

# Historic District Handbook



City of Glendale  
Historic Preservation Commission

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Cover photos:  
Royal Boulevard Historic District, Glendale's first historic district;  
c. 1924 and 2008, the year it was designated

# Introduction

## What Is An Historic District?

Historic districts are designated geographical areas defined by either a significant **concentration** of properties representing a collection of one or more historical **architectural styles** or a noteworthy historical **development pattern** of the City that is worth protecting for the future. Inclusion in an historic district signifies that a property contributes to an ensemble that is worth protecting by virtue of its historic importance or architectural quality.

An historic district possesses a significant **concentration or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects** united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development. Districts may include several contributing resources that are nearly equal in importance, as in a neighborhood, or a variety of contributing resources, as in a large farm, estate, or parkway. Noncontributing resources located among contributing resources are generally included within the boundaries of a district.

## Why Adopt An Historic District?

The City recognizes that the historic and architectural resources of the city are among its most important assets. The Municipal Code allows for historic districts for the following purposes:

- To protect the beauty of the city and improve the quality of its environment through identification, recognition, conservation, maintenance and enhancement of its historic and architectural resources within neighborhoods;
- To protect designated areas having historic and architectural significance against intrusion of alterations, additions, new structures and other designs that fail to protect such significance;
- To ensure harmonious, orderly and efficient growth and development of the city;
- To stabilize and improve property values in such districts thus strengthening the local economy;
- To foster civic pride; and
- By furthering such purposes, to promote the public welfare, to strengthen the cultural and educational life of the city and to make the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live and work.



## What Areas Are Eligible?

An historic district is a geographically definable area possessing a concentration, linkage or continuity, constituting more than sixty (60) percent of the total, of historic or scenic properties, or thematically-related grouping of properties. Properties must contribute to each other and be unified aesthetically by plan or historical physical development. A geographic area may be designated as an historic district overlay zone by the city council upon the recommendation of the historic preservation commission and planning commission if the district:

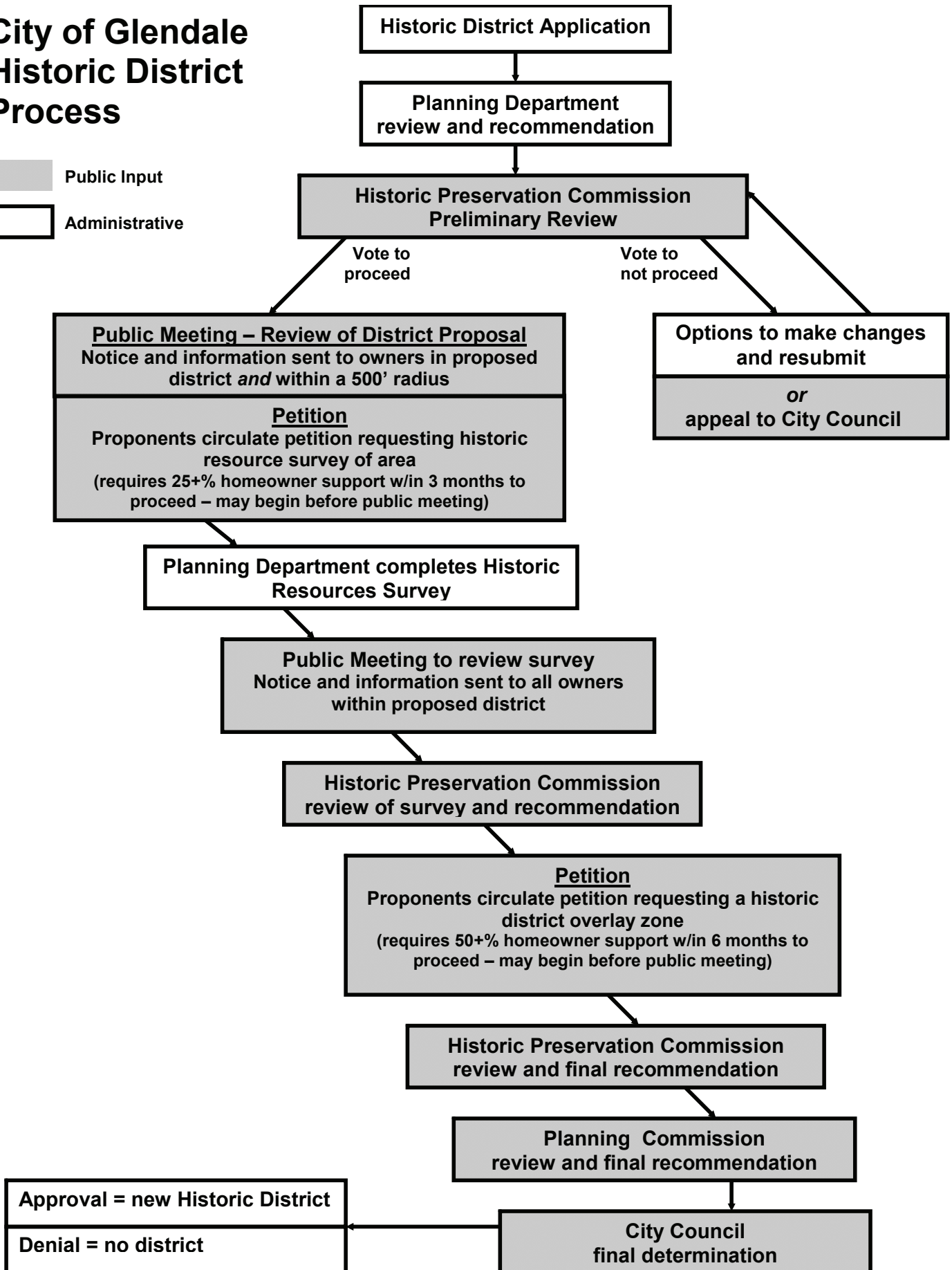
- Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, architectural, or natural history;
- Is identified with persons or events significant in local, state, or national history;
- Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship;
- Represents the work of notable builders, designers, or architects;
- Has a unique location or is a view or vista representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood community or of the city;
- Embodies a collection of elements of architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship that represent a significant structural or architectural achievement or innovation;
- Reflects significant geographical patterns, including those associated with different eras of settlement and growth, transportation modes, or distinctive examples of park or community planning;
- Conveys a sense of historic and architectural cohesiveness through its design, setting, materials, workmanship or association; or
- Has been designated a historic district in the National Register of Historic Places or the California Register of Historical Resources.

