



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Proposed Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs)

Department of City Planning, Office of Historic Resources
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1) What is a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ)?

An HPOZ is a historic district – an area that has special character based on its historic value, notable architectural features, or the cultural heritage of the community. An HPOZ designation protects the historic character of the neighborhood by providing a way for projects to be reviewed prior to changes taking place. This helps to ensure that the design of alterations is in keeping with the original historic feel of the neighborhood.

2) How does an HPOZ come into being?

HPOZs are typically initiated by the City Council at the request of local neighborhoods. They are considered for approval by City government after careful research and evaluation by preservation experts, and after a public hearing process in the neighborhood has occurred. These zones are legally established under Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 12.20.3, enacted in 1979.

3) How are HPOZs governed? Who will be on our HPOZ Board?

Each HPOZ is overseen by City Planning Department staff and a local five-member HPOZ Board. At least three of the five members must be owners or renters who live within the HPOZ area. No single entity controls a majority of appointments to the Board, and local homeowners associations do not appoint the Board. The Mayor, City Councilmember, and Cultural Heritage Commission each select members based on the Ordinance criteria, and the fifth member is chosen by a majority vote of the other four members. HPOZ Board members serve for a term of four years and may be re-appointed for an additional four-year term.

4) What kind of projects are reviewed by the HPOZ?

Any work that affects the exterior of the home, accessory structure (i.e. garage), or significant landscaping features must go through the HPOZ review process. HPOZ review may be required for some projects that do not require regular building permits, but basic maintenance and repair work, as well as work that affects only interior features, are exempt from review.

5) Does inclusion in a HPOZ prevent me from making changes to my property?

No, an HPOZ is not meant to freeze a property in time, and an HPOZ does not prevent owners from making changes or additions to their properties. Instead it ensures that any changes do not detract from the architectural and historic qualities of the home and district. HPOZ guidelines place highest importance on visible, significant historic features. Replacement of original historic features is allowed when they cannot be reasonably repaired. Overall, the HPOZ process represents a flexible framework for creative problem-solving, helping property owners achieve their goals while enhancing their historic neighborhood.

6) Can I add a second-story to a one-story house in an HPOZ?

Yes, HPOZ Preservation Plan guidelines allow homeowners to add a second story to a one-story house, usually provided that the new addition is stepped back and subordinate to the original house design.

7) What's the difference between an HPOZ and the Interim Control Ordinance (ICO) that was approved for our neighborhood, or the proposed Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (BMO)?

The ICO was meant to severely limit any changes or new development for a two-year period while the HPOZ was being considered for adoption. An HPOZ will provide property owners with considerably

more flexibility to make changes and improvements than has been possible while the ICO has been in effect. The proposed Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (BMO) is a citywide proposal to limit the size of homes within single-family zones. An HPOZ does not prescribe home size, but seeks to preserve significant architectural features in a neighborhood.

8) *Is there a fee for HPOZ work?*

There is currently no fee for minor work that does not involve new construction, demolition or a larger addition. Such requests, called “Conforming Work” in the HPOZ Ordinance, constitute more than 90% of requests in most HPOZs. For the few requests involving larger additions and major alterations, a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) or Certificate of Compatibility (CCMP) is required, which involve a fee of \$708 to \$1706 depending on the size of the project.

9) *Do HPOZs raise property values?*

HPOZs do not immediately affect property values. However, nearly every study conducted nationally has shown that historic districts, such as HPOZs, do have some positive effect on property values over time. HPOZ designation assures that the unique qualities that draw people to the neighborhood will endure into the future and that inappropriate development that can harm property values is less likely to occur.

10) *Are there other benefits to living in an HPOZ?*

The most common shared benefit is the assurance that your neighbor will not be permitted to make inappropriate changes to their property, which degrades the character of the historic neighborhood. More tangible benefits include the eligibility for participation in the Mills Act Program, which can result in lower property tax bills. In addition, work on homes within HPOZs is often eligible to be reviewed under the California Historical Building Code rather than City’s Building Code, which often allows more flexibility. Many HPOZs become popular filming locations. And many HPOZ neighborhoods report an enhanced sense of community from the process of collaborating to preserve their neighborhood’s distinctive character.

11) *What about making improvements for environmental sustainability, such as solar panels or drought-tolerant landscaping?*

Solar installations are exempt from HPOZ review under State laws ensuring solar access. Though many HPOZs do not approve the installation of artificial turf, a wide array of options for natural, drought-tolerant ground cover are typically approved.

12) *Can I get help from the HPOZ in designing my project?*

Yes, City Planning Staff is available to assist property owners and the HPOZ Board itself is a valuable resource, with an experienced architect and other knowledgeable members who can offer helpful guidance through informal “consultations” at their regular meetings. Both staff and the Board can also provide you with other valuable information, including lists of experienced contractors and architects, sources of historic building material, and historic information on your home.

13) *What if the work I want to do is not approved by the HPOZ?*

You can work with the Board and City Staff to re-submit modified plans for your work or file an appeal. The Area Planning Commission (APC) with jurisdiction in your neighborhood will hear an appeal within 75 days of filing.

14) *Where can I find more information on the HPOZ process and on other HPOZs around the city?*

Visit the Office of Resources’ web site at www.preservaton.lacity.org/hpoz for information on all 30 existing HPOZs and helpful resources for project applicants.