



CITY OF VIROQUA **HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN** 2026-2031



**DRAFT REPORT**  
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**studio**gwa  
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**City of Viroqua  
Historic Preservation Plan  
2026-2031**

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# I: Introduction

## Plan Overview

The 2026-2031 Historic Preservation Plan (HPP) charts a forward-looking course for the City of Viroqua to protect and celebrate its storied heritage—from pre-settlement to founding and formation to its historic built environment—while reinforcing community identity and economic vitality. Recognizing that every lost or altered structure erodes collective memory, the plan positions historic preservation as a strategy that preserves not only buildings and sites but also the stories of the people who shaped Viroqua. It builds on more than two decades of local stewardship and presents a proactive approach to preservation of the city's historic resources.

The City of Viroqua HPP details, reviews, and updates information on historic resources and locations that comprise the historic inventory to guide continual improvement of the City's historic preservation offerings, whilst maintaining the City's eligibility for State and Federal historic preservation grants and funding opportunities. It also serves as an important element of Viroqua's overall and long-term comprehensive planning program goals by addressing specific historical items over the next five-year period (2026-2031). This HPP will allow the City to participate in programs, such as the Certified Local Government (CLG) program, that require historic preservation plans as a prerequisite.

The HPP was commissioned by the City of Viroqua in 2024. The plan was produced by Studio GWA, an architecture and planning firm based in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin. The HPP was produced concurrently with the 2026-2031 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) and the 2026-2036 Comprehensive Plan, the latter of which was created in tandem with the consultant firm Redevelopment Resources.

## What is Historic Preservation?

Historic preservation is the thoughtful process of identifying, protecting, conserving, and enhancing buildings, sites, districts, and objects that embody significant historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural heritage. It is both a physical discipline—stabilizing masonry, repairing timber, reglazing windows—and a planning practice that integrates stewardship into education and outreach, funding and incentives, zoning, and community development. Historic preservation encompasses the care of notable structures, whether or not they have been formally designated as historic. By retaining tangible links to the past, preservation sustains local identity, educates residents and visitors, and reinforces the unique sense of place that distinguishes Viroqua from other communities.

In the United States, preservation relies mainly on public programs: landmark designation and historic-district status at the federal, state, and local levels, together with public funding and incentives that underwrite the maintenance, rehabilitation, and preservation of buildings, structures, sites, and objects.

## The Benefits of Historic Preservation

Historic preservation delivers measurable returns across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. By retaining and reusing existing buildings, communities realize a multiplier effect that supports local prosperity, strengthens identity, and reduces environmental impact. While infrastructure can be duplicated by city, no community can duplicate historic resources.

### Economic Benefits

Historic preservation can be a catalyst for economic development in downtowns and for reinvestment in older neighborhoods. Many municipalities in and around Wisconsin offer local preservation programs for property maintenance and adaptive reuse. Examples of preservation as it contributes to the local economy are as follows:

- **Job Creation:** Rehabilitation projects can generate more local employment per dollar invested than new construction, with higher ratios of skilled labor and local sourcing.
- **Housing Creation:** Building revitalization generates diverse housing stock, allowing population increase and housing pressure deflation in periods of housing shortages.
- **Reduction of Environmental Impact:** Waste from new development via conserved building resources and stock decreases environmental negatives and allows reuse.
- **Increased Property Values:** Residential and commercial properties in designated National Register or local historic districts increase in property value significantly more rapidly than the market.<sup>1</sup>
- **Tourism Creation:** Heritage activities generated in association with landmarks, historic districts, and additional commercial spaces foster tourism.

### Quality of Construction

Compared to most contemporary buildings, older buildings employ superior materials (e.g. old growth lumber) and unique architectural features, all of which helps them stand the test of time. Such durability and craftsmanship can help historic downtowns and neighborhoods keep (and often raise) their property values. Many historic buildings feature the following attributes by design:

- **Robust Composition:** Buildings often carry heavier structural loads to account for sturdier materials and are adaptable for a variety of uses.
- **Energy Savings:** Historic structures often offer energy efficiencies nonexistent in modern climate-controlled buildings, in part due to reliance on passive heating and cooling systems.
- **Craftsmanship and Differentiation:** Historic buildings also offer detailing and finishes, such as ornate cornices, typically well crafted. This creates distinguished, unique appearances among these buildings.

## Revitalizing Downtowns

Historic downtowns represent the community's economic and social hub. Key businesses, often locally owned, established companies, and parks are common locations for the creation of memories. Within the scope of revitalization, some examples of potential benefits include:

- **Affordable Housing:** Contemporarily, historic structures in downtown areas offer affordable options for new business and adaptable upper levels, often consisting of residential space or offices. These potential dwellings provide residents with proximity to downtown commerce and dining, furthering the local economy.
- **Main Street Program:** As a Main Street revitalization community as of 1989, Viroqua maintains the ability to generate funding that fosters reinvestment into buildings, businesses, and other applicable uses.

## Revitalizing Neighborhoods

Often contributing to the character and sense of place in neighborhoods, historic homes are typically distinct from newer neighborhoods because of diverse architectural styles and building stock.

- **Ubiquitous Housing Opportunity:** Multiple income levels can be accommodated in concentrations that are often near municipal amenities. In combination with landmark and district designations, these items can offer increased property values to neighborhood properties.
- **Stabilization:** Neighborhoods experiencing economic and population decline can experience a level of stabilization through attraction to landmarks.

## Environmental Benefits

Preservation of historic resources is often key for a comprehensive approach to the sustainability of a municipality. Preserving historic properties reduces economic impact through conservation of embodied carbon made during creation. Resource conservation through the retention of historic buildings can include:

- **Waste Conservation:** As nearly a third of landfills consist of demolished buildings, building conservation also reduces waste.<sup>2</sup>
- **Carbon Reduction:** The rehabilitation of existing, historic structures negates energy consumption typically produces during the creation of new buildings and their respective components.
- **Enhanced Walkability:** Historic structures, which are often located in urban environments, promote walkability through proximity to downtown areas. "Main-Street" style structures also encourage interaction through large storefront windows, which offer pedestrians viewing opportunities.

## Heritage Tourism

Historic preservation investment creates heritage tourism in an area, as people are attracted to cultural heritage. These resources offer visitors links to Viroqua's historic past and an understanding of its contribution to state and national history. Cultural heritage tourism typically includes cultural, historic, and natural resources. Heritage tourists typically spend more dollars on travel than other types of tourists, stimulating the local economy. With this, the following examples of preservation as it relates to heritage tourism provide Viroqua with the opportunity to bolster this segment of the local economy:

- **Increased Visitation:** Preservation of historic sites maintains opportunities for heritage tourism in Viroqua.
- **Economic Benefits:** The typical heritage tourist stays longer, spends more money, and is more prone to return visits than the average tourist. As such, these visitors are more likely to positively impact the local economy through the insertion of funds into the local economy.
- **Job Creation:** In a typical historical rehabilitation project, the majority of total cost goes towards labor. This labor, which often employs local carpenters, architects, electricians, plumbers, and other trades, is beneficial to local employment, which fronts an economic ripple effect.<sup>3</sup>

## Placemaking Benefits

At its best, historic preservation not only saves old buildings but also activates them. This is where placemaking comes in, a term used to describe the collaborative efforts of transforming public spaces into places that are unique to the community. Historic preservation is integral to this endeavor, as it provides tangible links to a community's past.

Examples of preservation-driven placemaking include:

- **'Pop-Up' Storefronts:** Some communities will utilize vacant Main Street storefronts for art installations or mini-shops, which keeps the ground floor activated in between permanent uses.
- **Murals:** Many historic downtowns have used their secondary facades as canvases for local artists to paint murals. Voices Productions in Dubuque, Iowa, for example, have created over 40 murals and have assembled them into a map suitable for a walking tour.

By thoughtfully integrating preservation into placemaking, communities can revitalize areas, restore the social functions of historic sites, and create authentic environments that foster belonging and economic vitality.

## Community Engagement

Community meetings, engagement activities, and meetings with city staff and commission members were held throughout the planning process. The engagement activities conducted for the HPP were designed to elevate the role of preservation, particularly in how its architectural and cultural

heritage is important to the city's identity. Community members were asked to not only share the places that are historically significant to them but also to consider how preservation can help advance other key community initiatives related to housing, sustainability, and more. Survey responses are listed in Appendix 5: Community Engagement Responses.

The engagement activities for the HPP were held from January to September 2025 and consisted of a community survey, focus groups, pop-up engagement, and a community open house. Engagement activities proceeded as follows:

### Community Survey

In January 2025, the project team developed a web-based community survey to gather important information on community needs and priorities. The survey was promoted on the City's website and social media page and via email to stakeholders. A print copy of the survey was made available at City Hall and McIntosh Memorial Library. The survey was administered from Friday, February 28 to Tuesday, April 15.

### Focus Groups

In March 2025, the project team facilitated two focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather input from stakeholders on preservation-related issues and opportunities throughout the city. 21 preservation-specific stakeholders participated in the focus groups. The stakeholders represented a number of preservation-related organizations including the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission, Vernon County Historical Society, the Viroqua Welcome Center Task Force, owners of historic properties, and business owners.

### On-Site Engagement

In May 2025, the project team conducted a series of on-site community engagement activities. Activities for the intercept survey and pop-up booth included one question associated with the Historic Preservation Plan. The question had slight variations based on the engagement method used. The engagement activities consisted of the following:

- **Intercept Surveys:** Tuesday, May 27, conducted at Nelson Ag Center and the Park Bowl during a baseball game.
- **Pop-Up Engagement Booth:** Saturday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, at Viroqua Farmer's Market.
- **Community Forum:** Saturday, May 31<sup>st</sup> at Viroqua Commons.

Each activity was designed to gather community input on concurrent planning efforts, including the Historic Preservation Plan, the Comprehensive Plan, and the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

### Open House

[Pending September data as of 8/14/25]

## How to Use the Plan

The City of Viroqua can use the HPP as a basis for a wide range of initiatives, including historic surveying, landmarking, education and outreach, financial incentives, and economic development. While city staff and the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission are the primary audience for the HPP, the plan is a resource for multiple community partners including the Vernon County Historical Society, Viroqua Chamber Main Street, property owners and business owners, preservation advocates, and more. The plan provides both the vision and policy direction for historic preservation within the City through identification of community values, goals, objectives, and strategies.

## Plan Outline

### *Section II: Historic Context and Resources*

Presents a brief overview of the City of Viroqua, including pre-settlement, early settlement and formation, development patterns, and themes. Information on Viroqua-specific historic resources including locally and nationally recognized landmarks, as well as architectural types and styles are defined in this section.

### *Section III: Historic Preservation in Viroqua*

Provides context and documentation of previous and ongoing preservation efforts in the City of Viroqua, whilst outlining legal and regulatory contexts, applicable ordinances, preservation-specific incentives, and relevant preservation partners.

### *Section IV: Community Engagement*

Details community engagement activities facilitated by the project team through the HPP process. These activities were designed to elevate the role of preservation, particularly in how its architectural and cultural heritage is important to the city's identity.

### *Section V: Historic Preservation Plan*

Details key goals and actions, following Vision and Value statements.

### *Section VI: Implementation (Action Plan)*

Identifies priorities, potential opportunities, recommendations, and responsible parties for the strategies. Annual review of the strategies and status should be an ongoing tool to measure the success and impact of the HPP.

### *Section VII: Appendices*

Includes documents used throughout the planning, documentation, and HPP creation processes, reference materials, community engagement responses, HPP-specific term definitions, and relevant municipal ordinances. Sources used throughout the document are included as endnotes in Appendix 7, Bibliography.

## Relevant City Plans or Studies for Simultaneous Use:

Historic Preservation is a common section found throughout city plans and studies. To ensure a continuous, coordinated, and comprehensive planning process, it is important that the HPP is used in tandem with other city plans and studies, including:

1. City of Viroqua Comprehensive Plan (2026)
2. Plan documents associated with downtown revitalization and municipal improvements, including the City of Viroqua Redevelopment Opportunities (May 2021), and the City of Viroqua Downtown Main Street Circulation & Safety Recommendations (2022)
3. Vernon County Existing Conditions Report (2024-2044)
4. Vernon County Economic Development Strategy Summary (2024-2029)

## II: Historic Context and Resources

### Historic Context

The Historic Context Section of the plan includes information on the area's geography, settlement, and development, establishing them into chronological themes. These themes form the basis for the Historic Resources section to follow, and as such provide the foundation for explaining why particular sites, buildings, or districts matter. For planning purposes, a historic context provides direction for evaluating the significance of individual properties, identifying integrity thresholds, and setting preservation priorities.

A variety of sources were used to develop this section, all of which can be found in Appendix 7 (Bibliography). Many sources, including the nomination for the Viroqua Downtown Historic District (Ref #03000669) have verbatim language.

### Geographic/Locational Setting

Vernon County and the City of Viroqua are situated in the Driftless Region in southwestern Wisconsin. The absence of glacial drift during the Ice Age allowed the region to retain its bluffs and hills, unlike the flattened terrain and glacier-formed lakes found elsewhere in the state. The county borders the Mississippi River on the west, Crawford and Richland counties on the south, La Crosse and Monroe counties on the north, and sits only sixty-three miles from Illinois' northern boundary.<sup>4</sup> Viroqua is situated near the center of the county and is the county seat.

The majority of Vernon County is situated on rolling prairie. Although no major waterways cut through the city itself, its location within the Lower Wisconsin River Basin paired with the Dubuque-Tama silt loams make it a fertile region that is ideal for pasture and specialty crops<sup>5</sup>. The Mississippi River is located nearly 20 miles to the west of City boundaries.

## First Peoples and Early Settlement

### *First Peoples*

The story of Wisconsin is a 12,000-year continuum of human ingenuity, adaptation, and landscape transformation. Beginning in roughly 12,000 B.C., the Paleo people were nomadic big-game hunters and gatherers who moved in small family groups of 15–25 people. Life was shaped by the need to secure food and suitable stone for tools, driving frequent relocation across the landscape. Little evidence of Paleo people remains.<sup>6</sup>

Between roughly 8,000 and 500 B.C., Archaic peoples adapted to post-glacial forests and waterways, shifting toward more territorially defined hunting and gathering economies, manufacturing copper and stone tools, and establishing the first cemeteries and base camps that foreshadowed later settlement patterns<sup>7</sup>.

Beginning around 500 B.C., Woodland groups introduced pottery, burial-mound ceremonialism, and limited gardening, producing durable villages, conical and effigy mounds, and earthworks that still punctuate the modern landscape. These communities created the first long-term settlements and ritual centers, setting the stage for more complex social and economic systems<sup>8</sup>.

Between A.D. 1000 and 1200, Mississippian immigrants brought large-scale maize agriculture, platform mounds, and expansive fortified villages such as Aztalan, while the indigenous Oneota tradition developed parallel lake-terrace farming settlements across the Driftless Area<sup>9</sup>. The resulting mosaic of effigy mounds, fortified towns, agricultural field systems, and trading centers constitutes Wisconsin's most visible and scientifically significant archaeological heritage, requiring coordinated protection to maintain its research, educational, and cultural values for future generations.

The presence of Dakota tribes was documented as early as 1632. Although there is no evidence of permanent Dakota villages in the area now known as Vernon County, the Dakota were believed to have traversed the region for trade and hunting, particularly along the Mississippi River<sup>10</sup>. French explorers also made claim to land in Wisconsin around 1650 and are believed to have conducted fur trading with the Native American tribes throughout the state<sup>11</sup>.

In the 18th century, the Sac and Fox tribe lived along the Mississippi River from northwestern Illinois to southwestern Wisconsin<sup>12</sup>. They established villages and hunting grounds, but their tenure was relatively short-lived. The English invaded in 1763 and, twenty years later, the American colonies defeated the English in the Revolutionary War. American pioneers moved westward and began claiming lands as their own. They started homesteads and settlements.

By the late 1700s, the Sac and Fox tribe began to retreat down the Mississippi River due to pressures from settlers. By 1804, they ceded their lands in what is now Wisconsin and were forced to move west of the Mississippi River into present-day Iowa<sup>13</sup>. In April 1832, after three years of struggling to prepare enough land for their crops, Black Hawk led the Sac and Fox into Illinois to reclaim their ancestral farmland and seek alliances with the Ho-Chunk and other tribes. They were met by an

organized militia comprised of Illinois settlers who ignored Black Hawk's flag of surrender and attacked the tribe. This marked the beginning of the Black Hawk War<sup>14</sup>, which culminated in the Bad Axe Massacre<sup>15</sup>. Many of those who made it across the river were slain by the Eastern Dakota, allies of the Americans in 1832. Only 150 of the one thousand members of Black Hawk's band survived the events of the summer of 1832. Survivors rejoined the Sac and Fox who had remained in Iowa<sup>16</sup>.

The Ho-Chunk—whose citizens still live in Wisconsin today—built their long-standing presence on sophisticated agricultural practices and far-reaching trade networks. As European settlers pressed in, the Ho-Chunk faced repeated dispossession, ceding territory to the United States through a chain of treaties that by the early 19th century forced many west of the Mississippi River.<sup>17</sup>

From time immemorial, Native peoples have lived throughout Wisconsin, and their story is one of resilience, adaptation, and enduring presence. Native people still live in the region; the Ho-Chunk, for example, own land in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve and around De Soto, among other places. Their living heritage remains woven into the region's cultural heritage.

#### *Early Settlement*

The settlement of what is now known as Vernon County began in the mid-19th century, primarily driven by pioneers seeking new opportunities in the fertile lands of the Midwest. The first known settler was John McCullough, who arrived in the spring of 1844. He established his homestead in the town of Franklin, near what is now Liberty Pole. McCullough built a house and prepared the land for farming, marking the beginning of permanent settlement in the area<sup>18</sup>.

