

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



*“...I who have known
Her tenderness, her courage, and her pity,
Have felt her forces mould me, mind and bone,
Life after life, up from her first beginning.
How can I think of her in wood and stone!...”*

- DuBose Heyward, 1922

Great cities have one common element: their differences. In this era of globalization, a new building may be designed in New York, located in Asia, and reference the shape of a structure in Europe. What distinguishes a great city is its singular history, expressed by multiple generations of residents in its architecture and development patterns. It is these cities, which successfully unite the historic and the contemporary, that are recognized as beautiful and lively places to live, work, and visit.

This Preservation Plan invokes a vision for Charleston based on the rich history of its buildings and people. The purpose of the Plan is to provide a direction for Charleston—renowned as a great historic city on the same world stage as Prague, Kyoto, and Edinburgh—to continue leading the way in protecting its built heritage and integrating a preservation ethos into everyday life.

Preservation is an everyday matter, especially in Charleston. Synonymous for many with quality of life, preservation encompasses far more than bricks and mortar. It is a social, economic, and cultural endeavor. Residents have affirmed this overlap of issues by calling for this Plan to tackle a vast sweep of concerns about transportation and traffic, affordable housing, open space, sustainability, and growth patterns. While preservation planning cannot single-handedly address these issues, it provides valuable input to these broader objectives.



1.1 *More than 500 Charlestonians participated in an extensive public process to help shape the plan.*

Twenty-first-century preservation reflects this complexity in its challenges, rewards, and stakeholders. The Plan brings together a broad spectrum of planning tools, citizen input, multidisciplinary expertise, and related ideas from cities around the country and the world. A concerted effort was made to involve Charlestonians with diverse backgrounds and concerns, and more than five hundred residents participated in community meetings and focus groups (*Figure 1.1*).

Thus, the Plan comes from many voices: the voices of Charleston. The vision presented here fuses the community's thoughts and ideas with extensive policy research. Here is a plan specifically shaped to Charleston, to the incredible wealth of historic resources and the central role preservation has played. Its relevance is heightened by continuing growth in Charleston and the region: in 2000 the city's population was 106,000, and forecasts predict a 51 percent increase, to 160,000 residents, by 2015.

This is not a blueprint that identifies which buildings to preserve. Rather, it is a broadly focused policy road map that outlines how the city can continue to protect and add to its layers of built history for new generations. The Charleston Vision frames the Plan, while 600 policy recommendations advocate specific guidelines, identify opportunities, and suggest actions. The Plan lays out new ideas as well as those with a history of success.

Charleston is home to an enviable wealth of historic resources, and preservation has played—and must continue to play—a central role in its ongoing stewardship. This Preservation Plan encourages forward-thinking preservation by all Charlestonians—not only those with historic houses, but all individuals who care about the built and natural environments that shape life in Charleston.

Stewardship Principles

With the current development boom, it is essential to articulate principles aimed at safeguarding Charleston's historic resources. Modern architecture and building practices differ dramatically from their historical counterparts. Without thoughtful guidelines, even well-intentioned new construction may be hard-pressed to contribute to the city's context.

The stewardship principles value heritage for its contribution to a relevant, lively future. Education and incentives are discussed as the basis for a more pluralistic practice of preservation, so that more people and resources can be engaged in protecting the community's historic resources. The Plan suggests updates to the City's Preservation Ordinance to reflect contemporary concepts of preservation. Other sections address the importance of historic preservation as a local economic engine and explore how the design review process can be streamlined.

