



City of Winston-Salem City Council Council Agenda Item Summary

Title	Ordinance Designating Certain Property as a Local Historic Landmark – Chatham Block
City Council Committee	General Government Committee
Meeting Date	August 10, 2026
Staff Lead (Presenter)	Michelle M. McCullough, Historic Resources Officer
Department Head	Chris Murphy, Director of Planning and Development Services
City Manager/ACM	Aaron King, ACM

Agenda Item Summary

Recommended Council Action Ordinance Approval
Suggested Action/ Motion Recommendation for Approval of City Council
Options

Strategic Focus Area Livable Community
Strategic Plan Objective LC2: Maintaining the Appearance of Neighborhoods
Anticipated Fiscal Impact Fiscal Impact Anticipated: See Analysis in Summary

Summary of Information

The attached ordinance designates the Chatham Block, including the complete exterior and interior of the building and the associated 0.32-acre parcel identified as Tax Block: 0027, BU: 1, Tax Lot: 012 (PIN 6835-17-4071), as a local historic landmark. WRCP Properties, LLC submitted the designation application. The qualifying historic elements are identified in the Local Historic Landmark Designation Application and Report, with the property's character-defining features listed on pages 41–42.

Local historic landmark designation is authorized by the North Carolina law and administered by the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission. Landmark designation recognizes properties that are significant to the heritage and character of the community and that retain sufficient historic integrity. There are currently 145 local historic landmarks in Forsyth County.

The property has a tax value of \$4,045,200. The Forsyth County Tax Office will determine the amount of the property tax deferral based on the portion of the property included in the designation.

The Historic Resources Commission held a public hearing on the application and designation report on May 6, 2026, and unanimously recommended approval.

Analysis of Fiscal Impact

The effects of landmark designation are as follows: 1) a property owner who wishes to make changes to a designated landmark must first have the scope of work reviewed

and approved by the Historic Resources Commission and 2) the owner of a designated landmark may apply for an annual property tax deferral of up to 50% for as long as the property's important historical features are retained.

Assuming a 50% tax deferral (the maximum amount allowable), the reduction in City property tax revenues would be \$11,913 annually (and an additional reduction of \$11,205 in County property tax revenues). Over the next ten years, total city and county property taxes reductions are estimated at \$231,180.

Statement of Significance

The Chatham Block, located at 301, 305 and 311 W Fourth Street in downtown Winston-Salem, NC, is a two-story masonry building that spans nearly the entire width of the north side of Fourth Street between Cherry and Marshall Streets. The building was designed by prominent Winston-Salem architect, Harold Macklin, for textile manufacturing mogul and politician, R. Thurmond Chatham, and his wife, Lucy Hanes Chatham. Macklin's design for the Chatham Block blended Stripped Classicism and Art Deco styles in what was one of his last works before the significant impacts of the Great Depression hit the architecture profession. The Chatham Block served as the location of several major retail and department stores from its opening in 1931 through the early 1980s. In addition to the local men's clothier, Frank A. Stith Company, national franchise Montaldo's, founded by female entrepreneur Lillian Montaldo, opened its second location nationally in Winston-Salem. Upon the opening of the Chatham Block, Montaldo's moved its operations from its original location just a block to the east. The high-end women's clothing store expanded into the former spaces of Ideal Dry Goods Company and W. T. Vogler and Sons jewelry store, occupying the majority of the building. Both Frank A. Stith's and Montaldo's remained in operation at their Fourth Street location until the early 1980s. Chatham Block is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, and Criterion A in the area of Commerce. The building has a period of significance, beginning in 1931 when the construction was completed and the first retailer opened, through 1970, since it remained a significant commercial building in Winston-Salem through the late twentieth century. The Chatham Block retains a high degree of architectural integrity representative of its Stripped Classical and Art Deco influenced design and continues to convey its historic commercial character.

Significance Area: History/Commerce

The Chatham Block is of special local significance for its association with commercial history in Winston-Salem. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Winston-Salem's tobacco and textile industries allowed the city to grow to the largest and wealthiest city in North Carolina during the 1920s. This wealth prompted growth and expansion of the city physically, and also allowed retail industries like clothing, jewelry, furniture, and department stores to flourish. In 1929, Thurmond Chatham and Lucy Hanes Chatham, who were both members of prominent textile-manufacturing families, purchased the parcel at the northwest corner of Fourth and Cherry Streets from the Vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. As soon as the congregation's new

church was ready for occupation, the Chatham's began preparations for the construction of a state-of-the-art commercial building with the intent to attract high-end department stores to the burgeoning Fourth Street. The Chatham Block, as it became known, served as the location of prominent local and nationally renowned retail stores beginning with the building's completion in 1931 through the early 1980s. Among the longest running retailers in the building were men's clothier Frank A. Stith and Co., as well as nationally prominent, high-end women's fashion retailer Montaldo's. Both retailers opened stores in the commercial building in the early 1930s and operated there until the early 1980s.

