





# Historic Preservation

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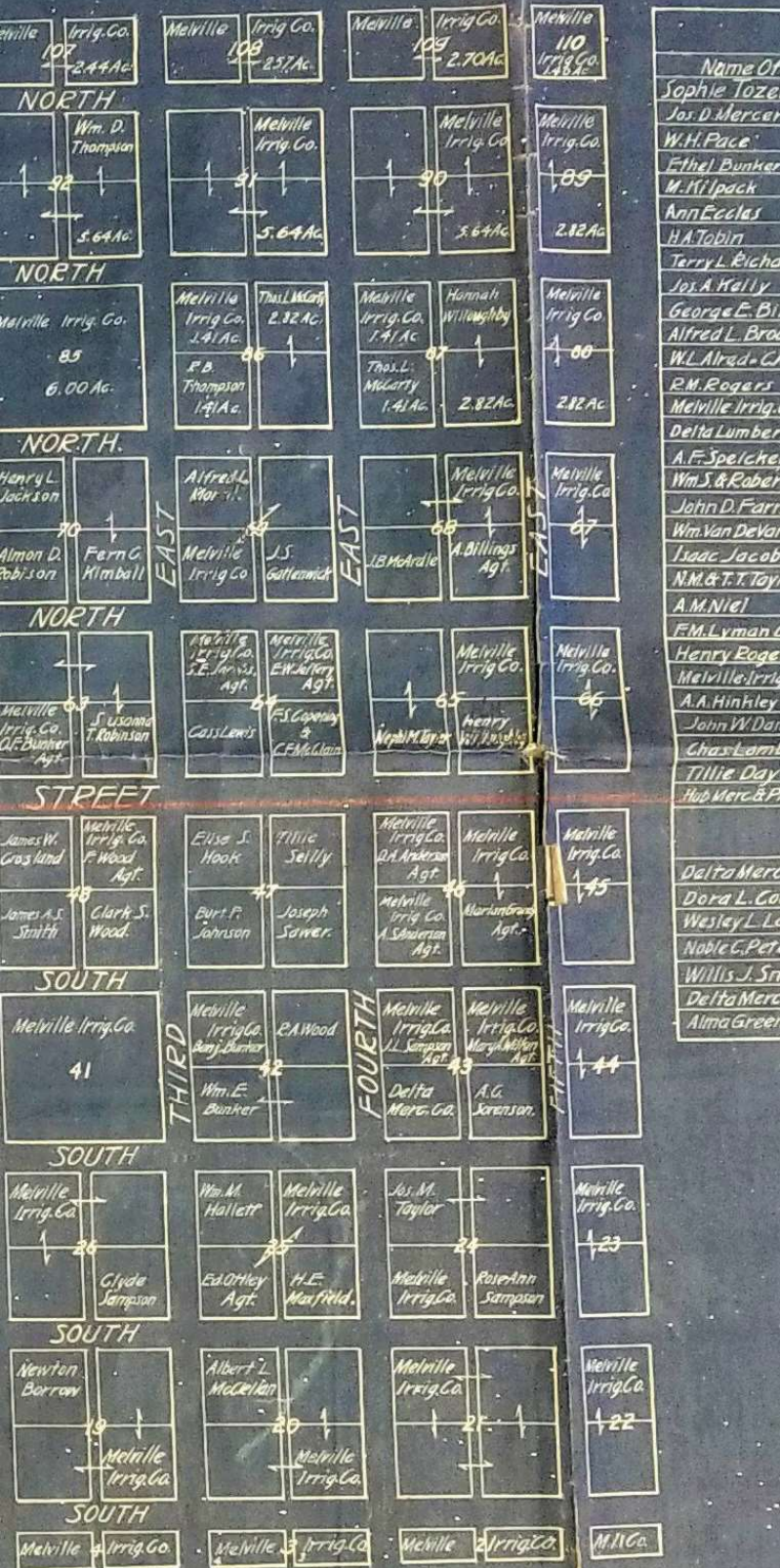
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# Delta City General Plan

## 2.1 Overview

### 2.1.1 Introduction

Although this chapter's first consideration is the past, the future is the focus of this General Plan. As such, Delta's founding, history, and significant places will be considered here to provide context for the Plan as a whole. Additionally, the chapter will discuss the creation of places that future residents will want to preserve and cherish.

The historic preservation movement as it exists today began in 19th century Europe as various schools of thought began to consider the maintenance of their communities. Although there were, and still are, many opinions and philosophies when it comes to historic preservation, the common thread is that the past is far from irrelevant.

