



ROUND ROCK, TEXAS
PURPOSE. PASSION. PROSPERITY.

Designation of Historic Landmarks and Historic Districts

Historic Preservation in Round Rock • Preserving Historic Properties
Through Historic Designation • Historic Landmarks • Historic Districts •
Maintaining & Modifying Historic Properties • Historic Tax Exemption •
Historic Preservation Terms



*The Round Rock is a locally designated historic landmark.
The subject marker from the Texas Historical Commission was erected in 1975.*

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www.roundrocktexas.gov/historicpreservation

Para información en español por favor llame al 512-218-5428.

Historic Preservation in Round Rock

The Planning & Development Services Department (PDS) and the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) administer a variety of programs to encourage historic preservation:

- **Historic designation:** Round Rock designates both individual historic landmarks and historic districts in order to preserve its architectural and cultural history. Designation comes with both benefits and responsibilities for the property owner.
- **Tax Exemption:** Qualifying property owners can participate in a program that reduces city property tax by 75% for older and historic properties that satisfy certain maintenance criteria.
- **Special Projects:** The HPC and PDS conduct projects to build awareness and understanding of the city's historic properties and historic preservation programs, including surveys and inventories of historic resources, historic design guidelines to assist property owners in planning projects, and informational media and materials for the general public. Financial assistance for many of these projects is provided through grants from the National Park Service's Certified Local Government program, administered by the Texas Historical Commission.

Goals for Historic Preservation

The HPC has adopted a set of goals to guide its preservation activities in Round Rock:

- **Preservation:** Continue efforts to increase the number of historic designations within the community and assist in maintaining the integrity of designated historic properties.
- **Public Education:** Increase public awareness of historic preservation and the history of Round Rock.
- **Heritage Tourism:** Work with various groups to improve tourism through historic preservation.
- **Community Partnerships:** Establish partnerships with business and community organizations supporting preservation efforts. Strengthen ties with state and county historical commissions.



The Cantu-Franco House, built ca. 1881, is a local historic landmark.

Nelson-Crier House, built 1895-1900, remodeled 1931. The City has designated this property as an historic landmark with historic zoning, and it is also a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL).

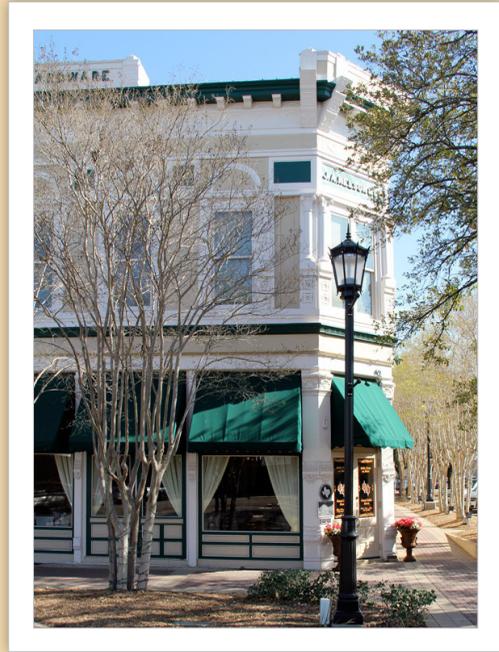


Benefits of Historic Preservation

The preservation of historic buildings and sites is beneficial for the community as a whole and for individual property owners. Research studies by numerous states and cities have shown that:

- Fewer resources are typically required to renovate an historic building than to build a new one of comparable quality.
- Improving energy efficiency in an existing building is far less expensive than tearing it down and constructing a new “green” building.
- Historic preservation activities create more jobs and more local economic activity than new construction. (Rehabilitating an historic building is labor-intensive, while new construction is material-intensive.)
- Historic designations boost and help to support stable property values.

Preserving the character of the historic built environment enhances the quality of life in Round Rock and helps to attract new residents and businesses to the City.



The Nelson Hardware Building (1900) is a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, is in a National Register Historic District, and is a local historic landmark.

