Community Design and Historic Preservation

An attractive, well-designed City instills civic pride; improves the visual character of the community; creates a strong, positive image; and attracts quality developments. Community Design relates not just to what buildings look like, but to the spaces between buildings, as well as to the street and public realm. While accommodating new growth and change, consideration must be given to preserving significant elements of the community that contribute to the City's unique character.

The intent of the Community Design and Historic Preservation Guiding Principle is to capitalize on unique features of the City in a manner reflecting the community's values and its connection to the history and traditions that distinguish it from other communities in the region. This can be accomplished through review and adjustment of planning, regulatory and incentive tools, and by improving

Guiding Principle:

In 2035, Fairfax is a city with… architecture that contributes to a vibrant, creative place and complements our historic character.

coordination among stakeholders who impact the future development of the City, without unreasonably burdening the review process.

The primary resource on design elements for new construction, expansions and renovations is the City of Fairfax Design Guidelines. Separate design characteristics are described in the guidelines for the Old Town Fairfax Historic Overlay District, the Old Town Fairfax Transition Overlay District (both described on the following pages), and

the Architectural Control Overlay District (which encompasses all properties within the City except for single-family residential properties and those properties located within one of the other overlay districts). The Board of Architectural Review, along with City staff, reviews development applications to determine if proposals meet the intent of the design guidelines.

FIGURE 14 HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND BUILDINGS

Historic Overlay Districts

The majority of the City's historic architectural resources are concentrated in Old Town, the City's traditional core. Old Town is recognized and preserved both nationally as a National Register of Historic Places district as well as through a City preservation district zoning overlay (Figure 14). There are 52 buildings, 10 "other structures," and a monument within the National Register of Historic Places' "City of Fairfax Historic District," many of which are considered "contributing elements." Six of the buildings predate 1850 while others are from the turn of the 20th century to the early 1930s. The City's locally-designated Old Town Fairfax Historic Overlay District is larger in area than the National Register district.

