

Local Landmark Criteria for Asheville & Buncombe County

The following information is from the *Handbook for Historic Preservation Commissions in North Carolina*, published jointly by Preservation North Carolina and the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

General information

Historic landmark designation applies to individual properties, which may be buildings, structures, sites, areas, landscapes or objects. State law specifies the procedure for designation of landmarks. The Historic Resources Commission of Asheville & Buncombe County (HRC) recommends designation, and the local governing board (City Council or County Commission, whoever has jurisdiction over the property) designates the landmark by adopting a designation ordinance.

Landmark designation is an honor. It signifies recognition that the property is important to the heritage and character of the community and that its protection enriches all the community's residents.

Investigation of a proposed landmark

Before recommending that a property be designated as a historic landmark, the property's significance must be investigated and the HRC must find that:

- ❖ It has special historic, prehistorical, architectural, or cultural significance **and**
- ❖ It shows integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, or association.

1. Criteria for Significance

To have special historical, prehistorical, architectural, or cultural significance, a property should meet at least one of these criteria:

- It is associated with events that have contributed significantly to the history of Asheville or Buncombe County.
- It is associated with the life of a person significant to our local history.
- It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.
- It represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values.
- It has yielded or is likely to yield important historical or prehistorical information.

2. Aspects of Integrity

A property has integrity if it is able to convey its significance to the observer. In other words, the significance can be seen or experienced, not just imagined. These aspects of properties contribute to their integrity:

- **Design:** Design refers to the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a building, or landscaping as it was originally conceived. It includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials.
- **Setting:** A property's setting is its physical environment (including natural or man-made features) as it relates to a property's functions, its significant role, or its design. Setting refers to the character of the place where a property played its significant role.
- **Workmanship:** Workmanship is the physical evidence of crafts of a particular culture or people during the period in history or prehistory when a property was created.
- **Materials:** Materials are the physical elements that originally were combined to form a property. For a rehabilitated property to have integrity of materials, its historical materials much have been preserved; it must be an actual historic property, not a re-creation.
- **Feeling:** Feeling is a property's expression of the historical or aesthetic sense of a particular period of time. A property has integrity of feeling when its physical features together enable it to evoke a sense of its historical character.
- **Association:** Association is a property's direct connection with a significant event or person. To have integrity of association, the property must be where the significant event or activity occurred, and it must be sufficiently intact to convey the connection to an observer.

To qualify for designation, a property generally should show integrity in most or all of these respects. In particular, integrity of feeling or association alone is not sufficient because these are more subjective qualities. Generally, a property retains integrity if it has not been substantially altered and if it is not severely deteriorated or dilapidated.

Designation Procedures

- ▶ Following receipt of the completed preliminary application, the Landmarks Committee of the HRC investigates the historical, prehistorical, architectural, or cultural significance of the property proposed for designation. This step typically includes a visit to the site by the Committee.
- ▶ The Landmarks Committee will report to the full Commission at the next regular meeting, and after discussion, the entire board will vote on whether or not the applicant should proceed with a full designation report. If the full HRC finds that the property does not hold enough significance or integrity to rise to the level of

local landmark, the applicant will be advised to save the time and expense of preparing the full report and withdraw the application. If new evidence is subsequently found that supports the request, the applicant is welcome to return for reconsideration. The applicant is free to proceed without a favorable recommendation from the HRC, with the understanding that designation is highly unlikely.

- ▶ Once the final report is completed, the Landmark Committee will submit the final report to the State Historic Preservation Office for their review and comment. The Committee will review the report and schedule a public hearing with the full Commission, giving the community an opportunity to participate and comment.
- ▶ After final discussion, the HRC will consider all of the information presented, including the report provided by the applicant, their own investigation, and comments from the State Historic Preservation Office as well as the public, to form a recommendation for the local governing body.
- ▶ A designation ordinance will be drafted and proposed to the local governing body.
- ▶ The City Council or County Commission will hold an additional public hearing before voting on the proposed ordinance.

Effects of Landmark Designation

Landmark designation has these consequences:

An owner who wishes to make changes to a property designated as a historic landmark must first have the plans reviewed and approved by the HRC by applying for a certificate of appropriateness.

The owner of a designated landmark may apply for an annual fifty percent property tax deferral for as long as the property's important historical features are retained. To receive this tax deferral, the property owner must apply to the county tax supervisor for a reduced valuation of the property after it has been designated.

A landmark may be identified by a sign posted on the property (with the owner's consent) or on a nearby public right-of-way, if this is provided for in the designation ordinance. When a property is designated as a historic landmark, the designation is filed with the title to the property. Future owners of the property are subject to the designation unless it is revoked.