



Landmark Designation Q & A

What is a local historic landmark?

A local historic landmark is an individual building, structure, site, area, or object, which has historical, architectural, archeological, or cultural significance and has been recognized by official designation for its importance. There are approximately 139 individual properties designated as historic landmarks in Wake County, including municipalities.

What are the benefits of designating a property as a historic landmark?

Honor - Landmark designation is an honor that is bestowed on only a few of the county's significant historic properties each year.

Reduced Property Taxes - An owner of a privately owned landmark is eligible for an annual 50% property tax deferral, as long as the special character of the historic property is maintained.

Design and Technical Assistance - The Wake County Design Guidelines aid the landmark owner in planning desired exterior changes in such a way that a landmark's historic value is preserved. Capital Area Preservation (CAP) staff can provide technical preservation assistance to owners of landmarks upon request.

What are the requirements of local designation?

Once the property has been designated, property owners are required to obtain a "certificate of appropriateness" from Capital Area Preservation before making changes to the exterior of the property. A Certificate of Appropriateness, or "CA," is a type of permit that *certifies* that changes to a historic landmark are *appropriate* to the historic character of the property. The Wake County Historic Preservation Commission's review of proposed changes ensures that work does not compromise the special character of the landmark.

How is local designation different from listing in the National Register of Historic Places?

Local designation should not be confused with listing in the National Register of Historic Places, a federal program administered by the state. Although some properties may carry both types of designation, the National Register and local designation are totally separate and independent programs with different requirements and benefits.

How are landmarks designated?

A local governing board designates historic landmarks upon recommendation of the Historic Preservation Commission. Procedures and requirements for landmark designation were established in the Wake County historic preservation ordinance.

Eligibility - Wake County's survey of historic architecture is used as a guide to evaluate a property's eligibility for landmark designation. In addition, the Historic Preservation

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Commission maintains a "Designation Priorities List" which includes properties already determined eligible for landmark designation. Other properties may be eligible, however, it is suggested that the applicant discuss the property's eligibility with Capital Area Preservation staff before proceeding with designation. Landmark designation is usually initiated by the property owner, Capital Area Preservation, the Wake County Historic Preservation Commission, or the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission.

Application and Designation Report - A Designation Application and Report are completed and submitted to Capital Area Preservation. The report is usually prepared by the property owner or a consultant hired by the property owner or CAP. The report will include current data about the property and site; a complete description of the property proposed for designation; pertinent historical information; and photographs. (The "Landmark Designation Application" specifies all the information required for designation reports. A designation handbook provides detailed instructions about preparing a designation report.)

Historic Preservation Commission Review - Once Capital Area Preservation determines that the report is complete; it is submitted to the Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission is required to give the State Historic Preservation Office 30 days to comment on the report. The report may also be referred to the Commission's Designation Committee. Following these reviews, the Historic Preservation Commission will hold a public hearing on the landmark request during a regular meeting. Comments from the property owner, the State Historic Preservation Office, and other interested parties will be heard at the public hearing. The commission will then vote on a recommendation.

Governing Board Review - The report will be forwarded to the appropriate local governing body, which will also hold a public hearing on the proposed designation. Comments from the property owner, the State Historic Preservation Office, and other interested parties will be heard at the public hearing and the Historic Preservation Commission will present its recommendation. Following this public hearing, the local governing body may adopt an ordinance designating the property as a landmark or reject the proposal.

Notification - Upon approval, written notice of the designation is mailed to the property owner. A certified copy of the ordinance is also mailed to the owner after it is filed with the Wake County Register of Deeds Office.

How do landmarks get the tax deferral?

Landmarks are eligible for the property tax deferral beginning in the year following designation. For example, a property which is designated as a historic landmark in 2001 is eligible for the tax deferral in 2002. (The deadlines are established by the N.C. General Statutes.) The tax deferral is claimed by submitting an application and a copy of the landmark ordinance to the Wake County Tax Assessor during the January tax listing period.

Please note that it takes several months for the completion of the landmark designation process. In order to ensure an adequate amount of processing time, the Historic Preservation Commission suggests that property owners who wish to meet the December 31 deadline submit a completed designation application form and report no later than August (see meeting schedule for specific deadline).

Is there any penalty if a property receiving the tax deferral loses its landmark status?

Yes. If a designated historic landmark loses its landmark status due to demolition or alterations which affect the special character of the property, the owner will be responsible for up to three years back taxes, plus interest.

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