildings on Franklin, 4th Street and Clinton moved or demolished in 1985 to create parking for the County (see Tribune article in the Appendix)



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Lost History

Properties that have been altered, demolished or proposed to be demolished since the HCDC was formed

Alteration of a historic building using materials on the façade that should not have been approved –
Use of appropriate materials would have been cost neutral with tax credits





Success Stories

Properties that have been saved from alteration or demolition with assistance from the HCDC

Grand Haven Landmark Status

Grand Haven Fire Barn

18-20 N Fifth Street



Success Stories

Properties that have been saved from alteration or demolition with assistance from the HCDC

Grand Haven Landmark Status

Grand Theater

Washington Ave

Preserved materials and marquee

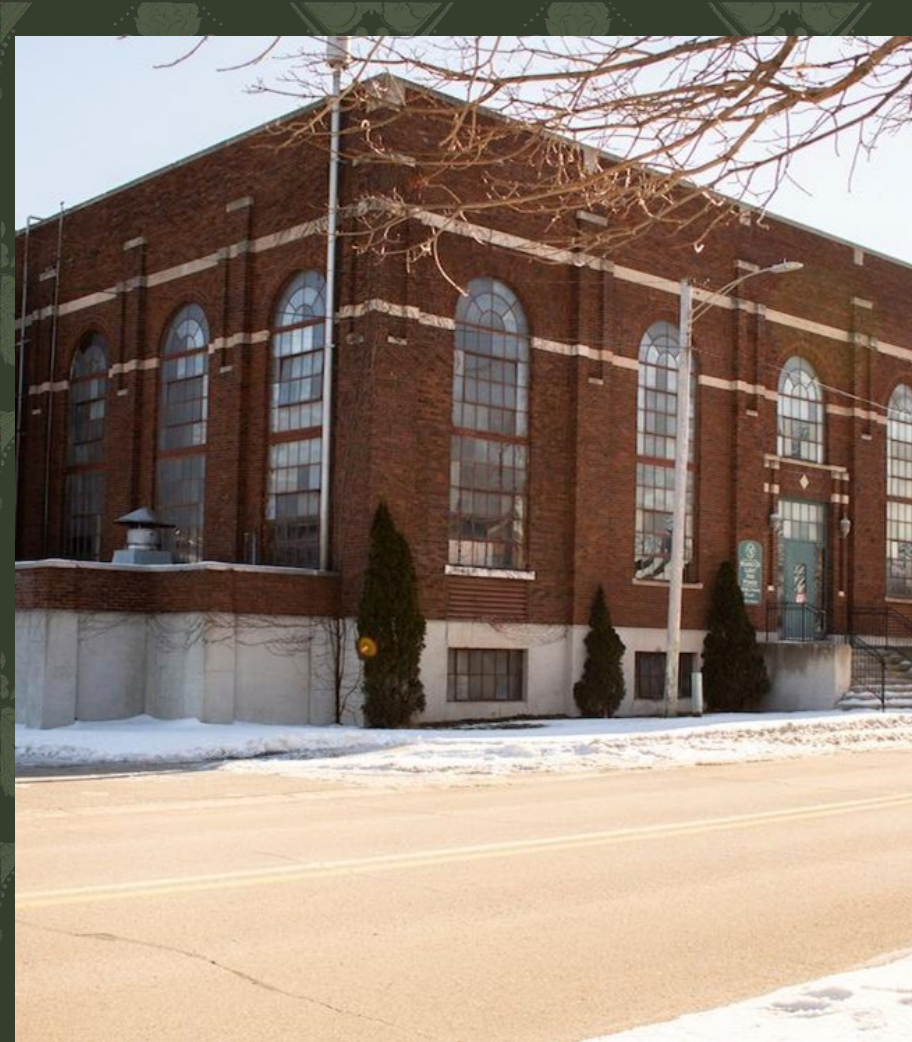


To Be Determined

Properties that have been saved from alteration
or demolition with assistance from the HCDC

Grand Haven Diesel Plant

Harbor Drive



Proposed Solution

1. Educate the public through providing meaningful district boundaries that have well documented historic significance to the city of Grand Haven.
2. Enable economic incentives for property owners that occupy structures which contribute to the significance of each historic district.
3. Provide legal protection for historic sites and structures.
4. Provide a path towards obtaining Certified Local Government (CLG) status.

Proposed Solution

Replace Chapter 19 with a new ordinance that aligns to the State Historic District Act, PA169

1. Access to economic incentives
 - a. CLG Grants and Resources
 - b. State Historic Tax Credits
 - c. Federal Historic Tax Credits
2. Enables regulatory protections of qualifying historic structures
3. Required Design Guidelines ensures each district retains its historic significance.
4. Establishes requirements for better record-keeping
5. Allows for more public engagement.

Roadmap to Success

Study Committee Report ⇒ Public Hearing ⇒ City Review ⇒ Final Draft ⇒ City Review ⇒ Adopt

Research Districts

Define Significance

Identify properties

Draft Ordinance

Draft Design Guidelines

Create Report

Within 60 days of
submitting report to city
council.

Draft Ordinance

Draft Design Guidelines

Create Report

1 year to adopt

Step 1: Historic District Study Committee

Before establishing a historic district, the City Council shall appoint a Study Committee.

A majority of the persons appointed to the Study Committee shall have a clearly demonstrated interest in, or knowledge of, historic preservation.

The Study Committee shall contain representation of at least one member appointed from one or more duly organized local historic preservation organizations (no more than 3 current HCDC members).

Step 2: Establish Historic Districts

- The new Historic District must be a researched historically significant region.
- Must have a documented historic significance, contain enough existing contributing buildings to justify its purpose
- Buildings within a district are cataloged by the study committee
 - Preliminary and final reports Approved by City Council, with public input.
- Buildings within a historic district required to adhere to design guidelines set forth by the Historic District Committee, which establishes the review process and requirements for structures within each historic district.

