

# The ABCs of Historic Designation: HCMs, HPOZs and NRHDs

2026 Los Angeles Historic Neighborhoods Conference  
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LOS ANGELES  
**CONSERVANCY**

Which designation is right for you  
and your community?

# Intro

Designation at the local, state or national level have different levels of protection and offer competing incentives.

This session will provide the current status of each option and offer insights from community advocates.

# Local Designation of Individual Resources

## *Historic-Cultural Monuments (HCMs)*

- Governed by L.A.'s Cultural Heritage Ordinance, first adopted in 1962
- HCMs are *recommended* by the Cultural Heritage Commission & *approved* by City Council
- Over 1,300 HCMs to date
- SB-330, *Housing Crisis Act of 2019*, prevents nomination if a preliminary application filed



Hollyhock House  
Frank Lloyd Wright  
Built 1919-1921  
HCM #12  
Designated 1963

# Protections for HCMs

Historic-Cultural Monuments have a relatively high level of protection.

Demolition of a designated HCM is rare, but can still occur if findings are made by City.

Only 22 demolished;  
13 destroyed by fire.



Barry Building, Milton Caughey, 1951  
HCM #887, Designated 2007  
***Currently approved for demolition***

# HCM Nomination Process

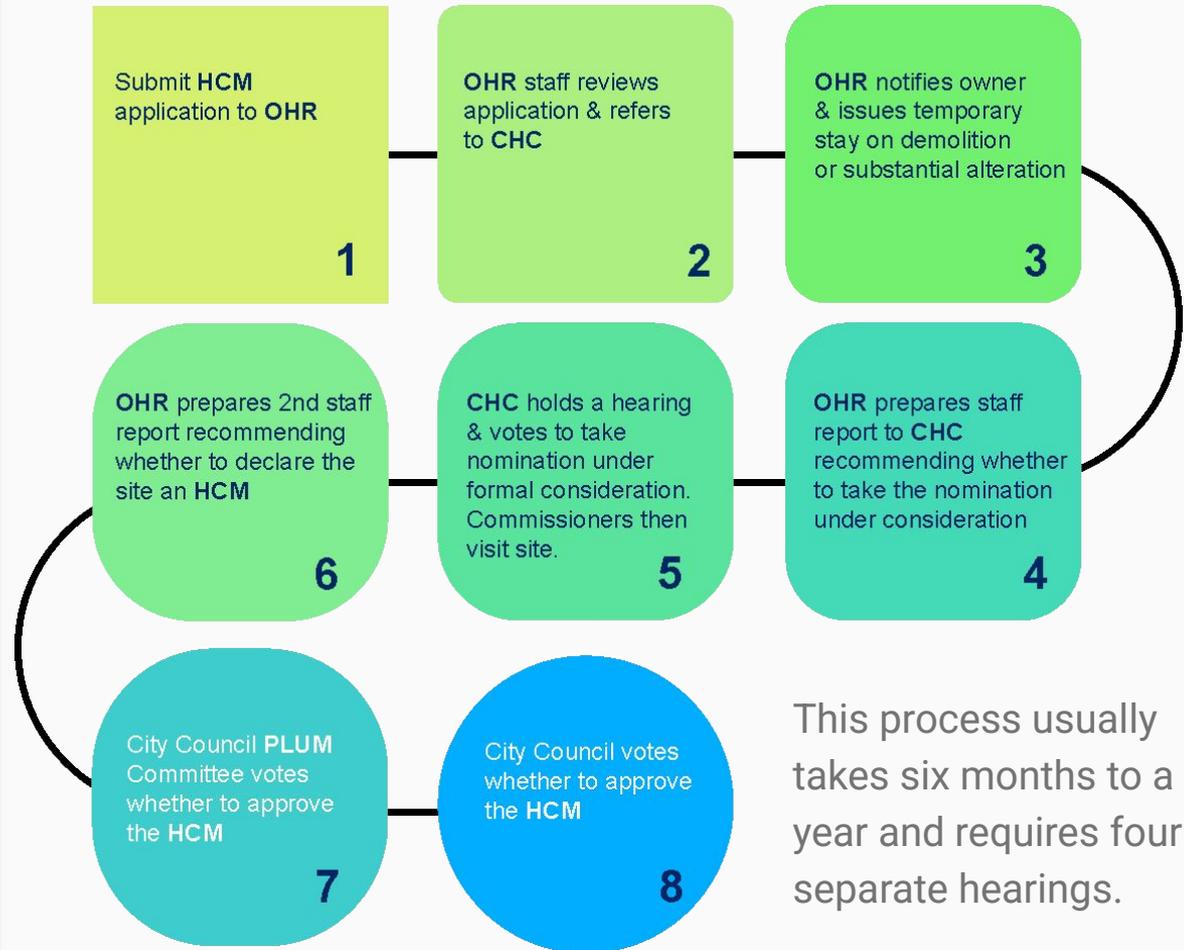
More ABCs to learn...

