

NORTH PARK DRYDEN HISTORICAL DISTRICT TOP TEN FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *If my neighborhood becomes a Historical District, can I still make changes to the exterior of my house?*

Yes. You currently have to obtain a permit before doing major alterations to the exterior of your home, such as building an addition or second story, stuccoing over wood siding, removing original porches, or removing wood windows and replacing them with aluminum or vinyl ones. The differences if you are in a Historical District are that:

- a) the proposed changes would have to be compatible (but not identical) with the style or character of your home, and
- b) there would be a project review by the City to check that the plans meet the U. S. Secretary of the Interior Standards, in addition to a typical building permit review.

2. *What are the U. S. Secretary of the Interior Standards that historically-designated properties would be subject to?*

They are locally-administered, flexible, common-sense guidelines that suggest options for rehabilitation of historic buildings. The guidelines do not prohibit changes, but they do assure that any proposed changes or additions are compatible with the historic character of the building. They require additions to be distinguishable as clearly new so that the proposed change is not confused with the original historic structure. Under the guidelines, this distinction can be subtle or distinct. Once a historical district is established, all development and redevelopment, including additions, modifications, new construction, relocations and demolitions (including development of vacant parcels and redevelopment of non-contributing resources) would be subject to the Standards. These Standards can be found on the National Park Service website at www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/standards_guidelines.htm

3. *Would I have to get a permit to paint my house or to change the paint color?*

No.

4. *Would I be allowed to change the interior of my house?*

Yes. Historical District status has no effect on the interior of your house. You would have to obtain the same permits as you do now (if any) for electrical, plumbing, or structural changes.

5. *Can I change the landscaping?*

Yes. The historical designation typically does not include your yard.

6. *What is the Mills Act and how could it reduce my property taxes?*

The Mills Act is a statewide law that reduces property taxes on historically designated structures by as much as 75 percent, based on a state formula. A structure must be designated as “individually significant” (important historically by itself) or be a “contributing” structure in a designated historical district to qualify for the Mills Act. Owners of qualifying structures can apply for the Mills Act Agreement, which is a 10-year contract with the City. Under this contract, the owner agrees to maintain the regulated characteristics of the structure (for example, the home exterior) in accordance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior Standards. The benefit of reduced property taxes goes with the property if it is sold, so the new owner does not have to

re-apply. Properties that have not been sold since 1978 may not benefit from the Mills Act, because of Prop 13. But the reduction in property taxes for recently acquired homes may be substantial, and this is an attractive selling point. Proving a structure is individually significant can be a long and difficult process. But once an area is a designated historical district, contributing structures within the district qualify for Mills Act much more easily.

7. *What are contributing and non-contributing properties in a historical district?*

A **contributing** property has the architectural style and is the appropriate age such that it falls within the “historical context” (reasons why the area is important historically) and “period of significance” (time frame) for the district. The property must also retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as part of the district (that is, not be deteriorated or altered beyond recognition).

A **non-contributing** property generally is a different architectural style or too new, has been altered too much and could not be restored, or is vacant. Non-contributing properties in a historical district are not eligible for the Mills Act.

8. *Why should I want to be in a Historical District?*

The unique style and character of your neighborhood would be protected, which helps maintain and increase property values, and motivates people to take care of their homes. Everyone must adhere to the same standards, which helps prevent unattractive and inappropriate alterations. New owners attracted to a designated historical area typically fix up dilapidated homes, increasing surrounding property values. According to the County Assessor and most real estate professionals, home values either remain stable or improve. A study in South Carolina showed that a historical district designation increased the property values up to 30 percent.

9. *What is the proposed North Park Dryden Historical District?*

The proposed historical district covers 134 parcels along Pershing Avenue and 28th Street, from Upas to Landis Streets. It is one of San Diego’s earliest suburban neighborhoods. About 20 of the houses were designed and built by David Owen Dryden, who was well known for the fine craftsmanship and distinctive architecture of his homes. Most of the 134 parcels have houses that would be classified as **contributing** to the historical district.

10. *What is the status of the proposed North Park Dryden Historical District?*

The North Park Community Association (NPCA) History Committee has completed the documentation needed by the City to consider the area for designation. The application package was submitted to the City on May 18, 2007. The package included individual information forms about each property in the proposed district. The forms have the date of construction, the builder and first owner (if known), and a description of the architecture of the house. The City Historical Resources Board will consider how important the neighborhood is from a historical perspective when they make their decision about designating the area a Historical District. They also will consider how much neighborhood support there is for forming the district. Individual signature forms from homeowners in the proposed district indicating support or non-support were included with the submittal. A total of 82 signature sheets were returned in time to be included; of these, 76 were signed in support of forming the district.