Old Town

Legend

- National Register Historic District
- National Register Historic Building
- City Historic District
- Building
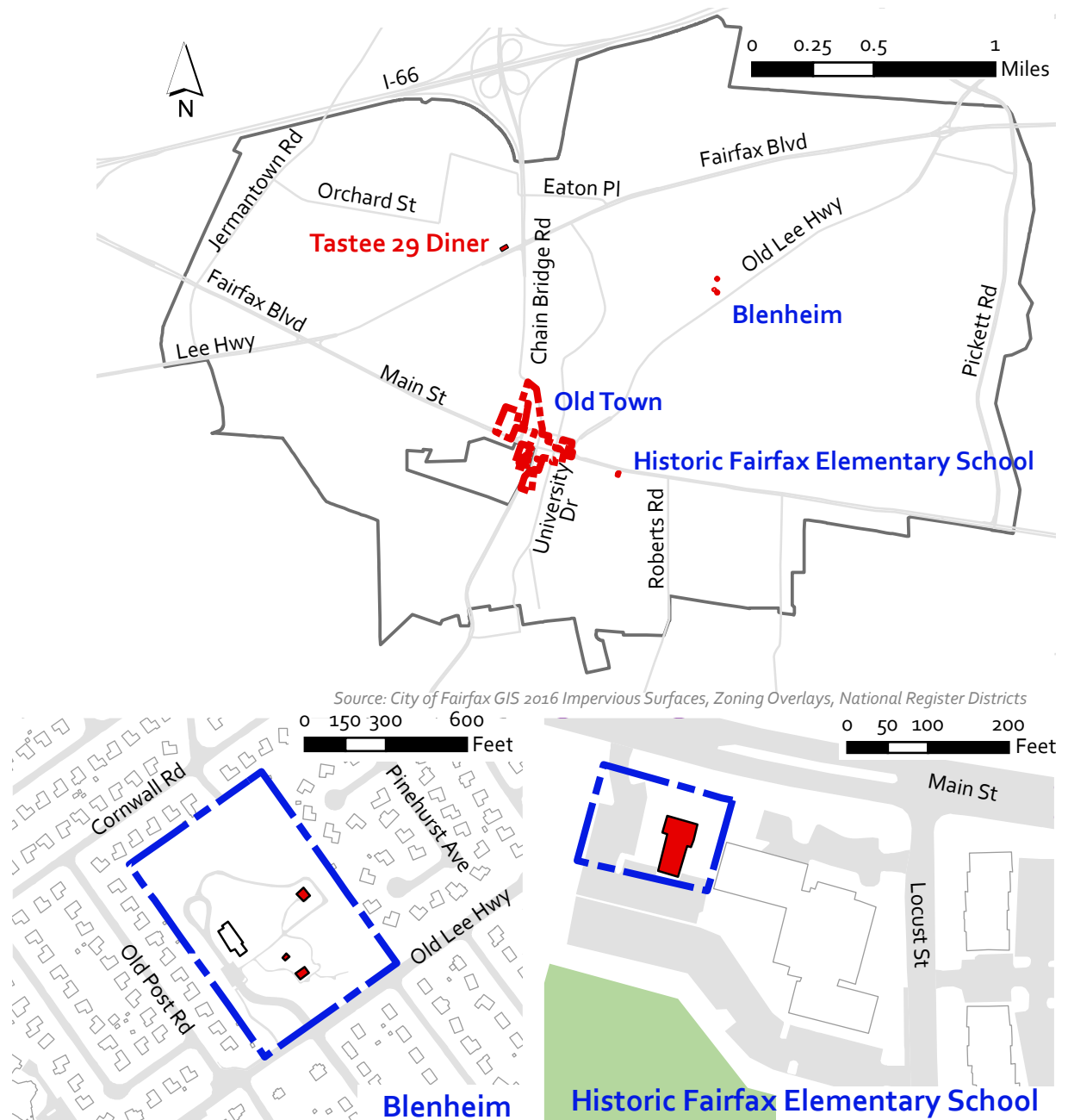- Centerline of Road
- Park
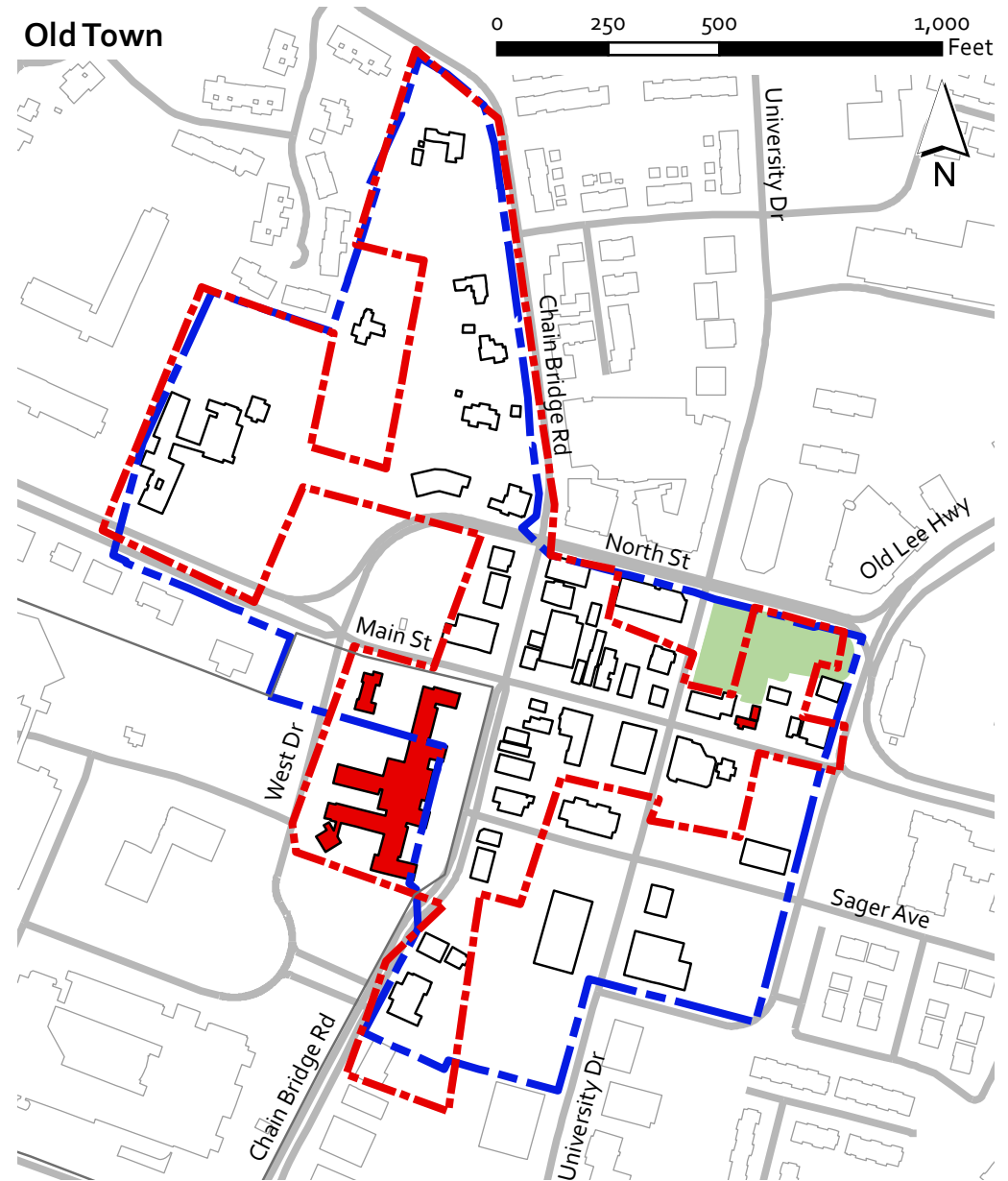
Source: City of Fairfax GIS 2016 Impervious Surfaces, Zoning Overlays, National Register Districts