Preserving Historic Properties Through Historic Designation

The City of Round Rock designates historic landmarks and historic districts in order to recognize and protect properties that are architecturally, culturally, or historically significant to the community.

All properties within the City of Round Rock are subject to zoning. Base zoning establishes the permitted uses for a property, such as residential or commercial. Historic landmarks and historic districts are designated (and, as a result, protected) with the addition of an overlay zone.

The overlay zoning on historically designated properties is what requires property owners to have exterior modifications reviewed for historic appropriateness, and automatically qualifies the property owner to apply for the historic property tax exemption.

Identifying Historic Properties

www.roundrocktexas.gov/historicsurvey

The process of researching and identifying historic properties may be conducted by members of the public or by the City. The City has conducted surveys of pre-1945 historic resources within the city limits, and downtown within the Downtown Master Plan area in order to identify potentially significant historic properties. These surveys have produced inventories of historic properties and information about the City’s development over time. These inventories identified properties that meet the City’s criteria for historic designation.

Historic Landmarks

Criteria for Historic Designation

Designated historic landmarks may be buildings, structures, objects, or sites. Properties must meet at least one of the following criteria for historic designation:

- Historic designation by the National Register of Historic Places or Texas Historical Commission;
- The property's role in the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, State or other society;
- Occurrence of a notable event on the property;
- Identification of the property with a person(s) who contributed notably to the culture and development of the City, State or other society;
- Distinctive elements of architectural design, material or craftsmanship, or the distinctiveness of a craftsman, master builder or architect, or a style or innovation;
- Archaeological value that the property can be expected to yield; or
- Other unique historical value.

State & National Historic Designation

www.thc.state.tx.us

Historic sites, buildings, districts, structures, objects, and cultural landscapes that are significant nationally, statewide, or locally can be recognized and protected through a variety of programs. The National Park Service, in cooperation with the Texas Historical Commission (THC), administers the National Register of Historic Places, and THC itself recognizes and oversees historic designations such as Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks (RTHL) and Historic Texas Cemeteries.

Each type of designation is completely separate, although some properties may hold multiple designations. In addition, each type of designation has unique requirements; for example, the National Register does not place any requirements on property owners who want to make changes to their properties, whereas the RTHL designation and local designation do.

FAQs : Historic Landmark Designation

- Q.** What's the difference between an old building and an historic landmark?
- A.** While all historic landmarks are "old" (typically at least 50 years old), not all older buildings are historic landmarks. If a building meets the City's criteria for significance, it may be designated as an historic landmark.
- Q.** Will I be required to restore my property?
- A.** No. Historic district designation does not require property owners to restore any landmark to the way it looked in the past.
- Q:** Will I get a plaque?
- A:** At this time, the City of Round Rock does not provide markers for locally designated historic properties. Other organizations may offer or require markers for properties that they designate.
- Q.** Do I have to open my house to the public?
- A.** No. The City has no such requirement. There have been historic homes tours in the past, but this has been and will continue to be strictly voluntary.
- Q.** Will I be able to lease out my house as an office?
- A.** If the house is in a base zoning district that permits offices, yes. Historic designation does not regulate the allowable uses of the property, only the base zoning does.
- Q.** How do I get my property designated as a historic landmark?
- A.** If research shows that your property meets one or more of the city's criteria for designation, you may apply for an historic landmark designation. Because this is a zoning change, it must be recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission and Planning & Zoning Commission and approved by City Council.

Historic Districts

A neighborhood or area that contains a collection of buildings and other historic resources which, as a whole, convey a sense of history and authenticity, may be designated as an historic district. Historic districts may contain a mix of properties, and not all of those properties must be individually historic, architecturally significant, or materially intact to be included. The primary goal is to preserve the overall character of the district.

Those properties within an historic district that retain their historic appearance or otherwise support the overall character of the district are classified as “contributing.” Non-contributing status may be due to a building being relatively new or having been altered in ways that are incompatible with its historic appearance.