More Resources, More Protection

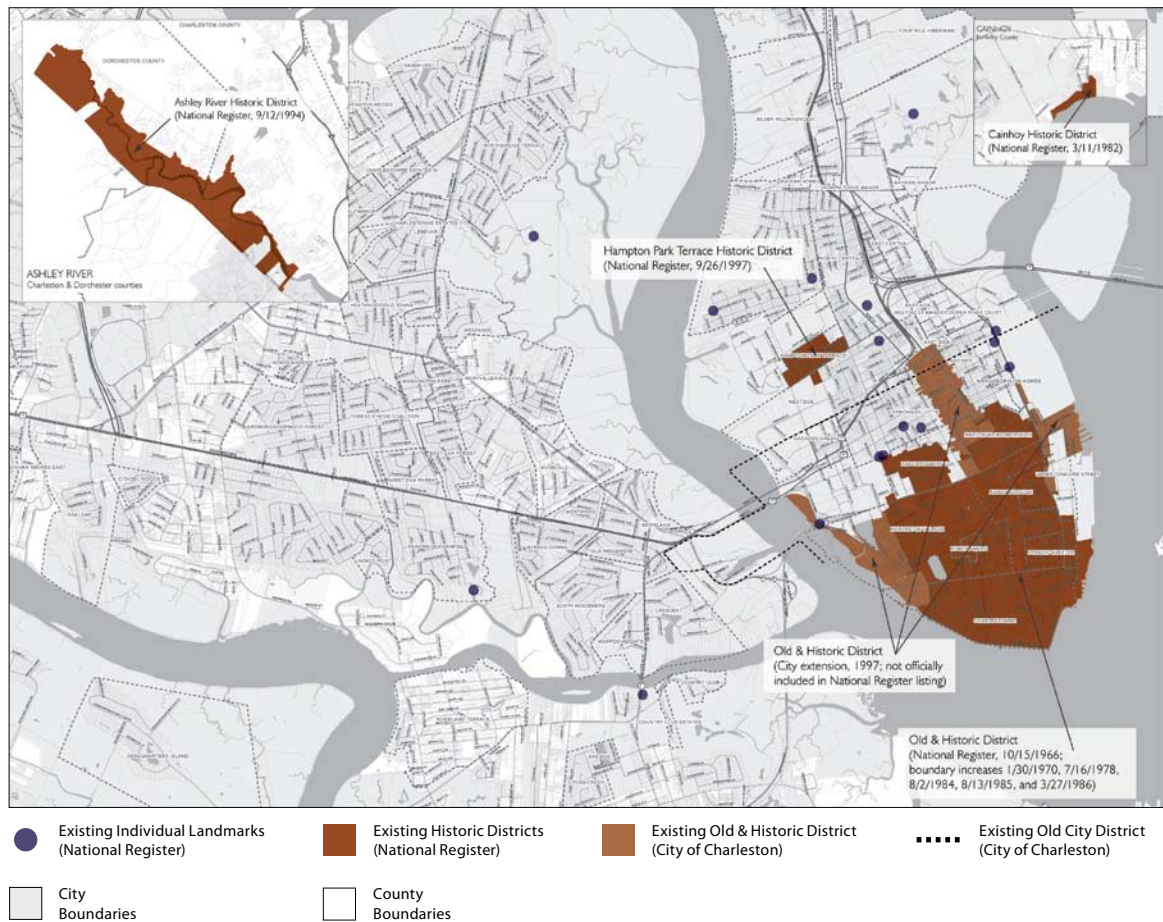
Although outstanding individual buildings sparkle, it is the volume, diversity, and quality of historic resources that make Charleston one of the world's great historic cities. Because many areas that contribute to its character currently lie outside historic districts, expanded protection and financial resources for preservation are vital as those areas face development

This Preservation Plan encourages forward-thinking preservation by all Charlestonians... who care about the city.

pressures. The Design Review section outlines a program for expanding the Old and Historic District, increasing project review south of Mt. Pleasant Street, and putting all National Register Historic Districts under the jurisdiction of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR), in addition to designating conservation districts (Figure 1.2). The Incentives for Preservation section describes specific preservation tools, such as the Bailey Bill and Transfer Development Rights (TDRs), that can benefit historic properties and their owners. The Interiors section affirms that historic interiors, as irreplaceable records of outstanding craftsmanship and materials, should be protected through easements whenever possible.

Vision for the Future

The ten statements in the Charleston Vision constitute the heart of this Plan and of future policies and plans. They seek to reinforce historical development patterns and existing construction quality through continuing stewardship of existing resources and standards for new development. The conviction that local heritage is the best foundation for growth begins with the Plan’s first vision statement—“Historic preservation is an integral part of Charleston’s history and will continue to inspire the City’s vision and its approach to planning and development”—and is reinforced throughout the Plan.



