

TOWN *Of* CARY  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
**Landmark Designation Q & A**

**What is a local historic landmark?**

A local historic landmark is an individual building, structure, site, area or object that has historical, architectural, archaeological or cultural significance and has been recognized by official designation for its importance. There are seven properties designated as historic landmarks in Cary.

**What are the benefits of being a historic landmark?**

*Honor* – Landmark designation is an honor that is bestowed on the town’s most significant historic properties.

*Reduced Property Taxes* – A landmark owner is eligible for an annual 50 percent property tax deferral for as long as the historic character of the property is maintained.

*Design and Technical Assistance* – The Cary Historic Design Guidelines aid the landmark owner in planning desired exterior changes in such a way that a landmark’s historic character is preserved. Historic Preservation Commission staff can also help provide technical preservation information to owners of landmarks.

**What are the requirements of local designation?**

Once the property has been designated, the owners are required to obtain a “Certificate of Appropriateness” from the Town of Cary Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) before making changes to the exterior of the property. A Certificate of Appropriateness, or COA, is a type of permit that certifies changes to a historic landmark are appropriate to the historic character of the property.

**How is local designation different from listing in the National Register of Historic Places?**

Local designation should not be confused with listing in the National Register of Historic Places, a federal program administered by the state. Although some properties may carry both types of designation, the National Register and local landmark designation are totally separate and independent programs with different requirements and benefits.

**How are landmarks designated?**

The Cary Town Council designates historic landmarks after receiving a recommendation from the Cary HPC. The HPC uses Cary’s Architectural and Historical Properties Survey as a guide to evaluate a property’s eligibility for landmark designation. The HPC or property owners usually initiate the nomination/application process. By Town ordinance, property can’t be nominated without the owner’s permission.

Application and Designation Process

- *Landmark Designation Application and Report* - A landmark designation application and report are completed and submitted to the Town of Cary Historic Preservation Department. The Town or the property owner can prepare the application and report. The report must include current data about

the property and site; a complete description of the property proposed for designation; evidence of the property's historic significance and architectural integrity; and photographs. The Landmark Designation Application specifies the information required for the report, and staff can provide detailed instructions for preparing a designation report.

- *Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Review* - Once staff has determined that the report is complete, it is submitted to the Cary HPC for review. The Cary HPC is required to give the State Historic Preservation Office 30 days to comment on the report. After receiving comments from the State, the HPC will hold a public hearing on the landmark request during a regular HPC meeting. Comments from the property owner, the State Historic Preservation Office, and other interested parties will be heard at the public hearing. The Cary HPC will then vote on a recommendation. If the HPC votes to recommend the property for landmark designation, the application and report are forwarded to the Cary Town Council for its review and decision.
- *Town Council Review and Decision* – The Cary Town Council will hold a public hearing on the proposed designation. Comments from the property owner, the State Historic Preservation office, and other interested parties will be heard at the public hearing and the Cary HPC will present its recommendation. Following this public hearing, Town Council may adopt an ordinance designating the property as a landmark or reject the proposal.
- *Notification* – Upon approval, written notice of the designation is mailed to the property owner. A certified copy of the ordinance is also mailed to the owner after it is filed with the Wake County Register of Deeds office.

#### **How do landmarks get the tax deferral?**

Landmarks are eligible for the property tax deferral beginning in the year following designation. For example, a property that is designated as a historic landmark in 2018 is eligible for the tax deferral in 2019. The deadlines are established in the N.C. General Statutes. The tax deferral is claimed by submitting an application and a copy of the landmark ordinance to the Wake County Tax Assessor during the January tax listing period. Town of Cary staff can assist the landowner with this task.

#### **Is there any penalty if a property receiving the tax deferral loses its landmark status?**

Yes. If a designated historic landmark loses its landmark status due to demolition or alterations that affect the special character of the property, the owner will be responsible for up to three years of back taxes, plus interest.

For more information about the Cary Historic Preservation Commission, go to:

<http://www.townofcary.org/mayor-council/boards-commissions-committees>

#### **For questions about the Landmark application process, please contact:**

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