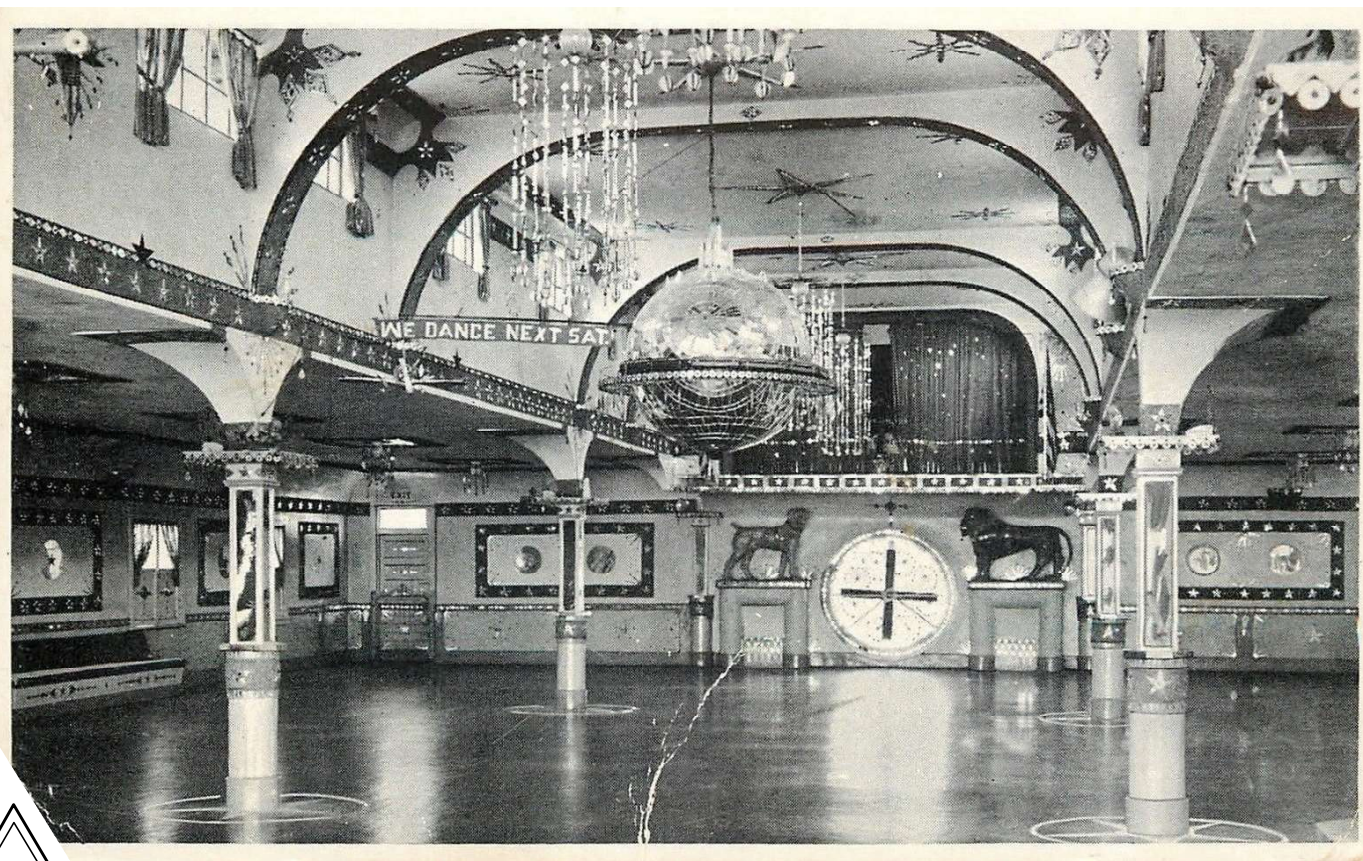
Since the movement's beginnings, historic preservation has also been concerned with the future. After all, the places created today are the future's history. John Ruskin, a 19th century preservationist, expressed it well when he said,

"Therefore, when we build, let us think that we build for ever. Let it not be for present delight, nor for present use alone; let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them,

and that men will say as they look upon the labor and wrought substance of them, 'See! This our fathers did for us.' for, indeed, the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, or in its gold. Its glory is in its Age."

