

HISTORIC PROPERTY DESIGNATION PROCEDURE

Wilson Historic Preservation Commission

From time to time, the Wilson Historic Preservation Commission votes to designate a certain number of properties as historic. The number depends on many factors, including the number of requests on file, the amount budgeted for bronze plaques, and the number of eligible properties in Wilson and Wilson County. The selection of properties for designation is not made on a first come-first serve basis, nor is it guaranteed that each property requested will be designated.

In order for property to be designated as an "historic property", certain procedural steps must be taken. These steps are as follows:

Property owners who believe their property to be worthy of designation should write a letter of request, stating the significance of the building and why they feel it is important to the history of Wilson and/or Wilson County. The letter should be directed to:

Historic Preservation Planner
City/County of Wilson
P.O. Box 10
Wilson, NC 27893.

On receipt of a written request, the Preservation Planner will include the property on a list of those requesting designation. A short questionnaire of basic information on the property will be sent to the person requesting designation. It will be used to assist in determining the qualification of the property when the requests are evaluated.

Each year the list and questionnaires are reviewed by the designation committee to determine which properties are the most significant in terms of architectural design, historical significance, or the association with a person or persons important in the development of the area.

The committee will establish a listing of the properties they recommend, and present that list to the entire Commission.

The Commission will then review each of those properties, and list them in order of priority. A tally of those figures will determine which properties will be addressed that year. The properties not selected will be filed for future review.

Once selected, the preservationist will contact the property owner to verify that they still wish the property to be designated.

At this point the research begins. The preservationist or a private consultant will prepare a report on each property chosen. Each report includes the following information:

- * Name and location of the property
- * Name, address, and phone number of present owner and occupants
- * Representative photographs of the property
- * Planimetric and Tax maps depicting property location
- * Current deed book reference and complete chain of title
- * Historical sketch of the property (written)
- * Architectural description of the property
- * Documentation of how the property meets the following criteria:
 - * historical, architectural, and cultural significance
 - * suitability for preservation and restoration
 - * educational value
 - * cost of acquisition, restoration, maintenance, or repairs
 - * possibilities for adaptive or alternative use of the property
 - * appraised value
 - * the administrative and financial responsibility of any person or organization willing to underwrite all or a portion of such costs
- * Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria established for inclusion on the National Register

- * Documentation of why and in what ways the property is of historical importance to Wilson or Wilson County
- * The most recent deed description of the property

Due to the amount of information and the importance of its accuracy, the research procedure is quite lengthy. It will usually take a number of months to complete.

On completion of the report, a copy is sent to the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History. They analyze the substance of the report and comment on the effect of such proposed designation.

After any necessary revisions, legal notice is posted and the owner and adjacent property owners are notified of a public hearing for the designation.

The Historic Commission and the City Council of Wilson or the County Board of Commissioners (as determined by the location of the property) will hold a joint public hearing on the proposed ordinance. The owner is encouraged to attend, and will receive written notice of the designation decision.

Upon approval by the City Council or County Board, the preservationist requests confirmation that the property owner would like a plaque placed on the property indicating such designation. After confirmation is made, cast bronze plaques are ordered. When the plaques are received, the preservationist will meet with each property owner to determine the best location for placement. Once agreed upon, the City/County will install the plaque on the historic structure. The newspaper is usually notified, and a photo and brief article is written.

One copy of the signed ordinance and all amendments are filed in the Office of the Register of Deeds of Wilson County; the office of the City or County Clerk; the Preservation Office; and the Development Services Department.

Notice is given to the Wilson County Tax Supervisor, and fact of such designation is clearly indicated on all tax maps maintained by the County. The designation and any restrictions upon the property limiting its use for preservation purposes are considered by the tax supervisor in appraising the property for tax purposes. It is important to realize that there are benefits of having an historic property, including tax benefits.

BENEFITS OF DESIGNATION

1. **Tax Benefit.** Once a property is designated as an "Historic Property" the owner may receive a 50 per cent deferral of property taxes on the "historic property" as delineated by ordinance. Unless the land is included in the designation, the tax deferral is only on the assessed valuation of the historic structure. It is critical that owners are aware that the tax deferral is not a given benefit -- it must be applied for at the office of the Wilson County Tax Supervisor. The benefit is not a tax reduction, it is technically a tax deferral which applies only to real property and not to personal property. The tax savings due to deferral are kept on the County tax records each year. If the property loses its eligibility as an historic property, the deferred taxes for the immediate year and three preceeding years become due immediately. This tax deferral is transferable as long as the property remains designated as an historic property, however a new owner must go to the tax office and request the deferral.
2. **Other Benefits.** In the final analysis, designation of historic properties remains one of only a few tools by which a local community and its citizens can hope to preserve their cultural and historic heritage for future generations to enjoy and experience. The individual designation plays a key and essential role in this effort by maintaining a living record of the past and allowing the local government to commend this endeavor by official designation. Thus, designation is both an honor and a prestigious benefit for those who seek to preserve the past. As urban growth and development continually change the character and quality of a community, the owners of designated historic property can take consolation in the fact that in their own way they are offering to the community a noteworthy example of past development while at the same time serving as a guide to perhaps influence and benefit future change.