



Historic Preservation Commission

Regular Meeting

July 17, 2026, 11:00 AM

Council Conference Room, La Plata Town Hall

305 Queen Anne St.

La Plata MD

Agenda

1. Call to Order

- 1.1. Attendees, please use meeting courtesy. Virtual attendees are asked to mute microphones when joining the meeting. Participants may be muted by the Town Clerk, and meetings will be recorded.

In accordance with the Open Meetings Act, the public has the right to view/listen to the discussion only. At their discretion, the Finance Committee may allow participants to voice questions or provide comments on the topics under discussion. Written comments may be submitted via email to Legislative@townoflaplata.org

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 258 482 113 801 02

Passcode: K2DX3Ei7

(Calendar Year: 2026)

- 1.2. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Approval of Minutes

- 2.1. Approval of minutes from meeting on May 15, 2026.

3. Matters of Discussion

- 3.1. La Plata-Maryland 250 Programming (PC Work Plan Item No. 2)
- 3.2. Adoption of the Preservation Professionals List (PC Work Plan Item No. 3)
- 3.3. Introduction and Discussion of the Development of a Legacy Business Program for the Town of La Plata (PC Work Plan Item No. 6)

4. Subcommittee Appointments

- 4.1. Legacy Business Program

5. Subcommittee Updates

5.1. Comments from the HPC Subcommittee concerning the Maryland 250 Programs for La Plata (Work Plan Item No. 2)

5.2. Comments from the HPC Subcommittee Concerning the Promotion of the Approved Centennial Plaque Program (Completed Work Plan Item No. 3)

6. Matters of Information

6.1. Commissioner Comments

6.2. Town Council Report

6.3. Staff Report

7. Public Comment

8. Adjourn

8.1. Adjournment



TOWN OF LA PLATA
Historic Preservation Commission Minutes
May 15, 2026, 11:00 AM
Regular Meeting
Council Conference Room, La Plata Town Hall
305 Queen Anne St.
La Plata MD

PRESENT: Chair Rich Gilpin
Vice Chair Steuart Bowling
Mary Beth Chandler
Jane Hobbs

ABSENT:

TOWN STAFF: Don Dooley, Director of Planning
Shelby Pritchett, Town Clerk

GUESTS:

1. Call to Order

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Meeting ID: 258 482 113 801 02

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Chair Gilpin called the meeting to order at 11:03 AM.

1.2. Roll Call

The Town Clerk conducted Roll Call.

1.3. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Gilpin led all assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair Bowling moved to amend the agenda to address items 3.2 and 6.2 in advance of the remaining agenda.

Moved By: Steuart Bowling, seconded by Jane Hobbs.

Ayes: Chair Gilpin, Vice Chair Bowling, Chandler, Hobbs

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent:

Passed

2.1. Approval of minutes from meeting on March 20, 2026.

Vice Chair Bowling moved to approve the minutes from the meeting on March 20, 2026, with amendments to item 5.2 to reflect Councilman Guttenbergs request for staff to develop meeting procedures.

Moved By: Steuart Bowling, seconded by Mary Beth Chandler.

Ayes: Chair Gilpin, Vice Chair Bowling, Chandler, Hobbs

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent:

Passed

3. Matters of Discussion

3.1. Draft of Preservation Professionals List (HPC Work Plan Item No.3)

Director Dooley gave a brief overview of the Draft Preservation Professionals List (HPC Work Plan Item No.3). Director Dooley acknowledged questions and concerns from the Historic Preservation Commission and agreed to address and draft a resolution adopting the list for a future agenda.

3.2. Former Fire House Building Capital Improvement Project (CIP) for FY 2027

Councilman Guttenberg provided a brief overview of the Fire House Building Capital Improvement Project and addressed Historic Preservation Commission feedback.

3.3. Historic Preservation Commission Vacancy for Alternate Member

Director Dooley gave a brief overview of the Historic Preservation Commission vacancies and the status of the staff work to address filling the vacancies.

4. Subcommittee Appointments

No business was conducted on this agenda item.

5. HPC Work Plan Subcommittee Updates

5.1. Maryland 250 Programs for La Plata (Work Plan Item No. 2)

Jane Hobbs provided a subcommittee overview and answered questions on the latest work within the Maryland 250 programs. Director Dooley answered Historic Preservation Commission questions regarding coordination with the Town of La Plata Event Planner.

5.2. Promotion of the Approved Centennial Plaque Program (Completed Work Plan Item No. 3)

Marybeth Chandler gave a brief overview of the status of the Centennial Plaque Program. Director Dooley answered Historic Preservation Commission questions.

6. Matters of Information

6.1. Commissioners Report

The commissioners reported on activities and concerns within the Historic Preservation Commission's scope of work.

6.2. Town Council Report

Councilman Guttenberg gave a brief Town Council Report and departed at 11:25 AM in advance of the remaining agenda.

6.3. Staff Report

Director Dooley states he will bring the Historic Preservation Professionals List back as an HPC Resolution at the next meeting.

7. Adjourn

7.1. Adjournment

Hobbs moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:27 PM.

Moved By: Jane Hobbs, seconded by Steuart Bowling.

Ayes: Chair Gilpin, Vice Chair Bowling, Chandler, Hobbs

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent:

Passed

Submitted by:

Shelby Pritchett, Town Clerk



TOWN OF LA PLATA

305 Queen Anne Street
Post Office Box 2268
La Plata, Maryland 20646

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DATE: July 17, 2026

TO: Honorable Chair and Members of the Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Don Dooley, Director of Planning

SUBJECT: Preservation Professionals List (HPC Work Plan Item No. 3)

REQUEST: To approve the Preservation Professionals List (aka "*Professional Trades Directory*").

