



WESTON HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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[HTTPS://BUSINESS.FACEBOOK.COM/HISTORICBUILDINGSMATTER/](https://business.facebook.com/historicbuildingsmatter/)

The Weston Historical Landmark Commission was formed on May 4th, 1998. Our mission is to preserve historic sites, structures, and landscapes in Weston, WV, and educate the public about the county's heritage. The commission intends to identify, study, preserve and protect historic buildings, structures, sites, and districts in Weston, West Virginia. The city has had a registered historic downtown district for 27 years.

What We Do:

The job of the Historic Landmark Commission is to promote the preservation of Weston, WV, and Lewis County, through official recognition, recording, and preservation of Weston's historical resources. In addition, the Commission is responsible for recommendations of historic buildings and properties for local historic landmark designations to the City Council, the administration of the community preservation plan, reviews proposed exterior alterations to a designated historic landmark or structure and recommends both incentives and opportunities for the preservation as well as education of our historic places.

Commitment:

The Weston HLC and the City Council are committed to preserving our rural heritage and our historic places. The review requirements for the preservation ordinances are among the best forms of protection for our historic structures and landmarks. In addition, the HLC is committed to preserving the past while educating the public of Weston's history.

Chair / President – Anna Cardelli

Member - City Council Representative – Sherry Rogers

Member – Ashely Montgomery

Member – Rebeca Jordan Gleason

Member – Brian McClain

Member – Kristen Bailey (2022)

Mayor – Kim Harrison

AmeriCorps – Jamie Billman

Secretary – Acting / Judy Piercy – City Clerk

Former Members 20/21

Larry Snider

Deborah Harris

Robert Weaver

Letter from Chair

This year has been another challenging year for the community, and the Historic Landmark Commission, Covid-19, has presented many challenges and obstacles in the efforts of this group. However, even with these challenges, great strides have been made. This year the HLC has worked hard to provide seamless offerings and preservation efforts with the tremendous support from many in our community. These partnerships and volunteer efforts have made everything we have accomplished this year possible and paved the path forward for the projects we have planned for the following year. We cannot thank the community and each volunteer enough for their hard work and dedication. We have also been fortunate enough to receive tremendous support from the WV Humanities Council, The Museum of American Glass in West Virginia, The Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum, The Preservation Alliance of West Virginia, and the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History to name just a few.

I have had the honor to serve on this board with a group of volunteers who offer their time to protect, preserve and promote the history of the city of Weston. The people who serve on this board and give so generously of their time do so for no other reason than to see this community thrive, and for this, I am grateful for each one of them. This group would not be where it is today without the countless hours of each member.

The Weston Historic Landmark Commission has had the unwavering support of the City Council in our preservation efforts this year and has enabled us to make significant progress.

The Mayor, Kim Harrison, has been a champion for this group and our efforts to revitalize our downtown. She rarely misses a meeting and is always available for endless last-minute deadlines.

The City Manager, Nate Stansberry, has worked tirelessly to help us envision a better future while understating our mission to protect our historical past. He was presented with numerous projects already underway this year and has been instrumental in helping us see them to completion.

Sherry Rogers has served on our commission as a liaison for the council. She has been instrumental in ensuring that we have seamless continuity between the Council at large and the HLC while enabling a bridge between the city and the county efforts imperative to our success.

Our group is here as a resource to anyone who wishes to learn about our historic community, structures, or preservation efforts. We encourage your feedback and input, and we hope to inspire others in our community and in the entire state to help us in the facilitation of protecting our past.

I would be remiss if I did not thank my husband for his endless support and patience in the time and dedication this role demands from my family.

Regards,

Anna Cardelli
Chair of Weston Historic Landmark Commission

2021 in Review

Preservation

This year started with the continuation of many projects that carried over from 2020 and the ongoing challenges from the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021 preservation focus has been directed towards our downtown historic district. Our primary preservation sites have been Bank Alley, Arnold Cemetery, Columbia Club / Weston Cultural Center, free community parking lots, Municipal Building, and river walk.

This year, the HLC applied for a Preserve WV AmeriCorps member grant. The grant was awarded, and we have been fortunate to accept Jamie Billman for the 2021/22 service year. This fall, she started on-site and has already been a tremendous asset to the group. This grant has enabled us to focus on our key projects.