## How Does The Process Work?

An historic district is a zoning designation for the properties involved. It is an 'overlay' zone, meaning that the current zoning of the property (for example, R1 Low Density Residential Zone or C2 Community Commercial Zone) remains in place, and the design regulations and any special processes that apply in the historic district are applied **in addition to** the regulations and processes of the underlying zoning.

The guidelines for buildings in historic districts may be stricter than those of the underlying zone, but they cannot cause any violation of the Zoning Code or require a property owner to obtain a variance in order to comply with those guidelines. For more information, refer to the section on Historic Districts and Design Review.

# City of Glendale Historic District Process



# The Process of Adopting Historic Districts

The process of adopting historic districts is governed by the Glendale Municipal Code and by the Glendale City Charter. Adoption of a historic district is determined in part by the property owners and in part by the City Council.

## **Application Form**

The application form for historic districts is available on the City's website, or at the Planning Department (633 E. Broadway, Room 103). Applications must include a proposed Study Area with boundaries for the proposed district, and an explanation of how that boundary was chosen; an initial historic context statement for the district; and a description and photographs of the architectural styles to be found in the district.

If there are special design features about the neighborhood that were not covered in the city-wide Historic District Design Guidelines (see below), then guidelines for those special design features should be included in the application.

## **How To Determine Boundaries**

When setting boundaries for historic districts, as with setting the boundary of any planning area, the standard practice is to determine the boundaries based on study and analysis, taking into account certain geographical or other criteria. For an historic district, the boundary is based on a geographical concentration of certain historic resources, but the boundary must also make some sense in today's context.

The National Register of Historic Places has guidelines which help determine boundaries for National Register Historic Districts. The National Register guidelines say that historic integrity should help determine the boundaries, taking into account important factors such as visual barriers that mark geographical and historic changes to an area, visual changes in the character of an area, historical boundaries such as subdivisions or other legally recorded boundary in history, and clearly differentiated patterns of historic development, such as commercial versus residential.