Following McCullough, the Rice brothers—Samuel and Hiram—settled in the same region in 1845. They were among the first families to establish roots in Vernon County, with Samuel bringing his family along. Their arrival was significant, as it encouraged further migration into the area. Other early settlers included Henry Seifert, Anson G. Tainter, and George P. Taylor, who contributed to the growing community<sup>19</sup>.

In 1846 additional families took up residence near the site of Viroqua. This includes Moses Decker, who is recognized as the first settler and pioneer of Viroqua, who constructed the first building—a log home—with the help of two of his sons<sup>20 21</sup> at what is now 207 North Main Street<sup>22</sup>. According to a history talk given by Mr. and Mrs. M.C. Nichols at the Old Settlers Club on May 28, 1898, the stage route based on a Native American trail and known as the "Black River Road" running north and south determined the location of Main St. Decker's family moved to the area in 1847, and Dora Brown, the granddaughter of Moses Decker, arrived in 1848<sup>23</sup>. In subsequent years, the population began to increase as many families pre-empted homesteads in areas near the site of Viroqua, including Springville, West Prairie, Liberty Pole (formerly Bad Ax), and Round Prairie<sup>24</sup>. Some of the names of early settlers are memorialized in the street names used in Viroqua today, including Thomas DeFrees (Defreeze Street), Rufus Dunlap (Dunlap Street), and William and Margaret Terhune (Terhune Street)<sup>25 26</sup>. These settlers, among others, played a crucial role in transforming the area into a thriving community and ultimately leading to the formation of Vernon County and the City of Viroqua.

### *Formation of Vernon County and City of Viroqua*

Vernon County was originally founded as Bad Ax County, which was formalized as a separate county from Crawford County by the Wisconsin legislature in March 1851<sup>2728</sup>. Some sources use 'Bad Ax', while others use 'Bad Axe'; this section will default to the former. The origins of Bad Ax are unknown, although newspaper articles suggest that there were negative connotations associated with the name, particularly to land investors<sup>29</sup>. The county was renamed to Vernon County in 1862, a change which was largely attributed to the efforts of Jeremiah Rusk and William Terhune who advocated for a more favorable name<sup>30</sup>. 'Vernon' had a dual connotation with green fields and George Washington's home, Mount Vernon<sup>31</sup>.

The settlement of present-day Viroqua was initially known as Deckerville according to the Old Settlers Club history talk. The name Viroqua is believed to have been suggested by Flora Defrees from the novel, *Viroqua: or The Flower of the Ottawas* by Emma Carra, published by F. Gleason in 1848. The City of Viroqua was never known as Farwell, the township of Viroqua was initially named Farwell after then-Governor Leonard Farwell<sup>32</sup>, but the township changed the name of the township to Viroqua in 1852 as recorded in the 1852 Bad Ax County Board Minutes.

### 19<sup>th</sup> Century Growth and Development in Viroqua

#### *Initial Development and Population Growth*

Moses Decker is responsible for two key actions that shaped Viroqua's growth and development in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. The first action was purchasing and subdividing 160 acres of land in the late 1840s. Decker's land was originally surveyed by Samuel McMichael, who in 1853 drew a plat map with streets and subdivided lots. The plat map consists of prominent north-south streets (e.g. Main Street) as well as multiple east-west streets, all of which largely retain their original names<sup>33</sup>. The second action was offering a deed for 40 acres of land on the condition that Viroqua as the new county seat in 1852. While building developments occurred prior to 1852—notably Rufus Dunlap's general store and hotel at the northwest corner of North Main and Decker Streets and Orrin Wisel's blacksmith shop at the northwest corner of North Main and West Court Streets—Decker's actions were a catalyst for the development of commercial, residential, and civic buildings, some of which are extant<sup>34</sup>.

Announcements of building developments were concurrent with the announcement of the settlement becoming the county seat. This includes the first post office as well as the 'Buckeye House', erected at the northeast corner of Main and Jefferson Streets<sup>35 36</sup>. By 1856, the settlement had established multiple buildings including a courthouse, schoolhouse, and churches, some of which were built by Moses Decker<sup>37</sup>. Most of the retail store buildings in the city were built on both sides of Main Street between Decker and Terhune streets, and gradually this area became the hub of the city's business district<sup>38</sup>. Viroqua's growth and development understandably slowed during the US Civil War from 1860-1865.

## Callout: The 1865 Tornado

Summer of 1865 was likely to have been a hopeful and jubilant time for Viroqua's residents, especially given that the Civil War was over and soldiers were on their way home. This hope, however, turned to calamity on June 28<sup>th</sup> 1865 when a devastating tornado swept eastward through Viroqua, leveling the southern section<sup>39</sup>. The tornado destroyed about fifty homes and many other structures, killing approximately 20 people and injuring around one hundred.

*"The tornado was twenty rods in width and nine miles long, moving west to east...It unroofed the Courthouse...raised the Northwestern Times printing office off its foundation; demolished the new store of Marshall C. Nichols and D.B. Priest, and the store of John Dawson, along with the Methodist Episcopalian Church, a blacksmith shop and 27 homes. There were 200 persons left homeless...The south part of the town was the hardest hit with one third of the settlement being destroyed. There was nothing left standing or alive on South Street."<sup>40</sup>*

According to sources researched for the HPP, redevelopment occurred promptly throughout the city and "within a year there were left few traces of the devastating tornado."<sup>41</sup>

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In the Spring of 1866, Viroqua was incorporated and retained a population totaling nearly four hundred<sup>42</sup>. The village quickly grew roots because of its position as the principal transshipping point for tobacco industry and as the county seat. The completion of a Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad track from Sparta to Viroqua in late August of 1879 catalyzed rapid growth. The first train arrived shortly thereafter in September<sup>43</sup>. In the same year the first lumber yard in the city was built and in 1880, a still extant courthouse building was constructed. By 1884, the village was incorporated as a city<sup>44</sup>. The La Crosse-Southeastern Railroad that ran from La Crosse through Chaseburg, Coon Valley, and Westby before arriving in Viroqua was completed in 1905.

### *Commercial Development*

In the following years, Viroqua's population continued to increase: From 1,400 residents in 1892, to 1,630 residents in 1896<sup>45</sup>. This population growth led to new commercial buildings up and down both sides of Main Street. The first generation of buildings consisted mostly of small frame commercial buildings located on blocks which now comprise the Viroqua Downtown Historic District. Gradually, though, the increasing value of the commercial lots on these blocks, the accelerating growth of the city, and the expanding wealth of the surrounding farming area made it expedient to replace the first generation of buildings with a second one<sup>46</sup>. Notable extant buildings include:

- Opera Block, 120-122 North Main
- Fortney Hotel, 102 North Main
- Nel's Solverson's Livery Barn, 118-124 Court Street
- C & J Michel Brewing Co., 106 N. Main

It should also be noted that some of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century building stock present with the Viroqua Downtown Historic District today is the result of fire damage which necessitated new construction. Previous small frame construction buildings along the 100 block of South Main Street were destroyed by fire and replaced with two-story brick masonry buildings, some of which exist today. This includes 107-109 South Main and 113-117 South Main, which were constructed in 1892. The Tremont House built in 1874 at 102 N. Main St. was moved to 202 N. Main St. in 1898 so that the Hotel Fortney could be built. The Tremont House was destroyed by fire at its new location, 202 N. Main St., in 1909. The Farmer's Bank was built at that location and served as a bank from 1917 until it closed its doors in 1931 during the Great Depression. The Viroqua City Council voted to buy the building in 1933. It served as Viroqua's City Hall until a new City Hall was completed in 2022.

#### *Residential Development*

Of course, Viroqua's population growth spurred new residential development. The Wisconsin Architecture Historic Inventory (AHI) lists 36 residential properties constructed between 1858-1899. Most of these properties were built to the east and south of Main Street. Together the residences employ a variety of architectural styles and construction types, including Italianate, Queen Anne, Bungalow, Gabled Ell, and others.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century Growth and Development in Viroqua, pre-World-War II

#### *Downtown Commercial Development*

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century appears to be one of continued growth marked by commercial, residential, and civic developments. Population increased to 2,500 persons by 1911, and the city's commercial district extended for five blocks along Main Street from Decker Street to South Street<sup>47</sup>. Some second-generation commercial buildings were beginning to be replaced by third generation ones. Similar to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, several of the buildings present in Downtown Viroqua were constructed—or reconstructed—due to fire damage. This includes the following present-day uses:

- Temple Theatre (Masonic Temple building), 114-118 South Main Street
- Rockweiler's Appliance (home to several buildings and businesses over the years), 123 South Main Street
- Citizens' State Bank (previously First National Bank), 101 South Main Street
- Ewetopia (formerly Felix's, as denoted by present-day signage on the corner), 102 South Main Street<sup>48</sup>

These buildings, among others, were primarily faced with brick masonry and marked a shift from the wood-clad frame construction buildings of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Viroqua's urban fabric was also re-cast by a handful of ambitious civic buildings and public works projects. The former McIntosh Library was built with money donated by Andrew Carnegie at 118 East Jefferson Street in 1905<sup>49</sup>. Eckhart Park was established in 1911 and its prominent stone entrance facing West Decker Street was constructed in 1930<sup>50</sup>. Other notable early 20<sup>th</sup> Century developments include the Vernon County Normal School (ca. 1919, present home to the Vernon

County Historical Society) and the WPA Pool and Bathhouse (ca. 1936, the bathhouse is the future home of the Viroqua Welcome Center). The city undertook a range of public works projects during this time period. Newspaper articles note the installation of sanitary sewer and electricity as well as municipal lighting in the downtown, while Sanborn Fire Insurance maps from 1922 illustrate a network of streets and alleys, with many properties served by electricity and water<sup>51 52</sup>.

### *Tobacco Industry*

Dark-fired tobacco arrived in Vernon County in the late 19th Century. Willard Werth, a county extension agent, wrote the following for the 1994 *Vernon County Heritage* book:

“In 1850, Vernon County had no tobacco. In 1870 there was one acre, in 1890 there were 338 acres, in 1910 there were 6,541 acres, and in 1945 there were 7,121 acres. Vernon County has been one of the leading tobacco-growing counties in Wisconsin for many years. It has ranked first for many years, but as of 1994 ranks second in the state to Dane County... Fifty years ago some of the best tobacco raised in Vernon County was used for cigar binders. This demanded a pretty good price. Then the demand for cigar binders was reduced because of mechanization within the industry. Now almost 100 percent of the Vernon County tobacco crop is sold for chewing tobacco.”

By 1906, Minneapolis dealer Martin H. Bekkedal had capitalized on the boom with a massive two-story, red-brick warehouse at 504 E. Decker Street—then the largest and most modern leaf facility in Wisconsin<sup>53</sup>. Additional warehouses soon lined the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad spur, creating a compact district where growers delivered wagonloads of cured leaf to be graded, auctioned, and shipped to national manufacturers. An interesting sidenote, the back end of the 1945 Northern Wisconsin Tobacco Pool Warehouse #2 located at 225 N. East Ave. had to be built at a diagonal because of its location to the track that ran to the Bekkedal Warehouse (Northern Wisconsin Tobacco Pool Warehouse #1) on Decker St.

As tobacco prices collapsed after World War I, local farmers organized the Northern Wisconsin Co-op Tobacco Pool Warehouse in 1922, converting Bekkedal's building into the nation's first farmer-owned leaf-marketing cooperative<sup>54</sup>. The co-op's success stabilized prices through the 1940s, funneling millions of dollars back into Viroqua's economy and cementing tobacco as the town's signature industry until mechanization and federal quotas ended large-scale production in the 1970s.

### *Residential Development*

Residential development in the early 20th Century was concurrent with commercial development. The Wisconsin AHI lists 74 residential properties constructed between 1900-1950, with most being built between 1900-1930. Much like the development pattern of the late 19th Century, the AHI properties listed were built to the east of Main Street. Architectural styles are in keeping with the 20th Century time period, including Craftsman, Bungalow, Colonial Revival/Georgian Revival, and others.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century Growth and Development in Viroqua, post World-War II (1945-1975)

[This section is not ready for final review. The project team will continue to work on this section in September].

### Historic Resources

Viroqua is home to a rich collection of historic resources that have been recognized through various preservation efforts spanning over two decades. These include local historic landmark designations, individual listings on the National Register of Historic Places, and contributing properties within National Register Historic Districts. Since adopting its Historic Preservation Ordinance in December 1996 by City Ordinance 458 (Chapter 17.44), the City—alongside the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission and other partners—has worked to document and protect its heritage. This work includes the City of Viroqua Historic Buildings Survey, a report produced in 2000 which surveyed over 90 historically and architecturally significant buildings in order to identify which properties may be eligible for local landmark status.

This section details the two primary means for designating historic resources in Viroqua: Locally Designated Historic Landmarks and Districts, and listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

#### Locally-Designated Historic Landmarks and Districts

The City of Viroqua is home to a variety of resources that have been designated as local historic landmarks by the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission. This includes:

- 29 buildings;
- One cemetery;
- One site;
- One tree; and
- One district.<sup>55</sup>

These landmarks are illustrated with additional information in the table below. Of these landmarks, 15 are either individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or considered contributing buildings to the Viroqua Downtown Historic District, which is a National Register District<sup>56</sup>. Additionally, 23 of the 33 local historic landmarks are also included in the Wisconsin Architecture Historic Inventory (AHI), which is a database of architecturally and historically significant properties<sup>57</sup>.

[Figure XX: Locally Designated Historic Landmarks, keyed]

Locally Designated Historic Landmarks			
Key	Current Name	Address	Local Listing
1	Viroqua Heritage Inn	217 E. Jefferson St.	4/28/1998

<b>2</b>	Viroqua Heritage Inn	220 E. Jefferson St.	4/28/1998
<b>3</b>	Conservation Connections	110 S. Main St.	3/30/1999
<b>4</b>	Sherry-Butt House	795 N. Main St.	3/30/1999
<b>5</b>	Banta Building	400 Courthouse Sq.	3/30/1999
<b>6</b>	Vernon County Courthouse	401 Courthouse Sq.	3/30/1999
<b>7</b>	Pioneer Cemetery	508 N. Rock Ave.	6/8/1999
<b>8</b>	Foreaker One Room Schoolhouse	606 B W. Broadway St.	8/10/1999
<b>9</b>	Old St. Mary's Church Museum	606 A W. Broadway St.	8/10/1999
<b>10</b>	Vernon County Museum	410 S. Center Ave.	6/8/1999
<b>11</b>	Viroqua Floral Mercantile	106 N. Main St.	9/28/1999
<b>12</b>	Northern Wis. Co-op Tobacco Pool	504 E. Decker St.	9/28/1999
<b>13</b>	U.S. Post Office	119 E. Jefferson St.	10/10/2000
<b>14</b>	Driftless Angler	106 S. Main St.	1/30/2001
<b>15</b>	Bentson Insurance Agency	124 S. Main St.	6/26/2001
<b>16</b>	Tangled Hickory	120-122 S. Main St.	6/26/2001
<b>17</b>	Dyson-Smith House	216 S. Rusk Ave.	4/30/2002
<b>18</b>	Viroqua Public Market/Main St. Station	219 S. Main St.	2/25/2003
<b>19</b>	Proline Printing & Signs	223 S. Main St.	5/29/2007
<b>20</b>	Landmark Center	500 E. Jefferson St.	5/29/2007
<b>21</b>	William R. Fiorella, Acupuncture; Omen's Alchemy	207 S. Main St.	5/27/2007
<b>22</b>	Milwaukee, Chicago, & St. Paul Railroad Depot	305 Railroad Ave.	5/29/2007
<b>23</b>	Munson-Atwood House	319 E. Jefferson St.	2/24/2009
<b>24</b>	Viroqua Welcome Center	220 S. Rock Ave.	11/9/2010
<b>25</b>	Rocklewicz Apartments	300 S. Rock Ave.	11/8/2011
<b>26</b>	Driftless Books	518 E. Walnut Ave.	3/26/2013
<b>27</b>	Hotel Fortney	102 N. Main St.	4/4/2013
<b>28</b>	Northern Wisconsin Co-op Tobacco Pool Warehouse #2	SE Corner of N. East Ave. and W. Walnut St.	10/31/2017
<b>29</b>	Chase Home	606 E. Court St.	2/26/2019

<b>30</b>	Viroqua Historic Warehouse District	E. Decker St. and N. East Ave.	2/17/2018
<b>31</b>	Cobalt Cottage VRBO Rental	216 S. Center Ave.	5/10/2022
<b>32</b>	Old City Hall Site	202 N. Main St.	2/13/2024
<b>33</b>	Gilman Champion Bur Oak Tree	322 W. Broadway St.	1/28/2025

According to Chapter 17.44.050 of the Viroqua Code of Ordinances, the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission may recommend designation of historic structures, sites, and districts within the City limits. Such designations shall be made based on section 17.44.040, which states “a historic structure, historic site, or historic district designation may be placed on any site, natural or improved, including any building, improvement, or structure located thereon, or any area of particular historic, architectural, archaeological, or cultural significance to the City such as historic structures, sites, or districts which:

1. Exemplify or reflect the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state or community; or
2. Are identified with historic personages or with important events in national, state or local history; or
3. Embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen inherently valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or of indigenous materials or craftsmanship; or
4. Are representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer or architect who influenced his or her age; or
5. Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.”<sup>58</sup>

### National Register of Historic Places, Buildings and Districts

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation’s historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America’s historic and archeological resources. This program is administered by the National Park Service (NPS) within the Department of the Interior. As of May 2025, NPS has designated over 100,000 properties across the country<sup>59</sup>.

A key component of the National Historic Preservation Act was the creation of State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), which serve as vital links between federal preservation programs and local communities. In Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) is the federally-designated SHPO and administers both the National Register of Historic Places and the Wisconsin State Register of Historic Places. Both registers include buildings, sites, districts, structures, and objects that are

significant in national, state or local history. In addition, both registers include resources related to architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture.