An historic district designation helps to protect the rights of property owners who have chosen to live in an historic neighborhood. It also helps to protect their investments, supports stable property values, and may result in improved property values over time. Historic designations accomplish this by

managing the changes that can be made within the district for the benefit of the community as a whole. The appearance of both contributing and non-contributing properties is managed in the same way, since all properties in the district affect its overall character.



The Round Rock Commercial Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

FAQs: Historic Districts

- Q. What are some of the benefits of owning property in an historic district?
- A. Designation as an historic district often improves property values because it requires everyone to maintain the historic character of the neighborhood. Historic property values are typically higher and more stable than similar properties not in historic districts. The City of Round Rock offers tax exemptions for historic properties to help cover costs associated with renovation and preservation.
- Q. Can a property owner make changes to a property once it is part of an historic district?
- A. Yes, although proposed changes to the exterior must be approved by the City to ensure their historic appropriateness. The City has adopted design guidelines for historic properties to define changes that are compatible with historic properties in Round Rock. Also, some minor projects can be reviewed by PDS staff, but all other exterior changes must be approved in advance by the HPC.
- Q. Why would a property be included in an historic district if it is not historic?
- A. An historic district is an area that includes a collection of historic resources. Nearly all historic districts include both properties that are historically or architecturally significant, and properties that are not considered “historic.” The character of an historic district is affected by all of the properties within that area, so the non-historic buildings are included in a district as well.
- Q. Can a property owner opt out of being included in an historic district?
- A. While individual property owners may not opt out of being included in an historic district, the City of Round Rock considers public input when making decisions about zoning changes. Property owners are encouraged to ask questions and share feedback with PDS staff, and elected and appointed officials.

Maintaining & Modifying Historic Properties

Benefits & Responsibilities of Historic Designation

Ownership of a local historic landmark or a property in an historic district carries both benefits and responsibilities. Benefits include the prestige of designation and eligibility for a property tax exemption. In turn, property owners must ensure that the historic integrity of the property is maintained.

In order to ensure that the historic integrity of a property is maintained, the owner must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA) before beginning most projects that would alter the exterior of these properties. The CofA process ensures that the proposed changes are consistent with the City's adopted historic design guidelines, which define what is appropriate for historic properties in Round Rock.

Historic Design Guidelines

www.roundrocktexas.gov/historicpreservation

The City has adopted historic design guidelines as a reference for what is considered historically appropriate. They include guidelines for modifications and additions to commercial and residential properties. They also include guidelines for new construction in historic districts. These guidelines are based on the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and adapted for the City of Round Rock.

City review for historic appropriateness does not mean that properties must be restored to an earlier appearance, or that new structures will be required to imitate historic styles. It *does* mean that any future changes must maintain a landmark's integrity or be consistent with a district's overall character.

The historic design guidelines are the City's primary tool used to evaluate CofA applications, so it is advisable for applicants to use them as a reference when planning their projects.



Changes to historic properties should be made carefully in order to preserve their integrity.

When do I need a CofA?

www.roundrocktexas.gov/cofa

Before making most changes to the exterior of a structure or to a site with historic zoning, the owner must obtain a CofA.

A CofA is required for:

- Any exterior work that results in a change of material, finish, design, or color
- Restoration to an earlier condition
- Major changes such as additions, outbuildings, or building a new structure in a historic district
- Relocation of a historic structure to a new location, or of any structure into a historic district
- Demolition of all or part of a historic property

A CofA is not required for:

- Changes confined to the interior of a structure
- “Ordinary maintenance and repair” (defined in the City Code) which does not change the exterior, but only repairs existing materials or replaces irreparable items with identical materials

If the owner does not obtain a CofA before beginning a project, the owner may be subject to the penalties outlined in the City Code. Work may be stopped and the owner may be required to undo any inappropriate exterior modifications.

Applying for a CofA

To apply for a CofA, first contact PDS staff, who will advise you about scheduling and what materials to submit with an application. There is no application fee. When issued, a CofA will include conditions for approval associated with the proposed work.

Staff Review: Some minor exterior changes (e.g. paint color, replacing doors or light fixtures) may be reviewed by PDS staff, and is usually completed in a few days. Items eligible for staff review are listed in the City Code.

