

## Chapter 8

# Culture

Preserve shared history and celebrate people's unique cultures.

Danville seeks to honor, preserve, and share its rich history, heritage, and cultures, fostering a sense of collective pride and identity. Danville is proud to be home to impactful leaders and place to historic events that have shaped the city as it stands today. It is vital to keep this legacy living through preservation and celebration.



# Cultural Policies

## C.1: HISTORIC PRESERVATION

HONOR AND MAINTAIN THE CITY'S SHARED HERITAGE AND SIGNIFICANT PAST.

### C.1.1 Continued Preservation

Continue historic structure and neighborhood preservation.

## C.2: CULTURAL CELEBRATION

CREATE PATHS FOR ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO CELEBRATE THEIR UNIQUE COMMUNITY IDENTITIES.

### C.2.1 Justice

Celebrate the rich history of the city while acknowledging past injustices.

### C.2.2 Representation & Inclusion

Create paths for all community members to celebrate their unique community identities using the arts and programming.

## C.3: PLACEMAKING

CREATE VIBRANT AND INCLUSIVE SOCIAL SPACES THAT REFLECT THE UNIQUE IDENTITY AND CHARACTER OF THE COMMUNITY.

### C.3.1 Cultural Hubs

Build off Downtown as an arts and cultural hub, as acknowledged in the 2024 Danville Arts and Culture Plan, with cultural corridors extending to Danville's various neighborhoods.



## Aligning with Public Feedback

Concepts of recognizing Danville's cultural traditions and history—including challenging history related to racism—as a means to encourage stronger unity were raised by the community. The goal to preserve history and celebrate culture is reflected in all seven of the cross-cutting community themes. In particular, culture is critical to four community themes: Community Engagement and Collaboration, Infrastructure and Accessibility, Education and Youth Development, and Highlighting Local History and Culture.

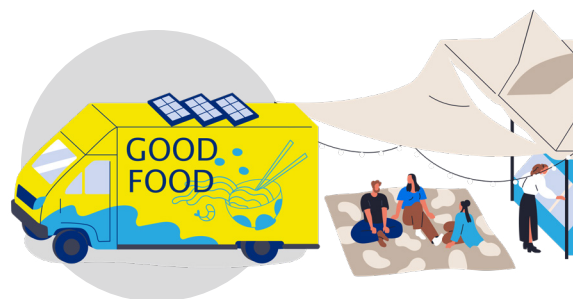






### C.1 Historic Preservation

Danville has a rich history. With a history dating back to 1793, Danville's history represents both challenges and opportunities. PLAN Danville preservation of historic structures as well as neighborhood assets that tell Danville's story and create opportunities for lessons from the past and recognition of their impact on the community today. It also builds on the work of the 2023 Preservation Danville plan.



### C.2 Cultural Celebration

The history and culture of Danville is largely that of neighborhoods and residents overcoming challenges to create a place they call home. PLAN Danville prioritizes celebration of this history of all people in Danville, not just its leaders, and recognition of past injustices. In order to achieve this goal, it is critical that events and programs create opportunities for members of the community to celebrate their personal history and identity as it relates to Danville's shared sense of history.



### C.3 Placemaking

Danville has placed a strong emphasis on establishing downtown as an arts and cultural hub, with notable success. Now that downtown has achieved this recognition, there is an opportunity to extend this cultural development into Danville's neighborhoods by creation of cultural corridors that recognize local artists and cultural resources across the community.



## Goal 8. Culture

Aligning with Public Feedback



## POLICY

### C.1

# Historic Preservation

Honor and maintain the city's shared heritage and significant past.

Historic preservation efforts in Danville date back decades and are responsible for saving some of the city's most important buildings and neighborhoods. So far, much of the work has focused on key neighborhoods and districts, such as the River District and the Old West End. It is clear that while these two areas are vital to the city's well-being, a similar focus is needed for other historic neighborhoods such as Almagro, Holbrook-Ross, Westmoreland, North Main Hill, Schoolfield, and the Averett University area.

## Desired Outcomes

- Continued maintenance of existing historic sites and buildings in historic districts
- Local and regional awareness of Danville as a cultural destination
- Establishment of formal cultural sites, hubs, and corridors