Listing in the National or State Register of Historic Places is an honorary designation that offers significant benefits, including eligibility for federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits, access to preservation grants, and protection from adverse effects of federally funded projects through the Section 106 review process. Listing does not impose restrictions or obligations on private property owners. Owners retain full control over their property within the bounds of local laws and ordinances. Unless a project involves state or federal funding, permits, or licenses, property changes are not subject to review by SHPO.

Properties may be listed individually in the National Register or be included as part of a district within defined geographic boundaries. The criteria for National Register eligibility is described in Appendix 1: National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Evaluation (page xx).

*Existing Buildings and Districts*

In addition to the locally-designated landmarks and districts described above, the City of Viroqua is home to the following national landmarks:

- 5 properties that are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places;
- 1 National Register Historic District (Viroqua Downtown Historic District); and
- 24 properties that are contributing buildings to the Viroqua Downtown Historic District.

*[map: National Register listed properties]*

The below table lists essential attributes associated with each individually-listed property.

<b>Properties Individually Listed on the National Register of Historic Places</b>					
<b>Map Key</b>	<b>Listing Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Natl. Reg. #</b>	<b>Date Listed</b>	<b>Year Built</b>
<b>1</b>	Vernon County Courthouse (includes the 1880 courthouse building, the ca.1910 Sheriff's Office and Jail, and the courtroom mural) <sup>60</sup>	401 Courthouse Sq.	80000200	1/8/1980	1880
<b>2</b>	Masonic Temple Building <sup>61</sup>	116 S. Main St.	00001469	12/1/2000	1921
<b>3</b>	Bekkedal Leaf Tobacco Warehouse ( includes the 1906 warehouse and the 1945 Northern Wisconsin Cooperative Tobacco Pool #2) <sup>62</sup>	504 E. Decker St.	03001167	11/14/2003	1906

4	Vernon County Normal School <sup>63</sup>	410 S. Center Ave.	11000479	7/26/2011	1919
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#### Viroqua Downtown Historic District

Listed in 2003, the Viroqua Downtown Historic District consists of portions of four rectilinear-shaped city blocks that are bisected primarily by North and South Main Street (USH-14). The district contains most of the surviving nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial buildings that constitute the historic commercial business district of Viroqua<sup>64</sup>. The National Register Nomination lists 26 properties, of which 22 are contributing buildings and 4 are non-contributing buildings. The below table lists 24 contributing buildings; this increase is attributed to dividing 118-124 West Court Street into three separate buildings. 118, 120, and 124 West Court Street each have their own inventory number in the state Architecture Historic Inventory and are each identified as contributing.

*[Figure XX: Contributing properties in district]*

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<b>Key</b>	<b>Current Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Year Built</b>
<b>1</b>	Citizens First Bank	101 S. Main St.	1908
<b>2</b>	Hotel Fortney	100 N. Main St.	1899
<b>3</b>	Ewetopia Fiber Shop	102 S. Main St.	1930
<b>4</b>	Citizens First Bank	105 S. Main St.	1908
<b>5</b>	Viroqua Floral Mercantile	106 N. Main St.	1899
<b>6</b>	Driftless Angler	106 S. Main St.	1898
<b>7</b>	Callan Wealth Management (107), New Directions Real Estate (109)	107-109 S. Main St.	1892
<b>8</b>	Conservation Connections - Valley Stewardship Network	110 S. Main St.	1888
<b>9</b>	Bon Ton	112 S. Main St.	1888
<b>10</b>	Parrish Music	111 S. Main St.	1888
<b>11</b>	Magpie Gelato (113-115), Coulee Roots Movement (117)	113-117 S. Main St.	1885
<b>12</b>	Encore (114), Temple Theatre (116), Second Time Around (118)	114-118 S. Main St.	1921
<b>13</b>	U.S. Post Office	119 E. Jefferson St.	1939
<b>14</b>	Tangled Hickory	120-122 S. Main St.	1901
<b>15</b>	Driftless Café	120 W. Court St.	1940
<b>16</b>	The Grey Duck (119), Rockweiler Appliances (123)	119-123 S. Main St.	1924
<b>17</b>	Bentson Insurance Agency	124 S. Main St.	1928
<b>18</b>	Gibson CPA & Law Offices	124 W. Court St.	1940
<b>19</b>	Driftless Café	118 W. Court St.	1896
<b>20</b>	Blue Dog Cycles	201-203 S. Main St.	1914
<b>21</b>	Aveda Pure Concepts Hair & Boutique	211 S. Main St.	1919
<b>22</b>	Viroqua Public Market/Main Street Station	213 S. Main St.	1919
<b>23</b>	Viroqua Public Market/Main Street Station	219 S. Main St.	1912
<b>24</b>	Proline Printing & Signs	223 S. Main St.	1926

The Viroqua Downtown Historic District was nominated to the National Register under Criteria A (local commercial significance) and C (local architectural significance), with the period of significance starting in 1892 and ending in 1953<sup>65</sup>. The buildings in the district represent the most intact group of

surviving buildings in Viroqua that are associated with the community's historic retail stores and other service-oriented commercial enterprises.

### *Eligible Buildings and Districts*

According to 2023 data from the state Architecture Historic Inventory, four properties have been determined by the Wisconsin Historical Society to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and have not yet been listed as of the time of this report. This includes:

- C.C. Brown House (322 East Court St);
- Frederick Dyson House (323 South Rusk St);
- Dr. F.E. Morley House (414 West Decker St); and
- Modern Woodsmen of America Hall (124 East Court St).<sup>66</sup>

Additionally, the Wisconsin AHI includes ten buildings that are categorized as 'Potentially Eligible'. This includes:

- H.P. Proctor House (305 East Jefferson St); \*
- Doris Dyson-Smith House (216 South Rusk Ave); \*
- O.E. Davis House (424 East Terhune St); \*
- W.F. Lindemann House (305 East Terhune St); \*
- Viroqua United Methodist Church (221 South Center Ave); \*
- 219 East South St; \*
- St. Mary's Catholic Church (606 West Broadway St); \*
- WPA Bathhouse (220 South Rock Ave); \*
- Eckhart Tobacco Warehouse (518 East Walnut St); and\*
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (504 South Main St).<sup>67</sup>

Of these buildings, three are also designated as local historic landmarks: The Doris Dyson-Smith House, the WPA Bathhouse, and the Eckhart Tobacco Warehouse<sup>68</sup>. Additionally, all but one building (Good Shepherd Lutheran Church) is noted as significant in the 2001 Viroqua Historic Building Survey Report<sup>69</sup>.

It should be noted that a resurvey of the above buildings and improvements would still be required to confirm eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

### National Historic Landmarks

The City of Viroqua does not have any features that have been identified by the Wisconsin Historical Society as a National Historic Landmark.

### Architectural Resources by Type

The City of Viroqua offers a rich collection of cultural and architectural heritage, reflecting nearly two centuries of urban development and over four centuries of indigenous presence. From the pre-historic effigy mounds of the region's earliest inhabitants to the diverse architectural styles of its residential, civic, religious, industrial, and commercial buildings, the City's built environment tells a

compelling story of community evolution, cultural convergence, and economic transformation. These resources, which range from Native American archaeological sites to tobacco warehouses and Queen Anne-style homes, are vital to understanding the city's historical identity and guiding its future preservation efforts. This section outlines the key historic assets within the city, emphasizing their significance and the need for thoughtful stewardship to ensure their continued contribution to Viroqua's character and legacy.

### *Residential Buildings*

Early residential architecture in the City of Viroqua contained many architecture styles, from the ornamented Queen Anne to the simplistic Front Gable-style house. Both types were initially basic in form and material, often containing one or two-story gable-facades with wood-frame construction. The City's oldest known extant residential sites date to 1858, eight years prior to the incorporation of the City as a village. Amongst them, the Levi Gaines House (1858, 421 E. South St.), a Front Gable style building, and the Colonial-style Cyrus M. Butt House (795 N. Main St.) have served as locally designated landmarks for centuries. Frederic Eckhart House (1897, 217 E. Jefferson St.) is a notable house of the Queen Anne-style. An additional Queen Anne-style house, named the L.C. Boyle House (1897, 220 E. Jefferson St.), is adjacently located. The Queen Anne-style C.C. Brown House (1900, 322 E. Court St.), the W.F. Lindemann Sr. House (1886, 305 E. Terhune St.), the H.P. Proctor House (1907, 305 E. Jefferson St.), the Dr. F.E. Morley House (1909, 414 W. Decker St.), 219 E. South St. (1922), O.E. Davis House (1923, 424 E. Terhune St.), and the Doris Dyson-Smith House (1924, 216 S. Rusk Ave.) have been determined to be potentially eligible for National Register of Historic Places listing. Of those, three, C.C. Brown House, Dr. F.E. Morley House, and Frederick Dyson House, have been deemed eligible for NRHP listing.<sup>70</sup>

*[Figure XX – Rederick Eckhart House (IMG\_XXXX)]*

### *Civic and Religious Buildings*

Civic and religious buildings are key influences for a community's culture and development. Historically, these institutions can offer a visual representation of the settlement of various ethnic and racial groups. Alternatively, they serve as an impromptu boundary, indicating municipal growth during that respective period. As the county seat, the City of Viroqua contains several prominent civic and government buildings, including the nationally listed, Italianate-style Vernon County Courthouse (1880, 401 Courthouse Sq.) and attached Sheriff's Office and Jail. The structure is of limestone masonry in material. The U.S. Post Office (1939, 119 E. Jefferson St.) is an additional nationally listed property and is of the Neoclassical/Beaux Arts-styles.

A number of religious institutions contribute to the importance of religion to the City's history. First Congregational Church (1868, 321 E. Decker St.) of the Greek Revival-style, Congregational Church (1907, 403 E. Jefferson St.) of the Queen Anne-style, St. Mary's Catholic Church (1907, 606 W. Broadway St.) of the Front-Gable-style, and Viroqua Lutheran Church and Parish Building (1949, 504 S. Main St.) of the Late Gothic Revival-style illustrate the importance of religion in the City of Viroqua.

Other non-exhaustive examples of key civic sites in the City of Viroqua include the Viroqua Public Library (1905, 120 E. Jefferson St.), which represents the contemporary style of architecture, the Modern Woodsman of America Hall (1891, 124 E. Court St., and various railroad depots, such as the La Crosse and Southeastern Railroad Freight Depot (1903, 313 N. Center Ave.).

[Figure XX – Vernon County Courthouse (IMG\_0755)]

#### *Industrial Buildings*

The City's industrial growth in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was predicated on the tobacco industry. Introduced to the region by farmers from eastern states, southern Wisconsin quickly adopted tobacco farming. The industry proved lucrative long-prior to Martin H. Bekkedal's 1880s arrival in Vernon County. By 1906, Bekkedal became the largest tobacco wholesaler in the region. Tobacco warehouses (1906, 504 E. Decker St.), of the Late Victorian architectural style were constructed in Viroqua that year and have since been listed in the NRHP.<sup>71</sup> Architectural elements such as a distinctive curved parapet wall and medallion ornamentation are distinctive elements of the façade. A plurality of tobacco warehouses have since been built since, including, but not limited to, the Eckhart Leaf Tobacco Co. warehouse (1906, 518 E. Walnut St.), the Solverson Tobacco Warehouse/Eckhart Grain Elevator (1909, 217 N. Center Ave.), and various Northern Wisconsin Co-op Tobacco Pool Warehouses within planning bounds.

[Figure XX – Bekkedal Leaf Tobacco Warehouse (IMG\_XXXX)]

#### *Commercial Buildings*

The City of Viroqua includes a significant number of historic commercial buildings, of which the majority are situated within the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-nominated Viroqua Downtown Historic District along both North and South Main Street, though two are located on the cross streets of the 100 block of West Court Street and East Jefferson Street, respectively. Like the majority of commercial "Main-street" style building constructed in Midwestern communities at the time, the first generation of downtown buildings were typically constructed of multi-wythe brick or limestone masonry exteriors spanning two to three stories, with wood lathe framing the interior. Storefronts consisting of glass and wood trim were common along facades and remain, though often at a level of alteration consistent National Register of Historic Places historic district requirements.

The downtown historic district is primarily comprised of buildings within a period of significance spanning from 1892-1953. One of the earliest extant commercial buildings is the Hotel Fortney Livery Barn (1896/1922-1933/1933-1946, 118-124 W. Court St.), designed in the Twentieth-Century commercial architectural style. Hotel Fortney (1899, 102-104 N. Main St.) is a Queen Anne-style building that has remained consistent in use throughout its tenure in the City. Other influential commercial buildings include, but are not limited to, the C.F. Dahl-Andrew Beat Building (1900, 120-122 S. Main St.) of Twentieth-century Commercial style, First National Bank of Viroqua (1908, 101 S. Main St.) which shares both Neoclassical and Beaux Arts styles, and the nationally-listed Masonic Temple Building (1922, 114-118 S. Main St.) of Neoclassical style.<sup>72</sup> Other commercial sites in the City

of Viroqua exist, though often altered, demolished, isolated, or ordinary. Consequently, the Viroqua Downtown Historic District now constitutes the only remaining intact contiguous commercial buildings left in the center of Viroqua's downtown.<sup>73</sup>

**[Figure XX – Hotel Fortney (IMG\_8007)]**

#### *Parks and Recreational Facilities*

Parks and open spaces within the City of Viroqua remain ever prevalent. Eckhart Park, vital to the community, facilitates entry via gateway on the north side (1930, 500 blk. W. Decker St.). The entrance is a formal axial gateway composed of symmetrical masonry piers. Each pier is constructed from coursed stonework, lending a sense of permanence and craftsmanship, and is crowned with an ornamental lantern. Low, symmetrical, curvilinear masonry walls angle north, with integrated benches.

The Viroqua Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse (1936, 220 S. Rock St.) provided a hub for community recreation during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Listed as a local landmark and potentially eligible for National Register of Historic Place listing, the structure is a stylistic utilitarian architectural style. It is composed of limestone masonry and includes arches which contribute to an extended entrance. The parapet includes raised corner piers along the perimeter and a curved central motif above the arched entryway, both similarly in limestone.

**[Figure XX – BPA Bathhouse (IMG\_8011)]**

#### *Educational Buildings*

Multiple educational institutions have served the City of Viroqua since its founding in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Of the extant, the Foreaker School (1889, 606 W. Broadway St.) serves as the longest withstanding. The structure is Front-Gabled in style and has served a plurality of purposes during its tenure.

The Vernon County Normal School (1919, 410 S. Center Ave.) has similarly been utilized for multiple uses. Prairie School in architecture style, the building is three stories in height and of brick masonry in material. Masonry ornamentation is included on the structure's exterior facade, particularly near fenestration.

**[Figure XX – Viroqua County Normal School (IMG\_XXXX)]**

#### *Viroqua Building Periods*

### Architectural Resources by Style

#### *Viroqua Architectural Styles*

The City of Viroqua highlights a diverse range of historic periods, which represents many techniques of construction. These architectural styles are representative of a plurality of cultures and locations, symbolizing Viroqua's diverse background.

Exterior decorative elements and features define architecture styles. The descriptions provided in this section establish historical and architectural contexts for evaluation and for determining levels of significance. Each section includes examples of properties which partially or completely exhibit a given architectural style. These examples are based on information from multiple sources, including:

- City of Viroqua Historic Buildings Survey Report (Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission, 2001);
- Nomination form for the Viroqua Downtown Historic District (2003);
- 'A Guide to Preserving and Restoring Viroqua's Historic Buildings' (Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission, 2007);
- Data from the 'Style' field in the state Architecture Historic Inventory; and
- Field work conducted by the project team.

### Italianate (1840-1885)

Known for wide eaves with numerous brackets, Italianate-style buildings often include mildly sloping roofs. They are typically rectilinear in plan, though the extension of the primary elevation to become an "L-shape" is common. Balustraded balconies, a square tower, and bay windows are common in Italianate design. These structures are often three stories in height, though a third-floor tower can also be seen. Italianate commercial buildings are also common. These structures include a flat or shed roof in addition to the typically bracketed cornice.

Italianate buildings are often constructed of brick, ashlar, or clapboard walls. The walls can be sandstone, brick, concrete, or a type of wood in materiality, though this typically depends on the scale of the home and regional availability. Multiple mullions are common to the windows. Above windows, a lintel and keystone create an arch. The entryways are typically covered with a similarly designed porch, which includes a cornice and ornate columns to support it.

Examples of Italianate Properties in Viroqua:

- 401 Courthouse Square (Vernon County Courthouse)
- 113-117 South Main Street
- 322 Dunlap Avenue

[Figure XX – Italianate Property]

### Front Gabled (1840-1925)

Gable-Front structures could be described as a vernacular form, not architectural style. It often includes elements of other styles, such as Greek or Colonial Revivals. The style is hugely common in both urban and rural settings, with rows of like-homes situated together. Layout is typically cubical, though additions with a separate roof structure are often seen. The style gains its name from the primary elevation, where the gable end and slope of the roof structure can be seen. Roof dormers can create second and third floors or remain storage space above. These structures are often symmetrical because of their form, with centered or mirrored windows with a single central

entrance. Gable-Front buildings often lack ornamentation and detailed facades. Decorative lintels, porch additions, or stained glass may provide them with aesthetic enhancements. Other styles, such as Greek Revival, share form and should not be confused.

The materiality of a Front Gabled building is primarily wood and balloon framed. Later examples include siding to cover the clapboard. Again, brick or stucco examples of this style exist, though are often confused with other architectural styles. Windows and doors, if original, are common indicators for the age of Front Gable buildings.