Boundaries can be justified by using guidelines such as geographical features including logical physical or manmade features that reflect recognized neighborhood boundaries; boundaries that reflect the historic significance of the district, such as documented historic boundaries such

as early roadways, subdivision plats, or property lines; and/or the integrity of the resources in the proposed district, where the boundaries contain non-historic resources or vacant land only where necessary to maintain the physical integrity of the district.

Information on the history of tracts and land subdivisions can be obtained from the City Public Works Department, Engineering Division.

**Size of Districts** There is no minimum size for a district. Most of the buildings in a proposed district (at least 60%) should reflect the important characteristics identified in the historic context statement of the historic resources survey. However, a proposed district does not need to contain all the buildings identified as contributing buildings, nor contain the entire area that may be eligible as a district or every area with a concentration of contributing buildings. A proposed district may contain only a portion of an area identified as a potential district.

**Amending Boundaries During the Application Period** After an application for an historic district has been submitted, the boundaries of the Study Area may be amended, but only at the time of submittal of a Petition Requesting a Historic Resources Survey (see Petitioning, below), and then only with the approval of the Historic Preservation Commission (or of the City Council, on appeal). For changes to boundaries after a district has been adopted, see Petitioning, below.

**Historic Survey and District Boundaries** The historic resources survey may make recommendations for district boundaries different than those in the application. For instance, the survey may find large groupings of non-contributing buildings that should be excluded from any potential district. If the survey recommends that an area be excluded, the proposed district boundaries should be adjusted accordingly. However, if a survey finds that a potential district could be larger than the area proposed in an application, it is not necessary for the district to include all potentially historic areas.

## **Preliminary Application Review**

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has the role of “preliminary consideration” of an application for an historic district. City Planning staff will first review the application and, when the application is complete, will forward it to the HPC for its preliminary consideration. The HPC must decide that the Study Area is **potentially eligible** to be an historic district before any further action can be taken.

If the HPC determines the Study Area is eligible to be an historic district, then the Commission shall authorize collecting a **Petition Requesting an Historic Resources Survey**, see below.

The Director of Planning will mail a notice summarizing the HPC action to every property owner and occupant in the study area, and to every property owner within 300 feet of the preliminary boundaries. In addition, the Director of Planning will mail to all owners and occupants within the study area (1) a summary of the design guidelines; (2) any supplements to the design guidelines for the proposed district; (3) the Handbook on Historic Districts (with a summary sheet); (4) any other informational materials.

Upon completion of the Historic Resources Survey, the Director of Planning shall forward the survey to the HPC for its review and approval. If the HPC approves the survey as being conducted according to the standards outlined in California Public Resources Code, then the Commission shall authorize collecting a **Petition Requesting an Historic District Overlay Zone** (see below).

## **Petitioning**

Two petitions are required to successfully adopt an historic district overlay zone – a petition requesting that the area be surveyed to see if a potential district exists, and a second petition asking for the zone change.

### ***A. Petition Requesting an Historic Resources Survey***

After the HPC determines that the Study Area is potentially eligible to be an historic district, the applicants must submit a **Petition Requesting an Historic Resources Survey** to the Director of Planning. This petition must be signed by the owners of more than 25% of the properties within the Study Area. This petition **must be submitted within 90 days** of the HPC determination (or 90 days of determination by the City Council, on appeal) or the application for an historic district overlay zone shall be deemed denied. The City Council may extend this deadline, upon showing of good cause.

When the Petition Requesting an Historic Resources Survey has been submitted and verified, the Director of Planning shall forward the petition to the City Council for approval of the commencement of the survey.



## **B. Petition Requesting an Historic District Overlay Zone**

Upon completion of the historic resources survey (see What's an Historic Resource Survey, below), the Director of Planning will forward the survey to the HPC for its review and approval. If the HPC approves the survey as being conducted according to the standards outlined in California Public Resources Code, then the Commission shall authorize collecting a **Petition Requesting a Historic District Overlay Zone**.

The **Petition Requesting an Historic District Overlay Zone**. A petition is required because historic districts are adopted by overlay zoning designation onto the affected properties. The petitions shall be accompanied by a copy of the city-wide Historic District Design Guidelines, any supplements proposed, any draft historic district guidelines prepared for non-residential buildings, and must identify where the guidelines and supplements can be obtained.

