



HISTORIC DISTRICTS FAQ SHEET

(The following information is quoted from the City of Palm Springs document
Historic Districts Frequently Asked Questions of October 2008/Revised 11/17/08)

What are historic districts?

Historic districts are areas or neighborhoods in which historic buildings or residences, and their surrounding characteristics or settings, are identified by historical association or architectural quality as significant to the city's heritage and cultural fabric. (PSMC 8.05.020)

What are some of the benefits of historic districts?

Historic districts enhance the richness and personality of a city by preserving the past and providing continuity into the future. They encourage neighborhood pride and preserve and increase property values by ensuring architectural standards are maintained or restored. Many studies show property values in protected historic districts tend to be higher than comparable neighborhoods without such standards.

How do areas or neighborhoods become historic districts?

Typically, a member of the City Council or the City's Historic Site Preservation Board, a non-profit historic organization, a neighborhood organization or an individual citizen proposes an area to the City's Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) for consideration. (PSMC 8.05.125) The HSPB commissions the requisite resources survey to determine whether the area or neighborhood meets the City's historic district criteria. Architecturally significant buildings or residences are categorized as contributing or non-contributing structures/sites and property owners' input is solicited during this process. The HSPB reviews the results of the completed survey, discusses whether or not the area or neighborhood meets historic district criteria and allows the public to comment. (PSMC 8.05.135) The HSPB may then recommend the creation of the historic district to the City Council. The City Council also holds a public hearing before voting on whether or not to create the historic district. (PSMC 8.05.140)

How are owner's views taken into account?

Strong community support is important to any successful planning process. This is especially true in the historic district process which involves every property owner. Owner input is sought from the beginning of the process. Owners are kept informed through mail and community meetings. Since there is rarely universal agreement on land use issues, if a homeowner does not want to be part of the historic district, they can ask to be excluded; however, the HSPB can recommend participation based on the established boundaries of the historic district.

If my area or neighborhood is designated how will my property be affected?

Exterior changes involving alterations or additions require a Certificate of Approval from the HSPB. The HSPB considers the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Buildings*. These standards are used throughout the country to ensure alterations and additions to historic properties are consistent and appropriate. (PSMC 8.05.180)

What is the downside?

Owners making changes to their property have an extra review step before a city permit can be issued. Scheduling the HSPB review may require between one and three months. (PSMC 8.05.185)

Are all properties in the historic district affected in the same way?

Even though a building might not have historic characteristics, exterior changes could adversely impact the historic street and neighborhood setting or ambiance. Consequently, the review process applies to all properties within historic district boundaries. (PSMC 8.05.210) (PSZC 94.04.00(D))

Are there any tax advantages to the property owners?

The Mills Act Historic Property contract provides a property tax reduction program for historic district, buildings or residences with historic and contributing characteristics. Property owners should explore this option with their tax advisor.

Will I incur costs to upgrade my property?

All physical conditions which existed legally at the time the district was designated are "grandfathered in." Owners are not required to do anything pro-actively to conform to the historic district regulations. The design guidelines apply when an owner requests a physical change to their property.

Need more information?

Please call the City of Palm Springs Department of Planning Services at (760) 323-8245 or log on to the city website at www.palmsprings-ca.gov.