**What is a Local Historic District?**

Fort Wayne is fortunate to have a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and historic preservation staff that work to preserve and protect the heritage of the built environment of the city. Historic Preservation Planners Don Orban and Creager Smith have over 52 years of combined experience in serving the city and assisting historic property owners.

Fort Wayne is a Certified Local Government, allowing the historic preservation program to assist with local, state, and federal historic preservation programs, such as the National Register of Historic Places. The most important available tool for preservation of local resources, however, is Local Historic District designation.

**The Basics**

Local historic districts preserve and protect historic and architecturally worthy buildings, structures, sites, monuments, streetscapes, landscapes, and neighborhoods. A local historic district may consist of one building, a group of properties, or an entire neighborhood.

The HPC and its staff review any exterior changes or additions to properties within local historic districts. A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) must be issued before a property owner can receive a building permit or exterior work may begin. Design guidelines are in place to provide direction to HPC staff and property owners in preserving the historic character of an area or an individual building.

**Design Review**

The purpose of design review is to protect and preserve the existing historic character of both the individual properties within a district, and the district as a whole. Exterior changes that are viewable from a public right-of-way are reviewed. Design review may include: roofing, windows and doors, siding, masonry, paint colors, porches, fencing, sidewalks, driveways, trees and permanent landscaping, exterior mechanical equipment, and new construction.

**The Benefits**

Studies show that local historic districts help to stabilize and enhance property values. The certainty offered by local historic districts assures owners that the value of their property will not be harmed by inappropriate alterations or construction on adjacent properties. This is similar to the assurances that covenants offer buyers of new homes in suburban subdivisions. Single site historic districts (or those that designate one building or one complex of buildings) offer protection for particularly notable properties or allow an owner to protect the legacy of their preservation efforts and future guidance for subsequent stewards of the property.

**Historic Districts: Myth vs. Reality**

**Myth:** A historic preservation ordinance will mean that property owners will lose their property rights.
**Reality:** Ownership rights are not affected by historic districts. Location in a local historic district does not mean that a property owner is required to restore or rehabilitate their property. New construction and demolitions are allowed within local historic districts when in compliance with guidelines. Local historic designation does not affect the zoning of a property. (The HPC does not regulate land uses). Historic properties (like all real estate) must comply with local and state building and property codes.

**Myth:** It will decrease the value of the property.

**Reality:** Property values are not adversely affected by local historic districts. Values tend to rise within local historic districts, equaling if not outpacing similar areas without historic district status. Values often exceed the rate of value increase for the city as a whole.

**Myth:** It will restrict the ability to alter property.

**Reality:** The preservation guidelines allow flexibility in planning improvement projects. Over 90% of COA applications are approved by HPC staff, often with free design advice and assistance.

**How to Apply**

The process for creating a Local Historic District can be initiated by the property owner(s). A completed petition form should be submitted directly to the city historic preservation staff. Technical assistance for completing the petition is available. All HPC forms may be found at: www.cityoffortwayne.org/preservation

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