**HCM** = Historic Cultural Monument

**OHR** = Office of Historic Resources

**CHC** = Cultural Heritage Commission

**PLUM** = Planning & Land Use Management



This process usually takes six months to a year and requires four separate hearings.

# Criteria for the designation of Historic-Cultural Monuments (HCMs)

1. Is identified with important events of national, state, or local history, or exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, state, city or community;
2. Is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city, or local history; or
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction; or represents a notable work of a master designer, builder, or architect whose individual genius influenced his or her age



Bank of America Chinatown Branch  
HCM #1269, Designated 2022

# Example of Criteria 2 in Action

## Sister Mary Corita Studio, HCM #1228



*Criterion 2: is associated with the lives of historic personages important to national, state, city or local history*

5518 Franklin Avenue exemplifies City of Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Criterion 2 for its association with 20th century artist Corita (Sister Mary Corita) during the 1960s.

This is the era in which she emerged as a major figure of the Pop Art Movement and is the most defining period of her artistic career in Los Angeles

Period of Significance: 1962-1968

# Local Designation of Individual Resources California and National Registers

- National Register created by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966
- Both Registers are overseen by the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) and require a hearing at the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC)
- National Register properties require approval from the Keeper of the Register
- Property owner can oppose listing



Capitol Records  
Building, 1956

Listed in the  
National Register  
In 2024

# Comparing Criteria for Designation for California and National Registers

## California Register Criteria

1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of **California's history and cultural heritage (Criterion 1)**.
2. Is associated with the lives of persons **important** in our past (Criterion 2).
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, **region**, or method of construction, or represents the work of an **important creative individual**, or possesses high artistic values (Criterion 3).
4. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history (Criterion 4).

## National Register Criteria

1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of **our history (Criterion A)**.
2. Is associated with the lives of persons **significant** in our past (Criterion B).
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or represents the work of **a master**, or possesses high artistic values, **or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction (Criterion C)**.
4. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory (Criterion D).

# California and National Registers

Why would someone pursue California or National Register listing instead of a Historic-Cultural Monument?

**Flexibility:** Limited review process from City staff for owner-initiated projects requiring building permits for exterior improvements

**Financial:** Makes available specific Federal and California tax credit incentives

*Federal: 20% federal tax credit on Qualified Rehabilitation Expenses (QREs)*

**Politics:** Some jurisdictions don't have preservation ordinances, or make designation exceedingly difficult.

**Status:** "Listed in the National Register" is a recognizable, easy to understand status

# California and National Registers

What are the downsides of California or National Register listing instead of a Historic-Cultural Monument?

**Limited protection:** Significant alteration and demolition can occur, but disclosed through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process/

**Higher Barrier to Designation:** Due to listing Criteria, locally important sites may not be eligible

**State Housing Preemption:** Some recent housing laws, namely SB-79, give greater flexibility to locally designated sites.

# Using Historic Places LA to Determine Eligibility

HISTORIC PLACES LA  
LOS ANGELES HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY

ADMIN LOGIN  
HOME ABOUT

Resource search  
FILTER BY RECORD TYPE  
Total Results: 65805

A. W. Black Residence 658 S BRONSON AVE  
The property meets the criteria for HCR designation because it "embodies the distinguishing characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction" as an excellent example of a residential building designed in the American...

A. P. Carter Residence 5020 W AMBROSE AVE  
The property meets the criteria for HCR designation because it "embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction," as an...

Abichandani Residence 7129 W LA PRESA DR  
The property meets the criteria for HCR designation because it "embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction," as an...

Abraham Gore Residence 2210 N CATALINA ST  
The property meets the criteria for HCR designation because it "embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction," as an...

Explore the updated version of HistoricPlacesLA

Historic Resource - Golden State Mutual Life Insurance 2490 S

Evaluation Details

California Historical Resource Status Codes



- 3D - Appears eligible for NR as a contributor to a NR eligible district through survey evaluation.
- 3CD - Appears eligible for CR as a contributor to a CR eligible district through a survey evaluation.
- 5D3 - Appears to be eligible as a contributor to a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) through SurveyLA or other survey evaluation.

# California Register Quirks

Two other ways properties are commonly listed in the California Register.

**Status Code 2S:** Individual property determined eligible for NR by the Keeper. Listed in the CR.

*i.e. you prepared a National Register nomination for a historic property, but the owner opposed listing. It can still be listed in the California Register*

**Status Code 2S2:** Individual property determined eligible for NR by a consensus through Section 106 process. Listed in the CR.

