

Urban Design and Historic Preservation

Introduction

Settled in 1739 and founded in 1762, Hagerstown's history spans more than 250 years. The city's changing identity, from crossroads village, to transportation and industrial hub, to regional center, has left its marks on the city's urban form. This chapter establishes Hagerstown's urban design and historic preservation policies.

Goals

1. Use urban design to link Hagerstown's existing neighborhoods with new development and redevelopment.
2. Strengthen the role of historic resources in the city by encouraging rehabilitation and reuse of historic residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed use buildings.
3. Use historic resources as tools for increasing economic development.

Issues Addressed by this Element

1. New development often lacks continuity with existing development in its streetscapes, signage, and other design elements.
2. Many historic buildings are not being utilized to their fullest extent.
3. The historic district review process, while progress has been made, is perceived by some as to be more difficult than in actuality.

Urban Design

The diversity of the city's neighborhoods, its mixed-use downtown, and its stock of historic buildings create a distinct aesthetic environment in Hagerstown. As described in the Downtown Element of this plan, the City has implemented extensive urban design improvements in downtown, through the installation of brick sidewalks, distinctive street lighting, signage, and other features. The intent of these improvements—which are largely centered around Public Square—is to create a uniform and attractive image of downtown to help to attract new residents and increased economic activity. The Downtown Element of this plan builds on efforts by calling for traffic calming, enhanced gateway features, pedestrian enhancements, and improved parking facilities.

Much of downtown Hagerstown and surrounding neighborhoods dates from the industrial boom era (1880-1930). The residential buildings from this period tend to be narrower, and have smaller lot sizes and setbacks from the street. In years past it was nearly impossible for new development or infill development to match the design elements of its neighbors without variances. This issue was remedied in the 2012 Land Management Code text amendments – the changes included revisions to the minimum lot size and setback requirements in the Residential zoning districts to reflect existing neighborhood design and make it easier to do infill redevelopment.



Newer houses designed to be oriented to Fridinger Ave (Left) with rear garages oriented toward the alley (Right)
These are prime examples of a more traditional neighborhood design

Successful urban design enhancements beyond the downtown will help to promote citywide renewal. The challenge is to upgrade urban design features, such as streetscapes and signage, while respecting the unique aesthetic character of the city's neighborhoods. Within these neighborhoods, houses tend to be similar in age and style. However, the transition between neighborhoods is not always smooth. This is especially true where relatively new (mid- to late-20th Century) development has occurred. In many cases, architectural styles and elements (such as roof gables), building setbacks, and other design elements of recent development do not match or complement existing building styles. In some cases, infill development—individual buildings constructed on vacant lots in otherwise developed neighborhoods—use building materials and architectural styles that are incongruent with neighboring buildings.

Understanding the design relationship between old and new areas of the city will be especially important. The 2008 Comprehensive Plan established the Mixed Use (MXD) land use category, which encourages traditional neighborhood design through a mix of non-residential uses on the ground floor with residential uses above. The Mixed Use category, which includes the Neighborhood-Mixed Use (N-MU) zoning district, is generally intended for new construction as well as for neighborhoods outside of downtown with many buildings constructed for ground-floor commercial and upper-floor residential. For larger, older, underutilized non-residential structures, the Conversion Overlay District can allow for adaptive reuse of buildings with a mix of commercial and light industrial uses with the possibility of incorporating residential uses. For smaller, mixed-use, non-conforming structures found throughout the city's established neighborhoods, the Local Conversion Zoning Overlay District can allow for redevelopment for

smaller, low-impact commercial activities on the ground floor while also allowing for the possibility of residential units on upper floors. Both the Conversion and Local Conversion Overlays are inspired by the purposes of traditional neighborhood design to allow mixing of neighborhood-serving commercial activity with residential dwellings. As of 2015, four Conversion Districts and three Local Conversion Districts are in existence.

The design and placement of signage graphics on buildings and along the streetscape contributes to the character of the community and influences the public's perception of a community. Standardized design regulations for the types, sizes, lighting, and placement of commercial identification signage brings order to commercial and industrial districts, and reduces clutter and distracting elements along the streetscape. Both on-premise and off-premise signage graphics should be addressed periodically for effectiveness in achieving goals of the community.

Much of the new development or redevelopment in Business-Employment (BE) and Mixed-Use (MXD) areas will be adjacent to existing residential development, elevating the importance of urban design considerations. New development does not have to mimic existing urban form. However, the design characteristics of new development should blend with the aesthetic environment of established neighborhoods to make both new and old areas more visually appealing – this was made possible through text changes to the zoning requirements for residential districts that allowed for lesser, more street-oriented front setbacks and smaller lot sizes that are reflected in many of Hagerstown's neighborhoods. Similar urban design compatibility requirements for BE and MXD areas also ease the transition between existing and new development.