### Goal 8. Culture

Policy C.1 Historic Preservation







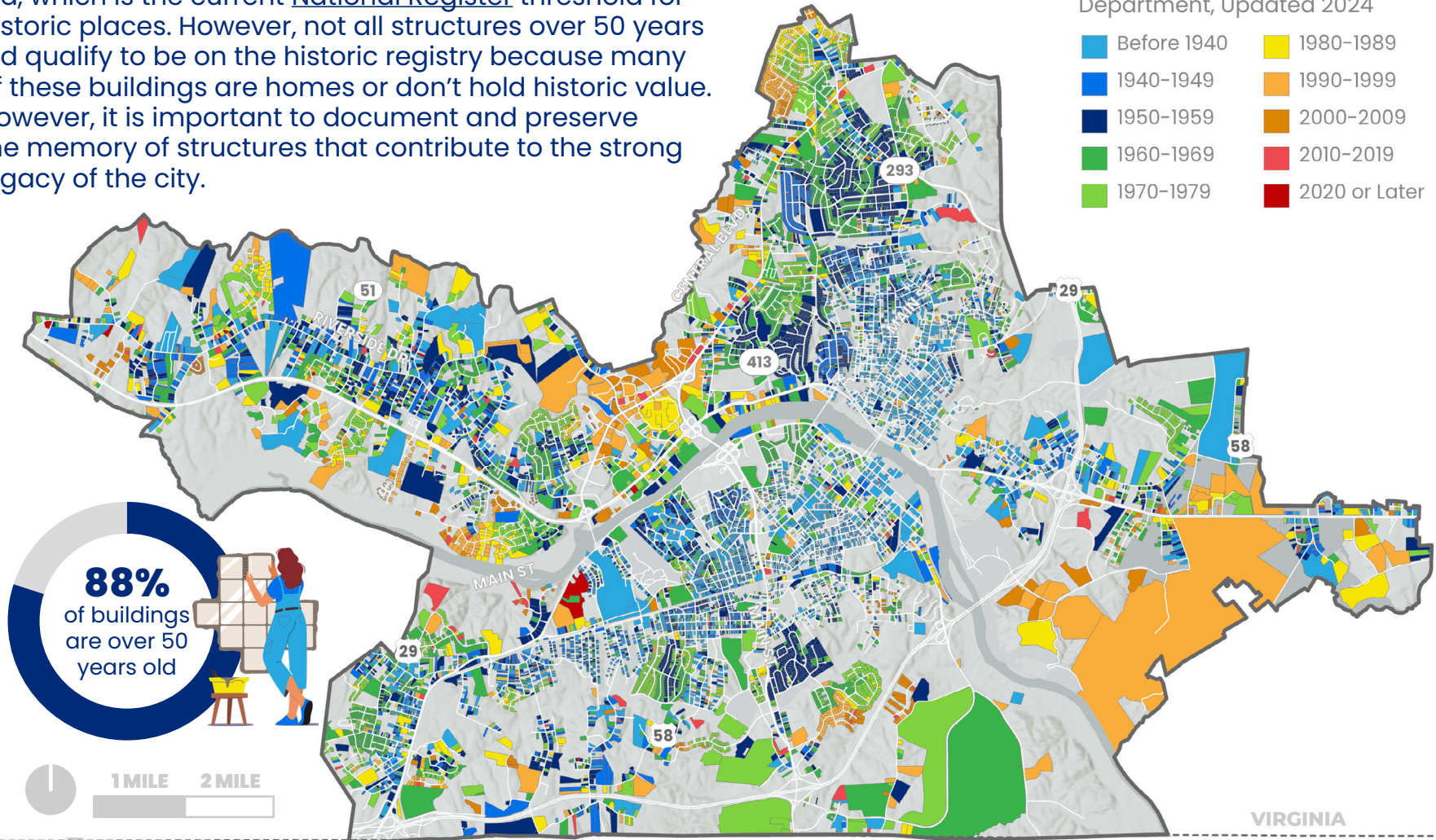
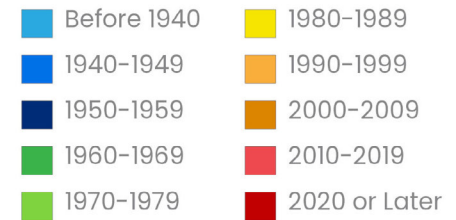
## WHY IT MATTERS

### Danville has a wealth of historic and older buildings.

As of 2024, 88% of Danville's structures are over 50 years old, which is the current National Register threshold for historic places. However, not all structures over 50 years old qualify to be on the historic registry because many of these buildings are homes or don't hold historic value. However, it is important to document and preserve the memory of structures that contribute to the strong legacy of the city.

#### Year Structure Built

**Source:** Danville GIS Department, Updated 2024



#### Goal 8. Culture

Policy C.1 Historic Preservation





## WHY IT MATTERS

### Danville has seven historic districts, and there are several more that are eligible.

There are pros and cons to the use of historic districts as a tool for preservation, and they should be considered before implementing elsewhere, especially when there are alternative ways to preserve history such as using historic designations for just specific buildings, educational signage, art, monuments, landscaping, and more.

#### Opportunities

- **Funding.** Historic districts can qualify for federal and state tax credits, incentivizing preservation and rehabilitation.
- **Community Pride.** Districts serve as living testaments to a neighborhood's rich history and can strengthen community ties.
- **Sustainability.** Preserving older buildings limits carbon emissions associated with development.
- **Reimagining.** While buildings cannot change completely on the outside, the use of the inside of the building can often transition to better meet the new needs of the community.

#### Limitations

- **Equity.** Many sites in Danville include layers of history, both positive and negative. There is renewed attention to the fact that some historic places hold the weight of values that do not align with Danville today. It is important to recognize this, acknowledge it, and ensure future use rectifies past wrongs.
- **Cost.** Requirements for preservation and maintenance might impose financial burdens on homeowners, potentially making it difficult for lower-income residents to comply.
- **Sustainability.** Preserving older buildings can sometimes conflict with modern sustainable practices if they limit improvements such as energy efficiency upgrades.







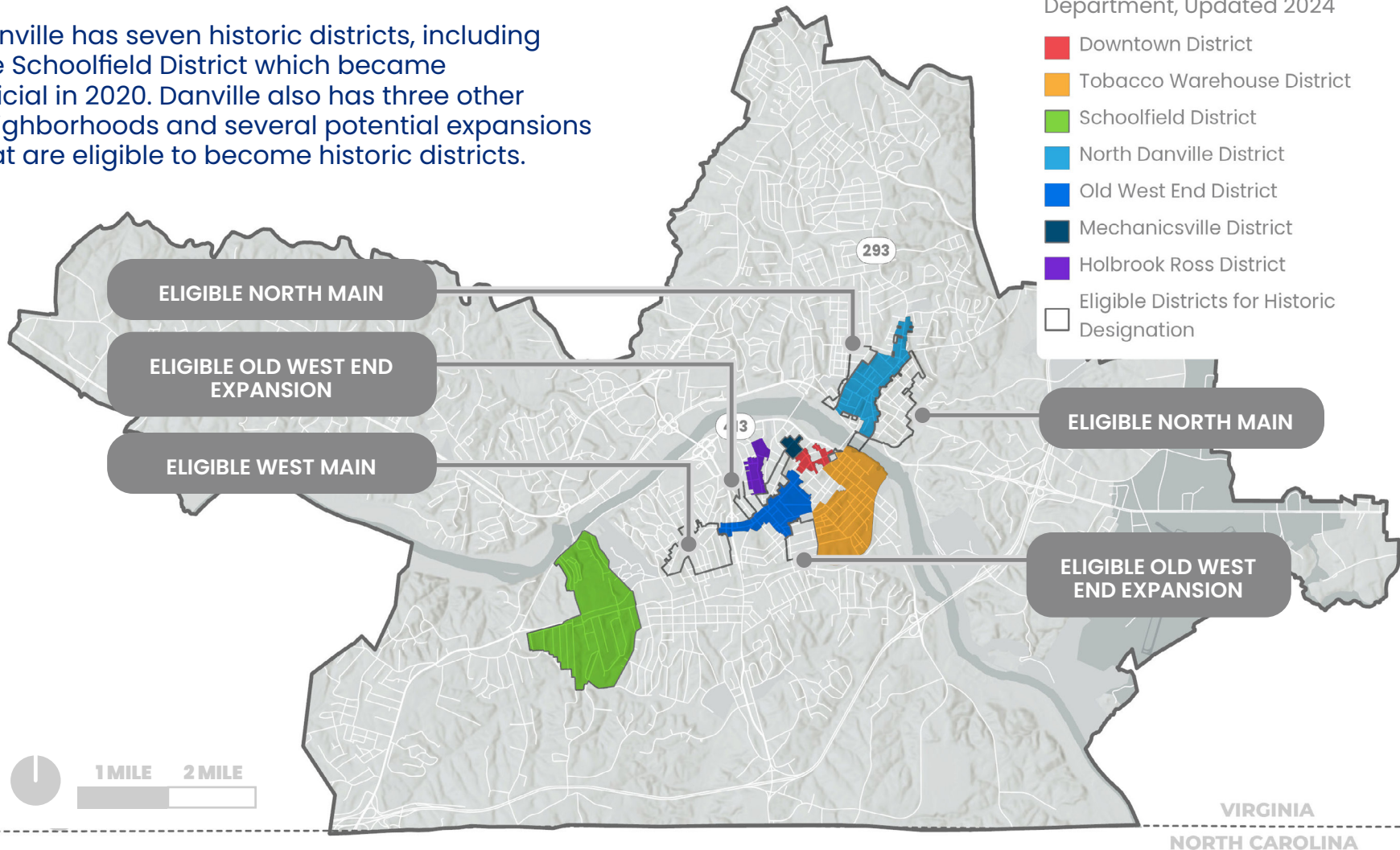
## Danville protects and maintains its historic districts.

