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*pasadena*

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# Legally Preserved

In Pasadena, there are over 4,000 designated historic properties but awarding such status requires navigating the complex intricacies of the law.

STORY BY // **JULIE CARLSON**

THE SAN GABRIEL VALLEY HAS A RICH AND VIBRANT CULTURAL HISTORY, WHICH THE COMMUNITY HAS STRIVED TO PRESERVE FOR GENERATIONS. MAYBE AS A LONGTIME RESIDENT, YOU'VE BEEN A PART OF THAT EFFORT. PERHAPS YOU'RE A NEWCOMER TO THE AREA OR A TOURIST WHO HAS RECENTLY DISCOVERED HISTORICAL PROPERTIES AND DISTRICTS SUCH AS GAMBLE HOUSE, BUNGALOW

Heaven, the Norton Simon Museum, Santa Anita Park, the Kona Kai Apartments and Cowina Bowl.

If so, then you're aware that historic preservation is vitally important to retaining and protecting our country's diversity, cultural institutions and architectural heritage. The process of protecting historical properties requires certain key steps, with various

guidelines in place, all which are handled by local governments. There are also similarities and differences when it comes to historic properties, districts, local and national landmarks and monuments.

Many resources are available through city websites as well as through organizations like Pasadena Heritage. "At Pasadena Heritage, we work to identify, preserve, and protect the

historic, architectural, and cultural resources of the City of Pasadena by monitoring development that affects historical properties," explains Preservation Director Jesse Lattig. "We also provide advice to those who work on historic buildings, nominate buildings, or who are seeking referrals to professionals with preservation experience."

When it comes to nominating a property as historic, anyone can do so. Many jurisdictions have local preservation ordinances, where consent is either needed by owners to have their property nominated, or not. But it's ideal when consent is not needed, because it's the most secure form of protection that a property cannot be demolished or altered.

"Most old buildings have undergone some change, usually maintenance, sometimes more intense alterations," says Lattig. "If these changes are in keeping with the historic nature of the building, they are acceptable."

So what is required to make a property a historic landmark? In Pasadena, for example, there are over 4,000 designated historic properties—from schools to houses of worship to commercial buildings.

Under the regulations of the City of



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This is truly a gracious home ideal for elegant living or entertaining in a relaxed resort-style.



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Pasadena, a property which is nominated is evaluated by the Design and Historic Preservation Section within the Planning and Community Development Department. This is to determine if a property meets the criteria for designation — national historic landmarks, sites and historic districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places, historic monuments, city landmarks and landmark districts.

A report is then made and once complete, the Historic Preservation Commission conducts a public hearing. The city council has the final determination in designating a property historic. If a property is not designated, the nominating representative receives a notice and can appeal the decision. The reason might be that "changes compromise and/or remove historic features, fabric, or any components of historic integrity," adds Lattig.

According to the City of Pasadena, in order for a property to be designated as a landmark, one of the following criteria must apply: the property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the city, region or state; it is associated with the lives of persons who have made a significant contribution to the city, region or state or the property holds importance in architecture, time period or method of construction and represents the work of an architect or designer significant to the city, region or state. Pasadena adopted its first historic preservation ordinance in 1964.

However, an ordinance is not enough. One of the most important economic incentives in preserving historic property in the California is The Mills Act Historical Property Contract Program, which self-renews every year for a ten-year period.

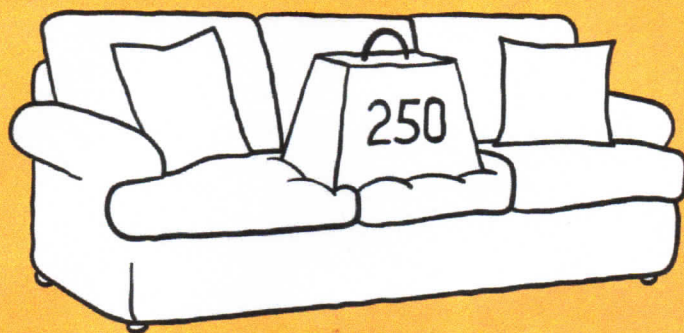
Through the program, historic property owners can receive reduced property tax assessments and other incentives. If an owner wants to repair their property, they must apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness permit. This can be anything from a new front door, installing new windows, building a fence and energy-related features. Changes must be made in compliance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and design guidelines.

How is this all kept in check? Each year the L.A. Conservancy hands out grades to cities on strides they've taken to preserve their cultural heritage. The non-profit organization, founded in 1978, helps to promote, educate, advocate and revitalize historic places and architecture within L.A. County.

Last year within the San Gabriel Valley, the cities of Glendale, Monrovia, Pasadena and



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South Pasadena all received an A+ to A- rating. San Gabriel received a B rating. West Covina a C rating and an F rating went to Alhambra, Arcadia, La Cañada Flintridge and San Marino.

High grades went to cities like Pasadena, which have continued their commitment to historic preservation through local ordinances, the Mills Act and the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act. CEQA was adopted by the California State Legislature in 1970.

Per L.A. Conservancy, CEQA helps to protect the "environment now and in the future, and to take all action necessary to protect, rehabilitate, and enhance the environmental quality of the state." CEQA is an important legal tool that helps protect historic resources such as bridges, by informing residents on development projects in your community.

Each year, the L.A. Conservancy honors exceptional examples of historic preservation at their Preservation Awards luncheon. Recipients include: the Comerica Bank in South Pasadena, Herkimer Arms apartment building and the Linde + Robinson Laboratory at Caltech, Pasadena City Hall and the Japanese House at the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in Pasadena, and the San Gabriel Mission Playhouse. Along with the Pasadena Heritage, L.A. Conservancy also offer walking tours, special events and lectures through their memberships.

Historic preservation is a fantastic way to not only save America's local and national treasures, but a way to discover ourselves. "Preservation of historic properties enables us to share the spaces and environments in which the generations before us lived," says Lanning. "The tangible conservation of cultural identity and our community's past, historic buildings help us draw tourism, businesses, and other activities which in turn draw investment and economic growth." ☺



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