Historic Preservation

Hagerstown is one of Western Maryland's oldest and most diverse cities. Founded in 1762 by Jonathan Hager, Hagerstown existed first as a milling, trading, and governmental center for the surrounding agricultural community. During the Civil War, Union and Confederate troops occupied Hagerstown repeatedly as they traveled through the region en route to Pennsylvania and Virginia. Extensive rail development in the late nineteenth century accelerated the Industrial Revolution in Hagerstown and the city boomed with prosperity.



The "Hager House", located in City Park.
This is the original residence of Jonathan Hager.

The city has retained many of the buildings and much of the urban form built during the Industrial Revolution period (1880 to 1930), and remains a window to turn-of-the-twentieth-century America. At the core of the city is a compact business and government center of three- to eight-story buildings from the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Surrounding the downtown are the urban rowhouse and genteel mansion house

neighborhoods developed for Hagerstown's boom era workers, industrial magnates, and business managers. Scattered throughout are the two-story, pre-Civil War era houses of the city's early German settlers. Hagerstown's rail heritage is evident in the still active rail lines which nearly encircle the downtown.

In recognition of this important urban architectural heritage, six National Register historic districts have been designated in Hagerstown (see Map 8-1): the Downtown, South Prospect Street, Potomac-Broadway, Oak Hill, City Park (residential area), and the Hagerstown District (approximately the 1870s boundaries of the city with some additions). Listing on the National Register is a nationally recognized honor making property owners within the district eligible for historic preservation state and federal tax credits and loans. Several of Hagerstown's historic buildings and neighborhoods are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and hundreds of properties in Hagerstown are contributing resources in historic districts listed on the National Register. National Register listing alone does not bring review of renovation or demolition plans unless state or federal funds or permits are involved with the project.

In addition to the National Register listings, the City has designated 7 city landmarks, identified 19 potential city landmarks, and designated four of the National Register districts as local historic districts (see Figure 8-1 and Maps 8-1 and 8-2). The City's Historic District Commission must review and approve any proposed demolitions or changes to the exterior of the City-designated landmarks and buildings within the City-designated historic districts. Any plans to demolish the potential city landmarks (see Figure 8-1 for a listing) must be reviewed by the Historic District Commission to determine historic or architectural significance and to make a recommendation to the Planning Commission as to whether the City should pursue the rezoning process to add a landmark overlay on the property. While this assessment and potential rezoning process is underway, any demolition permit is stayed until the completion of that process.

City staff and the Hagerstown Historic District Commission regularly review the local design guidelines and the City Code to determine suitability of the processes that guide the local design review process for locally designated landmarks and for buildings in the locally designated historic districts. As a result of this ongoing self-assessment process, over 95% of design review applications in recent years for landmarks and historic district properties are approved and the vast majority at the first meeting.

The City of Hagerstown has been recognized by the National Park Service and the Maryland Historical Trust for its special commitment to historic preservation with designation as a Certified Local Government (CLG). Eligibility for this status includes establishment of a qualified historic district commission, adoption of a local historic district review ordinance that is consistent with State law, maintenance of a system for survey and inventory of historic resources, facilitation of public participation in local preservation, and adoption of local design review guidelines that are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. CLG status makes the City eligible for State training grants for the HDC and staff and to compete for State non-capital project grants.

Figure 8-1: Historic Sites

Existing National Register Historic Sites	
H1. 16-22 East Lee Street	H7. Maryland Theatre
H2. Armory	H8. Old Washington County Library
H3. Colonial Theatre	H9. Price-Miller House
H4. Elliot Bester House	H10. Washington County Courthouse
H5. Hagerstown Charity School	H11. Western Maryland Railway Station
H6. Jonathan Hager House	H12. Western Maryland Railway Steam Locomotive #202
Existing City Landmarks	
L1. Graystone Manor	L5. Verdant Mead
L2. Leonard Middlekauf House	L6. Ridenour’s Folly
L3. Middlekauf House	L7. Alms House
L4. F. Stevens House	
Potential City Landmarks	
P1. 28-30 East Franklin Street	P11. Miller’s House
P2. 65-7 East Washington Street	P12. Moller Apartments
P3. 277 South Potomac Street	P13. Old Post Office
P4. 570 Jefferson Boulevard	P14. Rose Hill Cemetery Buildings
P5. 1135 Potomac Avenue	P15. Surrey School
P6. 1201 Hamilton Boulevard	P16. Trovinger House
P7. Antietam Fire Company	P17. The Valencia Building
P8. Cynosure	P18. Washington County Museum of Fine Arts
P9. Hager’s Mill	P19. Zeller Apartments
P10. Mansion House	P20. Robert W. Johnson Community Center