The reverence for family history in the state of Utah is a prime example of the cultural importance of remembering shared heritage. Although Delta is one of the older cities in Utah, its remote location and small population have kept it from creating a great number of historic sites. Van's Dance Hall is on the National Register of Historic Places, and the nearby Topaz Internment Camp is a National Historic Landmark. These and other places in and near Delta will be discussed later in this chapter, as will opportunities for the maintenance and improvement of these sites.

As part of the process of writing this General Plan, the public's input was sought through survey and public meetings. Responses and comments relevant to historic preservation have been included later in the chapter. The goals discussed later in this chapter provide Delta direction for its preservation of significant landmarks and places while also emphasizing the importance of creating new aspects of the community that will be valued by future residents. To achieve these goals, the Approach and Opportunities section will discuss the principles and philosophies associated with historic preservation, as well as strategies that can be implemented by various members of the community.





## 2.2 Historic Sites

### 2.2.1 Van's Dance Hall

Once voted the best dance hall in America, Van's Dance Hall is the place many love stories began from the 1930s all the way through to its closure in the 1960s. Famous more for what it was than what it is today, the dance hall sits empty but intact, with Delta residents hoping to restore it to its former glory. Several attempts to restore the site have been made, but none have been successful. The location is on the National Register of Historic Places.

### 2.2.2 Topaz Internment Camp



Originally called the Central Utah Relocation Center, the Topaz War Relocation Center held people of Japanese ancestry from 11 September 1942 to 31 October 1945. Although conditions there were not abject, it is still a mark of shame from World War II that should not be forgotten. The camp was not within city limits, however it is in close proximity, and Delta currently houses a museum associated with the camp. The site of the camp is a National Historic Landmark and is on the National Historic Register of Places

### 2.2.3 Cemeteries

There is one cemetery within Delta, the Delta Cemetery. The facility is operated by the Delta-Sutherland-Oasis Cemetery-Districts, not Delta City. As such, the City cannot assert direct influence. Still, a cemetery's purpose is remembrance of the past by its nature. Thus, this site should be grouped with historically significant places.

### 2.2.4 Museums

The two museums in Delta are the Topaz Museum and the Great Basin Historical Society Museum. The Topaz Museum focuses on the Topaz Internment Camp that existed just west of Delta during World War II. Delta has taken great care to preserve the lands and legacy

of Japanese Americans relocated to Topaz Internment Camp during World War II. The camp's buildings were cleared after the war, but the desertscape where it stood still bears the marks of its use. The museum preserves artifacts and stories of the internees that lived at Topaz. Many of the camp's buildings were purchased by Delta residents and can be seen on a driving tour available at the museum.

The Great Basin Museum's purpose is to teach visitors about the area and Great Basin using historic objects and photos to tell the stories of Delta's past. The museum also showcases geodes, trilobites, and fossils.

### 2.2.5 Homes

Although many of the older homes within the City are difficult to preserve due to issues with cost, code violations, and structural integrity, some homes of particular significance still ought to be maintained whenever possible. One example is the Bird House. Dr. Myron Bird was the only physician in the Great Basin area for much of his life and as such was an important figure in the community throughout the 20th century.

### 2.2.6 Community Events

Every year, thousands of snow geese fly over Delta on their annual 3,000-mile migration back to Canada. Delta is situated along the route from their California winter home and hosts the Delta Snow Goose Festival during the February migration. Associated activities include the Wild Goose Chase 5K or 10K, observing the snow geese, and visiting a craft and quilt fair put on by local artisans.

### 2.2.7 Aspects of the Community

Finally, the physical nature of the community itself contributes to its history. Compared to many communities in Utah, there is very little sprawling growth in Delta. Instead, the densest areas are still near the center of town. This aspect of the City helps preserve the identity of Delta and helps prevent long-term blight that can result from economic downturns. Additionally, a compact and easily identifiable downtown reinforces cultural associations with the golden age of the American small town. Thus, it is not surprising that the community wishes to preserve this characteristic of Delta.

