

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION ABOUT LANDMARKING HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN AURORA

Aurora Historic Preservation Commission



WHAT IS LANDMARKING AND WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Q: What does Landmarking mean?

A. Making your property an Aurora Historic Landmark gives it the distinction of being a marker of Aurora's unique past. While anyone can nominate a property to be a landmark, it takes a vote of the Aurora City Council to convey the official status.

Q. What are the Advantages of landmark designation?

A. Landmark status can enhance a building's prestige, increase the value of property, and influence conditions and property values in an entire neighborhood. There are also federal and state economic incentive programs. Additional information about these programs is available from the Historic Preservation Commission and City staff.

Q. How does landmark designation affect property values: will landmark designation affect property taxes?

A. As far as the value of property is concerned, the factors affecting value are quite varied and depend on the individual property, its location, etc.; in the eyes of some buyers, landmark designation is regarded as an asset, and both real estate advertisements and real estate agents often tout this as a selling point. Studies on the effect of landmark designation on property values have generally shown that it does not have a negative impact on property values. As for real estate taxes, neither the valuation of property by the County Assessor's Office nor the tax rate is affected directly by landmark designation.

Q. What benefits does a property owner receive from having a building landmarked?

A. There is a reputation of quality and real estate marketability that is achieved when a building or district is officially designated as a landmark. Landmark property owners benefit from the official commitment to historic preservation and the security of knowing that their property will not be negatively affected by rapid development trends in the future.

Q. What part of my building would be landmarked?

A. A nomination form must be completed as part of nominating a property to be an Aurora Historic Landmark. The nomination form should define what area of a property is to be nominated, and should clearly identify the character-defining features of a building or site.

ALTERATIONS, RENOVATION, HOME IMPROVEMENT, DECORATING

Q. Who makes the rules about how to repair, renovate, or alter my property?

A. In addition to any existing City of Aurora ordinances, Historic Landmarks must follow guidelines to maintain the historic character of the building. Those guidelines come from Aurora City Code, the adopted Rules of Procedure for the Aurora Historic Preservation Commission, and the *U.S. Secretary of Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties*.

Q. Can I replace my windows or do I have to live with the leaky windows I currently have?

A. If repairable, the Commission first encourages you to repair them. However, if beyond repair, windows can be replaced with in-kind or compatible windows, after review by the Commission.

Q. Can I add an addition to the rear?

A. Additions constitute a “major alteration,” and would need to be reviewed by the Commission at a public hearing.

Q. Can I replace anything inside?

A. Under Aurora City Ordinance, the Commission is tasked to review exterior modifications. The Commission does not typically review interior modifications. However, certain grant and tax credit programs may require interior renovations to follow the *U.S. Secretary of Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties*.

Q. Can I paint my building any color I want to?

A. Painting typically constitutes a “minor alteration,” and can be reviewed and approved administratively by City staff.

Q. Does the Commission control things like landscaping, driveways and sidewalks?

A. The nomination to become a Historic Landmark should clearly outline what features are considered character-defining. These features should be maintained, and may include landscaping elements such as driveways or sidewalks.

Q. Is the Commission going to force me to restore my house back to the way it looked at the time it was built?

A. No. When a building is designated as a Historic Landmark, it is accepted in its present condition. You are not required to do anything to the building except maintain it to the minimum standards of the building code, something that is required of all property owners in the City of Aurora. Any alterations or major repairs you wish to make should be reviewed by either City staff or the Commission. If you choose to do a restoration in keeping with the character of the building, City staff and the Commission will assist you in your renovation project to assure that it conforms to the original architecture as closely as possible. These kinds of major renovation projects may qualify you for one or more tax breaks, as mentioned below in the "financial" section.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES AND BENEFITS

Q. What are the financial benefits of landmarking?

A. Designation as an Aurora Historic Landmark can qualify your property for tax credits from both the State of Colorado and the federal government. Major repair and renovation projects may also qualify for public and private grant programs through the State Historic Fund or the National Trust for Historic Preservation.