

Criteria for Landmark & Historic District Nomination & Designation

The Historic Preservation Commission considers the following criteria for designating historic districts:

1. A significant number of buildings, structures, sites, or objects meeting any of the standards required for historic landmark status (see below).
2. An area containing a contiguous grouping of properties having a sense of cohesiveness expressed through a similarity of characteristics of style, period, or method of construction .
3. An area of sufficient historical integrity to convey a sense of time and place.

The following criteria are considered for historic landmarks:

1. Significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political, or social heritage of the nation, state, or community.
2. Associated with an important person or event in national, state, or local history.
3. Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type, inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity.
4. Notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area.
5. Identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics.
6. Its character is a particularly fine example of a utilitarian structure, including but not limited to, farmhouses, gas stations, or other commercial structures with a high level of integrity or architectural significance.
7. Areas that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Benefits of Preservation

Economic Incentives:

- ◆ The *Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit* is a 20% federal tax credit on certified historic commercial or rental structures that are properly rehabbed.
- ◆ Property owners within the district may also be eligible for the *State's Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program*.
- ◆ *City of Urbana Building Permit Fee Waiver:* the Building Official may waive building permit fees for locally designated historic landmarks and structures in locally designated historic districts.

Other incentives for historic preservation include:

- ◆ The conservation and protection of the historic integrity and significance of local buildings and neighborhoods within the City.
- ◆ Research shows that historic landmarks and districts rise in property value faster than normal property values.
- ◆ Major attraction for new residents, tourists, and economic development

Historic Preservation Commission

Meetings of the Commission are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. All interested residents are invited and encouraged to attend and participate.

For More Information Contact:

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The Urbana Historic Preservation Ordinance

UNDERSTANDING LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT & DESIGNATIONS

Quick answers to Commonly Asked Questions about Urbana's Local Historic Designations



Community Development Services
Planning Division
July 2009



A Simple Guide to Understanding Historic Preservation



Q What is a historic resource?

A A “historic resource” in Urbana helps establish our town’s unique quality. Physical settings enable us to tell stories about our pasts and cultures. From schools to houses, public libraries to storefronts, our built environment and community looks the way it does because of the people who came before us!

Q What is the purpose of historic preservation?

A The Urbana Historic Preservation Plan has five primary goals:

- ◆ Promoting the preservation of Urbana’s historic resources, including, sites, structures, objects, and historic districts
- ◆ Preserving Urbana’s historic downtown buildings and facades
- ◆ Encouraging economic development through investment in historic resources
- ◆ Preserving the character of historic neighborhoods
- ◆ Fostering an understanding and civic pride in Urbana’s history and architecture

Q What is a historic landmark?

A When a property or structure becomes a historic landmark in Urbana, it is because it has historic or architectural significance to our community. Landmark status preserves the property for the future by encouraging its preservation and renovation.



Q Can anyone nominate my property for landmark or historic district designation?

A Anyone may nominate a property for landmark or a historic district designation. In the case of historic districts nominations must include a signed petition with the consent of *at least* 25% of all property owners within the proposed district must accompany the nomination form for a historic district.

Q What are my responsibilities as a property owner of a landmark or property within a historic district?

A If you want to make certain changes to the exterior of your property, you must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the City.

Q What is a Certificate of Appropriateness?

A The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is a permit issued to ensure that planned exterior work is consistent with the visual character of the structure.

Q When is a COA required?

A A COA is required for any construction, alteration, removal, relocation, or demolition that affects the exterior features and historic value, characteristics, or significance of either a designated landmark or contributing structure within a historic district.

Q What are the guidelines used to determine how changes may be made to the exterior of landmarks or structures within a historic district?

A The guidelines used are the Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for Rehabilitation* and *Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. These guidelines are general in nature and recommend the preservation of the overall character of the structure. These guidelines are listed in the City of Urbana Historic Preservation Ordinance and on the back of this brochure.

Q What is the difference between a “contributing” and “noncontributing” property? Are the project level standards and guidelines the same for both?

A A “contributing” landmark is one that adds to the historical, architectural, or archaeological value and significance of a landmark property or historic district by meeting landmark criteria.

A “noncontributing property” is one that is part of a historic district, but that does not have significant historical, architectural, or archaeological value per se. Examples may include, garages, out buildings, or some newly constructed structures. However, the relationship of these properties may be important in maintaining visual continuity within the landmark property or district.

A There are separate project level of review guidelines for contributing and non-contributing properties. Tables XII-1 and XII-2 of the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance provide a project matrix to indicate the level of review required for certain activities and projects.

Q Do all COA requests require a public hearing with the Historic Preservation Commission?

A No. According to Tables XII-1 and XII-2, some activities have “no review” and others are considered “minor works.” “Minor works” can be approved by the Zoning Administrator and Historic Preservation Commission Chair. This process typically takes 1-2 working days. Refer to the above mentioned tables for a list of specific activities or projects.

Q What happens if I cannot afford to make the changes required by the guidelines?

A You can apply for a Certificate of Economic Hardship, a document that authorizes exterior alterations, construction, removal, or demolition, even if a COA has previously been denied for the same proposal.