## 2.3 Public Input

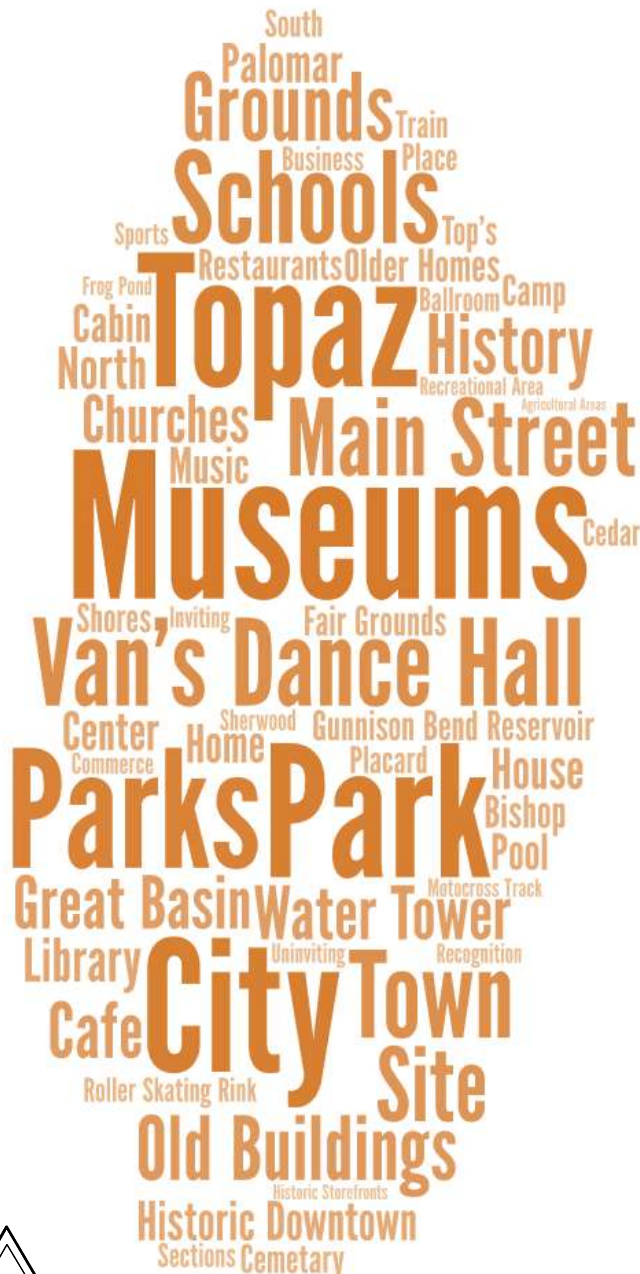
Collecting and addressing public input in the drafting of a General Plan is integral to the success of the Plan and the community. Ideas and goals that are created using resident input are far more likely to come to fruition than those that are formed without public participation. Throughout the writing process of Delta City's General Plan, residents, property and business owners, and developers were asked to share their

## Delta City General Plan

thoughts, recommendations, and desires for the future of the City. The following subsections explain the methods used to obtain this feedback and the accompanying results. Although some of the information and feedback gleaned from resident input has already been synthesized into previous sections and subsections of this chapter, it is also included here for clarity.

Over the course of the creation of this General Plan, there were six public meetings. During the first two meetings, the executive committee discussed what they would like to see in the vision statement and goals. After drafting a vision statement and element goals, two more meetings provided opportunities for individual residents

*Figure 2.3.1.1 : Q15 - What places in Delta City have historic or cultural significance to you?*



to give insight, feedback, and comments to the BYU team. A survey was then conducted to gather further public input. In the final two meetings, after hearing public comment, the Plan was recommended to and adopted by the City Council. All public input relevant to this chapter has been included below.

### 2.3.1 Survey Data

A survey composed by the BYU team and the Executive Committee was dispersed to Delta residents, business owners, and property owners via social media and water bills. Of the estimated 3,478 people currently living in Delta (as per the American Community Survey's 2017 data), 193 residents, or 5.5%, participated in the survey. Consequently, it should be acknowledged that data summarized in this subsection represents the insights of a small portion of Delta's population and may not be proportionally representative of the opinions of the community as a whole. The survey question pertaining to historic preservation in Delta was Question 15, "What places in Delta City have historic or cultural significance to you?"

Of the nearly 200 respondents to the survey, 110 answered the question while 83 left the section blank. Nine respondents indicated "nothing" or "none"; however, reading these responses individually showed that some simply had not lived in Delta long enough to be familiar with local history. Locations common to the responses were Van's Dance Hall, the museums, the Topaz camp, downtown, Main Street, Parks, and the homes of significant members of the community. A summary of the responses is displayed in Figure 2.3.1.1.

### 2.3.2 Public Meetings

This section summarizes resident comments from each of the public input meetings held at the Community Center on Main Street. Those who attended were encouraged to provide feedback on goal statements, idea lists, questions, and maps drafted for each of the eight General Plan elements. A scanned image of the historic preservation map used at these meetings can be seen on page 10 (Figure 2.3.1).