In addition to Old Town, the City has historic zoning overlay districts for two other properties, the Fairfax Public School and Blenheim (Figure 15).

Additionally, there are many properties and structures with historic characteristics that have not been designated at the local, state, or national levels. Over 4,800 structures in the City are 50 years of age or older, one of the criteria to determine eligibility of historic designation. The significance of a given property or structure to architectural history, landscape history, events or activities in the past, or to lives of important people are other criteria for preservation. Remaining large estates such as the Farr Homeplace and the Sisson House may also be considered for preservation, as well as landforms such the Manassas Gap Railroad Bed.

FIGURE 15   HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND BUILDINGS

Source: City of Fairfax GIS 2016 Impervious Surfaces, Zoning Overlays, National Register Districts

Old Town Fairfax Transition Overlay District (Transition District)

The Transition District is established in areas surrounding Old Town Fairfax as a means to ensure the character of those areas complements that of the historic districts. This is accomplished through regulations in the Zoning Ordinance limiting the height of new construction, encouraging buildings to be oriented toward the street, and requiring more extensive streetscape improvements than the base standards. The current extent of the Transition District and potential Future Transition Overlay District are provided in Figure 16.

Properties located in the Future Transition Overlay District may be added to the Transition District either upon application from the property owner (typically in conjunction with an individual property rezoning) or as part of a larger City-initiated rezoning. The extent of the potential expansion area for the Transition District stretches farther away from the historic district in order to continue these characteristics along corridors leading into Old Town Fairfax.