**Petitions in Support** - Supporters of the historic district must submit a petition in favor of the overlay zone which is signed by owners of **more than 50% of the properties** within the proposed historic district. This petition must be submitted within six (6) months of the HPC's authorization to circulate the petition or the application will be deemed denied. The six (6) month time limit may be extended by City Council, if received prior to the expiration of the six (6) month time limit and upon showing good cause.

Alternatively, supporters may submit a petition for a historic district overlay zone under the procedures in the Glendale City Charter. (Article XV, Section 2).

**Petitions in Opposition** – Opponents of the zone change may submit a petition protesting the adoption of the historic district in one of two ways:

- A petition may be submitted from owners of 20% or more of the frontage of property within the proposed historic district;

or

- A petition may be submitted by the owners of 20% or more of the frontage of property which is immediately adjacent to the district — either in the rear, the sides, or across a street or an ally.

A petition which mixes signatures from within and outside of the proposed district is not acceptable. Signatures must be from property owners entirely within the district or entirely outside the district.

**Petition Format** – No specific format is given for petitions. The City will supply petition forms to those who request them, but any legally sufficient form may be used.

When a property is owned by multiple property owners (including married couples or domestic partners where the property is in both names), all owners of the property must sign in order for the property frontage to be counted. One spouse, domestic partner, tenant in common, tenant in partnership cannot sign for the other. For properties held in trust, all trustees must sign the petition.

## **Final Application Review**

When a **Petition Requesting an Historic District Overlay Zone** has been submitted, and a qualified survey of the area has been completed, then the application returns to the HPC for its final consideration. As with any zoning proposal, the application must also be reviewed by the Planning Commission. The recommendations of both the Historic Preservation Commission and the Planning Commission will be forwarded to the City Council for the final decision on the historic district request.

As with all zoning requests, adoption of the historic district requires a “yes” vote from at least four of the five City Council members. If sufficient petitions are received in opposition to the historic district, then adoption of the district requires a unanimous vote of the City Council (see Petitioning, above).

## **Adding To Or Withdrawing From An Historic District**

The procedures for modification or deletion of an historic district overlay zone shall follow the procedures outlined in this section on The Process of Adopting Historic Districts and elsewhere in the Zoning Code (Title 30) and the city Charter as applicable.

## **What Is An Historic Resources Survey?**

An historic resources survey of the area must be conducted before the City Council will initiate hearings on the adoption of the historic district overlay zone. The survey will be carried out by City Planning staff, with the guidance of a historic consultant meeting National Park Service professional qualifications. Volunteers may be used to collect or synthesize objective data only. Any judgment on architectural or historic merit will be made only by City staff and the professional consultant.

The survey will use the preliminary historic context statement submitted with the district application, and will verify and/or correct the information. The historic context statement will identify a period of significance for the proposed district, and only buildings built inside of that time period will be 'contributors' to the district.

Each property within the proposed district will be surveyed. Only the exteriors of the property visible from the public right of way are used in judging architectural merit. Data from building permits and from the Los Angeles County Assessor's office are used to assess property alterations. However, this information is not used for code enforcement purposes.

When the survey has been completed, staff will mail to each property owner a summary of the results for the entire district, as well as the assessment of that specific property, informing the property owner of their right to submit any comments or evidence concerning the assessment of their property. Staff and the professional consultant will review any comments submitted, and may make appropriate changes to the survey report.

The survey will judge whether there are enough properties with architectural and historic merit within the area to form a potential historic district. If a potential district exists, then each building will be judged as to whether it contributes to the potential district or whether it is a 'non-contributing' structure.

The Glendale Municipal Code requires that there be at least 60% 'contributing' structures in order to qualify as a district.

**Contributing Structures** *A contributing structure* adds to the overall historic district's significance through the individual structure's historic associations or distinctive architectural qualities. The significance of the individual structure will be evaluated as to whether it was present during the period of significance, relates to the documented significance of the property, and possesses historic integrity or is capable of yielding important information about the period.

**Non-Contributing Structures** *A non-contributing structure* does not add to the significance of the historic district because it was not present during the period of significance or does not relate to the historic context of the district. Alterations, additions or other changes may have irrevocably modified the structure so that it no longer possesses historic integrity or is no longer capable of yielding important information significant to the historic district.

If a building is judged to be non-contributing, it does not mean that the City is criticizing the design of the house. It only means that the design of the building does not reflect the historic pattern upon which the potential district is based. A new home, or a newly remodeled home, may be quite beautiful, but it may not contribute to the sense of history.