Danville has seven historic districts, including the Schoolfield District which became official in 2020. Danville also has three other neighborhoods and several potential expansions that are eligible to become historic districts.

### Historic Districts

**Source:** Danville GIS Department, Updated 2024

- Downtown District
- Tobacco Warehouse District
- Schoolfield District
- North Danville District
- Old West End District
- Mechanicsville District
- Holbrook Ross District
- Eligible Districts for Historic Designation







## Danville and partners are acting to enhance preservation.

### Certified Local Government

Danville is a Certified Local Government, which allows the city to nominate locations to the National Register of Historic Places, receive technical assistance, and participate in state and federal historic preservation funding programs.

### Zoning

Danville created the Historic Preservation Overlay District for the purpose of maintaining, preserving, protecting, and enhancing the architecture, cultural significance, economic vitality, heritage tourism, and visual character of Danville's historic resources. Buildings in these areas are often eligible for a host of funding sources to accomplish this goal, including local, state, and federal incentives.

### Planning

Danville has a Historic Preservation and Arts & Cultural Plan which guide future decision-making.

### Commission of Architectural Review

The Commission of Architectural Review is a seven member commission appointed by City Council to review all new construction, exterior renovations, and signs undertaken in Danville's Old West End Historic District.

### River District Design Commission

The River District Design Commission is a seven member board appointed by the City Council to review all new construction, exterior renovations, and signs undertaken in Danville's River District.

### National Civil Rights Trail

Danville is part of the National Civil Rights Trail, a collection of landmarks across 15 states that tell the story of changemakers in the Civil Rights movement.







## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### **C.1.1 Continued Preservation**

Continue historic structure and neighborhood preservation.

### ACTIONS

1. Maintain the architectural integrity and character of existing historic districts.
2. Develop a guide for owners of historic properties including funding resources, lists of qualified contractors, and best practices.
3. Continue to incentivize the rehabilitation of historic structures.
4. Promote Danville as a heritage tourism destination, a national designation created in partnership with Federal organizations.
5. Explore pursuing historic designation in eligible neighborhoods after receiving adequate interest from neighborhood stakeholders.
  - 5.a. Provide materials explaining the advantages and disadvantages of historic designations when conducting community outreach.







### How to Use Danville's Funding and Incentives

There are many programs available at the local, state, and federal level to assist with historic preservation.

- **Real Estate Tax Abatement Program.** Provides a real estate tax exemption for substantially rehabilitated residential, multi-family, commercial, industrial, or multi-use structures within a historic district.
- **Façade Improvement Grant Program.** A matching grant program managed by the River District Association for rehabilitating facades for commercial buildings in designated historic districts.
- **Zoning Exemptions.** Certain minor projects in the Historic Preservation Overlay Zone are exempted from review. Reach out to the City of Danville Division of Planning to learn more.
- **State Funding.** The Virginia Department of Historic Resources has created a [Financial Incentives Guide](#) of resources available to property owners and developers.
- **Virginia Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program.** Provides up to 25% income tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings that have been determined by the National Park Service to be certified historic structures.
- **Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program.** Provides a 20% income tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings that have been determined by the National Park Service to be certified historic structures.
- **Expertise.** Several organizations can provide technical expertise, advise, or serve as hired consultants to assist with preservation efforts. This would include: the Danville Commission of Architectural Review, Danville River District Design Commission, Danville Historical Society, Virginia Humanities, and National Park Service.







### How to Become a National Heritage Area

National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are places where historic, cultural, and natural resources combine to form cohesive, nationally important landscapes. These are usually community driven initiatives and can blend ecological conservation, recreation, historic programming, and education in one. Another major focus is capacity building and education for future leadership. Unlike national parks, NHAs are large lived-in landscapes. Consequently, NHA entities collaborate with communities to determine how to make heritage relevant to local interests and needs. There are currently 62 NHAs, only two of which are in Virginia.

Danville surrounding areas such as Pittsylvania County, Virginia and Caswell County, North Carolina could benefit from having an NHA around the Dan River. This initiative could be an opportunity to partner with local tribes and recognize native inhabitants while honoring their work by educating a new generation about what it means to be a land steward.

In 2022, **NHAs leveraged \$75 million in cash and in-kind support** to carry out heritage projects and programs, greatly increasing the impact of the \$26.1 million in federal Heritage Partnership Program funding received.

Learn more about NHAs [here](#).





## POLICY

### C.2

# Cultural Celebration

Create paths for all community members to celebrate their unique community identities.

Reaching back to the area's indigenous peoples, Danville's history is both compelling and complex. Danville seeks to be known as a destination for arts and culture. In the creation of this destination, Danville must remember that art is only as strong and true as its curators. Danville recognizes that everyone's history has value, and all forms of art can celebrate culture.

