6.0 CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

6.1 OVERVIEW

Cultural and historic resources are the foundation upon which every community is built. These resources provide many benefits to the community, including bridging the present with the past and setting the community apart from others. A community’s cultural and historic resources can include any structures or sites having historical, archaeological, architectural, social or cultural significance within the City. Preservation of such resources fosters civic pride and helps to contribute to the economy by attracting residents, businesses, and visitors. North Charleston has been committed to promoting culture and history since the City Council created the Cultural Arts Department in 1979. The Cultural Arts Department is responsible for programs and services that encompass public events, public outreach, artist assistance, economic development, among others that promote the City’s history.\(^{15}\)

6.2 HISTORY

The Ashley and Cooper Rivers were integral to life for Native American tribes and the European settlers who followed. Settlers who arrived in the late seventeenth century quickly spread out along the banks of the rivers, starting farms which soon evolved into plantations. The plantations were known to grow crops, such as rice, cotton, indigo, and even silk from imported silk worms. Consequently there are no Native American sites identified in the City today and while the legacy of the Native Americans has faded, vestigles of their occupation of the land remain in the names of many places in the area.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the area north of the City of Charleston became known as “The North Area.” Due to the physical geography of the North Area, it became a transportation corridor with important trade routes, ferries, taverns, and animal watering stops, connecting the growing plantations to the port city. The Broad Path, the main road which was in the location of the present-day Rivers Avenue and Dorchester Road, connected Charleston to the upcountry in South Carolina. Rail lines were eventually added, and the train became the primary mode of transportation. After the railroads were established, more settlements filled in around the railroad crossings, but they were relatively small due to the fact that the North Area was covered with marsh and lowlands. The first true communities in the North Area were Liberty Hill and Pettigru.

During the 1890s, Charleston County drained wetlands to create land for more productive agriculture and to reduce the mosquito population for fear of malaria and other diseases prevalent during that time. The City of Charleston purchased two former plantations on the Cooper River to create Chicora Park, wanting to create a recreation destination for its citizens. That plan was stopped as the federal government purchased the land to develop a naval base that would replace the same at Port Royal in Beaufort, South Carolina. Eventually, the Naval Base was established and the community began to flourish with neighborhoods such as Chicora Place, Charleston Heights, Accabee, Cherokee Place, Buckfield, and Mappus Tract. After the North Area was established as one of Charleston County’s first Public Service Districts in 1935, these neighborhoods benefited from street lights, public sewers, water, fire protection, and garbage collection. During the 1940s, the North Area experienced another housing boom due to increased operations at the Naval Base during World War II.

\(^{15}\) https://www.northcharleston.org/residents/arts-and-culture/
North Charleston was incorporated in 1972 and since then has grown into the 3rd largest city in South Carolina based on population. North Charleston has grown into an economic powerhouse where businesses locate and thrive. With two seaports (soon to be a third) and two major freight rail operators in North Charleston, the movement of commodities is instrumental to the economy. The Economic Development and Transportation Chapters discuss businesses and transportation in greater detail for North Charleston.
6.3 HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The City of North Charleston has several Historic Districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Three of these are located entirely within North Charleston, and another, a portion of the Ashley River Historic District, extends into the City to preserve the viewsheds from the western bank of the Ashley River. Listing on the National Register of Historic Places is limited in the protection provided to these resources. Highway 61, Ashley River Road, is a National Scenic Byway that features St. Andrews Parish Church, Drayton Hall Plantation, Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, Middleton Place Plantation, and Fort Dorchester State Park.

- Charleston Navy Yard Historic District
  - Designated in 2006, part of the former Navy Base and ShipYard (1903-1996)
  - District includes 29 buildings, 27 structures associated with U.S. Navy operations, and a portion of the shipyard and its associated buildings.
  - Provides historic context and resources about what occurred on this land during the 20th Century, especially during World War II

- Charleston Navy Hospital Historic District
  - Designated in 2010
  - Located in northwest corner of the former Navy Base
  - Includes collection of 32 buildings
  - At risk of being delisted due to proposed Navy Base Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF) project
  - Demolition of several structures in district has begun and/or been completed to accommodate the proposed Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF)

- Charleston Navy Yard Officers’ Quarters Historic District
  - Located in north end of former Navy Base
  - Includes 24 buildings built between 1903 and 1945 that were used for housing Navy officers and their families

