

WORKING PAPERS

- Using Conservation Districts
- Case Studies
- Operational Plan
- Defining Valued Characteristics for a Conservation District
- Ordinance

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USING CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

The City of Pittsburgh is investigating the potential use of historic conservation overlay districts to help protect the character of some traditional neighborhoods that are not designated as local historic districts. Conservation districts may be used to promote specific neighborhood objectives related to maintaining character, address issues, protect traditional development patterns, and discourage unnecessary demolition. In most cases, they are designed to have a simple administrative process.

This handout provides background material to support a discussion on the potential use of conservation districts in Pittsburgh. A related handout, entitled *Conservation Districts Around the Country*, provides information about the use of conservation districts in other cities.

Purpose of a Conservation District

Communities and neighborhoods around the country use conservation districts to address a variety of objectives and issues. Conservation districts are often used to:

- » Help maintain a neighborhood with distinctive character that is not a historic district.
- » Address the mass and scale of new buildings in an older, traditional neighborhood.
- » Promote active, pedestrian-friendly streets.
- » Address the demolition of existing buildings that promote neighborhood character.
- » Support the reuse of existing buildings.
- » Support retention of existing businesses or affordable housing.
- » Provide a buffer or transition around a sensitive feature such as a historic landmark, historic district, or natural resource.
- » Provide interim protection to a neighborhood that may later be designated as a historic district.

A community process, including workshops and stakeholder meetings, will help determine which local objectives a potential conservation district tool should support.

Comparing Conservation and Historic Districts

Typically, a conservation district does not have the “fine-grained” level of design review that exists in a historic district. In a historic district, any work on the exterior of a building is subject to review and approval. In most conservation districts, alteration to the skin of an existing building is not regulated, only major alterations, or additions, and new construction. Thus, a conservation district addresses neighborhood character at a broader level by shaping future change rather than protecting specific historic resources.

With respect to historic resources, a conservation district may:

- » Have many historic buildings, but not enough to qualify as being a historic district.
- » Be eligible as a historic district, but the neighborhood does not wish to pursue historic designation.

If individual historic landmarks are located within a conservation district, historic preservation regulations continue to apply. A conservation district may also be used to provide a transition around an existing historic district, or may be applied to an area that could later be designated as a historic district.



What is a Conservation District?

A conservation district is a zoning designation that applies tools to address issues or promote specific neighborhood objectives. It typically implements tools to promote compatible new construction and additions. The focus is generally on maintaining a preferred neighborhood character as seen from the street or sidewalk. Unlike a historic district, a conservation district does not protect specific existing building features.

Note that the neighborhood conservation district tools described in this handout have no relationship with Natural Resource Conservation Districts managed by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

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Potential Tools Applied Through a Conservation District

Neighborhoods may use a conservation district to apply a range of tools that address specific objectives or issues. Conservation districts are most often associated with application of design review - a process in which City staff or a design review board evaluates new construction, additions or other neighborhood projects using established design guidelines. However, they may also apply new or revised zoning standards that provide more predictability and require fewer administrative resources.

Examples of tools used in conservation districts include:

Regulations	Education	Incentives
» Zoning standards to assure compatible building form and scale (administered by staff)	» A heritage awareness publication to build neighborhood pride	» Maintenance assistance
» Design review to assure compatible new construction (administered by staff, or a board)	» Technical assistance publications to assist with maintenance	» Financing assistance for compatible infill
» Demolition review or delay, to consider alternatives	» Voluntary guidelines for improvement to existing buildings	» Technical assistance (i.e., evaluation of an existing structure for reuse)

The table below illustrates the relationship between possible neighborhood objectives and potential conservation district tools. The table does not list all potential objectives or tools that could be addressed using a conservation district.

Neighborhood Objective	Potential Conservation District Tools		
	Demolition Delay Ordinance	Design Standards (1)	Design Review with Guidelines (2)
Assure Compatible Additions to Existing Buildings		✓	✓
Assure Compatible New Construction		✓	✓
Reduce Demolition of Existing Buildings	✓		
Support the Re-use of Existing Buildings	✓	✓	
Preserve Historic Buildings	Conservation districts generally do not provide specific tools for preservation of historic resources. Such tools are best provided through individual historic landmark designation or inclusion in a historic district.		

(1) Design standards (such as special height limits or porch requirements), generally apply in addition to existing zoning.
 (2) Design guidelines may be administered by City staff or by an existing review board or commission.

Application of a Conservation District

A conservation district system may be applied using a range of approaches. The best approach depends on the desired balance between customization, cost and ease of administration. Districts may be set up to apply the same, or similar tools to a range of neighborhoods or may be customized on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis. For example, the city could create several 'pre-made' conservation districts, allowing a neighborhood to choose which one best addresses its objectives. Alternatively, the city could allow neighborhoods to create their own conservation district using customized tools. A blended approach might allow a neighborhood to create its own conservation district, but limit the range of tools or potential customization.



Why is Pittsburgh Considering Conservation Districts?

Residents have expressed concern with changes occurring in several of Pittsburgh's older neighborhoods, including vacant properties and inappropriate new construction. To address these and other potential concerns, the City of Pittsburgh received a Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) grant to help fund a conservation district study.

The study will identify tools for community groups seeking to preserve the historic nature of neighborhoods that lack sufficient historic significance or integrity to be considered for designation as local historic districts. The study began in June 2013 and will be complete by November 2013. The process will include a range of opportunities for public participation, including a community workshop and presentation.

Zoning Overlays

A conservation district is most often applied as a zoning overlay to implement additional tools that are not included in the base zoning. This means that existing zoning regulations continue to set forth the basic rules for development, while a conservation district overlay applies additional standards or design review. For example, the base zoning may limit overall building height, while a conservation district overlay requires that buildings step down in height towards their neighbors.

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CASE STUDIES

Three neighborhoods in Pittsburgh demonstrate the potential for applying the Conservation District tool to a variety of conditions. The three case studies are summarized here. Note that these neighborhoods are used for illustrative purposes only, and it does not imply that those communities would actually choose to move forward with designation if such a tool were to become available.

The Central Northside Neighborhood

The Central Northside Neighborhood abuts the designated historic districts of Mexican War Streets and Manchester. The area contains many buildings of potential historic significance, but also have a number of non-contributors. Recently considered for historic district designation, concerns were raised about the appropriateness of using that tool, particularly with respect to how that would mesh with the community's concerns and goals for the area. This could be an opportunity to consider a conservation district designation as an alternative.

Potential landmarks

Many buildings of potential historical significance exist in this area. In some cases, these buildings could be individually landmarked. These potential landmarks could be identified in a Conservation District Plan for the area.

Buildings with cultural associations

Some buildings have been substantially altered and therefore would not be considered "contributors" in the sense of a historic district, but they are valued for their association with cultural events in the community. Such buildings could potentially be listed as "Structures of Value" as defined in this report. These potential Structures of Value could be identified in a Conservation District Plan for the area. These are examples of how a demolition delay provision could be useful, in order to provide the community an opportunity to respond to proposals to demolish such structures.