1.2 Existing historic districts will need to change to include resources throughout the city.

Charleston Vision

1. Historic preservation is an integral part of Charleston's history and will continue to inspire the City's vision and its approach to planning and development.
2. Charleston will sustain its rich and dynamic cultural heritage by retaining its long-standing communities. Housing affordability is a crucial part of this effort.
3. Charleston will look like Charleston, with recognition that the city's eras of development each have a distinct and valuable character, which collectively represent the continuity of its rich history.
4. The peninsula will continue to grow as a dense and diverse urban community consistent with its historic development patterns.
5. The natural landscapes in Charleston are important parts of the city's cultural and environmental heritage. These landscapes will be protected with planning and conservation tools.
6. Suburban neighborhoods are the potential historic resources of the future. They will be treated accordingly, with the goal of reducing sprawl through development consistent with traditional patterns.
7. Dense urban architecture and infill development will be encouraged where infrastructure supports such development. Publicly accessible open space is central to successful development.
8. Charleston's historic architecture sets a high and challenging standard. This tradition of high-quality architecture and building materials will be required in all projects in the city.
9. Charleston's policies will encourage a balance of diverse, appropriate, and compatible uses to make it a truly living city with continuing neighborhood vitality and livability.
10. Charleston will be a responsible steward of its environment, both built and natural: environmental and cultural sustainability will be considered in planning decisions that affect development.

Common Design Principles

While a well-articulated vision is necessary to guide the city, it must be translated into building-by-building principles. This is the role of the urban design principles, which render the sweeping statements of the Charleston Vision into tangible guidelines that residents, developers, and City staff can work from when they look at and talk about buildings and their contexts.

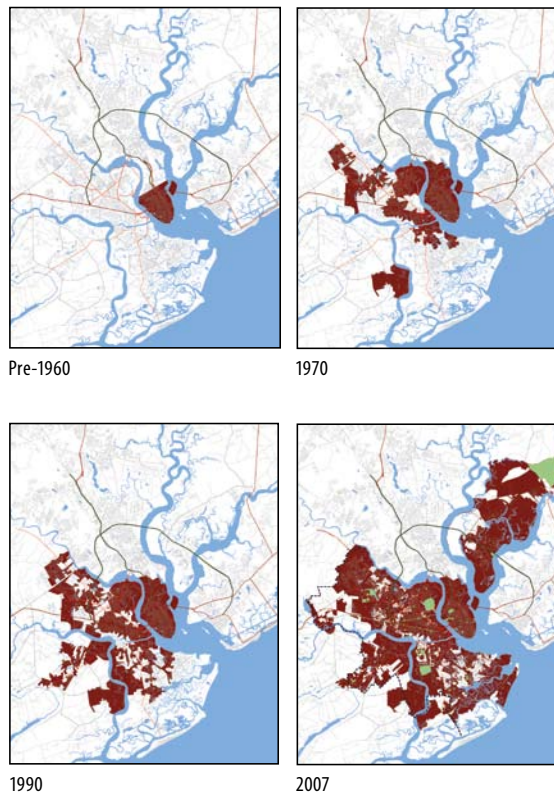
There are no easy answers to the question of appropriate architectural styles for Charleston. This issue requires ongoing community dialogue. The buildings that often prompt public controversy—large structures with little historical or stylistic precedent in Charleston—are especially important to assess. The Plan recommends that a New Charleston typology, focused on integrating large new buildings into the existing context, be developed.

In the thirty years since 1974, the population has grown to nearly 120,000 and land area has increased fivefold to more than 100 square miles.