FIGURE 16 HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND TRANSITION OVERLAY DISTRICTS

Legend:
- Historic District
- Old Town Fairfax Transition Overlay District
- Old Town Fairfax Future Transition Overlay District
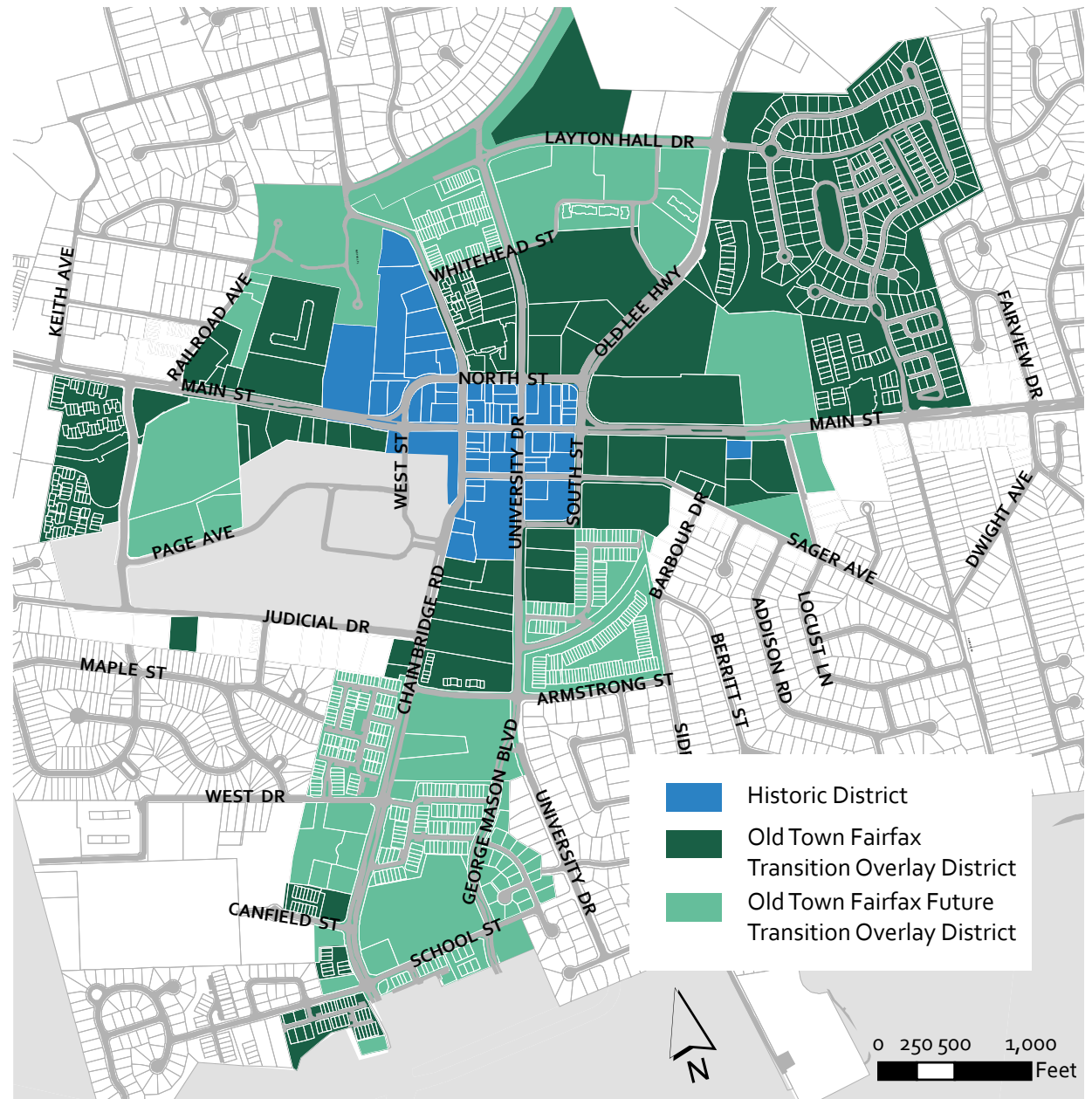
Community Design and Historic Preservation
Goal 1

Require high-quality, sustainable design.