BACKGROUND

On February 24, 2026, the Town Council adopted the Historic Preservation Commission's ("HPC") five-year Work Plan to facilitate the long-term development of a historic preservation plan for the Town of La Plata as required in Chapter 11, Section 11-8(A)(10), of the La Plata Municipal Code.

Work Plan No. 3 identifies the need to develop of a "Preservation Professionals List" to help property owners identify potential trade professionals that may have the skills and resources necessary to help preserve, rehabilitate, or restore their vintage/historic buildings and structures.

DISCUSSION

Staff developed a draft preservation professionals list that is entitled, "*Professional Trades Directory*" ("*Directory*"). As identified in Attachment No. 1, it includes a variety of professional trades and resources that can be helpful to residents interested in preserving, rehabilitating or restoring their vintage or historic buildings and structures. While the Directory is by no means exhaustive, it groups together many trade resources, their contact information, and their areas of expertise for the public's reference.

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting of May 15, 2026

At the May 15, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, the Commission expressed support for the Directory. Staff recommended continuing this item to the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting on July 17, 2026, to allow the Commission members additional time to review the Directory in detail and propose any additional

businesses to supplement those identified by staff. As of this writing, staff has not received any additional suggestions from the Commission. The Town Attorney has also reviewed the Directory and its associated disclaimers and has not identified any concerns.

Development of the Directory

The draft Directory was developed through staff research and the consolidation of several trade lists for professionals from the Maryland Historic Trust, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Charles County Government, the City of Annapolis and other resources.

Directory Limitations and Challenges

One of the challenges in developing the Directory was finding trade professionals who have a demonstrated interest in working with vintage and historic resources. Particularly those who have the training, specialization, familiarity, and sensitivity to perform such work. Once the integrity of a resource is compromised, it is often too late to reverse the damage. Professionals that are familiar with applying the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines are also less common. These are the same challenges other government agencies and preservation non-profits have in creating any type of professional service reference list for the public. Nevertheless, such lists provide a starting point and an awareness of the professional resources and trades that are available for the public's consideration. Given these challenges, staff has proposed a disclaimer on the draft Directory that states,

"The La Plata Professional Trades Directory ("Directory") has been produced solely for informational purposes only. The Directory is not an endorsement by the Town of La Plata, Maryland or a recognition of professional competency or trade quality. As a local government agency, the Town of La Plata cannot recommend the goods or services provided by anyone in this Directory as it is not possible for the Town to fully verify the experience and credentials of those listed. Therefore, this Directory should not be construed as a governmental "approval" list of any kind. Determining the suitability of the individuals and firms in this Directory is your sole responsibility. It is also your responsibility to ascertain whether the individuals and firms in this Directory have the appropriate government licensures and permits to conduct business in the Town of La Plata."

Similar disclaimers are frequently used by other agencies during staffs' research. As noted above, the Town Attorney has reviewed the disclaimer and has not identified any issues of concern.

Another challenge in assembling the Directory was identifying local trade resources that have the professional qualities and experience desired to work with vintage and historic buildings. However, to obtain a reasonable pool of trade professionals, staff has listed

firms and individuals that may be well outside of Charles County, in Maryland or Virginia, that are within a “reasonable” driving distance to La Plata. Such trade professionals may be potentially interested in doing work in La Plata.

Directory Implementation

With the approval of the Directory by Historic Preservation Commission, staff will finalize the attached list and upload it to the Town’s website for public decimation.

It is staff’s intent to make this a “living directory” so that any professional trade or service provider who is not listed in the Directory will have the opportunity to request the Planning Department to add them to the Directory in the future for public reference.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt the attached, draft, resolution approving the 2026 Preservation Professionals List (aka “Professional Trades Directory”) to complete Work Plan Item No. 3 on the Historic Preservation Commission’s 2025-2030 Work Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Draft Planning Commission Resolution
- 2) Draft La Plata Professional Trades Directory

DRAFT

TOWN OF LA PLATA, MARYLAND HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 2026-02

A RESOLUTION OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION OF THE TOWN OF LA PLATA, MARYLAND APPROVING THE 2026 PRESERVATION PROFESSIONALS LIST (ALSO KNOWN AS THE “PROFESSIONAL TRADES DIRECTORY”).

WHEREAS, on February 24, 2026, the Town Council adopted the 2025-2030 Historic Preservation Commission (“HPC”) Work Plan to guide the long-term development of a historic preservation plan for the Town of La Plata, as required in Chapter 11, Section 11-8(A)(10) of the La Plata Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, Work Plan Item No. 3 identifies the need to develop a “Preservation Professionals List” to assist property owners in locating trade professionals who offer services in preserving, rehabilitating, reconstructing and restoring vintage and historic buildings and structures in the Town of La Plata; and

WHEREAS, Town staff prepared a draft *Professional Trades Directory* (“Directory”) consisting of professional trades, contact information, and areas of expertise compiled from multiple government and preservation resource lists, as more fully described in Attachment No. 1; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the draft Directory at its regularly scheduled meeting on May 15, 2026, expressed support for its purpose, and continued the item to the July 17, 2026, meeting to allow additional time for Commission members to review the Directory and suggest additional trade resources; and

WHEREAS, as of July 17, 2026, staff has not received any additional recommended trade professionals from Commission members; and

WHEREAS, the Town Attorney has reviewed the Directory and its associated disclaimer and has identified no legal concerns; and,

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that the Directory will serve as a useful informational resource for property owners and will further the public purposes of the Town’s historic preservation program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the La Plata Historic Preservation Commission hereby approves the 2026 Preservation Professionals List, also known as the “Professional Trades Directory,” as presented in Attachment No. 1 to this Resolution and incorporated herein by reference.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that staff is authorized to finalize the Directory and make it publicly available on the Town’s website, and to update the Directory as needed in the future as additional trade professionals request inclusion.

PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE LA PLATA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION on July 17, 2026, by the following vote:

Yes:

No:

Abstain:

Absent:

Richard Gilpin, Historic Preservation Commission Chair

Attest:

Don Dooley, Director of Planning

Attachments:

- 1) Final Draft 2026 Preservation Professionals List (aka “Professional Trades Directory”)

JULY 17, 2026

DRAFT PROFESSIONAL TRADES DIRECTORY

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-END OF LIST-



TOWN OF LA PLATA

**305 Queen Anne Street
Post Office Box 2268
La Plata, Maryland 20646**

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DATE: July 17, 2026

TO: Honorable Chair and Members of the Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Don Dooley, Director of Planning

SUBJECT Proposed Legacy Business Program

REQUEST: To create a Legacy Business Program for the Town of La Plata.

BACKGROUND

Legacy Businesses are longstanding, locally rooted, enterprises that have contributed to the cultural, social, and economic identity of a community for many years, often 20-25 years or more. These businesses may include (but are not limited to) restaurants, retail shops, service providers, and other small or mid-sized establishments that have become place-based institutions or mainstays in a community. They are the kinds of places that parents and grandparents remember, rely on, and continue to support. Earlier generations often introduce younger generations to these familiar, place-based, businesses that are integral to the community. In doing so, families and friends share traditions, memories, and stories. Recognizing this value, cities and towns across the United States are increasingly developing Legacy Business Programs to acknowledge, support, and preserve these businesses as essential components of community identity and economic stability.

The idea of protecting long-standing, community-defining businesses is connected to broader movements in historic preservation and cultural heritage protection. While traditional historic preservation in the United States has largely focused on the architectural significance of buildings, the homes of notable individuals, and sites of historic events, preservationists, planners, and community leaders are increasingly recognizing that a community's cultural identity is also shaped by its long-tenured businesses, their founders, and patrons. As noted above, these businesses often serve roles that extend far beyond commerce. They function as social anchors, generational gathering places, and hubs for cultural expression and local identity.

For example, a local café or restaurant may qualify as a Legacy Business if it functions as a well-known gathering place where residents meet friends, hold community

conversations, or host neighborhood meetings. It may also preserve ethnic or cultural traditions through long-standing recipes, cooking methods, or holiday celebrations. Some establishments sponsor traditional community events or activities on-site or serve signature foods and drinks that have been part of local life for generations. Businesses like these contribute to the social and cultural fabric of La Plata because they are often cherished places that hold deeper meaning for residents than for visitors. Whether or not these businesses are in historic or vintage building is of less concern. Additionally, such businesses may be better known to locals than visitors.

Beginning in the early 2000s, several U.S. cities began exploring ways to support older small businesses as urban redevelopment pressures, shifting demographics, rising commercial rents and increasing public regulations threatened their survival. Although these early efforts were largely informal, they laid the groundwork for later structured programs.

What is **Not** a Legacy Business

A Legacy Business is not simply any older business, nor is it recognized solely by the age or historic character of its building. A business does not qualify as a legacy business if it lacks a meaningful cultural, social, or community-based connection to the town, even if it has operated for many years. Likewise, businesses that do not reflect or contribute to La Plata's cultural identity, traditions, or community life are not considered Legacy Businesses. The designation is also not a marker of architectural significance, professional quality, or commercial success, nor is it an endorsement of the goods or services provided. In short, a Legacy Business must be more than long-standing, it must play an enduring and recognizable role in the cultural fabric of a community.

The Beginning of Legacy Business Programs

San Francisco is widely credited with launching the nation's first official Legacy Business Program in 2015, following growing concern about the rapid displacement of long-standing restaurants, independent retailers, arts establishments, and neighborhood-serving businesses. This program emerged after sustained advocacy from community groups, neighborhood organizations, and preservationists who sought to protect "cultural assets" that made San Francisco's neighborhoods unique.

Key aspects of San Francisco's groundbreaking initiative included:

- Creation of a "Legacy Business Registry" recognizing businesses operating for at least 30 years (later expanded to 20 years in some cases).
- Development of financial incentives for both legacy businesses and their landlords.
- Integration of cultural heritage preservation into economic development strategy.

San Francisco's model demonstrated that long-standing small businesses could be formally acknowledged and supported by local government in the context of broadening historic preservation philosophy with the desire to protect a community's tangle an intangible cultural heritage and sense of place.

Following San Francisco's program, several major American cities began to see Legacy Businesses as essential components of local economic and cultural resilience. Thus far, several factors have contributed to the growth and popularity of Legacy Business Programs:

- 1. Urban redevelopment and rising rents**

Redevelopment and gentrification in many cities have led to rising commercial rents that threatened long-standing small businesses, particularly in well-established neighborhoods that maintained lower rents. Legacy Business Programs emerged as tools to counteract displacement of businesses that have been a part of older neighborhoods for generations while maintaining neighborhood character.

- 2. Recognition of intangible cultural heritage**

Traditional historic preservation policies in the United States have largely focused on protecting physical resources such as buildings and archaeological sites as well as historic landscapes within the framework of the *National Register of Historic Places*. Increasingly, however, communities are recognizing the value of also preserving intangible cultural heritage and traditional cultural properties, including community practices, ethnic traditions, and other forms of living culture.