At the two primary public input sessions, comments on historic preservation fell largely into two camps. One group felt that there was little worth preserving in Delta; old buildings were not worth keeping, and the new ones lack quality and meaning. The other group felt that there were several sites worth preserving and that new construction should be held to higher standards than it has been in the past.

## 2.4 Goals

Delta's community vision is to foster a thriving city by preserving Delta's heritage, expanding the local economy, and facilitating a sense of community. Pursuing

the goals below will help accomplish the community's vision by preserving historically significant places and properties in Delta while encouraging the creation of places that will be considered significant to subsequent residents. These goals are further supported by the strategies found in the Approach and Opportunities section of the chapter.

**GOAL 1: ENCOURAGE THE PRESERVATION OF DELTA'S HERITAGE THROUGH THE RESTORATION AND RENOVATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND SPACES.**

**GOAL 2: PROMOTE THE CREATION OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND SPACES THAT WILL CONTINUE TO BE VALUED BY FUTURE GENERATIONS.**

## 2.5 Approach and Opportunities

The overarching purpose of a General Plan is to help the community achieve its vision. Although the historic preservation chapter's primary focus within the community is to preserve Delta's heritage, it can also play a vital role in strengthening the local economy and sense of community. History, stories, and character naturally draw people to the City. Some of the greatest tourist cities in the world are also some of the oldest: Rome, Paris, Cairo, and London are all excellent examples of this. Closer to home, another example is Provo's Center Street. The early 20th century brick buildings, wide sidewalks, and established trees bring thousands of people to just a few blocks on warm summer nights.

This section suggests strategies intended to help individual parties work together to achieve community goals. Each goal is discussed individually, considering community planning principles, public input, and potential opportunities that the City may choose to explore in order to ensure maximum effectiveness. The subsequent tables designate responsibilities and actions to individual parties.

### 2.5.1 Goal 1: Encourage the preservation of Delta's heritage through the restoration and renovation of historic buildings and spaces.

One of the overarching projects that must be accomplished ahead of other historic preservation projects is the establishment of standards outlining what qualifies as historically significant and what restrictions or easing of code will be applied to those structures or places. The process of drafting these legislations should be highly collaborative between residents, business owners, developers, the Planning Commission, the City Council, the Mayor, and other City Staff. In many communities, those most familiar with the history of the community are not active participants in government. Seeking extensive

public engagement will produce documents that accurately reflect the values of the residents.

Once standards have been established, residents can continue to participate in historic preservation by renovating or rehabilitating aging structures as well as by forming a historic preservation committee. Business owners can also participate by adapting buildings near the core of the City.

Unfortunately, the processes of historic preservation can be financially restrictive for residents and businesses alike. To incentivize the reuse of significant buildings, the City can ease or adapt building standards, expedite the review and approval processes for historic structures, or reduce taxation on properties.

There are several reasons to make historic preservation a priority. As discussed elsewhere in this plan, focusing development in the center of a city fosters long-term stability. Rehabilitating older buildings reduces the use of construction materials while preventing unnecessary waste. Additionally, a number of residents expressed interest in historic places and a desire to see them maintained.

### 2.5.2 Goal 2: Promote the creation of public buildings and spaces that will continue to be valued by future generations.

A sentiment that was expressed in the public input process is that there is little in Delta worth preserving for its history. Such a condition is not uncommon since much of what has been built in the United States since World War II has not been built to last more than 25 years. However, having a built environment that endures for greater timespans frees up funds in an economy that would otherwise be used on new construction. This wealth grows over time, stabilizes individuals and families, and strengthens communities.

The trade off involved with building long-lasting structures is that construction costs are typically higher. Thus, to offset these issues, cities can provide tax benefits or other incentives to make construction that fits the community vision more closely. However, some aspects, such as design language, have less to do with economics and more to do with government using its long-term planning to produce a more cohesive community. Form-based zoning code is one way in which the City can ensure that new construction, as well as historic preservation, creates an environment that is visually pleasing now and that can withstand the test of time. Simple things, such as bringing buildings up closer to the roads, planting street trees, and providing benches or trash cans create places where residents will want to spend time. The result is a more connected community, increased patronage of local businesses, and improved resident well-being.



