

LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION: IS IT RIGHT FOR MY COMMUNITY?



Would you rather live in this neighborhood. . . or this one?

Many towns, cities, and counties nationwide have already said “yes” to local historic designation. More than 2,300 districts have historic preservation commissions that conduct design review and many such commissions work with multiple districts in their local jurisdictions! Why are the number of historic districts growing yearly? Residents know that their historic districts are far more than attractive places for tourists to visit, shop, and perhaps have lunch. Residents know that one of the best ways to keep the look and feel of the place they call “home” is through a local design review process.

LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION AND THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Does listing in the National Register mean that your house and neighborhood or city’s main street will be protected from time and change—forever preserved? Many people think so, and this is a common misunderstanding. While National Register listing is a tremendous honor and carries some financial opportunities as well, “under federal law, owners of private property listed in the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as they choose, provided that there is no Federal involvement.” (Quote from the National Register of Historic Places.)



As opposed to the more honorary National Register listing, local designation can be a first step toward legally preserving historic landmarks, neighborhoods and downtown areas in your community.

WHAT IS LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION?



Local historic designation is a preservation tool chosen by property owners to protect historic buildings and their settings with public review. Historic designation ordinances are local laws that are adopted by communities using powers granted by the state. In Warren County there are two levels of protection: Local Historic Districts and Local Historic Sites or Conservation Districts.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION?

- Local historic designation protects the investments of owners and residents. Buyers know that the aspects that make a particular area attractive will be protected over a period of time. Real estate agents in many cities use historic designation as a marketing tool to sell properties.
- Local historic designation encourages better design. It has been shown through comparative studies that there is a greater sense of relatedness, more innovative use of materials, and greater public appeal within historic districts than in areas without historic designations.
- The educational benefits of local historic designation are the same as those derived from any historic preservation effort. Districts help explain the development of a place, the source of inspiration, and technological advances. They are a record of ourselves and our communities.
- Local historic designation can result in a positive economic impact from tourism. A historic district that is aesthetically cohesive and well promoted can be a community's most important attraction. The retention of historic areas as a way to attract tourist dollars makes good economic sense.
- The protection of local historic designation can enhance business recruitment potential. Companies continually re-locate to communities that offer their workers a higher quality of life, which is greatly enhanced by successful local preservation programs and stable historic districts.
- Local historic designation provides social and psychological benefits. A sense of empowerment and confidence develops when community decisions are made through a structured participatory process rather than behind closed doors or without public comment.

AS A PROPERTY OWNER WITHIN A LOCALLY HISTORIC DESIGNATED AREA WHAT WOULD MY RESPONSIBILITIES BE?

Before making certain types of changes to your property, and those types of changes depend on the type of designation your property has, you will need to submit an application to the Historic Preservation Board (HPB) for a Certificate of Appropriateness, more commonly known as a COA. The HP Planner is available to assist you with the process and provide guidance for your project either before you submit your application or after. Major applications, which include new construction, demolition or moves is required to have a public hearing where the HPB will issue a COA. Almost all other COA applications can receive an immediate answer from the HPB staff.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TYPES OF LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATIONS?

The two levels of designation are different in the level of protection they provide. A COA, is required for the following types of actions in each.

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS & SITES

- Alternation of any exterior part of a structure which would alter the historic character,
 - New Construction
 - Demolition
 - Relocation

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

- New Construction
 - Demolition
 - Relocation

WHO IS THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE (HPB) AND WHAT GIVES THEM THE QUALIFICATIONS TO DIRECT MY PROJECT?

The HPB is a seven-member all-volunteer Board that meets once a month. At least two of the members have training or experience in a preservation-related profession. Their decisions are guided by *Design Guidelines*. In general, the *Design Guidelines* provide a basis for making fair decisions and consistency in design review. Bowling Green's *Design Guidelines* are available online at www.warrenpc.org/historicpreservationboard.htm or by calling 270-842-1953. The *Design Guidelines* was created by a professional preservationist and based on nationally accepted standards. It is important to know that the *Guidelines* does not prevent a property owner from "updating" and "modernizing" their property. Most changes to the rear of the building, which can not be seen from the street, will conform to the *Design Guidelines*.

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www.warrenpc.org/historicpreservationboard.htm