



Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

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BUSTING THE MYTHS ABOUT HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCES

A historic preservation ordinance will mean that property owners will lose their rights. – MYTH!

Ownership rights are not affected by historic designation. Property owners are required neither to restore nor to rehabilitate their properties. For owners of designated properties, the application for a building/demolition permit means that there is an additional step of review by the Historic Preservation Commission before the Building Department grants a permit.

Communities are not allowed to designate landmarks without property owner consent. – MYTH! Fire regulations, zoning and building codes do not require owner consent. Historic preservation is no different. Nowhere in Illinois law does it state that owner consent is required before a local government can designate a landmark or a historic district. Historic preservation ordinances have been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, which found that designation does not harm a property's economic value. Recommended ordinance language authorizes the Historic Preservation Commission to review and comment on all permits for demolition, additions, and new construction on properties that are designated as landmarks or that lie within historic districts.

It will be impossible for owners to make an alteration to a designated property. – MYTH! For designated properties, any construction or demolition must meet the local building code AND pass review by the Historic Preservation Commission, based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and any additional guidelines which that community may establish. (See the booklet, "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.") This review must be completed in a timely manner and usually applies to exteriors that are visible from the public way.

Landmarks and historic districts will negatively affect property values. – MYTH! While property values reflect the enhanced quality of life found in traditional neighborhood settings, it is not true that property values will become so unstable that gentrification will force residents from their lifetime homes. Nor is it true that property values will fall when historically significant properties are designated or a historic district is established. Donovan Rypkema, a nationally recognized expert on the economics of historic preservation, has said, "No evidence in any form of data demonstrates that local historic districts have any adverse effect on property value." See "Twenty Lesson Learned: Economic Benefits of Local Historic District Designation in Indiana," based on the findings Donovan Rypkema, and see the Alabama property value study:
<http://www.preserveala.org/pdf/FINAL%20REPORT%20COMPLETE%20.pdf>

There are no financial benefits to the public in historic districts and landmarks. – MYTH! Property owners benefit directly when they take advantage of the state's Property Tax Assessment Freeze or the Federal Income Tax Credit program, both of which are outlined in the IHPA brochures. Only owners of National Register or contributing properties within a certified local district can take part in these programs, which have saved taxpayers several million dollars over the past decade. The article, "Tax Freeze Turns Twenty", offers case studies of how property owners have taken advantage of locally designating their historic properties. The state's Heritage Grant program has funds for preservation of public buildings designated as landmarks.

The Certified Local Government program will not really help the community and its residents. – MYTH! The State of Illinois earmarks 10% of the Federal Historic Preservation funding each year for matching grants shared among the state's 53 CLG communities. These grants can fund activities like public education, National Register nomination, surveys of historic resources, or planning and preservation of structures. Furthermore, CLG status provides valuable networking opportunities with other CLG communities.