Frank A. Stith first gained experience in the men's fashion industry working as a salesman for N.L. Cranford and Company. In 1911, Stith joined forces with J. H. Smitherman and established Frank A. Stith Company. The company moved locations several times with stores on the 400 block of North Trade Street and West Fourth Street prior to opening their store in the eastern end of the Chatham Block, 301-303 W Fourth Street. Their store, featured prominently at the corner of Fourth and Cherry Streets, specialized in men's clothing and provided tailoring services on the second floor. During his career, Stith saw changes to the retail industry, such as the introduction of improved display cases and shelving equipment. He acknowledged the importance of the appearance of the store and its merchandise and was reported to have been among the "first in the city to install individual hanging suitcases." In 1955, Stith modernized the retail space at 301 W 4th, a sign of the success of the business. While many of Stith's counterparts commissioned renovations that leaned toward expressions of the Modern movement, Stith instead embraced the classical components of the building and even added a bay window reminiscent of an earlier architectural period. The North Carolina Merchants Association awarded Stith for his dedication and service to the retail industry. Following Stith's death, his son Frank A. Sith, Jr., took over operations of the company. The legacy of adaptation to industry and market changes allowed the store to remain in business in its location in the Chatham Building until 1983.

In 1933, Montaldo's, a high-end women's fashion retailer, relocated their Winston-Salem store into the western end of the Chatham Building, at 311 W Fourth Street. Female entrepreneur, Lillian Montaldo, moved to New York City in the early 1920s with the dream of starting a retail fashion store for women. In New York City, Montaldo established a resident buyer's office, which was among the first of its kind for the industry. From her buyer's office, she was able to follow top designers and the latest trends in the fashion industry. According to family recollections, Lillian Montaldo overheard Mrs. R. J. Reynolds ordering a dress in the lobby of her New York City hotel; Katharine Reynolds has been noted for using fashion as a status symbol. Reynolds, and her fellow Winston-Salem socialites, followed the latest designers, as well as the relationship between fashion and politics. Montaldo went on to learn that "a good many of the fashion-conscious women making the pilgrimage to New York were from Winston-Salem." Female socialites and their interest in fashion, coupled with the wealth and success of 1920s Winston-Salem, attracted Montaldo to the city. In 1924, she opened her first retail store in the Gilmer Building (also designed by Harold Macklin), just a block away from the future Chatham Building. Montaldo put her sister, Lenora

Montaldo, in charge of the store, where she continued to serve as the manager until 1943 when she was succeeded by another female manager.

The textile industry in Winston-Salem made the city an ideal complement to her New York office. The strategic choice to position her company in the textile-rich town gave her easy access to material for the designs she procured from her buyer's office. It is likely that the development of the Chatham Building by textile tycoons Thurmond Chatham and Lucy Hanes also factored into Montaldo's move to 311 W Fourth Street. By the early 1930s, the store's success prompted its move to the Chatham Building, where it continued to expand into adjacent storefronts. Montaldo's remained prosperous during the Great Depression, credited to the fact that more women entered the work force in order to supplement income and had little time for sewing or dress-fitting appointments. It was also said that the Great Depression did not greatly impact Montaldo's business, as "People that had money just came on in and spent it." As the economic and retail climate evolved, Montaldo also adapted her business model to include "more inexpensive lines with better taste," in order to expand her customer base.

Lillian Montaldo's vision was to provide exceptional quality, design, and customer service. According to Montaldo's obituary, she "believed enthusiastically in women in business, and she staffed her organization with them almost entirely—decades before the phrase 'consciousness raising' would be heard." The Winston-Salem store was managed by a female for its entire 60 year-history. She was also among the first to accept and adapt her stores to the "ready-to wear" industry, and was "quick to envision that soon women, even those of wealth and fashion, would buy their clothes ready-made at stores instead of having them sewn from patterns by their dressmakers." Throughout her nearly 60 years managing Montaldo's, she worked closely with American fashion designers to provide insight on customer preferences. In 1967, Lillian Montaldo was recognized for her accomplishments and contributions to the American fashion industry as the Woman of the Year. The Montaldo's in Chatham Block remained in continuous operation until the early 1980s.