New construction opportunities

A few vacant lots exist in the neighborhood, where new construction could occur. Compatibility with the traditional development patterns in the area could be a concern. For example, assuring the buildings align with their neighbors and continue the rhythms of repeated building modules and using similar materials could be principles to apply.

Public infrastructure

Stone street paving and curbs occur as accent features in this neighborhood and could merit preservation. Such resources could be identified in a Conservation District Plan to promote retaining them.

Demolition concerns

A few buildings suffer from deferred maintenance and could be targets for demolition. Many of these may have historic or cultural significance to the community. Having an opportunity to respond to demolition proposals in such cases could be an issue.



What is a Conservation District?

A conservation district is a zoning designation that applies tools to address issues or promote specific neighborhood objectives. It typically implements tools to promote compatible new construction and additions. The focus is generally on maintaining a preferred neighborhood character as seen from the street or sidewalk. Unlike a historic district, a conservation district does not protect specific existing building features.

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Some potential landmarks appear as sets of buildings and could be individually designated.



Potential landmarks, such as the building on the corner above, could be identified in a Conservation District Plan.



Vacant lots exist in the Hill Neighborhood offering opportunities for infill development.

The Hill Neighborhood

A portion of the Hill Neighborhood contains a concentration of commercial buildings along Centre Avenue, with some residential structures mixed in. This corridor is flanked by residential blocks on either side that also include some institutional facilities (churches and schools).

Potential landmarks

Several buildings of potential historical significance exist in the area. Some of these appear in sets of two, three and four buildings, but then are separated from other buildings with vacant lots or with new buildings. In some cases, these buildings could be individually landmarked, but there may not be sufficient integrity to meet criteria for designation as a historic district. These potential landmarks could be identified in a Conservation District Plan for the area.

Buildings with cultural associations

Some buildings have been substantially altered and therefore would not be considered “contributors” in the sense of a historic district, but they are valued for their association with cultural events in the community. Such buildings could potentially be listed as “Structures of Value” as defined in this report. These potential Structures of Value could be identified in a Conservation District Plan for the area.

New construction opportunities

Many vacant lots exist in the neighborhood, where new construction could occur. Compatibility with the traditional development patterns in the area could be a concern. For example, assuring the buildings in the commercial corridor are built to the street edge with storefronts providing interest to pedestrians could be a design guideline concept that would be applied.

Public infrastructure

Stone street paving and curbs are accent features in this neighborhood that could merit preservation. Such resources could be identified in a Conservation District Plan to promote retaining them.

Demolition concerns

Several buildings have deferred maintenance and could be targets for demolition and some of these may have historic or cultural significance to the community. Having an opportunity to respond to demolition proposals in such cases could be an issue.

The Brownsville Road Area

Brownsville Road extends for several miles and varies in character along the way. Many blocks were originally residential in use, and the buildings reflect this character. Other portions contain collections of commercial storefront buildings that served the nearby residential neighborhoods. Churches, schools, parks and other institutional facilities provide accents along the way.

Adaptive Reuse

Many residential structures have been converted to commercial uses, which in some cases has resulted in alterations to the fronts of buildings and changes in the relationship of the building to the street. Site design guidelines and guidelines for additions could be useful in these situations.

Potential landmarks

Several buildings of potential historical significance exist in the area. Some of these appear in sets of two, three and four buildings, but then are separated from other buildings with vacant lots or with new or altered buildings. In some cases, a small portion of the corridor could be eligible for designation as a local historic district, but it is unlikely that the entire corridor would. A conservation district tool could provide a more consistent approach to considering new construction in the area.

Even so, several individual buildings could be potentially eligible for landmark designation. These potential landmarks could be identified in a Conservation District Plan for the area.

Buildings with cultural associations

Some buildings have been substantially altered and therefore would not be considered “contributors” in the sense of a historic district, but they are valued for their association with cultural events in the area. These potential Structures of Value could be identified in a Conservation District Plan for the area.

New construction opportunities

Several vacant lots exist in along the corridor, where new construction could occur. Compatibility with the traditional development patterns in the area could be a concern. For example, assuring that new buildings in the commercial corridor are built to the street edge with storefronts providing interest to pedestrians could be a design guideline concept that would be applied.

Demolition concerns

A few buildings have deferred maintenance and could be targets for demolition and some of these may have historic or cultural significance to the community. Having an opportunity to respond to demolition proposals in such cases could be an issue.



The Brownsville Road area is accented with churches, parks and other institutional facilities.



Commercial buildings along Brownsville Road serve nearby residential neighborhoods.



The Brownsville Road area contains many residential structures, some of which have been converted to commercial uses.

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3.

Pittsburgh Historic Conservation Overlay Districts Study

OPERATIONAL PLAN

Executive Summary

This report recommends the structure for establishing and operating a Historic Conservation District (HCD) program for older commercial and residential neighborhoods in Pittsburgh. The proposed system grows out of concerns voiced by residents and property owners in various neighborhoods about the erosion of character through the loss of existing building stock and the potential for inappropriate new construction that would diminish the traditional character which people value. It also is inspired by the desire to attract investment into these areas that would help sustain them as viable parts of the city.

In 2012, the city adopted a resolution instructing planning staff to develop a Historic Conservation District ordinance, which would be implemented as a zoning overlay tool. That resolution is brief in its scope, but provides a directive to consider the quality and values of older neighborhoods in the city's permitting processes and incentives programs. The actions proposed in this report would expand those provisions and clarify how the general system would operate and how specific Historic Conservation Districts would be designated.

This zoning overlay would define the criteria for determining when a neighborhood would be eligible, and highlight key features of the area that are to be respected in rehabilitation and new construction. This information would be used when the city conducts design review for projects that require it under existing regulations. It also would have a process to discourage demolition of structures that the community values.

Enabling Ordinance

First, an enabling ordinance should be adopted, which would define the process for establishing individual HCDs. (Note that the enabling ordinance would not in itself establish any conservation districts for specific neighborhoods, but instead would set forth the process for doing so.)

The enabling ordinance would contain these provisions:

» Demolition Delay

For properties that are identified as having special value, a delay period would be required to provide the community time to consider options for response.

» District Designation Process

A formal process for designating an individual Historic Conservation District would be defined, including criteria for eligibility to become a HCD, the public outreach requirements involved and a menu of the regulatory tools that could be employed to promote conservation.

» Conservation District Plan

As a part of designation of a specific HCD, the neighborhood would be required to develop a Conservation District Plan, which would summarize primary issues and objectives, describe the key features of the area that are to be respected, and provide direction on how the city's existing zoning standards and design guidelines are to be applied (or perhaps modified) in the area. The plan would also identify existing incentive programs that may be particularly applicable to the district.



What is a Conservation District?

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Use of the term “Neighborhood” in this report

The term “neighborhood” is used in this report to reference an area that is considering becoming designated as a Historic Conservation District. It is used loosely, and does not refer to the official neighborhood names or boundaries that are recognized by the city. While the city has formally identified official neighborhoods throughout the community, it is not the intent to imply that, when an area may be designated as a Historic Conservation District, it must comply with the boundaries of an official city-recognized neighborhood.