Front Gabled Properties in Viroqua:

- 606 A West Broadway Street (Old St. Mary's Church Museum)
- 606 B West Broadway Street (Foreaker School)
- 321 East Decker

[Figure XX – Front Gable Property]

Commercial Vernacular (1850-1920)

This style of architecture is less specific to a type of architecture compared to other styles and is a representation of the simplistic commercial buildings common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The style is also referred to as “Main Street Architecture” because of its setting, which was typically on a central artery of towns at the time. All varieties, if preserved or typical, include large storefront display windows. Transom windows can be seen above an often-inset door. A lintel and cornice often lie above the first floor. These structures are typically two to three stories in height and have double-hung windows on consecutive floors. An ornate cornice including corbels, friezes, and other moldings typically sits beneath the parapet.

Materiality is typically brick, though some other stone types may be used depending on regional availability. Wood trim and ground floor storefronts are common, with glass inset. The foundations in this style are typically concrete, though can be limestone or other materials depending on construction date and availability.

Commercial Vernacular Properties in Viroqua:

- Tangled Hickory
- Nichols Building/Former Tastee Treat Bakery
- Former Petersen Buick-Pontiac Dealership
- Driftless Angler
- Conservation Connections

[Figure XX – Commercial Vernacular Property]

Boomtown (1860-1905)

This style of architecture refers to the rapid domestic urban expansion following the arrival of an economic sector in the area. Boomtown buildings are often the first building type to an area because of the economic growth. Commercial buildings are the primary user of this style, where

buildings are typically in a row. To differentiate buildings, false wooden or brick walls were placed on these buildings to create unique facades. A tiered parapet often displays a cornice. The structure is typically supported by balloon framing, with a gabled roof behind the false façade. The layout is rectilinear, with the depth of the structures often greater than the façade in order to maximize the amount of street facing storefronts per block. Single double-hung windows are most common and typically symmetrical on the façade.

Materiality is typically simplistic because of the application and regional availability, though it is often wood. Brick and log examples were also used in less frequency than other architectural styles.

Boomtown Properties in Viroqua:

- S.E. Corner of North East Avenue and West Walnut Street (Northern Wisconsin Co-op Tobacco Pool Warehouse #2)

[Figure XX – Boomtown Property]

Late Victorian (1870-1910)

This style of architecture is a combination of many common styles, such as Second Empire, Queen Anne, Shingle, and multiple others. It is not to be confused with later styles domestically, such as Gothic and German Revival or Italianate. The later stages of Gothic Revival are similar and could be referred to as High Victorian Gothic because of its Victorian and Gothic elements. Steeply sloped roofs and the use of corner turrets are typical to residential applications, while commercial applications often use curved parapets.

Because of the style's eclectic nature, materiality varies greatly. The use of wood, stone, brick, siding, and some ceramic are common. In most applications, wood detailing is used in areas such as the cornice, brackets, columns, and other façade ornamentation. The style became known to be used in "old main" structures, such as schools, universities, or religious applications. The color palette varies by materiality or texture.

Late Victorian Properties in Viroqua:

- 504 East Decker Avenue (Northern Wis. Co-op Tobacco Pool)
- 405 South Rusk
- 316 North East
- 428 South Garfield
- 220 Minshall Ave

[Figure XX – Late Victorian Property]

Queen Anne Victorian (1880-1910)

Queen Anne can be referred to as many styles because of its commonality. Neo-Jacobean and Free Classic styles are synonymous with the styles in its birthplace of England. The style reached Wisconsin by 1880, shortly after its creation internationally in the 1870's. Its dominance in domestic architecture can be seen across the United States because of the interest in colonial forms at the

time. The prevalence of ready-made materials and architectural features are a driver for its popularity. The overall complexity and irregularity define the Queen Anne style from other American types. Its influence on domestic architecture is well documented and survived into the beginning of the twentieth century prior to the shift away from architectural ornamentation in favor of rectilinear styles.

Queen Anne structures vary in materiality, with typically facades using either singles, clapboard, or brick. Two to three stories are common for homes. Cottages in this style may range from one to two stories. The roof is ordinarily steep in pitch, gabled, and includes turrets or cutaway bay windows. Facades are often asymmetrical and include bay or double-hung windows with stained glass accessories.

Queen Anne Victorian Properties in Viroqua:

- 106 North Main Street (Viroqua Floral Mercantile)
- 305 Railroad Avenue (Milwaukee, Chicago, & St. Paul Railroad Depot)
- 102 North Main Street (Fortney Hotel)
- 220 East Jefferson Street (Boyle House)
- 207 East Jefferson
- 305 East Terhune

[Figure XX – Queen Anne Victorian Property]

Colonial Revival/Georgian Revival (1880-1950/1900-1940)

The term “Revival” is often used to note the use of architecture styles borrowed from previous eras during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These styles include similar elements, though Colonial Revival is often less formal than the Georgian Revival style. Most structures of these styles are two stories in height with gabled roofs that may include attic windows or dormers.

Ornamentation on these styles often stems from the Queen Anne architecture style. Facades are typically symmetrical in layout and fenestration, while offering the use of cornices, pediments, dentils, lintels, and balustrades. Pilasters and shuttered double-hung windows are also typical for the styles. Sidelights may flank the main entryway, while columns support an overhang. The overhang may be arched to create a gable front like that of the roof.

Materiality of these structures are often clapboard, though brick and plaster can be seen in application. The chimney stack is typically brick and the foundation is commonly stone. Shingles are common to the roof of these structures.

Colonial Revival/Georgian Revival Properties in Viroqua:

- 216 South Rusk Avenue (Dyson-Smith House)
- 795 North Main Street (Sherry-Butt House)
- 1002 West Broadway
- 231 South Rusk

[Figure XX - Colonial Revival/Georgian Revival Property]

### English Tudor Revival (1890-1940)

Tudor Revival is primarily based upon English antecedents of the sixteenth century. The style was popularized in the United States after World War I and ranged from cottage to mansion in scale. Ornamental half-timbering applied over a conventional balloon frame structure and in-filled with stucco or brick is a hallmark of the Tudor Revival. Elizabethan Revival buildings are more commonly of brick with stone detailing. They also tend to be larger in scale and more formal. Both styles are characterized by elaborate decorative chimneys, multi-gabled rooflines, and large window expanses subdivided by a multitude of mullions. Tudor Revival structures are often irregular in plan. Small scale versions of the Tudor Revival style can be referred to as "Cotswold Cottages", typically with shingles simulating a thatched roof.

The appearance of English Tudor Revival generally contains a dominant or cross-gable, grand chimneys, diamond-paned casement windows, and a stone water table or first floor. Materiality ranges, with plaster, brick, stone, and wood being the most commonly used in construction.

English Tudor Revival Properties in Viroqua:

- 217 East Jefferson Street (Eckhart House)
- 215 South Rusk

[Figure XX – English Tudor Revival Property]

### Prairie School (1895-1925)

The Prairie School style of architecture refers to the architecture school in which it is named. Horizontal elements, long or low roofs, and the separation of floors using horizontal bands are key elements to the style. These horizontal lines are intended to mimic the flat lines of the prairie landscape of the region. Inspiration for the style stems from the English Arts and Crafts movement through its connection to natural materials, art, and handcrafting. However, the connection of art and machine is contrary to the beliefs of the Arts and Crafts movement, which itself formed through the distaste of the German DWB and Bauhaus movements who used machinery. The Wrightian style is known to stem from this style and famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who is the most well-known Prairie School architect. Louis Sullivan employed Wright and also worked with the Prairie School style.

Materiality of Prairie School buildings range in materiality, though they are commonly brick, stucco, plaster, or wood. The windows of these structures are typically single-pane casement in form and may have stained glass with small decorative metal mullions.

Prairie Properties in Viroqua:

- 410 South Center Avenue (Vernon County Museum/Former Vernon County Normal School)
- 400 Courthouse Square (Vernon County Jail)

[Figure XX – Prairie School Property]

### Twentieth Century Commercial (1895-1930)

This style developed as a reaction to ornate Victorian styles of the late nineteenth century. Its popularity stems from its adaptable design, which applies to many building types. It is frequently referred to as the style that brought forth the earliest skyscrapers because of its technological advances. Twentieth century commercial buildings are often taller than a story, though do not have to be. Whereas loadbearing structural walls have relatively low fenestration, twentieth century commercial buildings are permitted more fenestration and ventilation because of their steel frame. This style of architecture is also commonly called “Chicago Style” because of its prevalence after the Chicago fire of 1871. The Chicago window is also typical in this style of architecture. It is a three-part window, with a large central pane that is flanked by two smaller double-hung windows.

Materiality often stems from steel framing and brick or stone exteriors. Storefront windows on primary facades are common with curtain walls. Transom windows typically lie above storefront entryways.

Twentieth Century Commercial Properties in Viroqua:

- 219 South Main Street (Viroqua Public Market/Former Peterson Motors)
- 223 South Main Street (Proline Printing/Former Dairyland Printing)

[Figure XX - Twentieth Century Commercial Property]

### Neoclassical/Beaux Arts (1895-1935/1895-1920)

Revived by Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893, Neoclassical Revival is a common architecture style domestically. It is prevalent in “Main Street Architecture,” or the downtown of cities and towns in commercial applications. Color is often light and is white, grey, or a beige with a colonnaded primary façade. Above, a cornice, frieze, pediment, and upper cornice create a Neo-Grec appearance. The structure is often raised off of grade and has an emphasis on spaces through hierarchy. Beaux Arts is a specialized aspect of Neoclassical architecture. Often, Beaux Arts roofs are flat, opposing the front gable of most Neoclassical structures. These buildings also typically include paired columns, blind parapets, decorative urns, and sculpture. Other exterior detail items may include corbels, dentils, brackets, inset pediments, or finials. Pilasters are also common where overhangs do not exist to necessitate columns.

Materiality is mostly stone, though plaster to create a smooth façade is also common. Fenestration varies but is often grand, with multiple mullions. The windows vary my application and scale.

Neoclassical/Beaux Arts Properties in Viroqua:

- 119 East Jefferson Street (U.S. Post Office)
- 124 South Main Street (The Dahl Building)
- 202 North Main Street (Old City Hall Site)
- 518 East Walnut Street (Driftless Books/Eckhart Tobacco Warehouse)
- 216 South Rusk

### [Figure XX – Neoclassical/Beaux Arts Property]

#### Bungalow (1910-1940)

Immensely popular during the early to mid-twentieth century, Bungalow architecture is ubiquitous domestically. The term “bungalow” refers to a low house with a porch wrapped around it. The style often includes simple horizontal lines, a porch, and little ornamentation. Second story spaces were common, though between the roof structure to maintain a single-story appearance. Bungalows are known for their application in city spaces where they line roads in rows, creating large clusters of buildings. Roofing structures also vary, with curved, folded, and gabled roofs most common to the type. A crawl space under the structure elevated the first floor. As such, steps up to the porch are very common. The windows are typically double hung with wood sashes.

Bungalows were typically built with wood or modern siding, though could use stucco or brick. Brick chimneys were common and central to structure. A single cluster of bungalows could yield varying aesthetics, creating uniqueness.

Examples of Bungalow Properties in Viroqua:

- 319 East Jefferson Street (Munson-Atwood House)
- 310 East Jefferson
- 510 South Rusk
- 217 East Court
- 768 North Main

### [Figure XX – Bungalow Property]

#### Astylistic Utilitarian Building

This approach to design does not include a specific style of architecture. Its intention is to be utilitarian in function. There is not a date attached to astylistic architecture because of its rudimentary and universal use.

Astylistic Utilitarian Buildings in Viroqua:

- 220 South Rock Avenue (WPA Bathhouse)

### [Figure XX - Astylistic Utilitarian Building]

## Survey and Documentation

Surveying and documentation of historic resources is a vital component of a municipality's preservation program, as they provide a systematic approach for identifying, evaluating, and managing historic resources. These work products help communities recognize which historic resources are architecturally or historically significant and help guide decisions on which resources should be recognized, preserved, protected, and revitalized. By maintaining accurate and up-to-date records, municipalities can support property owners in making informed choices about stewardship, restoration, potential designation as a local historic landmark, or potential inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Moreover, an active survey program is a key requirement for maintaining Certified Local Government (CLG) status through the Wisconsin SHPO and the NPS. This status opens the door to technical assistance, funding opportunities, and greater influence in state and federal preservation decisions. The City of Viroqua obtained its CLG status in 2000.

It is important to note that future survey projects which utilize funding from the State of Wisconsin are required to share information with the Wisconsin SHPO. The information will be entered into the state Architecture Historic Inventory (AHI).

### City of Viroqua Historic Buildings Survey Report

In 2000, the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission contracted with a private consultant to produce a preliminary survey of historically and architecturally significant buildings in order to identify properties eligible for local landmark status. The scope of the survey included all properties in the City of Viroqua, with the exception of properties previously surveyed by Wisconsin Department of Transportation that were located in the Main Street Historic District (now known as the Viroqua Downtown Historic District).

The report identifies approximately 90 properties, mostly residential, that have historic and architectural significance and may be eligible for nomination as a historic landmark by the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission. Multiple sources of information formed the basis for the survey, including printed guides of historic buildings in the city, WisDOT surveys, archival maps and news excerpts from Vernon County Historical Society, oral history from current and past owners, and more.

The survey includes 91 inventory forms<sup>74</sup>. Each form includes multiple variables including ownership (current and historic), address, parcel number, legal description, type of property, date of construction, a brief description of the property, and possible historic or architectural significance. The forms are intended to provide the property owner, a commissioner, or other interested parties enough information with which to begin a nomination for a property as a Viroqua Historic Landmark. The survey also identified a potential local Historic Residential District.

[Figure XX: Inventory Summary, City of Viroqua Historic Buildings Survey Report]

<b>Number of Properties</b>	<b>Significant*</b>	<b>Non-Significant</b>
91	84	7

### Brochure, 'A Guide to Preserving and Restoring Viroqua's Historic Buildings'

In 2007, the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission produced a booklet to help community members preserve their historic building stock. The booklet consists of ten chapters and is

designed to be an intuitive, easy-to-understand reference for a wide range of stakeholders. Multiple sources were used to compile the report, including guidelines from other Wisconsin communities and publications from the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

Key chapters within the guide include:

**'Why Preserve our Buildings?':** The importance of historic preservation highlights that maintaining local structures is a cost effective and simple economic development program<sup>75</sup>. Buildings in Viroqua speak to the city's identity and preserving them communicates the historical significance of local forbears. Keeping commercial and residential buildings is an asset both economically and historically.

**Common Architecture Styles and Terms:** Various commercial and residential architectural styles are described, and detail elements are listed with local examples of the corresponding style. Additionally, images diagramming 26 architectural terms are detailed in this section.

**Preservation Incentives:** The booklet also describes both the State and Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits, both of which remain viable funding sources for rehabilitation projects of eligible buildings. Program qualifications are defined thereafter.

**Becoming A Viroqua Historic Landmark:** This section details the process steps necessary to become a Viroqua Historic Landmark. Building nomination forms will be reviewed by the commission, then the public, and lastly the City Council. Newly designated historic landmark acknowledgement includes a Landmarks plaque and certificate.

**Certificate of Appropriateness:** This section notes that the owner of a structure with landmark status or in a landmark district must file a Certificate of Appropriateness application in order to conduct exterior renovations. The Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission must determine the project favors its historical integrity and economic viability for renovation to commence.

#### ***Important Concepts and Considerations for Preservation***

Maintenance and renewal guidelines for preservation of historic landmarks are listed in the section. Some of the key items mentioned included are façade pressure washing, sandblasting, tuckpointing, and wall or fenestration integrity.

## **III: Historic Preservation in Viroqua**

### **Legal, Regulatory, and Planning Framework**

#### **Federal**

##### *National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)*

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), signed into law on October 15, 1966, created a national preservation program and a system of procedural safeguards to counter the widespread loss of historic sites to federally funded infrastructure and urban-renewal projects. The Act

authorized key tools such as the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and grant programs financed through the Historic Preservation Fund.

- Section 106 (54 U.S.C. § 306108) requires federal agencies to evaluate the effects of their undertakings on properties listed in—or eligible for—the NRHP.
- Section 110 (54 U.S.C. § 306101 et seq.) mandates that each federal agency, in cooperation with the Secretary of the Interior, establish a program to identify, evaluate, and protect historic properties <sup>76</sup>.

In Wisconsin, the National Park Service and the Wisconsin Historical Society jointly administer the NRHP program; Certified Local Governments, such as the City of Viroqua, support these efforts by carrying out local preservation activities in partnership with the state and federal agencies.

#### *Certified Local Government (CLG)*

The Certified Local Government (CLG) program was created by a 1980 amendment to the NHPA to formalize partnerships between local governments, State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), and the NPS. In Wisconsin, the program is administered by the Wisconsin SHPO Officer, housed within WHS, in collaboration with the NPS.

Communities achieve CLG status by adopting and enforcing a historic preservation ordinance certified by the SHPO, establishing a historic preservation commission, and maintaining an active survey program for historic resources <sup>77</sup>. In return, CLGs gain access to at least ten percent of the state's Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant allocation, receive training from state and federal staff, and are assigned a dedicated CLG coordinator by the SHPO <sup>78</sup>. They also review and comment on NRHP nominations before those nominations are forwarded to the Wisconsin SHPOs Historic Preservation Review Board.

## State

#### *1999 Wisconsin Act 9: Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law*

Enacted in 1999, Wisconsin Act 9 requires every local comprehensive plan to address nine mandatory elements, including issues and opportunities, housing, transportation, utilities and community facilities, economic development, and agricultural, natural, and cultural resources. Further, the Act encourages municipalities and communities to pursue broad-based planning goals including “preservation of cultural, historic, and archaeological sites” <sup>79</sup>. Act 9 does not outline or relegate historic elements of local comprehensive plans, including the integration or adoption of other plans which further comprehensive planning objectives. Therefore, this Historic Preservation Plan is permitted to address the preservation elements of a Viroqua Comprehensive Plan.

