

Frequently asked questions regarding historic buildings

How do I know if a building is “historic”?

Any building over 50 years old may classify as “historic”. Buildings that have particular merit may be designated as “historic landmarks” on the City of Cottage Grove’s local inventory and/or on the National Register of Historic Places.

A building, site, or neighborhood may be eligible for local or national designation as a historic landmark based on any of the following criteria:

- Its association with historic or famous events;
- Its association with the lives of persons, or groups of people, significant in local, state or national history;
- Its architectural design or method of construction;
- Its relationship to the cultural, social, political and/or economic history of the community;
- Its identification as a resource that represents an aesthetic or educational feature of the community; and
- The likelihood that the property will yield important information about pre-history or the historic past of the community.

What are the benefits of designation?

Designation as a local historic landmark or historic neighborhood is intended to protect and encourage the continued use of historic resources. Designated resources are protected by the Historic Preservation Overlay District standards found in the Cottage Grove Development Code. These standards ensure that new construction or alterations on the building or on adjacent properties are sensitive to the historic character of the resource. Historic Landmarks also qualify for a 15-year tax freeze from the State of Oregon, and may qualify for “brick and mortar” grants for qualified restoration projects (see below). Across the country, historic designation has been proven to be one of the best tools we have to improve property values and ensure neighborhood sustainability.

Are all buildings in a Historic Neighborhood considered “historic”?

When a neighborhood is designated as a “historic landmark”, the buildings in that neighborhood typically receive a classification that denotes its relationship to one of the above criteria and its condition. Look for the heading “Classification” on the building’s inventory form. A building will be classified under one of five titles:

- Primary
- Secondary
- Historic Non-Contributing
- Compatible
- Non-Compatible

Only those buildings listed as “Primary” or “Secondary” are considered historic at this time. A “Historic Non-Contributing” building may be elevated to “Primary” or “Secondary” rating through restoration and/or rehabilitation of the building’s historic features.

What do those classifications mean?

Primary:

Constructed during the primary period of development of that neighborhood or district and retains significant historic fabric and integrity and still reflects that historic period.

Secondary:

Constructed during the secondary period of development of that neighborhood or district and retains significant historic fabric and integrity and still reflects that historic period.

Historic Non-Contributing:

Constructed during the primary or secondary period of development of that neighborhood or district but does not presently retain sufficient historic fabric or integrity.

Compatible:

Constructed after the secondary period of development and is compatible in style with buildings constructed during historic periods.

Non-Compatible:

Constructed after the secondary period of development and is not compatible in style with buildings constructed during the historic periods.

**Please note that the historic periods of development may vary from one neighborhood or district to another. A definition of those periods of development can be found in the Historic Context Statement of the neighborhood/district.*

What is the local process for designating a building as a historic landmark?

There are several ways to designate a building or neighborhood as a historic landmark.

One: A property owner applies for that designation through the City of Cottage Grove’s Community Development Department. The application is reviewed by the City’s Historic Landmarks Commission at one of their regular meetings. The Historic Landmarks Commission bases their decision on criteria listed above.

Two: The City designates a property after completing a comprehensive neighborhood inventory. During this inventory, a historic building consultant reviews the architectural character of a building or a neighborhood, its individual history and alterations which have occurred to the building(s) exterior. The consultant and members of the Historic Landmarks Commission review the building according to criteria listed above. Formal designation is made following the public hearing. Property owners have an opportunity to comment and opt-out of the designation.

Three: The property owner or neighborhood group requests designation as a Historic Landmark. The Historic Landmarks Commission will review the application according to the criteria listed above. Formal designation is made following the public hearing.

Four: The property owner or neighborhood group applies for designation with the National Park Service as a National Register Historic Landmark or National Register Historic District. The owner or group must submit their National Register application to the City of Cottage Grove first. The Historic Landmarks Commission will hold a public hearing on the application and offer a resolution of support if they agree that the property(s) meet the criteria listed above. The application is then sent to the State Historic Preservation Office for review before being sent on to the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. for designation on the National Register of Historic Places. The property owner will be given an opportunity to opt-out of the designation by the State Historic Preservation Office. Any property designated on the National Register is automatically placed on Cottage Grove's local landmarks list and protected by our local Historic Preservation Overlay District.

