



Frequently Asked Questions: Proposed Crown Heights North Historic District

What is a historic district?

A historic district is an area of the city with a special character or a special historical or aesthetic interest which causes it to have a distinct "sense of place." Each historic district represents at least one period or style of architecture typical of one or more eras in the city's history. The proposed Crown Heights North Historic District has many different styles of architecture; the buildings reflect the innovative quality of late 19th- and early 20th-century American architecture.

I'm not able to attend the Public Hearing on September 19, 2006—how can I make my voice heard?

If you cannot come in person to testify at the public hearing on the proposed district, you may give your statement to someone else to read on your behalf, or you may send the Commission a letter, fax or email stating whether you support or oppose the proposed historic district.

I want to sell my landmark building. Must I tell the Landmarks Commission?

No. Landmark designation places no restrictions on an owner's right to sell his or her property.

Is there any extra fee or tax associated with the sale of a home in a historic district?

No.

Does landmark designation raise my taxes?

No.

Does landmark designation lower my property value?

No. Inclusion in a historic district ensures that the buildings around yours will not be demolished or modified in ways that are unsympathetic to the neighborhood. A 2003 study by the New York City Independent Budget Office concluded: "Although prices for historic properties have at times increased less rapidly than for similar properties outside historic districts, overall price appreciation from 1975 through 2002 was greater for houses inside historical districts." A link to this study is available on the Landmarks Preservation Commission web site at www.nyc.gov/landmarks.

Will landmark designation prevent all alterations and new construction?

No. Landmark designation does not "freeze" a building or an area. Alterations, demolition, and new construction continue to take place, but the Landmarks Commission must review the proposed changes and find them to be appropriate to the architecture of the building and the historic district. This procedure helps ensure that the special qualities of the designated buildings and historic districts are not compromised or destroyed.

I'd like to do repaint my front door and re-tar portions of my roof. Can I do this work without contacting the Commission?

Yes. Maintenance, such as replacing broken window glass, patching a flat roof, and repainting a building exterior to match the existing color, do not require the Commission's approval. It's a good idea to call the Commission if you are unsure whether or not work would require a permit.

I have air conditioning units in my windows. Can I install or remove them without a permit?

Yes. The Commission does not regulate the installation or removal of air-conditioning units that are installed simply by raising or lowering a window sash.

I'd like to plant some trees in my backyard and install new plantings in front of my building. Can I do this without a permit from the Commission?

Yes. The Landmarks Preservation Commission does not regulate ordinary landscaping activities such as pruning, planting of seasonal flower beds or vegetable gardens, or planting of ornamental shrubs or trees.

When do I need to get a permit for work on my building?

The Commission must approve in advance all work, whether restoration, alteration, reconstruction, demolition, or new construction, that affects the exterior appearance of any property within a historic district, even if a Department of Buildings permit is not needed for the proposed work. Commission staff reviews your proposal to evaluate the effect of the proposed changes on the architectural and historical character of your building and/or the historic district.

How do I get a permit from the Landmarks Commission?

The Commission uses a single application form for all types of work. The permit application forms are available on the Commission's web site. Applications should include descriptive materials, including photographs and drawings and material samples where relevant, to explain and describe the existing condition of the building and the proposed work.

Can the Landmarks Commission make me restore my building to the way it looked years ago?

No. The Commission regulates proposed changes to a building. It does not make you do work on your building. For example, if prior to landmark designation the stoop was removed and a ground-level entrance installed, the Commission can not make you replace the stoop.

I am renovating my kitchen and bathroom. Do I need permits from the Commission for interior work?

The Commission only reviews interior work if it requires a Department of Buildings permit or affects the exterior of the building. If the work is purely interior, the Commission's review is limited to confirming that there will be no effect on the exterior. If there is an effect, for example a vent for a new stove, the Commission will review the proposed location, size, and design of the vent.

We want to install outdoor lighting near our front door, in addition to other security measures. Do I need a permit?

Yes. The Commission staff regularly approves the installation of lighting, considering the design and placement of the lighting rather than its brightness, and other security measures.

A family member has a disability. Can I modify my house to accommodate her needs?

Yes. The Commission routinely reviews and approves lifts, railings, and ramps to accommodate handicap accessibility.

Is there funding available for work on my home?

Yes, in some circumstances a grant may be possible from the Landmarks Preservation Commission's Historic Preservation Grant Program. This program is a federally funded program that provides grants for homeowners and non-profits to restore severely deteriorated facades. Grants generally range from \$5,000 to \$20,000 and pay for exterior repairs, primarily on the street façade. Eligible work may include, but is not limited to: masonry rebuilding and repointing, repair and replacement of windows and front doors, and cornice restoration. For residential buildings, owners or tenants must meet the federal limits for household income.

Does the Commission require me to use specific contractors to do work on my building?

No.

How do I find out more about the effects of designation?

Owners of buildings within the proposed historic district are encouraged to call Landmarks Preservation Commission Executive Director Ronda Wist at 212-669-7922 to discuss questions or concerns about the effects of designation. If a building owner needs more information, a meeting can be arranged.

How can I learn more about the Landmarks Preservation Commission?

The Commission's web site offers detailed information on the Commission and the permit application process. You may visit the web site at www.nyc.gov/landmarks. Click on "FAQS" for more information on a variety of topics.

You may also call or write the Landmarks Preservation Commission at 1 Centre Street 9th Floor North, New York, NY 10007; telephone: 212-669-7700; fax: 212-669-7960; TTY: 212-669-7788.