Special Significance Area: Architecture

The Chatham Block, constructed ca. 1931, is of special local significant in the area of Architecture as an excellent and well-preserved example of the influence of Stripped Classicism and Art Deco styles on commercial architecture during the early 1930s. The building is also locally significant for its association with Winston-Salem architect, Harold Macklin. In addition to capturing the defining characteristics of Stripped Classicism expertly combined with Art Deco details, the Chatham Block represents one of Macklin's last major works prior to the economic downturn of the Great Depression, which greatly impacted the architecture profession. Like most commercial architecture, the style, design, and level of ornament was influenced by contemporary trends of the period. The Chatham Block, along with its commercial design elements such as a flat roof, large storefront windows for displaying goods, and projecting awnings or canopies over entries, features a blend of two popular architectural styles of the 1930s: Stripped Classicism and Art Deco. Stripped Classicism, which started to become popular in the

early 1930s, was influenced by high-style Art Deco of the 1920s, and blended classical and modern aesthetics. Stripped Classicism often borrowed elements of Art Deco including geometric forms and sculptural detail in shallow relief, ornamental details like exterior light fixtures, and interior ornamentation. The Chatham Block combines the character-defining elements of Stripped Classicism, including its monumental quality, simplified and abstracted classical elements, and the shallow sculptural rosettes that adorn the cornice of the building, with Art Deco-influenced exterior light fixtures, bronze canopies and awnings, and interior doors. The Chatham Block, which is Winston-Salem's finest, and most intact example of Stripped Classical commercial architecture, is also the only recorded example of the style by architect Harold Macklin. Macklin designed only a few other commercial buildings, and was instead, well known for residential and institutional architecture primarily representative of high-style Classical and Colonial Revival styles. Harold Macklin was born in Dorset, England in 1885. He was educated in Salisbury, England and attended architecture school in London. In 1919, Macklin moved to Winston-Salem after marrying Isma Lyle Stultz in February of that year in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. For a short time, Macklin worked as a draftsman and contractor prior to opening his own practice in Winston-Salem in 1920. Macklin applied to become a member of the American Institute of Architects in December 1920. As an exhibit of his work, he submitted plans of two schools he designed in Oklahoma, which he completed in collaboration with architect Walter Roy Fought. Macklin's application was approved in March 1921, and by 1923, Macklin's first major work in Winston-Salem, the Realty Building located at 216 W. Fourth Street, had been completed. During the 1920s, at the height of Winston-Salem's "era of success" prompted by its wealthy tobacco and textile industries, Macklin was commissioned to design several major commercial and institutional buildings including the ca. 1923 Realty Building, ca. 1926 Gilmer Building, ca. 1927 Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel Building, ca. 1929 St. Paul's Episcopal Church, ca. 1928 Spruce Street YMCA, and the ca. 1929 Atkins High School, all of which are extant.

Macklin was primarily known for mastering Colonial and Georgian Revival style, as well as other revival styles. His design of the 1927 Journal and Sentinel Building received widespread recognition as "a masterful rendition of Georgian Revival Style," after the North Carolina AIA awarded Macklin for the "year's best commercial building design." Macklin's skilled blend of classicism and modernism in the design of the Chatham Building, was therefore, unique among the architect's major works and demonstrated his breadth of experience and knowledge of trends in the architectural profession. The emergence of designs like the Chatham Building became more refined over the course of the 1930s, and such Stripped Classical designs were especially popular among PWA and WPA-funded buildings of the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The Chatham Block was Macklin's last major private commission before his firm was forced to take a hiatus due to the economic impacts of the Great Depression. Macklin's AIA record indicates that he began to fall behind on chapter dues beginning in 1928, and by 1931 his membership was suspended. In 1932, Macklin's firm with William Roy Wallace, first established in 1928, was dissolved. From 1930 to 1932 the firm employed Garrell Robert Stinson as senior draftsman. Both Wallace and Stinson had been

employed by Charles Barton Keen in Philadelphia during the 1920s, likely sparking the partnership. Stinson worked for several firms during the Depression including Northup and O'Brien, until 1939, when he formed a new partnership with Macklin. Although Macklin and Stinson worked on a few New Deal-funded projects during the late 1930s, he did not re-apply for AIA membership until 1945 when signs of economic expansion began prompting the post-World War II building boom that put many architects and builders back to work. Macklin's career was cut short in 1947, when he died at the age of 62. His firm continued to operate under Stinson and its successor firms, including Stinson, Arey, & Hall who designed the alterations to Frank A. Stith & Co. at 301 West Fourth Street in the 1950s.

(Kayla Halberg, The Chatham Block Local Historic Landmark Application 1/6/2026)

Integrity

The Chatham Block possesses the seven qualities of historic integrity: location, setting, feeling, association, design, materials, and workmanship.

