

# Historic Preservation Program

December 6, 2023 Public Information Meeting

# **AGENDA**

- 1. Terminology**
- 2. Program Overview**
- 3. Historic Preservation Ordinance**
- 4. Work Guidelines for Landmarks and Historic Districts**
- 5. Mills Act Program**
- 6. Q&A**

# Terminology

- **Landmark**
- **Historic District**
- **Contributor (Contributing Property)**
- **Certificate of Appropriateness**
- **Work**
- **Character-Defining Features**
- **Historical Integrity**
- **Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties**
- **Ministerial**

A landmark is a property, including any structure, site, place, object, tree, landscape, or natural feature, that has been designated by the Board of Supervisors.

A Historic District is a Board designated geographic area containing one or more contributing properties and exhibits a concentration of historic sites containing common character-defining features, which contribute to each other and are unified aesthetically by a plan, physical development, or architectural quality. Alternatively, a historic district can exhibit significant geographical patterns, associated with different eras of settlement and growth, transportation modes, or distinctive examples of parks or community planning.

A Contributor is a property within an historic district that has characteristics and features that relate to the historic context and significance of the district.

A Certificate of Appropriateness or CoA is the entitlement required to authorize work on a landmark or within an HD.

Work is the widest range of construction activities, excluding maintenance and repair.

Character-defining features are those features of a historic resource that must be preserved to retain its historical integrity.

Historical Integrity is the ability of a historic resource to convey its historical significance.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties are standards established by the National Park Service that must be met in order for a CoA to be approved.

Ministerial means a project must be approved if it complies with objective standards and the projects are not subject to environmental reviews or public hearings.

## Program Overview

- Historic Preservation Ordinance
- Mills Act Program
- Projects

The County's Historic Preservation Program consists of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, MA Program and various preservation projects such as historic resource surveys.

## Historic Resource Surveys and Historic Districts

- East LA Third Street Specific Plan Survey
- Altadena African American Survey
- Sun Village African American Survey
- Florence Firestone Survey
- View Park National Historic District
- Historic Highlands County Historic District

Beginning with latter, Historic Resource Surveys identify properties that are eligible for listing individually or as districts on the National, State or County registers. The County has completed four historic resource surveys: the East LA Third Street Specific Plan Survey, the Altadena African American Survey, the Sun Village African American Survey and the Florence Firestone survey.

There are two historic districts in the County, the View Park National Historic District and Altadena's Historic Highlands, a pending County district.

You may have received notice of this meeting because your property was identified in a survey as eligible for listing, or because that it has already been listed. If you would like to know if your property is located in a historic district or has been determined eligible for listing by a survey, please contact us at our email that will be displayed at the end of presentation.

## Historic Preservation Ordinance

- Adopted in 2015
- 10 Designated Landmarks
- 1 Nominated Historic District

In 2015, the Board adopted the Historic Preservation Ordinance which has provisions for nominating, designating and reviewing work on County landmarks and Historic Districts. Landmarks and Districts can be nominated by property owners, the public, the Landmarks Commission or the Board.

The Board has designated 11 landmarks to date and will consider the first County Historic District, Historic Highlands in Altadena, next year.

## Benefits of County Designation

- Preserves Historic Resource in Perpetuity
- Access to the Mills Act (property tax relief) Program
- Eligibility for State Historic Building Code

### Historic Districts

- Preserves neighborhood character.
- Higher property values
- SB9 Exemption

There are three main benefits to designating historic resources as County Landmarks or Historic Districts. First, designation essentially preserves historic resources in perpetuity. Second, designation provides access to the Mills Act property tax relief Program which we'll talk about soon. Lastly, designation provides access to the State Historic Building Code which provides flexibility in the County's building code for designated historic resources.

For Historic Districts, designation preserves neighborhood character. Additionally, owners of property in historic districts often enjoy higher property values because buyers know that the character of the neighborhood will not change.

Some people might say that exemption from SB9 is another benefit of historic district designation as it preserves the district's density, with the exception of ADUs. SB 9 streamlined the process for a homeowner to create a duplex or subdivide an existing lot. Specifically, the law mandates a ministerial process for the following projects if they are located in a single-family residential zone: a subdivision of one lot into two; and construction of a Second Dwelling Unit.

A project is not eligible under SB 9 if it is located on property included in the State Historic Resources Inventory or on a site that has been designated by the County.



# Landmark Designation Eligibility



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A structure, site, object, tree, landscape, or natural land feature may be designated as a County landmark if it is **50** years of age or older and

- It is associated with historically significant events or people; or
- It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, architectural style, period, or method of construction, or represents significant work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder; or
- It provides important information about prehistory or history; or
- It has been determined eligible or is listed in the National or California registers; or
- It is the one of the largest or oldest trees species in the County; or lastly
- It is a tree, landscape or natural land feature that is associated with a historically significant event, person, site, street, or structure; or because it is a defining or significant outstanding feature of a neighborhood.

