



LOCAL LANDMARK DISTRICT DESIGNATION

Frequently Asked Questions

DISTRICT DESIGNATION

Do I have any say in whether my neighborhood is designated as a historic district?

Yes. Public comment is an important part of the designation process. By law, property owners in a proposed local historic district must be notified of the proposal so that they may testify in favor or against any designation during the required public hearings.

Are all buildings within a historic district necessarily historic?

No. A historic district is comprised of two (2) different types of properties; contributing and non-contributing. Contributing properties generally add to the historic significance of the district by their location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and association, while non-contributing properties lack the qualities embodied in the criteria for designation of the district.

Can a property owner “opt out” of being included in a local historic district?

No. After the public hearings are held and a local historic district is officially designated, it must follow the standards and guidelines created by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and National Park Service. These guidelines for determining historic district boundaries indicate that boundaries are based on geography, integrity and the significance of the resource, not on political boundaries or ownership and that “donut holes” cannot be cut in the district to intentionally exclude properties.

Can an individual property be designated?

Yes. The property to be designated should be 50 years old or older, and noteworthy for its design or construction techniques, for its information potential, or its association with a significant person or event. A historic structure must also retain its physical integrity and be a good example of period architecture, including quality in design, materials and workmanship for the period, unless the structure proposed for designation is associated with a significant person or event.

My property is already an individually designated local landmark. Is there any difference between having a property individually designated and being designated as part of a district? What additional impact will the local landmark district have on me?

None. The protections and benefits are equally applied regardless of whether a property is listed individually or is a contributing resource within a historic district.

If you are an owner of property in the Detroit Hotel (215 Central Avenue) or the Binnie-Bishop Hotel (256 1st Avenue North), then the designation of the block as a historic district would have no additional impact on you. The Detroit Hotel was designated as a local historic landmark in March 2010, while the Binnie-Bishop Hotel was designated in August 2013. As such, both properties are currently subject to exterior design review of alterations through the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process. That review will not change if the proposed district is designated.

Do I have to open my building to the public?

No. Many historic districts around the country offer historic open house tours, but individual participation is always voluntary.

What type of technical assistance can I receive in preserving my property?

The Urban Planning & Historic Preservation Division provides professional staff support to the Community Planning and Preservation Commission (“Commission”) and can assist property owners in solving problems typically encountered by historic property owners in the maintenance of their property.

MAINTENANCE and RESTORATION

Once my property is included in a local historic district, do I have to restore it to the way it was when it was originally built?

No. The purpose of local historic district designation is to retain as much of the original historic material that existed in the district at the time it was designated, while still making the structure comfortable and useful for modern living.

Can I renovate my property?

Yes. The Commission encourages historically appropriate rehabilitation, which is one of the main purposes of the historic tax exemption. As such, a Certificate of Appropriateness is required for typical *exterior* rehabilitation. A Certificate of Appropriateness is not required for minor maintenance, which is defined as maintenance that does not change the exterior appearance, design or materials, and which does not require a permit. A Certificate of Appropriateness Matrix ([LINK, Starting page 4 of 8](#)) has been developed indicating whether certain improvements require no review, staff review, or public hearing review. The Commission and the City Council are jointly considering

new amendments to further streamline review procedures that will decrease the number of public hearing reviews.

How do I apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness?

An application will be provided by the Planning & Historic Preservation Division of the Planning and Economic Development Department. Any necessary photographs and drawings will be submitted with the application to provide staff with enough information to process the request. Those applications eligible for staff review will be reviewed timely in order to keep the project moving forward. Those applications requiring Commission review per the COA Matrix, will be processed for the next available public hearing.

Is work on the interior of a building reviewed by the Commission?

No. The Commission only reviews work to the exterior of the structure. If the proposed work on the interior will affect the exterior, such as rearranging the floor plan in such a manner that will result in the closing of a window opening or relocating an exterior door, you may have to show the CPPC the plans in order to explain why the changes are being made to the exterior.

