

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HPOZ'S**

### **What is an HPOZ and how does it work?**

An Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, or HPOZ, is an area of the City which is designated as containing structures, landscaping, natural features or sites having historic, architectural, cultural or aesthetic significance. To receive such designation, areas must be adopted as an HPOZ by the City Planning Commission and City Council through a zone change procedure that includes notification of all affected and nearby property owners and public hearings. Once designated, areas have an HPOZ overlay added to their zoning, and are subject to special regulations under Section 12.20.3 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code. Each HPOZ area has a five-member HPOZ Board to review and make recommendations on projects and promote historic preservation within the designated area. Most types of exterior changes or improvements to properties in an HPOZ area require written approval from the Planning Department.

### **What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of being in an HPOZ?**

Advantages of living or owning property within an HPOZ include that the Board and the HPOZ regulations work to preserve the unique, distinctive, historic and/or charming qualities of the neighborhood that many people like. National studies have also shown that in most cases historic preservation zones like an HPOZ benefit property values, and the value of properties located in such zones tends to rise faster than that of similar properties that are not located within such preservation zones. In addition, there can be significant tax advantages to property owners who own and agree to maintain designated historic structures, which can include "contributing structures" (defined below) within an HPOZ. The Board is also a source of expertise, and can often offer property owners excellent advice on cost-effective ways to remodel their properties to maintain and enhance their historical character, thereby further increasing their property values.

The only real disadvantage to living or owning property within an HPOZ is that such areas are subject to additional regulation that does not affect properties not located in an HPOZ. Most types of exterior changes or improvements must be approved by the Planning Department, which may take from 15 to 75 days. Projects which the Planning Department believes would degrade the historic character of buildings or the neighborhood may not be allowed. While an owner attempting such a project would consider that a disadvantage, it has the effect of preserving the unique historic character and charm of the area which is beneficial in many ways.

### **Who will be on the HPOZ Board?**

The HPOZ Board will consist of five members, at least three of which must be renters or owners of property within the HPOZ. All members should have a knowledge of and interest in the culture, structures, sites, history and architecture of the HPOZ area, and if possible, experience in historic preservation. One member is appointed by the Mayor, and must have extensive real estate or construction experience. One member who must be an owner or renter of property in the HPOZ is appointed by the City Council member representing the area. Two members, one of whom must be a licensed architect, are appointed by the City's Cultural Heritage Commission. The final member is selected at large by a majority vote of the initial four members. Members normally serve a term of four years, although the initial terms are staggered to prevent a complete turnover of the Board at any one time. Appointed members may be removed or replaced by the appointing authority

prior to the expiration of their term. The Board is only an advisory body to the City Planning Department. The Director of Planning (and the Area Planning Commission and City Council on appeals) has the authority to issue determinations, building permit sign-offs, and Certificates of Appropriateness.

### **What is a "Contributing Structure" and how is it affected by an HPOZ ?**

A "contributing structure" is any structure identified by a Historic Resources Survey of an HPOZ area as contributing to the historic significance of the area. Any exterior changes to a contributing structure, which also includes its demolition, removal or relocation, require approval of the City Planning Department through the issuance of a special permit called a "Certificate of Appropriateness". This requires the submission of a formal application form, detailed plans, and a fee of \$261. The permit process may take up to 75 days, or longer if the initial decision is appealed. Certain less significant changes, like routine maintenance or changes to the exterior paint color or landscaping, may be approved by the Planning Department without having to apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness or pay a fee, and this usually takes only 15 to 30 days. In reviewing projects and issuing permits, the Planning Department considers recommendations of the local HPOZ Board and the City's Cultural Heritage Commission, as well as its own research and analysis.

### **What are non-contributing structures and how are they affected by an HPOZ?**

Any structure within an HPOZ area that is not identified as a contributing structure by a Historic Resources Survey of the area is considered "non-contributing". Exterior changes to a non-contributing structure require the review and written approval of the HPOZ Board to ensure that the proposed modifications would not be detrimental to the distinctive and historic character of the neighborhood. This usually takes only 15 to 30 days, and no fee is required. City Planning Department staff will then sign-off on the building permit application.

### **If I disagree with the Planning Department's decision about a project, can I appeal it?**

Yes. The approval or disapproval of Certificates of Appropriateness or any other written determination by the Director of Planning may be appealed to the Area Planning Commission. The approval or disapproval of Certificates of Appropriateness for the demolition, removal or relocation of structures, features or sites issued by the Area Planning Commission (as the original permit jurisdiction, not on appeal) may be appealed to the City Council. All appeals must be filed within 15 days of the date of the action, and must be acted on within 75 days from the date filed. Decisions can be appealed only once. Original decisions by the Director of Planning that are appealable to the Area Planning Commission cannot be further appealed to the Council.

### **Will an HPOZ help address other urban problems like crime, illegal dumping, poorly maintained properties, problems with street lights or trees, etc.?**

Not directly. These kinds of issues are the responsibility of other agencies, and the HPOZ procedures and regulations under the Municipal Code are not designed to facilitate addressing them. However, the existence of an HPOZ can in some cases indirectly help to reduce or resolve problems of this nature. HPOZ Boards are generally knowledgeable about City government and may know better than many private citizens exactly what agency or individual to call to get prompt action on some type of neighborhood problem.