

# FAQs

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## Frequently Asked Questions



### **Why would a property owner want his/her property designated as historic?**

Historic designation often carries a certain prestige that may improve the marketability of your property, increase property values, and secure financing that would not otherwise be available for an older building. The pride that often results in owning recognized historic structures creates neighborhoods that statistically have lower crime rates, higher public investments and cleaner streets and lots. All of this adds up to an increased quality of life. Additionally, the Historic Preservation Board and its staff can provide technical advice to property owners concerning appropriate design, construction methods and selection of materials.

### **What does the designation of a historic property mean to the property owner?**

Designations are meant to protect important historic resources, whether architectural or archaeological, against unnecessary demolition or destruction. Any physical changes to the exterior of a property must be reviewed and approved in advance by the historic preservation staff. This review process is designed to assist owners in developing appropriate plans and designs and inform them of any available benefits.

### **If my house is historically designated, does it lower my property value?**

No. In fact, in most instances the value of historic properties increase after designation, and properties within historic districts often have higher property values than comparable neighborhoods in close proximity. Buyers often search out for historically designated neighborhoods because they know that their own investments will be protected from intrusions into the neighborhood that are out of character with the district.

### **Does this prevent me from doing anything to my property, such as an addition?**

No. Historic designations merely act to preserve those historic portions of the buildings and the features that make them historic. A property owner may add, alter, and even demolish portions of historic buildings provided the proposed project is in keeping with the character of the original structure.

### **Will I have to appear before the Historic Preservation Board every time I want to do something to my house?**

No. Most application reviews are handled administratively by staff. You are only required to appear before the Historic Preservation board for applications to demolish or for significant additions/alterations that are visible from the street.

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### **What effect would designation have on my property taxes?**

Historic designation and assessed value are independent of each other, and taxes are not automatically increased just because a property has been declared historic. However, it is possible that the value of your property would increase because a historic building is often considered a desirable place in which to live or work. Additionally, designated commercial structures can request to have their taxes assessed at actual income if it is currently being assessed at the “highest and best” use. This has the potential to provide a property owner significant savings on their taxes.

### **Will I be forced to restore my property if it becomes designated?**

No. You are not required to do anything new to your property just because it has been designated. The only time we get involved is when you choose to undergo renovations or restorations.

### **Are there any financial incentives for owners of designated properties?**

Yes. There is an Ad-Valorem tax exemption available to owners of designated properties who restore or make improvements to their buildings. And as historic preservation grants become available, only those properties that are already designated would be eligible. Our office is continually on the look-out for other avenues of financial assistance, such as state and federal grants, which we can then inform our historic property owners about.

### **What if I want to make changes to the inside of my house/unit?**

We do not regulate what you do to the inside of your house, apartment or condo unit. Changes to interiors are only reviewed if the interior space was specifically part of the designation (like the interior of the Dade County Courthouse, for example,) because those interiors are an integral part of the historic fabric.

### **Are there any restrictions on buying or selling a designated historic property?**

No. An owner can sell to whom he or she pleases, as far as the Historic Preservation Ordinance is concerned.

### **What is the process to get a project approved? How long does it take?**

Before a building permit can be issued to a property that is designated, a special permit must first be issued by the County’s historic preservation office. This special permit is called a COA, or, Certificate of Appropriateness. The COA basically says to the building official that we have “Certified” that the work is “Appropriate” for the historic building. Most COA’s are approved administratively within a day or two. Obviously, projects with extensive plans to review will take a few days longer. The Historic Preservation Board meets once a month to review special COA applications, such as those involving demolitions and major additions.