Examples of intangible cultural heritage include elements like storytelling, dance, music, language, rituals, ceremonies, activities, and traditional methods of ethic production. In this context, Legacy Businesses fit naturally into an expanded understanding of cultural heritage. One that places greater emphasis on people, their practices, and the cultural environments they create, use, and rely on.

- 3. Economic stabilization and small-business retention**

Communities recognize the value of supporting businesses with established customer bases, strong community ties, and proven economic resilience. Legacy Business Programs became a way to help retain and strengthen small businesses, not just recruit new ones with no historic connection to the community. This enhances a community's sustainability and sense of place.

4. Main Street and downtown revitalization trends

Legacy Business initiatives, particularly when paired with Main Street programs, help strengthen traditional and historic commercial areas by supporting the businesses that give these districts authenticity and cultural meaning.

5. Community identity and placemaking

The idea of “place-based economic development” has gained momentum nationally. Legacy businesses have been increasingly viewed as core components of placemaking, tourism marketing, and community branding.

Public Policy Advantages of Legacy Business Programs

The continuing appeal of Legacy Business initiatives across the United States comes from their ability to address several community priorities at once:

- **Cultural preservation:** Protecting unique traditions, activities and stories embedded in longstanding businesses.
- **Economic resilience:** Supporting stable employment and reducing commercial turnover.
- **Historic preservation:** Enhancing the vitality and viability of operating long-standing, generational, businesses in a community.
- **Community pride:** Strengthening residents’ connection to their town’s identity and history.
- **Small-business support:** Offering targeted assistance to preserve iconic community businesses often excluded from traditional preservation tools like landmark designation.

As communities navigate redevelopment pressures, housing growth, and generational change, Legacy Business Programs can provide a practical and culturally meaningful strategy to safeguard local community character.

Sample of Cities with Legacy Business Programs

Since 2015, numerous cities have adopted or piloted Legacy Business Programs, including:

Large Cities Examples:

- **San Antonio, TX** – Launched a formal Legacy Business Program recognizing “heritage businesses” important to the city’s culture.
- **Austin, TX** – Developed a “Heritage Business Program” offering technical assistance and preservation support.

- **Washington, D.C.** – Created a program to identify and support “longstanding community businesses” serving cultural and neighborhood needs.
- **Seattle, WA**- Implemented a cultural space stabilization framework that supports long-standing community and cultural businesses through zoning flexibility and technical assistance.
- **Portland, OR** - Uses cultural districts and planning tools to recognize and support culturally significant, long-standing businesses contributing to neighborhood identity.

Small Town Examples:

- **Leadville, CO** – Utilizes a heritage-based recognition and preservation approach that supports long-standing businesses within its historic commercial district. (See Attachment No. 2)
- **Bisbee, AZ** – Supports culturally significant long-standing businesses through historic district flexibility, heritage tourism promotion, and community-driven recognition. (See Attachment No. 2)
- **Eureka Springs, AR** – Highlights and promotes long-established arts, cultural, and heritage businesses through its historic district framework and tourism-based recognition tools. (See Attachment No. 2)
- **San Elizario, TX** – Uses a designated Cultural Heritage District to recognize and promote culturally rooted businesses central to the community’s traditions and identity. (See Attachment No. 2)

Maryland Communities and Legacy Businesses Program Development

Based on staff’s initial research, no Maryland community has developed a formal “Legacy Business Program.” However, several communities have heritage-oriented initiatives that could serve as a foundation. Smaller cities and Main Street communities have also expressed growing interest in identifying and preserving the businesses that shape their local identity. However, there are a few Maryland communities that have moved toward structured Legacy Business Programs. As of now, here’s the most accurate picture based on staff research:

1. Baltimore – Emerging Efforts (Not a formal program yet)

Baltimore has explored legacy business concepts through:

- Cultural district planning (e.g., Pennsylvania Avenue Black Arts District, Station North Arts District).
- Efforts by the Baltimore Development Corporation to support long-standing small businesses.

These initiatives recognize culturally significant businesses but do not operate a dedicated Legacy Business registry or incentive program like San Francisco.

2. Montgomery County – Early Discussion

Montgomery County has studied policies for retaining culturally significant small businesses, particularly in areas undergoing redevelopment (e.g., Wheaton, Silver Spring, Bethesda), but has not formally adopted a Legacy Business Program.

3. Prince George’s County – Cultural & Community Preservation Work

Prince Georges County’s planning initiatives, especially around Port Towns, Route 1, and Hyattsville, include heritage and community retention goals. However, they do not yet include a formal Legacy Business registry or incentive mechanism.

4. Annapolis – Interest Through Cultural Heritage Planning

While Annapolis has strong historic preservation policies and African American heritage initiatives (e.g., cultural districts and interpretive planning), it has not built a Legacy Business Program.

5. Frederick & Hagerstown – Small Business Retention via Main Street, but No Legacy Program

Main Street programs in Frederick, Hagerstown, and other towns support historic and long-standing businesses, but these are revitalization programs, not true Legacy Business Programs.

Developing a Legacy Business Program for La Plata

There is no “one-size-fits-all” model for Legacy Business Programs. Some communities implement formal programs, while others rely on a mix of ordinances and initiatives that collectively function as a de facto Legacy Business framework. For La Plata, any Legacy Business Program should be tailored to the Town’s specific goals of recognizing and supporting businesses that best reflect its cultural identity, heritage, and sense of place. Based on staff research, small-town Legacy Business models like those in Leadville, Bisbee, Eureka Springs, and San Elizario offer the closest match to La Plata’s staffing levels, budget limitations, and administrative capacity. These communities successfully support long-standing culturally significant businesses through low-cost strategies such as heritage recognition, promotional efforts, zoning flexibility, and modest façade or stabilization incentives. Because these small-town models emphasize cultural identity, modest but meaningful support tools, and manageable program administration, they provide a realistic and sustainable template for La Plata to use in shaping its own Legacy Business Program in contrast to large, complex, communities like San Francisco and Seattle with far greater resources at their disposal.

