

# Historic Preservation 101



May 7, 2024

Study Session  
Monrovia City Council



*The value of historic preservation is to identify those significant aspects and resources in the community that will help tell the story of Monrovia for the future.*



# Historic Preservation Ordinance

- Adopted in 1995, Monrovia's Historic Preservation Ordinance established the framework and authority to implement the City's Historic Preservation program. These provisions establish and authorize:
  - A process and the criteria for the designation of historic landmarks and historic districts.
  - Procedures and findings to review and approve modifications to designated properties through the Certificate of Appropriateness process
  - Specific incentives provided to designated properties.
  - A Historic Preservation Commission to administer the program.

# Historic Preservation Commission

- Administers the provisions of Chapter 17.40 of the MMC.
- Authority to approve:
  - Certificate of Appropriateness
  - Special Reviews (Old Town facades, Potential Historic Landmarks)
- Advisory to City Council for:
  - Historic Landmark and District designations
  - Mills Act Contracts/Conditions
- “Working” Commission:
  - Participates on subcommittees
  - Provides technical expertise to applicants





# Historic Designation

A historic landmark can be a structure, site or object if it meets one of the seven criteria in the Ordinance. Historic Districts can also be designated if the area meets one of the same criteria. There is no age requirement.

Other key points related to historic designation include:

- For individual landmarks, the Ordinance is voluntary, the property owner must consent to the submittal of an application.
- For districts, a majority (50% + 1) of the property owners must consent to the application.
- Requires two public hearings: Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and City Council.

# Mills Act Contracts

The Mills Act was enacted by the California Legislature in 1972. It is the single most important economic preservation incentive program in California for historic structures.

- Enables local jurisdictions to enter into an agreement with owners of historic properties that provides a financial incentive to preserve and restore through a reduction in property taxes owed.
- Monrovia adopted the Mills Act program in 1995 as part of the Historic Preservation Ordinance.
- Mills Act Contracts are available to property owners of all locally designated historic landmarks and contributors in designated historic districts.

# Mills Act Contract – Conditions

In addition to the standard conditions, the Mills Act Contract allows the City to place conditions to address the specific needs of the resource. This is based on a 10-year plan developed with the property owner. The conditions may include tasks such as:

- Repair of original features
- Removal of non-appropriate modifications.
- Ongoing maintenance and preservation.



# Mills Act Contract - Term

- Contracts are for a 10 year period, but renew automatically each year by adding a year to the end of the contract period in perpetuity.
- A contract can be terminated two ways:
  - The City or the property owner issues a Notice of Non-renewal *without cause*. This will cease the automatic renewals and the Contract will run out after 10 years. There is no penalty for this process.
  - The City may revoke a contract *for cause* if the contract is out of compliance. The revocation process requires both the HPC and City Council hold a public hearing on the matter.
  - If the Contract is revoked, the property owner is assessed a fee equal to 12½% of the current fair market value.



# Mills Act Assessments

MA		Prop 13	Current Market	Mills Act	Reduction
1	250 N Primrose Ave	\$1,541,005	\$2,090,000	\$671,000	56%
15	336 N Ivy Ave	218,228	1,170,000	345,000	0%
32	123 El Nido Ave	108,805	1,020,000	288,000	0%
108	214 N Encinitas Ave	744,869	920,000	339,000	54%
129	805 S Shamrock Ave	1,765,214	1,680,000	1,140,000	35%
151	518 W Maple Ave	790,500	800,000	211,000	73%

## Assessments as of January 1, 2023:

148 Contracts processed by Assessor

Average reduction: 49%

Estimated total City revenue decrease: \$218,307

Average savings per contract: \$4,768

# Historic Commercial Downtown (HCD) Zone

- HCD zone encompasses most of Myrtle Avenue between Foothill and Olive
- Historic Preservation Commission review required for all building permits that affect the exterior of buildings



# Demolition Review Ordinance

In 2016, the Monrovia City Council adopted Ordinance No. 2016-10. These regulations require all residential properties 50 years or older to be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission if demolition or partial demolition is proposed.

- Historic Significance is determined by HPC based on the criteria in the Ordinance and the thresholds established in the Citywide Historic Context Statement.
  - Written historic assessment by a historic preservation consultant required.
  - If there is an “obvious lack of historic significance”, an exemption may be requested.

# Historic Preservation - Results

- 165 designated Historic Landmarks
- 2 Historic Districts containing 81 properties and 52 contributors
- 147 Mills Act Contracts
- Citywide Historic Context Statement adopted
- Demolition Review Ordinance implemented
- HPC participation in Neighborhood Treasures program



# Historic Preservation - Goals

- Develop window replacement guidelines
- Implement Mills Act Contract inspection program
- Expand Bricks & Mortar program for Commissioner training
- Update/clean up Historic Preservation Ordinance
- Achieve Certified Local Government (CLG) Designation
- Expand Historic Preservation activities into under represented (EJ) neighborhoods
- Designation of additional districts
- Develop marketing/education program
  - Landmark owners
  - Potential landmark owners
- Create online database with historical property information
- Explore opportunities to partner with community historical groups





# Historic Preservation – Challenges

- Historic Preservation Program is very labor intensive
  - Significant staff time required for most HP applications
  - Most activities require substantial documentation
  - Historic Preservation fees heavily subsidized to encourage preservation
- Ongoing administration of 165 Historic Landmarks & 147 Mills Act Contracts
- Historical significance determinations (Demo Ordinance)

# Historic Preservation – Challenges

- Hesitancy of property owners to designate due to increased oversight and review processes required
- Lack of understanding of requirements by both general public as well as landmark owners
- Cost of restoration and preservation has significantly increased
- Difficult to gain consensus for district designation

# Questions and Discussion

