

Local Preservation Districts: Commonly Asked Questions

Have you heard of "Local Preservation Districts"? Have you ever visited Old Louisville, Cherokee Triangle, Limerick, West Main Street, Parkland Business District, Butchertown, or Clifton? Have you ever considered what the "Local Preservation District" designation means for a neighborhood?

Here are some common questions and answers to help you consider what it means to be a Local Preservation District.

Q: What is a Local Preservation District?

A: Generally speaking, a preservation district is a specific area of our community in which the buildings and improvements have a recognized historical value or significance. This area, which may be as small as a few adjacent buildings or as large as an entire neighborhood or business district, tells the story of an important time or theme in our community's history. As a planning tool historic designation is used by neighborhoods to ensure the preservation of historic properties within the defined boundary. Innovative ways are increasingly being explored to utilize district designation as a redevelopment tool. In some cases the groundwork for establishing a local preservation district may have been laid when the neighborhood was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Q: How is a Local Preservation District established?

A: The Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission may designate an area as a preservation district if it receives a petition requesting the designation signed by no fewer than 200 residents of the proposed district or of at least 50% of the property owners, whichever is less. Additionally, the petition is accompanied by a fee and photographic documentation of the proposed district. When a petition meeting these requirements is received, the Commission conducts a study and holds a public hearing to determine if the proposed district is eligible according to criteria established by the Commission. A description of the proposed district and notice of the public hearing is published twice in the newspaper and is mailed to all owners of property in the proposed district.

Q: What does designation as a Local Preservation District mean for owners of property in the district?

A: Local Preservation District status establishes a design review process for all exterior changes *except routine maintenance* to structures in a district, including demolition and new construction. It's comparable to having a deed restriction that gives residents of the district the assurance that changes in the neighborhood will be compatible with its character. The price of this assurance is the requirement for review by the Commission.

The proposed work is reviewed for conformance to design guidelines established for the district. Depending on the scope of the project it is reviewed by either the Commission staff, the district's Architectural Review Committee, or the full Commission. A project may be Approved, Approved with Condition, or Denied. If the project is "Approved" or "Approved with Condition", a Certificate of Appropriateness is issued and the work may proceed subject to all other applicable regulations. If a project is "Denied", a Certificate of Appropriateness is not issued and the work may not proceed.

Studies continue to show that the values of properties within preservation districts are positively affected by district designation due primarily to the retention of each district's unique character.

Questions regarding Local Preservation Districts are welcomed and should be directed to Landmarks Commission staff.