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## Stopping Losses

The September/October issue of the National Trust's *Forum News* provides a solution to a problem we experience here in Greensboro in a weekly basis.

The *Forum News* states "It has long been a cause of frustration for preservation advocates, and misunderstanding by the public, that there are no formal preservation protections for properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places."

Residents of Greensboro wonder aloud how can a building of national significance be destroyed, when a building of local significance (designed through a local landmark or district program) be denied demolition? Doesn't that seem backwards?

Well, sure it does!

At this time, any building listed in Greensboro on the National Register of Historic Places can be destroyed with no advanced permission (aside from a standard demolition permit). Examples of lost National Register properties abound, including The Mantleworks on South Elm Street (right), and a charming bungalow on Arlington Street. Both buildings were listed on the National Register, and both were destroyed without delay.



How can this be so? It seems that it is easier to pass stringent local laws regulating destruction of historic places than stringent national laws and regulations. What is acceptable in North Carolina

may be unacceptable in Texas. Our state, it seems, can count itself as one of the more progressive states of the union in terms of passing legislation to delay or deny destruction of historic landmarks.

Destruction of buildings that are locally designated landmarks, or located within locally designated historic districts, can be

delayed for 365 days in order to provide a “cooling off period” to determine alternatives to destruction. This tool has been used in Greensboro as recently as 2006, when the Margaret Gay House was relocated from North Elm Street to West Bessemer Avenue (right).



Alternatives to the destruction of historic resources are out there, however, it is the will of the community that turns these alternatives to reality.

A Hartford (CT) preservation ordinance, which took effect in December 2006, solves the problem efficiently. It requires that properties within the city listed on the National Register of Historic Places, individually or as part of a historic district, undergo the same design review as locally designated properties. The nonprofit Hartford Preservation Alliance has partnered with the city to present workshops introducing the ordinance, and will soon lead a training program for building contractors who work on historic properties.

Closer to home, New Bern and Statesville have made strides in closing the demolition gap.

On August 14th, New Bern’s Board of Aldermen [adopted](#) an ordinance to require permits before demolishing structures within their historic district. In order to gain approval, the application must be reviewed to meet standards that include: architectural integrity, style, superior craftsmanship, the building merit as part of a significant group, or the building’s cultural significance.

Last year the North Carolina General Assembly gave New Bern authority to adopt the ordinance. The Historic Preservation Commission and the city planning and zoning board both provided favorable recommendations that the aldermen adopt the requirement for a permit.

A similar ordinance was [passed](#) in Statesville, requiring approval by Statesville City Council for the demolition of structures within historic districts. The applicant must first submit an application for review by the Historic Preservation Commission. Based on the application the Commission submits a recommendation to City Council. City Council then renders a decision on the requested demolition.

Examples exist for Greensboro to follow. History and architecture are features that define the city against cross-state rivals as a great place to live, work, and shop. Where there is a will, there is a way.

Written by Benjamin Briggs

***Preservation Greensboro contributes a key role in the growth of Greensboro’s economy and vitality through tourism, reinvestment, and place-making. With diverse initiatives that help you to restore, explore, and connect with your community, Preservation Greensboro provides a voice for revitalization, improved quality of life, and conservation of historic resources for future generations. Are you a member yet? Learn more about Greensboro’s***

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Categories: City Planning, Lost Greensboro By Benjamin Briggs September 6, 2007

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