

6. Cultural & Historic Resources

6.1 Local History

The City of North Charleston was incorporated in 1972, but development existed in the area long before the city became official. Although several areas and water features in North Charleston are derived from Native American names, there are no aboveground Native American sites associated with North Charleston. The earliest colonial settlements in North Charleston date back to the late 17th century, the land being used for rice and indigo plantations. By the mid-18th century, the North Charleston area had already established itself as an important transportation corridor with several ferries and trade route crossroads. This became further established, as railroad lines began crisscrossing the area in the 1800's.

Because North Charleston was covered with a lot of marsh and lowlands, it was not heavily settled because of fears of malaria and other diseases spread by mosquito. Settlements existed at railroad crossings and crossroads, but they were small. The first true communities in North Charleston were Liberty Hill and Pettigru, which were both established in the 1870's by pre-Emancipation Freedmen and former slaves.

With the establishment of the U.S. Navy Yard on the Cooper River came the a new wave of neighborhoods in North Charleston, including Chicora Place, Charleston Heights, Accabee, Cherokee Place, Buckfield, and Mappus Tract – all of which were developed near the Navy Base.

The development of North Charleston as a town was planned around Park Circle. The area was laid out in 1913 with the circle as the center streets radiating outward from the circle. Sales of lots began in the area in 1915, and most of the homes in Olde North Charleston were built between 1915 and 1945.

North Charleston experienced another housing boom in the 1940's as Navy Base operations expanded for World War II. Several of North Charleston's neighborhoods were established at this time as military housing, including Ben Tillman Homes, George Legare Homes, Palmetto Gardens, John C. Calhoun Homes, Nafair, Waylyn, and Dorchester Terrace.

6.2 Historic Districts

There are three National Register Historic Districts located in North Charleston:

Charleston Naval Yard Historic District – Designated in August 2006, the Charleston Naval Yard District is comprised of a portion of the former Navy Base and Shipyard, which operated from 1903 to 1996. The district includes 29 buildings, 27 structures associated with Naval operations, and a portion of the shipyard and its associated buildings. The historic resources in the district reflect the evolution of the base and the U.S. Navy throughout the 20th Century, especially during and around World War II, when the base experienced its most dramatic expansion.

Navy Yard Officer's Housing District – This recently designated historic district is located on the north end of the former Navy Base, bordering Noisette Creek, the new Riverfront Park, and the north end of the Naval Yard Historic District. The district includes landscaping and road layouts that were originally part of Chicora Park, designed by the Olmstead Brothers in 1898. There are 24 contributing buildings, built between 1903 and 1945 that were used as housing for Naval officers and their families. The district also included several recreational facilities, including a golf course bordering Noisette Creek. All properties and the majority of the 70 acres of land are currently owned by the Noisette Company, with the exception of a small amount of land that is owned by the City of North Charleston.

Ashley River Historic District – The Ashley River Historic District is only partially in the City of North Charleston. The district, created in 1994, is located in Charleston and Dorchester Counties, and includes Ashley River Road (Scenic Highway), the banks of the Ashley River and its historic plantations - Middleton Place, Magnolia Plantation and Drayton Hall. The district includes 53 properties and archaeological sites with significance during Native American settlements, plantation use, 18th Century African American settlements, and Civil War fortifications. The district is currently listed on the National Register for Historic Places 11 Most Endangered Places List.

Proposed Historic Zoning Overlay Districts

North Charleston is in the process of establishing two zoning districts that are intended to help protect the city's historic resources. The locations of the two districts' parcels are shown in Map 6.1. They are:

Olde North Charleston Historic District

This district is located south of the East Montague Avenue's Business District, and is generally bounded by Virginia Ave., Buist Ave., Oakwood Avenue, Jenkins Ave., and the south alley behind East Montague. There are a high number of

intact homes in this area that were built between 1915 and 1945, generally of two or three types of common architectural styles. Development of nearby parcels that is out of character with the styles of this neighborhood creates concern of threatening the districts character. The proposed Historic District would set regulations for bulk, setbacks, building materials, and other physical characteristics to help preserve the identity of the area.