This photo is of Alpine Village, a County landmark located in the unincorporated community of West Carson. It was designated for its building type, a themed shopping court and for its cultural association with the European community.

## Landmark Designation Process

1. Applicant confirms eligibility with staff.
2. Applicant reviews How To Nominate a Landmark or Historic District.
3. Applicant submits Landmark and District Nomination form.
4. Staff reviews nomination and invoices fees (\$1,461/\$4,864).
5. Staff notices nomination and requests owner consent.
6. Staff and consultant inspects site.
7. Consultant prepares evaluation.
8. Staff notices HLRC hearing.
9. Staff prepares case for Landmarks Commission (HLRC).
10. HLRC makes eligibility determination & recommendation.
11. Board acts on the HLRC's recommendation.
12. Staff notices designation.
13. Staff records designation resolution.

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The process for designating a landmark is as follows:

1. First, confirm with staff that the property is likely eligible for designation. Provide as much information as you have regarding the historic resource...the address, built date, architecture style, architect, builder, and it's association with historic events or people. Also provide any photos that you have if Google Streetview or real-estate web sites are insufficient.
2. Review How To Nominate a Landmark or Historic District guidelines that are on our website.
3. Complete the Landmark and Historic District Nomination Form and submit it to our online permitting system.
4. Staff will review the nomination and invoice the application through the system. The fees are: \$1,461 with owner's consent and \$4,864 wo owner's consent.
5. Once the application has been found complete, the nomination notice is sent to the owner and consent is requested if not already provided.
6. Staff and our consulting historian will inspect the site.

7. The historian prepares an evaluation of eligibility.
8. The Landmarks Commission hearing is noticed.
9. Staff prepares the case for Landmarks Commission.
10. The Landmarks Commission determines if the criteria for designation has been met and recommends that the Board of Supervisors designate or not.

If the owner does not consent to designation a board hearing and notice is required.

10. The Board acts on the Commissions recommendation.
11. The nominator and property owner are noticed of the designation.
12. Lastly, the designation resolution is recorded on the property.

The process takes approximately 6 months.

# Historic Districts



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A geographic area that is at least **50** years old may be designated as a County historic district if it exhibits either:

- A concentration of historic or scenic sites containing common character-defining features, which contribute to each other and are unified aesthetically by a plan, physical development, or architectural quality; or
- If the area exhibits significant geographical patterns associated with different eras of settlement and growth, particular transportation modes, or distinctive examples of parks or community planning.

The nomination application must include completed forms indicating consent from more than 50% of property owners and a contributor survey. The survey is typically prepared by an architectural historian. The nomination fee is \$11,113. Due to the requirements for majority owner consent, the cost of the contributor survey and the nomination fee, nominating historic districts are challenging. Success is determined by the proponent's ability to organize to raise

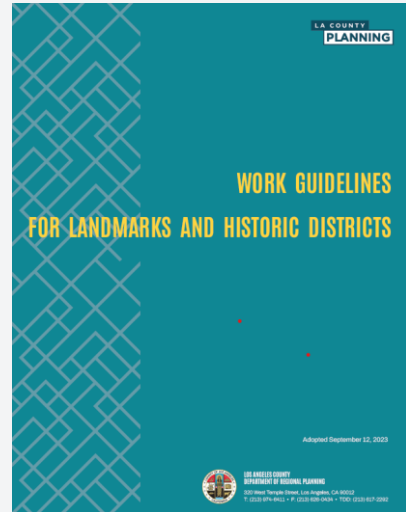
funds for the contributor survey and nomination fee, and to obtain owner consent.

The designation process for Historic districts differs from landmarks as districts require a public hearing with the Planning Commission between the Landmarks Commission and Board hearings. The RPC makes a recommendation to the Board that the proposed district is consistent with the land use plans; is in the interest of public health, safety and welfare; and conforms to good zoning practice.

In addition to district nominations being challenging, the designation process for a historic district can be lengthy. If you are interested in nominating a historic district, please contact us and we'll discuss the process further.

# Work Guidelines for Landmarks and Historic Districts

- Interprets the US Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties for the County;
- Defines applicable terms;
- Provides an overview of the requirements and procedures for reviewing work on landmarks and property located within districts;
- Describes historical architectural styles and character-defining features; and
- Establishes guidelines for work on landmarks and within historic districts.