#### *Wisconsin Statute 62.23: Powers and Duties of City Plan Commissions*

Enacted in 1973, Wisconsin Statutes § 62.23 authorizes every city to create a plan commission whose express duty is to prepare and keep a current master plan for the “orderly development” of the city. The statute lists the plan’s purposes as promoting public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare. The commission may also amend or extend the master plan to

include more detailed historic preservation provisions that address specific local preservation issues.<sup>80</sup>

#### *Wisconsin Statute 44: Historical Societies and Historical Preservation*

Since 1987, Wisconsin Statute 44 has expanded beyond the original focus on historical societies and now governs the state's comprehensive historic preservation program. Subchapter II (§§ 44.30–44.44) contains the following core provisions:

- Creates and maintains the State Register of Historic Places;
- Requires state-agency cooperation in preservation planning and review;
- Establishes the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Review Board, which must approve all National Register nominations before they are forwarded to the NPS; and
- Regulates the use and disposition of state-owned historic properties.

Subchapter I (§§ 44.02–44.18) defines the of the Wisconsin Historical Society and the SHPO, detailing their responsibilities for administering state-funded surveys, grants, and archaeology programs as well as for reviewing state-agency undertakings that may affect listed or inventoried properties.

Subchapter III (§§ 44.45–44.48) authorizes local governments to create certified preservation commissions—such as the one that designated the Viroqua Downtown Historic District—and prescribes the process for local landmark and district designation. Statute 44 also authorizes the administration of statewide programs for archaeology and submerged cultural resources.<sup>81</sup>

#### *Wisconsin Statewide Historic Preservation Plan 2016-2025 (2016)*

Created in 2016, the Wisconsin Statewide Historic Preservation Plan outlines and details several statewide planning goals and objectives that aim to improve community life, revitalize neighborhoods and downtowns, and utilize historic preservation as economic revitalization through reinvestment in municipal heritage.<sup>82</sup> Goals and objectives specifically outlined in the plan include development of targeted educational opportunities, support and expansion of digital data and access, increased overall awareness and funding sources for historic preservation, and the cultivation of partnerships to advance historic preservation goals.<sup>83</sup> The Plan also addresses the significance of historic elements relating to architecture, cultural heritage, and archaeological resources.

#### *Main Street Program*

In August of 1989, the City of Viroqua was accepted into the Wisconsin Main Street Program, a downtown revitalization initiative administrated by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). The Program is focused on the principles of economic development set forth by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and aligns with the National Main Street Center's 'Four-Point Approach' of organization, promotion, design, and economic vitality<sup>84 85</sup>. Participation gives Viroqua access to technical assistance that includes market data, event-impact analysis, geofenced demographics, strategic-planning guidance, and benchmarking tools—all designed to spur local business growth and historic commercial-district investment.

## Local

### *Viroqua Code of Ordinances*

The Historic Preservation Ordinance, previously known as Ordinance 458, serves as Viroqua's historic preservation ordinance and emphasizes the importance of protecting and maintaining sites, structures, and districts of historical or architectural significance for the public's health, safety, and welfare. The chapter also outlines the purpose of historical preservation and allows for certain building code provisions to be varied or waived when applied to historic properties, provided public health and safety are retained.

A local ordinance is considered certified if it meets requirements related to local designation criteria, procedures for designation of local historic districts and landmarks, and requirements and procedures concerning Certificates of Appropriateness (COA).

The full ordinance is included in Appendix 5.

## Program Administration

### Preservation Commissions

#### *Historic Preservation Commission*

The Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission (VHPC) is a City Council appointed commission established in December of 1996 by city ordinance. The ordinance, which was formerly known as Ordinance 458 and has now been integrated into Chapter 17.44 (Historic Preservation), was written in response to the State of Wisconsin's requirement that all cities with a property on the National Register of Historic Places have such an ordinance in place.

The commission consists of no fewer than seven and no more than eleven members, all of whom are appointed by City Council. Of the membership, if available in the community, one shall be a registered architect; one shall be a historian; one shall be a licensed real estate broker; one shall be an alderperson; and seven shall be citizen members. Each member shall have, to the highest extent practicable, a known interest in historic preservation. The term for each member shall be three years.

The creation of VHPC is in accordance with state CLG requirements.

Responsibilities of the Historic Preservation Commission are many, and fall under the following themes:

- Designation;
- Regulation of construction, reconstruction, alteration, and demolition;
- Operating guidelines;
- Recognition of designated properties; and
- Public education.

A full description of the responsibilities of the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission is located in Appendix 4.

#### *Plan Commission*

The Viroqua City Plan Commission is a statutory commission which is required to review matters related to public buildings, statues or memorials, streets, parks and playgrounds, and subdivision plats within the City or within one to one and a half miles of the City boundary. The Plan commission meets as necessary.

### Relevant City Departments and Agencies

The growth and success of Viroqua is driven by the time and effort of the individuals who serve on numerous governmental bodies. The City of Viroqua has numerous departments with relation to historic preservation, dedicated to managing the logistics necessary to help the community thrive.

Staff Responsibilities, Departments, and Agencies relating to historic preservation include:

- Building and Zoning
- City Administrator
- City Assessor
- Viroqua Parks and Recreation

### Viroqua Committees and Commissions

#### *Public Works Committee*

The Public Works Committee has oversight responsibility for the Department of Public Works operations, management, facilities, and equipment. The Committee meets on the first and third Tuesday of the month.

#### *Public Safety Committee*

The Public Safety Committee has oversight responsibilities for the Fire and Police Departments and management (except personnel), public safety, alcoholic beverage, and other licensing activities.

#### *Parks and Recreation Committee*

The Parks and Recreation Committee oversees the operations of the City's parks and the recreation programs.

### Preservation Partners

#### *Viroqua Development Association*

The Viroqua Development Association exclusively promotes the economic development of the City of Viroqua. This includes efforts to market and solicit proposals for development of City-owned land. The VDA makes recommendations to the Viroqua City Council who provides final approval on project proposals and sale of public lands. The Association meets as necessary.

## Program Components

### Certified Local Government (CLG)

The City of Viroqua, designated as a Certified Local Government (CLG) in 2000, is required to maintain their historic property inventory and survey in order to maintain their status. Established by the National Park Service (NPS) and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), CLGs are responsible for the following tasks:

- Establish a qualified historic preservation commission.
- Enforce appropriate State or local legislation for the designation and protection of historic properties. In most cases this is done in the form of a local ordinance.
- Maintain a system for the survey and inventory of local historic resources.
- Facilitate public participation in the local preservation, including participation in the National Register listing process.
- Follow additional requirements outlined in the State's CLG Procedures. Each state has Procedures for Certification that may establish additional requirements for becoming a CLG in that State.

### Identification and Survey

The incorporation of a comprehensive, up-to-date survey provides property owners, public officers, and the public with important information that informs their decision, maintenance, and stewardship of historic structures. As such, the identification component of the preservation program primarily focuses on surveying historic structures and evaluating them for potential historic significance. The maintaining of this survey is also a condition of the City's CLG status.

A myriad of research tools are utilized to assist City staff, commission members, and advocates in determining the historic significance of a structure, using nationally recognized standards. These include summaries of historical patterns, descriptions of property types and building styles, and City and County's Geographic Information System (GIS). These technologies will assist in the creation of property identification and information in efforts to help broader sustainability and municipal planning efforts. Other data provided by the County Assessor furthers research findings.

The City of Viroqua Historic Buildings Survey Report (2000), prepared for the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission via contract with a private consultant, produced a preliminary survey of historically and architecturally significant buildings in order to identify properties eligible for local landmark status. The scope of the survey included all properties in the City of Viroqua, with the exception of properties previously surveyed by Wisconsin Department of Transportation that were located in the Main Street Historic District (now known as the Viroqua Downtown Historic District). The report administered 91 inventory forms, mostly residential, that have historic and architectural significance and may be eligible for nomination as a historic landmark by the Viroqua Historic

Preservation Commission. Multiple sources of information formed the basis for the survey, including printed guides of historic buildings in the city, WisDOT surveys, archival maps and news excerpts from Vernon County Historical Society, oral history from current and past owners, and more. The survey, not dissimilar to NPS guidelines, offers a guide outlining the criteria potential historic landmark must meet:

- Association with a Historical Event
- Association with a Significant Person
- Distinctive Physical Characteristics of Design, Construction or Form
- Potential to Yield Important Information (mostly archaeological)

### Certificate of Appropriateness

To receive a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission (VHPS), applicants are required to complete a Certificate of Appropriateness form. Required application fields include:

- Property Name and Information;
- Property Owner Information;
- Complete Description of Project; and
- Applicant Signature.

Other required submittals include the potential historic building's floor plans, drawings, specifications, and other relevant documents. The application is to be filed by the VHPS ten days prior to the Commission's review meeting, at minimum. The Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission must determine the project favors its historical integrity and economic viability for renovation to commence.

Further description of the Certificate of Appropriateness is located in Appendix 4, with additional definitions located in Appendix 6.

### Local Landmark Designation:

In accordance with the powers of the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission (VHPC) under the local Historic Preservation Ordinance, the VHPC may recommend nominated historic structures, sites, and districts as historic landmarks. These recommendations shall require approval by the Common Council. A nomination form shall be submitted to the VHPC for consideration of each historic landmark, which can be obtained from City Hall. The VHPC is available for advice and reference material.

The VHPC will review the nomination at a regularly scheduled commission meeting. Evaluation of nominations will follow standards and criteria set forth in the local ordinance, Chapter 17.44. If the property meets the criteria set forth in the local historic ordinance, the nomination will proceed according to the ordinance and the VHPC nomination process which includes a public hearing. The VHPC will publish the date, time, and agenda of the hearing as a Class 1 notice under the Wisconsin

Statutes. Within ten days after the close of the public hearing, the VHPC may designate or deny the property is a historic landmark. The nomination is subject to City Council approval. A designated historic landmark will be subject to all provisions as required by the local Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Acknowledgement as a newly designated historic landmark will be presented to the property owner by the VHPC at City expense. Acknowledgement includes a Landmarks plaque and certificate.

## Incentives and Financial Programs

Effective preservation programs offer incentives to stimulate investment in historic properties and sites, encourage owners to follow appropriate rehabilitation procedures, and assist those in need of financial assistance. These may include the following incentives and programs:

### Tax Incentives

#### *Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit*

The Federal Historic Tax Credit (HTC) program is jointly administered by the (part of the U.S. Department of the Interior) and the Internal Revenue Service (part of the U.S. Department of Treasury). It offers a 20 percent income tax credit for the substantial rehabilitation of certified historic structures used for commercial or other income-producing purposes<sup>86</sup>. A certified historic structure is a building listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places or a building located in a registered historic district that has been certified by the Secretary of the Interior as contributing to the district's historic significance<sup>87</sup>.

The application process involves submitting a three-part application to the NPS through the SHPO. The SHPO reviews and comments on the application before forwarding it to the NPS, which makes the final certification decision in writing<sup>88</sup>.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 modified the program by requiring the 20 percent credit to be claimed ratably over a five-year period for projects placed in service after December 31, 2017. However, under a transition rule, projects that began before January 1, 2018, may still claim the full credit in the year the rehabilitation is completed<sup>89</sup>.

#### *Wisconsin Historic Preservation Tax Credit*

The Wisconsin Historic Preservation Tax Credit (HTC) program offers transferable state income-tax credits equal to 20 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenditures for income-producing certified historic buildings, with a cap of \$3.5 million per parcel<sup>90</sup>. While the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) oversees the program, the Wisconsin Historical Society's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) reviews all applications and certifies that the work conforms to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. A certified historic structure is one that is either individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places or a contributing building within a National Register historic district.

A separate 25 percent credit is available through SHPO for owners of non-income-producing historic homes. This credit is subject to a different application process<sup>91</sup>.

## Grant Programs

### *Federal Historic Preservation Fund (HPF)*

The Historic Preservation Fund was established in 1976 to assist governments, municipalities, and organizations in historic preservation through appropriated funds to provide matching grants. Administered by NPS on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior, \$150 million is authorized per year and allocated to states via SHPO and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) through appropriated funds. At minimum, ten percent of SHPO allocations are to be sub-granted to Certified Local Governments (CLG), including the City of Viroqua.

## Municipal Incentives

The City of Viroqua does not currently offer grant programs relating to or facilitating the preservation of historic sites, structures, or buildings.

## Technical Assistance

Owners of officially designated historic properties are eligible for special technical advice and assistance from VHPC and WHS.

## Education and Outreach

The Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission facilitates various educational and informational materials for property and business owners. The booklet 'A Guide to Preserving and Restoring Viroqua's Historic Buildings' consists of ten chapters and is designed to be an intuitive, easy-to-understand reference for a wide range of stakeholders, offering historic building stock preservation guidance. Also produced by the VHPC, the 'VHPC Q and A Brochure' offers responses to common historic preservation inquiries in Viroqua. Public ceremonies and sign unveilings when a local landmark have been designated or a historic district have been dedicated are also held by the VHPC.

The Vernon County Historical Society, which is located in Viroqua, also offers a variety of educational and outreach opportunities, including their library. The society also facilitates events and online or in-person walking tours, including 'Graveyard Ramble', 'Main Street Meandering', 'Heritage Hike', and 'Court House Trail'.

## Partnerships and Stakeholders

### Vernon County Historical Society (VCHS)

The Vernon County Historical Society (VCHS) is an integral resource in the recording, teaching, and historical collection of Vernon County, in which the City of Viroqua is situated. Its mission is to preserve and promote Vernon County history for the education and enjoyment of all residents, whilst ensuring the connection of past and present. The Society also offers publicly available

facilities dedicated to the collection of research. VCHS has roles in utilizing its resources to reduce barriers, foster community connection, and encourage accessibility.<sup>92</sup> Public programs or events are offered through VCHS and include speakers, virtual and in-person walking tours, and historic property tours.

### National Trust for Historic Preservation

Dedicated to the preservation of historic places, the National Trust for Historic Preservation aims to provide resources and advocacy to local preservationists and communities, such as Viroqua. To do so, the organization facilitates national and local preservation campaigns focusing on the development of communities through adaptive reuse and historic stewardship. Often located at National Trust Historic Sites, the National Trust hosts events advocating historic preservation awareness.<sup>93</sup> An umbrella of funding and grant opportunities are offered through the National Trust Preservation Funds (NTPF) and are intended to encourage preservation at the local level by supporting both ongoing and future projects.<sup>94</sup>

### National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC)

Founded in 1983 in response to amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Alliance of Preservation Commission (NAPC) provides a forum for historic preservation commissions to discuss and serves as a national voice representing the particular needs of commissions. Individually, NAPC offers technical assistance and information to aid local commissions in preservation objectives. Their offered training initiatives, webinars, mentoring programs, and resource library are other examples of resources extended to commissions.<sup>95</sup>

### Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS)

As the federally-designated State Historic Preservation Office, the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) partners with communities, such as Viroqua, to identify, interpret, and preserve historic places for the benefit of residents. WHS also administers the National Register of Historic Places in Wisconsin. Their coordination provides resources and technical assistance to municipalities and historic property owners. The SHPO also certifies historic building rehabilitation projects for state and federal income tax credits to aid in community development.<sup>96</sup>

## IV: Community Engagement

Community input is essential for creating a historic preservation plan that is not only effective but also resonates with the people it aims to serve. The engagement activities conducted for the HPP were designed to elevate the role of preservation, particularly in how its architectural and cultural heritage is important to the city's identity. Community members were asked to not only share the places that are historically significant to them but also to consider how preservation can help advance other key community initiatives related to housing, sustainability, and more.

The engagement activities for the HPP were held from January to September 2025 and consisted of a community survey, focus groups, pop-up engagement, and a community open house. A detailed

summary of each engagement activity provided below. Additional information can be found in Appendix 5.

## Community Survey

In January 2025, the project team developed a web-based community survey to gather important information on community needs and priorities. The survey was published on February 28, 2025. The original closing date for the survey was March 28; however, the date was extended to April 15 to allow additional input. The survey was promoted on the city's website and social media page and via email to stakeholders. A print copy of the survey was made available at City Hall and McIntosh Memorial Library.

The survey included 33 questions, of which four (questions 28-31) were related to historic preservation. In total, there were 316 completed responses and 465 partial responses to the survey. A summary of responses from questions 28-31 is below.

### **Q28: What do you think Viroqua's historic preservation priorities should be in the next 5-10 years?**

Respondents were given five answers and were asked to rank them from most important (1) to least important (6). A plurality of respondents indicated that 'encouraging adaptive reuse and sustainability-focused alterations' was their first preservation priority, followed by 'protecting existing buildings from inappropriate alterations'. Responses associated with destination marketing and public awareness campaigns were ranked 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, respectively.

[Figure xx: Response to Survey Question, 'What do you think Viroqua's historic preservation priorities should be in the next 5-10 years?']

### **Q29: How do you feel about historic preservation in Viroqua?**

Respondents were asked to choose one of the four answers provided, one of which was a write-in option. Of the 316 responses, a majority of respondents (60 percent) indicated that historic preservation is "an asset to our community".

The comments submitted in the write-in option (36 comments total) offer a mixed perspective on historic preservation efforts in the community. Generally, respondents stated that while historic preservation is an asset to the community it can become a hindrance to future development. Various comments suggested that not all buildings warrant preservation, particularly if resources could be allocated elsewhere, and that preservation efforts should be weighed against competing priorities. A couple of respondents expressed skepticism about the criteria used to determine historic value, while others emphasized the importance of viable uses that "enliven" a building as well as functional improvements (e.g. elevators) to ensure historic properties remain relevant.

[Figure xx: Response to Survey Question, 'How do you feel about historic preservation in Viroqua?']