Neighborhood Conservation District

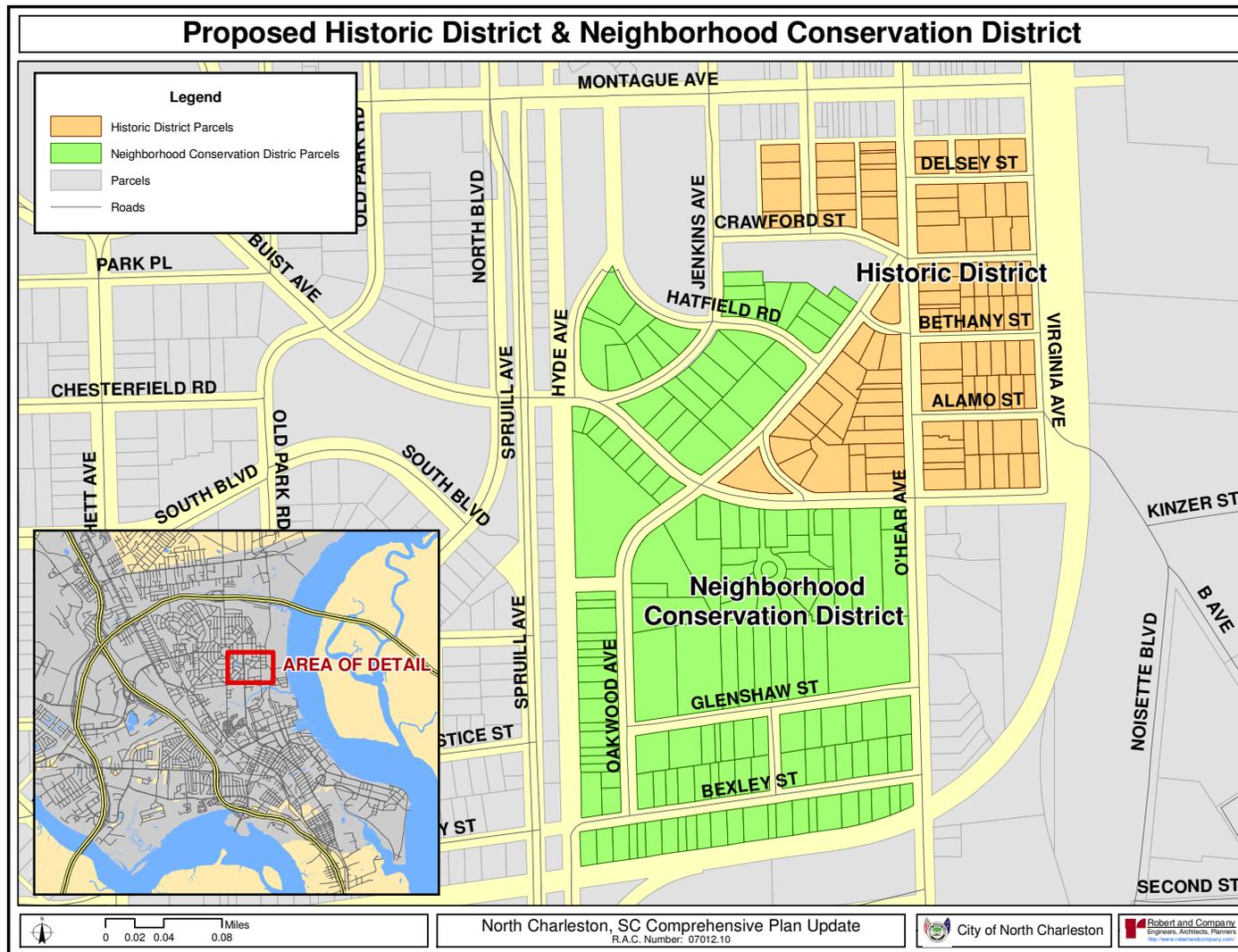
The Conservation District is located adjacent to the Olde North Charleston Historic District to the south and east of that district's boundaries. There are some homes in this district that are of the same era (1915-1945), but they are more sparsely spread out here, and they are mixed in with undeveloped lots, mobile home parks, and apartment buildings. The regulations in this district will be similar, but not as strict as the Historic District, but would help limit out-of-character development from occurring adjacent to the Historic District.