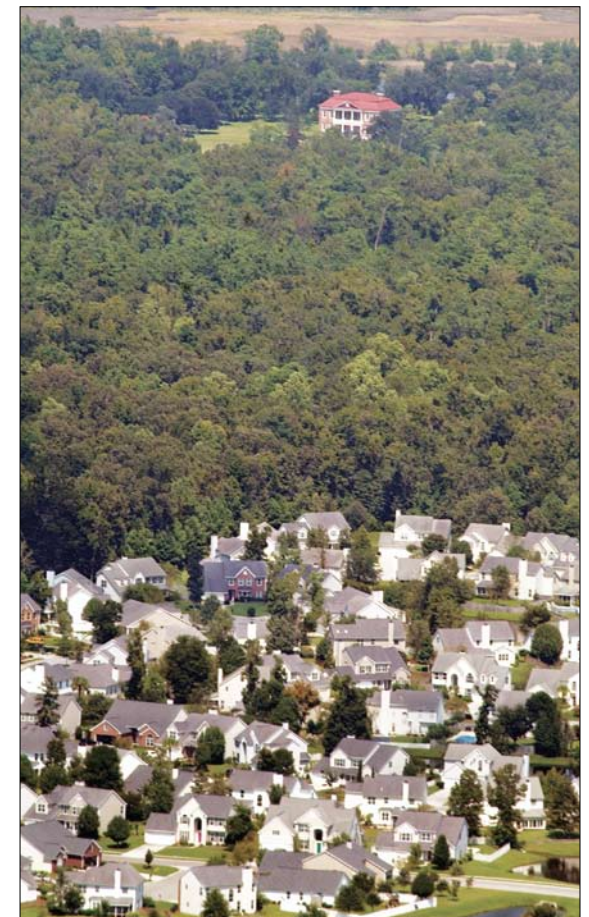
Charleston's Expanding Horizon

The Charleston of today is very different from what it was in 1931 and 1974, when the original Preservation Ordinance and the Historic Preservation Plan made national history. Between 1931 and 1974, Charleston's population rose from 62,000 to 67,000, and land area grew from 6 square miles to 18 square miles. In the more than thirty years since 1974, the population has grown to nearly 120,000, and land area has increased fivefold to more than 100 square miles (*Figure 1.3*).

This growth, unprecedented in Charleston's history and projected to continue, requires visionary thinking to ensure that it builds upon past success. An influx of interest and financial wherewithal has opened the door to growth on an unprecedented scale. With growth comes great opportunity to reinforce and add to the Charleston landscapes. While standards for guiding growth are set forth in Stewardship Principles, the sections within Charleston's Expanding Horizon outline practical steps across transportation, infrastructure, and institutional planning to handle that growth.



1.3 Charleston's growth, 1960–present



1.4 Development near Drayton Hall



1.5 *Wagener Terrace, in the Upper Peninsula, is a cohesive twentieth-century neighborhood.*

Smarter Growth

The city limits encompass a rare mix of dense urban fabric, older suburbs, industrial brownfields, rural land, and recent development. The large lots of new suburbs, which relax historically tight development patterns, threaten the rural landscapes that embody a way of life. With preservation of place taken as a given, the Growth and Sprawl section presents ways to lessen the negative impacts of existing suburban development and promote smart planning for future growth (*Figure 1.4*).

Institutions and Preservation

Several large institutions, including colleges and the Port, oversee a number of historic resources and indirectly influence many more through their actions. Effective integration of large institutional buildings that border historic neighborhoods should be explored to help define campus boundaries and positively reinforce neighborhood edges.

Diversity of Place

A drive or stroll through the city reveals a variety of historic resources, from the very urban to the very rural: gracious homes and intimate alleys south of Broad Street, cohesive neighborhoods along Rutledge Avenue, residential neighborhoods and spreading oaks west of the Ashley River and on James Island, the expansive vistas on Johns Island, Cainho's unpaved lanes. These vastly different landscapes maintain a record of the Charleston area's growth and development, from the late seventeenth-century street grid through modern building construction in progress. These diverse, well-preserved landscapes and the histories they recall elevate Charleston from a small town to a great historic city.

It is this diversity of place that makes preservation planning so complicated. Neighborhoods cannot be lumped together in planning efforts. Recognizing this, the City of Charleston is moving toward neighborhood-based planning. This Plan reinforces that shift by evaluating historic resources and issues neighborhood by neighborhood. Dedication to maintaining each area's unique character is reflected in Neighborhoods, which explores the history, issues, and opportunities present in each area of the city.

