LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

What Does Designation as a Local Historic District Mean?

Local Historic District designation is a tool, provided by the Fort Wayne Historic Preservation and Protection Ordinance for residents to monitor changes which occur in historic areas. Local Historic District designation may be applied to a single property or a group of properties. Upon designation, a design review process, prescribed by the ordinance, regulates proposed exterior changes by requiring property owners to apply for and obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness before a building permit can be issued or exterior work begun.

Benefits of Local Historic Designation

Once a property has received Local Historic District designation, elements of the property that are subject to public view become protected from inappropriate changes by a design review process. Property owners are required to apply for, and obtain, a Certificate of Appropriateness before a building permit can be issued, or exterior work begun, on any exterior changes. This review process adds protection and stability to both individual properties and historic districts. Property owners in historic districts are assured that their investment in their property will be not be harmed by inappropriate alterations or construction on adjacent properties. The process and its benefits are similar to deed restrictions that are placed on lots in modern housing developments. In both cases, the goal is to guide development in order to protect individual investment and the common good.

People who are unfamiliar with local historic districts often express concern that historic designation would restrict their right to alter properties they own. In reality, Fort Wayne’s Historic Preservation Guidelines allow a great amount of flexibility in planning common home improvement projects. Over 90 percent of the applications for Certificates of Appropriateness are approved by the Fort Wayne Historic Preservation Commission. The majority of those applications obtain quick approvals by HPC staff. While a property owner may be required to get approval of proposed changes by reviewing plans with the HPC and its staff, many owners find the process helpful because free advice is available from objective professionals.

Some property owners think that any restriction on a property can harm property values. An independent 1997 study of property values and historic districts in Indiana, which was commissioned by Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, proved otherwise. Donovan Rypkema, a nationally known real estate development consultant, compared housing prices in historic districts and similar areas without historic designation. Using Multiple Listing Services (MLS) data, augmented by census data and other information, the study found that property values rose with local historic district designation, equaling if not outpacing similar, undesignated areas. Values in local historic districts often exceeded the rate of value increase for the city as a whole, thereby offering a secure location for investment.

In addition to the study’s findings relating to property values, several other interesting observations about historic districts were drawn from the data:

- Historic districts often mirror the entire community in terms of their economic, educational, social, and racial diversity.
- The ratio of homeowners to renters tends to be higher than in similar undesignated areas.

- People who move into historic districts do not "just pass through," but tend to be residents for extended periods, adding stability to the neighborhood and a lively sense of community.

- Home buyers who choose historic districts often have broader housing choices, and get more house, dollar for dollar, for their money.

**Process for Applying for Local Historic District Designation**

The Historic Preservation Commission, or any owner(s) in fee simple, may submit a property for Local Historic District designation. It may take up to three (3) months for the nomination process to be completed once an application is submitted. The steps necessary to initiate the nomination are:

1. Contact the HPC staff of the Community Development Division (427-1127) for assistance to determine if the property or properties meets at least one of the criteria found in Section 151.030 (D) of Fort Wayne's "Historic Preservation and Protection Ordinance" and for information on application forms and instructions. Technical assistance for completing Local Historic District nomination forms is available. There is no fee for filing an application for Commission review.

2. Click **PETITION FOR LOCAL HISTORIC PROPERTY OR DISTRICT DESIGNATION.**

3. Return the completed nomination form should be submitted directly to the City's Historic Preservation Planners, located in the offices of the Fort Wayne City Community Development Division application.

4. The application, if complete and accurate, scheduled for public comment and review by the Historic Preservation Commission.

5. Planners shall notify owners and the public of pending applications.

6. The Commission, after reasonable opportunity for public comment, shall prepare a report as to whether or not such property, in its opinion, meets the criteria for local designation and draw a map establishing the boundaries of the proposed district.

7. Nominations approved by the HPC are forwarded to the Fort Wayne Common Council for final approval.