

CPPPC

City-Parish Planning Commission

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

INFORMATION BULLETIN

Number 57

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The East Baton Rouge Parish Historic Preservation Commission was established by Metropolitan Council in August 2004. The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is considered a part of the planning functions of City-Parish Government, and is administrated by the staff of the Office of the Planning Commission.

Goals of the Historic Preservation Commission

- Protect, enhance, and perpetuate resources that represent distinctive and significant elements of the city's historical, cultural, social, economic, political, archaeological, and architectural identity;
- Insure the harmonious, orderly, and efficient growth and development of the City-Parish;
- Strengthen civic pride and cultural stability through neighborhood conservation;
- Stabilize the economy of the City-Parish through the continued use, preservation, and revitalization of its resources;
- Protect and enhance the city's attractions to tourists and visitors and the support and stimulus to business and industry thereby provided;
- Promote the use of resources for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of the City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge; and
- Provide a review process for the preservation and appropriate development of City-Parish resources.

Members of the Historic Preservation Commission

- Camm Morton, Chair, appointed by Metropolitan Council
- Carolyn Bennett, Vice Chair, Foundation for Historical Louisiana representative
- Bob Dean, appointed by Metropolitan Council
- Peggy Duerr, appointed by Metropolitan Council
- George Jenne, Mayor-President representative
- Davis Rhorer, Downtown Development District representative
- Martha Salomon, appointed by Metropolitan Council
- As historic districts are added, each new district will have an additional member on the HPC.

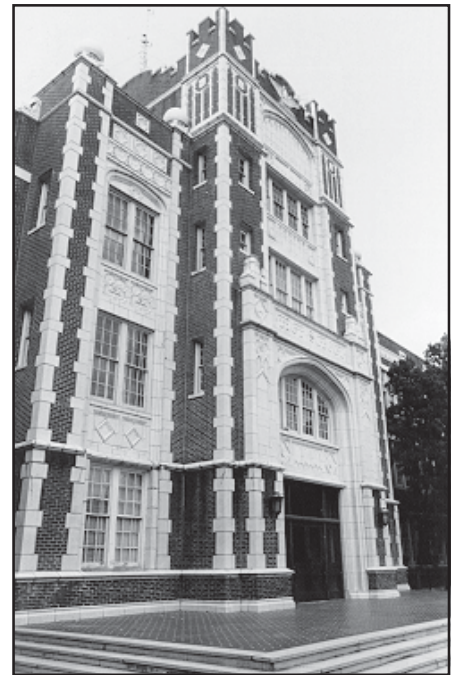
Historic Designation Process

A historical society, neighborhood association, property owner, the Mayor-President, or the Metropolitan Council may request the report for designation of a local historic district or landmark by the HPC.

The HPC will prepare a property inventory of proposed historic districts and landmarks. These proposed historic districts and landmarks will be recommended to the Metropolitan Council for official designation. Public comment is an important part of the designation process. State law requires that property owners in a proposed local historic district be notified of the proposal so that they may appear and comment during the public hearings of the Historic Preservation Commission and the Metropolitan Council.

After designation by the Metropolitan Council, the HPC will review applications for Certificates of Appropriateness for changes in appearance to the exterior of historic properties. If work on the exterior of such a designated property is proposed, a Certificate of Appropriateness must be obtained from the HPC, in addition to the building permit. Interior alterations will not be reviewed by the HPC. It is the intent of the HPC that any changes which occur to a designated property be in keeping with the historic character of the landmark or district. Historic district designation is designed to protect and enhance the existing character of a community, not to change it.

In addition to the honor and prestige of being recognized as a local historic district or landmark, local designation also provides protection. Local historic district and landmark designation is the most effective form of protection to maintain the historic character of a neighborhood or property. It has been proven to have a positive and stabilizing effect on property values. Local historic district designation allows the HPC to enforce demolition by neglect violations against property owners who allow their buildings to deteriorate.



Above: Baton Rouge Magnet High School is an example of neo-gothic architecture and was built in 1926.

Also, once a neighborhood is designated as a local historic district, the HPC has jurisdiction over all demolitions in the district, thus keeping to a minimum demolitions that leave the neighborhood with vacant lots. Unfortunately, while there are tax benefits associated with National Register designation, currently, there are none for local district or landmark designation.

The HPC will collaborate with local historic district and landmark representatives to establish design guidelines for these properties. Historic district or landmark design guidelines will be specific to the historic property or district and may address design features such as building materials, awnings, signs, lighting, fences, and roofing. Design guidelines must be approved by the Planning Commission and Metropolitan Council.

Historic district and landmark designation is not created to prevent changes to historic properties. Rather, the HPC offers assistance to owners to make sure that any changes to the exterior are appropriate to the architecture of the building and the character of the district. The regulations provide for a design review process which allows for pre-application conferences. Historic district or landmark designation does not affect the usage or zoning of any property. The HPC does not have the authority to force a property owner to restore or renovate his property.

Many property owners believe that a local designation requires the owner to make costly improvements, or that they will be forced to spend more money to comply with the appropriate preservation treatments than they would otherwise spend. While in some cases the initial changes may be more costly, it is hoped that those changes, if done correctly, will save money in the long run and increase the value of the building. Technical assistance offered by the HPC can result in savings to the home owner.

The HPC and the Planning Commission staff is available to assist owners of historic properties. The HPC and Planning Commission staff can answer technical questions, suggest solutions to problems, explain the review process, and assist in filling out application for a Certificate of Appropriateness.



Above: This residential building is located in the Drehr Place National Register District. Drehr Place is significant in community planning and development.



Above: Fonville Winans photography studio located in downtown Baton Rouge is an Italianate commercial building on the National Register. This building is significant because of Winans history in the area.

A future goal of the Historic Preservation Commission includes applying to the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation to become a Certified Local Government. The Certified Local Government (CLG) Program is a local, state and federal partnership that provides technical assistance and small grants to local governments who are seeking to preserve their architectural and cultural heritage for future generations.

Historic Preservation is also part of the Horizon Plan. Horizon Plan Action Item LU5.L, implemented by the Planning Commission, calls for the City-Parish to identify historically significant elements, structures, and locations in the community, and incorporate methods for preservation of these elements, structures, and locations.

Historic Preservation and the Horizon Plan

During the process to establish the Historic Preservation Commission, a demolition and relocation ordinance was investigated. The Metropolitan Council established a Demolition and Relocation Ordinance for the Downtown Development District in September 2004. Any demolition or relocation of a historic building in the Downtown Development District must receive Planning Commission approval before a permit can be issued by the Building Official.

For more information contact:

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