Beyond residential neighborhoods, there is a wide variety of building uses in the City, from office and retail buildings to industrial and institutional buildings. These buildings were constructed over several decades and encompass an array of design styles and architectural influences. The City requires high-quality, sustainable design and construction of new buildings and public spaces along with similarly high-quality modifications and additions to existing buildings and open spaces. The intent of the design review process in areas of the City outside the historic districts is to continue to allow architectural variety while encouraging higher quality materials and design rather than designating specific design styles. The City can further support aesthetic quality through public investment in visible infrastructure, such as streetscapes and signage, and through public-private partnerships to promote desired types of development.

OUTCOME CDHP1.1: Clear expectations for the required design elements and building materials for the City's historic districts and commercial centers.

ACTION CDHP1.1.1 Determine design aesthetic of Fairfax Boulevard and Main Street with input from City boards and commissions and convey through design documents such as the City of Fairfax Design Guidelines and other documents that may be prepared.

OUTCOME CDHP1.2: Attractive buildings, inviting public spaces, and welcoming gateways that contribute to our economic vitality and unique character.

ACTION CDHP1.2.1 Identify commercial economic investment areas and provide financial support through the Economic Development Authority.

ACTION CDHP1.2.2 Continue to develop and refine design standards with a menu of options to encourage variety, visual interest, and durability in the design of new development.

ACTION CDHP1.2.3 Explore public-private partnerships to create neighborhood centers inclusive of gathering places.

ACTION CDHP1.2.4 Create attractive gateway features at key City entry points.

Community Design and Historic Preservation

Goal 2

Protect and enhance historic resources.

Inclusion of properties or structures in a local historic district should be based on the criteria described on p. 61. Local protections give the City the ability to designate specific characteristics of a property or district that are intended to be preserved, as well as provide regulatory measures that protect those properties. Local districts can be applied to individual properties or a group of properties, such as a neighborhood. Establishment of any new historic districts should be contingent upon support from owners of the affected properties.

Preservation and appreciation of historic properties and other historic resources in the City can be supported through events and programs that highlight the history of the City and the importance of the historic

OUTCOME CDHP2.1:	Protection of eligible structures, properties, and neighborhoods through local historic designation and strategic investments.
ACTION CDHP2.1.1	Develop an inventory of historic and archaeological resources readily available on the City's website that is reviewed and updated at least every 10 years.
ACTION CDHP2.1.2	Work with neighborhoods to gain support for new locally-designated historic districts and landmarks, where appropriate.
ACTION CDHP2.1.3	Encourage the preservation of existing buildings of historic or architectural significance whenever feasible.
OUTCOME CDHP2.2:	Redevelopment that respects nearby historic structures and the established architectural pattern.
ACTION CDHP2.2.1	Ensure all new development subject to the requirements of the City of Fairfax Design Guidelines is compliant, and continue to monitor the review process for Certificates of Appropriateness to ensure it is effective.
ACTION CDHP2.2.2	Rezone all properties in the Old Town Fairfax Future Transition Overlay District to the Old Town Fairfax Transition Overlay District, either proactively or as each property seeks land use amendments.
OUTCOME CDHP2.3:	The City's historic resources are utilized to provide educational programs to the community and promote preservation of historic properties.
ACTION CDHP2.3.1	Promote greater awareness of the City's historic resources and the history of the City and surrounding area, identifying educational, economic, and recreational benefits of historic structures, properties, and districts.
ACTION CDHP2.3.2	Evaluate the need to expand the Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center, currently located in the Historic Fairfax Elementary School building.

properties in historic events. City historic resources, such as the Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center, Blenheim Civil War Interpretive Center, and the Ratcliffe-Allison-Pozer House can be utilized to engage the public through special programs, tours, events, exhibitions, and outreach efforts.