

Chapter 5

HERITAGE &

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

PART 1: BACKGROUND

Section 1: Introduction

This section discusses the history of the community and identifies historic structures and areas of historical significance including the Round Hill National Register Historic District. Expectations for character, design, and architecture are also discussed.

Section 2: Historical Perspective

The Town of Round Hill is located in the western section of Loudoun County along Route 7 at the base of the Blue Ridge. Round Hill was named for a 910-foot-high hill, named Round Top, approximately two miles southwest of town. No one really knows how old this given name is, but in the first court order of Loudoun County in 1757 there was a road order which set out a group of “viewers” (people who decided which way an important road was to go) whose decision was that the road from Leesburg to Winchester would be located on the north side of the “round hill”. In 1731, the first tract of land in today’s Round Hill was granted to Benjamin Grayson and, ten years later, additional land was granted to William Cox and Thomas Gregg. When the Leesburg and Snickers’ Gap Turnpike (Route 7) was built in the 1830’s, a small store opened, and in 1858 the area received its first U.S. Post Office.

Round Hill began as a working class community serving the needs of tourists escaping the heat of Washington, D.C. The town was the end of the W&OD train line from 1875 until 1896, when the line was extended to Bluemont. Early businesses included rooming houses, markets, a bank, a doctor’s office, a farrier, and a tombstone manufacturer. Businesses then as now were interspersed among residences. The majority of today’s homes within the corporate limits were built prior the end of the 1920’s.

On February 5, 1900, the Virginia General Assembly incorporated the Town of Round Hill and appointed town commissioners. In May of that year, the townsmen elected their first mayor, George T. Ford, who later became a state senator. The first council met in the store owned by the mayor (which also housed the post office). In the late 1980’s, the Ford’s Store property was purchased by the town and renovated to house the town offices. The train station, located on the northern end of Main Street, continues to be an identifying element of the town’s past as well.

When incorporated, Round Hill had 10 streets that were lit with coal lamps. These lights were electrified in 1919. In 1913, the town developed its own water delivery system, but many residents remained on their own wells. The town expanded the water system in 1915 to include a spring fed reservoir on Scotland Heights. In 1926, all town privies were to be updated and

conversion to septic tanks was encouraged. By 1978, the Town had constructed a wastewater treatment plant and sewer lines.

Today's Round Hill has much the same scale and character as the Round Hill of the past. The residents continue to be a mix of social and economic groups. Although the train stopped coming here in 1939, Round Hill remains a haven away from the hustle and bustle of life to the east.

Section 3: Round Hill National Register Historic District

(Refer to Map 5-1 Historic District). A comprehensive historic survey was conducted in the Town in 2008, and the detailed data was submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to nominate the proposed Round Hill Historic District to both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. These designations became official in December 2008 and May 2009 respectively.

The Historic District Map at the end of this chapter shows the properties included in the historic survey, and the small numbers shown refer to the individual property survey identification numbers. The numbers included in circles show where photographs were taken. Properties are listed as either “contributing” or “non-contributing” to the district based on the three areas of significance that were determining factors in deciding how resources would be classified when the survey was conducted; they were: architecture, commerce/trade and transportation, and on the period of significance as 1850 to 1958. All non-contributing resources were, therefore, so noted for either being constructed after 1958 or as no longer possessing historic integrity because of major alterations and additions.

Section 4: Round Hill Circa 1900

Round Hill was incorporated on February 5, 1900. To help visualize what Round Hill looked like in 1900, one can refer to “Map 5-2 Round Hill Circa 1900” along with “Table 5-1: Legend to Map 5-2 Round Hill Circa 1900” which is a snapshot of some of the existing residences, churches and commercial establishments that were a part of Round Hill when the town was incorporated in 1900. These buildings are located on the National Register District of Historic Places as contributing buildings and are significant for a variety of reasons, as described in the book “A Story of Round Hill” by Ann Whitehead Thomas. For the purposes of this chapter, Table 5-1 serves to show some of the Town of Round Hill buildings that were built before the 20th century and are still occupied today.