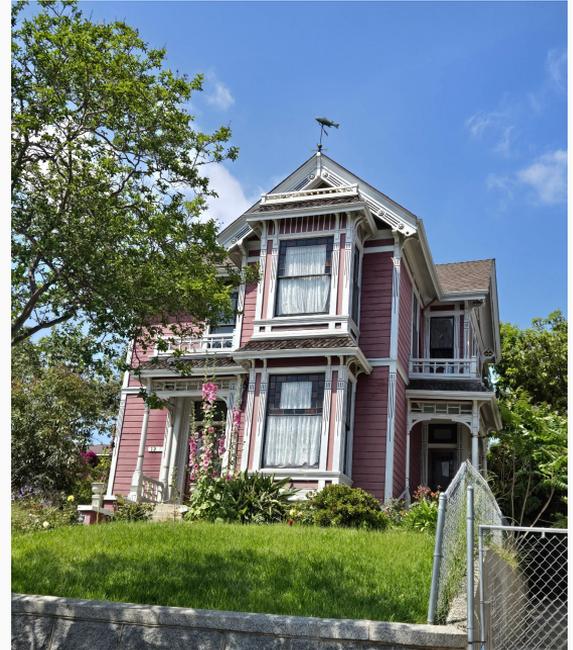
*I.e. Metro is planning a new rail line in your neighborhood, and through environmental review your local theater was listed in the California Register*

Now on to districts!

# Local Designation of Districts

## *Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs)*

- The City adopted the HPOZ ordinance in 1979.
- Currently 35 designated HPOZs
- HPOZ areas range in size from neighborhoods of approximately 50 parcels to more than 4,000 properties.
- HPOZs contain *contributing* and *non-contributing* properties.
- HPOZs governed by a Preservation Plan and overseen by an HPOZ Board



# Benefits of being in an HPOZ

HPOZs have a relatively high level of protection.

HPOZ boards give community members a high level of public participation.

Provides requirements for design review for all discretionary projects occurring if located in an HPOZ.



Country Club Park

Designated 2010

662 properties within HPOZ boundaries



# PRESERVATION POSITIVE LOS ANGELES

Investing in older neighborhoods is a good return on investment. An analysis of more than 136,000 sales of single-family homes between 2000 and 2016 indicates that property values in HPOZs appreciate at a greater rate than the rest of the city.

Cultural diversity is a backbone of the city's historic neighborhoods, which are more ethnically, racially, and income diverse than the rest of the city as a whole. Of the thirty-five HPOZs that currently exist, twenty-one have populations where there is a greater share of racial diversity than in the rest of the city.

# HPOZ Desigination Process

Long process that requires a lot of buy in and community support.

## Phase 1: Survey phase

HPOZ INITIATED BY COUNCIL MOTION,  
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION, DIRECTOR OF  
PLANNING OR RESIDENTS

HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONSULTANT  
PREPARES HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

DCP STAFF REVIEWS INITIAL SURVEY WITH  
NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS/  
COMMUNITY GROUPS

DCP STAFF ANALYSES INPUT AND HOLDS  
A SERIES OF FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS TO  
BEGIN CRAFTING A PRESERVATION PLAN

STAFF FORMULATES A DRAFT  
PRESERVATION PLAN  
BASED ON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

PUBLIC WORKSHOP

STAFF ANALYZES INPUT

## Phase 2: Plan adoption

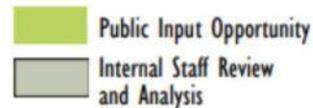
HEARING OFFICER PUBLIC HEARING

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION - AREA TOUR &  
CERTIFICATION OF HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
DECISION

PLANNING AND LAND USE (PLUM)  
COMMITTEE OF CITY COUNCIL

CITY COUNCIL DECISION



## Jefferson Park HPOZ



## Preservation Plan



City of Los Angeles  
May 2011

## ABCs of an HPOZ

### **Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)**

Major work on a contributor

### **Certificate of Compatibility (CCMP)**

Demolition of a non-contributor and/or new infill construction

### **Conforming Work on a Contributing Structure (CWC)**

Rehabilitation work or small additions on a contributor

### **Conforming Work on a Non-Contributing Structure (CWNC)**

Minor work or small additions on a non-contributor

# California Register & National Register Districts



- National Register and California Register Districts have a similar nomination process to individual resources
- Need approval from State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) and State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC)
- Process is much more independent than for HPOZs!

# California Register & National Register Districts

**Limited protection:** OHR does review exterior changes, but districts can still be significantly altered

**State Housing Preemption:** SB-79 does not exempt National Register districts

Right: Flower Drive Historic District  
Listed in the California Register in 2008  
Currently threatened



# California and National Registers

Why would someone pursue California or National Register District instead of a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone?

**Bureaucracy:** No HPOZ Board makes permitting much simpler. Some communities may prefer this lower level of oversight.

**Timeliness:** Can often be done quicker than an HPOZ. No signature gathering needed. Multiple NR Districts approved when new HPOZs approval was paused.

**Unevenly Applied State Housing Laws:** Some state laws explicitly exempt National and California Register properties while being more vague on local designations.

**State Historic Building Code:** Broad exemptions from stricter modern code standards.

**Financial:** Makes available specific Federal and California tax credit incentives.

There is no “best”  
designation, only the  
one that is right for  
you currently.

# Thank you!

If you have any follow-up questions, please feel free to reach out at [advocacy@laconservancy.org](mailto:advocacy@laconservancy.org)

Enjoy the rest of today's sessions!



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