## Desired Outcomes

- Enhanced diversity of cultural art, festivals, and community spaces
- A process for arts and festival curation that prioritizes showcases diverse stories
- Increase in number of public art installations
- Increase in number of neighborhoods in Danville with public art installations
- Increase in number of residents within a 15-minute walk and 10-minute drive of community gathering spaces



**Goal 8. Culture**

Policy C.2 Cultural Celebration





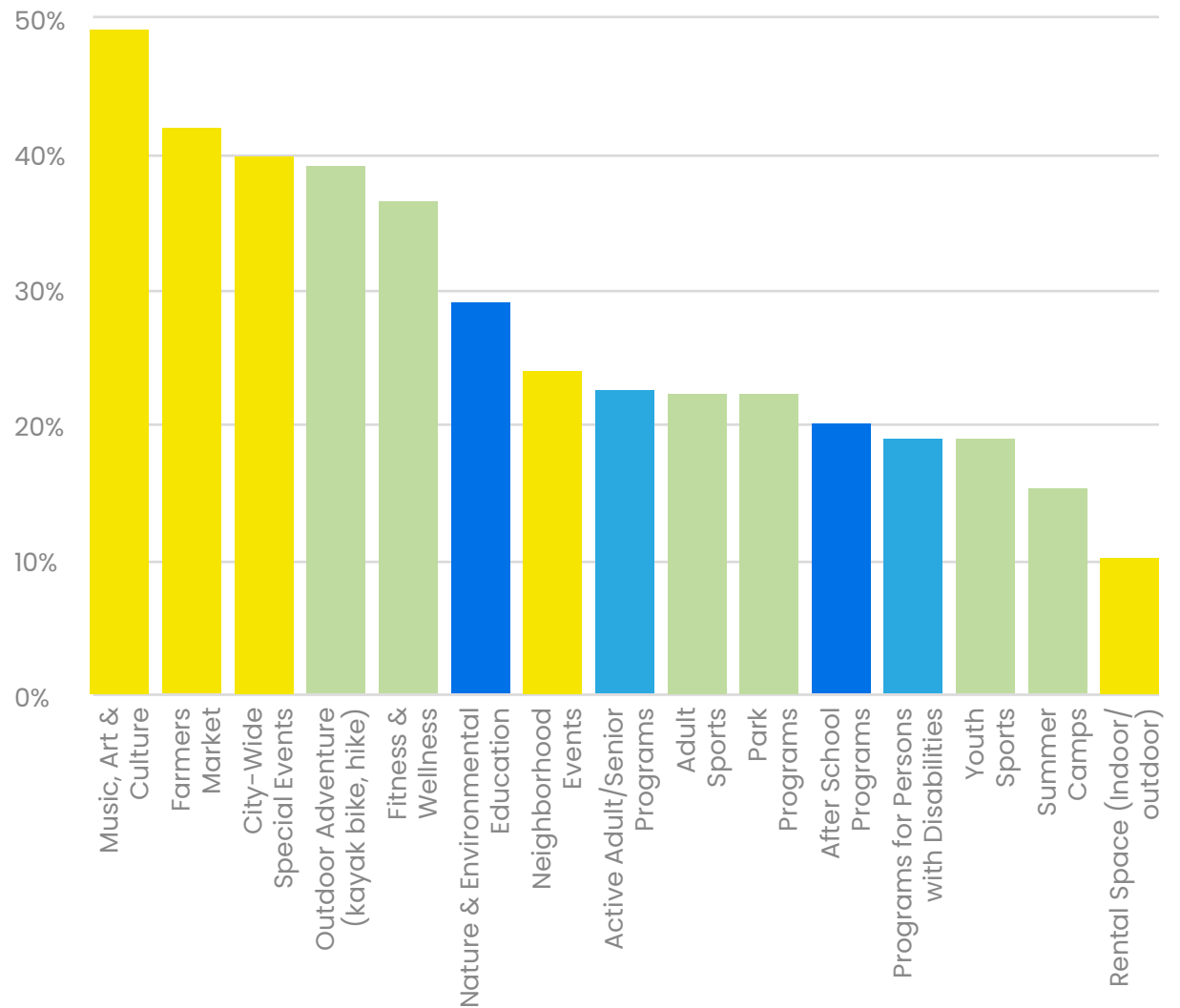
## WHY IT MATTERS

### Community members agree that arts are an area where they want to see investment.

When asked which recreation programs households most needed, music, art, and culture were the top answers. Major community events such as farmers markets were also near the top.