Companion Documents

This strategy report is the fourth paper in a series related to the Historic Conservation District study for Pittsburgh. For additional background, see:

- » Conservation Districts Around the Country
- » Potential Tools Applied Through a Conservation District
- » Using Conservation Districts

» Building and Demolition Permit Requirements

The enabling ordinance also would set forth the thresholds for design review and demolition delay that would apply to all HCDs. (These could potentially then be modified for an individual HCD when an individual district is formally designated.)

» Education and Awareness

Neighborhoods could use the HCD designation as a springboard for other programs that would help to promote an awareness and appreciation of the heritage of the designated districts. This could include markers to interpret the cultural traditions of the areas, as well as programming of special events and festivals. The Conservation District Plan would define the approach for interpretation and awareness for an individual HCD.

Administration of the Conservation District Program

The program would use the existing design review and permitting systems of the city. No new board or commission would be created. Planning and Zoning staff would administer the program, using their current review procedures. (Depending upon the number of Historic Conservation Districts that may be designated under this program, an additional staff member will likely be needed to assist with its administration.)

Relationship to the City’s Historic Preservation Program

While retaining older buildings is an objective of the HCD system, it is not a replacement for the preservation system, and its historic district designation provision in particular. The HCD system emphasizes retaining existing buildings, but does not go to the detailed level of design review that focuses on preserving key features of existing structures, which is an important component in the historic district program. Design review in a HCD would instead concentrate on promoting compatibility of new buildings and perhaps could consider major alterations to the exterior of existing buildings. The HCD system would only delay demolition, whereas demolition of a formally listed historic structure can be prevented (within certain provisions for considering hardship).

The HCD designation could apply where:

- » An area lacks a sufficient number of historic resources to meet eligibility requirements for becoming a historic district
- » Residents and property owners do not wish to have the more in-depth level of regulation that is associated with a historic district
- » Preservation of the area as a whole is not a primary objective

The Historic Review Commission would not have a formal role in permitting in the HCD program, but could assist in an advisory capacity by commenting on the development of Conservation Districts Plans, and on individual design proposals that may be referred to them by staff for advice. Also note that within a HCD, it would still be possible (an indeed likely) for some individual properties to be designated as historic landmarks.

Implementing the HCD Program

If this report is accepted as a general direction for implementing the Historic Conservation District program, then the formal ordinance language would be prepared. (Some sample language is attached to this report as an appendix as a starting point.)

Introduction

The City of Pittsburgh seeks to strengthen its older established residential and commercial neighborhoods, maintain their sense of identity and enhance livability in these older areas that are important places in the social, cultural and economic life of the city. A Conservation District program is proposed with specific criteria for eligibility and a process for designation, a mechanism for demolition delay, and a system for design review and permitting that would promote retaining and enhancing the traditional character of designated areas,

The conservation district program would promote neighborhood objectives related to maintaining character, protecting traditional development patterns, and discouraging demolition. It would be designed to have a simple administrative process.

This document outlines a strategy for establishing a conservation district system in Pittsburgh. It provides a summary of identified neighborhood objectives and issues, describes alternative conservation district approaches, and recommends a series of specific conservation district components to address the objectives and issues. Finally, it recommends an approach for administering the conservation districts that would be established and sets the stage for developing an enabling ordinance.



Some areas that might be considered for a Conservation District overlay have many vacant lots that offer infill opportunities. In such cases, the emphasis would be on developing designs for new buildings that would be compatible with the established character of the area.

Neighborhood Conservation

In this report, the discussions of topics related to neighborhood conservation are organized into the three categories of sustainability





Neighborhood representatives participated in a community workshop to help identify the ways in which a conservation district program could help achieve goals for maintaining community character.

Community Objectives and Issues

This section provides a brief summary of neighborhood objectives and issues that the Historic Conservation Overlay District program would address.

During the course of this study, members of the public participated in a series of interviews and a community workshop to provide insight into issues that neighborhoods have related to conserving character. Workshop participants were primarily from the three neighborhoods that were identified as potential test sites for a conservation district overlay. While participants from each neighborhood identified unique objectives and issues, a number of common themes emerged which are summarized below.

The project team also toured a sampling of traditional neighborhoods in Pittsburgh to gain insights into the range of conditions that exist, and reviewed other planning documents containing policies related to conserving neighborhood character.

Primary neighborhood assets

These are some key assets identified:

Cultural assets

- » A strong cultural legacy of people, places and events
- » Concerned citizens who care about the character of their neighborhoods
- » Active neighborhood organizations that work to enhance livability for their constituents
- » Places where people gather and share in a sense of community, including schools, parks, businesses and churches

Environmental assets

- » Intact development patterns of buildings of similar scale and orientation, yards and public spaces
- » Good building stock that reflects the heritage of the community
- » Many historic resources, as individual structures and sometimes in sets that convey a distinct character
- » Parks & open spaces that are used by the community and contribute to neighborhood identity



Workshop participants identified assets of selected case study neighborhoods and outlined trends that could affect character.

Economic assets

- » Distinct business districts that serve neighbors and provide jobs in the community
- » Owner-initiated improvements that enhance property values and create jobs in the construction industries

Typical neighborhood conservation issues

Residents voiced these concerns:

- » Loss of traditional buildings that contribute to the visual quality of the area and that have associations with cultural events related to the community
- » Vacant lots that remain unused and leave gaps in the rows of buildings that define street edges
- » Designs of new buildings that are out of character with respect to mass and scale, and orientation to the street
- » Site plans that are also out of character, with respect to the location and access of parking, alignment of building fronts, and quality of open space
- » A lack of investment and delayed maintenance in existing properties
- » Enforcement of zoning and building codes
- » A lack of appreciation of the values of the neighborhood by some newcomers and of some absentee owners

Shared neighborhood objectives

In recognition of these widely appreciated assets of traditional neighborhoods in Pittsburgh and issues related to them, residents described these objectives that a Historic Conservation District program should help to achieve:

Cultural Objectives

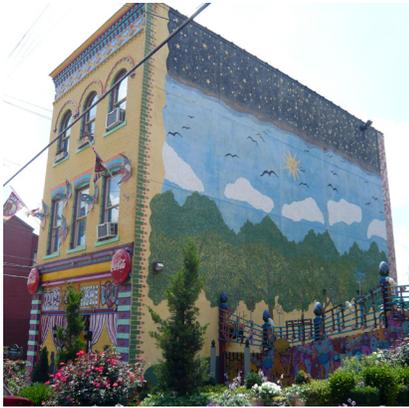
- » Provide opportunities for citizens to meet and share in a sense of community
- » Maintain a sense of identity for the neighborhood
- » Celebrate the heritage of the area
- » Facilitate coordination and communication

Environmental Objectives

- » Protect and promote established neighborhood patterns
- » Maintain and enhance existing buildings
- » Enhance a pedestrian-oriented character
- » Preserve individual historically significant buildings

Economic Objectives

- » Promote economic vitality
- » Improve property values



A conservation district designation would not limit changes to the surface of an existing building.