Location and Setting

The Chatham Block remains at its historic location and retains integrity of setting in the downtown commercial district.

Design, Material, and Workmanship

Harold Macklin's design of the Stripped Classical-style Chatham Building, with Art Deco influences remains largely intact. The building retains its storefront retail design, with the overall footprint of each storefront intact. The 1986 renovation altered the central storefront windows. Modern storefront and glass block bulkhead replaced the historic storefront and marble bulkhead. The configuration of the recessed entry with the square column however, remains intact. Additionally, Art Deco-inspired bronze leaf details remain in the door surround. The easternmost storefront, 301, remains largely unchanged. The historic marble bulkhead surrounds the large glass windows on the façade and side of the building. Although a modern storefront system has been added to the front of the building creating a vestibule, the historic recessed wooden storefront has been retained behind the modern storefront. Similarly, the storefront entrances of 311 reflect the original Macklin design.

The first floor and Mezzanine of 301 have been the very well preserved including the overall volume of space, as well as other design details such as crown molding, wainscoting, and woodwork. On the second floor of 301 new partitions have been added to create office spaces, however, character defining features such as the bay window and its lines of site have been preserved. Additionally, much of the original hardware and doors, and the major circulation corridors and stairwells have been preserved as well.

Interior alterations have compromised some integrity of design, limited to the central retail store, of 305. The 1986 renovation created a large open atrium on

the second floor that provided internal connections between all three sections of the building on the second floor. The first floor of the central space is open to the second-floor ceiling and skylight. The open nature of the retail space, however, remains intact. Additionally, many of the original doors and hardware have been retained, preserving the Art Deco influences which speak to its original design and construction. The primary circulation spaces, including stairwells and elevators, have also been preserved.

On the westernmost end of the building, 311, has also been reconfigured following the 1986 renovation to allow for the introduction of new offices and movie theater spaces. Significant design features of the former retail space remain intact, however, including the relationship of the first floor to the Mezzanine, intricate plaster and wood carving details above doors and around former mirrors, and the vaulted ceiling of the main first floor showroom.

The second floor of the building was redesigned in 1986, removing the majority of the partitions between the department stores to create offices. The second-floor plan was again redesigned as part of the recent (completed 2025) Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit project that converted the 1986 offices to residential units. As part of this project, historic ceiling heights were reinstated, historic plaster was retained where possible, and the overall north south orientation of the former department store partitions were retained particularly over the former Montaldo's. All windows were repaired, and many that had been previously covered by drywall were reinstated and repaired. The historic stairwells and elevator shafts were retained and reused where possible. Most of the historic interior finishes on the second floor had been removed during the 1986 renovation, however, where they remained, they have been restored. For example, the design for the interior of the unit that is associated with the bay window on the facade has been designed to maximize the volume of space and highlight this character-defining feature. New contemporary compatible finishes were installed throughout the second floor.

Materials

The Chatham Block retains a high degree of integrity of materials. On the exterior of the building, character defining historic materials that have been retained include: limestone veneer exterior, stone bulkhead, second floor steel casement/hopper, fixed, and arched windows, metal canopies, recessed wooden storefront entrance at 301, second floor bay window, and wall sconces. The presence of historic steel windows on the second floor of the building is a somewhat rare occurrence among similarly sized buildings in Winston-Salem from the period. Interior materials have also been retained including crown molding and trim, stair balusters and handrails, wood and metal doors and hardware. During the 1986 renovation to the building, some historic materials like plate glass storefront windows were replaced, as well as the central storefront system. Modern storefront systems and glass block were introduced

on the interior of the atrium; however, the space retains historic doors and trim. Where new walls or partitions have been inserted, historic Mezzanine railing, door surrounds, wooden paneling, and historic carved plaster have been retained. The building, therefore, retains its historic character-defining materials.

Workmanship

Similarly, the workmanship of the early 1930s craftsmen has been retained on the exterior of the building. Decorative work including the low-relief rosettes and carved window keystones demonstrate the craft of the stripped classical period. Art Deco craftsmanship has also been preserved in details such as interior doors, stair and Mezzanine railings, and hardware, as well as the exterior light fixtures, rosettes, and door surrounds. The building also retains the intricate craftsmanship required to create the carved plasterwork, crown molding and wood paneling that exist throughout the interior of the building.

Feeling and Association

Overall, the Chatham Block retains its historic feeling and association with the commercial history and architectural character associated with the building's area and period of significance.

(Kayla Halberg, The Chatham Block Local Historic Landmark Application 1/6/2026)

Committee Action	
For:	Against:
Remarks:	