**“Which recreation programs does your household most have a need for? (select up to 5)”**

**Source:** 2023, Community Pulse Check Survey







## WHY IT MATTERS

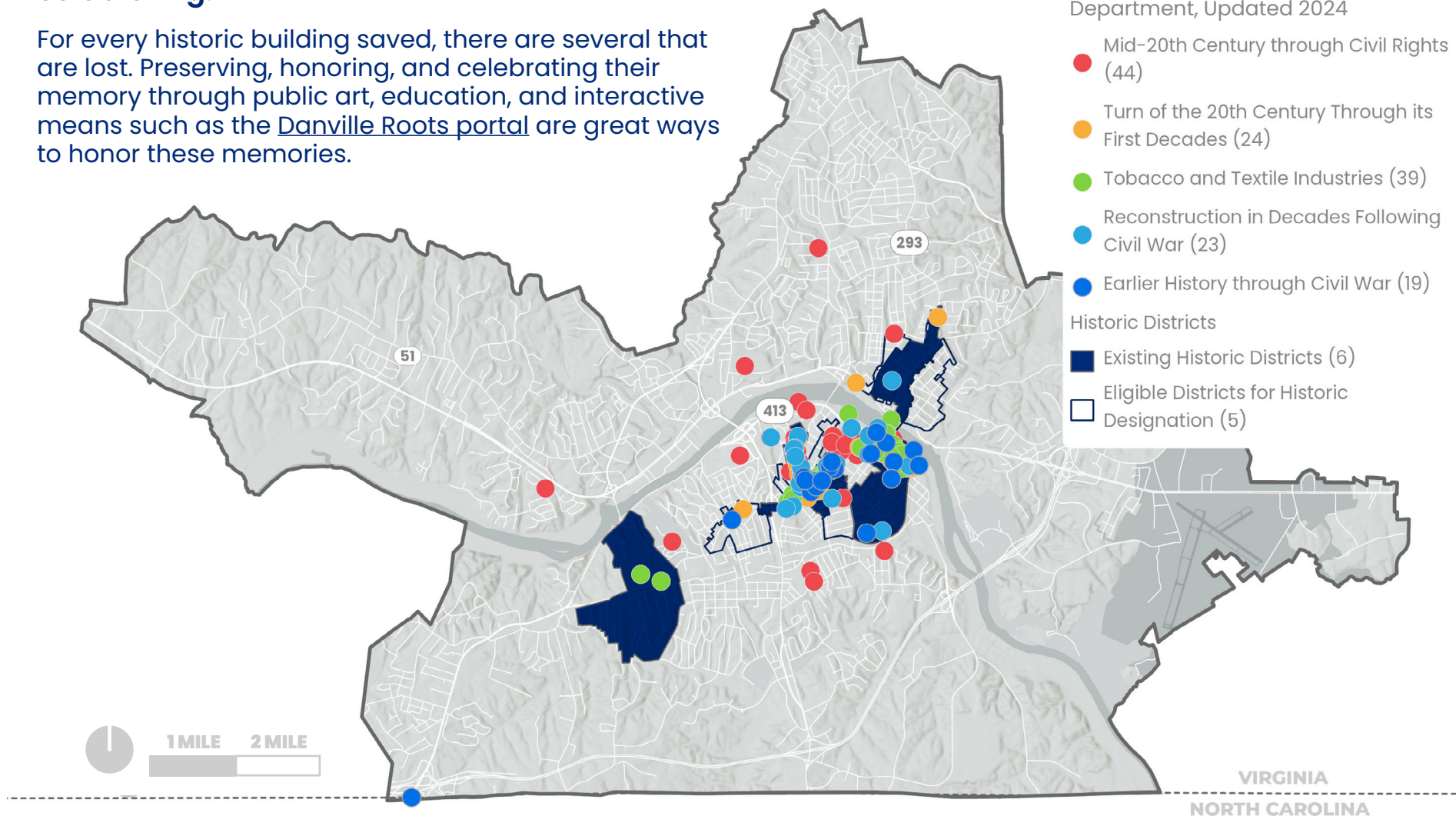
### There are many sites and people worth celebrating.

For every historic building saved, there are several that are lost. Preserving, honoring, and celebrating their memory through public art, education, and interactive means such as the [Danville Roots portal](#) are great ways to honor these memories.

#### Historic Sites

**Source:** Danville GIS Department, Updated 2024

- Mid-20th Century through Civil Rights (44)
  - Turn of the 20th Century Through its First Decades (24)
  - Tobacco and Textile Industries (39)
  - Reconstruction in Decades Following Civil War (23)
  - Earlier History through Civil War (19)
- Historic Districts
- Existing Historic Districts (6)
  - Eligible Districts for Historic Designation (5)



#### Goal 8. Culture

Policy C.2 Cultural Celebration





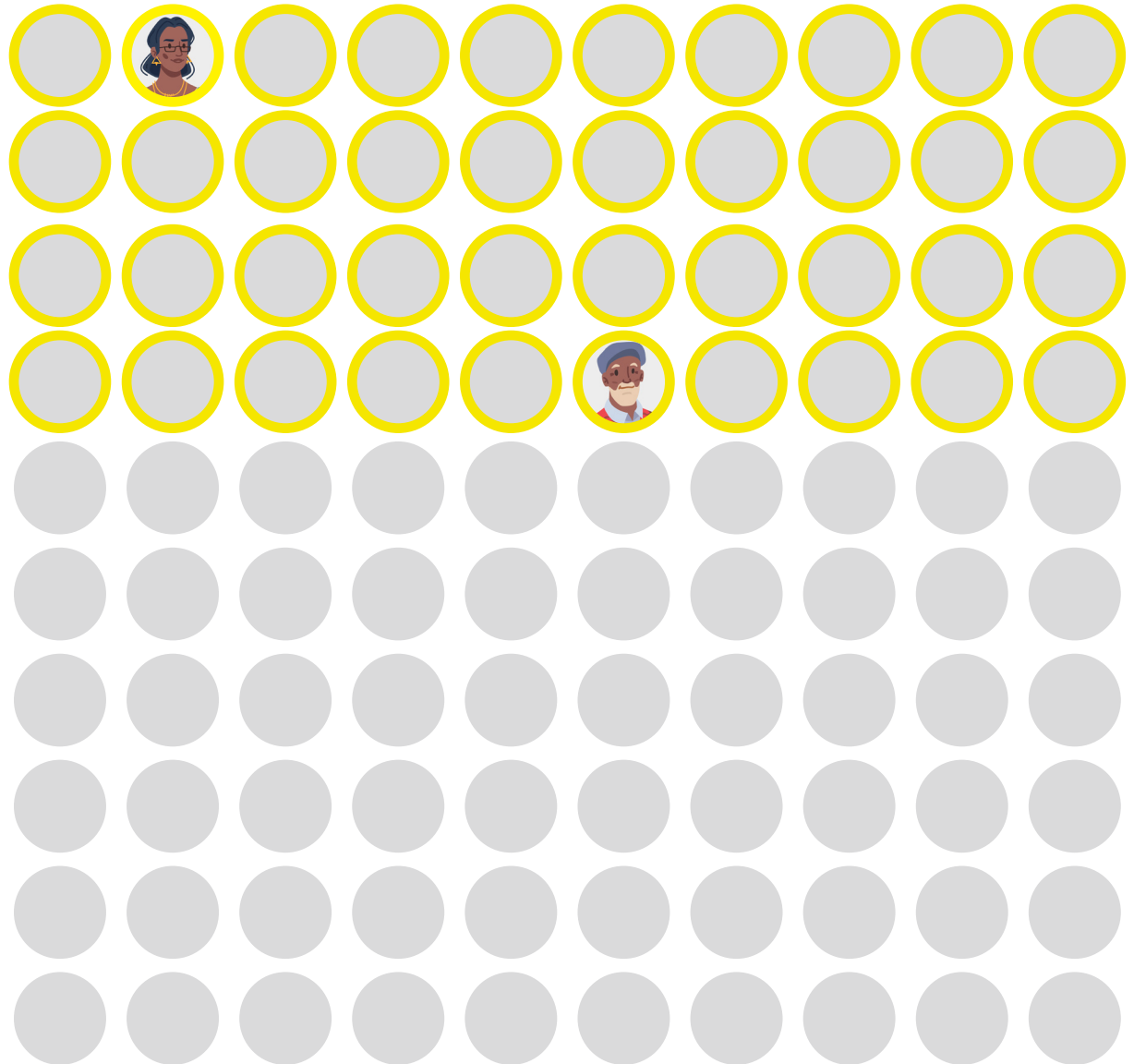
## WHY IT MATTERS

### There is a lack of representation.

Just 2% of the 95,000 sites on the National Register of Historic Places — the list of places declared worthy of preservation by the U.S. federal government — focus on the lives and stories of Black Americans according to the [Virginia African American Cultural Resources Task Force](#). About 40% of sites in Danville are related to the contributions of Black Americans, leaders and innovators.