However, in developing a Legacy Business Program, staff has identified the following initial topics that need to be satisfactorily addressed by the Commission to help successfully launch and maintain a Legacy Business Program in the context of La Plata's small-town environment.

1. Defining "Legacy Business" in a Small-Town Context

The Town must establish fair, consistent and transparent criteria for what qualifies as a Legacy Business, including factors such as years in operation, cultural significance, and contribution to community traditions. Evaluating "cultural significance" will require community input as well as guidance from the Historic Preservation Commission.

Because the Historic Preservation Commission plays a central role in identifying the cultural themes that define La Plata's identity, history, and sense of place, it is essential that the Commission help articulate the Town's long-standing traditions, gathering spaces, and locally valued/iconic businesses. This work forms the foundation for identifying Legacy Businesses that exemplify the Town's cultural grounding. Once these cultural anchors are defined, the Town will be able to more effectively evaluate business candidates for the Legacy Business Program and ensure the program reflects La Plata's unique heritage and community identity. Examples of relevant cultural themes could include generational family enterprises, local foodways and gathering traditions, arts and cultural production, agricultural and rural heritage, and civic or social gathering traditions such as barbershops, community-oriented service providers, and small venues that serve as hubs of the Town's social life. Staff is currently researching the number of businesses in Town that are at least 25 years old to determine the pool of businesses that would need to be considered in the development of a Legacy Business Program.

2. Alignment with the Current Zoning Ordinance

The Town's current Zoning Code may not offer the flexibility needed to support older or culturally significant businesses, particularly when their properties are not properly zoned. Existing nonconforming use regulations can also unintentionally burden long-standing businesses, especially when they seek to grow or expand, because their operations pre-date current zoning requirements and standards.

To ensure the Legacy Business Program has practical impact, the Town will likely need targeted zoning amendments, such as a Legacy Business Overlay or enhanced nonconforming use protections. For example, a Legacy Business with nonconforming parking or setbacks could be permitted to expand its building by a set percentage. Similarly, a Legacy Business currently classified as a nonconforming land-use could be treated as conforming land-use while in operation and allowed limited expansion based on a percentage of its existing floor area.

Any amendments would need to be coordinated with the Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Commission, and Town Council, with guidance from the Town Attorney. The Historic Preservation Commission will play a critical role in recommending ways to adjust zoning regulations to support Legacy Businesses and in identifying incentives for businesses seeking Legacy Business status.

3. Identifying Legacy Business Registry Benefits that Support Economic Development

With staff's support, the Historic Preservation Commission will need to clearly articulate the conceptual benefits of being listed in the Legacy Business Program to help businesses understand the value of their participation. Based on staff research, Legacy Business Programs can provide help needed to business owners in the following ways:

- **Long-term stability and security**

Legacy businesses often rely on property stability to remain in place. Sudden rent increases or redevelopment pressures are common threats.

- **Support for modernization**

Many legacy businesses need help updating their buildings, interiors, equipment, signage, or accessibility features without incurring prohibitive costs or significant regulatory burdens.

- **Flexible zoning and permitting**

Older buildings or long-standing uses may not fit modern zoning codes. Owners often need regulatory flexibility to expand, upgrade, or adapt their business. Variance requests are often too difficult to obtain because of the strict criteria required to obtain Town approval.

- **Curb-side appeal assistance**

Refreshing older building façades, improving on-site landscaping, repaving parking areas etc. can greatly help Legacy Business owners as many cannot afford to physically reinvestment in their properties due to rising business operation costs (i.e., wages, insurance, equipment costs, etc.).

- **Marketing and visibility**

Many Legacy Business owners can benefit from programs that promote their history, cultural value, or unique services, especially as they compete with newer businesses.

- **Reduced administrative burden**

Streamlined processes, simplified paperwork, and technical assistance can help owners who may not have resources or staff to navigate complex regulations.

In short, supporting Legacy Businesses in ways that sustain their operations not only preserves the Town's cultural identity, but it also strengthens economic development

and reinforces community support for the businesses that have historically contributed to the Town's success.

4. Approval Findings for a Legacy Business

The Town must identify the specific findings needed to approve Legacy Businesses in an objective and consistent way. These findings should recognize both the tangible and intangible qualities or other character-defining attributes that demonstrate a business's significance in supporting the cultural identity and traditions of the Town of La Plata. Legacy Business designation should not depend solely on the physical integrity of a building or site to convey cultural value. Instead, the Commission must determine which significant cultural themes the business represents and how those themes establish its cultural association with the Town.

5. Limited Financial Resources

The Town Council has approved up to \$1,800 dollars in grant money for a total of five designated Legacy Businesses for Fiscal Year 2027. Commission input is needed to specifically identify how this grant should be prioritized and/or used by approved Legacy Businesses. Staff believes grant money should be used anyway that will best support the needs of a designated Legacy Business. However, it is important to recognize that such re-occurring funding may not always be available in the Town's budget. Therefore, opportunities to seek alternative and supplemental funding sources should be explored to help benefit designated Legacy Businesses.

6. Outreach

It will be essential to gather direct feedback from potential Legacy Businesses to understand their common needs, challenges, and priorities in La Plata. Legacy Business Programs across the country consistently emphasize early engagement with business owners to ensure that program benefits, recognition, and support tools are meaningful and help sustain their long-term operation in the community. Input from these businesses will guide the Town in designing a Legacy Business Program that reflects real conditions on the ground and provides value where it is most needed.

