

**MIRROR LAKE LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT
DESIGNATION APPLICATION**

HISTORIC DISTRICT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The “Sunshine City’s” historic neighborhoods are more than collections of old buildings – they are tangible reminders of the city’s history, architectural trends, and culture. The purpose of a local historic district designation is to encourage the restoration, preservation, rehabilitation, and conservation of historically, architecturally, and archaeologically significant areas, structures, buildings, sites, and objects and their surroundings.

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TERMINOLOGY:

HISTORIC means the resource (e.g. house) is 50-years in age or more. The word “historic” does not signify any official designation.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES means the list of historic properties significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture, maintained by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, as established by the National Historic Preservation act of 1966, as amended.

ST. PETERSBURG REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES means the list of local landmarks, including historic district, and archaeological sites that have been designated by the St. Petersburg City Council. The St. Petersburg Register is distinct from the National Register; however, certain properties may be listed in both.

CONTRIBUTING and NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCE: Within a historic district, all properties are listed as either “contributing” or “non-contributing” to label their significance within the larger district designation. Contributing properties generally add to the historic significance of the district by their location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and association, while non-contributing properties lack the qualities embodied in the criteria for designation of the district.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (COA) is a required approval for any exterior alteration, new construction, demolition, or relocation to a building, structure, or object within the designated boundary of a local landmark.

ST. PETERSBURG’S DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR HISTORIC PROPERTIES: A resource guide to help City staff, historic property owners, builders, architects, developers, and other interested parties in making decisions regarding the alterations, repair and maintenance, and other construction activities that affect properties determined to be historically significant. The Guidelines also provide an understanding of St. Petersburg’s development and the recognized architectural styles prevalent throughout the City.

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND PRESERVATION COMMISSION: The Commission Planning and Preservation Commission (CPPC) is comprised of 10 volunteer citizens, seven (7) regular members and three (3) alternate members, appointed by the Mayor. CPPC is responsible for reviewing map amendments to the Future Land Use and Official Zoning maps, text amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, participating in other specialized zoning and land use planning projects, and reviewing all matters pertaining to historic and archaeological preservation.

DESIGNATION PROCESS, LOCAL LANDMARK DISTRICTS:

The City of St. Petersburg has received a citizen-initiated request to consider local historic district designation for a portion of the Mirror Lake neighborhood. In accordance with City Code [Section 16.30.070.2.5.B.2](#), the City of St. Petersburg’s Urban Planning and Historic Preservation Division is required to facilitate this request starting with a public information meeting, followed by the distribution of ballots, and possible processing of an application for local historic district designation. An information sheet outlining the step-by-step process was published by separate document, published on the City’s website, and may be accessed by clicking on the following link: [Summary of Next Steps and Procedures](#). For more information: <https://www.stpete.org/mirrorlake>.

GENERAL INFORMATION, LOCAL LANDMARK DISTRICTS:

1) What is the difference between the National Register Historic District and a Local Historic District?

Both National Register districts and locally designated historic districts can be used as effective preservation tools, either independently or together, to help preserve a community’s historic resources.

A **National Register historic district** means that the proposed area has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is managed by the National Park Service in the U.S. Department of the Interior and is the official Federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. Generally, the listing of a property in the National Register places no restrictions on what a non-federal owner may do with their property up to and including destruction, unless the property is involved in a project that receives Federal assistance, usually funding or licensing/permitting.

National Register properties:

- Qualify for a federal rehabilitation tax credit
- Qualify for a local ad valorem tax exemption
- Do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior modifications.

The proposed local historic district is already included in the Downtown St. Petersburg Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. To learn more about the Downtown St. Petersburg Historic District, please see the nomination report available on the [National Park Service's NPGallery website](#).

A **local historic district** is listed in the St. Petersburg Register of Historic Places, meaning the area has been determined to have historic significance and is important to St. Petersburg's developmental history. The designation of a local district protects the significant properties and the historic character of the district. Local designation encourages sensitive development in the district and discourages unsympathetic changes from occurring. This review process is handled through the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process.

Local landmark properties:

- Qualify for a local ad valorem tax exemption
- Require a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior modifications.

2) Do I have any say in whether my neighborhood is designated as a historic district?

Yes. Part of the designation process includes a balloting procedure. Public comment is also an important part of the designation process. By law, property owners in a proposed local historic district must be notified of the proposal so that they may testify in favor or against any designation during the required public hearings. An information sheet outlining the step-by-step process was published by separate document, published on the City's website, and may be accessed by clicking on the following link: [Summary of Next Steps and Procedures](#).

3) Can a property owner "opt out" of being included in a local historic district?