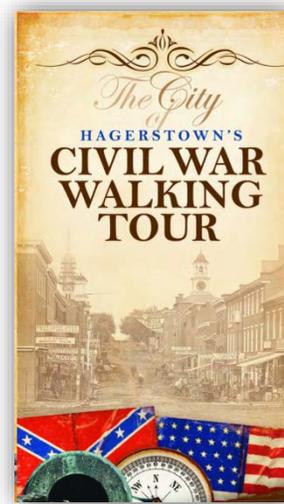
The city’s stock of industrial revolution-era buildings are an integral part of Hagerstown’s identity and provide an important link to the city’s rich past. However, many of these large commercial and industrial buildings, including some in the city’s historic districts, are wholly or largely vacant, which hinders redevelopment efforts. Many of these buildings have existing (but unused) wastewater allocations, a fact that is not widely known but that should encourage re-use of these structures, especially given the wastewater constraints described in the Water Resources element.

The City’s Conversion District and Local Conversion District overlay zones encourage adaptive re-use (changing the primary use of a structure while retaining its architectural character) of

vacant buildings. Obtaining Conversion District or Local Conversion District status requires a property owner to preserve the building and submit a site plan and a concept plan showing the layout, parking allocation, open space, and architectural theme of the building. Hagerstown has also received an exemption to the County excise tax for properties in the Enterprise Zone and in the CC-MU (City-Center Mixed Use) zoning district.

The City of Hagerstown has a rich package of incentive programs to facilitate investment in downtown properties - the sign and façade grant program for exterior improvements to commercial and mixed use buildings, the Partner in Economic Progress (PEP) incentive program, and First-Third program are available for downtown property and business owners (the First-Third program is available city-wide). These programs are described further in the Economic Development Element of this Plan. The City works with property owners and developers to identify County, state, and federal tax incentives for the rehabilitation of historic structures.

Hagerstown and the surrounding region are rich in Civil War and other tourist resources (see the Economic Development Element). Since 2010, promotional videos, books, and information have been created and distributed to promote Hagerstown's history. These efforts include the publishing of an interactive online walking tour map of historic 1861 Hagerstown directing people to sites containing an interpretive plaque describing the historical significance of that place. These efforts were done to capture a share of the region's tourist spending from its many attractions. Continued and increased promotion about the city's historic resources, and clearer signage and promotional material would also help to increase tourism and tourist spending in the city.