Equally important is broad public outreach. Legacy Business practice recognizes that cultural significance is often defined by the community itself, particularly by residents who hold diverse cultural traditions, memories, and identities. Engaging the public ensures that businesses valued for cultural, ethnic, or historic reasons, especially those not always visible in traditional surveys or economic data, can be identified and considered. This community-driven approach helps the Town recognize Legacy Businesses that truly embody La Plata's cultural identity and heritage from multiple perspectives.

Program Concept Strategy Outline

In Attachment No. 2 of this report, staff has provided a broad, conceptual, Legacy Business Program outline that is intended to help begin and frame a discussion between Town staff and the Historic Preservation Commission on how such a program could take shape in La Plata. It is based on successful approaches used in comparable small-town communities, which offer realistic, low-cost tools that match La Plata's scale and capacity. The outline provides an initial vision, presents potential feasible program components, and highlights potential benefits, all to support an informed dialogue on how to recognize and sustain long-standing businesses that embody the Town's cultural identity. Its purpose is to guide the Commission's early conversations rather than to prescribe a final program structure.

Based on the Commission's feedback, staff will continue to develop the Legacy Business Program details.

CONCLUSION

Legacy businesses serve as vital economic and cultural anchors in communities. They help preserve intangible heritage, reinforce the identity and authenticity of historic areas, support long-term economic stability, and advance local economic development strategies. Recognizing and supporting these businesses complements historic preservation efforts and strengthens broader revitalization initiatives such as Main Street programs. For communities seeking to protect their unique character while promoting sustainable economic growth, Legacy Business initiatives offer a meaningful and impactful tool.

Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission use this report and the accompanying attachments as a starting point for shaping a Legacy Business Program appropriate for La Plata's small-town context. Commission guidance on cultural themes, eligibility criteria, program benefits, zoning considerations, and grant prioritization will be essential in developing a framework that meaningfully supports the Town's long-standing and culturally significant businesses. With the Commission's input, staff will continue refining the program so that it reflects La Plata's heritage, administrative capacity, and community values, ultimately positioning the Town to recognize and sustain the businesses that contribute to its unique identity. Once the Historic Preservation Commission has completed the Legacy Business Program framework it will travel to the Planning Commission for their review and recommendations to the Town Council. The final version will be reviewed for action by the Town Council.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Historic Preservation Commission provide its initial feedback to staff on the development of the proposed Legacy Business Program for La Plata and appoint a subcommittee to work with staff on its development.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Conceptual Legacy Business Program Outline
- 2) Legacy Business Program Summaries

ATTACHMENT NO. 1

CONCEPTUAL DRAFT OUTLINE

LEGACY BUSINESS PROGRAM FOR LA PLATA

1. Purpose and Vision

The Legacy Business Program is intended to recognize, support, and help preserve long-standing businesses that contribute to La Plata's unique cultural identity, community traditions, heritage, and sense of place. The program will focus on businesses that embody the Town's history, heritage, and local character. The intent is not to provide large financial support, but instead to enable businesses to thrive through targeted zoning flexibility, cultural recognition, heritage tourism, promotional support, small-scale stabilization tools (i.e., monetary grants).

2. Program Goals

1. Celebrate and promote long-standing businesses (not affiliated with a national or regional corporate chain) that shape and support the distinctive cultural identity, traditions or practices that have developed in the Town of La Plata.
2. Reduce barriers for long-term business retention, especially in historic or vulnerable commercial areas.
3. Support the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, including stories, traditions, and crafts.
4. Provide zoning and land-use flexibility to help legacy businesses continue to operate and thrive to provide the vital goods and services it has traditionally supplied the Town for years.
5. Encourage local pride, tourism, and economic stability through recognition and promotion of Legacy Businesses.
6. Ensure the program is manageable for a small town and financially sustainable.
7. Promote economic development and stability for long-standing businesses that have special meaning to the Town's cultural heritage and sense of place.

3. Recommended Model Communities with Legacy Business Type Programs

Based on La Plata's size, limited budget, staffing capacity, and zoning framework, the following communities appear to be good models for establishing a nascent Legacy

Business Program in La Plata. These communities offer realistic, low-cost approaches that align closely with La Plata's opportunities and constraints based on staff's research

Primary Models (Small-Town Scalable Programs):

- Leadville, Colorado – heritage-based business recognition integrated with historic preservation.
- Bisbee, Arizona – flexible signage, zoning support, and cultural storytelling for long-standing businesses.
- Eureka Springs, Arkansas – tourism-driven recognition programs supporting local arts, traditions, and small businesses.
- San Elizario, Texas – cultural district framework that recognizes culturally significant businesses with low administrative burden.

Secondary Models (Selected Scalable Tools):

- San Antonio, Texas – for its cultural significance criteria and celebration/recognition framework.
- Seattle, Washington – for zoning flexibility and non-conforming use protections that help stabilize long-standing businesses.

At this time, staff believes these communities can collectively contribute to providing the best template for La Plata because they use recognition, zoning flexibility, heritage tourism promotion, and small business grants. These are very similar tools staff believes La Plata has the capacity to deliver without requiring large budgets or complex regulatory systems.

4. Eligibility Criteria

Staff believes a Legacy Business should generally align with the following criteria:

- Has operated in La Plata for at least 25 years. This age requirement reflects businesses that have been established long enough to show stability and meaningful cultural value within the history of the community, while still allowing enough local businesses to qualify. The 25-year minimum also aligns with many state and national definitions of a "legacy business." This threshold may be adjusted based on additional staff research to determine how many La Plata businesses meet the age requirement when evaluated within the heritage and cultural themes identified by the Commission.
- Contributes to recognized cultural themes established by the Commission. Examples may include but are not limited to local foodways, community gathering traditions, agriculture, arts/music/entertainment/crafts etc.