Alternative Approaches to Conservation Districts

Alternative approaches for the use of Historic Conservation Districts are described in a companion paper, *Conservation Districts Around the Country*. That survey of peer communities finds that a variety of approaches exist around the country, in terms of the objectives and the specific tools employed. Fundamentally, they take these alternative forms:

Approach 1: A Preservation Focus

In this approach, objectives are very similar to that of a historic district. Design review may go to a level of detail that is similar to that of a historic district, with alterations to the character of a historic building being considered. Demolition may be more directly regulated.

Approach 2: A Cultural Heritage Focus

In this approach, objectives focus on celebrating the cultural values of the area. Interpretive markers, public art and other design features that convey the cultural legacy are the focus. This program may only have voluntary design guidelines. Incentives to encourage compatible design and retain older buildings are included.

Approach 3: A Traditional Character Focus

In this approach, the primary objective is to retain older buildings that support the character of the street and to assure that new construction is compatible. But, preserving individual buildings is not a focus. Demolition is delayed to provide time for the community to respond. (This is the approach recommended for Pittsburgh, with the understanding that cultural heritage is also an important component and that individual buildings of historic significance could be designated as landmarks within a conservation district.)

Conservation District Components

This section identifies the components proposed to be in the conservation district system for Pittsburgh. They are designed to address neighborhood objectives and issues that are frequently cited.

Building Conservation Component (Demolition Delay)

Objective: To keep existing buildings of value in active service

Buildings that are of value to the community should be retained, and kept in active use, to the extent feasible. This means that demolition should be discouraged, and when a demolition is proposed, that the community should have a reasonable opportunity to respond and seek alternatives.

This tool addresses a widely identified neighborhood objective, which is to preserve existing building stock that is valued and discourage demolition that may reduce neighborhood vitality. While demolition of buildings that are not locally designated as historic resources would not be prohibited within a conservation district, a notification and delay period should be required to allow the City, neighborhood representatives and property owner's time to seek alternatives if doing so seemed appropriate.

The demolition component should include:

1. Demolition delay

A delay period from the time of application to allow for community notification

Provision:

When an application for a demolition is filed for a building that is not a public safety hazard but is identified as a "Property of Cultural Value," a waiting period of 60 days would be invoked, before demolition can proceed. (See page 8 for an explanation of the concept of a "property of cultural value.") During this time, the community will have an opportunity to consider the importance of the structure to the community, and, if it determines that retaining the structure is merited, they may consider these alternatives:

- » Option 1: Nominate the property as an individual historic landmark.
- » Option 2: Seek alternative uses that would keep the building in use.
- » Option 3: Seek financial assistance or incentive programs that may assist the existing owner in retaining the building.
- » Option 4: Seek means to acquire the property for reuse by another owner.

2. Demolition application notification

A special notice requirement for a demolition request involving a "Structure of Value"

Provisions:

In order to make the community aware of a pending demolition, a notice of the demolition application should be posted by the property owner at the site 60 days prior to the effective permit date. In addition, a designated neighborhood conservation group would be notified via email and a general notice would be published on the city's website by the DCP. Creating a special web page for information about current events in the city's conservation districts should be considered as a location for this notification.



Some properties may be difficult to adapt to only those uses permitted in an existing zone district. Providing for other uses as special conditions could help keep these properties in service.

3. Land Use Flexibility Component

This component of the system would provide flexibility to promote adaptive reuse of existing buildings that are of “Cultural Value,” but that were designed for uses that may no longer be permitted in the base zoning. For example, a building that was originally designed as a firehouse may be difficult to reuse as a residence, but could have the potential to be adaptively reused as a professional office. Rather than seeing such a structure decay, and perhaps be demolished, additional uses could be permitted, perhaps under special review, to encourage reuse. This also would encourage neighborhood investment through reuse of existing buildings. The expanded range of land uses would be available only for buildings identified as cultural resources in the Conservation District Plan and would be treated as conditional uses.

Criteria for listing as a “Property of Cultural Value”

Not all properties within a Historic Conservation District would be subject to the demolition delay provision; only those identified as having cultural value would. During the process of establishing an individual Conservation District, the community would identify those properties that have “Cultural Value” to the neighborhood. This would be a more informal listing than designation as a historic resource is, but would still require that it meet a minimum of two of the following criteria:

- » It is associated with cultural events that are important to the identity of the neighborhood.
- » It contributes to the visual character of the block.
- » It serves as a community focal point.
- » It serves (or has served) as a center of activities that are a part of the community.
- » It is identified in a historic survey as having historic significance.

Those properties that meet the criteria would be entered into a list of Properties of Cultural Value for the specific Conservation District. This list would be developed as part of the Conservation District Plan. (More details about the process for developing a Conservation District Plan follows later in this report.)

Note that, as a “Property of Cultural Value,” a structure need not have distinctive architectural features, as is often the case for a historically significant building. While it is possible that a Property of Cultural Value could have architectural merits, it could be a very modest building, but be cherished in the community because of its association with cultural events and traditions in the area. Or, it could be an older building that has lost its integrity in terms of landmark criteria and therefore would not be eligible for listing as a historic resource.

Design Compatibility Component

This component of the conservation district system includes zoning standards and design guidelines that are intended to promote compatibility in new construction and of alterations to individual properties.

Provisions:

In order to assure consistency in and ease of administration, each individual conservation district should be able to customize its design guidelines (but only using a standard checklist of potential variables), and with a standard format, in order to assure uniformity and clarity in their administration.

The Design Component should have these elements:

I. Zoning Standards

The city's zoning code includes some standards that affect the character of development, by establishing minimum setback requirements, maximum building heights, and, for some uses, even the degree of transparency that must be provided at the street level. Sometimes these requirements are modified, during a hearing process, such as by the Planning Commission. At times, some residents have expressed concerns that these zoning standards are out of character with the established context, which they wish to maintain. In a Conservation Plan, a neighborhood could signal those characteristics of the neighborhood that are particularly valued and which should be respected when applying the existing zoning standards. In addition, it should also be possible to modify a limited number of the standards outright when establishing a conservation district, to establish a more context-sensitive standard for the particular context.

These prescriptive standards, which already exist in the zoning code, could be modified, based on the findings of the Neighborhood Conservation Plan:

- » Maximum permitted height
- » Maximum lot coverage
- » Required build-to line (or minimum setback line)

2. Design Guidelines

The City also uses design guidelines to determine the appropriateness of many types of construction projects, particularly for commercial and multifamily infill. The Conservation District would use the guidelines that already exist in the City of Pittsburgh Zoning Code and in other citywide guidelines. However, since those guidelines are written to apply throughout the city, they may not reach the level of specificity that is needed for conservation districts. Those general principles could be better interpreted for a specific location when a description exists of the key features that are valued in the area. The Conservation District program should include such a description for each district that is established. Design guidelines for a conservation district would include:

Description of Key Features of the District

As a part of the Conservation District Plan that would be prepared for each Conservation District, the community should highlight features to be valued and emphasize any guidelines in the Citywide Guidelines that are of special importance to the area. This information would guide staff and the CDAP and Planning Commission when they are engaged in making determinations of appropriateness for project proposals.

