

# CHICAGO LANDMARKS



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWER FOR OWNERS OF PROPOSED CHICAGO LANDMARKS

**Q. What are the restrictions on designated landmarks?**

**A.** When a property is proposed for Chicago Landmark status, and after its designation, all building permit applications are evaluated to determine whether the work will affect what are called “significant historical and architectural features” of the proposed landmark; work on these features must be approved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks. For all proposed designations, those significant features are defined at the beginning of the designation process and codified in the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council. For landmark districts, the significant features typically are the exterior building elevations visible from the public right-of-way.

**Q. When is a building permit required and for what kind of work?**

**A.** No additional City permits are required for Landmark buildings. The Commission simply reviews permits as part of the normal building permit process. The Commission annually reviews more than 1,800 permits for Landmark properties, most of which are approved in one day. Routine maintenance work, such as painting and minor repairs, does not require a building permit. Under the City’s Rehabilitation Code, there is also a special historic preservation provision that allows for greater flexibility in applying the Building Code to designated landmarks in order to preserve significant features of such buildings. More information on getting a permit is available from the Landmarks Division.

**Q. How does the Commission evaluate proposed changes to existing buildings or the design of new construction?**

**A.** The Commission has established criteria to evaluate permit applications for both renovations and new construction. These criteria and the Commission’s review procedures are published as part of the *Rules and Regulations of the Commission of Chicago Landmarks* (pages 27 through 33). The basis for the criteria is the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for Rehabilitation*. The Commission also has adopted policies regarding many aspects of rehabilitation work, and these policies are detailed in *Guidelines for Alterations to Historic Buildings and New Construction*, available from the Landmarks Division.

**Q. Does the Commission have jurisdiction over zoning?**

**A.** The Commission has no jurisdiction over zoning. The Commission can, however, recommend reductions in the depth of required setbacks in certain instances to ensure that the character of a Landmark District is maintained.

**Q. How does landmark designation affect property values? Will landmark designation affect property taxes?**

**A.** Both of the above are frequently asked questions. As far as the value of property is concerned, the factors affecting value are quite varied and depend on the individual property, its location, etc.; in the eyes of some buyers, landmark designation is regarded as an asset, and both real estate advertisements and real estate agents often tout this as a selling point. Studies on the effect of landmark designation on property values have generally shown that it does not have a negative impact on property values. As far as real estate taxes are concerned, neither the valuation of property by the Cook County Assessor’s Office nor the tax rate is affected directly by landmark designation.

**Q. What are the advantages of landmark designation?**

**A.** Landmark status can enhance a building’s prestige, increase the value of the property and help stabilize an entire neighborhood. There are also specific benefits available under federal and local economic incentive programs. Additional information about these incentive programs is available from the Landmarks Division.

