Demystifying Historic Designation

Real Places Conference 2019
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Training Objectives

- Define “designation”
- HPO’s role in designations
- Types of designations-and implications
- Resources for HPOs
Why Designation?

As HPO, you will be on the front lines answering the public’s questions.

- You will be asked to lead the designation process for local landmarks and districts
- You will be asked about which properties qualify for incentives
- You will be asked about restrictions on a property
- You will be asked about plaques
- You will be asked about removing designations from properties
**Terms**

**Designation**- General term meaning that the property has been listed on *some* register. It could be “designated” at the federal, state, or local level. Or, it could be listed at multiple levels.

**Historic Resource**- General term meaning a property, object, or structure that is of historic age (50 years or older).

**Landmark**- General term to refer to a designated property. It could be a federal, state, and/or local landmark.
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See the handout for more definitions.

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**Bottom Line**

When using these terms, you need to further explain what you mean.

When someone else uses these terms, you need to clarify what they mean.
Levels of Designation

- Federal (NPS)
- State (THC)
- Local (City)
Levels of Designation

Designation at the local level offers the most protection of historic resources! This is one of the reasons the CLG Program was established in 1980.
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<td>• Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL)</td>
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Designations at the Federal Level

National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)

- Administered by the THC in coordination with the National Park Service
- Individual properties or districts can be listed
- Primarily an honorary designation, a recognition of a property’s significance
- Does not come with protection or restrictions
- NRHP listing can qualify a building for CLG grants or the federal and state rehabilitation tax credits

For more information visit: http://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/national-register-historic-places
Designations at the Federal Level

National Historic Landmark (NHL)

- A nationally significant property is of *exceptional value* in representing or illustrating an important theme in the history of the United States
- NHLs can be buildings, sites, structures, objects, or districts
- Must be evaluated by the NPS National Historic Landmark Survey, reviewed by the National Park System Advisory Board, and recommended to the Secretary of the Interior
- Because they are so exceptional, few carry this designation (less than 50 in Texas)

For more information visit: [https://www.nps.gov/nhl/](https://www.nps.gov/nhl/)
Designations at the State Level

Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL)
- Individual buildings are designated, not districts
- Owner consent is required to nominate a property as a RTHL
- THC reviews exterior alterations and demolition requests, unsympathetic alterations may lead to de-designation

State Antiquities Landmark (SAL)
- Individual buildings or sites are designated, not districts
- Protected under the Antiquities Code of Texas
- Cultural resources on non-federal public lands are eligible
- Requires THC review for demolition and exterior alterations
- THC holds a preservation easement for each SAL

For more information visit: http://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/national-register-historic-places/historic-designations-texas
Designations at the Local Level

Local Landmark

- Criteria based on the National Register of Historic Places
- Typically, exterior alterations must be approved by the City
- Administered by the City

Local Historic District

- Each City’s program is slightly different from the next
- Eligibility and process for designation is described in the local preservation ordinance
- Criteria based on the National Register of Historic Places
- Typically, exterior alterations must be approved by the City
- Administered by the City
Keeping it Organized

- Properties and districts can have multiple designations
- Maintain an organized inventory of historic resources
- Share the inventory with the public, even better if it’s map-based

City of Kingsville, Map of Local Historic District and Main Street District
How can the THC help?

- Each February we send out a list of properties designated as RTHLs, SALs, and listed on the National Register
- We are working on building out an inventory system in DowntownTX.org customized for HPOs

Screen Shots from DowntownTX.org
National Register Historic Districts will identify the resources within the district as either contributing or non-contributing. Local Historic Districts will often do this as well.

A **contributing property** reflects the values that give a historic district its distinctive historical and visual character.

A **noncontributing property** does not add to the historic associations, historic architectural qualities, or archeological values for which a district is significant.

Does your city have different guidelines for contributing and noncontributing buildings?
HPO as Designation Promoter

✓ Organize and know the designations in your City to avoid future confusion
✓ Promote preservation incentives like the federal and state tax credits
✓ Honor historic building stewardship with designation
✓ Increase the protection of historic resources
✓ Build preservation ethic
✓ Be an active partner with the THC and communicate action affecting federally and state-designated properties

Image courtesy of the @downtownplano Instagram feed.