Description of Key Urban Design Goals

The city's general design guidelines also promote best practices in urban design. They encourage building designs that are oriented to the street and have a human scale, for example. These guidelines are particularly useful where the existing context lacks a strong sense of continuity, such as in an older neighborhood that has lost much of its original building stock and has many newer buildings from more recent decades with differing design features. These guidelines will be applied broadly across the city and therefore remain rather general. The Conservation District program could help in interpreting their application to a specific neighborhood by linking them to descriptions of the neighborhood's key features and by stating specific urban design goals for the area. As a part of developing a Conservation District Plan, the community would highlight those fundamental urban design principles that are especially relevant to their context.



Areas that are eligible for designation as conservation districts often will have a diversity of building types and ages.



Adaptive reuse that provides for outdoor activity should be permitted in a conservation district.

Design standards vs. design guidelines

Design standards are generally quantitative and do not require discretion in determining compliance.

Design guidelines are generally qualitative and may require discretionary review by City staff, a design review committee or elected officials in order to determine compliance.

Thresholds for Design Review

Those projects that have the potential to substantially affect the character of a HCD should be subject to review. The threshold for determining which projects will be reviewed should be defined in the “enabling” ordinance that would establish the conservation district system.

Potential thresholds for review within a HCD:

- » New commercial building
- » New multifamily building
- » Work exceeding more than \$20,000 on the exterior of an existing building
- » Any alteration to an existing building that changes the size or shape of a window or door in a street-facing building wall
- » Construction of any new opening (window or door) that is seen from the public way

The Design Review Process

Currently, the city uses a system of different review tracks, which are organized to expedite permitting of small-scale projects and to facilitate efficient design review of more complex ones. Many projects are reviewed by City Planning Staff only, while others include a step to receive comments from the city’s Design Advisory Panel (CDAP) and then formal action by the City Planning Commission. This system should continue to be employed in the HCD program. City staff would conduct design review on any projects that meet a threshold (such as those suggested above), but which are not presently required to be reviewed under the current system. For those projects that already require design review by CDAP and/or the Planning Commission that process would continue.

Conservation Districts and Neighborhood Participation

The Conservation District program would balance the intent to provide opportunities for the community to engage in promoting appropriate investment in their neighborhoods with the objective of keeping the system simple and efficient to administer. While district residents and neighborhood conservation advocates certainly will want to be involved, their participation should be structured such that key concerns are addressed without burdening the review system or adding costs.

An efficient system is one in which the rules for review and the criteria to be used are clear and easy to understand. A key to this is to have public comment occur during the drafting of the design goals for a district, the description of its key features and tailoring of the guidelines that would be used. When this information has the benefit of community input, then City staff and boards can administer the program without the necessity of public comment on each individual project. In addition, neighborhood representatives should participate in an annual review of the operation of the program. In this respect, the community “reviews the reviewers,” rather than individual projects. This saves time for neighborhood advocates as well, and helps them focus their energy on policy development and general monitoring of the program.

With respect to design review, this means providing opportunities to the public to help establish the design policies, and to monitor the system, but not engage in a public comment process for each project. That said, some projects already include public comment, which typically happens at a Planning Commission hearing.

Neighborhood residents would participate in developing design policies for their conservation district by:

- » Creating the initial description of key features and goals in the Conservation District Plan
- » Working with staff to create guidelines and standards for the Conservation District Plan
- » Participating in an annual review of the state of the conservation district



Many older buildings in potential conservation districts have experienced alterations over time. While restoring these properties would be encouraged in a conservation district, that is not the focus.



Infill opportunities will exist in many potential conservation districts. For these places, design guidelines for compatible new construction will be important.

Establishing A Conservation District

This section describes the system for establishing an individual conservation district and administering the overall conservation districts system.

District Nomination

A Neighborhood Conservation District nomination may be initiated by one of these methods:

Nomination Option 1: Neighborhood-initiated nomination

A Neighborhood organization may initiate the process, with these measures:

- » A petition that is signed by a minimum of 51% of property owners in the area who respond to a request for an indication of support, and
- » An indication of approval by a high percentage of residents (65%+) responding to a neighborhood survey, and
- » All property owners and residents are notified by DCP of the proposed action.

Nomination Option 2: Council member initiated nomination

As an alternative, a City Council member may initiate the process. To do so, the council member would also require a demonstration of support for designation in the area proposed, by these methods:

- » A non-binding survey of residents could be required.
- » All property owners and residents would be notified by that council member.

Community Meetings to Consider Designation

The Conservation District Plan for an individual neighborhood would be developed in an inclusive public outreach process in which neighborhood organizers would conduct workshops to engage residents, property owners and other stakeholders. City planning staff would provide technical assistance for these meetings, as is feasible within their workload, and help to assure that the information being distributed is accurate.

Designation Hearings

Once the neighborhood has developed a draft Conservation District Plan and has documented sufficient support for creating the district, a series of public hearings would be conducted. These would be the same hearings that are used today for establishing any zoning overlay. They include a hearing before the Planning Commission and before the City Council. The details of this process would be documented in the designation ordinance.

Development of a Conservation District Plan

Prior to designating an area as a Historic Conservation District, a Conservation District Plan must be prepared by the neighborhood, and it must then be included in the designation ordinance. The plan itself may be relatively brief, but should include these essential components:

1. Determination of eligibility

A statement, describing how the proposed district meets the criteria for designation, would be required. This would confirm that the area is indeed appropriate for consideration as a conservation district.

2. Summary of the planning process

A description of the field analysis, public workshops, and other outreach efforts would be included. This would substantiate that the plan reflects widely held community values.

3. Description of key features of the proposed district

This would include a summary of physical and cultural attributes that make the area unique and contribute to its identity. This information would provide a basis for applying design standards and guidelines in the area.



Some potential conservation districts include a mix of commercial, residential and institutional facilities, all of which contribute to their unique character.

4. Statement of key issues and objectives

This should describe the concerns of the neighborhood related to community character and their objectives for the district. It would be used when considering applications for improvements that are subject to permitting with design review.

5. List of properties of cultural value

These would meet the criteria listed above. This list would then be used when a demolition application is filed, or when the neighborhood is planning an interpretive marker program.

6. Special zoning modifications (if any)

In some limited cases, some standards in the base zoning could be modified. For example, a district might change the front yard setback requirement in the base zoning to be more in line with traditional development patterns. Or, they could simply reinforce the fact that the base zoning requirement for building at the prescribed setback line that is established in the code is very important to the neighborhood and should be maintained and not varied.



Streetscapes may also be features in some potential conservation districts that will merit special design guidelines.