### Art, placemaking, and restoration is only as authentic, diverse, and reflective as its curators.

To succeed, any approach will need to be inclusive of a wider range of voices, buildings and stories than have been included in a number of Danville's past preservation efforts.







## WHY IT MATTERS

### The arts are a matter of community health.

Among adolescents, participation in arts and cultural activities is shown to reduce loneliness, risk of substance use, and behavior and attention problems, as well as result in fewer reportedly anti-social or criminalized behaviors and improved self-control.



### Local culture is a key reason people choose to live in Danville.

When asked what they like most about living in Danville as part of the 2023 Community Pulse Check Survey, 1 in 5 people said the culture of the city. This means that in addition to factors such as housing, parks, and job opportunities, the arts a major factor drawing people to Danville.



#### Goal 8. Culture

Policy C.2 Cultural Celebration





## Danville and partners are active at work to enhance justice and education.

### State Organizations

There are several state organizations that have partnered with Danville including the [Virginia Department of Historic Resources](#), [Virginia Humanities](#), and [Preservation Virginia](#).

### Signage

The state created educational signage and memorials around sites with significant historic importance. One of these initiatives plaques which recognize sites featured in the [Green Book](#), a 20th-century travel guide for African Americans during the Jim Crow era of segregation.

### Danville Redevelopment and Housing Authority (DRHA)

The DRHA has played a major role in historic preservation and educational campaigns in the residential areas of Danville.

### Danville Historical Society

Since its founding in 1971, the [Historical Society](#) has played an important role as stewards of artifacts and historic research to increase awareness of Danville's history through public outreach, tours and more.

### Danville Museum

The Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting history and art in the Dan River Region. Located in Danville, Virginia, the museum offers art and history exhibits, programs, and events and collaborates with local organizations and educational institutions to provide art and culture for residents and visitors throughout the year.

### Danville Research Center for African American History

Non-profits are working to create a research center for African American History in Danville, in partnership with [Our History Matters](#), to provide opportunities for community members to understand the history of their city and to better document the impacts of African American community members on Danville.

### Danville Roots

Danville created an [interactive mapping portal](#), which provides a virtual tour of many important historic sites and people that impacted the city. There are several other virtual maps that dive deeper into specific areas including

- [Danville Historic Marker Tour](#)
- [Historic Sites of the River District](#)
- [Old West End National Historic District](#)







## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### **C.2.1** **Justice**

Celebrate the rich history of the city while acknowledging past injustices.

### ACTIONS

1. Host historic tours of Danville's core neighborhoods such as Holbrook-Ross, Almagro, and Old West End following elections so key decision makers, elected city officials, and city staff have a similar baseline of where Danville was versus where it could go.
2. Prioritize the funding and installation of arts and cultural projects that focus on stories and ideas which have often been overlooked.







## RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

### RECOMMENDATION

#### **C.2.2 Representation and Inclusion**

Create paths for all community members to celebrate their unique community identities using the arts and programming.

### ACTIONS

1. Ensure the diverse array of neighborhoods and community residents are represented in the curation and development of Danville's public art, events, and programs by establishing a Public Art Commission to support staff and generate community support for public arts in Danville.
2. Solicit local artists to assist neighborhoods in developing local brand identities, signage typologies, and art installations as part of the implementation of the Cultural Arts Plan.
3. Create a publicly accessible database of local artists for use in future city events and initiatives, as well as to promote their services to the broader community.
4. Consider percent-for-art ordinances, where a percentage of capital improvement projects is retained for the commissioning of public artworks.
5. Prioritize requests for funding using the PLAN Danville Scorecard (see Chapter 9. Implementation).

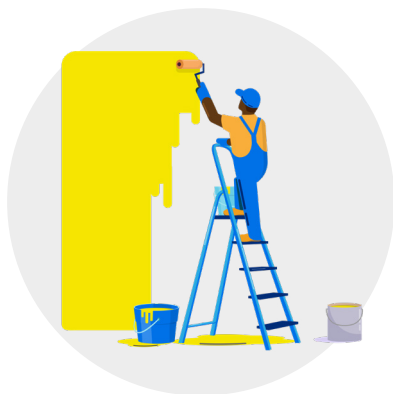




## How to Celebrate Culture

Danville has several tools to celebrate culture through the lens of representation and inclusion.

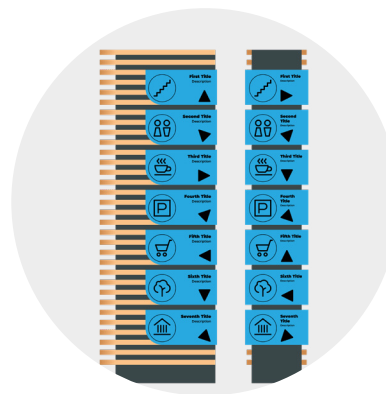
### Public Art



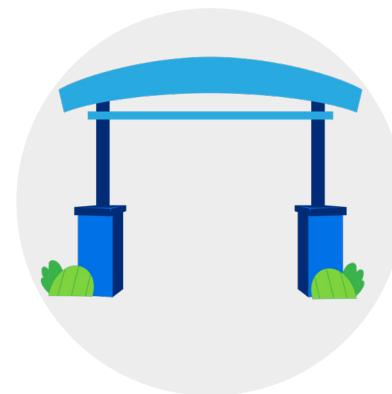
### Digital Content



### Wayfinding & Signage



### Gateways



### Music & Theatre



### Festivals



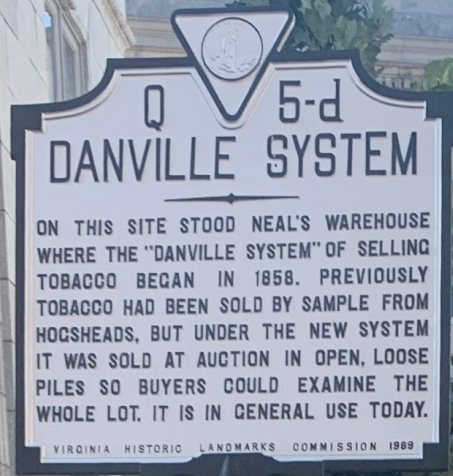
### Community Kitchens



### Landscaping







**“Without question, the trend toward historic justice has had a profound effect on how history is viewed and has influenced expectations regarding how our programs can, and should, bring attention and recognition to all aspects of Virginia history.**