It is expected that these districts will be adopted sometime in 2008, and incorporated into the North Charleston Zoning Ordinance. As will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, an historical survey of the city shows that these two neighborhoods are hardly the only ones with a large number of historic homes. There are several other neighborhoods in North Charleston that would be worthy of their own historic districts. However, some of these neighborhoods are not experiencing the same amount of redevelopment and reinvestment as Olde North Charleston. Over-regulation from a historic overlay could burden a developer and give reason to build elsewhere, slowing the infill development process. Additional historic districts should be sought to help protect the city's cultural heritage, but care should be taken in areas in greatest need of reinvestment not to over-regulate.

Ashley River Scenic Districts

This overlay district in the city's zoning ordinance protects the Ashley River for both its environmental and cultural importance. The district is subdivided into three districts – AR-I, AR-II, and AR-III. While AR-II and –III are primarily for the purposes of protecting the natural resources and aesthetics of the Ashley River, AR-I also protects viewsheds from the historic plantations and properties located on the opposite side of the river. Within this district, buildings and structures cannot be constructed within 100 feet of the Ashley River and adjacent lowlands (marshes, mudflats, or shallows periodically inundates with tidal action). Additionally, other land disturbance activities, such as tree removal, grading, filling, or construction of impervious surfaces, are prohibited within 100 feet of the river and its lowlands in this district. This district helps ensure that the natural and historic beauty of the Ashley River are not degraded as North Charleston continues to grow and develop. (Additional information on this district and a location map are in the Zoning Overlay Districts section in the Land Use Chapter of this document).

Map 6.1 – Proposed Historic Districts



6.3 Historic Structures & Properties

Although there are not any specific North Charleston properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places (apart from what is included in the three districts mentioned previously), the city is certainly not devoid of history. There are several neighborhoods in North Charleston that contain an abundance of historic homes and properties. An historical and architectural survey was performed in 1995 to document and study North Charleston's historic properties. The following table (6.3.1) lists the number of historic properties that were surveyed in each neighborhood.

Table 6.3.1 - 1995 Historical & Archaeological Survey

Number of Properties Surveyed by Neighborhood			
Liberty Hill	37	Palmetto Gardens	200
Ashley Junction/Pettigru/Six Mile/Deas Hill	22	Nafair	67
Chicora Place	224	Nafair Addition	52
Stromboli	9	Whipper Barony	90
Charleston Heights	49	Whipper Barony Extension	12
Cherokee Place & Mappus Tract	66	St. Johns	10
Buckfield	33	Dorchester Terrace	550
Olde North Charleston	335	Ferndale and Morningside	83
Charleston Farms	98	Russelldale	10
Ben Tillman Homes	138	Liberty Park & Highland Terrace	18
George Legare Homes (North Park Village)	160	Midland Park	12
John C. Calhoun Homes	200	Ladson	3
Liberty Homes	192	Other/Scattered Sites	36

Preservation Consultants, Inc., 1995

The next table (6.3.2) shows the date ranges of the surveyed properties.

Table 6.3.2 – Date Ranges of Surveyed Properties

Date Range of Surveyed Properties	
c. 1820 – 1885	4
c. 1870	1
c. 1890	1
c. 1900	6
c. 1909 – 1915	50
c. 1916 – 1920	122
c. 1921 – 1929	100
c. 1930 – 1935	144
c. 1936 – 1940	559
c. 1941 – 1945	1719

Preservation Consultants, 1995

The survey found the following properties to be eligible for Individual Listing in the National Register, according to the 1995 survey:

- ❑ John C. Calhoun Homes and Office
- ❑ Five Mile Viaduct – Concrete bridge on U.S. 78, which spans CSX rail line and Meeting Street. It was built in 1926, and exists as one of 13 non-metal truss highway bridges in South Carolina
- ❑ War Worker Housing Historic District (Ben Tillman Homes and School, and George Legare Homes)
- ❑ General Asbestos and Rubber Company (GARCO) and Employee Housing

George Legare Homes (also known as North Park Village) is no longer in existence, as it was razed to build Horizon Village, the new Hope VI housing development. Ben Tillman homes are still in existence, and are now in use as an apartment home complex. John C. Calhoun Homes have also been cleared to make way for the Mixson development. Five Mile Viaduct is still in existence, and is listed in the National HABS/HAER Program, which documents achievement in architecture, engineering and design in the United States. Steps should be taken to preserve or re-use North Charleston's historic properties that area still in existence.