To Each Place Its Own

Building type and style, lot size, streets, landscaping—each neighborhood is composed of many factors that make it an interesting, well-rounded place. Wagener Terrace is noted for its cohesive architectural feel, but this element combines with generous front lawns, similar building placement on lots, gables and porches, doors set into the front façade, and street trees to make it a distinct neighborhood. The proposed Area Character Appraisals, or ACAs, study a particular neighborhood, then articulate the elements that contribute to neighborhood character. ACAs will be used as a planning and design review tool to ensure that new development reinforces the existing context (*Figure 1.5*).

“Only a preservation effort that maintains the vibrancy and diversity of a community as well as its built heritage can truly succeed.”

New Paths for Preservation

In 1931, Charlestonians rallied around individual buildings. By 1974, the focus was on renewing historic neighborhoods. Today, this Plan envisions stewardship of Charleston’s heritage as groundwork for the entire city’s growth. This vision requires preservation to engage multiple disciplines, pioneer new collaborative efforts, and embrace fresh subjects and ideas.

Archaeology

Archaeology has the potential to reveal artifacts from precolonial days to the present, uncovering details of how people lived. The Mayor’s Walled City Task Force recognized resources in the oldest part of the city, but archaeologically significant areas throughout Charleston should be protected. An Archaeology Ordinance should be passed before the advent of major developments that might otherwise permanently damage or obscure below-ground resources.

Sustainability

Preservation has long practiced “the three R’s” of the environmental movement—reduce, reuse, and recycle. Preservation reduces the amount of natural resources and land used in constructing new buildings, encourages reuse of structures and materials to make the most

of embodied energy, and recycles buildings and valuable community fabric. This Plan recommends linking efforts of the environmental and preservation movements and calls for the appointment of a sustainability coordinator to work with the City, nonprofits, and the preservation community.

Preservation of Community

“Only a preservation effort that maintains the vibrancy and diversity of a community as well as its built heritage can truly succeed.” Thus the Housing Affordability section opens. Because preservation has lasting effects on quality of life, property values, and demographics, community engagement is critical in building support for preservation as a democratic, pluralistic movement.

Charleston should continue to integrate historic preservation and community development by hiring a development review/affordable housing liaison and exploring cost-efficient, contextually sensitive designs for affordable housing. Funding should be secured to create more affordable housing in historic buildings and new developments, zoning should require new residential developments to include a percentage of affordable housing units, and historic housing should be retained as owner-occupied and affordable rental units (*Figure 1.6*).



1.6 *Enston Homes, constructed “to make old age comfortable” for elderly Charlestonians, continues to provide affordable housing today.*

Disaster Preparedness and Recovery

Charleston’s wealth of historic resources and its remarkable history of experiencing—and recovering from—disasters make disaster preparedness and recovery a necessary component of this Preservation Plan. An educated, involved public is essential to effective preparation for and response to disasters. A Preservation Response Network (PRN) of concerned agencies and organizations can formalize response efforts by developing and implementing a Heritage Disaster Management Plan.



1.7 Harleston Village, in the Lower Peninsula



1.8 Upper King Street, in the Mid-Peninsula



1.9 Moe's Crosstown Tavern, in the Upper Peninsula's North Central neighborhood

Neighborhoods

This city's dynamic history is communicated by its neighborhoods and landscapes, which often differ dramatically but collectively comprise the place that is Charleston. It is no surprise, then, that stewardship of these neighborhoods and landscapes presents distinctly different challenges and opportunities. From the East Side to Riverland Terrace, Hampton Park Terrace to Johns Island, historic suburbs in West Ashley to Cainhoy Village, this Plan offers a path for each that seeks to balance growth and preservation.

While Area Character Appraisals (ACAs) and conservation districts identify the individual importance of different parts of the city, the sections in Neighborhoods explore them more fully, focusing on issues and opportunities specific to each area.

