

# Historic Resources FAQs

## FAQs

### Is my property historic?

Properties that are over 50 years of age can be considered “historic”. Historic resources can be a building, structure, district, object, or site. Properties that are designated by the City or have statewide significance must comply with additional regulations to maintain their character, history, and integrity.

**What is historic integrity?** Historic integrity is the authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics. Historic integrity enables a property to illustrate significant aspects of its past. It is the composite of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

**What is an historic landmark?** A property that is individually designated. This is typically due to its architecture or history. There are over 25 local landmarks located throughout West Linn.

**What is an historic district?** A geographically definable area, urban or rural, possessing a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

**What is the Willamette Historic District?** It is a locally designated historic district in the Willamette Neighborhood of West Linn. More information on the district is available on the [Willamette Historic District](#) page.

**What is the Willamette Falls Neighborhood National Register Historic District?** It is a National Register listed historic district that includes most of the Willamette Historic District.

### Is my property part of a historic district or designated as a local landmark?

The City has over 25 local landmarks and over 60 properties that are part of the local and National Register Willamette Falls Neighborhood Historic District. In addition, there are several properties that are part of the local Willamette Historic District, but not the National Register district. Contact Planning staff at 503-722-5512 if you have questions.

### What is the National Register?

The National Register of Historic Places is an official list of historic places that are worthy of preservation. More information is available on the [National Register of Historic Places](http://www.nps.gov/nr/) (<http://www.nps.gov/nr/>) website.

### What types of financial incentives/tax benefits are available for historic structures?

Owners of designated historic properties can apply for the Oregon Special Assessment of Historic Property program. This program allows for a “freeze” of property taxes for a 10-year period prior to a substantial rehabilitation. Most eligible properties are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The application for this program must be submitted BEFORE the rehabilitation work occurs on the property. Contact Planning staff at 503-722-5512 or check out [Oregon Heritage](http://www.oregonheritage.org/OPRD/HCD/SHPO/tax_assessment.shtml) ([http://www.oregonheritage.org/OPRD/HCD/SHPO/tax\\_assessment.shtml](http://www.oregonheritage.org/OPRD/HCD/SHPO/tax_assessment.shtml)) for additional information.

Income producing properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places are eligible for a 20% Federal Tax Credit, provided the work follows the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. Alternatively, commercial and industrial buildings that are not designated as historic and that were built before 1936 may be eligible for a 10% Rehabilitation Tax Credit. Interior and exterior work may qualify for the tax credit. This must be reviewed by the [State Historic Preservation Office](http://www.oregonheritage.org/OPRD/HCD/SHPO/FED_TAXCREDIT_NEW.shtml) (SHPO) ([http://www.oregonheritage.org/OPRD/HCD/SHPO/FED\\_TAXCREDIT\\_NEW.shtml](http://www.oregonheritage.org/OPRD/HCD/SHPO/FED_TAXCREDIT_NEW.shtml)). Contact Planning staff at 503-722-5512 for additional information.

### Are any restrictions placed on property owners?

Historic designation does not prevent property owners from completing ordinary maintenance and repair tasks. Review is required only for exterior improvements. “Minor” and “major” alterations (see explanation below) require

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the submittal of a Development Review Form. Minor alterations will be reviewed and approved by the Planning Director. Major alterations require review by the Historic Review Board. Contact Planning staff at 503-722-5512 for additional info.

### **What is the difference between “maintenance” and “alterations”?**

Ordinary maintenance and repair to a structure do not require city review. This includes painting previously painted structures. However, window replacement and repairs that use different materials require review. Contact the Building Department at 503-656-4211 to see if a building permit is required. Contact Planning staff at 503-722-5512 if you have any questions as to whether a project will require review.

### **What is a “minor” alteration? What is a “major” alteration?**

Proposed work will be classified as “minor” or “major” alterations. Minor alterations are detailed in the Community Development Code and may include the repair and/or replacement of gutters, foundations, roofs, storm windows, wood window sashes, solar equipment, fences, pools, and accessory structures. The Planning Director will make the determination as to whether an alteration is minor or major. Minor alterations will be reviewed and approved by the Planning Director, who may consult with the Historic Review Board.

Work in addition to the items listed above, new construction, and additions will be considered major alterations. These will require Design Review by the Historic Review Board.

Contact Planning staff at 503-722-5512 for more information or to set up a pre-application meeting.

### **What standards does the Historic Review Board use to evaluate the applications?**

Chapter 25: Historic District and Chapter 26: Historic Landmarks in the City's [Community Development Code](http://westlinnoregon.gov/cdc) (<http://westlinnoregon.gov/cdc>) establish the criteria and standards that the Historic Review Board uses. Contact Planning staff at 503-722-5512 with questions or for more information.

### **How does preservation relate to Goal 5?**

Goal 5 of Oregon's Statewide Planning Goals is to protect natural resources and conserve scenic and historic areas and open spaces. West Linn maintains an inventory of properties that are of historic significance in compliance with Goal 5.

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