Bank Alley:

Located on Bank Street and Main Avenue, the historic brick-paved pedestrian alley has been a primary restoration site for the HLC for the past year. A grant has funded the efforts of this project by the WV Humanities Council and Lewis County First. Local West Virginia artist Jesse Corlis was hired for the mural restoration on this project. He is the same artist who painted the glass mural last year on the Museum of American Glass in West Virginia's exterior wall. He has spent hours cleaning, scraping, and historically preserving the murals on the brick wall. These murals depict advertisements from Coke, Fairyland, and other business that once made up the economic backbone of this downtown. They are carefully preserved for future generations to enjoy without jeopardizing their original charm. This will ensure the integrity of the original artwork. The HLC group has worked with Lewis County First, a local non-profit group, to ensure cleanup efforts, brick walkway, graffiti removal, and other preservation efforts have been completed with the best historic preservation practices in mind. We are currently seeking grants and support in repointing the mason work on Bank Alley and other at-risk structures in downtown Weston. We are hopeful that this project will move forward in April 2022 once funding has been secured.

After repointing, we will seek funding to finalize the restoration project efforts. Lighting and other beautification efforts are underway to complete this project next year. This site was identified by the HLC, the City Council, and the Lewis County Blueprint Committee as an at-risk and significant preservation site in our downtown. We are on target and making progress on this project as projected.

Arnold Cemetery / Old Hill:

Weston's first city cemetery is 201 years old this year and has been in disrepair for decades. The fence has failed, headstones are broken, and some areas are unrecognizable as they once stood. This site has been classified as one of our target at-risk areas in our downtown and has focused on our efforts this year and will continue into next year. Anna Cardelli, Erico Cardelli, and Jamie Billman attended the preservation workshops offered by the Preservation Alliance of WV in Morgantown to learn proper techniques to preserve better Arnold Cemetery conducted by Atlas Preservation. The HLC is working with Monument Services out of Morgantown to create the following year's restoration plan for the entire cemetery site.

The HLC was awarded a grant by the WV Humanities Council that has provided three exhibit signs along our walking tour for Old Hill / Arnold Cemetery. The Weston Street Department installed these exhibits. These exhibits will educate the public about our history and preservation efforts for this site. Education and preservation have been identified as primary importance of the Weston HLC.

Meetings with Monument services, Preservation Alliance of West Virginia, and several local contractors have been conducted to create the preservation plan for the cemetery project. In addition, meetings were held with Nate Stanberry to review the condition of reservoir street, the primary access to the cemetery site, and repaving discussions. As a result, the HLC has requested the City of Weston consider repaving the access to the cemetery as an essential need for access to the site for both the residents on this street and patrons of the cemetery. This project is on the city's radar for spring of 2022, in addition to needed tree removal and site repairs.

Restoration has started on the Maxwell Family Plot, including cleaning, leveling, and reorientating headstones. The Maxwell family, towards these efforts, has supplied a private donation. The Maxwells also supplied important information for other site locations previously owned by their family on our historic walking tour. Unfortunately, due to weather, the completion of this plot has been delayed and will resume as weather permits in the spring of 2022.

Plot maps are in process and ongoing in 2022. We expect to have these completed to the best of our ability by the end of 2022. In addition, the HLC will be working with the Youngstown University to utilize ground penetrating radar on-site at the cemetery to help locate lost and unmarked graves. Soil samples were collected at the end of November 2021. This testing is being done in kind by Youngstown University and is vital to our preservation planning and process.

A fundraising effort will be a primary mechanism to complete needed work at the cemetery. This will include grants, fundraising, and family contributions. This cemetery has no residual income and is in urgent need of ongoing care and a fiscal plan.

This cemetery will feature its own Clio walking tour in 2022 and will continue to be a central focus of our preservation efforts. In addition, the cemetery will continue to be featured in our downtown historic walking tour. Another partnership priority that has been identified due to the efforts at this cemetery is the need for grants, funding, and support of the West Virginia Genealogy Library at Hackers Creek. HLC members are now actively engaged with HCPD and their efforts. This has been identified as a core alliance that needs to be fostered for the city and Lewis County and will be a focus of this group going forward. This alliance will serve both parties and help provide better preservation assurance to our community.

