

City Council – Action Request Form

Date: September 13, 2022

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Aaron King, Assistant City Manager
Chris Murphy, Director of Planning and Development Services

Council Action Requested:

Resolution Supporting the Eligibility of Property for the National Register of Historic Places

Strategic Focus Area: Livable Neighborhoods

Strategic Objective: Preserve Historic Resources

Strategic Plan Action Item: No

Key Work Item: No



Summary of Information:

The National Register is a federal program administered by the National Park Service and is the nation’s official list of historic buildings and districts worthy of preservation. Listing in the Register is predominantly an honor and does not negatively affect the rights of a private property owner. Unlike Local Historic Landmark designation, there is no local property tax deferral associated with the National Register program. However, National Register listing does allow a property owner to utilize federal and state investment tax credits for qualified rehabilitation work to a property. The nominated district is comprised of roughly 53 acres and 82 resources, including 71 contributing resources and 11 noncontributing resources. Federal and State guidelines for the Certified Local Government Program require that Winston-Salem participate in the process of nominating properties to the National Register. This participation involves the review of nominations by the Historic Resources Commission (HRC) and the City Council. The Commission and the City Council are required to submit comments to the State Historic Preservation Office relaying their findings as to the eligibility of the properties under consideration for listing in the National Register. The HRC and City Council are to comment as to whether they conclude the district meets the criteria for National Register listing. The National Register Criteria for Evaluation have been included for information. The Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission held a public comment period at their September 7, 2022 meeting. The Commission reviewed and discussed the nomination, and unanimously voted to recommend that the Downtown Winston-Salem Historic District, Winston-Salem, Forsyth County, be submitted for listing in the National Register Historic Places because it meets the criteria for listing as stated in Section 8 of the report.

Committee Action:

Committee	<u>CDHGG 9/13/22</u>	Action	<u>Approval</u>
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For	<u>Unanimous</u>	Against	<u></u>
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Remarks:

Downtown Winston-Salem Historic District

The Downtown Winston-Salem Historic District in the heart of the city represents the historic commercial and institutional core of Winston-Salem. The urban district is laid out in a grid-like pattern with West Fourth Street at its core from N. Chestnut Street to N. Broad Street. The district also expands outward northwest to W. Sixth Street between N. Cherry Street and N. Broad Street; and extends south to E. First Street roughly between N. Church Street and N. Spruce Street. The irregular shape of the district incorporates the body of contiguous properties that relate to the central commercial and governmental development of Winston-Salem beginning in the late-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century. The Downtown Winston-Salem Historic District is characterized by its concentration of high-style commercial and institutional buildings that represent the success of the city's core industries including tobacco, textiles, and furniture. Construction dates of primary buildings in the district range from 1882 through the early 1980s and include the earliest extant commercial buildings, as well as the city's mid-20th century urban renewal projects. The district is comprised of roughly 53 acres and 82 resources, including 71 contributing resources and 11 noncontributing resources.

The Downtown Winston-Salem Historic District is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for events in the area of Commerce as the historic commercial core of the city that supported its tobacco, textile, and furniture industries, and it also served as the financial, institutional, and retail center of Winston-Salem. As the headquarters for prominent Southeast corporations such as the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Hanes Hosiery, Hanes Knitting, and Wachovia Bank, Winston-Salem was among the wealthiest and largest cities of the South in the early to mid-twentieth century. The Downtown Winston-Salem Historic District is also significant at the local level in the area of Social History: Civil Rights, as the site of Civil Rights demonstrations that prompted Winston-Salem to become the first city in North Carolina to desegregate its lunch counters and restaurants in 1960. The Downtown Winston-Salem Historic District is also locally significant in the area of Government, as the government core for Forsyth County from 1851 with the construction of the first county courthouse to the present, as well as Community Planning and Development for its use of Urban Renewal and Downtown Redevelopment Programs that re-envisioned the urban core in an attempt to bring activity back to downtown in the age of the automobile and increasing suburbanization. Finally, the Downtown Winston-Salem Historic District is eligible for listing under Criterion C for Architecture at the statewide level of significance. Downtown Winston-Salem's collection of high-style commercial architecture represents nearly a century of architectural styles, craftsmanship, and design associated with prominent architecture firms, many of whom also had offices in the district. Several buildings in the district are among the most exceptional designs of their era in North Carolina, and as a collection they represent the Southeast's race to the sky setting height records for the region's tallest buildings many times over. Architectural styles represented in the district include: Renaissance Revival, Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, Spanish Revival, Late Gothic Revival, Commercial Style, International Style, Art Deco, Streamlined Moderne, and Brutalism. The Downtown Winston-Salem Historic District has a period of significance beginning in 1882 when the first extant commercial buildings were constructed, to 1976 when the government superblocks of the urban renewal period were completed.

Upon approval by the Community Development/Housing/General Government Committee, a public hearing will be conducted at the October 3, 2022 City Council Meeting.