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<b>RESIDENTS</b>	<b>BUSINESS OWNERS AND DEVELOPERS</b>	<b>PLANNING COMMISSION</b>	<b>CITY COUNCIL</b>	<b>MAYOR</b>
Coordinate the creation of a standard for determining historic significance				
Seek grants for historic preservation projects				
Renovate historic homes	Utilize historic buildings for new businesses	Identify and keep a record of historically significant locations and structures		
		Develop zoning language to protect places identified as historically significant		
		Incentivize residents and businesses to repurpose and utilize historic structures		
Support businesses that repurpose historic structures	Focus business in the historic downtown	Relax current requirements for restoration projects	Commission an official documentation of the history of Delta	
		Codify a historic district		
		Expedite plan review for restoration projects		

*Table 2.5.1.1: Historic Preservation Goal 1 Approach and Opportunities*

<b>RESIDENTS</b>	<b>BUSINESS OWNERS AND DEVELOPERS</b>	<b>PLANNING COMMISSION</b>	<b>CITY COUNCIL</b>	<b>MAYOR</b>
Refrain from new construction where possible until other available structures are actively occupied.		Create a form based code that encourages a mix of uses and high quality construction		
		Improving incentives to develop in the downtown area		
		Prioritize development of Delta's historic downtown over expansion into undeveloped areas		
		Add language to the zoning code to regulate the upkeep of public spaces		

*Table 2.5.2.1: Historic Preservation Goal 2 Approach and Opportunities*







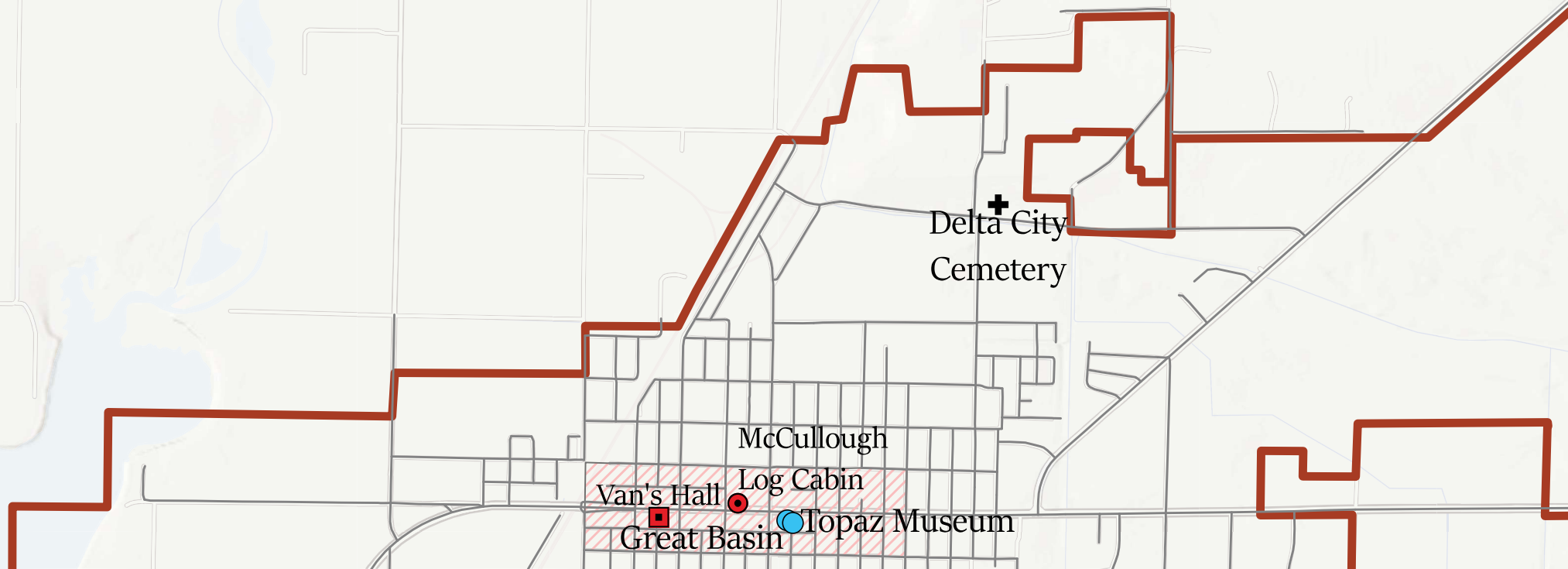
**MAP 2.1:  
HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION  
SITES**

Historic Preservation:  
Sites and Potential Historic District

- National Register of Historic Places
- Other Historic Sites
- ✚ Cemetery
- Museums
- ▨ Potential Historic District
- Roads
- ▭ Town Boundary



Topaz Internment Camp Site, 14 Miles



Delta City  
Cemetery

McCullough

Van's Hall  
Great Basin  
Log Cabin  
Topaz Museum