Columbia Club AKA Weston Cultural Center

The original Catholic church in Weston has been a local eyesore, a danger to our downtown and the residents who live near it. This year a grant was submitted and awarded by the WV Department of Arts, Culture, and History for the first restoration project on this at-risk building. This three-year grant process is a matching fund grant to be matched by Weston and other grant opportunities. This has been identified as one of our top priority locations downtown that needs immediate attention. An EPA site survey and report were completed and submitted on this project. An architectural firm has been secured to advise as the project moves forward to focus on restoring historic buildings. In 2021 the city worked with the previous owner to acquire the building and clean the facility of all debris. The first phase of this project includes planning for phases 2 and 3, safety measures needed to be addressed immediately to ensure the building is secure and surroundings are safe. While initiated in 2021, these projects will not be completed until 2024. The focus of 2022 will be to complete all phase one goals of the awarded grant, secure additional funds for the match, and plan and grant writing for phase two of the project. This facility will be a central location for an art and history center for all of Lewis County and is integral to our downtown restoration projects. Ongoing community programming has been organized and implemented at alternate locations during this construction process.

Significant efforts of 2022 will focus on completing phase one efforts to ensure the property is safe, secure funding for year two, and future humanities planning.

Municipal Building Façade Updates

In the spring of 2021, the City of Weston presented HLC with proposed paint color choices for the Municipal building and a selection of windows. It worked with HLC to ensure that they would complement the historical elements of the building. The HLC consulted with the state preservation office to find out more details before moving forward with window selection on this process. Recommendations were provided to the city to foster sound choices for both features. No request for certificate of appropriateness was presented or requested, and no certification process is currently in place through the city of this group. The windows are partially installed, and the building has not been scraped and repainted at the date of this writing. During ongoing masonry building evaluations in the city with the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia, severe foundation pointing issues have been identified on this building, including improper pointing and spalling.

Façade Grant Program

In the fall of 2021, the development of a façade grant program was outlined and drafted at the request of the Weston City Council. We hope to have this rolled out in early 2022 if a grant can be secured to carry out this project. Several grant opportunities have been identified and are currently being drafted for submission for this project. We hope to roll out this grant program in 2022 on a three-year trial program to ensure the preservation of our historic downtown. This program would offer home and business owners of historic structures in our downtown the opportunity to secure grants targeted at high-impact façade improvements.

Archival

A digitization preservation project was essential to our local and national history. This collection consists of original copies of the Weston Democrat for the past 164 years. In 2021 the HLC paid for one year from the mid-1930s to be digitally copied and preserved. This allowed us to preserve one year of publications identified as at risk while exploring the cost associated with completing this on a much larger scale for grant writing purposes. We want to digitalize all years of the historical newspapers; however, this will require a funding mechanism yet to be identified but in process. The American Museum of glass in West Virginia has asked for assistance in writing grants to obtain equipment to enable them in their archival efforts. This may bring collaborative opportunities in the community for projects like the one mentioned above. This will be the focus of 2022.

Infrastructure Improvements

Parking Signs

Free 2-hour parking signs were placed in our historic district. The HLC worked with the city on these efforts, but the city street department completed this project outside this group. A new free courtesy parking lot sign was designed and worked on by the HLC and the city of Weston. The City of Weston provided the funds for this project. We did have delays in the sign development due to delays in paint colors and materials needed to produce the sign. This was picked up and installed in the fall of 2021.

Parking Meter removal from historic downtown

In the efforts to improve Weston's walkable downtown, the removal of parking meters was spearheaded in 2020 and was an ongoing discussion between the city council and HLC until completion. This project was completed in 2021 by the city of Weston Street Department. A few posts still need to be removed, but these efforts are underway as availability permits.

Riverwalk

The Westfork Riverwalk project has been a high priority for HLC since 2020 and has been tabled by the City Manager until a strategic plan report has been completed. These efforts are underway, and we hope to move forward with the city on this project in 2022. The HLC as a group has expressed this project as integral for the future progress of our walkable historic downtown. A prior proposed drawing and design has been presented by Thrasher Engineer, who has several sound qualities. However, this plan needs to be re-evaluated to consider safety concerns with the street and play area and other details.

Historic Street Signs

Replacing the street signs in the downtown historic district was discussed throughout the year; however, funding for this project has not yet been secured. Other items that have been discussed in conjunction with this project include metal downtown benches as well as trashcans. This project needs funding to complete and is on our project list for 2022 if possible.

Bridge Lighting

Weston HLC worked in conjunction with Lewis County First, a local non-profit, to consult on the new bridge lighting in downtown Weston. Lewis County First and local electricians ordered and installed this lighting this year. These fixtures complement the historic nature of our downtown, and input was requested by this group when selecting these fixtures.

Zoning and Permitting

The Weston HLC is currently working with the Weston Planning Commission and the Weston City Council to develop a permit plan that enables us to protect our historic downtown business and residential assets without hindering zoning or permit wait times.

