

CITY OF COLUMBIA

DESIGN PRESERVATION (LANDMARKS) DESIGNATION

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROPERTY OWNERS

What does *Design Preservation overlay zoning include?*

Design Preservation is the name for the zoning control placed on historic properties or historic areas of the city in order to preserve their historic appearance and protect them from destruction. Design preservation can take several forms.

1) A **Landmark** is an individually designated building that is worthy of preservation because of its great importance to the City and its people, its association with important individuals or historic events or because its design or architectural style is unique or outstanding (*State House, City Hall, and First Baptist Church* are examples).

2) A **Landmark District** is a geographic area that is a distinctive area of the city that collectively contains a number of landmark and other historic buildings. (The area surrounding the *Hampton Preston and Robert Mills Houses* for example).

3) An **Architectural Conservation District** is a geographic area of the city that collectively contains a number of buildings constructed in a similar architectural style or sharing a simple time period of construction. (*Elmwood Park* is an example).

4) An **Historic Commercial District** is a geographic area of the City that collectively contains a number of buildings constructed in a similar architectural style or sharing a single time period of construction originally built for commercial purposes. (*West Gervais Street* is an example).

5) A **Protection Area** is a geographic area that contains some historic buildings or landmarks, but contains a large number of either non-historic or marginal buildings also. (The *Arsenal Hill* area and the *Old Shandon/Lower Waverly District* are examples).

Non-historic or non-contributing buildings and vacant lots may be included in a district because of their close proximity to historic landmarks or buildings. New construction or major exterior changes to non-historic buildings are regulated because of potential negative impact they may have on the historic character of a district.

What does *Design Preservation regulate?*

The **physical EXTERIOR appearance** of a designated landmark or a building in a design preservation district is regulated. Depending on the level of designation, design preservation reviews: **changes to exterior appearance, demolitions, new construction, and signage.** Design preservation **does not** regulate or review changes to the interiors of buildings or minor repairs to designated buildings. Minor repairs are those that use materials that exactly match

what is being replaced and repairs that do not alter the exterior appearance of the designated building. Regular maintenance is also not reviewed unless it alters the exterior appearance of the building. Design preservation **does not** regulate the **use** of the property. Use *is* regulated by the zoning regulations, which are placed on all property in the City. The degree of design preservation is determined by the type of designation. For example, repairs to an individual landmark that require a great deal of replacement material may be reviewed by the Commission. Simple additions to historic buildings in a protection area and exterior changes to non-historic buildings in conservation districts may be given staff approval. New construction in historic districts and demolitions of designated buildings will always require Design/Development Review Commission approval. Repainting, exterior color changes, and landscaping **do not** require Design/Development Review Commission approval. The staff for the Design/Development Review Commission determines if approval by the Commission is necessary.

How does the Design/Development Review Commission application for approval process work?

The Commission meets the first Tuesday of each month to review applications for approval. Deadline for application is NOON on the second Wednesday of the month preceding the Commission meeting. The Design/Development Review Commission meeting is a public hearing, which requires a legal advertisement for public notice. The applicant is required to furnish plans, photographs, and other information that communicate what he or she is seeking approval to do. The Commissioners are provided with this information before the meeting to allow them time for a site visit if desired. The applicant should be present at the hearing to answer questions about the request. The Commissioners then vote to approve or deny the request. The Commissioners may also approve the application conditionally. These conditions may deal with the design itself, with the timing of completion, or with future approval of additional design elements. After approval, the applicant can take out zoning and building permits and begin work immediately.

What recourse does a property owner have if denied approval?

The property owner may take legal action through a court of competent jurisdiction.

What burdens does Design Preservation place on property owners?

Demolition requests may be delayed indefinitely or denied outright. To obtain demolition approval, the applicant must provide proof that the property is unable to produce an economic return. For exterior changes, the applicant may have to alter desired changes or material selections to gain approval. New construction in historic districts requires approval of exterior design and materials.

What benefits does Design Preservation provide to property owners?

Designation adds distinction to a property or neighborhood and serves to protect the historic visual character of the neighborhood. Design preservation is actually an assurance that appealing historic and aesthetic characteristics will remain. This assurance can also help to increase property values by maintaining the historic appearance and quality of the historic architecture and by mandating that new infill construction is appropriate. Design preservation assures that new construction in a district will enhance the area and does not detract from the historic appearance. Local designation may also lead to inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, which in turn, can provide Federal tax savings for rehabilitated, income producing properties. Properties in the Columbia city limits having either a local historic designation or a National Register designation may also be eligible for a 10-year property tax abatement known as the “Bailey Bill.” Both the Bailey Bill and the Federal income tax credit require certification of the rehabilitation work as meeting the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation*. The SC Department of Archives and History issues certifications for these tax incentives.

How are designations made?

New designations require a public hearing process and are made by the Mayor and City Council. Generally, the Design/Development Review Commission and the Planning Commission review requests from individuals, city officials, or neighborhood groups seeking designation. The commissions, after receiving staff and public input, make recommendations to the City Council about boundaries for designations. All property owners of record, based on the Richland County Ownership Directory, are notified of a public hearing before the Mayor and City Council concerning designation. Public hearings are also advertised in the newspaper. After the public hearing, the Mayor and City Council must vote twice by majority vote to approve the designation before it becomes regulation.

Additional information about historic preservation, review processes, resources, and so on is available on our website: <http://www.columbiasc.net/>

For more information call: Amy Moore (803) 545-3335.