7. Special directives for interpreting the citywide design guidelines (if any) or additional guidelines.

For example, the general guidelines encourage locating parking behind a building. This could be emphasized in the district plan, and special methods for doing so that fit the neighborhood could be described.

8. Recommendations for incentives to be applied in the district

For example, the use of some flexibility in permitted uses, in order to encourage retaining buildings of value, could be highlighted.

9. Recommendations for education and awareness programs to be applied in the district

For example, a strategy for installing a public art program that celebrates the heritage of the district could be described.

10. Description of how the demolition delay provision would operate.

Any special notification requirements, or considerations for seeking alternatives to demolition could be highlighted.

Summary

This report describes the fundamental objectives for the city's conservation district program and outlines the components that would be included in it. It represents an understanding of the traditional characteristics of many neighborhoods in the city, the factors that they value, and the issues that they face related to maintaining traditional character. It recommends a system that is designed to work efficiently, and to be distinctly different from other programs (such as the preservation system), while working in concert with existing tools, regulations and administrative processes.

Next Steps

This report does not, in itself, establish a conservation district for any specific neighborhood in the city. Once this report is accepted as a formal strategy for developing a conservation district program, then ordinance language will be drafted that will enable the creation of conservation districts. It will establish the process and criteria, as outlined in this report, but in more formal language for adoption as a city code. Following adoption of the enabling legislation, individual neighborhoods could initiate the process for developing conservation districts.

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4.

Pittsburgh Neighborhood Character Assessment Kit

DEFINING VALUED CHARACTERISTICS FOR A CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The City of Pittsburgh plans to establish a Historic Conservation District (HCD) program to help protect the character of some traditional neighborhoods that are not designated as local historic districts. Residents and property owners use an HCD to define valued neighborhood characteristics and create tools that protect those characteristics while promoting long-term neighborhood objectives.

A neighborhood seeking HCD designation must prepare a Conservation District Plan, including a neighborhood character assessment. This kit is provided to assist residents with an evaluation of the character of their neighborhood. It may be used in several ways:

- » As a field worksheet for individual residents or a neighborhood working committee with an assignment to define neighborhood character
- » As an activity in a neighborhood workshop intended to help identify neighborhood character
- » As the basis for a mailed or online resident survey on neighborhood character

This assessment kit focuses on defining physical attributes of the neighborhood, both built and natural, that may be valued. At times, there also may be cultural associations that are important to describe as well.

What if neighborhood features are not consistent?

While some neighborhoods may include many consistent characteristics (i.e., rectangular blocks with a nearly continuous pattern of three-story row houses), others may be less consistent with a wide range of features from block to block. Where neighborhood features are not consistent, it is important to describe the range of diverse features that exist.

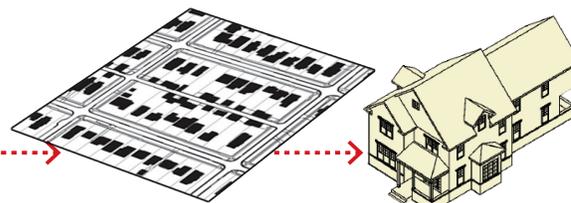
What resource materials may be used in the assessment?

Walking around the neighborhood is the best way to identify its characteristics. Neighborhood and block level characteristics can be observed by walking around as well as through maps and aerial views of the neighborhood. Maps and online street view applications will also be helpful. If available, statistical data, such as the number of buildings in the area, their ages and condition, may also be useful. If the assessment is to be conducted in a group setting, background information should be assembled ahead of time to inform discussion.

This assessment kit guides residents through an evaluation of neighborhood character at the three levels illustrated below and described on the next page.



Neighborhood Level Characteristics



Block Level Characteristics



Building Level Characteristics



What is a Conservation District?

A conservation district is a zoning designation that applies tools to address issues or promote specific neighborhood objectives. It typically implements tools to promote compatible new construction and additions. The focus is generally on maintaining a preferred neighborhood character as seen from the street or sidewalk. Unlike a historic district, a conservation district does not protect specific existing building features.

Use of the Term “Neighborhood”

This kit uses the term “neighborhood” to mean any area with a unique identity. A conservation district need not follow the same boundaries as an official Pittsburgh neighborhood. It could apply to only part of a neighborhood, or parts of two or more adjoining neighborhoods.

Contact for More Information

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Pittsburgh Historic Neighborhood Character Assessment Kit

Neighborhood Level Characteristics

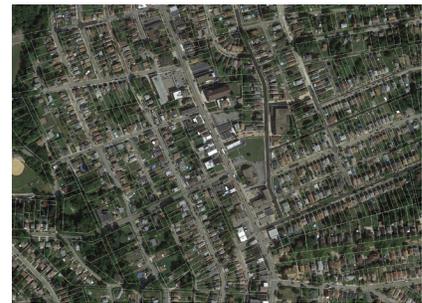
First, consider the features that define the neighborhood as a whole. These may include how streets are organized, how topography influences development, the character of the pedestrian experience, and the focal points created by landmarks and gathering spaces. The aerial diagrams below are provided as an example to illustrate differences in neighborhood level characteristics across three neighborhoods in Pittsburgh.



The Middle Hill District



The Central Northside



Brownsville Road/Carrick area

Block Level Characteristics

Now, consider the characteristics at the block level. Explain the attributes of building setbacks, building alignment/orientation, street foreground, and building connection to the street. The aerial diagrams below are provided as an example to illustrate differences in block level characteristics across three neighborhoods in Pittsburgh.



Block-level sample area in the Middle Hill District



Block-level sample area in the Central Northside



Block-level sample area in the Brownsville Road/Carrick area

Building Level Characteristics

Finally, consider the characteristics at the building level. Explain the attributes of the materials, mass/scale, and architectural characteristics of buildings in the area. The street views below are provided as an example to illustrate differences in building level characteristics across three neighborhoods in Pittsburgh.



Sample street views in the Middle Hill District



Sample street views in the Central Northside



Sample street views in the Brownsville Road/Carrick area

NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS

Please answer the following questions regarding your neighborhood. Neighborhood and block level characteristics can be observed by walking around as well as through maps and aerial views of the neighborhood. Consider the variety or consistency within the neighborhood, and if certain characteristics are successful or could use improvements.

Neighborhood: _____

1. Topography

What are some key features of the topography within the neighborhood? Are their dominant features such as hills, creeks, or valleys? Does the topography seem to be consistent or vary? Does the topography influence how the neighborhood is organized and how the streets are coordinated?

2. Street Patterns

What are some key characteristics of street patterns throughout the neighborhood? Are the streets aligned in a grid manner, or are they more curvilinear and organically routed? Are there alleys?

3. Pedestrian Experience

How do pedestrians experience the neighborhood? Are there consistent sidewalks and crosswalks? Are there places for pedestrians to stop and rest or shops, activities or landscaping that provide interest for pedestrians?

4. Monuments and Landmarks

Are there distinctive monuments or landmarks that identify the area? List monuments or landmarks in the neighborhood such as churches, civic buildings, sculptures or historic resources. Note that landmarks could also include meeting places that are part of the neighborhood's cultural traditions.