- Ashley River Historic District
  - Created in 1994
  - Roughly 23,000 acres; partially in City of North Charleston
  - District includes both banks of the Ashley River
  - District was expanded in 2010 to include adjacent areas with a distinctive historic rural landscape, Watson Hill property annexed by the City of North Charleston in 2005 (finalized in 2011) is adjacent to the District’s expanded boundary and the Whitfield Tract along the Runnymede and Middlebrook Plantations, which were annexed into the City in 2018
6.4 HISTORIC ZONING Overlay Districts

A Historic Zoning Overlay District is a regulatory planning tool used to preserve the historic character of an area.

- Olde North Charleston Neighborhood Historic District
  - Adopted in 2008 to preserve the historic character of this neighborhood
  - District includes properties built between 1900 and 1945 that are worthy of protection
  - Historic District overlay requires additional design review for new construction and alterations of the existing structure. There are regulations for bulk, setbacks, building materials, and other physical characteristics to help preserve the original character of the neighborhood

- Olde North Charleston Neighborhood Conservation District
  - Next to the Olde North Charleston Neighborhood Historic District and includes homes built in the same era
  - Historic properties are more spread out than those in the Neighborhood Historic District
  - Conservation District is intended to limit “out-of-character” development adjacent to the Historic District
  - District requires additional design review which mimics the controls from the Historic District, including those for massing, bulk, setbacks, materials, orientation, and demolition

- Ashley River Scenic District
  - Not a district for historic preservation specifically. Subdivided into three districts: AR-I, AR-II and AR-III.
  - AR-I protects the viewsheds from the historic plantation and properties that line the river. Design controls in this district are primarily height limitations and buildings or structures placement. Tree protection, grading, filling, excavating, and limiting impervious surfaces are also used to conserve the natural environment
  - AR-II and AR-III are to protect the natural resources of the Ashley River
  - District includes regulations for boat dock facilities to help preserve the natural environment surrounding the Ashley River
Figure 37: North Charleston Historic Districts and Historic Overlay Districts
6.5 HISTORIC STRUCTURES AND NEIGHBORHOODS

The City of North Charleston has a rich history with numerous historic neighborhoods, some of which are highlighted in Figure 38. The City contains many properties within the Districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The City of North Charleston Historical and Architectural Survey (1995), prepared by Preservation Consultants, Inc. of Charleston, SC, documented North Charleston’s history and historic properties. A total of 2,706 properties were surveyed in North Charleston, of which approximately 38 were designated as historic by the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Table 18 identifies the number of historic properties that were surveyed in each neighborhood. Since completion of the survey, the George Legare Homes, John C. Calhoun Homes and Liberty Homes has since been demolished and developed as the Horizon Village, Mixson and Oak Terrace Preserve communities, respectively.

![Surveyed North Charleston Neighborhoods](image)

Table 18: Historical Properties Surveyed (1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEIGHBORHOOD</th>
<th>SURVEYED PROPERTIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Liberty Hill</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ashley Junction/Pettigru/Six Mile/Deas Hill</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Chicora</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Stromboli</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Charleston Heights</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Cherokee Place &amp; Mappus Tract</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Buckfield – Not shown in map</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Olde North Charleston</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Charleston Farms</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Ben Tillman Holmes – Not shown in map</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 George Legare Homes (North Park Village) – Now Horizon Village</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 John C Calhoun Homes – Now Mixson</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Liberty Homes – Now Oak Terrace Preserve</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Palmetto Gardens – Not shown in map</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Nafair</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Nafair Addition</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Whipper Barony</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Whipper Barony Extension – Not shown in map</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 St Johns - Not shown in map</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Dorchester Terrace</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Ferndale and Morningside</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Russeldale</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Liberty Park and Highland Terrace</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Midland Park</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Ladson - Not shown in map</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Scattered Sites</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 38: Surveyed North Charleston Neighborhoods
6.6 CULTURAL ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

The City of North Charleston host events at special venues specifically designed to promote cultural arts and activities within the community. These facilities include the following:

- **NORTH CHARLESTON CULTURAL ARTS DEPARTMENT**
  - Located in NC City Hall the department has served the community since 1979
  - Provides artist assistance, organizes and facilitates special events, assists with after school arts enrichment programs, helps to educate and archive North Charleston history and manages facility rentals for community