No. After the public hearings are held and the City decides to establish a local historic district, it must follow the standards and guidelines created by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and National Park Service. These guidelines for determining historic district boundaries indicate that boundaries are based on geography, integrity and the significance of the resource, not on political boundaries or ownership and that "donut holes" cannot be cut in the district to intentionally exclude properties.

4) Are all buildings within a historic district necessarily historic?

No. A historic district is comprised of two (2) different types of classifications: contributing and non-contributing.

5) My property is already an individually designated local landmark. Is there any difference between having a property individually designated and being designated as part of a district? What additional impact will the local landmark district have on me?

None. The protections and benefits are equally applied regardless of whether a property is listed individually or is a contributing resource within a historic district.

If you are an owner of property in the former St. Petersburg High School (701 Mirror Lake Dr N), then the designation of this area as a historic district would have no additional impact on you. The St. Petersburg High School, now known as 701 Mirror Lake Condominium, was designated as a local historic landmark as the St. Petersburg High School in 1998. As such, owners of any condominium units are currently subject to exterior design review of alterations through the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process. That review will not change if the proposed district is designated.

6) I live in a co-op; will I receive a ballot for voting? [Added 02.14.2024]

Yes. City Code Section 16.30.070.2.5 states [emphasis added], “b. Evidence of the support of the historic district from the owners of 50 percent plus one tax parcel (50% + 1)...” and “(1) The City shall mail to all property owners of each tax parcel within the proposed historic district, as listed in the Public Records of Pinellas County, and at the applicant's sole expense, a City issued ballot requesting the owner to return by mail a signed ballot showing support or opposition/nonsupport for the application...”

City Code Section 16.90.020.3 defines the following [emphasis added], “Owner of record or property owner shall have the same meaning as the definition of "owner" in Section 1-2. For the purposes of notices or balloting required by this chapter, owner of record or property owner means the person having legal responsibility for the payment of taxes on said property as shown by the Official Records of Pinellas County. If the ownership is held by a trust, then notice is required to be provided to the trustee(s).”

In conclusion, individuals who pay the property taxes for your parcel/unit/residence and are listed as the owner for tax purposes on the Pinellas County Property Appraiser’s Office website (pcpao.gov) then you will receive a ballot for voting. Generally, condominiums and cooperative unit owners are designated by Florida Statutes as the responsible party for tax purposes, see F.S. 718.120 & F.S. 719.114.

7) Do I have to remit my ballot through the mail, or can my ballot be hand-delivered to the Urban Planning and Historic Preservation Division office in the Municipal Services Center building? [Added 02.14.2024]

Ballots may be returned by mail or hand-delivered; all ballots shall include the required post-mark or date stamp.

8) Who made decisions about the proposed district boundary and what is the 200-foot rule? [Added 02.14.2024]

The “200-foot rule” referenced by an attendee at the January 10, 2024, public information meeting is not a City Code requirement rather it was identified by citizen representatives in their pre-application submission. Pursuant to City Code, citizen representatives are required to provide a written description of the proposed district boundaries and a map. In this instance, the citizen representatives submitted a text description titled “St. Petersburg Landmark Designation Pre-Application” and a computer-generated map. (The computer-generated map was later recreated by the City’s Geographic Information Systems specialist, so that the City could develop an [interactive map layer](#) and other related materials.)

The citizen representatives’ [pre-application](#) includes three (3) paragraphs of boundary description starting on page 4 of 6. The submitted boundary description states, “The Mirror Lake Local Historic District comprises the contiguous, intact, historic resources within 200 feet of Mirror Lake Park and with frontages along Mirror Lake Drive North, Burlington Avenue North, Grove Street North, 4th Avenue North, and 5th Street North. Mirror Lake Park,” and “These multi-family residential structures fall with-in the 200-foot boundary and are contiguous visually and physically to the Mirror Lake facing properties. Beyond the 200-foot boundary area the concentration of intact historic structures declines due to demolitions and to intense modern infill development.”

PERMITS and CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (COA):

9) How do I apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)?

The [COA application](#) is located on the City’s [Planning & Zoning forms and applications website](#). Completed applications can be submitted by email to history@stpete.org. Any necessary photographs and drawings should be submitted with the application to provide staff with enough information to process the request. Those applications eligible for staff review will be reviewed in a timely manner to keep the project moving forward. Those applications requiring CPPC review, per the matrix, will be processed for the next available public hearing.

Of the 225 reviews sent to staff in 2023:

- 147 were determined to need a COA. 78 reviews were determined to not require a formal COA application.
- 26 of 147 were determined to need a public hearing review by CPPC.
- In 2023, 129 COA applications were approved, and only one COA application was denied, 15 applications are currently in process, and two applications were withdrawn. **In 2023, the COA approval rate was 98.5-percent (%)**.

10) Who can submit a COA application?