Some buildings in the survey area may have such outstanding design that they will be rated as individually eligible for listing on the Glendale Register, the California Register or the National Register of Historic Places. However, being listed as 'eligible' does not automatically put a building on the Glendale Register. The owner's consent is still required. In addition, architectural merit is not the only factor that makes a building individually eligible— there are seven criteria for listing on the Glendale Register (see [www.ci.glendale.ca.us/planning/HPGlendaleRegister.asp](http://www.ci.glendale.ca.us/planning/HPGlendaleRegister.asp)), of which at least one must be met.

# Historic Districts and Design Review

All newly constructed houses and apartment buildings are subject to design review, as are many remodels and additions. Design review in historic districts focuses on those parts of the building which are visible from the public street immediately adjacent to the property. For most properties, this means the front façade and the portions of the side facades that can be seen from the sidewalk abutting the property. Alterations to a house which are visible only from an uphill view a block or more away are not subject to the design guidelines.

In historic districts, there are more aspects of remodeling subject to design review, compared to houses outside of historic districts. Any exterior change (again, visible from the public street immediately adjacent the property) may be subject to design review, even if that change does not require a building permit.

However, many projects are exempted from design review. If a project involves an addition of up to 700 square feet of floor area visible from the street, City staff can exempt it from design review if it is consistent with the Design Guidelines for Residential Buildings in Adopted Historic Districts . Routine repair and maintenance can also be exempted.

Any remodeling visible from the street which is inconsistent with the Design Guidelines for Residential Buildings in Adopted Historic Districts and additions of floor area of more than 700 square feet visible from the street will be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission.

For projects in historic districts, the Historic Preservation Commission will use both the Single Family Neighborhood Design Guidelines, when applicable, and the Historic District Design Guidelines. When those two sets of guidelines cover the same topic, the Historic District Design Guidelines will prevail where there is any conflict.

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) will have authority over almost all aspects of a project, including some issues that are not covered by the Historic District Design Guidelines. For example, the Commission has authority over the paint color of new buildings, just as the Design Review Board has authority for paint colors in areas of the city that are not historic districts. Similarly, the Historic Preservation Commission will also have authority over landscaping for new buildings, even when landscaping is not an important feature of an historic district.

Appeals of HPC decisions in historic districts are heard by the City Council.



## **What's In The Design Guidelines?**

The Historic District Residential Design Guidelines were adopted by the City Council following their preparation by a professional consultant with the guidance of a citizen's advisory group.

The guidelines provide guidance to homeowners, City staff and the Historic Preservation Commission for dealing with common issues encountered in maintaining, repairing or altering buildings in historic districts. However, they are not meant to dictate design solutions or to stifle creativity. The guidelines do not substitute for case-by-case analysis, nor do they address exceptions or rare situations.

The guidelines describe the prominent historic architectural styles found in Glendale's residential neighborhoods. There is a chapter devoted to each style, reviewing the prominent character-defining features for siding and exterior finishes; roofs; porches; windows and doors; architectural details; and massing. Additional chapters on each of those building elements give more information. Finally, the guidelines address outbuildings (such as detached garages), streetscape and landscape (when they are found to be historically important), infill development, and alteration of non-contributing structures.

The guidelines are meant to apply uniformly to all historic districts in the city. The guidelines cannot be altered from district to district – that is, the rules and suggestions for any given building element (for instance, roofs or windows) cannot be stricter or more lenient in one district versus another. The guidelines may be supplemented if there are design features that are uncommon or are unique to a particular district. For example, a district may have a unique river-rock retaining walls, or a distinct pattern of architectural features not found in other parts of the city. The importance of any proposed supplement must be verified by the historic resources survey. Supplements to the city-wide design guidelines which are meant to call out specific features unique to a single district would be adopted by the City Council at the time that the historic district overlay zone is adopted for that area. Any proposed city-wide changes would need to be adopted by Council resolution.

The Historic District Residential Design Guidelines can be found on the City's website at:  
<http://www.ci.glendale.ca.us/planning/HPDistrictDesignGuidelines.asp>

## **Environmental Review in a Historic District**

All projects undergoing design review are also subject to environmental review, although many house projects are determined to be exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). No additional environmental review is required for projects in a historic district, unless the number of contributing properties in the district would fall below 60% as a result of the project.