



HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION OF PITTSBURGH

INFORMATION SHEET

HISTORIC DESIGNATION PROCESS

The Historic Designation process is made up of many steps intended to inform the public about the process and effects of designation, and then to elicit the opinions of the property owner and the public concerning a given proposal for designation. The process is as follows:

1. Nomination

- Nomination of *structures, sites, or objects* may be made by any resident or property owner in the city of Pittsburgh by submitting forms obtained from the Historic Review Commission (HRC).
- Historic *districts* may be nominated by community organizations or by any individual (again, on official HRC forms) and must be accompanied by a petition of support signed by 25 percent of the owners of record of the proposed district, or by the Mayor, or by a member of City Council, the City Planning Commission, or the Historic Review Commission.
- Historic Review Commission staff notifies the property owner(s) of the receipt of a nomination and of all subsequent hearings and decisions concerning the proposed designation.

2. Information

- No more than six months prior to the nomination of a historic district, the HRC holds a public information meeting in the community about the meaning and effects of historic designation.
- The HRC does not hold public information meetings in advance of nominations of structures, sites, or objects. However, HRC Staff is always available to answer questions.

3. Protection

- Nominated properties are placed under the protection of the HRC upon nomination, in order to maintain their existence and historic character during the designation process. This means that any exterior alteration that is visible from a public street or way must be reviewed and approved by the Historic Review Commission or its staff.
- Within 45 days of receiving a nomination, the HRC makes a preliminary determination about the nominated property's potential to meet one or more the criteria for designation, as listed in the Pittsburgh Historic Preservation Ordinance (see below). If the HRC makes a positive determination, the protection of the property is continued throughout the designation process; if the vote is negative, the HRC's protection of the property ends but the designation process does not.
- HRC protection during the designation process begins two business days after the mailing of notification by the HRC and may continue for a maximum of eight (8) months. During this time, anyone wishing to alter or demolish the nominated structure, site, object, or district must apply to the HRC for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Any work underway when the property is nominated must receive HRC approval to continue.

4. Public Meetings

- HRC holds at least one public hearing regarding the appropriateness of the designation.
- The HRC Staff prepares a report on the nominated structure, site, object, or district, and a recommendation about whether it meets the criteria for designation.
- Based on the information in this report and the testimony it receives, the HRC makes a recommendation on the designation to City Council (within five months of the nomination).
- The City Planning Commission makes a recommendation to City Council (also within five months of the nomination), taking into account the planning, land use, and development objectives of the City.
- City Council holds a public hearing and votes on the nomination (within three months of the HRC and Planning Commission recommendations, or eight months of the nomination date).

A property whose designation is defeated by City Council may not be re-nominated for five years, with one exception: in the case of a proposed historic district, 51 percent of the property owners may petition the Historic Review Commission for re-consideration.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

In order to be designated as a Historic Structure, District, Site, or Object, the nomination must meet one or more of the specified criteria for designation within each appropriate category listed in the City's historic preservation ordinance (Section 1.4 of Title Eleven of the City of Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances). These are as follows:

- Its location as a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity;
- Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspect of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
- Its exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship;
- Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
- Its exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or overall quality of design or detail;
- Its location as a site of an important archaeological resource;
- Its association with important cultural or social aspects or events in the history of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
- Its exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant

to the cultural history or traditions of the City, whose components may lack individual distinction;

- Its representation of a cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological or related theme expressed through distinctive areas, properties, sites, structures or objects that may or may not be contiguous; or
- Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh.

The Historic Preservation Ordinance also says that any area, property, site, structure or object that meets any one or more of the criteria listed above shall also have sufficient integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration.

EFFECTS OF DESIGNATION

When a property has been designated by City Council as a City Historic Structure, Site, or Object, or as part of a City Historic District, the Historic Review Commission has jurisdiction over all proposed new construction, demolition, and exterior changes to the property. The HRC does not review any interior changes, nor does it regulate the use of the property. Historic designation does not oblige an owner to do any work to his or her property; the review process begins only when an owner decides to do work on the outside of the structure.

If you have any questions concerning this material, please do not hesitate to call the Historic Preservation Office of the Department of City Planning at 412-255-2243.