Education and Programming

The Smithsonian Crossroads Exhibit – Museum on Main Street

This exhibit was awarded through a West Virginia Humanities Council grant in 2020 in a partnership with Weston HLC and Planning Commission. The grant awarded a touring Smithsonian exhibit highlighting change in rural America. It would be hosted in Weston for six weeks. The exhibit had a bumpy start due to Covid-19 restrictions but officially came to Weston in October of 2021. It was to be on-site until November 14th. Due to an unforeseen covid related issue at another host site, the date was extended, and the exhibit was able to run through December 5th, 2021, in Weston. The

HLC has been provided with training throughout the year by the WV Humanities Council. The training helped ensure that this exhibit and our complementary offerings would benefit our community. In addition, we have been provided with a great deal of content and information to elaborate on future exhibits and program offers within our community.

The exhibit was housed at The American Museum of Glass in West Virginia on Main Ave in our historic downtown. Throughout the exhibit, we have offered a variety of complementary heritage events, roundtables, and exhibitions. (See attached event offerings for more details). The outcome of having the opportunity to have this exhibit in Weston has been profound for our community on a scale much more significant than we had even anticipated.

The glass museum experienced a significant uptick in attendance to the museum. As a result, the local K-12 were able to tour the exhibit and the museum on a comprehensive school initiative for the first time. In conjunction, they could also tour the local military museum located in downtown Weston as part of the field trip. This provided a no-cost field trip opportunity to the students while immersing them in their local and national history.

A heritage music in the park was held, and due to the favorable response, several community members have reached out to the HLC and requested to hold it as a regular event.

A living history weekend was held. The HLC's goal is to make this repeatable as an annual event to improve each year. The 2021 event had a reenactment of 1861, National Exchange Bank of Virginia Robbery. A civil war period tea party focused on tea etiquette and importance. A living history encampment was set up at Holt Square and offered patrons an example of life in a civil war encampment.

HLC with Trans-Allegany Lunatic asylum conducted a History of Mental Health Round table that established regular ongoing meetings after this exhibit's first event.

A heritage fiber arts demonstration was held with local artists in our community who could come out and share their art and provide demonstrations of spinning, tatting, and other fiber crafts and give local and craft-specific history.

The Lewis County high school Theater group, put on a play written by a local woman about the life of workers in the factories in Lewis County during WWII. This play was held at our historic Masonic Temple and was available as a free theater production open to the public. Three performances were held in town and were well attended by the public.

Square dancing demonstration and educational event were held as a part of heritage dance exhibition. The ongoing weekly event already in town has seen an increase in younger people attending the dances after the event was held and a new interest after months of not participating due to the pandemic.

The teardown and transfer of this event were completed on 12/5/21 by several members of this HLC and volunteers from Arthurdale, who then transported the exhibit to their location.

The final report for this exhibit has been completed and submitted to the Smithsonian and the WV Humanities Council.

Clio walking Tour / Walking tour Exhibits

A forty-stop Clio walking tour has been created <https://www.theclio.com/tour/1774> online, and in conjunction with our crossroads exhibit, we have created a guided tour version that can be given during special events or at scheduled times during the year. This program we hope to retain regular volunteers for and establish as a regular opportunity for those visiting the community. In addition, HLC was awarded a grant to provide interpretive exhibits along the walking tour route, which began installation on 11/4/2021. Unfortunately, these signs had a significant delay in getting them in place due to Covid-19, but we were excited that the majority were in place in time for our crossroads exhibit. These exhibits provide an insight others would not have into our local history and give a more enriching experience on our historic downtown walking tour. In addition, we have created a print version of this tour for those who do not have access to a smartphone, and it is available at the glass museum.

The historic home tour is currently underway, divided up by wards, civil war tours, and cemetery tours. These will all be in the process, hopefully, complete in 2022.

We have created a fun architectural scavenger hunt for those taking a tour in downtown Weston that has been available for visitors who have come to the crossroads exhibit.

Woman Suffrage Exhibit

This grant was applied for through the HLC and awarded and placed on-site at Trans-Allegany Lunatic Asylum in 2021 and is available for free access to all who visit the site and details the impactful woman suffrage in our community.

The Alexander Wither's Exhibit

This landmark was destroyed by a vehicle and has been replaced. The HLC has worked with Lewis County First on the new site location for the replacement sign.

