Historic Preservation in Arcadia

A Guide to Preserving Buildings and Resources

July 2019
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ARCADIA ADOPTS HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

April 8, 2019 – On April 2, 2019, the Arcadia City Council adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance, a first for the City of Arcadia and marking an important step in the identification and preservation of historic buildings throughout the City.

The Ordinance represented the culmination of several years of community engagement and involvement. The project began in 2015 with an effort to determine what historic resources exist in the City, and to identify the various patterns of development throughout the City’s history. The City contracted with well-respected Pasadena historians Architectural Resources Group, Inc., to develop a Historic Resources Survey and Context Statement, as well as to draft the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

The Survey identified a number of important structures, some of which rise to the State and National levels for historic significance. Arcadia’s rich history includes not only obviously important structures such as the Santa Anita Park Grandstand and Queen Anne cottage at the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Gardens, but also iconic structures related to City-founder Lucky Baldwin and the Baldwin family, homes designed by famed architects Wallace Neff and Richard Neutra, and commercial structures such as the Harold Bissner designed Denny’s building with its famous windmill.

“Like any important new regulation, the Ordinance was truly a community effort, with numerous well-attended public meetings and discussions. In the end, the final Ordinance represents a balance between private property rights and the ability to protect and preserve important buildings,” said Assistant City Manager/Development Services Director Jason Kruckeberg.

The main tenets of the Ordinance are the facts that it is voluntary, and property owners can come forward to designate their own properties. “The Historic Preservation Ordinance is a thoughtful, important step in the preservation of not only buildings but of Arcadia’s heritage,” said Mayor Sho Tay. “We listened to our residents and developed an Ordinance that fits our City.”

Now that the Ordinance is in effect, the City will be working with local organizations such as the Arcadia Historical Society and Los Angeles Conservancy in assisting residents and property owners in designating their buildings as historic if they so choose. If you are interested in learning more about the Historic Preservation Ordinance and its implementation, please contact the Arcadia Planning Division at (626) 574-5423 or visit the City’s website at ArcadiaCA.gov/HistoricPreservation.
Criteria for Designation

A building may be designated as a historic landmark if it meets one or more of the following local eligibility criteria:

1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Arcadia’s or California’s history.
2. It is associated with the lives of persons important to local or California history.
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possess high artistic values.
4. It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history or the city or state.

A historic district may be approved if it meets one of the above criteria AND:

1. It poses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.
2. A minimum of 60% of the buildings within the proposed historic district contribute to the district’s significance.
3. A total of 75% of the owners within a proposed historic district must consent to designation, and 100% of the owners of contributing resources within the district must consent to designation.

Determining Local Historical Significance

Designation Process

Any person, or group, including the City, may request the designation of a historical resource as a historic landmark, or a group of resources as a historic district, by submitting an application to the City. The owner of the property MUST consent to application.

Once received, the application will be reviewed by the Development Services Department. If eligible, the application will be presented to the Historic Preservation Commission and City Council for their approval. The step-by-step flowchart on the following pages provides a detailed description of the process.

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• The building must be at least 45 years of age.

• An Architectural Historian or Historian that meets the State Office of Historic Preservation professional qualifications must evaluate the building to determine its historical significance.

• If the building is of historical significance, the owner may apply for Local Landmark status. Those properties eligible for listing at the State and/or National level are automatically locally eligible.

• File the Application with the City.

• The City may require the applicant to submit additional information regarding the historic significance of the resource, including but not limited to: photographs, plans, deeds, permits, and other materials that may provide pertinent information.

• The Planning Commission will consider your request at a public hearing and forward a recommendation to the City Council.

• The City Council will either adopt or reject the historic designation. If approved, the building will officially become a historic landmark and may qualify for incentives and tax abatement programs to assist in preserving the building.
Step 3
Alterations
Once
Designated

Step 4
Mills Act and
Incentives

- **Major Alteration** – Major alterations are any improvements, additions, or changes to the exterior façade and/or design that is visible from the public right-of-way. These shall be subject to review and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission.

- **Minor Alteration** – Minor alterations are improvements such as replacement of windows and doors, and additions that are not visible from the public right-of-way. City Staff or Homeowners Association’s (HOA) can approve these improvements.

- For both major or minor alterations, the owner must have the proposed project evaluated by a qualified preservation consultant to ensure that the project complies with the Secretary of Interior’s Standards. This report must be submitted to the City and to the HOA, if the building is within a HOA, to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness.

- As a designated landmark, the homeowner may apply for the Mills Act Program and may be eligible to enter into a 10 year contract with the City to repair, rehabilitate, restore, and maintain their property and in return receive a property tax relief; or

- As a designated landmark, the homeowner may also apply for other incentives that may result in relaxation of the Building Code requirements, fee waivers, reduced building permit fees, and parking modifications.
MILLS ACT CONTRACT PROGRAM:

Once a property is designated as a local landmark, a property owner can apply for a reduction in property taxes through the Mills Act Property Tax Abatement program. This program was created to incentivize the preservation, rehabilitation and maintenance of qualified historic properties. The agreement is recorded with the County, which allows the Assessor to determine the property tax, based on a formula set in State Law that typically results in a substantial annual savings to the property owner.

- The Mills Act is most effective/highest amount of savings for properties that have recently sold (due to Proposition 13)
- The Mills Act Contract runs with the land enabling new property owners to benefit

### Benefits To Historic Designation

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- Ability to apply for the City’s Mills Act Contract Program (average yearly property tax savings of between 40% and 60%)
- More information below

- Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives

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Costs

Application Fees
(Local Level Designation)

- Local Historic Landmark & Mills Act Contract Program Application Fees **waived** for first 10 applicants
- Local Historic Landmark Application: $1,800
- Historic District Application: $2,500
- Mills Act Contract Program Application: $1,500

Historic Report
(Required for Landmark, District, & Certificate of Appropriateness Applications)

- Average Cost: $2,500 - $3,000

Alterations to Historic Landmarks

- Negligible Alterations (most interior and some exterior alterations) are **exempt** from Certificate of Appropriateness Process
- Certificate of Appropriateness (Minor): $900
- Certificate of Appropriateness (Major): $1,600
Arcadia City Hall, 1924, First Street and Huntington Drive

City of Arcadia | Planning Division
626.574.5423
ArcadiaCA.gov/historicpreservation