

Historic District Information

Definition:

Historic Districts look to preserve the original structure exactly as when it was **first built**. They also attempt to preserve **original** materials, colors, styles, and other elements of the original structure. Historic Districts wish to maintain certain standards of an era and any improvement or new construction must be first approved the HPC, which issues a Certificate of Approval for authorization.

An area that generally includes within its boundaries a significant concentration of properties linked by architectural style, historical development, or a past event.

Historic Districts are areas:

- that have been designated for architectural protection based on established criteria
- in which architectural changes are subject to review by a commission in accordance with certain standards (Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, for example)

There are currently 57 HPCs in Minnesota.

There are current 43 CLGs in Minnesota.

A "District" is a geographically defined area with a concentration of historic buildings, structures, sites, spaces and object unified by past events, physical development, or design.

Process: Steps 1 & 2= Identification. Steps 3-4 Historic Resource Listing either to Local or National registries

***Follow LDC directions 8.5.7 for HPC designations

Follow Criteria for Historic Significance: Age, Significance, Historic Contexts and themes for buildings, historic districts, objects, sites, and structures. (SHPO)

1. Conduct Survey: (using prescribed format)
2. Inventory: Enter into inventory (further action is optional)
3. Evaluate for Eligible Properties: Evaluate for significance and integrity using adopted criteria
4. Nomination: Determine if designation is merited, considering survey findings and other goals and objectives
 - Local Designation?
 - National Register?

Steps to Designation from SHPO:

1. Prepare the nomination
2. File the nomination with the HPC
3. Schedule a HPC hearing
4. Preservation Commission makes a decision
5. Referral to Planning Commission
6. City Council hearing/ 7. Appeal

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Pros:

Established national guidelines make restoration and development easier to judge whether it is compatible or not as National Registry guidelines are already in place.

Property often increases in value.

Historic properties attract specific buyers and renters who appreciate such things.

Often these areas are more pedestrian friendly due to density and off-road structures.

See other lists for pros also.

HPC is familiar with how to operate in Historic Districts.

Cons:

Check regulations for percentage needed for approval for district and how to tabulate. It may be difficult to get the numbers needed in a geographic area. Would a college be considered one vote even if they own several properties?

Can limit ability to repurpose structure if that causes significant changes to exterior.

Matching owners' wishes with building codes and preservation codes can be challenging.

Some repairs and rehabilitations cost more.

Having to get Certificates of Appropriateness can slow owners down—permissions take time.

Not all owners want another group deciding what they can and cannot do.

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What we currently have:

Northfield's Historic Downtown District—65-69 buildings overseen by the HPC.

Comparable Cites:

Many cities have Historic Districts. Many of their guidelines are online. Most of them operate in a way similar to Northfield where the Historic District is concerned as we are all trying to follow SHPO and National Park Service guidelines.

We could look at Red Wing and Stillwater and Faribault for their Historic Districts, if that would be helpful, but I think we have a pretty good idea of what it takes to make those work. Although our guidelines have been developed for a commercial district and we would need to develop guidelines for homes.