Do property owners have a choice whether or not their building is listed as historic?

All affected property owners are invited to attend a public hearing before the Historic Landmarks Commission hears any application for Landmarks Designation. Individual property owners may object and opt-out at that time. If no objections are filed with the Community Development Department, the historic designation becomes final when the Historic Landmarks Commission votes to accept the application as presented. National Register nominations will have both a public hearing before the Landmarks Commission and an opportunity to opt-out in writing to the State Historic Preservation Office.

What protections or restrictions are placed on historic buildings?

Protections include the review of new construction adjacent to historic buildings. The Historic Landmarks Commission reviews new construction to ensure compatibility in scale, style, height, materials, architectural detail, and orientation with the adjacent historic building and neighborhood.

Restrictions are placed on the exterior alteration of historic buildings. Exterior alterations are reviewed by the Historic Landmarks Commission. Alterations including attaching decks or porches, replacing siding with different type of material, replacing windows with different materials or styles, removing historic ornamentation, changing rooflines, constructing an addition, etc. All exterior alterations are reviewed by the Historic Landmarks Commission. Interior alterations are not reviewed by the City. Certain exterior alterations that are to replace missing historic features or are to repair the structure based on historic photographs of the house may be approved administratively.

Routine maintenance is not reviewed. Routine maintenance includes cleaning, landscaping and minor repairs. In addition, exterior paint colors are not reviewed. Property owners are not

required to paint their buildings in historic colors. However, the City will offer assistance in selecting colors if requested by the property owner.

What other assistance is provided?

The City offers the historic building owner limited design consultation by the City's trained staff. This consultation may include reviewing the history and stylistic characteristics of the building, suggestions on how to blend the alterations with the building's historic character, and advice on how to navigate an application through the Historic Landmarks Commission.

Are financial incentives available?

Financial incentives are available through the State and Federal Government for buildings individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or landmarks within a National Register Historic District.

The State Historic Preservation Office offers "Special Assessment" – a freeze on the assessed value of a building for 15 years. Applicants must prepare and commit to restoration and improvement plans of their building. All plans and alterations to both the exterior and interior must be approved by the State before work is commenced. For more information call the State Historic Preservation Office at 503-378-4168. The State Historic Preservation Office website is at prd.state.or.us

The US Department of the Interior offers a 20% Federal tax credit for rehabilitation performed on income-producing buildings (apartments, bed & breakfast, commercial, etc.) Again, all work on both the exterior and interior must be approved before work is commenced. In this case, both the State and Federal Government review the planned restoration and renovation.

Also, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has a tax credit fund established jointly with Bank of America. Contact the National Trust for Historic Preservation for more information. The National Trust for Historic Preservation website is: www.ntph.org

If my house is historic, do I have to open it to the public? Am I limited to what changes I can make to the interior?

There are no local requirements for open houses. If you choose to apply through the State for Special Assessment and your property is enrolled in that program (see above), you will be required to open parts of your home to the public once a year. Interior changes are reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office only if a property is participating in the Special Commission review of interior changes.

Does the Cottage Grove Historical Society have anything to do with the City of Cottage Grove's historic building program?

No, not directly. People often confuse the historical society with the Historic Landmarks Commission. The Cottage Grove Historical Society has nothing to do with the review of local landmarks – that's the role of the Historic Landmarks Commission.

The Cottage Grove Historical Society is a non-profit organization of volunteers that maintains the historic library.

The Cottage Grove Genealogical Society maintains historical records of families from the area.

Where can I get additional information about historic landmarks and historic preservation?

Call the City of Cottage Grove Community Development Department at 541-942-3340, or write to us at 400 East Main Street, Cottage Grove, OR 97424, or email at planner@cottagegrove.org

Websites:

State Historic Preservation Office	www.prd.state.or.us
National Trust for Historic Preservation	www.ntph.org
The National Register of Historic Places (Department of the Interior)	www.cr.nps.gov
The Oregon Heritage Commission	www.oregonheritage.org
City of Cottage Grove	www.cottagegrove.org
Cottage Grove Historical Society	http://cottagegrovehistoricalsociety.com/
This Old House	www.thisoldhouse.com
Old House Journal	www.oldhousejournal.com