Lower Peninsula

Planning for the Lower Peninsula requires balancing historic preservation and development pressures; old buildings and new ones; and the multiple needs of residents, institutions, and visitors. As the traditional geographic nexus of preservation in Charleston, this area has long been the center of revitalizing preservation efforts, and its continuing protection must remain a top priority. The area's tight-knit historical fabric cannot accommo-

date much change, and new buildings must fit into the established context in the few remaining development opportunities. Union Pier and Concord Park are notable exceptions as large mixed-use redevelopment projects with the potential to spark the development of a uniquely Charleston urban architecture—the New Charleston typology. Elsewhere, infill development must respect the context of this most historically important district (*Figure 1.7*).

In part because of successful historic preservation in this area, housing affordability has decreased. Increasing the supply of housing that is affordable to a range of Charlestonians should be included in preservation, planning, and nonprofit efforts, with innovative programs and new sources of funding explored. Improved public access to the riverfront would benefit residents, downtown employees, and visitors.

Mid-Peninsula

The Mid-Peninsula combines the historic architecture of the Lower Peninsula with exciting opportunities for redevelopment that can strengthen the existing community character and benefit current residents. More outreach and responsiveness to community concerns are needed to connect historic preservation with community rewards, as past preservation efforts have sometimes lacked local support. Directing new development in this

area while maintaining its historic value, diversity, mix of uses, and affordability should be a priority. As in the Lower Peninsula, contextual, high-quality design should be required in all new developments (*Figure 1.8*).

The area is currently under the jurisdiction of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and classified as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Expanding the Charleston National Register Historic District would enable use of federal and state tax credits for rehabilitation projects. Combined with steps to retain housing affordability and increase homeownership, these incentives could greatly benefit current long-term residents.

Upper Peninsula

Upper Peninsula neighborhoods have remained remarkably cohesive since their development in the early twentieth century. Hampton Park Terrace has been recognized as a National Register Historic District, but neither it nor other area neighborhoods receive BAR oversight of new construction or alterations. This Plan recommends putting all National Register Historic Districts and newly created conservation districts under BAR jurisdiction, with BAR review eventually extended over the entire Upper Peninsula (*Figure 1.9*).



1.10 *Rosemont, in the Neck*



1.12 *James Island's Riverland Terrace neighborhood*



1.11 *Byrnes Downs, in West Ashley*



1.13 *Johns Island*

Efforts to strengthen major north-south corridors and east-west axes should protect existing neighborhoods and the Upper Peninsula's diverse commercial and civic uses. Infrastructure improvements should include pedestrian pathways and cyclist routes. Planned new developments present the opportunity to develop a New Charleston typology for large-scale buildings, with special attention paid to contextual design at the edges of residential neighborhoods.

The Neck

A historic home to heavy industry, the Neck is poised for transformation by extensive mixed-use developments. These new developments, if sensitively designed, could help propel the New Charleston typology into architecture that belongs to Charleston as much as the single house.

It is important to protect compact existing residential neighborhoods as these large new developments are planned and built. Zoning changes, sensitively designed edges of development, and carefully planned new infrastructure will help the historic workers' communities in the Neck retain their character and physical form. Inclusionary zoning would allow longtime residents, 40 percent of whom live below the poverty line, to stay in the area (*Figure 1.10*).

West Ashley

Significant growth here underscores the need for a West Ashley Comprehensive Plan jointly developed by the City and County of Charleston. Generic new developments also highlight the need to protect the character of historic inner-ring suburbs through ACAs and conservation districts. These neighborhoods, most developed between 1924 and 1950, show how Charleston responded to the innovations and events of the early to mid-twentieth century.

West Ashley's older history as an agricultural area should also be protected. The remaining historic plantations and rural land here should be protected through conservation easements and, less directly, smart growth practices that reduce the land area used by new developments (*Figure 1.11*).

James Island

On rapidly growing James Island, growth must be directed wisely and sprawl contained. Conservation easements and smart growth tools will help preserve the remaining open space on James Island. Creating pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure—both here and in West Ashley—is a necessary step toward improving neighborhood livability.