HPC Review: Any other changes must be reviewed by the HPC, including changes in building or roof materials, changes in window size or style, restoration to an earlier condition, additions, relocation of a structure, or demolition of all or part of a structure. The application should be submitted to PDS at least two weeks before the HPC's monthly meeting. At the meeting, PDS staff will present an overview of the proposal to the HPC. It is helpful for the applicant and/or their contractor to attend in order to answer questions about the project.

Historic Tax Exemption

www.roundrocktexas.gov/historictax

The City's historic tax exemption program was created in 1982 as an incentive for owners to maintain their properties and to offset the costs of doing so.

Eligible historic properties that meet the required maintenance criteria may receive an exemption of 75% of the City's portion of their property taxes. In recent years, the average property tax savings was over \$1,000.

Eligible properties must include at least one man-made structure, and must be designated with historic zoning, or meet age and architectural authenticity criteria in the City Code. Owners must submit an application each year they wish to apply for an exemption. Members of the HPC then inspect each property utilizing a list of specific maintenance criteria (peeling paint, loose mortar, etc.) listed in the City Code. Items that need maintenance are noted, and the applicant typically has the next year to complete the noted repairs. If the repairs are not completed and the same problem is noted the following year, the property may not be eligible to receive the exemption.

FAQs: Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA)

- Q. Does the city provide any guidelines that I can refer to while planning my project?
- A. Yes. The City has an adopted set of guidelines for historical appropriateness, which are available at www.roundrocktexas.gov/historicpreservation. Another helpful reference is the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, available at www.nps.gov.
- Q. Do I need a CofA before I can make changes to the inside of my house?
- A. No. The interior design, interior renovation, and use of a designated structure is not affected by historic zoning.
- Q. Will my yard be affected?
- A. Yes. While plants and landscaping are not subject to review, a CofA is required for any changes to paving (other than ordinary repair and maintenance), as well as the addition of any architectural structures (such as fences or lampposts).
- Q. What about my storage shed (or other outbuildings)?
- A. Existing permanent accessory structures are not required to meet historic design standards. Any new additions or renovations, however, require a CofA.

Historic Preservation Terms

Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA): *A document certifying that proposed changes to a property with historic zoning have been reviewed by the HPC or PDS staff, and that the proposed changes are consistent with adopted historic design guidelines.*

Historic district: *An area where properties collectively have historic significance (although all the properties in the district may not be significant individually) and has been designated with historic zoning.*

Historic landmark: *A property meeting the City's criteria for historic designation, and designated with the application of historic zoning.*

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC): *City of Round Rock commission appointed by the City Council to oversee the City's preservation programs.*

Historic zoning: *An overlay zoning district for historic properties that is applied in addition to (overlying) the property's base zoning district. The base zoning district describes permitted uses for the property, and the historic zoning gives the legal basis for enforcing preservation ordinances.*

National Parks Service (NPS): *A department under the Secretary of the Interior that administers national parks and federal historic preservation programs.*

National Register of Historic Places: *A registry of historically or archaeologically significant places that is jointly administered by the NPS and state preservation agencies. National Register properties receive extra consideration when federal projects (such as highways) are planned.*

Planning & Development Services Department (PDS): *City of Round Rock department that administers land development, planning, zoning, building inspection and historic preservation functions.*

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historically Significant Properties: *A set of documents issued by the NPS to offer guidance to local preservation agencies and owners of historic properties about the best ways to preserve their properties' integrity.*

Texas Historical Commission (THC): *A commission appointed by the Governor of Texas, which serves as the State Historic Preservation Office to administer both Texas preservation programs and federal preservation programs in Texas. Its many activities include administering Texas properties on the National Register of Historic Places and the federal historic preservation tax credit, producing statewide preservation plans, and administering programs including the Certified Local Government program, Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks (RTHL), Texas Heritage Trails, Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation, Cemetery Preservation, and several archaeology programs.*

This project was funded in part through a Certified Local Government Grant from the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior, as administered by the Texas Historical Commission. The contents and opinions, however, do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior.

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