- Represents a business type that anchors the community's identity or social life.
- Demonstrates the intention to remain in operation and continue to operate as it has traditionally done to retain its cultural significance to the Town.
- Receives approval by Town Council based on a recommendation from the Historic Preservation Commission.

5. Conceptual Program Components

5.1 Business Registry

A public registry listing designated Legacy Businesses, including:

- Business history.
- A summary of the business' cultural significance to the community.
- Years in operation.
- Photos and archival material.

Registered businesses would receive a certificate, Town website profile, and some promotional support.

5.2 Recognition and Promotion

Tools inspired by small-town models and San Antonio include:

- Website features and business spotlights.
- Heritage walking maps or brochures.
- Legacy Business plaques or window decals.
- Promotion at Town events and festivals.
- Storytelling through social media and Town newsletters.

5.3 Zoning and Regulatory Support

Adapted from Seattle and small-town models:

- Reduced parking requirements for Legacy Businesses.
- Increased flexibility for signs, murals, and historic storefront features
- Allowance of accessory uses (classes, demonstrations, small-scale production)
- Protections for legacy nonconforming uses

- Expedited review for minor improvements and façade updates

5.4 Small-Scale Financial Assistance

Based on La Plata's budget constraints the program could provide:

- Up to \$1,800 per business (subject to re-occurring Town Council approval) for eligible uses such as:
 - Façade improvements, signage, equipment purchases, ADA upgrades, safety compliance, building system improvements for code compliance or upgrades.

5.5 Business Technical Assistance

- Supporting long-standing businesses through:
 - Zoning and permitting guidance.
 - Help connect with county and regional economic development resources.
 - Marketing and digital presence assistance through Town website and newsletter.
 - Coordination Chamber of Commerce

6. Administration

- Program administered by Planning Department.
- Maintain Legacy Business Registry, review applications, coordinate outreach, and oversee promotional efforts.
- Keep application process simple and accessible to minimize burden on staff and business owners.

7. Cultural Themes/Context Framework

- The Planning Commission will need to identify core cultural themes or contexts, along with clear approval findings, to guide the selection of Legacy Businesses. These themes help ensure that each designation reflects La Plata's unique heritage and is based on objective, consistent criteria. For discussion purposes, potential cultural themes include businesses that contribute to the town's historical identity, serve as community gathering places, demonstrate multi-generational ownership, host well-known community events or traditions, represent local crafts or food and drink traditions, support a specific ethnic identity, or provide long-standing essential services to La Plata.

8. Implementation Steps

- Legacy Business Milestone Steps.
 - Collaborate with Town staff to identify and refine the Legacy Business Program goals, concepts, criteria, program benefits etc.
 - Launch a public outreach campaign to help identify cultural/heritage themes for Legacy Businesses for inclusion in the draft program.
 - Recommend applicable amendments to the zoning ordinance to support the Legacy Business program provision concepts.
 - Process code amendments through the Planning Commission.
 - Obtain Town Council Approval of the Legacy Business Program.
 - Launch program and advertise to the business community.
 - Conduct periodic reviews to ensure those businesses added to the Legacy Businesses Registry are still supporting the cultural heritage of the community.

9. Evaluation and Program Review

- Review program effectiveness every 2–3 years and conduct periodic reviews to ensure those businesses added to the Legacy Businesses Registry are still supporting the cultural heritage of the community to retain their listing in the Registry. If not, the Legacy Business will need to be de-listed based on de-listing process to be developed in the Legacy Business program.
- Track participating businesses, zoning flexibilities used, and impacts on business retention.
- Adjust criteria and program components based on feedback and program experience to help ensure the long-term success of the program.

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ATTACHMENT NO. 2

EXAMPLES OF SMALL-TOWN LEGACY BUSINESS TYPE PROGRAMS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

EXAMPLE NO. 1

Leadville, Colorado – Heritage-Based Business Support Program Overview

Leadville does not operate a formal “Legacy Business Program,” but it uses a heritage-focused recognition and stabilization framework within its National Historic Landmark District. Its approach functions as a small-town equivalent of a legacy business model, emphasizing preservation, heritage tourism, and business continuity through low-cost, planning-oriented tools.

Eligibility Characteristics

- Long-standing businesses (often 10–20+ years) located within or associated with the historic district
- Businesses that contribute to Leadville’s mining history, mountain culture, or downtown identity
- Culturally significant establishments that anchor community life or serve as longstanding gathering spaces

Support Strategies

1. Heritage Recognition and Promotion

- Public recognition through heritage tourism materials, walking tours, and brochures
- Integration into downtown heritage branding
- Visitor center promotion and storytelling features

2. Zoning and Design Flexibility

- Leniency for historic signage, older building forms, and traditional storefront layouts
- Support for nonconforming uses within the historic commercial core
- Flexibility in permitting for small-scale expansions, improvements, and adaptive reuse

3. Business Stabilization Assistance (Low-Cost)

- Small façade improvement grants through partner organizations or grant cycles

- Assistance identifying state historic tax credit opportunities for tenant improvements
- Coordination with Colorado Main Street Program for business support

4. Technical Assistance & Navigation

- Guidance for historic building upgrades
- Assistance with grant applications, building code compliance, and small business tools
- Partnerships with local nonprofits for training, marketing, and succession resources

Why It's Relevant to La Plata?

Leadville demonstrates a manageable, heritage-based model for small towns without large budgets. The key tools such as storytelling, zoning flexibility, and modest façade support translate to La Plata's scale and potential capacity.