### **Q30: What are the major threats to historic preservation in Viroqua?**

Responses were asked to choose three of the nine answers provided, one of which was a write-in option. Of the 316 responses, 54 percent selected 'lack of funding for preservation'. This was followed by other cost-related answers, including 'economy and/or cost of rehabilitations' and 'Deferred maintenance': 49 percent and 37 percent, respectively.

The comments submitted in the write-in option (30 comments total) cite local government decisions, public disengagement, and inappropriate renovations as major threats to preservation. Some comments were associated with the preservation or demolition of specific properties, such as the WPA Bathhouse (Viroqua Welcome Center) or the former city hall building. Some comments expressed the need for preservation to be a guiding element in the decisions made by city staff and council members. Additionally, some respondents expressed concern over the use of inappropriate building materials (e.g. vinyl siding, improperly sized windows) and how they diminish the character of historic buildings.

[Figure XX: Response to Survey Question, 'What are the major threats to historic preservation in Viroqua?']

### **Q31: Given limited time and money, what three types of historic properties should be Viroqua's preservation priority?**

Respondents were asked to choose three of the twelve answers provided, one of which was a write-in option. Of the 316 responses, 48 percent selected 'cemeteries and Native American mounds' followed by 'Buildings more than 100 years old (42 percent). The comments submitted in the write-in option (16 comments total) included a variety of responses that are similar to previous write-in responses but not directly related to this survey question. One respondent, however, mentioned museums as a preservation priority.

[Figure xx: Response to Survey Question, 'Given limited time and money, what three types of historic properties should be Viroqua's preservation priority?']

## **Focus Groups**

In March 2025, the project team facilitated two focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather input from stakeholders on preservation-related issues and opportunities throughout the city.

Stakeholders were selected from a list generated by the consultant team and refined by City staff. The list was then segmented by an individual's subject matter expertise and relevance to the Comprehensive Plan, Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, or Historic Preservation Plan. 90 individuals were included in the stakeholder list; of those, 21 were identified as preservation-specific stakeholders. This list included stakeholders representing preservation-related organizations, such as the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission, Vernon County Historical Society, the Viroqua Welcome Center Task Force, owners of historic properties, and business owners.

The 21 preservation-specific stakeholders were invited to participate in one of two focus groups:

- **Focus Group 1:** Tuesday, March 25, 2025, 4:00-5:00 pm. (Virtual, via Zoom)
- **Focus Group 2:** Wednesday, March 26, 2025, 10:00-11:00 a.m. (In-person, at City Hall)

Three individuals participated in the virtual focus group, and seven individuals participated in the in-person focus group. One individual who was unable to attend participated in a phone interview afterwards.

Participants were asked a series of questions related to seven themes:

- General ('Icebreaker' questions)
- Preservation Opportunities and Challenges
- Building Preservation, Landmark Designation, and Maintenance
- Public Sentiment and Awareness
- Economic Vitality and Tourism
- Collaboration, Partnerships, and Funding
- Future Planning

A summary of input from each theme is provided below. The complete list of questions within each theme as well as all participant responses can be found in Appendix 5.

**General:** Each focus group began with a set of ice-breaker' questions. These were high-level questions designed to facilitate discussion about the interests, preservation wins, and preservation needs of stakeholders and the organization(s) they represent. Key takeaways include:

- **Compelling Aspects of Viroqua's History:** Viroqua's buildings, people, and activities are foundational to the city's history. Its small-town identity is strengthened by its historic downtown and further reinforces its sense of place. Its many locally designated landmarks include places of architectural and historic significance; participants mentioned Freddy Slack, a boogie-woogie piano player, as well as the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Bur Oak tree on Gilman St. Participants also underscored the need to bring history to life through a wide range of educational efforts, particularly to new community members.
- **Preservation Success Stories:** The recent rehabilitation of the Hotel Fortney was mentioned frequently; it is a "shining star", "heartwarming", and a "little gem". Participants also mentioned the direct role community members have played in the Masonic Temple Building (Temple Theatre) and the WPA Bathhouse (Viroqua Welcome Center).
- **Preservation Needs:** Participants cited the need for ongoing public awareness campaigns, particularly to new community members, as well as the need to take a strategic and proactive approach to preservation. Additional needs include identifying funding and finance programs to sustain preservation efforts, as well as alleviating the concerns of property

owners who fear landmark designation results in cost-prohibitive improvements and limits their ability to sell.

[Figure(s) XX and XX: Freddy Slack pic; Fortney, Bathhouse]

### Preservation Opportunities and Challenges

- **Funding and Maintenance:** Stakeholders described the City council's decision to renovate—and not demolish—the WPA Bathhouse into the Viroqua Welcome Center as “an uphill battle”. The second and third floors of the Vernon County Museum & Historic Center as well as Driftless Books do not have heating or air conditioning, and retrofitting such buildings with modern HVAC equipment is a significant capital outlay.
- **Meeting Community-Wide Needs through Historic Preservation:** In addition to being the future home of Viroqua Chamber of Commerce, the Viroqua Welcome Center will also include restrooms, meeting space, an information center, and will serve as a trailhead with a bike repair station. Participants mentioned that historic buildings can serve as business incubators, with many new businesses needing only 500 square feet to get started.

### Building Preservation, Landmark Designation, and Maintenance:

- **Landmark Designation Process:** Stakeholders stated that identifying and researching potential landmarks is conducted regularly by commission members. Inbound leads from the community at large is rare. It is a time-consuming process, especially with potential districts (e.g. 'Pill Hill'), so commission members desire to be proactive and strategic with their efforts.
- **Buildings for Potential Designation:** The Viroqua United Methodist Church (221 S Center Avenue) Mr. G's Shoes and Clothing (122 N Main), and the former Viking Inn (113 N Main St) were also listed as potential local landmarks. Stakeholders mentioned that there are no churches listed as landmarks.
- **Potentially Endangered Properties:** While no specific properties were mentioned, one individual said that there may be several homes that could be at risk of demolition.

[Figure(s) XX and XX prompt: - Viroqua United Methodist Church, or Opera house]

### Public Sentiment and Awareness:

- **Community Buy-In:** When it comes to community members viewing historic preservation as something that is good for the community, stakeholders offered a nuanced response. Some said that community members love to see “success stories” such as the Hotel Fortney, and understand their unique contributions to the city. Conversely, endangered buildings generate the most criticism, and stakeholders emphasized the importance of educating the community at large and council members in particular on the merits of preservation.

*[Possible callout: "The buildings won't survive if people aren't on board. The Bathhouse was one council meeting away from being demolished. It's crucial we educate council members on this."]*

- **Outreach and Educational Efforts:** Existing initiatives are largely conducted by the Vernon County Historical Society (VCHS) and the Viroqua Historic Preservation Commission. This includes exhibits at VCHS and education at county-owned historic buildings (e.g. Foreaker One-Room Schoolhouse), the holiday tour of homes, self-guided walking tours, and awareness campaigns of specific properties after research has been conducted. Occasionally, businesses will contact VCHS to obtain archival images of properties for marketing purposes. Stakeholders suggested improvements to the existing efforts, including better collaboration with other agencies (e.g. Viroqua Chamber) and offering more dynamic activities and programs.

#### **Economic Vitality and Tourism:**

- **Heritage Tourism:** Stakeholders mentioned communities that are exemplary in their preservation-related tourism efforts, including Decorah, Iowa, Mineral Point, Wisconsin, and Stevens Point, Wisconsin.
- **New Uses for Old Buildings:** One participant stated that Viroqua is short on business space and that many prospective businesses need small 'incubator' space which many older buildings provide. An example of this is the Landmark Center.

#### **Collaboration, Partnerships, and Funding:**

- **Key Preservation Partners:** Stakeholders listed multiple partners, including the library, VCHS, and the Tourism Commission. Cyndy Hubbard, chair of the Historic Preservation, expressed a desire for the commission and VCHS to work together more often.

#### **Future Planning:**

- **Preservation Priorities and Trends:** Cyndy Hubbard stressed that the future historic preservation plan must be proactive in its approach, and that proper succession planning within the Historic Preservation Commission must take place in order to ensure long-term effectiveness.

## **Pop-Up and Other On-Site Engagement**

In May 2025, the project team conducted a series of on-site community engagement activities:

- **Intercept Surveys:** Tuesday, May 27, conducted at Nelson Ag Center and the Park Bowl during a baseball game.
- **Pop-Up Engagement Booth:** Saturday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, at Viroqua Farmer's Market.
- **Community Forum:** Saturday, May 31<sup>st</sup> at Viroqua Commons.

Each activity was designed to gather community input on each of the plan efforts within the purview of the project team. Engagement activities for the intercept survey and pop-up booth were based on four question prompts—two associated with the Comprehensive Plan, one with the Historic

Preservation Plan, and one with the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan—and were adjusted to fit the method of engagement for that given day. A summary of preservation-related questions are provided below. The complete list of participant responses can be found in Appendix 5.

It should be noted that the Community Forum focused almost exclusively on the Comprehensive Plan; participants did not ask questions related to the HPP.

**May 27 Intercept Survey, Q3: Imagine someone you know is visiting Viroqua for the first time. What is a site you would preserve or enhance?**

Respondents shared four sites, of which two—Temple Theatre and Hotel Fortney—were related to preservation. Additional dialogue indicated that respondents highlighted these places as assets in general, and not as opportunities for further preservation or enhancement.

**May 31 Pop-Up Engagement Booth, Q3: What are the places in Viroqua that are historically significant to you?**

For this activity, participants were shown a map of existing local, state, and national historic designations in Viroqua and instructed to place stickers on the map to indicate places that were historically significant to them. Participants were told they could place a sticker on an existing landmark or a proposed landmark, and they were encouraged to share stories with the project team or write additional context on the map. Of the 43 stickers placed on the map, 7 were placed at/around the Driftless Books/Eckhart Tobacco Warehouse, followed by Pioneer Cemetery (4 stickers) and Temple Theatre (3 stickers). At least one sticker was placed on a total of 39 places throughout the City; of those places, 30 are existing landmarks and nine are proposed landmarks. Of the proposed landmarks, eight include a structure on the property and one is a vacant site (321 S. East Ave, formerly home to Viroqua Hospital).

[Figure XX - Image from Farmer's Market, Board 3]

## Open House

[pending as of 7/29/25]

## V: Historic Preservation Plan

To offer a comprehensive and inclusive planning process, the establishment of an encompassing vision, goals, and actions will offer guidance for the development of the HPP. Goals are statements of desired elements and are typically general in nature. Actions are specific tasks or steps that are necessary to achieve defined goals or objectives. Recommendations will then be formulated, using these items as a basis.

The X goals detailed in this section reflect a strong intent to preserve Viroqua's unique identity, promote and educate the community of the values of historic preservation, guide revitalization and economic development, protect the community's historic resources, and create awareness of financial opportunities.

The following goals and actions were developed by the planning team in tandem with the Vernon County Historical Society using community input.

## Vision Statement

Viroqua envisions a vibrant, inclusive future where our historic heritage not only preserved but also celebrated. We strive to create a harmonious blend of the past and present, fostering a deep appreciation for our historic resources. Through proactive preservation efforts, we aim to enhance our city's unique sense of place, promote sustainable redevelopment, and engage all community members in the stewardships of our historic resources.

## Value Statements

### *Core Beliefs of the Viroqua Preservation Community*

1. Historic preservation strengthens our city identity, cultivates a distinct sense of place, and enhances our quality of life.
2. Viroqua's historic resources--its buildings, people, and activities--are celebrated throughout the community, as they are important contributions to our city's overall story.
3. Preservation-focused outreach and education bring history to life and foster a deep connection to our past, which is especially helpful for new community members.
4. Viroqua's historic preservation program is readily accessible to stakeholders and proactive when it comes to preservation challenges.
5. Preserving and adaptively reusing existing buildings advances our city's resiliency and sustainability efforts.
6. Historic preservation is part of a strong economy, as it contributes to lively commercial districts that are unique to the city.
7. Historic preservation is embraced by elected officials and integrated into planning process by city staff.
8. Partnerships between preservation stakeholders advances public awareness and leads to improved preservation outcomes.
9. Succession planning is key for the long-term effectiveness of the Historic Preservation Commission and its endeavors.

## Goals and Actions

### Topic 1: Survey and Documentation

Goal: Maintain a comprehensive inventory and designation program for historic and cultural resources that serves as the authoritative data set for every preservation action.

- **Action A:** Commission a city-wide Reconnaissance-Level Survey (RLS) using a rapid-field methodology (windshield plus tablet app). The intent of this action is to identify potential

structures over 45 years old that could be historically significant. Use results of this effort to focus future in-depth surveying area.

- **Action B:** Launch "Wiki-History Days", where community members photograph every street-facing elevation of existing and proposed historic resources. Work with VCHS and SHPO to determine metadata standards.
- **Action C:** Adopt a Documentation Standard Operating Procedure that requires DPR-523 or HABS-level standards for any property slated for demolition or alteration.
- **Action D:** Using information from the RLS and Wiki-History Days, develop a publicly searchable, web-based Historic Resources Inventory (HRI). Include links to scanned images, drawings, Sanborn maps.
- **Action E:** Fund a pilot "Digital Twins" project for the three most endangered landmarks, resulting in a 3D scan of the building that can be used for marketing to developers.
- **Action F:** Schedule a 'survey refresh' cycle every xx years, and require that all city departments consult the historic resource inventory before issuing permits.
- **Action G:** Pursue local landmark designation for the following residential properties:
  - C.C. Brown House (322 East Court St);
  - Frederick Dyson House (323 South Rusk St);
  - Dr. F.E. Morley House (414 West Decker St);
  - H.P. Proctor House (305 East Jefferson St);
  - O.E. Davis House (424 East Terhune St);
  - W.F. Lindemann House (305 East Terhune St); and
  - 219 East South St.
- **Action H:** Pursue an individual listing to the National Register of Historic Places for the following properties:
  - Eckhart Tobacco Warehouse (518 East Walnut St);
  - Viroqua United Methodist Church (221 South Center Ave); and
  - Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (504 South Main St).
- **Action I:** Evaluate the feasibility of modifying the boundaries of the Viroqua Downtown Historic District to include additional properties, notably 122 North Main (former Opera House), 113 North Main (former Viking Inn) and 124 East Court (Modern Woodsmen of America Hall).
- **Action J:** Prioritize areas in Viroqua to conduct an archaeological survey.

## Topic 2: Program Administration and Management

Goal: Develop a robust historic preservation program, with updated ordinances, policies, best practices, and procedures that are integrated across city departments and further facilitate the protection and preservation of historic resources.

- **Action A:** Encourage all VHPC members, especially new members to participate in NAPC training. This can begin through a series of webinars and scale up to the 'FORUM' conference

or their Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program (CAMP). Consider a "watch party" as a commission for viewing and discussing together.

- **Action B:** Explore the feasibility of establishing a demolition delay ordinance to temporarily halt the issuance of demolition permits for buildings that are historically or architecturally significant. Review Wisconsin peer communities as well as NAPC best practices when considering.
- **Action C:** Explore the feasibility of creating a 'Demolition by Neglect' ordinance, with escalating fines and a process for receivership for owners who fail to stabilize within 12 months. Review Wisconsin peer communities (e.g. Evansville) as well as NAPC best practices when considering.
- **Action D:** Explore the feasibility of establishing façade easements for rehabilitation projects receiving city financial assistance.
- **Action E:** Publish a booklet listing essential VHPC program components, including Certificate of Appropriateness and Local Landmark designation.
- **Action F:** Review the 'eligible' and 'potentially eligible' properties on the Wisconsin Architectural Historical Inventory and produce a report every 3-5 years.
- **Action G:** Develop Sustainable Design Standards within the city's historic preservation/design review commission's design guidelines.

### Topic 3: Financial Support and Incentives

Goal: Encourage investment in Viroqua's historic resources through a system of grants, tax credits, and other financial tools.

- **Action A:** Establish a grant program (\$5000-\$10,000) for property owners making façade improvements or upgrading major building components (i.e. roof, HVAC, sprinkler system, windows).
- **Action B:** Launch a low-interest revolving stabilization loan fund, seeded by xxxx [funding source]. This program could also be tied to façade or major building component improvements/repairs.
- **Action D:** Explore the feasibility of waiving building permit fees for rehabilitation or restoration work on properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places or are contributing buildings in a National Register District.
- **Action E:** Publish a 'Preservation Funding 101' booklet listing all federal, state, and nonprofit funding opportunities. The booklet can include a wide range of public and private grants, tax credits, and loan programs. Ensure booklet is reviewed and updated annually.
- **Action F:** Coordinate with local banks and wealth management firms to share the benefits and incentives available for historic preservation so they might share the information more widely to key demographic.

## Topic 4: Education, Advocacy, and Partnerships

Goal: Engage community through ongoing outreach and training that builds broad support and practical skills.

- **Action A:** Create historic walking and biking tours. Begin by using VHCS existing materials, but use a tour guide. Include guests at key stops who can tell you more about a building's history and give you a tour. To make the tour more dynamic, build the tour on an app (e.g. Ride With GPS) and add archival images at key stops. Market the event regionally.
- **Action B:** Install six high-impact 'heritage kiosks' at key gateways with QR codes triggering overlays of historic photos.
- **Action C:** Create a preservation 'rapid response team' trained in temporary stabilization techniques (e.g. board-ups, roof tarping).
- **Action D:** Facilitate discussions with property owners of historic buildings to encourage local landmark designation. Develop a hand-out that expresses benefits as well as explains common myths associated with designation.
- **Action E:** Promote the sustainability benefits of adaptively reusing historic buildings.
- **Action F:** Promote architectural salvage of building materials or distinguishing features (e.g. signage) for buildings that were demolished.
- **Action G:** Inform prospective buyers of local landmarks about the benefits and responsibilities associated with the designation. This can include distributing resources to area realtors and title companies. It can also include coordination with city and county staff on distributing new resident packets with essential information.