Grants Awarded

WV Humanities Council

Walking Tour Exhibit Grant \$7,998.00

ARP Grant \$16,000

Crossroads Smithsonian Exhibit \$3,000 + Exhibit

WV Division of Arts, Culture, and History

Columbia Club Grant Phase 1 \$46,669.88

Preservation Alliance of WV

AmeriCorps – Awarded 1 FTE for one year term.

Woman Suffrage Exhibit - awarded Exhibit

SEImpact logo creation Logo completion no cost

Grant's Applied – Pending

Pending Grant applications

Marketing Support for the Humanities - Weston Multi-Cultural Facilities grant project (submitted) \$7,000

American Water - WV Woman and Veterans exhibition series - (submitted) \$2,500

Programs in the works:

HLC Quarterly Newsletter release Q1 2022

Historic Makers Program to identify historically significant buildings

Goals for 2022

These goals will guide the group's efforts for the following year. In addition, these goals represent our immediate needs for preservation and programming.

Identify & Prioritize Historical Resources- Update resource survey of historic district site survey by ward

- Riverwalk Planning
- Façade Grant Implementation
- Weston Cultural Center
- HLC Mini Building

Incentive Programs

Work closely with the city council to rehabilitate while discouraging demolition of any historic resources. This includes developing a façade grant in conjunction with the city council's wishes. In addition, help council identify funding mechanisms for programming.

Marketing

Increase awareness about HLC efforts, preservation efforts, and educational programming.

Work with property owners to realize the benefits of being added to the registry for those not on it that should be.

Maintain social media presents and capital campaign fundraising presence online

Quarterly informational newsletter to promote the efforts of the city and the HLC.

Completion of phase one of Weston Cultural Center and grant funding applications for phase two

- Identify grants and funding to meet goal needs
- Strengthen partnership with community organizations

Clearly defined process working with the city council and planning to preserve our historic buildings with continuity.

Preservation By the Numbers:

The city has submitted zero permits for review to the HLC in the 2021 calendar year as of 12/31/21. This number is discouraging in our preservation efforts. The HLC is currently trying to work with the City Council, the City Manager, and the Building Inspector to realize the importance of preserving historic places and structures. This is one of our major at-risk factors that need to be resolved soon as several buildings on the register will have to be removed during this survey cycle due to approved changes made by the city that have disproportionately harmed the historical integrity of the buildings. One of these homes was one of only a handful of great examples of Tudor-style construction left in our historic district. These detrimental façade changes have removed all Tudor characters from the structure. The HLC hopes to bridge this gap and ensure that a team effort approach can be taken that will not slow down the permit process but will help maintain our historic places.

Upon the request of the HLC, the building inspector provided information on the already approved new construction plans for the new United Bank building. Unfortunately, it is not in line with a historical downtown, and little to no consideration was made during their approval process. We want to use this example as a learning experience for both the HLC and the City to ensure the downtown's historic integrity. We hope to partner with the city this year to bridge this gap for the future permit process. In addition, we have zoning in place that states the new structure must fit in with historic buildings, which was again not followed or considered when permit approval was issued.

Survey Plan 2022

HLC plans for 2022 to resurvey Weston in its entirety for the purposes of updating both historic districts in town as well as assessing for any structures that are newly eligible. An easy-to-use sheet will be created for volunteers that are less familiar with guidelines that need to be followed and how to properly fill out HPI, nomination or survey forms. Information to be obtained through this surveying process is:

1. Structural integrity of the site
2. The feeling and association of the site
3. A photo of the site
4. Materials of the site
5. Any noticeable modern additions and alterations

With this information gathered, someone who is familiar with site documentation will be able to input it properly into the appropriate forms. Similarly, this information can be compared to the previous documentation to judge the historical integrity of the site and whether it should remain listed as part of the historic districts or not.

The plan for the resurvey is to assign streets to volunteers based on location and necessity. These assignments will be created by the HLC and distributed accordingly. The plan is to set deadlines to finish the resurveying of Weston's ward 1 by the end of Q1, ward 2 by end of Q2, etc. This will allow the resurveying of the town to happen in a timely manner.

In addition to the resurveying of the town, the Old Hill/Arnold Cemetery will also be resurveyed and redocumented by the end of the year. As with the documents for the historic districts, there has been little to no update to the Old Hill Cemetery documents since the 90s. Both the city and cemetery have seen significant changes since the previous documentations of these sites.

The resurveying of these locations is paramount. With the upcoming review of the Comprehensive Plan and potential new Comprehensive Plan this information would allow the Historic District to be better taken into consideration in any planning. Furthermore, with these sites properly documented new funding opportunities become available, which will allow for restoration and revitalization to take place.