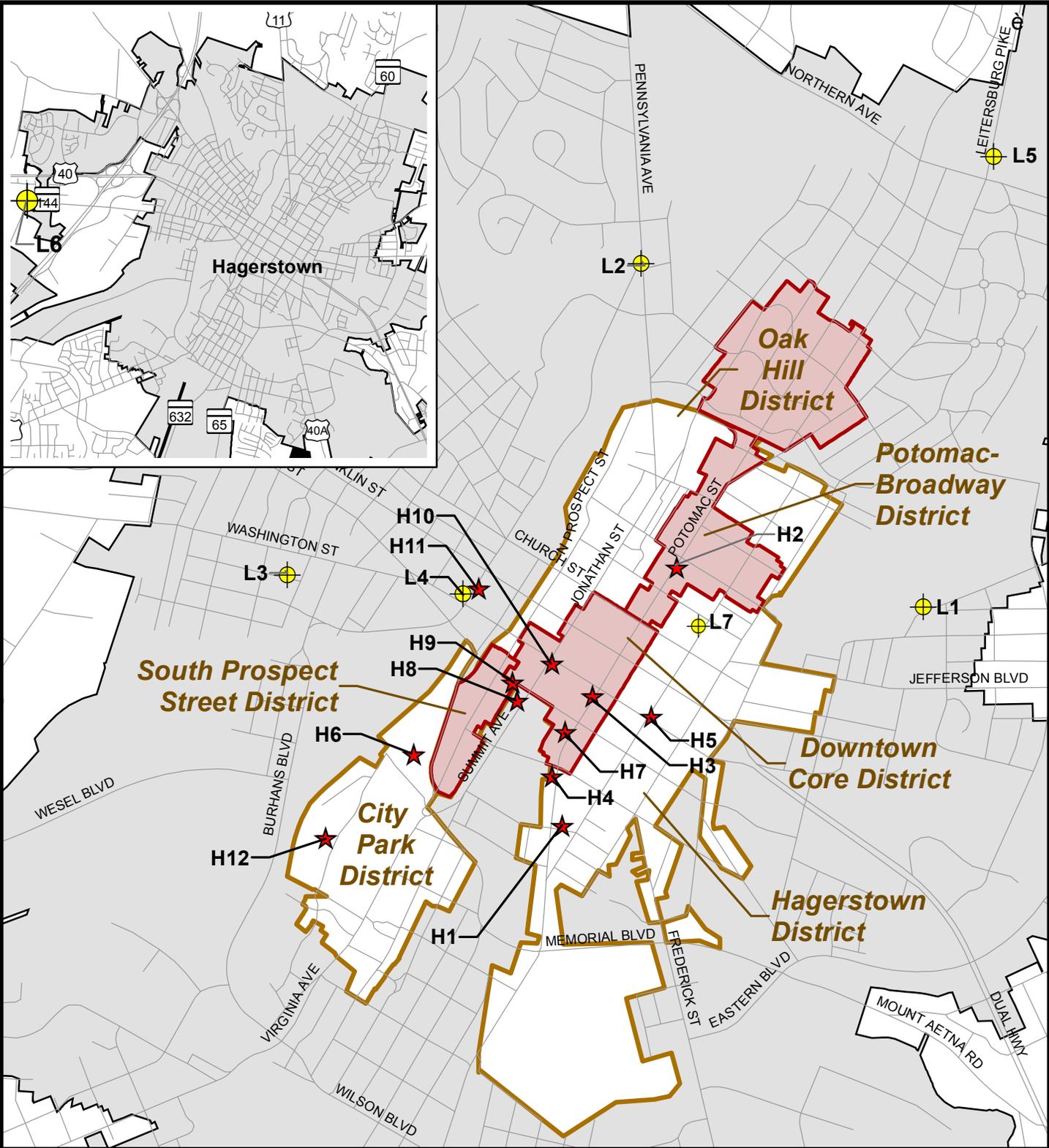
As described in the Downtown Element, Hagerstown is part of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area. The city has endorsed the Management Plan for this area which was certified by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. The Heritage Areas program encourages communities to identify, protect, and promote their unique heritage and to capitalize on that heritage through economic development tourism initiatives. State funds and assistance will be made available for interpretive and infrastructure improvements in State-approved heritage areas. As part of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, a Target Investment Zone (TIZ) has been designated in downtown Hagerstown (see Figure 6-2), and the Downtown Element lists specific revitalization strategies for the TIZ. The historic districts provide another element to the integrity of the Heritage Area by protecting the value of public and private investment.

Urban Design and Historic Preservation Policies

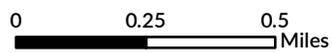
- Policy 8-1.** Land development regulations will ensure that the layout, architecture, and other physical design elements of new development blends, meshes, and transitions into nearby existing development and historic resources.
- Policy 8-2.** Hagerstown will encourage rehabilitation and reuse of its historic residential, commercial, and industrial buildings.
- Policy 8-3.** Hagerstown will enhance and promote its historic resources to help capture a greater share of the region’s tourist spending.

Urban Design and Historic Preservation Implementation Actions

- Action 8-1.** Consider extending streetscape improvements (similar to those present in the central part of the downtown) throughout the whole downtown and into the city’s neighborhoods, to establish a cohesive pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.
- Action 8-2.** Consider developing a “pattern book” for the downtown and historic districts, suggesting typical architectural and urban design elements for new development and redevelopment.
- Action 8-3.** Reevaluate off-premise signage regulations.
- Action 8-4.** Consider expanding the City’s National Register Historic Districts to make state and federal funds available to more residential neighborhoods, and commercial and industrial areas.
- Action 8-5.** Actively promote underutilized historic properties that already have wastewater allocations.
- Action 8-6.** Continue developing marketing programs to tie nearby Civil War resources (including Antietam National Battlefield) to the city’s Civil War and other historic resources.
- Action 8-7.** Promote benefits of historic district designation to existing property owners and to areas currently undesignated.
- Action 8-8.** Work with the Main Street program work groups on initiatives to enhance the urban design and image of the downtown



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Map 8-1: Historic Resources



(See Table 8-1 for Key listing)