Step 3: Draft Ordinance with Design Guidelines

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- Must have a documented historic significance, contain enough existing contributing buildings to justify its purpose
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Step 4: Public Discourse

- Within 60 days of submitting the study committee's report, a public hearing must be held.
- City council will vote to approve the draft. This allows the study committee to finalize the report for a final vote within 1 year.

Advantages

- Achieves the City's historic preservation goals
- Allows property owners (both Commercial and Residential) to be eligible for tax advantages
- Provides Historic District building and design guidelines to property owners
- Property values maintained
- Defines roles and responsibilities for Commission members
- Prepares the City to be considered for CLG status

Challenges

- Additional costs will impact City budget:
 - Legal review of the Ordinance
 - SHPO inventory assistance
 - City staff to manage the permit review process
- Review process is more thorough
- Property owners upset over additional review process, impact on future development

Historic District vs Historic Conservation District

	Historic Conservation District	Historic District
Achieves the City's historic preservation goals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Allows property owners (both Commercial and Residential) to be eligible for tax advantages	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Provides Historic District building and design guidelines to property owners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Property values maintained	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Defines roles and responsibilities for Commission members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Prepares the City to be considered for CLG status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Preservation Steps to Success

Timeline

Q3 2026



Grand Haven City Council establishes a Historic District Study Committee

Duration = 1 year
Q3 2027



Study Committee creates a preliminary Historic District Study Report with photos, context, and SHPO inventory forms

- a. Historic District Map/s
- b. Photographic Inventory
- c. Historic vs non-historic resources for each district
- d. History of each proposed district
- e. Significance of each district

Q3
2027



Study Committee presents recommendations and delivers a preliminary report to City Council and SHPO

Preservation Steps to Success

Timeline

e

Within 60 days of preliminary report completion



Public Hearing held within 60 days of preliminary report delivery (notice to all property owners required)

Duration = 1 year after Public Hearing



Study Committee creates a Final Report within one year of the Public Hearing

- a. Ordinance must include legal boundary description, and be sent to the register of deeds
- b. Building guidelines finalized
- c. Includes a draft of the proposed ordinance

Duration = 1 year After Public Hearing



City Council holds final vote and enacts within 1 year if approved

Timing

- City Council to approve the creation of a research study committee, and empower the committee to:
 - Study the history of the area
 - Gather public input
 - Prepare and deliver a report to City Council and SHPO
- Adoption of a new ordinance
 - SHPO has provided a template

Milestone	Target Date
City Council appoints a research study committee	Q3 2026
Research committee conducts research and completes SHPO inventory	Q3 2027
Deliver preliminary report to City Council and SHPO	Q3 2027
Public Hearing	Q3 2027+ 60 days
Research committee creates final report for SHPO and Council	Q4 2028
City Council votes on Historic District	Q4 2028

Appendix

Grand Haven Tribune

11/20/1985

Houses and buildings on Franklin, 4th St,
and Clinton



Neighbors hear about county's growing plans

By R.L. McCOLLOM III

Neighbors of the county's soon-to-be expanded parking facilities met again with the county Administration and Development committee Tuesday night to hear of the county's plans for their neighborhood.

Fifteen Clinton Street-area residents attended the meeting at the county building, which was chaired by committee Chairman Robert Soule of Spring Lake.

Deputy Controller Mark Scheerhorn briefly summarized the parking problem and the proposed solution, saying the city zoning ordinance requires the county to provide one parking space for each 200 square feet of usable floor space.

With a 68,000 square-foot county building, Scheerhorn said, that translates out to 340 parking spaces needed to satisfy the ordinance. The county now has 169 parking spaces, he said, 107 in the main lot and 62 in the Franklin-Clinton area.

He said a frequent complaint lodged by visitors to the county building is the lack of parking facilities and that, coupled with the experience by commissioners and others who regularly use the county parking lots, has prompted the county board to look at this as a serious problem.

The proposed solution to the problem, he said, lies in the demolition of the former Christian Science reading room, the former Sheriff's Department Administrative offices, both located on Franklin Street, and a county-owned house at 421 Clinton.

The demolition of those three buildings, Scheerhorn said, would provide the county with 35 additional parking spaces.

The second phase of the parking upgrade, not scheduled for im-

plementation for two or three years, calls for demolition of the People's Bank building at Fourth and Clinton, the Rose house at Fourth and Franklin, and a second house on Clinton Street owned by the county. That second phase would net the county 130 parking spaces, Scheerhorn said, bringing the total to 334 — within sight of the number called for in the zoning ordinance.

After nearly 90 minutes of discussion, Soule said the committee would consider withholding demolition of the house at 421 Clinton, that in response to comments by neighbors that the house, even while standing vacant, acts as a buffer between the parking lot and an occupied house.

The committee assured residents that there were no plans to create a driveway from the parking lot leading onto Clinton Street.

Soule, responding to a comment made by Fourth Street resident Barb Rowe, said there is no formal master plan developed for the area surrounding the county building, but said "there is a plan there." He said the plan, now a year or so old, doesn't include much of anything other than purchasing land when and where the county can do so.

He said the county shouldn't "tip its hand" too much, and added that "without acquisition we're not going to go very far, unless you want to move the county building out of Grand Haven, at a cost of between \$30 million and \$50 million. I don't think that's going to happen.

County Controller Kurt Humphrey said regardless of how the plans for the new jail turn out, the county has plans to add some 30,000 feet of office space to the county building, which in some departments, he said, is bursting at the seams. That addition, he said, would push the county's parking space needs upwards accordingly.