*- Julie V. Langan, Director and State Historic Preservation Officer, Virginia Department of Historic Resources*







## TOOLS



### Learn from Leaders

#### *Black Wall Street*

Black Wall Street in Durham, North Carolina and Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma

Similar to Danville, Durham and Greenwood experienced prosperity in a time when the nation failed to recognize Black people as equals and serves as a model of hope for Black people in America.

In 1921, the Tulsa Race Massacre became one of the worst acts of violence spurred by racism in American history. In less than 48 hours, roughly 40 blocks of businesses and homes were burned down, and over 200 African Americans lost their lives. Durham experienced similar instances of violence and racial prejudice. Against all odds, the community prevailed. During the mid-1920s, these areas were rebuilt and soon thrived again. Highway construction once again impacted the neighborhoods and urban renewal led to the loss of many thriving community staples, but the communities have stood strong. They are now home to several key institutions and are hubs of entrepreneurship.

The principles of many businesses, activists, and developers in Durham and Greenwood could be applied to neighborhoods such as Holbrook-Ross and Almagro. Empowering community-led redevelopment, local businesses, historic preservation and storytelling are key parts of their story. Danville could also take inspiration from community gathering spaces in Greenwood such as the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, a beautiful memorialization of those affected by the 1921 massacre, and apply it to other areas in the city.

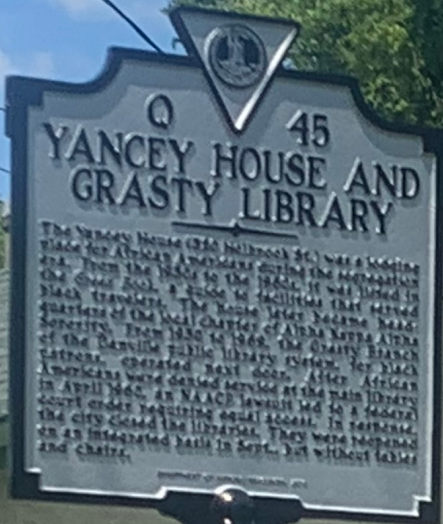
**Image Source:** Doug Hoke, The Oklahoman



### Goal 8. Culture

Policy C.2 Cultural Celebration





“

**Danville is finally really embracing preservation. We have history that has been lost.**

*- Sarah Latham, Danville Historical Society 2022*

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**Goal 8: Culture**

Policy C.2 Cultural Celebration



## POLICY

### C.3

# Placemaking

Create vibrant and inclusive social spaces that reflect the unique identity and character of the community.

Historic designations can be important tools for financing the preservation of historic sites. However, they can also be limiting and exclusionary, preventing the type or scale of development which may be needed to create the change desired by residents and maintain affordability. Danville knows that while areas might not fit the qualifications for formal historic designations or want the limitations of these designations, they are still vital parts of the city's story. Danville will cherish the people who played important roles in shaping this city, region, and even the nation. It will recognize the spaces of both positive and negative moments which have made the city many call home today.

## Desired Outcomes

- Creation of wayfinding system
- Installation of wayfinding and gateways



**Goal 8. Culture**

Policy C.3 Placemaking



## RECOMMENDATION

### C.3.1 Cultural Hubs and Gateways

Build off Downtown as an arts and cultural hub, as acknowledged in the 2024 Danville Arts and Culture Plan, with cultural corridors extending to Danville's various neighborhoods.

## ACTIONS

1. Identify character areas which could benefit from design guideline standards instead of traditional historic guidelines.
2. Formalize the identified potential cultural hubs and corridors.
3. Support paths to community ownership of neighborhoods culture hubs.
4. Determine in future neighborhood plans what neighborhoods "gateways" are and how to enhance them.
5. Use placemaking techniques at Danville's key gateways to establish a sense of place and welcome people to the city.

### Action Steps

- 5.a. At the north, south, eastern, and western gateways use the following interventions:
  - Enhanced signage that is inspired by the City of Danville's new brand: Feels Like Home
  - Wayfinding to nearby destinations including universities, parks, and retail or entertainment centers
  - Consistent wayfinding to Downtown and the River District
  - Lighting at signage and intersection points
  - Landscaping and street trees when there is space in the right of way
  - Public art building off the city brand

### Action Steps

- 4.a. Try to align these gateways with higher traffic intersections, community resource hubs, cultural hubs, retail centers, transit stops or other key landmarks to make it easier to obtain funding by streamlining investments in areas of high activity.



## How to Determine Character Areas

As part of future neighborhood plans, communities should help determine what defines their “character zone”. The current historic districts are good examples of character zones. These areas all have their unique building form and neighborhood character formalized in Danville’s zoning code, which sets the neighborhoods up for success by ensuring there is policy that will make new development match the rest of the area.

See Chapter 2. Land Use to learn more about how to identify neighborhood character.







## How to Create Gateways

There are four key gateways to the city that could use both key redevelopment sites, signage, and landscaping to establish a sense of welcoming to Danville.