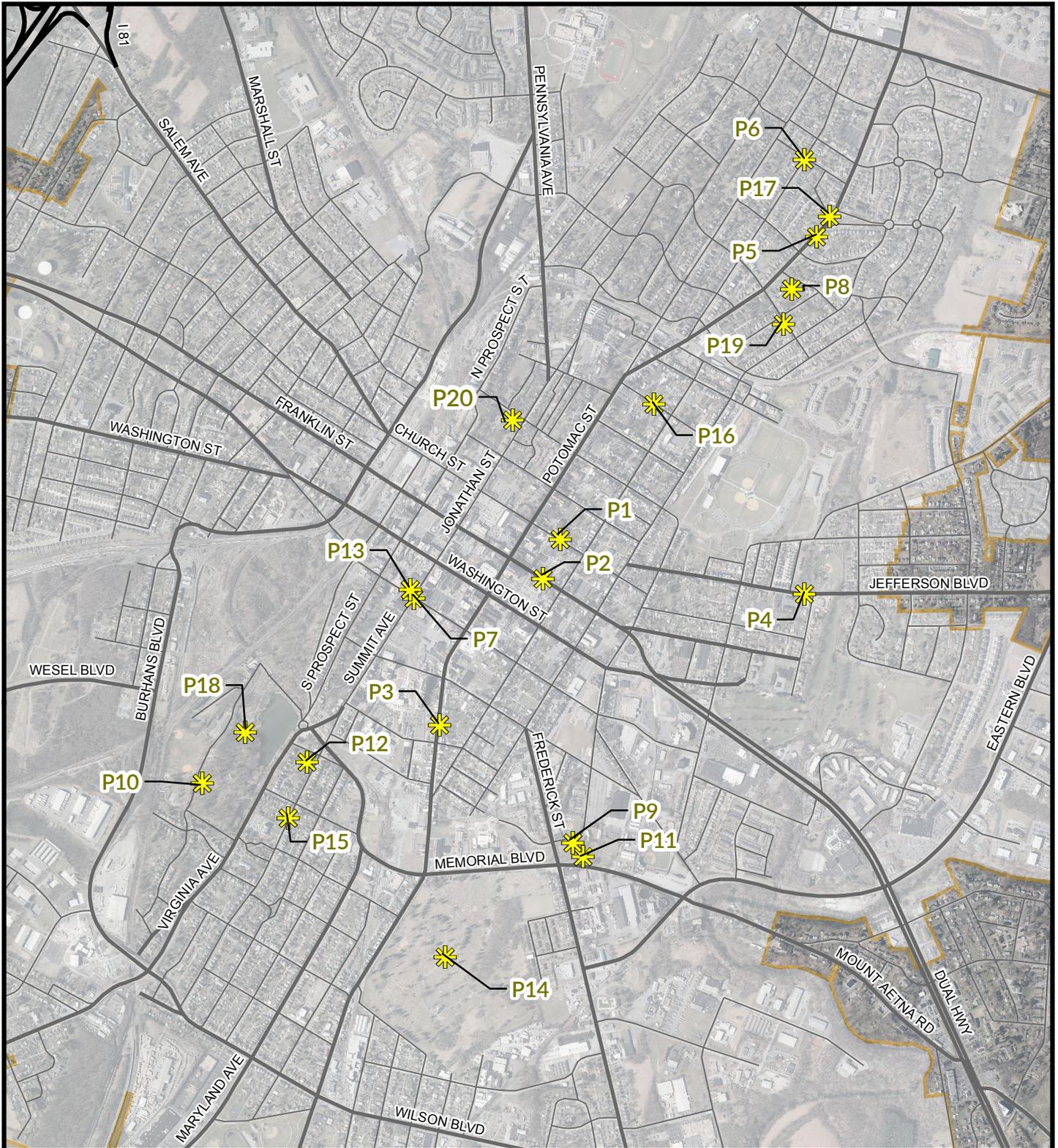
- Major Road
- National Register of Historic Places
- City Landmark
- National Register & City Historic Districts
- National Register Historic Districts Only
- Corporate Boundary

Map Projection: NAD83 State Plan Maryland FIPS (feet)

Data Sources:
 City of Hagerstown, 2016

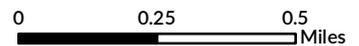
Prepared By: Hagerstown Planning & Code Admin Dept, 01/30/17





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Map 8-2: Potential City Landmarks



- Interstates
 - Major Thoroughfares
 - Other Roads
 - Corporate Boundary
 - Potential City Landmarks
- See Figure 8-1 for key listing

Map Projection: NAD83 State Plan Maryland FIPS (feet)

Data Sources:
City of Hagerstown, 2016; State of Maryland Imagery, 2014

Prepared By: Hagerstown Planning & Code Admin Dept, 01/30/17