Survey Recommendations

The survey also made several recommendations for further research or actions needed to help preserve North Charleston's historical assets. The recommendations made by the 1995 Survey include:

- ❑ *Further Research & Investigation*: The survey identifies several gaps in information that the survey was unable to cover. This includes a couple areas of the city that were not surveyed, several buildings that were moved that necessitate further investigation, and additional resources or photo archives that should be researched further.
- ❑ *National Register* – Properties that have been identified as eligible, that are still in existence should be nominated for the National Register of Historic Place.
- ❑ *Interagency Cooperation* – The survey recommends coordination with properties across the Ashley River to protect viewsheds for Magnolia, Drayton Hall, and Middleton Place plantations.
- ❑ *Public Policy* – Encourages the city to consider effects of development and land use on historic properties and significant viewsheds, when forming policies and decisions.
- ❑ *Historic District Designation* – Identifying and creating design standards to preserve the architecture and heritage of several worthy neighborhoods in North Charleston. The survey identifies the following neighborhoods as worthy of local historic district designation:
 - Chicora and Charleston Heights
 - Cherokee-Buckfield
 - Liberty Hill
 - Pettigru/Six-Mile/Seven-Mile/Deas Hill
 - Palmetto Gardens
 - Nafair
 - Whipper Barony
 - Dorchester Terrace
- ❑ *Heritage Tourism* – Promote tourism opportunities to explore and educate groups and the general public about the local history in North Charleston. This will not only increase the city as a destination, but also validate local pride in its identity and history. The survey notes the value of local military history as particularly good draw for historical tourism.
- ❑ *Historic Markers* – The survey encourages the use of historical markers as visual signage aids and identification of significant areas. It also encourages using markers to commemorate important historic properties that are no longer in existence

Area 3 Cultural Resources Plan

In 2002, Brockington and Associates, Inc. created a Cultural Resource Management Plan specifically for Planning Area 3 of North Charleston (Dorchester County). The plan summarizes previous surveys of known cultural and archaeological resources, identifies areas that have not been survey and have the highest likelihood to contain additional resources, and makes recommendations to the city for preserving existing and potential sites.

The plan identifies 20 known cultural resources in Planning Area 3 that are eligible for, potentially eligible for, or already listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Nearly all of these historic and archaeological sites are associated with eighteenth century plantations, nineteenth century phosphate mining operations, or Native American settlements.

Recommendations for the management of Planning Area 3 resources included:

- ❑ *Develop an Historic Planning Commission* –North Charleston would benefit from an Architectural or Design Review Board, that would help guide quality design in new construction, historical appropriateness of rehab construction, and ensure that new construction within or adjacent to historic neighborhoods is contextually appropriate.
- ❑ *Develop the Historic Resources Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan* – Both this update and the previous Comprehensive Plan (1996) contain a Cultural Resources element that provides analysis of cultural and historical aspects of the city, and makes policy and implementation recommendations for the future planning of these resources
- ❑ *Emphasize the Ashley River as one of the City's Cultural and Environmental Stars* – This has been effectively accomplished through the Ashley River Historic District, North Charleston's Ashley River Scenic District regulations, the Charleston Harbor Project, and the state designation The Ashley as a Scenic River.
- ❑ *Seek Consideration of Cultural Resources on Land that has not been surveyed* – A citywide historical survey should be performed to survey areas that were not covered in Planning Area 3 Management Plan or the 1995 Historical Survey.
- ❑ *Develop a Library of Cultural Resources Report* – this is a worthy recommendation. However, this should not be limited to Planning Area 3, and it could also be expanded to recommend a North Charleston Museum & Library to educate the public of the city's history, and keep North Charleston's historical records and artifacts.
- ❑ *Use the Geographic Information System (GIS) Database* – A GIS database of the city's historic properties would be helpful when reviewing development proposals.

Adaptive Reuse

Old buildings often outlive their original function; however, this does not mean that structures should be abandoned or demolished once its original use has come and gone. Adaptive reuse in historic preservation is the concept of renovating or retrofitting a building so that it can be used for modern purposes. Reuse of older buildings, especially in an urban setting, reduces wasteful teardowns for new structures – which is costly and changes the character of the community. Additionally, adaptive reuse helps urban revitalizing through infill development. A classic example of this is the national trend of converting old factories and warehouses into residential lofts or art studios. The lofts and studios help attract young professionals, empty nesters, and creative types, who help repopulate formerly abandoned urban areas.

