

Glendale Historic District Q&A

What, exactly, is a historic district?

A historic district creates an “overlay zone” on top of the existing zoning, such as R-1. Within this zone, the guidelines will supplement zoning rules and take precedence over existing design guidelines.

Do residents get to vote on historic districting?

Not directly, but indirectly. There isn’t an election or a referendum, but there are two times in the process where supporters have to gather enough signatures on a petition to proceed to the next step, or the application for a historic district is deemed withdrawn. The first petition is to ask City Council to conduct a historic resources survey to see if the area qualifies as a historic district. After the survey is finished and property owners know whether their houses are ‘contributors’ or ‘non-contributors’ to the district, then a second petition is circulated to formally ask the City Council for the historic district overlay zone. In addition, there are a number of public meetings at which residents can voice their views regarding districts.

What are the historic district design guidelines?

The guidelines give suggestions on how to handle maintenance, repair and additions to residential buildings in adopted historic districts. When a historic district is proposed, the guidelines give property owners some sense of the restrictions and protections that come with historic districts. If a historic district is adopted, the guidelines give homeowners, and their contractors or architects, a good idea of how to handle common household improvement projects.

The guidelines can be found at:

<http://www.ci.glendale.ca.us/planning/HPDistrictDesignGuidelines.asp>

Why do we need historic district guidelines if we already have design review?

Other single-family design guidelines are very general, usually covering a group of neighborhoods in about six pages. The historic district guidelines are much more detailed, with about 150 pages of suggested design solutions and maintenance practices. This may sound intimidating (although you won’t need to read all 150 pages for each repair), but the good news is that with such detail, homeowners have a much greater degree of certainty about what will pass design review without any problems.

Where do the historic district guidelines apply?

They will apply *only* in historic districts.



Who wrote the guidelines?

At the direction of the City Council, city planners hired a respected planning consultant and created a 19-member citizens advisory group of HOA representatives, real estate professionals, architects and members of the Design Review Boards and Historic Preservation Commission. The guidelines are a result of their efforts. They were further reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission, the Planning Commission and the City Council.

What do the guidelines cover?

The guidelines apply only to alterations to single and multi-family residences *visible from the street immediately adjacent your property* and cover:

- Siding and exterior finishes
- Doors and windows
- Roofs and porches
- Garages and outbuildings
- Streetscapes

What do the guidelines *not* cover?

The guidelines do not apply to:

- Commercial properties
- Alterations not visible from the street
- Paint color
- Interiors
- Routine maintenance and repair

Why do the guidelines say “should” instead of “shall?”

You will notice that the guidelines say they *should* be followed, not *shall*. The guidelines are not regulations that must be strictly and uniformly enforced in all situations (“shall”). Rather, they are written as suggestions (“should”), instead of unwavering rules.

What is a “historic resources survey?”

Before a district can be considered, a historic resources survey is required to determine if there are enough historic homes in a proposed district. A survey classifies homes as being “contributing” (historic) or “non-contributing” (not



historic). Non-contributors typically result from either significant alterations made prior to the historic district's designation or the fact that a property was built outside the district's "period of significance." This period is determined by research that accompanies the survey and includes the range of dates that captures the area's most important period of development. At least 60% of the homes in a proposed district must be contributing. A historic resources survey has already been completed for the Cumberland Heights area and can be viewed on the City website.

What if my home isn't "historic"?

If the historic resources survey determines that your home is non-contributing, you will *not* be required to restore your home to its original design. *If* you decide to remodel, you are encouraged to make your home *no less* historic and to maintain the visual coherence of the district as a whole.

Will I ever be forced to remodel?

No. You will never be forced to remodel your home if you are not planning on remodeling it.

If I remodel, will I be forced to remodel more than I want to?

Only in unusual circumstances. The guidelines say that the Historic Preservation Commission can ask you to remodel more than what you had intended only if the extra remodeling is reasonably related to your proposed project. Even then, the Commission must take into account the relative cost of the extra remodeling versus your original project.

For instance, if you remodel your windows, you will not be required to remodel your roof. However, if you are putting in new windows, you may be asked to put in historically accurate window frames, as well.

Can I add to my home?

Yes. The historic design guidelines do not prohibit you from enlarging your home.

The guidelines seem huge. How do I use them?

The guidelines cover many home styles and types of alterations. Despite their length, you will only need to refer to a few pages for any one project. Here's how they work:

1. Determine the scope of your project— say you are remodeling your roof.
2. Read *only* those sections applicable to roofs— the roof guidelines common to all styles (4 pages), and the roof guidelines specific to your style of home (1/2 page) — a total of 4-1/2 pages in all.



Will there be more bureaucracy or fees to remodel my home?

No. Historic districting does not add any layer of bureaucracy. You already must go through design review for most alterations. The Historic Preservation Commission will simply apply the historic design guidelines. The guidelines do not apply to routine maintenance and repairs that don't affect the character of a home.

In fact, because the historic district design guidelines are more detailed than the existing design guidelines, getting through design review may be easier and more predictable. Fees will not increase.

How do you form a district? Will I ever be forced to join?

A historic district can only be formed when a majority of the neighbors want it. The City Council has the final say.

Will the guidelines protect trees?

Usually not. Although the guidelines encourage maintaining mature, healthy trees, the guidelines give special protection to landscaping only when there is a strong, consistent pattern that is part of the historic nature of the area. However, the City's indigenous tree ordinance protecting oaks, sycamores and bay laurel trees still applies. The guidelines also contain limited streetscape elements.

I've heard that there are tax benefits. Is that true?

No. Although there are some tax advantages for landmark homes listed on the Glendale Register of Historic Resources, but at this time there are no tax advantages for simply being in a historic district. Taxes will not increase, either.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, you can contact Jay Platt, the city's Historic Preservation Planner, at (818) 548-2140, or go to its website:

<http://www.ci.glendale.ca.us/planning/HPHomePage.asp>