A variety of historic resources, ranging from 1860s earthworks to twentieth-century Riverland Terrace, should be recognized and preserved. McLeod Plantation, a major historic resource, should be the focus of a management plan developed with the American College of the Building Arts, Historic Charleston Foundation, and the City of Charleston (*Figure 1.12*).

Johns Island

This relatively undeveloped area stands as an anomaly in Charleston's booming building climate. Its rural landscapes are invaluable cultural, historical, and environmental resources. To protect them, the Urban Growth Boundary must be maintained, and proposed large transportation and development projects should be thoroughly evaluated for their impacts on the land, residents, and ecology. City and County planning, land use, and zoning policies should be coordinated.

As development proposals on Johns Island increase, long-term communities and unrecognized historic resources must be protected. Heirs' property, or land that has been divided between family members through succession, is closely tied to Johns Island's long-standing African American community and rural development patterns. Cemeteries and other archaeological resources on the island should be recorded and preserved, along with rural roads and scenic corridors (*Figure 1.13*).

Cainhoy

Cainhoy illustrates the need for regional planning. Located on the edge of booming Daniel Island in Berkeley County, new development encroaches on Cainhoy's historic resources. Historic village development patterns should be encouraged through low-density zoning and maintenance of rural roads.

The historic settlement should be protected through BAR review, both as a National Register Historic District and the proposed Cainhoy character area conservation district. As on Johns Island, heirs' property issues should be resolved and archaeological resources protected (*Figure 1.14*).



1.14 Cainhoy Village store

Historic Resource Surveys

Historic resource surveys should be integrated as planning tools and expanded to include context statements, cultural landscape components, and historic interiors. This underscores the Plan's theme of recasting preservation as an active contributor to current and future planning efforts. This section summarizes surveys that have been conducted in Charleston, including a pilot survey undertaken as part of this Plan, and recommends specific steps to standardize, integrate, and expand surveys as tools for strong planning.

Historic Context Statement

Here you will find the story of Charleston. Beginning with Native American settlements that occupied the area for more than 12,000 years and continuing through the new Cooper River Bridge in modern times, the Historic Context Statement weaves the broad themes of history into the patterns of the city's physical development. It helps explain how local and national politics, society, and culture shaped Charleston's streets and buildings.

The Historic Context Statement lays an important foundation for policy and education. In tracking the history that has influenced Charleston's growth, it helps residents and policy makers to better understand the city's physical, political, and social development—and how historic resources can be managed within their specific context.



1.15 View of Charleston Harbor circa 1739



1.16 *The new Cooper River Bridge*

Even in this brief Executive Summary, it is evident that the scope of the Charleston Preservation Plan stretches far beyond traditional boundaries. There is a growing awareness of the impact that preservation values can make in the course of urban planning. The volume of comments received from Charlestonians on subjects such as transportation and affordable housing signals a readiness for this innovative and expansive approach to preservation and preservation planning.

This Preservation Plan speaks to Charleston as it is, as it has been, and as it could be. It digs deep into local history and potential to propose a vision for Charleston as a city renowned for both its history and its dynamic forward-thinking planning. In calling for preservation to address nontraditional issues, this Plan opens up preservation in Charleston to all citizens: not only those with historic houses, but all who care about the city. For although this Plan was commissioned by the City of Charleston and Historic Charleston Foundation, it belongs to the entire community. Only public affirmation can make its recommendations come alive.

How to Use This Document

This Plan has been written for both laypeople and preservation professionals. Thus, narrative text in each section explains the concepts behind recommendations, whether basic or advanced, and how they apply to Charleston. Bulleted recommendations follow the text.

Many recommendations in the Plan appear in more than one place. These repeated recommendations are a reflection of integrated policies and are noted by different symbols. Letters following some recommendations signify that legal changes may be required (**L**) and that additional relevant information can be found in the Resources section (**A**). All recommendations are included in Next Steps with responsibilities and priorities assigned.

Symbols

- ◆ Recommendation
- ❖ Repeated recommendation
- L** Legal issues
- A** See Resources section



32-35 St. Augustine Court
William Weston Home - 1882
"To Make Old Age Comfortable"