- **LIBERTY HALL ROOM (NEW AMTRAK STATION)**
  - Located in the new North Charleston Transit Center which will house Amtrak, CARTA and Southeastern Stages
  - Includes a community meeting space and historic display room

- **NORTH CHARLESTON FIRE MUSEUM & EDUCATIONAL CENTER**
  - Opened in 2007
  - Showcases both fire education and history material
  - Houses over 20 antique vehicles and other firefighting artifacts, interactive exhibits, children's play area, fire truck simulator and 40-person theatre

- **BOURNE-SUMMEY CITY COMPLEX**
  - North Charleston Coliseum (1993): 14,000 seat multi-purpose arena hosting indoor concerts and home to SC Stingrays ice hockey team
  - Performing Arts Center: 2,300 seat theatre hosting concerts, ballets, symphonies and plays
  - Convention Center (1999): 77,000 square-foot event space that hosts trade shows, exhibits and expos
  - City Gallery: Located in Convention Center and features art works by international, national and local artists in various media

- **RIVERFRONT PARK**
  - One of the City’s most significant cultural resources and event venues
  - Pavilion serves as a concert venue and hosts exhibits such as the Outdoor Sculpture competition, summer concert series, Fourth of July festival, waterfront boardwalk, public pier for fishing and crabbing, children’s playground and dog park
  - Houses Naval Base Memorial, opened in 2007 and pays tribute to the military and civilian personnel that served at the former base during operation (1903-1996)

- **EAST MONTAGUE AVENUE**
  - City’s Main Street
  - Hosts annual community events such as St. Patrick’s Day Parade and Block Party, Harvest Festival, City’s Art Festival
  - Home to South of Broadway Theatre

- **PARK CIRCLE**
  - One of City’s most recognizable landmarks
  - Centerpiece of original planned community of North Charleston
  - Provides recreational fields, a disc golf course, surrounding parks, and Felix Davis Community Center

- **SPRUILL AVENUE**
  - Emerging Business Corridor

- **REYNOLDS AVENUE**
  - Local Community Business Corridor

- **THE BEND**
  - 20-acre community redevelopment project along the Ashley River
  - Provides a community space for music and cultural events, and recreational uses

- **LIBERTY HALL ROOM (NEW AMTRAK STATION)**
  - Located in the new North Charleston Transit Center which will house Amtrak, CARTA and Southeastern Stages
  - Includes a community meeting space and historic display room

- **NORTH CHARLESTON REGIONAL STADIUM (FUTURE SITE)**
  - Charleston County School District project
  - Proposed 6,000 seat facility on ~38 acre site
  - Will host various sport events including football, soccer, lacrosse, and band competitions
6.7 PROTECTED LANDS

The Charleston County Greenbelt Program began in 2004 with approval of a referendum for a one-half penny sales tax to fund roads, mass transit, and greenbelts. Citizens were concerned that the new roads would promote growth that could impact the natural beauty of Charleston County. Therefore, of the $1.3 billion dollars that was expected to be collected during the 25-year life of the tax, $221 million was set-aside for greenbelts. Since funding from the first sales tax has been virtually exhausted, Charleston County citizens approved a second one-half penny sales tax for roads, mass transit, and greenbelts in 2016. The 2016 tax provides an additional $210 million for the greenbelt funding that will be used for preservation and beautification. There are approximately 185 recorded acres of lands in North Charleston that have been protected by the Greenbelt Program.

The lands in North Charleston are also protected by other organizations such as the Lowcountry Open Land Trust, East Edisto Conservancy, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation through the purchase of properties or conservation easements. Approximately 3,600 recorded acres have been protected so far in North Charleston, as depicted in Figure 39. The Watson Hill Tract in Dorchester County is the largest part of this with approximately 2,661 acres that are conserved by limiting one dwelling unit per six acres.

6.8 HERITAGE CORRIDORS

North Charleston is part of the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor which promotes and preserves cultural, natural, and historic resources across South Carolina. The South Carolina National Heritage Corridor stretches across 17 counties from the Appalachian Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean. North Charleston is also part of the Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor which recognizes the Gullah Geechee culture. The Gullah Geechee corridor extends 12,000 square miles through North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.
Figure 39: North Charleston Protected and Greenbelt Lands