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This September, the Board adopted Work Guidelines for Landmarks and Historic Districts. These Guidelines are intended to be used by property owners, their architects and contractors, County staff and the Landmarks Commission when considering or reviewing work on landmarks and on property located within historic districts. Specifically, the document:

- Interprets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties for the County.
- It defines applicable terms;
- It provides an overview of the requirements and procedures for reviewing work;
- It describes HD historical architectural styles and their character-defining features; and most importantly
- It establishes guidelines for work.

## Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA)

- Required to authorize work, excluding maintenance and repair.
- Types
  - Administrative: \$544
  - Public Hearing: \$1,158



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A CoA is required prior to conducting any of the following work:

- Work involving or impacting the exterior of a landmark building or property located within a historic district. A CoA is only required for an interior space if it has been held open to the public and has been identified as a character-defining feature;
- Work involving or impacting a character-defining feature of a landmark or historic district; and
- Work that requires a CoA pursuant to the resolution or ordinance designating the landmark or historic district.

However, CoAs are not required for:

- Maintenance and repair;
- A change to sign or copy of a sign affixed to or part of a landmark or located within a historic district, if the change does not alter the existing design or materials of the sign;
- Work which is necessary to correct an unsafe condition, as determined by the County;
- Painting or staining, unless it is a mural
- Solar energy equipment installations;



- Landscaping that has not been specifically designated; or
- ADUs.

CoAs for reconstruction, rehabilitation, restoration or additions of less than 500 square feet of new floor area will be processed ministerially. All other work requires a public hearing with the HLRC.

CoAs require an application and fee. The fee for an Admin CoA is \$544 and the fee for public hearing CoA is \$1,158.

A CoA will be approved if the proposed work complies with the following:

- It will preserve, enhance, or restore, and does not damage or destroy, the exterior or character-defining features, interior (if designated) or exterior, of a landmark or contributing property.
- It will not adversely affect the special character or special historical, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value of a landmark, contributing property, or historic district.
- It will be compatible with the character of the historic district.
- It will comply with the provisions of the resolution or ordinance designating the landmark or historic district; and lastly
- The proposed work will comply with the Work Guidelines.

## Work on Landmarks and Contributors



Appropriate

Inappropriate

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For work on Landmarks and contributors, generally, those character-defining features visible from the street must be preserved.

Deteriorated CDFs should be repaired. If irreparable, they should be replaced in-kind.

And, there is greater flexibility for those areas of buildings not visible from the street. On those areas, the following are acceptable:

- New door and window openings
- Replacement of windows for energy efficiency...

## Additions to Contributors



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- Dormers off the rear roof for attic conversions; and
- Rear additions that are subordinate, differentiated and are compatible in style and materials to the historic building.

On the left is an attic conversion with a rear dormer and on the right is a two-story rear addition...both sensitively done.

## New Construction



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New buildings should be designed to be interpretations of traditional building styles found within a historic district or on the landmark property, without copying them exactly.

Window and doors should be appropriate to the architectural style.

New construction should be compatible with contributors in the district, including:

- Siting/Setbacks
- Mass/Scale
- Height
- Roof Style and Pitch; and
- Building Materials. Alternative materials, such as composite siding, are acceptable if they appear similar to historic materials.

Houses typically should have single-story front porches.

Accessory buildings, such as garages and guest houses, should be smaller in scale than the primary building and located to rear of the lot. They should also be compatible in architectural style with the primary building.

Katrina will now provide an overview of the Mills Act Program.

## Mills Act Program

- State-enabling legislation (1972)
- County Program adopted (2013)
- Property tax savings: roughly 50%, declining savings over time
- Contract includes a 10-Year work program
- Interior and exterior inspections
- Fees
  - Application Fee: \$1,301
  - Contract Execution Fee: \$718
- Competitive Process



The Anderson House  
ARG, 2020.

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The Mills Act Program is one of the major incentives we have for designated properties.

The State recognized that historic resources are costly to maintain and repair. To incentivize their preservation, the State enacted the Mills Act in 1972 to grant local governments the authority to enter into contracts with owners of historic properties who are willing to restore and maintain their properties in exchange for property tax relief.

In 2013, The Board of Supervisors implemented the Program in LA County when it adopted the Los Angeles County Mills Act Program. The County manages 17 Mills Act contracts. These property owners save about 50% on their property taxes, with the savings declining slightly over time. And they're able to put those savings back into the property. The owner of the house photographed here requested a contract because the property needed extensive and costly work. The carport (which is in the foreground) was separating from the house causing water intrusion into the residence. The wood siding also needed repair. Those are examples of items that we built into a 10-year work program, which is an important aspect of the Mills Act application and contract. During the initial inspection, we review your proposed work program and check for other work that should be prioritized for completion in the first 2-5 years. For example, work dealing with hazards and failing foundations.

We conduct inspections periodically (typically every 5 years) to check on your progress and

confirm compliance with your contract.