| Map ID | Name of Building | Year Built |
|---------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Potts Farm House (29 E. Loudoun) | 1774 |
| 2 | Frame House (28 E. Loudoun) | 1850 (c) |
| 3 | Stone House (20 E. Loudoun) NOTE: First Post Office | 1857/1858 |
| 4 | Chamblin Boarding House (1 E. Loudoun) | 1874 |
| 5 | Round Hill United Methodist Church (11 W. Loudoun) | 1889 |
| 6 | Corner Hall/ Ballenger's Tea Room (19 E. Loudoun) | 1890 |

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| 7 | Castle Hall (11 E. Loudoun) | 1890 |
| 8 | Harvey Fields' House (18 E. Loudoun) | 1890 |
| 9 | Howe's Store (6 W. Loudoun) | 1890 |
| 10 | Mt. Calvary Episcopal Church (16 E. Loudoun) | 1892 |
| 11 | Kuhlman Home (30 W. Loudoun) | 1892 |
| 12 | Lodge House (31 W. Loudoun) | 1892/1895 |
| 13 | Preston Boarding House (25 W. Loudoun) | |
| 14 | Frame House (21 W. Loudoun) | 1898 |
| 15 | Hammerly House (15 W. Loudoun) | 1898/1897 |
| 16 | Field's Farm | 1832 (c) |
| 17 | Chamblin House (3 Copeland Way) | 1850 (c) |
| 18 | Ford's Store (23 Main) | 1872 |
| 19 | Washington and Ohio Railroad Station (35 Main) | 1875 |
| 20 | Frame House (41 Main) | 1876 |
| 21 | Arthur Hall House and Store (31 & 29 Main) | |
| 22 | Hillcrest- Copeland House (22 Main) | 1874/1880 |
| 23 | Dr. Copeland's Office (20 Main) | 1880 |
| 24 | Mt. Zion Baptist Church (28 Main) | 1881 |
| 25 | Nanny Nichols Boarding House (40 Main) | 1890 |
| 26 | Ford's House (26 Main) | 1890 |

There are other contributing buildings listed on the Round Hill National Register District which were built after 1900 as a result of the increase in business generated by the railroad. Many of these early 20th century buildings are also significant to the historical character of Round Hill.

PART 2: OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Section 1: Historic Preservation

(Refer to Map 5-3 Heritage & Preservation Overlay). The 1993 comprehensive plan set forth the goal of developing an architectural review board paired with architectural design standards to regulate the architecture of historic buildings in town. While this goal has never been implemented, due to the lack of public support, the town may consider the creation of an organization or committee that will inspire support for voluntary historic preservation efforts and could organize a variety of projects such as educational lectures, tax credit workshops and design awards.

The heritage & preservation overlay shows the gateway corridors along Main Street and Loudoun Street. The historic buildings along these corridors define the town's identity and make a lasting impression on all visitors driving through Round Hill. Any potential future historic preservation organizations, groups, or committees should focus most of their attention on these buildings for coordinating preservation efforts that could double as economic development projects. Such projects could include walking tours or interpretative signage at landmark buildings. In addition to the gateway corridors, the heritage & preservation overlay references

the remaining parcels that once made up the Round Hill train industry known as the "Train District." The town supports the rehabilitation of any of those buildings in order to return them (as close as possible) to their original condition.

Section 2: Impact of Historic Buildings

There is a shared belief amongst town officials that historic preservation efforts need to be directed towards historically significant buildings, not just buildings that have hit a certain "old age." In other words, age alone should not be the deciding factor on whether or not a building has any historic value. There are some buildings in town that are over 50 years old but do not add anything of value to the town's historic character.

When discussing historic preservation, the term "historic building" is used quite frequently. The term "historic building" can have different meanings to different people. For the purposes of this comprehensive plan, the town officials wanted to have their official definition of the term "historic building" to be, "a building that is listed as a contributing resource in the 2008 Round Hill National Register of Historic Places Registration, as it is amended from time to time."