Does staff or the Commission review work done on the back of the building or on other areas that cannot otherwise be seen from the street?

Yes. A review is conducted for any work to the exterior of the building, without distinguishing the location of the work. As noted in the Certificate of Appropriateness Matrix, depending upon the work to be accomplished, the review may simply be a staff review.

My building is a “non-contributing” structure. Do I need my rehabilitation reviewed for appropriateness?

Yes. A review is conducted on all work to the exterior of all properties within the historic district. A “non-contributing” structure is one which is less than 50 years old or a building greater than 50 years old which has lost its historical integrity and therefore is listed as “non-contributing” on the historical survey. The primary focus of review is to ensure that improvements that affect size, massing and placement do not adversely affect adjacent resources and those within the district overall. According to the Certificate of Appropriateness Matrix, most rehabilitations to “non-contributing” structures only require a staff review and can be processed quickly.

Can the Commission tell me what color to paint my building?

No. Typically, paint is viewed as a temporary application that does not damage original material, and therefore is not regulated. The Commission and staff would, as part of their duties, provide guidance to any property owner who requested assistance in choosing a historically appropriate color for their structure.

Will my yard be affected?

No. Landscaping is not subject to historic review. However, site walls and fences are subject to staff review, as are decks, patios and structures such as pergolas and sheds.

What if I want to demolish my structure?

Owners of all properties within the City are required to obtain a demolition permit from the Construction Services and Permitting Division prior to demolishing any portion of a building. Structures within a historic district must also first obtain approval from the Commission.

FINANCIAL BENEFITS, INCENTIVES, TAXES and INSURANCE

Will local historic designation hurt my property values?

Property values are determined by a variety of market factors, including influences extending beyond historic preservation. A number of states across the country, including Florida, Michigan, Texas, Georgia, Wisconsin and Virginia have conducted studies comparing property values in a designated local historic district to property values in a comparable non-designated district. While these studies generally show consistency or improvement in overall property values, many of them are comparing residential properties or districts. Consequently, many of these studies did not comparatively measure or take into consideration the amount or scale of unused development potential that exists on properties located within this proposed local historic landmark district. For these reasons, it is difficult to measure with any level of accuracy, the perceived or real impact on overall property values at this time.

For more information:

“Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in Florida, Update 2010.”

http://dos.myflorida.com/media/32432/economic_impact_executive_summary_2010_pdf.pdf

Are there tax breaks available to property owners in local historic districts?

Yes. The granting of tax exemptions to owners who make improvements to historic properties was authorized under Florida law in 1992. Pinellas County subsequently adopted an ordinance making provisions for an Ad Valorem Tax exemption (AVT) under state law. The City of St. Petersburg has entered into an interlocal agreement with Pinellas County to allow for these tax breaks. The program provides an exemption from tax increases on the improvements to historic properties for City and County Ad Valorem taxes for up to a ten (10) year period. The exemptions for historic properties are intended for the physical improvements necessary to restore or rehabilitate the historic structure, which may also include additions or alterations. All improvements must be pre-approved.

Will local designation make my property taxes go up?

No. Property taxes are tied to real estate values. Property taxes for buildings within historic districts are taxed no differently than those outside the district.

Does being designated historic affect my ability to obtain/maintain insurance?

No. In speaking with several historic preservation planners, the insurance on the property is not affected by the property being designated historic, because in a catastrophic event, the property owner is not required to build the structure back identically to its original construction, complete with period fixtures, materials and construction techniques.

Can I lease out my building?

Yes. Any previous legal use of the property permitted under the existing zoning district is still allowed.

Will I have difficulty selling my property because of the historic designation?

The ability to sell property is contingent upon a variety of factors; designation is one factor among many important considerations. Some buyers may consciously choose to avoid designated properties, whereas other buyers will actively and exclusively pursue individual local landmarks and local historic landmark districts.

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