## Topic 5: Community Revitalization and Sense of Place

Goal: Promote preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse efforts that strengthen community identity, preserve character, and drive revitalization. Use these assets as a base for heritage tourism and economic growth.

- **Action A:** Publish a 'Rehabilitation and Reuse Handbook' with before-and-after case studies, checklists, and a contact list of qualified historic contractors.
- **Action B:** Host a 'Rehabilitation Roundtable' pairing property owners with architects, contractors, and historic tax credit consultants. If successful, the roundtable could occur semi-annually at a historic property.
- **Action C:** Engage the services of an architect, in consultation with city staff, to produce a pre-approved 'Pattern Book' of sensitive infill designs compatible with the character of a given district.
- **Action D:** Establish a 'Trades Academy' in partnership with Western Technical College. This could be a certificate-based program that focuses on heritage carpentry, plaster repair, window restoration, deconstruction/salvage, and other trades.
- **Action E:** Encourage local and regional community events to take place in or around historic properties, setting these assets as the backdrop of civic activity.

- **Action F:** Consider pairing walking tours with local events, leaving and returning back to the site of the event.
- **Action G:** Establish an "Open House Night" for historic buildings, coordinated with property owners. Invite residents and visitors to explore historic buildings they might not otherwise have had access to. Incorporate food, beverage, and music at key areas.

## VI: Implementation Plan

[This section of the HPP will be developed in September 2025]

## VII: Appendices

### Appendix 1: The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Buildings

This appendix includes an overview of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties using language from the Technical Preservation Services office of the National Park Service as well as regulatory language from the Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR Part 68)<sup>97</sup>

The purpose of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings (2017)* is to provide guidance to historic building owners and building managers, preservation consultants, architects, contractors, and project reviewers prior to beginning work. The Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties address four treatments:

- Preservation
- Rehabilitation
- Reconstruction
- Restoration

As stated in the regulations (36 CFR Part 68) promulgating the Standards, "one set of standards ...will apply to a property undergoing treatment, depending upon the property's significance, existing physical condition, the extent of documentation available, and interpretive goals, when applicable. The Standards will be applied taking into consideration the economic and technical feasibility of each project."<sup>98</sup> These Standards apply not only to historic buildings but also to a wide variety of historic resource types eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This includes buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts.

#### § 68.3 Standards.

One set of standards—preservation, rehabilitation, restoration or reconstruction—will apply to a property undergoing treatment, depending upon the property's significance, existing physical condition, the extent of documentation available and interpretive goals, when

applicable. The standards will be applied taking into consideration the economic and technical feasibility of each project.

*(a) Preservation.*

(1) A property will be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that maximizes the retention of distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships. Where a treatment and use have not been identified, a property will be protected and, if necessary, stabilized until additional work may be undertaken.

(2) The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

(3) Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate and conserve existing historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection and properly documented for future research.

(4) Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

(5) Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

(6) The existing condition of historic features will be evaluated to determine the appropriate level of intervention needed. Where the severity of deterioration requires repair or limited replacement of a distinctive feature, the new material will match the old in composition, design, color and texture.

(7) Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

(8) Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

*(b) Rehabilitation.*

(1) A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.

(2) The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

(3) Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

(4) Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

(5) Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

(6) Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

(7) Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

(8) Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

(9) New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

(10) New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

*(c) Restoration.*

(1) A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that interprets the property and its restoration period.

(2) Materials and features from the restoration period will be retained and preserved. The removal of materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize the period will not be undertaken.

(3) Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate and conserve materials and features from the restoration period will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection and properly documented for future research.

(4) Materials, features, spaces and finishes that characterize other historical periods will be documented prior to their alteration or removal.

(5) Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize the restoration period will be preserved.

(6) Deteriorated features from the restoration period will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials.

(7) Replacement of missing features from the restoration period will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence. A false sense of history will not be created by adding conjectural features, features from other properties, or by combining features that never existed together historically.

(8) Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

(9) Archeological resources affected by a project will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

(10) Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.

*(d) Reconstruction.*

(1) Reconstruction will be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a property when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the property.

(2) Reconstruction of a landscape, building, structure or object in its historic location will be preceded by a thorough archeological investigation to identify and evaluate those features and artifacts that are essential to an accurate reconstruction. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

(3) Reconstruction will include measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships.

(4) Reconstruction will be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different features from other historic properties. A reconstructed property will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color and texture.

(5) A reconstruction will be clearly identified as a contemporary re-creation.

(6) Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.<sup>99</sup>

## Appendix 2: National Register Criteria for Evaluation

This appendix has been taken from Section 2 of National Register Bulletin (NRB) 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior (2002).

## Criteria for Evaluation

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or,
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or,
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

## Criteria Considerations

Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register.

However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or,
- A building or structure removed from its original location but which is primarily significant for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or,
- A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building associated with his or her productive life; or
- A cemetery that derives its primary importance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or,
- A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or,
- A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance; or,
- A property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.<sup>100</sup>

## Appendix 3: Wisconsin State Register of Historic Places Criteria of Significance

- A. The state register of historic places shall include districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects which are significant in national, state or local history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture. The quality of significance is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and that satisfy any of the following conditions:
1. Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history.
  2. Association with the lives of persons significant in the past.
  3. Embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or that represent the work of a master or that possess high artistic values.
  4. Representation of a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
  5. Yielding, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.
- B. No cemetery, birthplace or grave of a historical figure, property owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes, reconstructed historic building, property primarily commemorative in nature or property that has achieved significance within the past 50 years may be considered eligible for the state register of historic places unless it is an integral part of a district that meets the criteria of significance under par. (a) or unless it falls within at least one of the following categories:
1. A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance.
  2. A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life in the vicinity of that birthplace or grave.
  3. A cemetery which derives its primary significance from the grave of a person of transcendent importance, age, distinctive design features or association with historic events.
  4. A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived.
  5. A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance.
  6. A property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.<sup>101</sup>

## Appendix 4: Viroqua Historic Preservation Ordinance

This appendix has been taken from Chapter 17.44 (Historic Preservation) of the Viroqua Municipal Code of Ordinances, which was adopted June 11, 2024.

### 17.44.010 Purpose and Intent.

It is hereby declared a matter of public policy that the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of improvements or sites of special character or special architectural or historic interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of the health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people. The purpose of this section is to:

- A. Effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement, and perpetuation of such improvements, sites and districts which represent or reflect elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history.
- B. Safeguard the city's historic and cultural heritage, as embodied and reflected in such historic structures, sites and districts.
- C. Foster civic pride in the notable accomplishments of the past.
- D. Stabilize and improve property values.
- E. Protect and enhance the city's attractions to residents, tourists, and visitors, and serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry.
- F. Improve and enhance the visual and aesthetic character of the city.
- G. Educate the public regarding the need and desirability of a city historic preservation program and its enhancement of the quality of life.

#### 17.44.020 Definitions.

The definitions shall be as follows:

- A. Certificate of Appropriateness means the certificate issued by the commission approving alteration, rehabilitation, construction, reconstruction or demolition of a historic structure, historic site or any improvement in a historic district.
- B. Commission means the historic preservation commission created under this section.
- C. Historic district is an area designated by the Common Council on recommendation of the commission, that contains two or more historic improvements or sites, as well as those abutting improvement parcels which the commission determines should fall under the provisions of this section to assure that their appearance and development is harmonious with such historic structures or historic sites.
- D. Historic site means any parcel of land of historic significance due to a substantial value in tracing the history or prehistory of man, or upon which a historic event has occurred, and which has been designated as a historic site under this section, or an improvement parcel, or part thereof, on which is situated a historic structure and any abutting improvement parcel, or part thereof, used as and constituting a part of the premises on which the historic structure is situated.
- E. Historic structure means any improvement which has a special character or special historic interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the city, state or nation and which has been designated as a historic structure pursuant to the provisions of this chapter.
- F. Improvement means any building, structure, place, work of art or other object constituting a physical betterment of real property, or any part of such betterment, including streets, alleys, sidewalks, curbs, lighting fixtures, signs and the like.
- G. Improvement parcel is the unit of property which includes a physical betterment constituting an improvement and the land embracing the site thereof, and is treated as a single entity for the purpose of levying real estate taxes. Provided, however, that the

term "improvement parcel" shall also include any unimproved area of land which is treated as a single entity for such tax purposes.

#### 17.44.030 Historic Preservation Commission Composition.

The Historic Preservation Commission shall consist of not less than seven (7) and not more than eleven (11) members. Attendance by four (4) or more members shall constitute a quorum. Of the membership, if available in the community, one shall be a registered architect; one shall be a historian; one shall be a licensed real estate broker; one shall be an alderperson; and at least three shall be citizen members. Each member shall have, to the highest extent practicable, a known interest in historic preservation. The Mayor shall appoint the commissioners subject to confirmation by the Common Council. The term for each member shall be three years. The office of a commissioner who is absent from three (3) meetings in any twelve (12) month period, without the prior excuse of the Chair, shall be vacant upon the Commission's decision. [ Ord. 498, 1999; 06OR009 ]

#### 17.44.040 Historic Structure, Historic Site and Historic District Designation Criteria.

A. For purposes of this ordinance, a historic structure, historic site, or historic district designation may be placed on any site, natural or improved, including any building, improvement or structure located thereon, or any area of particular historic, architectural, archaeological or cultural significance to the City such as historic structures, sites, or districts which:

1. Exemplify or reflect the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state or community; or
2. Are identified with historic personages or with important events in national, state or local history;
3. Embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen inherently valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or of indigenous materials or craftsmanship; or
4. Are representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer or architect who influenced his or her age; or
5. Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

B. The commission may adopt specific operating guidelines for historic structure, historic site and historic district designation providing such are in conformance with the provisions of this ordinance.

#### 17.44.050 Powers and Duties.

A. Designation. The commission shall have the power subject to section 17.44.060, to recommend designation of historic structures, sites, and districts within the City

limits. Such designations shall be made based on section 17.44.040. Historic structures, sites, and districts as recommended shall require approval by the Common Council. Once designated and approved, such historic structures, sites and districts shall be subject to all the provisions of this ordinance.

B. Regulation of Construction, Reconstruction, alteration and Demolition.

1. No owner or person in charge of a historic structure, historic site or structure within a historic district shall reconstruct, alter or demolish all or any part of the exterior of such property or construct any improvement upon such designated property or properties or cause or permit any such work to be performed upon such property or demolish such property unless a Certificate of Appropriateness has been granted by the Historic Preservation Commission. Unless such certificate has been granted by the commission, the building inspector shall not issue a permit for any such work.
2. Upon filing of any application for a Certificate of appropriateness with the commission, the commission shall approve the application unless:
  - a. In the case of a designated historic structure or historic site, the proposed work would detrimentally change, destroy or adversely affect any exterior architectural feature of the improvement or site upon which said work is to be done;
  - b. In the case of the construction of a new improvement upon a historic site, or within a historic district, the exterior of such improvement would adversely affect or not harmonize with the external appearance of other neighboring improvements on such site or within the district;
  - c. In the case of any property located in a historic district, the proposed construction, reconstruction, exterior alteration or demolition does not conform to the purpose and intent of this chapter and to the objectives and design criteria of the historic preservation plan for said district;
  - d. The building or structure is of such architectural or historical significance that its demolition would be detrimental to the public interest and contrary to the general welfare of the people of the city and state;
  - e. The building or structure is of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture, and/or material that it could not be reproduced without great difficulty and/or expense;
  - f. In the case of a request for the demolition of a deteriorated building or structure, any hardship or difficulty claimed by the owner is self-created or is the result of any failure to maintain the property in good repair.  
Provided, however, that the commission shall approve the application if, in case of a request for a demolition permit, the denial of the permit would result in the loss of all reasonable and beneficial use of or return from the property.
3. In addition, in determining whether to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness, the commission shall consider and may give decisive weight to any or all of the following standards:

- a. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
  - b. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
  - c. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
  - d. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
  - e. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
  - f. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
  - g. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
  - h. Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
  - i. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
  - j. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.
4. If the commission determines that the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness and the proposed changes are consistent with the character and features of the property or district, and with the above guidelines, it shall issue the Certificate of Appropriateness. Upon the issuance of such certificate, the building permit shall then be issued by the building inspector. The commission shall make this decision within forty-five (45) days of the filing of the application.
  5. Agencies of the city and all public utility and transportation companies, undertaking projects affecting historic structures, historic sites or historic districts, shall be required to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness prior to initiating any changes in the character of street paving, sidewalks, utility

installations, lighting, walls, fences, structures, and buildings on property, easements, or streets owned or franchised by the city.

6. The issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness shall not relieve the applicant from obtaining other permits and approvals required by the city. A building permit or other municipal permit shall be invalid if it is obtained without the presentation of the Certificate of Appropriateness required for the proposed work. Insofar as they are applicable to a historic structure, historic site, or improvement in a historic district designated under this section, any provision of the plumbing code, electrical code, or building or housing of the city shall apply, unless waived by the appropriate state or city officials. The commission may support or propose such waivers before the appropriate state or city appeals body.
  7. Compliance, with Certificates of Appropriateness shall be started within twelve (12) months after the issuance of the certificate, and the work shall conform to the provisions of the certificate. The city may inspect the work during and after construction in order to assure compliance. Failure to comply with a Certificate of Appropriateness or failure to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness shall be a violation of this section. In addition to other penalties and remedies, the city shall issue a stop work order, and all work shall cease on the designated property. No additional work shall be undertaken as long as such stop work order shall continue in effect.
  8. Ordinary maintenance and repairs may be undertaken without a Certificate of Appropriateness provided that the work involves repairs to existing features of a historic structure or site or the replacement of elements of a structure with piece identical in appearance and provided that the work does not change the exterior appearance of the structure or site and does not require the issuance of a building permit.
- C. Appeals. Should the commission fail to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness due to the failure of the proposal to conform to the guidelines, the applicant may appeal such decision to the Common Council within thirty (30) days. In addition, if the commission fails to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness, the commission shall, with the cooperation of the applicant, work with the applicant in an attempt to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness within the guidelines of this ordinance.
- D. Recognition of Historic Structures, Sites and Districts. At such time as a historic structure, site or district has been properly designated, the commission may cause to be prepared and erected on such property at city expense, a suitable plaque declaring that such property is a historic structure, site or district. Such plaque shall be so placed as to be easily visible to passing pedestrians. The plaque shall state the accepted name of the historic property, the date of its construction of significance, and other information deemed proper by the commission.

E. Other Duties. In addition to those duties already specified in this section, the commission shall:

1. Work for the continuing education of the citizens about the historical heritage of this city and the historic properties designated under the provision of this section.
2. Cooperate with the State of Wisconsin historic preservation officer and the State Historic Preservation Review Board in attempting to include such properties here under designated as landmarks or landmark sites, or historic districts in the National Register of Historic Places and the State Register of Historic Places.
3. As it deems advisable, receive and solicit funds for the purpose of historic preservation in the city. Such funds shall be placed in a special city account for such purpose.

#### 17.44.060 Procedures.

A. Designation of Historic Structures and Historic Sites

1. The commission may, after notice and public hearing, designate historic structures and historic sites, subject to Council approval, or rescind such designation or recommendation, subject to Council approval, after application of the criteria in section 17.44.040. At least ten (10) days prior to such hearing, the commission shall notify the owners of record, as listed in the office of the city assessor, who are owners of property in whole or in part situated within two hundred (200) feet of the boundaries of the property affected. These owners shall have the right to confer with the commission prior to final action by the commission on the designation. Notice of such hearing shall also be published as Class 1 Notice, under the Wisconsin Statutes. The commission shall also notify the following: Department of Public Works, Redevelopment authority, Parks Division, Fire and Police Departments, Health Department, building Inspection Division, and Plan commission. Each such department may respond to the commission with its comments on the proposed designation or rescission.
2. The commission shall then conduct such public hearing and, in addition to the notified persons, may hear expert witnesses and shall have the power to subpoena such witnesses and records as it deems necessary. The commission may conduct an independent investigation into the proposed designation or rescission. Within ten (10) days after the close of the public hearing, the commission may designate the property as either a historic structure or historic site, or rescind the designation, subject to Council approval. After the designation or rescission has been made and approved by the Council, notification shall be sent to the property owner or owners. Notification shall also be given to the City Clerk, building Inspection division, Plan Commission, and the City Assessor. The commission shall cause the designation or rescission, upon Council approval, to be recorded, at city expense, in the County Register of Deeds office.

B. Designation of Historic Districts.

1. For preservation purposes, the Historic Preservation Commission shall select geographically defined areas within the city to be designated as Historic Districts and shall, with the assistance of the City Planning Department, prepare a historic preservation plan in ordinance form for each area. A Historic District may be designated for any geographic area of particular historic, architectural or cultural significance to the city which:

- a. Exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state or community; or
- b. Is identified with historic personages or with important events in national, state or local history; or
- c. Embodies the distinguishing characteristics of architectural types or specimens inherently valuable for the study of a period or periods, styles, methods or construction, or of indigenous materials or craftsmanship; or
- d. Is representative of the notable works of master builders, designers, or architects who influenced their age.
- e. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to history or prehistory.

Each historic preservation plan prepared for or by the Historic Preservation Commission shall include a cultural and architectural analysis supporting the historic significance of the area, the specific guidelines for development and a statement of preservation objectives.

