



CITY OF SHREVEPORT

P.O. BOX 31109 SHREVEPORT, LA 71130 • 505 TRAVIS STREET SHREVEPORT, LA 71101

Website: www.shreveportla.gov

September 4, 2014

Boundaries Change in Downtown Commercial Historic District

The Shreveport Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) congratulates Downtown Development Authority (DDA) for its successful effort to get state approval to update the boundaries of the Downtown Commercial Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Register is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects significant to American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. Any person or entity can initiate a nomination to the National Register, which is a long and involved process.

A nomination to the National Register is considered by the Louisiana National Register Review Committee and if approved, then sent to the National Park Service, Department of the Interior for final approval and listing on the National Register. The nomination application DDA initiated in early 2013 involved boundary changes for the downtown historic district last updated in 1997. The nomination application included areas of expansion as well as places deleted from the older boundary. The review committee met in Baton Rouge this past July.

The HPC is charged by the City Council under the historic preservation ordinance with the responsibility to advise and assist federal, state and local government on historic preservation issues. The Commission, beginning July 7, 2014, conducted an analysis upon receiving a copy of the nomination and largely supported the update, but had some concerns from a historic preservation standpoint. The Commission's concerns were ultimately resolved by the DDA.

Historic properties listed individually on the National Register or grouped within a historic district provide recognition to their historic importance and highlights their worthiness to be preserved. Listing assures review of federal projects that might impact on the character of the property and district. There are no limitations placed on these properties by the federal government if they are listed and the federal government does not attach restrictive covenants to the properties or attempt to acquire them. Visitations by the public of these historic properties are not required of the owners. There is no restriction by the property owner on the use, transfer, routine maintenance or disposition of their private property. A property owner can object to their property being listed.

Individual listed buildings could become eligible for Federal Historic Tax Credits and State of Louisiana rehabilitative tax credits and some grants. These tax credits and grants might encourage



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owners and potential developers to rehabilitate historic buildings in lieu of them deteriorating, an occurrence called “demolition by neglect.” Tax credits and applicable grants are not automatic and the property must qualify after the owner applies for these benefits.

The City of Shreveport’s regulatory oversight of these National Register-listed properties and historic districts is spelled out in the City’s historic preservation ordinance. Specific oversight by the HPC is through Design Review Guidelines and Certificate of Appropriateness.

Design Review Guidelines are the generally accepted way to preserve the character and integrity of a historic district and local landmarks. Guidelines are based on the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties to ensure historic properties are kept in general good repair so they do not fall into a deteriorated or damaged state of disrepair and to guard against insensitive alterations to the historic property. Guidelines do not limit new construction to any one particular style of architecture within a district and they do not cover routine maintenance of the historic property, this is the owner’s responsibility. Guidelines generally apply to the exterior part of a building that is visible to the public but can apply to interior portions that if not maintained can cause a state of disrepair.

Guidelines for the seven National Register-listed historic districts in Shreveport are to be tailored to each specific district and be created through collaborative work groups between HPC and neighbor-based associations of property owners. Guidelines are to be presented to the Metropolitan Planning Commission and forwarded for approval by the City Council before implementation by HPC. Once approved, guidelines shall be posted to the HPC webpage currently being created by the City. And guidelines are to be created as new local historic districts are established.

Guidelines and other treatments to historic properties are implemented through a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). The Certificate is simply the document issued by the Commission approving work being proposed by the owner on the historic property.

Property owners initiate the certificate process for their work project and covers alternation of the exterior part of the building or structure that is visible to the public, new construction, and demolition or relocation of a historic structure. Some COAs are to be decided in a public hearing conducted by HPC while minor alterations can be immediately approved, without a public hearing. Once submitted, COAs are to be expedited with Commissioners following up with property owners on the project’s progress. An approved COA is effective up to 365 days but can be extended.



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Application and decision procedures for COA are currently being drafted by the HPC and once approved shall be posted on the HPC webpage.