



St. Mary's County Department of Land Use and
Growth Management

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Customer Service Guide

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Historic Landmarks and Districts Overlay

To enjoy enhanced property values and to be eligible for tax credits, qualifying properties may apply for historic landmark or district designation. A designated property then becomes subject to the requirements imposed by the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and architectural design guidelines when certain alterations are made to the exterior. Therefore, a balance exists between the benefits and the obligations that come with historic designation. The intent is to preserve the integrity of the resource and to enhance the owner's enjoyment of it.

In St. Mary's County, the means of protecting historic resources is the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, which imposes zoning "overlays" and design guidelines. Please rely on this guide and the assistance of the preservation planner to facilitate this process.

A **historic landmark or historic district** designation may be applied to historic and prehistoric resources, including sites, districts, structures, objects, buildings or remnants. Land use and development regulations, as well as performance standards applicable to a building, structure, or area subject to a historic designation, shall govern unless modified by design guidelines or a historic resources conservation plan adopted by the Historic Preservation Commission and approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

If a property owner wants the **Zoning Maps amended** to include a historic landmark or historic district, s/he must submit an application following the guidance of Chapter 21 (General Application and Public Hearing Procedures) of the Zoning Ordinance. In the case of a district, the application must be supported by at least two-thirds of the property owners of the proposed district.

The site or district must have some of the following attributes to qualify for designation:

1. Value as a visible reminder of the cultural heritage of the County, state or nation.
2. Location of a significant local, state or national event.
3. Identification with a person, group, or event that contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the County, state or nation.
4. Example of a particular architectural style or way of life important to the County.
5. Best remaining examples of an architectural style in a neighborhood.
6. Identification as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the County, the state, or the nation.
7. Outstanding attention to architectural or landscape design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.
8. Preservation is essential to the integrity of the building or district.
9. Unique archaeological resources.

The **procedures for designation** include an application for an amendment to the Zoning Maps for a historic landmark or district designation processed in accordance with the procedures for amending the Zoning Maps and Chapter 42 (Historic Landmarks and Districts Overlay) of the Zoning Ordinance. The **application shall include**:

1. A map and description of the proposed historic landmark or district delineating its boundaries.
2. Photographs of the landmark or district proposed for designation.
3. An inventory of the age, setting, character and architectural, cultural or historical significance of the landmark or sites within the district proposed for designation.
4. Objectives to be achieved by the designation of the landmark or district.
5. If for a district, consent in writing of two-thirds of the property owners in the proposed district.

All applications for districts involving 10 or more resources or properties must have a **Historic Resources Conservation Plan**. The plan:

- Must be prepared by the applicant
- Must contain architectural and design guidelines
 - Specific to the proposed district
 - Consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation
 - To govern renovation, new construction, infill and maintenance work
 - Specifying materials, colors, signage, landscaping and other design-related considerations that will be permitted, encouraged, limited, or excluded from the district.
- The Historic Resources Conservation Plan shall be subject to the review and approval of the Board of County Commissioners.
- Substantive amendments to a Historic Resources Conservation Plan shall require the approval of the Board of County Commissioners, while the Planning Director may approve minor amendments.

The **Historic Preservation Commission** (the “HPC”), then the **Planning Commission shall review all applications for historic landmark and district designation**. The HPC must make its recommendations to the Planning Commission within 30 days of receiving a staff report on the proposal or, if no report is requested/received, 30 days of the date of the application. The **Planning Commission** will hold a public hearing on the application and recommendation by the HPC. The **Planning Commission** then makes its recommendation to the **Board of County Commissioners** who hold a public hearing on the application and recommendations. If the Board of County Commissioners finds the applicant’s property is eligible for the historic landmark or district designation, it will sign an ordinance to that effect which requests that the Official Zoning Maps be changed to apply the “H” (historic) zoning overlay to the property.

Benefits and Obligations of Historic Landmark or District Designation

- The property is now eligible for the local historic real property tax credit of 10% for restoration and preservation and 5% for architecturally compatible new construction.
- The property is subject to the *Historic Preservation Guidelines for St. Mary’s County* for any exterior changes, except for routine maintenance. The owners must submit a plan for review to the HPC to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness *before* beginning work.
Note: All other necessary building permits must also be obtained before work can begin.

Please address questions to the Historic Preservation Planner, 301-475-4200, extension 1549 who will provide assistance with the application process, tax credits, etc.