



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Eisenbeisz and Assembly Members

Thru: John Leach, Municipal Administrator
Amy Ainslie, Planning and Community Development Director *AAA*

From: Ariadne Will, Planner I

Date: March 18, 2026

Subject: Approval of the Sitka Historic Preservation Plan

Background

At its regular meeting on August 13, 2025, the Sitka Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) voted to approve its Sitka Historic Preservation Plan (“the plan”) for forwarding to the Planning Commission and then the Assembly. The adoption and implementation of a historic preservation plan is required by Sitka General Code under SGC 2.50.040.B, which states that the HPC shall “develop a local historic preservation plan including provision for identification, protection and interpretation of the area’s significant resources.”

The previous, existing Sitka Historic Preservation Plan is a two-page document that was adopted by the HPC in 1994. The document was drafted roughly a year after the HPC was established and provides a short history of Sitka, the purpose of the plan, and the HPC’s goals, actions, and objectives. No updates have been accepted by the HPC between the adoption of the 1994 plan and the new plan.

The new plan aims to provide information on the significance of historic preservation and its application in Sitka by providing the following:

- Information about the local, state, and national legacies of historic preservation
- Historic preservation-related resources for laypeople and contractors
- Historic contexts in which to classify Sitka’s historic resources
- Sitka properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Observed historic preservation needs within Sitka
- Goals of the HPC

Public Engagement

Work on the 2026 Sitka Historic Preservation Plan has been underway since 2009. Since then, the community has been invited to comment on the plan on several occasions, including at least ten instances since January 2025. Below is a brief list of recent engagement opportunities:

- Public comment at HPC meetings, including each monthly meeting between 2019 and August 2025, the January 2026 HPC meeting, and additional meetings prior to 2019
- Public input meeting hosted by staff in April 2025, advertised by way of flyers, CBS social media posts, newspaper advertising, and radio interview
- Sitka Tribe of Alaska Cultural Resources Committee review and comment, requested and underway from April 2025 to July 2025
- Planning Commission hearing and consideration on October 1, 2025

In addition to public engagement, the plan was forwarded to the State of Alaska Office of History and Archaeology for review by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). SHPO comments have been incorporated into the 2026 Historic Preservation Plan.

Analysis

The plan—especially the “Goals and Actions” portion—serves as a guiding document for the HPC. The plan’s goals and actions are broken down into five parts, with each goal nesting a handful of actions. The goals are as follows:

1. Develop new partnerships and raise awareness of historic resources representing the history of under-represented communities, especially Tlingit history.
2. Identify, preserve, protect, and enhance the historic and cultural resources in the City and Borough of Sitka.
3. Improve City processes to include consideration of historic preservation in planning.
4. Educate and engage the public and students in historic preservation.
5. Promote heritage tourism.

Actions within the goals state specific aims for the commission, and some are presently underway. Examples are Action 2.7, “Rezone Sitka’s cemeteries as Cemetery Zone,” and Action 3.1, “Update, if needed, Sitka’s street naming policy, and hone a procedure for using Native language names.”

Other actions in the plan, though not currently in progress, will require Assembly action following further development and recommendation by the HPC. Examples are Action 2.6, “Use ordinances to protect places of community value, such as Lincoln Street or Katlian Street, that are under redevelopment pressure,” Action 2.3, “Obtain a CLG (Certified Local Government) grant to contract an update to Sitka’s Inventory of Historic Sites and Structures,” and Action 3.5, “Obtain CLG grants for staff and commission trainings in historic preservation, leadership, the Section 106 process, other legal responsibilities, and how to identify and protect sites.”

While these goals require Assembly action, adoption of the plan does not necessarily constitute Assembly commitment to such goals. The plan may instead act as a framework, as well as a tool to bring in outside resources—such as grant funding—in. Through this, the Assembly will retain authority to appropriately pace completion of plan goals with available municipal resources.

Alignment with Comprehensive and Strategic Plans

In addition to serving as a guiding document for the HPC and providing the public with background information on historic preservation, the plan works in concert with the Comprehensive Plan. It specifically speaks to goals associated with the “Historic, Cultural, and Arts” section of the Comprehensive Plan. A historic preservation plan is explicitly mentioned in HCA 1.1a, which states, “Develop, adopt, and implement a Sitka Historic Preservation Plan.” Several other goals listed in this section of the Comprehensive Plan are echoed in the goals included in the Historic Preservation Plan, often overlapping exactly, as is the case with HCA 1.1h, “Create a memorial and naming policy”; HCA 2.1, “Advertise historic preservation opportunities, tax incentives, and grants available to rehabilitate historic properties, sites, and within districts”; and HCA 5.1, “Support cultural heritage tourism.”

The Historic Preservation Plan also aligns with the Strategic Plan, and specifically goal 2.3, “Identify opportunities to foster relationships with underrepresented groups/populations in the community to improve engagement and representation.” The plan repeatedly states its intention to advocate for preservation and education in relation to structures and sites with significant Tlingit history; it also speaks to collaboration between CBS and STA within its goals and actions, as well as in its approval by the HPC, which included forwarding and review by STA’s Cultural Resources Committee. The plan aims to engage Tlingit histories in Sitka in and to place those histories on equal footing with Russian and other Euro-American legacies.

Fiscal Note

There are no direct expenses associated with adoption of the plan; having a plan in place keeps CBS eligible for the CLG program and associated grants which have been used extensively in Sitka to support historic preservation work (both by CBS and by property owners of historic structures and properties). Any additional expenses that result from pursuing plan-related goals and actions would come before the Assembly for consideration and approval, as well as CLG grant applications.

Recommendation

The Historic Preservation Commission and the Planning Commission recommend that the Assembly approve and adopt the 2026 Sitka Historic Preservation Plan.

Potential motion: **“I move to approve and adopt the 2026 Sitka Historic Preservation Plan.”**

Encl: 2026 Sitka Historic Preservation Plan Draft
2026 Sitka Historic Preservation Plan Appendices
1994 Sitka Historic Preservation Plan
Comprehensive Plan 6.3 Historic, Cultural, and Arts Resources Goals,
Objectives, and Actions.
Strategic Plan Goal 2: Improve Communications and Strengthen Relationships
Throughout the Community