### Potential Gateways

**Source:** PLAN Danville,  
Updated 2024

#### NORTHERN GATEWAY

**Location |** Danville Water Tower

**Recommendations |** Use the water tower as a signage opportunity similar to the River District. Use existing strip malls as an additional gateway opportunity with landscaping, screened parking, and facade improvements

#### WESTERN GATEWAY

**Location |** Strip retail with parking in front

**Recommendations |** Use existing strip malls as an additional gateway opportunity with landscaping, screened parking, and facade improvements

#### SECONDARY GATEWAYS

**Location |** Rt 29

**Recommendations |** Use masonry signs and landscaping at major Route entrances to welcome people to Danville.

#### EASTERN GATEWAY

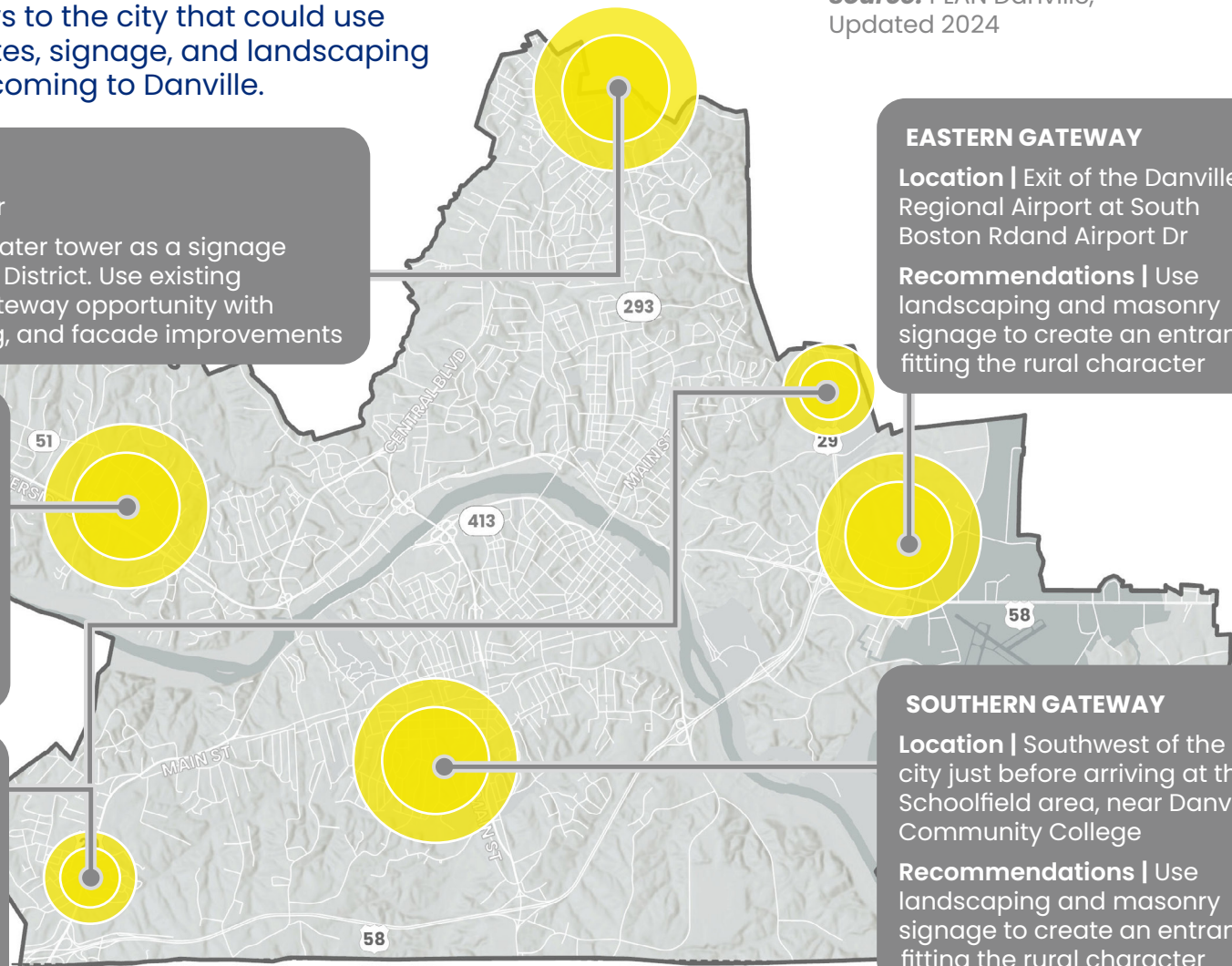
**Location |** Exit of the Danville Regional Airport at South Boston Rd and Airport Dr

**Recommendations |** Use landscaping and masonry signage to create an entrance fitting the rural character

#### SOUTHERN GATEWAY

**Location |** Southwest of the city just before arriving at the Schoolfield area, near Danville Community College

**Recommendations |** Use landscaping and masonry signage to create an entrance fitting the rural character





## How to Create Cultural Hubs and Corridors

Outside of gateways, there are key main streets, mixed-use areas, and public spaces that could use placemaking enhancements to reinforce the sense of local identity and celebrate local creatives.







## TOOLS

### 1 Proximity

Strengthen cultural hubs and corridors in residential neighborhoods and destinations people frequently visit in the city.

### 2 Preservation

Preserve significant architectural features when possible (original materials, window and door openings, cornices and pilasters, masonry and brick details).

### 3 Communications

Access to digital infrastructure (public wi-fi).

### 4 Education

Access to social and educational hubs (early childhood education, arts studios, technology labs, innovation libraries, maker spaces, youth resources and collaborative spaces).

### 5 Mobility

Access to mobility methods (bus stops, transit routes, bike racks, well-shaded sidewalks).

### 6 Placemaking

Productive outdoor space for programming and events including festivals, food fairs and block parties (alleys, temporary installations on vacant lots, plazas).

### 7 Art

Public art installations and branding when applicable on major corridors that focus on empowerment, awareness and reconciliation.

### 8 Materiality

Using a range of materials such as pavers and bricks can differentiate a space as important, provide a tactile experience, and reflect the history of the area.

### 9 Seating & Furnishing

Provide spaces for that encourage informal social gathering, outdoor activity, places for respite, and in more “destination areas”, encourage visitor retention.

### 10 Lighting

Lighting enhances safety and can be used to create a sense of arrival at night time. It can be a source of art or just a source of illumination.

### 11 Planting

Native plantings can assist local ecology, improve air quality, help with stormwater retention, and beautify the area.

### 12 Signage & Wayfinding

Wayfinding and interpretive signage can celebrate the local history of Danville’s distinct neighborhoods, raise awareness of local events, and improve connectivity.

### 13 Beautification

Fund for the beautification of existing property, such as restoration of architectural features, updated roofing, and general maintenance are key to integrating residents and their homes with their surrounding resources.



## Goal 8. Culture

### Policy C.3 Placemaking