And a note that there is a fee to apply for the Mills Act. There is no guarantee of a contract, no refund if not selected.

More on the application process later, but it is a competitive process. We prioritize applications based on answers to the following questions:

- How will a Mills Act contract result in the preservation, restoration, or rehabilitation of the property?
- Is the historic resource threatened by deterioration, abandonment, or demolition? If so, how?
- Will the historic resource deteriorate or be abandoned without a Mills Act contract due to the property owner's economic hardship?
- Will the contract result in the preservation of a historic structure or structures containing, or which will contain as a direct result of the historical property contract, one or more affordable housing unit(s) reserved for occupancy by Extremely Low Income, Very Low Income, or Lower Income households, as those income categories are described in the operative Los Angeles County Affordable Housing Program Income Limits criteria for area median income (AMI), adjusted by family size, published by the Department? If yes, please provide evidence that supports your answer.

# Mills Act Program: Eligibility

## Eligibility:

- Located in unincorporated LA County
- Privately owned
- Not exempt from property taxation
- Has a historical designation
- The maximum assessed property value is not exceeded

## Maximum Assessed Values (MAV) including both improvements and land:

| Property Type           | NR, CR (Individual or HD Contributor) | County Landmark, County HD Contributor |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Single-Family Residence | \$1 million                           | \$2.1 million                          |
| Two-Family Residence    | \$1.5 million                         | \$3.2 million                          |
| Other Land Uses         | \$3 million                           | \$6.3 million                          |

## Exemption to MAV

- High bar: cost of need relative to property value
- Requires a hearing at the Board of Supervisors
- Requires a Historic Resources Report

## Eligibility:

- Located in unincorporated LA County
- Privately owned
- Not exempt from property taxation
- Has a historical designation
- The maximum assessed property value is not exceeded

The Board established Maximum Assessed Values (or MAVs) for properties in the Program. This means that the most recent property tax assessment can't exceed the numbers shown here. This chart distinguishes between the National Register and California Register (middle column) and our County Register (right column).

If a property's assessed value exceeds the maximum and the property owner has requested an exemption from disqualification, the Board may approve the exemption, if they find that the property is deserving of a contract due to its exceptional nature or because it is subject to special circumstances. However, this rarely occurs and is highly competitive. This requires a costly historic resources report and a hearing before the Board of Supervisors. The cost of the required work also needs to be fairly high in relation to the property's value.



# Mills Act Program: Application Process

Maximum Assessed Values (including both improvements and land):

| Property Type           | NR, CR (Individual or HD Contributor) | County Landmark, County HD Contributor |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Single-Family Residence | \$1 million                           | \$2.1 million                          |
| Two-Family Residence    | \$1.5 million                         | \$3.2 million                          |
| Other Land Uses         | \$3 million                           | \$6.3 million                          |

- 
- 1. Online Application (\$1,301)**
    1. Proposed 10-Year Work Program
    2. Photographs and Site Plan depicting Work Program Items
    3. Most recent property tax bill
    4. Questionnaire
  - 2. Review Applications for Completeness; Prioritize Applications**
  - 3. Interior and Exterior Inspection**
  - 4. Administrative Review**
  - 5. Draft and Review Contract**
  - 6. Contract Execution Fee (\$718)**
  - 7. Contract Effective: January 1**

- 1. Landmark Designation Process (4-6 months, \$1,461/\$4,864)**
  - 2. Mills Act application steps #1-7**

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This slide reiterates that if your property is currently individually designated or is a Contributor to the National Register or California Registers (such as a Contributor in View Park), it is eligible for the Mills Act if the most recent property assessment is under \$1 million (if it is a single-family residence), under \$1.5 million (if it is a two-family residence – a duplex or single-family residence with an ADU), and under \$3 million (if it is another land use, such as a commercial building).

If the MAV is above those amounts but is below \$2.1 million, \$3.2 million, or \$6.3 million, perhaps it's eligible for designation as a County Landmark. Keep in mind that the process to designate a County Landmark takes at least 4-6 months and comes at a cost. If you believe your property could be eligible for designation as a County Landmark, reach out to us and we can look into its potential. And a reminder that we cannot guarantee a Mills Act contract.

Once your property is eligible to apply for the Mills Act, proceed with steps #1-7. It starts with an online application. Our department will then review the applications for completeness and prioritize the applications based on answers to the questionnaire. We conduct an interior and exterior inspection. If the property looks eligible and could benefit from the work that comes from a Mills Act contract, we draft a contract and have you review it. The 10-year work program is attached to the contract. The fee to execute the contract is \$718, and the contract's effective date is January 1 of the following year.

# Historic Preservation Program

[planning.lacounty.gov/preservation](http://planning.lacounty.gov/preservation)  
[preservation@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:preservation@planning.lacounty.gov)