EXAMPLE NO. 2

Bisbee, Arizona – Cultural & Historic Commercial Core Support Program Overview

Bisbee blends historic preservation, tourism branding, and small-business support to maintain its long-standing, culturally significant businesses. This informal framework closely resembles a Legacy Business Program but is built for a small town with limited staff and financial resources.

Eligibility Characteristics

- Businesses located within the Historic Commercial District or adjacent cultural areas
- Long-standing businesses tied to Bisbee's mining history, arts culture, or community identity
- Culturally significant establishments such as cafés, galleries, bookstores, music spaces, and social hubs

Support Strategies

1. Cultural & Heritage Promotion

- Inclusion in heritage tourism campaigns, brochures, and town marketing materials
- Window decals or plaques signifying business heritage
- Support during festivals, art walks, and tourism events
- Storytelling through social media and walking-tour apps

2. Zoning and Regulatory Flexibility

- Flexible signage allowances for historic, creative, or iconic signs
- Reduced parking requirements in historic and downtown areas
- Support for mixed-use and creative uses in older buildings
- Protection for long-standing nonconforming uses

3. Small-Scale Grants and Incentives

- Limited small business and façade improvement programs
- Cooperative marketing assistance through local organizations
- Access to county and tourism funding streams

4. Technical Assistance & Business Navigation

- Helping businesses navigate historic preservation requirements
- Permit and zoning support for small renovations, events, and adaptive reuse
- Partnerships with arts and cultural nonprofits to promote creative enterprises

Why It's Relevant to La Plata?

Bisbee's low-cost, heritage-driven model which is focused on signage flexibility, downtown identity, cultural promotion, and technical assistance is extremely similar to what La Plata could potentially implement given its staff size and resource limits.

EXAMPLE NO. 3

Eureka Springs, Arkansas – Heritage & Cultural Business Support Program Overview

Eureka Springs does not operate a formal “Legacy Business Program,” but its heritage-driven downtown revitalization framework functions very similarly. The city relies on historic preservation tools, cultural tourism promotion, and recognition of long-standing businesses to protect the character and identity of its historic commercial district.

Eligibility Characteristics

- Long-standing businesses (often 10–20+ years) located in or closely tied to the historic district
- Businesses associated with Eureka Springs’ arts culture, Victorian heritage, or tourism identity
- Community gathering spaces, galleries, shops, restaurants, and creative enterprises central to local culture
- Businesses occupying historic structures or contributing to the city’s distinctive architectural environment

Support Strategies

1. Heritage Promotion and Business Recognition

- Prominent inclusion in walking tours, visitor guides, and heritage tourism campaigns
- Signage, plaques, and recognition through the Historic District Commission
- Promotion through city-sponsored arts events, festivals, and tourism materials
- Cultural storytelling through brochures, museum partnerships, and digital platforms

2. Zoning & Historic District Flexibility

- Flexibility for historic signage, storefront design, and architectural features
- Support for adaptive re-use and mixed-use operations in historic buildings
- Allowances for creative arts uses and small-scale artisan production
- Reduced parking or dimensional requirements in the historic core

3. Small-Scale Grants & Incentives

- Modest façade improvement grants
- Partnerships with the CAPC (City Advertising & Promotion Commission) for promotional support
- Limited assistance for code compliance or safety improvements

4. Technical Assistance & Business Navigation

- Help navigating Historic District guidelines

- Assistance through the local arts council, CAPC, and downtown organizations
- Guidance on marketing, business continuity, and creative enterprise development

Why It's Relevant to La Plata?

Eureka Springs shows how a small town can support long-standing cultural businesses primarily through heritage promotion, zoning flexibility, and small-scale assistance, all within a historic preservation framework. This is compatible with La Plata's goals and capacity.

EXAMPLE NO. 4

San Elizario, Texas – Cultural District & Heritage Business Recognition Model Overview

San Elizario uses a Cultural Heritage District framework that operates as a practical small-town Legacy Business Program. The focus is on recognizing culturally significant businesses, supporting them through tourism promotion, and providing zoning and regulatory flexibility to ensure continuity.

Eligibility Characteristics

- Businesses tied to San Elizario's Hispanic, Indigenous, and border-region cultural heritage
- Long-standing establishments (often 10–20+ years) within the cultural district or historic townsite
- Galleries, restaurants, shops, artisans, and community-serving establishments
- Businesses contributing to traditional crafts, foodways, festivals, or cultural expressions

Support Strategies

1. Cultural District Branding & Promotion

- Official designation within the Texas Commission on the Arts Cultural District network
- Highlighting heritage businesses in tourism campaigns, brochures, and walking tours
- Promotion through festivals, art crawls, and community celebrations
- Cultural storytelling emphasizing San Elizario's deep historical roots

2. Zoning & Permitting Support

- Flexibility for historic building uses, signage, and storefront improvements
- Streamlined approvals for cultural events, artisan markets, and galleries
- Adaptive use allowances to help legacy businesses remain operational
- Preservation support within the townsite and historic overlay

3. Low-Cost Infrastructure & Business Support

- Small business resources coordinated through the cultural district organization
- Informal technical assistance for marketing, events, and business development
- Collaboration with tourism agencies to drive foot traffic and visibility

4. Community Partnerships

- Strong reliance on local arts organizations and cultural nonprofits
- Business participation in district events and cooperative marketing
- Local leadership in preserving traditional cultural practices and commercial identity

Why It's Relevant to La Plata

San Elizario offers a simple, low-cost framework that emphasizes cultural identity, recognition, and zoning flexibility. It is an ideal model for La Plata's scale, budget constraints, and conceptual heritage conservation goals.

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