BLOCK LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS

Focusing on a specific block in your neighborhood, please answer the following questions. Neighborhood and block level characteristics can be observed by walking around as well as through maps and aerial views of the neighborhood. Consider the variety or consistency within the block, and if certain characteristics are successful or could use improvements.

1. Building Setbacks

What are some key characteristics of building setbacks at the block level? Are the setbacks uniform or varied? In a commercial area, are buildings located at the sidewalk edge? In a residential area, are buildings set back behind a front yard?

2. Building Alignment

How are the buildings aligned with other surrounding buildings on the block? Do foundations, porches, windows, or roof lines match up with other buildings?

3. Streetscape

What are some key features of the streetscape on the block (the area between the street and the front of the building)? Features may include shade trees, lighting or other elements along the street. In a residential area, they may also include landscaped front yards, planting strips and paths to building entries. In a commercial area, they may include benches, patios and recessed storefront entries.

4. Building Orientation

How are buildings oriented along the block? Do building entries face the street, or do sidewalks lead to entries around the side or rear of the buildings?

BUILDING LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS

Focusing on a series of buildings in your neighborhood, please answer the following questions. Consider the variety or consistency among the buildings, and if certain characteristics are successful or could use improvements.

1. Building Materials

What are some key characteristics of the building materials? Is there a variety of materials, or consistent materials with accents? Do changes in material indicate different levels or uses (shops, apartments, etc.) within the building?

2. Mass and Scale

Is building height and scale generally consistent or is there a high level of diversity?

3. Entry Features

What types of doors and other entries are typical? Are they clearly defined by porches, stairs, recessed windows, or awnings?

5.

ORDINANCE

907.04.A Historic Conservation Overlay District

907.04.A Introduction and Purpose

Pittsburgh consists of very distinctive neighborhoods that were settled at different times during the historical development of the City. These various neighborhoods, including residential and commercial areas, have their own distinctive development patterns, which reflect the time during which they evolved and that are valued for their livability and sense of place.

Many of these neighborhoods are recognizable by their consistency of physical characteristics such as similar building heights and uniform setbacks as well as their distinctive exterior facade design elements including storefronts, porches and steps, masonry and other building materials, cornices and decorative trim, doors and windows and other architectural features. These neighborhoods also have cultural traditions that contribute to their sense of identity and that often are reflected in buildings and sites where community activities and cultural events occurred.

The intent of this section is to maintain the viability of these neighborhoods by retaining those features that contribute to their sense of identity and to enhance them as places to live and work and also to foster a feeling of pride. For these reasons, a Historic Conservation Overlay District (HCOD) system is hereby established.

The HCOD is not intended to be the same as the city's historic district program. The HCOD system promotes retaining existing buildings, as does the preservation system, but it does not go to the detailed level of design review for alterations that local historic designation does, which focuses on preserving key features of existing structures and the prevention of demolition of historically significant resources. The HCOD does not prohibit demolition of historically significant structures, although it does seek to discourage the loss of any buildings that contribute to the traditional character of a designated conservation district. (Note, however, that individual properties within HCODs may be designated as local historic landmarks and therefore would be subject to the protections of the city's historic preservation ordinance.)

Objectives:

Through the HCOD designation, the City seeks to achieve these objectives:

Cultural Objectives

1. Provide opportunities for citizens to meet and share in a sense of community by maintaining livable neighborhoods
2. Maintain a sense of identity for their neighborhoods by retaining characteristics that reflect the unique sense of place
3. Celebrate the heritage of these areas by acknowledging sites with strong cultural traditions
4. Facilitate coordination and communication of individual property improvements in a way that helps to maintain community character

Environmental Objectives

1. Protect and promote established neighborhood patterns, such as traditional street layouts, building setbacks, forms and materials
2. Maintain and enhance existing buildings and keep them in service
3. Enhance a pedestrian-oriented character and promote walkability
4. Preserve individual historically significant buildings

Economic Objectives

1. Promote economic vitality by encouraging investment in older neighborhoods
2. Improve property values by stimulated improvements to properties that reinforce the design traditions of the neighborhood

907.04.B Special Definitions.

The following definitions shall apply to this Chapter:

1. **Alteration.** A change in the exterior appearance of a building, structure or site, or any other change for which a permit is required under The Pittsburgh Code, including demolition
2. **Building.** A structure, along with its site and appurtenances, created to shelter any form of human activity
3. **Conservation District Plan.** A document describing physical characteristics and cultural site in an area to be designated as an HCOD and establishing guidelines for review of improvements that are subject to approval as provided in this ordinance
4. **Demolition.** Razing or destruction of an entire building or structure
5. **Design Features.** Exterior features of a building including its mass, height, appearance and the texture, color, nature and composition of its materials, openings and architectural details.
6. **Historic Conservation Overlay District.** A zoning overlay created under this Chapter
7. **Neighborhood.** The term “neighborhood” is used in this section to reference an area that is to be designated as a Historic Conservation Overlay District. It does not refer to the official neighborhood boundaries that are recognized by the city. It is not the intent to imply that when an area may be designated as a Historic Conservation Overlay District, it must comply with the boundaries of an official city-recognized neighborhood.
8. **Property of Cultural Value.** A property recognized as having special cultural significance to the neighborhood and meeting the criteria for such as described in this ordinance

907.04.C Creation of an HCOD

Each HCOD shall be created by ordinance, following the city’s hearing procedures for zoning actions. The ordinance shall set forth the boundaries of the HCOD, and shall include a Conservation District Plan and Design Guidelines for review of improvement in the HCOD.

Applicability.

1. An HCOD shall be an Overlay District to any conventional underlying zoning district.
2. Within an HCOD, all of the use, yard, area and other requirements of the underlying zoning district shall apply, except that any activity regulated by this Chapter shall also comply. When both the provisions of the underlying zoning district and this Chapter apply, the provision that is most restrictive shall control.

Eligibility for Designation as an HCOD

In order to be designated a Historic Conservation Overlay District, the area must meet the following criteria:

1. The area must have been platted or developed at least 75 years ago, and
2. At least 75% of the land area in the proposed district is presently improved; and
3. The area must possess one or more of the following distinctive features that create a cohesive identifiable setting, character or association:
 - a. Building scale, size, type of construction, or distinctive building materials;
 - b. Lot layouts, setbacks, street layouts, alleys or sidewalks;
 - c. Special natural or streetscape characteristics, such as creek beds, parks, gardens or street landscaping;
 - d. Land use patterns, including mixed or unique uses or activities.

District Nomination

A petition requesting that the Planning Commission initiate the process to create an HCOD may be filed with the Planning Commission by either of these methods:

Nomination Option 1: Neighborhood-initiated nomination

A Neighborhood organization may initiate the process, with these measures:

- » A petition that is signed by a majority of property owners in the area proposed to be designated, and
- » A majority of those residents in the area who respond to a neighborhood survey, and
- » All property owners and residents are notified of the proposed action.