Town officials refer to the 2008 Round Hill National Register of Historic Places Registration to determine if a building in Round Hill is historically significant. In 2008, the town applied to be on the National Register of Historic Places. This involved a complex application process with many different conditions and requirements to determine if a building or structure can earn the title "contributing resource." A "contributing resource" is a building, site, structure, or object that adds to the historic significance of a property or district. In comparison, a noncontributing resource is a building, site, structure, or object that does not add to the historic significance of a property or district.

In larger municipalities, a historic district is a small subset of the larger city or town. However, the Round Hill Historic District encompasses the majority of the town. Of 257 total buildings, 204 (over 96 acres) contribute to the district. This means when people describe the desire to protect and preserve the character of Round Hill, they are actually supporting the protection and the preservation of the historically significant buildings. If these buildings disappeared tomorrow and were replaced by modern suburban houses, the town would feel like it had lost the "bones" of the community. It would feel hollow without the community character created by its historically significant buildings. The Round Hill National Register of Historic Places nomination calls out the following architectural classifications that define the community character of the Town of Round Hill:

- **Late Victorian:** Queen Anne; Italianate
- **Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals:** Colonial Revival; Late Gothic Revival
- **Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements:** Bungalow/Craftsman

It is the community character of the Round Hill historically significant buildings, as well as new houses that have recreated any of the above architectural classifications, which make Round Hill unique and special. In comparison, there is a clear difference between houses in the Round Hill Historic District and the new subdivisions in the Joint Land Management Area. Historic preservation efforts are needed in Round Hill for more reasons than protecting individual historic treasures, but protecting the character of the town as a whole.

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Heritage & Community Character

Goals, Objectives & Strategies

Goal 1: Foster the protection and preservation of historic buildings and local heritage sites with special attention directed towards those buildings or sites tied to the founding of Round Hill.

- a) **Objective:** Embrace the Round Hill National Register District as a notable recognition that serves as a source of pride for the town and a tool for historic preservation efforts
 - 1. **Strategy:** Keep a copy of the Round Hill National Register District nomination, with the list of contributing and non-contributing historic resources at the Town Office at all times, as well as feature a link to the document on the Town Website.
 - 2. **Strategy:** Develop a brochure and a map explaining the purpose and significance of the Round Hill National Register District.
 - 3. **Strategy:** Advocate for a recognition program to honor one contributing historic building in the Round Hill National Register District once a year with a historic plaque that prioritizes selections by age and landmark status.
 - 4. **Strategy:** Identify, evaluate and protect historic and archaeological resources by submitting an update to the Round Hill National Register District nomination once every ten years.

- b) **Objective:** Increase the levels of community awareness of historic building and heritage site preservation by sharing information and engaging stakeholders, as well as the general public, in the preservation process:
 - 1. **Strategy:** Develop ways to encourage and educate historic property owners interested in properly identifying, interpreting, establishing and maintaining a heritage tourism site.
 - 2. **Strategy:** Establish a walking tour for local schools that will identify local historic sites or events to convey the history and heritage of Round Hill.
 - 3. **Strategy:** Partner with the Visit Loudoun organization to implement heritage tourism strategies.

4. Strategy: Develop a Round Hill heritage awareness program to promote Round Hill's heritage and historical assets to local residents.

Goal 2: Advocate that new development (or redevelopment) should not impact the integrity or authenticity of the historic character of the town.

- a) Objective: Expect new development, redevelopment, or rehabilitation projects to incorporate (or be compatible with) the current identifying elements of the town when reviewing rezoning applications, special exception applications, or future Round Hill design guidelines language.
 1. Strategy: Support new development or redevelopment projects in the Round Hill National Register District that are compatible in the size and character to the contributing buildings of the district.
 2. Strategy: Support new development or redevelopment projects outside of the National Register District to incorporate current identifying elements of the contributing buildings of the district.
 3. Strategy: Support new additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction projects of historic buildings or heritage sites that are compatible with the existing historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion.
- b) Objective: Encourage attractive and historically sensitive land development projects.
 1. Strategy: Adopt the Round Hill Design Guidelines, not as regulations, but guidelines, to assist the planning commission and town council; developed through a public process and formally adopted by the Town Council used to promote new development (or redevelopment) compatibility with adjacent historic structures and the overall community character of the town.
 2. Strategy: If the Round Hill Design Guidelines have not been adopted, the following factors shall be taken into consideration during the review of a rezoning application (or special exception application) by the planning commission and the town council:
 - a. Building mass and height in relation to surrounding development
 - b. Setback and placement of the building on the lot in relation to the setback and placement of adjacent buildings
 - c. Building orientation
 - d. Number, placement and proportion of the doors and windows
 - e. Size, shape and proportion of entrance features, such as porches
 - f. Feedback from the 2015 Visual Survey conducted during the 2015 public input meetings

