



Frequently Asked Questions Local Historic Designation Created by Historic Denver, Inc.

The City of Denver's Preservation Ordinance was created in 1967, just a year after the watershed passage of the National Historic Preservation Act. The ordinance is a framework that supports Denver's historic districts and individual landmarks, and specifically outlines provisions related to historic designation, design review and demolition review. It is important to note that these functions are managed by the City & County of Denver, its Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC), and the Denver City Council.

Please note: Historic Denver, Inc is a private, non-profit organization that provides ideas and actions for Denver's historic places. We do not manage designation programs. The Landmark Preservation Commission is the formal city agency responsible for designation and design review. To contact the Landmark Commission, please visit www.denvergov.org/preservation or call (720) 865-2709.

Why do we need Historic Designation?

Historic designation is one method of ensuring that changes to a neighborhood occur thoughtfully, preserving the fabric of a neighborhood that people love— homes with history, vital dwellings that preserve the past, while acknowledging modern lifestyles. Historic district designation can preserve the essential features of a neighborhood, while permitting contemporary improvements and additions that honor the historic character of the area.

What is the designation process?

The process used to designate a structure or district under the local ordinance is much like the processes used in other land use decisions, such as zoning. To initiate the process a single property owner, or a group of at least three property owners or residents, can submit a designation application. The application is quite extensive and requires that the proposed landmark or district meet criteria in two of the following three categories: history, architecture or geography. Once an application and requisite application fees are paid the formal process includes review by Community Planning Department staff and the LPC to determine whether the application is complete, a public hearing before the LPC on the merits of the application and recommendation to Council, review by City Council's neighborhood and/or land use committee and ultimately a public hearing before City Council, after which City Council will vote to approve or deny the designation.

What are the benefits of living in a designated landmark or historic district?

Residents of individual landmarks and local historic districts can take pride in the special qualities of their neighborhood and gain certainty that the quality and character present at the time of designation will carry forward long into the future. Additionally, owners of individual landmarks or contributing properties are eligible for a **Colorado State Preservation Tax Credit**. Projects that can benefit from the tax credit include window restoration, removal of historically incompatible material, roof replacement, electrical, HVAC and plumbing upgrades, masonry repairs, and foundation improvements.

The financial benefits of the tax credit can be substantial, with 20% of the qualified costs up to a maximum \$50,000 in tax credits, which can be spread over ten years. The credit can be used once every ten years or

by each new owner of the property. Keep in mind that a tax credit is different from -- and much better than -- a deduction. A tax credit allows you to offset your taxes on a dollar-for-dollar basis. A deduction only allows you to reduce your taxable income. More information is available at <http://www.historycolorado.org/oahp/preservation-tax-credits>.

What are the responsibilities of living in a designated landmark or historic district?

Denver's local designation program requires a design review process for **exterior** changes that require a permit (this includes building permit, curb cut permit, demolition permit, revocable permit, zoning construction permit and request for zoning lot amendment) for all buildings that are individually designated or located within a historic district.

- Examples of **projects that require design review** include roof replacement or modification, window or door replacement, additions, retaining walls, installing solar panels, or new siding.
- Examples of **projects that do not require design review** include painting your house the color of your choice, installing storm windows or security doors, interior remodeling, plantings, installing sprinklers, installing a satellite dish, placing playground equipment in the yard.

Design review is conducted using a set of adopted Design Guidelines, which are available at www.denvergov.org/preservation. To ensure the design review process goes smoothly, owners can contact Landmark Preservation staff early in the planning process for advice and recommendations. **There is no fee for design review.**

Can I add to my home?

Yes. Additions to homes in historic districts are reviewed and approved by the Denver Landmark Commission regularly, using the design guidelines. Additions do not have to duplicate the original style and materials, but must be compatible in massing, size, and scale.

Can I demolish my home in a historic district?

Non-contributing structures (those that were not built within a district's period of significance) may be approved by the Landmark Commission for demolition without a public hearing. The Landmark Commission does review the replacement structure according to the infill chapter of the Design Guidelines. Contributing (or historic) structures may only be demolished if economic hardship is established at a public hearing of the Landmark Commission. This is quite rare.

Does designation impact property values?

The 2017 economic study *Preservation for a Changing Colorado* conducted by Clarion Associates analyzed the economic impacts of historic preservation in Colorado over the past 20 years. They found that residential property values in three of Denver's local historic districts *increased or stayed the same* as values in nearby, undesignated areas.

Note: This FAQ was developed by Historic Denver, Inc. Historic Denver is happy to field questions about designation at (303) 534-5288 or info@historicdenver.org. Questions can also be directed to the Landmark Preservation Commission at (720) 865-2709.