Nomination Option 2: Council member initiated nomination

A City Council member may initiate the process. To do so, the council member may, at their discretion, seek a demonstration of support for designation in the area proposed, by these methods:

- » A non-binding survey of residents, and
- » A non-binding survey of property owners, and
- » All property owners and residents are notified of the proposed action

Public Hearing

The Planning Commission shall convene at least one public meeting in order to seek public comment on the proposed ordinance. The Planning Commission shall then submit their recommendations on the proposed ordinance to Council.

Community Meetings to Consider Designation

A Conservation District Plan for an individual neighborhood shall be developed in a public process in which neighborhood organizers shall conduct workshops to engage residents, property owners and other stakeholders. City planning staff may provide technical assistance for these meetings.

Criteria for listing as a “Property of Cultural Value”

During the process of developing the plan for a HCOD, the neighborhood shall compile a list of properties that are considered to be “Properties of Cultural Value.” These properties may have historic significance, or may be properties that are associated with the heritage of the neighborhood but that do not meet criteria for designation as historic resources. In order to qualify as a Property of Cultural Value, it must meet a minimum of TWO of the following criteria:

1. The property is 75 years old or more
2. It is associated with cultural events that are important to the identity of the neighborhood
3. It contributes to the visual character of the block
4. It serves as a community focal point
5. It serves (or has served) as a center of activities that are a part of the community
6. It is identified in a historic survey as having historic significance

Those properties that meet the criteria listed above shall be entered into a list of Properties of Cultural Value for the specific HCOD and said list shall be included in the conservation district plan.

Note that, as a “Property of Cultural Value,” a structure need not have distinctive architectural features, as is often the case for a historically significant building. While it is possible that a Property of Cultural Value may have architectural merits, it may be a very modest building in terms of design, but is valued in the community because of its association with cultural events and traditions in the area.

907.04.D Conservation District Plan

A Conservation District Plan must be prepared by a sponsoring neighborhood organization. The plan shall summarize primary issues and objectives related to conservation and describe the key features of the area that are to be respected. The plan may also identify existing incentive programs that may be particularly applicable to the district. The plan also shall include:

1. A list of Properties of Value
2. A description of the key features of the proposed district that distinguish it
3. Statement of Purpose and Intent
4. A map that indicates the boundaries of the proposed Conservation District.
5. A description of the history and evolution of the area.
6. A description of potential categories of development standards and guidelines including, but not limited to the following:
 - i. Building design
 - ii. Access and parking
 - iii. Accessory structures
 - iv. Landscaping
 - v. Pedestrian connections
 - vi. Open space

(Note that the city has prepared a Handbook for citizens to use in developing the Conservation District Plan.)

Zoning Standards

The existing underlying zoning standards shall continue to apply in an HCOD. However the Conservation District Plan may modify the following variables in order to assure compatibility of new development with established development patterns:

1. Maximum permitted height
2. Maximum lot coverage
3. Required build-to line or minimum setback line

Design Review Guidelines

In order to ensure that exterior alterations to existing buildings and new construction will be compatible with traditional patterns of development in the neighborhood and with the massing, proportions, and fenestration patterns of existing buildings, the design guidelines adopted as part of each HCOD shall address the following:

1. Alterations to the exterior of an existing building that is visible from a public street
2. Construction of a new building
3. Expansion of an existing building that increases its footprint
4. Any exterior improvement (including site work) exceeding more than \$20,000 in cost

Note that the design guidelines shall not extend to the level of detail seen in the city's Preservation Guidelines, in terms of treatment of exteriors of existing buildings, but shall focus on basic features related to materials and openings (windows and doors) visible from the public way.

Certificates of compliance required within an HCOD.

1. Within an HCOD, a certificate of compliance issued under this Section is required for the following work:
 - a. to alter the exterior of a building (if such alteration will be visible from a public street),
 - b. to demolish a building, and
 - c. to construct a building.

2. This certificate of compliance is required in addition to all other permits and approvals required by law, including, but not limited to, building permits and zoning and use regulation permits.
3. Applications for a certificate of compliance shall be made to the Planning Director, and shall include the following information:
 - a. a narrative describing the proposed work;
 - b. photographs of existing conditions;
 - c. plans and illustrations of the proposed work; and
 - d. if for demolition, plans for the post-demolition use of the property; and
 - e. such other information as the Planning Director may reasonably require to determine compliance with the design guidelines adopted for the HCOD.
4. The Planning Director shall issue a certificate of compliance if there is compliance with the design guidelines adopted for the HCOD, and they may attach conditions to a certificate of compliance which are reasonably required to meet the purposes of this Chapter. In making its determination, the Planning Director may consult with the Historical Review Commission and the Planning Commission. If the Planning Director does not issue a certificate of compliance or a written denial of an application for a certificate of compliance within thirty (30) days after it receives an application with all required information, the Planning Director shall be deemed to have issued the certificate of compliance without conditions.
5. The Planning Director's issuance of a certificate of compliance (with or without conditions) or denial of an application for a certificate of compliance may be appealed to the Planning Commission.
6. Issuance of a required certificate of compliance shall be a prerequisite to an application for a building permit within an HCOD.

The Design Review Process

Design review shall run concurrent with other permitting steps that may be applicable. The Director of the Planning Department (or their designated staff member) shall conduct the design review, using the design review guidelines adopted for the district. In making their determination, they may consult with the Historic Review Commission or the Planning Commission and take their advice into consideration.

907.04.E Demolition

The intent of this section is to discourage the demolition of buildings that contribute to the traditional characteristics of development and cultural traditions of the HCOD.

Demolition Application Notification

When the city receives a request for demolition of a property that is 75 years or older and that is within a Conservation District, it shall post a notice of the demolition request, following its usual procedures for notification of a demolition request in a local historic district.

Demolition Delay

For properties within a Historic Conservation District that are identified as being 75 years old or older, a delay period shall be required to provide the community time to consider alternatives. The delay period shall be for 60 days from the time that a request for a demolition permit is submitted. During this time, the community shall have an opportunity to consider the importance of the structure and if it determines that retaining the structure is merited, they may consider these alternatives:

1. Nominate the property for designation as an individual historic landmark
2. Seek a means to acquire the property for reuse by another owner
3. Secure financial assistance or other incentives that may assist the existing owner in retaining the building

If, during the 60-day delay, the Planning Director determines that no viable alternatives are available, they may release the delay prior to the end of the delay period. If, after the 60-day delay period, no alternative to demolition has been established, the city shall issue the demolition permit pursuant to its regulations.

907.04.F Threshold for Project Design Review

The purpose of design review is to assure that improvements within the HCOD will be compatible with the established characteristics as identified in the Conservation District Plan. Design review shall be required for the following work in the HCOD:

1. Any new building
2. Exterior work exceeding more than \$20,000 on any single building
3. Any alteration to an existing building that changes the size or shape of a window or door in a street-facing building wall
4. Construction of any new opening (window or door) on an existing building that is seen from the public way