Several Navy Base warehouses and older office buildings along Storehouse Row on the Noisette property have been renovated and converted into new uses, including art studios, restaurant space, new offices, and workshops for the



College of Building Arts. The Urban Alliance Studio building on Storehouse Row has not only been reused, but also retrofitted to LEED standards for energy efficiency, safety, and air and light quality.

The former Naval Base property provides numerous opportunities for adaptive reuse. The Admiral's House and other grand houses and landscapes (shown left) that were formerly housing for the Navy's officers, provide a unique setting with winding roads, oak trees draped in Spanish moss, and classically-inspired buildings. The new historical designation for this area will help ensure that these buildings will be protected, and it is hoped that the

Noisette Company, North Charleston, and other private interests will collaborate to create a unique and valuable opportunity to reuse the area.

The former Navy Powerhouse (shown right), located at the corner of McMillan Avenue and Hobson Avenue across from the shipyards is another significant opportunity for reuse. The shell of the powerhouse is a surviving example of monumental architecture in the city, but has been augmented with layers of industrial machinery over time. It is large enough to house a variety of uses, and the city is considering it as the future home for the city's Cultural Arts Department, which will eventually vacate its current occupancy at Sterett Hall when the Clemson Restoration Institute takes over. It is estimated that renovation of the Powerhouse will cost approximately \$10 million.



6.4 Cultural Arts and Entertainment Venues

Cultural Arts Department and Facilities

North Charleston's Cultural Arts Department oversees and develops tourism, local art culture, and arts initiatives throughout the city.

Venues

The city's Cultural Arts and Civic Center complex at Sterett Hall is located on the Former Naval Base Property. The complex consists of an auditorium, conference rooms, a reception hall, classrooms, studios, rehearsal space, department offices, and a gymnasium. The department also oversees use of 'The Meeting Place', a city-owned facility located in the

Olde North Charleston Business District on East Montague Avenue. This venue features an assembly hall for small meetings and receptions, and a storefront exhibition space.

Services

In addition to the department's venues, it provides four primary services: General Public Programs, Outreach Programs, Artist Assistance, and Economic Development

- ❑ General Public Programs – the Cultural Arts departments produces a number of free or affordable performances and art exhibitions throughout the year for a variety of audiences.
- ❑ Outreach Programs – In addition to the general programs, outreach programs are targeted to school children, senior citizens, low-income residents, and at-risk youths.
- ❑ Artist Assistance – The department assists local artists through grants, technical assistance, artists' studio relocation assistance, and coordinating donations for art studio space.
- ❑ Economic Development – This service coordinates with the business community to advance city and regional tourism through marketing, cultural heritage, and arts related business development.

The Cultural Arts Program develops its own long-range plans every 5 years to keep up with the community's needs.

Riverfront Park

One of the city's most significant resources is its abundance of waterfront along the Cooper and Ashley Rivers. The Cooper River's waterfront in North Charleston is primarily dominated by industry and shipping. The closure of the Naval Base opened up an opportunity to regain waterfront access for the community. The recently built Riverfront Park along the banks of the Cooper River and Noisette Creek now provides scenic open space for the city's residents and visitors. Additionally, the pavilion and lawn provide an outdoor concert venue, and hosts exhibits such as the Outdoor Sculpture Competition. A newly constructed boardwalk runs along the Cooper for waterfront walks, and there is a pier for fishing and crabbing.

Coliseum-Convention Center-Performing Arts Center Complex

The coliseum hosts major concerts, Southern Conference collegiate tournaments, and is home to the South Carolina Stingrays professional hockey team. The convention center hosts major national conventions and events throughout the year. Connected to these venues is also an Embassy Suites Hotel, where out-of-town conventioners and visitors can stay with convenient access to the complex.

Events & Festivals

An annual Independence Day festival and concert, and the Outdoor Sculpture Competition are both put on at Riverfront Park.

Libraries

North Charleston is served by two library systems, Charleston County Libraries and Dorchester County Libraries. Charleston County has four libraries located in North Charleston:

- ❑ Cooper River Memorial, 3503 Rivers Avenue
- ❑ Dorchester Road Regional, 6325 Dorchester Road
- ❑ Otranto Road Regional, 2261 Otranto Road

Charleston County also operates a Bookmobile, which is a large bus that acts as a mobile library, stopping at various schools, community centers or retirement centers throughout the county, to help reach people with less means to get to one of the library branches.