2. Guideline criteria to be considered in the development of Historic District plans are as follows:

- a. Regulation of construction, reconstruction, alteration and demolition shall conform to the criteria and standards in Section 17.44.050 B.I., 2., and 3.
- b. All new structures shall be constructed to a height visually compatible with the building and environment with which they are visually related.
- c. The gross volume of any new structure shall be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related.
- d. In the street elevation of a building, the proportion between the width and height in the facade should be visually compatible with the building and environment with which it is visually related.
- e. The proportions and relationships between doors and windows in the street facade should be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related.
- f. The rhythm of solids to voids, created by openings in the facade, should be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related.
- g. The existing rhythm created by existing building masses and spaces between them should be preserved.
- h. The materials used in the final facade should be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related.
- i. The texture inherent in the facade should be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related.

- j. Colors and patterns used on the facade (especially trim) should be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related.
- k. The design of the roof should be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related.
- l. The landscape plan should be sensitive to the individual building, its occupants and their needs. Further, the landscape treatment should be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related.
- m. The street facade should blend with other buildings via directional expression. When adjacent buildings have a dominant horizontal or vertical expression, this expression should be carried over and reflected.
- n. Architectural elements should be incorporated as necessary to relate the new with the old and to preserve and enhance the inherent characteristics of the area.

3. Review and Adoption Procedure.

- a. Historic Preservation Commission. The Historic Preservation Commission shall hold a public hearing when considering the plan for a Historic District. Notice of the time, place and purpose of such hearing shall be given by publication as a Class 1 Notice under the Wisconsin Statutes in the official city paper. Notice of the time, place and purpose of the public hearing shall also be sent by the City Clerk to the Alderman of the aldermanic District or districts in which the Historic District is located, and the owners of record, as listed in the office of the City Assessor, who are owners of the property within the proposed Historic District or are situated in whole or in part within two hundred (200) feet of the boundaries of the proposed Historic District. Said notice is to be sent at least ten (10) days prior to the date of the public hearing. Following the public hearing, the Historic Preservation Commission shall vote to recommend, reject or withhold action on the plan. This recommendation shall be forwarded to the City Plan Commission and the Common Council.
- b. The City Plan Commission. The Plan Commission shall review the Historic District plan and make a recommendation to the Common council. The Plan Commission shall make its recommendation on the Historic District plan within thirty (30) days.
- c. The Common Council. The Common Council, upon receipt of the recommendations from the Historic Preservation Commission and Plan Commission, shall hold a public hearing, notice to be given as noted in subparagraph a. above and shall following the public hearing either designate or reject the Historic District. Designation of the Historic District shall constitute adoption of the plan in ordinance form prepared for that district and direct the implementation of said plan.

17.44.070 Interim Control.

No building permit shall be issued by the building inspector for alteration, construction, demolition, or removal of a nominated historic structure, historic site, or any property or structure within a nominated historic district from the date of the meeting of the Historic

Preservation Commission at which a nomination form is first presented until the final disposition of the nomination by the Historic Preservation Commission or the City Council unless such alteration, removal or demolition is authorized by formal resolution of the City Council as necessary for public health, welfare or safety. In no event shall the delay be for more than one hundred eight (180) days.

#### 17.44.080 Conformance with Regulations.

- A. Every person in charge of a historic structure, historic site or improvement in a Historic District shall maintain same or cause or permit it to be maintained in a condition consistent with the provisions of this ordinance. The City Council may appoint the building inspector or any other individual or group of individuals to enforce this ordinance. The duties of the inspection officer shall include periodic inspection at intervals provided by the City Council of designated historic structures, historic sites and historic districts. These inspections may include physical entry upon the property and improvement, with permission of the owner, to insure that interior alterations or maintenance will not jeopardize the exterior appearance or structural stability of the improvement. If an owner refuses permission for the enforcement officer to enter for purposes of inspection, the inspection officer may obtain a warrant of entry pursuant to s. 66.122, Wis. Stats., and take any other reasonable measures to further enforcement of this ordinance.
- B. Every person in charge of an improvement on a historic site or in a Historic District shall keep in good repair all of the exterior portions of such improvement and all interior portions thereof which, if not so maintained, may cause or tend to cause the exterior portions of such improvement to fall into a state of disrepair, including but not limited to:
1. The deterioration of exterior walls or other vertical supports;
  2. The deterioration of roofs or other horizontal members;
  3. The deterioration of external chimneys.
  4. the deterioration or crumbling of exterior plasters or mortar;
  5. The ineffective waterproofing of exterior walls, roofs, and foundations, including broken windows or doors;
  6. The peeling of paint, rotting, holes, and other forms of decay;
  7. The deterioration of surrounding environment, e.g., fences, gates, sidewalks, steps, signs, accessory structures, and landscaping;
  8. The deterioration of any features so as to create or permit the creation of any hazardous or unsafe condition or conditions.
  9. All interior portions thereof which may cause the exterior to deteriorate or become damaged or otherwise to fall into a state of disrepair.
- The purpose of this section is to prevent the demolition of a building or structure by neglecting it and permitting damage to it by weather or vandalism.
- C. Insofar as they are applicable to a historic structure, historic site or improvement in a historic district, designated under this section, any provision of the Plumbing Code, the Minimum Housing and Property Maintenance Code, building Code, Heating,

Ventilating and Air Conditioning Code, and Outdoor Signs and Outdoor Advertising Structures regulations of the General Ordinances may be varied or waived, on application, by the appropriate board having such jurisdiction over such chapter or, in the absence of such board, by the building inspector, provided such variance or waiver does not endanger public health or safety.

#### 17.44.090 Penalties for Violations.

Any person or persons violating any provision of this section shall be fined two hundred dollars (\$200) for each separate violation. Each and every day during which a violation continues shall be deemed to be a separate offense. Notice of violations shall be issued by the building inspector. If the violations remain uncorrected after the time specified in the notice, the city may, at its election, impose fines and/or have the violations corrected at city expense and have a lien placed against the property equal to the cost of the repairs, plus applicable fines and administrative costs.

#### 17.44.100 Emergency Conditions.

In any case where the building inspector determines that there are emergency conditions dangerous to life, health or property affecting a historic structure, site or a property in a historic district, the building inspector may order the remedying of these conditions without the approval of the commission. The building inspector shall promptly notify the commission of the action being taken. When the emergency conditions do not require demolition, the building inspector shall make every effort to carry out the intent of this ordinance and to use the design guidelines of the commission when remedying the emergency conditions.

#### 17.44.110 Separability.

If any provision of this chapter or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, the remainder of this chapter and the application of such provisions to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected thereby. (Ord 458, 1995)<sup>102</sup>

### Recommended Ordinance Amendments and Revisions

#### **17.44.065 Timeframe for Commission Action (New Section)**

The Historic Preservation Commission shall act upon any complete application for a Certificate of Appropriateness within forty-five (45) calendar days of receipt. Failure to act within this period shall be deemed approval of the application, unless the applicant agrees in writing to an extension.

#### **17.44.066 Public Notice and Hearing (New Section)**

For any application involving demolition or major alteration of a historic structure or site, the Commission shall:

- Provide written notice to adjacent property owners and publish a notice in the official newspaper at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting.
- Hold a public hearing to receive comments before rendering a decision.

#### **17.44.067 Maintenance of Historic Properties (New Section)**

Owners of designated historic structures or sites shall maintain such properties in good repair to prevent deterioration and structural failure. The Commission may issue a notice of violation for “demolition by neglect” if maintenance is not performed.

#### **17.44.068 Incentives for Preservation (New Section)**

The City may offer incentives to encourage the preservation of historic properties, including but not limited to:

- Technical assistance
- Local grant programs
- Support for state or federal tax credit applications

#### **17.44.100 Emergency Actions - Amendment**

(Current language allows the building inspector to act in emergencies.)

Add the following:

Any emergency action taken under this section shall be reported to the Historic Preservation Commission within ten (10) days. The Commission may review the action and recommend further steps to ensure compliance with this chapter.

### **Appendix 5: Community Engagement Responses**

Preservation-Related Responses from Community Survey (Questions 28-31)  
[Pending]

Preservation-Related Focus Groups, Meeting Agenda and Notes

The following document consists of a meeting agenda, questions, and participant responses from two focus groups with historic preservation-related participants on March 25 and March 26, 2025. It should be noted that the list of responses in the 'Notes' section is not exhaustive and may not fully reflect the entire comment provided by a given participant.

## Preservation-Related Responses from Pop-Up Engagement (Question 3)

[Pending]

### Appendix 6: Definitions

This appendix includes a glossary of key terms used in the Viroqua Historic Preservation Plan. Multiple sources including the National Park Service, Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office, and Chapter 17.44 (Historic Preservation) of the Viroqua Municipal Code of Ordinances were used to define many of the terms listed.

**Adaptive Reuse:** The process of reusing an existing building for a purpose other than which it was originally designed or built. Normally entails some modification of the structure.

**Alteration:** The act or process of intentionally changing the physical condition or integrity of the exterior of a property or the structural elements of a property, including but not limited to construction, reconstruction, and relocation. Typical maintenance activities (e.g. repainting a previously painted surface) is not an alteration.

**Architectural Review Guidelines:** A set of design principles intended to preserve the distinctive character of a historic building or district. Provides standards and criteria for proposed alterations, additions, and new construction.

**Archaeological Resource:** Any material remains or physical evidence of past human life or activities that are of archaeological interest, including the record of the effects of human activities on the environment. An archaeological resource can reveal scientific or humanistic information through archaeological research.

**Building:** Created principally to shelter various forms of human activity. Examples of buildings include houses, dormitories, churches, hotels, and schools, among others.

**Certificate of Appropriateness (COA):** A certificate issued by the Historic Preservation Commission approving alteration, rehabilitation, construction, reconstruction, or demolition of a historic structure, historic site, or any improvement in a historic district.

**Certificate of Economic Hardship:** A certificate issued by the Historic Preservation Commission authorizing an alteration, construction, removal or demolition even though a Certificate of Appropriateness previously has been denied.

A certificate issued by the Historic Preservation Commission that authorizes an alteration, construction, removal, or demolition of a property even after a Certificate of Appropriateness has been denied.

**Certified Local Government (CLG):** Any city, village, county, or town that has been certified by the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Department of the Interior to meet the following criteria:

- Establish by ordinance a qualified historic preservation commission
- Enforce appropriate state or local legislation for the designation and protection of historic properties
- Maintain a system for the survey and inventory of local historic resources
- Provide for public participation in the local historic preservation program

In Wisconsin, the CLG program is administered by the state SHPO on behalf of the National Park Service. Upon certification, communities gain access to grants and technical assistance for implementing preservation initiatives.

**Contributing Resource:** A building, structure, object, or site within the boundaries of a historic district that contributes to the cultural, historic, or architectural significance of the district.

**Cultural Landscape:** A geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values. There are four non-mutually exclusive types of cultural landscapes: historic sites, historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes, and ethnographic landscapes. At the time of this report, there are no designated cultural landscapes in the City of Viroqua.

**Cultural Resource:** An aspect of a cultural system that is valued by or significantly representative of a culture or that contains significant information about a culture. A cultural resource may be a tangible entity or a cultural practice. Tangible cultural resources are categorized as districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects for the National Register of Historic Places and as archeological resources, cultural landscapes, structures, museum objects, and ethnographic resources for National Park Service management purposes.

**Design Review:** The process of reviewing proposed projects seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission.

**District:** A district possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of buildings, sites, structures or objects united historically or architecturally by plan or physical development. A district derives its importance from being a unified entity, even though it is often comprised of a variety of resources. The identity of a district results from the interrelationship of its resources, which can convey a visual sense of the overall historic environment or be an arrangement of historically or functionally related properties.

**District (National Register Historic):** A geographically defined area listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which is maintained by the National Park Service. These districts are recognized for their significance in American history, architecture, engineering, archaeology, or culture, and they consist of contributing and non-contributing properties. Additional information on National Register Historic Districts is found in 'National Register of Historic Places', below.

**District (Locally-Designated Historic):** A geographically defined area designated by the city that is recognized for its historical, architectural, or cultural significance. Key characteristics of locally-designated historic resources, including both individual properties and districts, are defined further in 'Locally Designated Historic Landmarks', below.

**Easement (Preservation):** A private, legal interest conveyed by a property owner to a qualified preservation organization or government agency. Easements are usually donated by landowners although they can also be purchased by easement holding entities. Once in place, most easements are perpetual and bind both current and future owners to protect the historic character and values of the property.

**Historic Character:** The sum of all visual aspects, features, materials, and spaces associated with a property's history.

**Historic Context:** A framework that organizes information about historic properties based on cultural themes and their geographical and chronological boundaries. It provides the background information needed to understand the significance of historic properties by relating them to broader patterns of history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture.

**Historic Resource:** A historic resource is any building, site, structure, object, district, place, or landscape considered to have historical, architectural, or cultural importance.

**Historic Preservation Commission:** A board created by a municipality to enforce and direct historic preservation actions and policy within the city's boundaries. Viroqua's Historic Preservation Commission was established in 1966.

**Inventory:** A list of cultural resources, usually of a given type and/or in a given area.

**Integrity:** The authenticity of a property's historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during its historic or prehistoric period; the extent to which a property retains its historic appearance. The seven qualities of integrity as defined by the National Register of Historic Places are location, setting, feeling, association, design, workmanship, and materials.

**Locally Designated Historic Landmark:** An individual historic resource recognized for its historic, architectural, and/or cultural significance and therefore worthy of rehabilitation, restoration, and preservation. A resource may include a building, structure, object, site, area of land, district, or landscape architecture element. As part of a historic preservation ordinance, a local designation:

- Designates historic properties on the basis of local criteria and local procedures.
- Sets boundaries based on the distribution pattern of historic properties, and other community considerations.
- Provides recognition of a community's significant properties.

- Coupled with a design review process, such as a historic preservation commission or architectural review board, provides protection of character-defining exterior features of a property, but, in many cases, not historic interiors or archaeological sites.
- May qualify a property for a form of financial assistance, such as a local tax incentive for historic preservation, if the local government has passed a tax incentives ordinance.
- Can provide for review of proposed demolitions within the district, and provide delays to allow for preservation alternatives to be considered.
- Can require local commission review and approval for all changes to the exterior appearance of historic properties, and review approval for all new construction, such as infill, e.g., adjacent new buildings on a site or on vacant parcels.

Landmark designation is a key function of the Historic Preservation Commission as designated by ordinance of the City Council.

**Landscape:** The area surrounding a landmark or structure within a historic district. Elements which comprise the landscape may include fences, signs, plantings, paving, and statues.

**National Historic Landmark (NHL):** A district, site, building, structure, or object of national historical significance, designated by the Secretary of the Interior under authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and entered in the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination process for a NHL listing is separate from a National Register nomination.

**National Register of Historic Places (NR or NRHP):** The comprehensive list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of national, regional, state, and local significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture kept by the NPS under authority of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. National Register listing is an honorary status that:

- Designates historic properties based on uniform national criteria and procedures.
- Sets boundaries for historic districts based on the actual distribution pattern of intact historic properties in the area.
- Provides recognition by the federal government that an area has historical or archeological significance.
- Requires the effects of federally assisted work projects (actions) on historic properties be considered prior to the commencement of work.
- Makes available federal tax incentives for qualified rehabilitation projects.
- Requires conformance to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (36 CFR 67).

**Non-Contributing Resources:** Buildings, objects, sites, and structures within a Local or National Register Historic District that have either lost integrity or were developed outside the district's period of significance. These resources typically possess little to no historic, architectural, cultural, or archaeological significance and may have been constructed after the relevant historical period.

**Object:** Refers to constructions that are primarily artistic, smaller in scale, and associated with a specific setting, such as a park or plaza. Examples of objects include boundary markers, fountains, mileposts, monuments, sculptures, and statuary.

**Period of Significance:** The span of time in which a property attained the significance for which it meets the National Register Criteria.

**Preservation:** The act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction. New exterior additions are not within the scope of this treatment; however, the limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a preservation project.

**Rehabilitation:** The act or process of making possible an efficient compatible use for a historic structure or landscape through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural and architectural values.

**Restoration:** The act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a historic structure as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period.

**Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:** The criteria used to determine if a rehabilitation project qualifies as a certified rehabilitation.

The Standards pertain to historic buildings of all materials, construction types, sizes, and occupancy and encompass the exterior and the interior of historic buildings. The Standards also encompass related landscape features and the building's site and environment, as well as attached, adjacent, or related new construction. Ten standards are applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

**Section 106:** Refers to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), comprised of one paragraph that requires federal agencies to "take into account the effects of their undertakings on properties that are eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places." The formal, detailed Section 106-regulatory/review process is established in the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's regulations found at 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 800. This federal law and federal regulation together make up what is referred to as the Section 106 process.

**Site:** A location of significant events, prehistoric or historic occupations, or buildings and structures—whether intact, in ruins, or no longer existing—that hold historic, cultural, or archaeological value. Examples of sites include designed landscapes, parks, natural features, ruins, and trails, all of which emphasize the importance of the location itself regardless of any existing structures.

**State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO):** The official appointed or designated pursuant to section 101(b)(1) of the National Historic Preservation Act. The SHPO administers the National Historic Preservation program at the State level, reviews State Register and National Register of Historic Places nominations, maintains data on historic properties that have been identified but not yet nominated to the registers, and works with state and federal agencies during the relevant federal, state or local unit of government statutory historic preservation law reviews. In Wisconsin, the SHPO is the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

**Structure:** A functional construction designed primarily for purposes other than human shelter. Examples of structures include bridges, canals, fences, and tunnels.

**Survey:** A study aimed at identifying and assessing properties within a community or district to evaluate their historic, architectural, archaeological, engineering, or cultural significance. It serves as a guiding document for determining a building's or neighborhood's historical importance, often used for nominations to State or National Registers of Historic Places, and can inform future development and programming related to historic sites.

**Zoning:** A regulatory tool adopted by the city to direct and shape land development patterns. Viroqua's zoning and development standards are contained within Chapter 17 of the Viroqua City Code and reflected on the city's Official Zoning Map.

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