Anyone can submit a COA application for a property, although owner consent is required. Most applications are submitted by the contractor who submitted the building permit. In 2023, sixty-two percent (62%) of COA applications were submitted by the contractor. Thirty-three percent (33%) of COA applications were submitted by the property owner or a representative. Five percent (5%) of COA applications were submitted by architects or design professionals.

11) Can I renovate my property?

Yes. The Community Planning and Preservation Commission (CPPC) encourages historically appropriate rehabilitation, which is one of the main purposes of the historic tax exemption. As such, a Certificate of Appropriateness is required for typical exterior rehabilitation, other than minor maintenance, which is defined as maintenance that does not change the exterior appearance, design or materials, and which does not require a permit. The matrix located in the Certificate of Appropriateness application package, indicates whether certain improvements require “no review,” “staff review,” or “CPPC” review.

12) How are decisions made regarding whether to approve my COA?

Historic preservation staff and CPPC review proposals based compliance with the criteria listed in [Section 16.30.070.2.6. - Approval of changes to local landmarks](#) in the Land Development Regulations, which are based on the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. Staff will also consult the *St. Petersburg’s Design Guidelines for Historic Properties*, as well as the *U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Guidelines for Rehabilitation* and technical publications provided by the National Park Service.

13) Do I have to restore my property to the way it was when it was originally built?

No. The purpose of local historic district designation is to retain as much of the original historic material that existed in the district at the time it was designated, while still making the structure comfortable and useful for modern living.

14) Can the staff or CPPC tell me what color to paint my building or structure?

No. Typically, paint is only reviewed when proposed to be applied to an unpainted masonry surface, such as historic brick or unpainted stone. In these limited circumstances, the color of the paint is not under review, but whether the application of paint would cause damage to historic materials.

15) What if I want to demolish my building or structure?

Owners of all properties within the City are required to obtain a demolition permit from the Building Department prior to demolishing any portion of a building. Structures within a historic district must also first obtain demolition approval from the CPPC.

Currently, the area proposed to be a local historic district is zoned DC-1 and DC-2. Demolition permits within DC-1 and DC-2 are not typically issued until a site plan has been approved, any pre-demolition conditions of approval have been complied with, and a complete application for building permits has been submitted.

16) Does the COA process review landscaping?

No. Landscaping is not subject to historic review; however, site features and structures including walls, fences, decks, patios, pergolas, and sheds are subject to review.

17) Does staff or CPPC review work done on the back of the building or on other areas that cannot otherwise be seen from the street?

Yes. A review is conducted for any work to the exterior of the building, without distinguishing the location of the work. As noted in the Certificate of Appropriateness Matrix, depending upon the work to be accomplished, the review may simply be a staff review.

18) My property is listed as “non-contributing.” Do I need my project reviewed for appropriateness?

Yes. A review is conducted on all work to the exterior of all properties within the historic district. A “non-contributing” structure or property is one which is a vacant lot, a building less than 50 years old, or a building greater than 50 years old which has lost its historical integrity and therefore is listed as “non-contributing” on the historical survey. The primary focus of review is to ensure that improvements that affect size, massing and placement do not adversely affect adjacent resources and those within the district overall.

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

19) Will being included in a local historic district affect my ability to obtain insurance?

Currently, the proposed local historic district is already included in the Downtown St. Petersburg Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and several of the properties included are listed as local historic landmarks on the St. Petersburg Register of Historic Places. We recommend that concerned persons talk with their insurance agent/broker in order to address any potential concerns for each unique situation.

20) Are there tax breaks available to property owners in local historic districts?

Yes. The granting of tax exemptions to owners who make improvements to historic properties was authorized under Florida law in 1992. Pinellas County subsequently adopted an ordinance making provisions for an Ad Valorem Tax exemption (AVT) under state law. The City of St. Petersburg has entered into an interlocal agreement with Pinellas County to allow for these tax breaks. The program provides an exemption from tax increases on the improvements to historic properties for City and County Ad Valorem taxes for up to a ten (10) year period. The exemptions for historic properties are

intended for the physical improvements necessary to restore or rehabilitate the historic structure, which may also include additions or alterations. All improvements must be pre-approved.

21) Will local designation increase my property taxes?

No. Property taxes are tied to real estate values. Property taxes for buildings within historic districts are taxed no differently than those outside the district.

22) Does historic designation restrict whether a property can be sold?

No. Historic designation is a type of overlay and has no impact on a property owner’s right to list or sell a property.

23) Do I have to open my building to the public?

No. Many organizations offer historic house tours, but individual participation is always voluntary.

24) What type of technical assistance can I receive in preserving my property?

The Urban Planning & Historic Preservation Division, Planning and Development Services Department, provides professional staff support to property owners in solving problems typically encountered in the renovation and maintenance of historic properties.

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