There are no Dorchester County Library Branches in North Charleston, but Dorchester operates a Bookmobile that delivers to various locations throughout the county, including the North Charleston area. North Charleston should lobby for a Dorchester County Library to be located in Planning Area 3, as this is the only planning area of the city that does not have a library branch, and this area is in need of more cultural venues.

Museums & Memorials

North Charleston Fire Museum

The Fire Museum, which opened in Spring 2007, is a 25,000 square foot facility located in the Centre Pointe Shopping District, adjacent to Tanger Outlet Mall. The museum is an interactive venue that educates the public on firefighting history, fire fighting techniques, and fire prevention.

The fire museum also houses the city's Visitor Center, where visitors can find information on local venues and destinations.

Naval Base Memorial

The Navy Base Memorial opened in late 2007 as part of Riverfront Park. This memorial features a fountain and sculptures that pay tribute to the military and civilian personnel that served at the former base during its operation from 1903 to 1996. The setting is ideal, as it sits on the former Navy Base property adjacent to the Cooper River.

Park Circle

Park Circle is one of North Charleston's most notable and recognizable landmarks. It is historically significant as the centerpiece of the original concept of North Charleston as a planned community. Today, the circle is home to recreational fields and surrounding parks, and it functions as a transportation roundabout for several neighborhood thoroughfares. It is a defining feature of the local area, which is often referred to as the 'Park Circle Area.'

Retail Shopping

Retail or mall shopping (retail shopping for leisure, outside of basic needs and services) occurs primarily at three areas in the city:

- ❑ Northwoods Mall – Northwoods Mall is a regional scale shopping mall, accessorized by several big-box anchored shopping centers in the surrounding area. The mall is located near suburban areas of North Charleston, Hanahan, and Goose Creek, helping to maintain the mall's viability.
- ❑ City Center – The City Center area consists of the new Tanger Outlet Malls, Centre Pointe shopping district, the Coliseum and Convention Center, and numerous area hotels.
- ❑ Olde North Charleston Commercial District – The shops and restaurants along East Montague between Spruill Avenue and Virginia Avenue provide a popular, vibrant area that has maintained its main street charm character.

Aside from retail shopping opportunities, most cultural venues in North Charleston are located in the south end of the city in Planning Areas 1 & 2. Northern areas 3 & 4 are for the most part devoid of local cultural features, and so must drive into the south end of the city. This is partly due to the relatively new development of the area, which may not have had the population numbers previously to warrant cultural venues. As the areas have now begun to fill in, venues are needed.

6.5 Cultural Resource Goals & Policies

Goal 6.1: Promote North Charleston's local history

- Policy – Preserve the character of historic neighborhoods and districts.
 - Action: Adopt the proposed Olde North Charleston Historic District and Neighborhood Conservation District to preserve the character of the area, and prevent incompatible development.
 - Action: Identify additional neighborhoods where historic overlay districts should be established.
 - Action: Create an Architectural/Design Review Board to ensure quality design and contextual appropriateness of new construction and rehabs.
- Policy – Create a unique sense of place in the different areas of the city.
 - Action: Create unique street signage for each neighborhood
 - Action: Identify development and unique building characteristics to incorporate into design standards for new and redeveloped properties.
 - Action: Improve development and design standards along commercial corridors.
- Policy: Educate the public of North Charleston's unique history
 - Action: Create a North Charleston Museum to showcase the city's history and natural environment, as well as to house its historical records and artifacts.

Goal 6.2: Protect existing historic properties

- Policy – Preserve historic structures with historical importance or architectural relevance.
 - Action: Identify historic structures eligible for designation on the National Register of Historic Properties.
 - Action: Hire an historic preservation consultant to perform an update to the 1995 historic survey.
- Policy – Encourage adaptive reuse of under-utilized historic buildings.
 - Action: Provide tax incentives for renovation and adaptive reuse of historic structures.

Goal 6.3: Provide an adequate amount and variety of cultural venues and events throughout all parts of the city.

- Policy: Provide more cultural centers and performing arts venues in Planning Areas 3, & 4.
 - Action: Lobby Dorchester County for a library and/or small cultural arts center to be provided in Planning Area 3.