3. Strategy: Consider the establishment of a gateway corridor overlay districts in order to accomplish the following:
 - a. Ensure the compatibility of development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse proposals with the historic resources identified in the comprehensive plan
 - b. Increase public awareness of the natural, scenic, historic, architectural, and cultural resources near and outside the Round Hill National Historic District.
 - c. Preserve and protect corridors along arterial streets or roadways designated as significant routes of travel as shown on the heritage & preservation overlay map
4. Strategy: Study the train district and prepare a master plan for future coordination of the buildings with the minimum goals to develop an educational brochure, a set of interpretive signage and a series of recommended future uses. The property owners of the buildings located in the train district will be invited to be active participants in developing the master plan.

Goal 3: Advocate for the structural stabilization, rehabilitation, or restoration of the historic buildings and heritage sites in the Town.

- a) Objective: Establish a heritage resources committee, not as an architectural review board, but to accomplish the following strategies:
 1. Strategy: Inspire residents and business owners to preserve the community character and unique identity of the town through voluntary home renovation, historic preservation, and facade improvement projects
 2. Strategy: Encourage historic preservation efforts through public outreach, education, marketing, incentive programs and local special events
 3. Strategy: Recommend historic preservation and heritage resource programs to the town council; and if authorized or directed by town council, the committee will develop and implement recommended programs.
 4. Strategy: Educate the public on the benefits of federal and state historic tax incentives.
 5. Strategy: Host an annual rehabilitation or restoration award program.
 6. Strategy: Promote the train district and the gateway corridors as priority areas for historic preservation outreach and awareness, as shown on the heritage & preservation overlay map.
 7. Strategy: Work with the Town Council to develop a heritage resources master plan.

- b) **Objective:** Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic structures and heritage sites in Round Hill, when reviewing rezoning applications, special exception applications or zoning ordinance amendments.
1. Strategy: Consider removing text in the zoning ordinance which could prevent heritage resource protection, preservation, and adaptive reuse of historic properties
 2. Strategy: Limit requirements on historic buildings that would require design features that detract from the authenticity of the site, endanger the integrity of the resource, or prevent the adaptive reuse of the site
 3. Strategy: Require that additional parking, lighting or signage requirements necessitated by the reuse of a historic structure are appropriately sized and/or shielded to minimize adverse impacts on the character of the surrounding area.
- c) **Objective:** Encourage development that works to prevent destroying historic buildings; and if dismantling of a historic building has been chosen as the proper course of action by the property owner, or if a historic building has been demolished by neglect, consider the following when reviewing rezoning applications or special exception applications:
1. Strategy: Support the proper dismantling of a historic building if it is structurally unstable, if the majority of the structural integrity of it has been compromised, and/or if incompatible additional or modifications over time have depleted the historic value.
 2. Strategy: Consider a requirement that there is photo documentation of the interior and exterior of a building submitted to the town for historic records before any dismantling or demolition begins.
 3. Strategy: Support that some of the remaining archeological features of a historic building are incorporated into the site design of the development project to avoid having to rebuild or reconstruct the building, such as the foundation walls
 4. Strategy: Support that new construction on the site incorporate features in the new building that are similar to features of the previous historic building in design, color, texture, and/or material as a tribute or homage to the history of the site.
 5. Strategy: Encourage the owner to donate or sell salvaged building materials for the purpose of preservation or reuse.