

Frequently Asked Questions About Historic Designation (Landmarks & Districts)

Several of your neighbors, residents and owners in La Alma Lincoln Park, have spent the last two years researching the history of the neighborhood, documenting the buildings, their architecture and history, and exploring the tools that exist in the city to foster and protect the attributes that make La Alma Lincoln Park a special community unlike any other Denver neighborhood.

Through special meetings and presentations at the Neighborhood Association there has been significant support to create a Historic Cultural District, which is a designation that would be approved by the Denver Landmark Commission and Denver City Council. This hand-out provides information on what that means for residents and owners in the district.

You can also seek more information from the City of Denver Landmark Preservation staff at landmark@denvergov.org or 720-865-2709.

What is the difference between a historic district and a cultural district?

Both historic districts and historic cultural districts are intended to protect and foster the continuation of the special character of a neighborhood. Both are created through designation by the Denver Landmark Commission and Denver City Council, with on-going oversight provided by the Landmark Commission and landmark staff. Both types of districts protect significant, contributing buildings from demolition, and both require design review of exterior alterations based on their period of significance and the Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts. However, Historic Cultural Districts can provide greater flexibility through **customized design guidelines** that acknowledge the individual character of the neighborhood and the changes that have occurred over time.

What is design review?

In designated Historic and Historic Cultural Districts the Denver Landmark Commission conducts review of exterior changes that require a building permit to ensure that the changes are compatible with the special characteristics of the individual buildings and the district. Design review is free, and is conducted as part of the permitting process with the City.

The following **would not** be affected by designation and **do not** require design review: 1) Painting the exterior of your home the color of your choice; 2) Making interior changes to your home; 3) landscaping and installing a lawn sprinkler system; 4) Installing an air conditioning unit or satellite dish; 5) Placing playground equipment in the yard, 6) Minor repairs such as gutter replacement and tuck-pointing.

The following **would** go through the design review process: 1) Additions to enlarge your home 2) Adding or replacing a garage; 3) Adding an Accessory Dwelling Unit on your lot 4) Replacing your doors or windows.

Design review is based on the city's adopted Design Guidelines for Landmark & Districts, but customized additions to these standards can be developed for Historic Cultural Districts and that is the intention for La Alma Lincoln Park. For example, customized design guidelines for La Alma Lincoln Park can encourage the preservation of existing murals throughout the district or perpetuate the variety of front yard fences in the district. The customized design guidelines may also allow greater flexibility for porches and window changes, which are two changes that are already common in the district.

As the effort to consider a Historic Cultural District continues, the City of Denver Landmark program would like to invite you to join a stakeholder group to help work on these customized design guidelines. Please email Kara Hahn at kara.hahn@denvergov.org to join the group this summer!

Does design review apply to every building, even new builds?

A designated district is comprised of both contributing and non-contributing structures. Contributing structures are the old structures, those that relate to the history of Period of Significance for the district. Non-contributing structures are those built outside the Period of Significance, such as new buildings or those that have been heavily altered in recent years. Both contributing and non-contributing buildings are subject to design review, but non-contributing buildings can be demolished and replaced as long as the new building meets the design guidelines and character of the neighborhood.

Is there any financial support for owners of designated properties?

Yes! Colorado has a state income tax credit for owners of designated commercial and residential properties. The credit can cover 20% of qualified home improvement costs up to a maximum of \$50,000 every ten years. The tax credit allows you to offset your taxes on a dollar-for-dollar basis and can be spread over several years. The types of projects that are eligible include window restoration; removal of historically incompatible materials; roof replacement; electrical and plumbing upgrades; and masonry repairs. The financial benefits can be substantial and more information is available at <https://www.historycolorado.org/preservation-tax-credits>.

DURA Housing Rehabilitation program offers 0% to low-interest loans to low and moderate-income homeowners (including homes in districts!) for home repairs up to \$24,999 including roofing, plumbing, siding, gutters, window repair, and kitchen/bathroom repairs. Find out more at <http://renewdenver.org/> or call 303-534-3872.

Can I demolish a home in a Historic Cultural District?

Non-contributing (or non-historic) structures may be approved by the Landmark Commission for demolition without a public hearing. Contributing (or historic) structures may be demolished only if economic hardship is established at a public hearing of the Landmark Commission.

Will I have to re-do or undo any changes that have already been made to my home if we become a Historic Cultural District?

No, only future exterior changes that you initiate and that will require a permit will be subjected to design review.

Does designation change my zoning?

No, your underlying zoning remains the same in a Historic Cultural District, and designation does not have any bearing on the use of your property, so if you are zoned for commercial, mixed-use or multi-unit those options remain available to you, so long as you continue to maintain and use any contributing structures on your property. In some instances designation may help you secure relief from zoning or building standards.

Will a designation impact my property value?

Of the 50+ areas in Denver that have been designated historic or historic cultural districts, there is **no evidence** that designation diminishes home values. Recent studies have found that Denver residential property values *increased or stayed the same* compared to values in nearby, undesignated areas.

Where can I get more information about designation?

You can visit www.denvergov.org/preservation or call 720-865-2709 for additional information about landmark and district designation.

You can also contact local non-profit Historic Denver, Inc. at www.historicdenver.org or 303-534-5288.