



Summary of Recommendations for City of Austin Landmarks Program

Landmarks Program Administration

1. Revise and strengthen the application format and require that all applications be fully complete, with express authority given to the Historic Preservation Officer or Historic Landmark Commission to reject incomplete applications.
2. Ensure that designated properties meet the Designation Criteria established by the National Register of Historic Places, as managed by the National Parks Service under the Secretary of the Interior.
3. Recognize that these revisions to the incentive structure and to the administration of the Landmarks Program should effectively limit the number of owner-initiated residential landmark designations without the need for an annual cap; however, if the number of cases is problematic after a period of two years, consider setting an annual limit of 24 owner-initiated residential cases, excluding properties located in the Homestead Preservation District.
4. Strengthen the annual inspection of each landmark to provide meaningful and comprehensive review and enforcement of applicable criteria and maintenance requirements.
5. Add a fee to the annual Application for Historic or Archeological Site Property Tax Exemption to cover the cost of inspection, review and enforcement and dedicate fees from all Preservation Program applications to an Enterprise Fund to provide additional resources to the Historic Landmark Program.
6. Ensure that reviews of applications for Certificates of Appropriateness are based solely on the established Secretary of Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties and applicable design standards for Local Historic Districts.
7. Ensure compliance with the Texas Historical Commission's requirements to maintain Certified Local Government status for the City of Austin.
8. Affiliate the City Landmarks Program with the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions and require staff and commission members to participate annually in the NAPC-approved professional training (or comparable training opportunities) and to adhere to NAPC's Code of Ethics for Commissioners and staff.

Preservation Incentives (predicated on all taxing jurisdictions' participation)

1. Revise the formula for tax incentives to cap the maximum abatement at the amount offered for the average assessed value of all residential landmarks (approximately \$750,000). Apply formula to the combined assessed values of land and improvements of owner-occupied residential landmarks designated after a certain date. Add a rehabilitation incentive equal to that for contributing structures in Local Historic Districts. Allow homeowners to change to the new formula if they wish. HSA estimates the cost to the various taxing entities would be reduced by approximately 50% when ultimately applied to all landmarked residential properties.
2. Continue the existing incentive structure for all current owner-occupied landmarks, but change to the new formula upon change of ownership except for situations such inheritance or divorce.
3. Maintain the existing incentive structure for commercial landmark properties.
4. Review the incentive program automatically if the total impact on ad valorem tax revenues reaches one-half of one percent of the total tax revenues of any taxing jurisdiction.