Guide to Living in a Historic District

What are the benefits of local historic districts?

- Investments of owners & residents are protected over time
- Local economies can be positively impacted through heritage tourism
- Better quality design is encouraged which equals a greater sense of cohesiveness & general public appeal
- Districts are vehicles for education - a living record of communities & residents
- Help the environment by encouraging communities to retain & use existing resources
- Local districts are energy-efficient as many older buildings were designed to take advantage of natural light & climate-appropriate materials
- By providing a higher quality of life, business recruitment potential can be enhanced
- Social and psychological benefits are provided
What are Certificates of Appropriateness (COA)?

A Certificate of Appropriateness is required for projects that would alter the exterior appearance of a property designated as a local landmark or a property located in a local historic district.

A COA is not required for exterior paint colors, interior alterations, ordinary maintenance and repair that does not involve a change in material or design, and any change to a portion of buildings and sites not visible from the public right-of-way.

Land use is not regulated by a COA.

The COA Process

Start → Discuss project with Historic Preservation Officer → Submit COA Application

- Public hearing held at Historic Preservation Commission meeting
- Notices mailed to property within 200 feet of your property (10 days prior to public hearing)

- Denied
- Tabled
- Approved*

May seek appeal through Zoning Board of Adjustment
Redesign project based on discussion
Submit for or obtain building permit

Application reviewed by Staff

*Have 1 year to start project and 2 years to complete project
Things to remember...

Ask Questions!
When in doubt, contact the City's Historic Preservation Officer to discuss project.

512.393.8230

Plan Ahead!
Because public notices must be given, Certificate of Appropriateness applications are due 30 days prior to a meeting date which is the 1st Thursday of the next month.

Clearly Define Project!
The Historic Preservation Commission reviews and takes action on the scope of work presented. Additional work not included or presented could result in additional hearings.

Character is important!
Keep the historic character of the neighborhood in mind when planning projects. Each of the 7 districts possesses its own unique identity.

Be Involved!
If requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness, be sure to come to the Historic Preservation Commission meeting.
1. What is a local historic district?
An area in which historic buildings and their settings are protected by public review which shows the neighborhood is historically significant to San Marcos.

2. Will my taxes increase?
Taxes are based on the appraised value of your property as determined by the Hays County Appraisal District. Historic district designation is not a factor in the appraisal or tax rate.

3. How long does it take to get a COA & how long is it valid?
Most applications are processed within a month and approval expires within a year if the work has not begun and within two years if the work is not completed.

4. Will I have to open my home for tours?
No, there are no requirements for home tours or public access to your property.

5. What restrictions will be placed on my property?
Only visible alterations, new construction, additions, or demolitions that are visible from the public right-of-way require a Certificate of Appropriateness. Routine maintenance & repairs, painting, and interior changes are not regulated.

6. How much will it cost me?
No dues or assessments are required to belong to a historic district. There is an $11 Technology Fee for a Certificate of Appropriateness application and the building permit fee is standard, whether your property is within a historic district or not.

7. What makes a property historic?
A structure is considered historic if it’s at least 50 years old. Each period of construction has character-defining elements and these elements are encouraged to be preserved.

8. Will being in a historic district affect the use of my property?
No, historic designation does not restrict land use. Zoning determines how your property can be used.

9. Will I be forced to restore my building?
Being in a historic district does not require you to make any improvements to your property. There are requirements for reasonable upkeep and maintenance already imposed by the Building Code on all property in the City of San Marcos.

10. Where do I go for help?
Contact the Historic Preservation Officer at 512.393.8230 or go to our website: www.sanmarcostx.com/historicpreservation

SOURCES: www.savingplaces.org/stories/10-on-tuesday-10-benefits-of-establishing-a-local-historic-district#.WMlD6sLcs