

# **Historic Preservation Ordinance**



**City of Las Cruces**  
**Community Development**  
**Memorandum**

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To: Robert Garza, City Manager

From: Carol McCall, Planner

Subject: August 22<sup>nd</sup> Council Work Session on Historic Preservation

Date: August 10, 2011 M-11-174

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Regarding the upcoming Council work session about historic preservation on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, I am writing with a recap of the report presented to Council by the Historic Preservation Ad Hoc Committee on June 6<sup>th</sup>.

The Committee made several recommendations regarding a City-wide preservation program. The overarching recommendation to Council was:

- Adopt a policy recognizing the value of historic properties and encouraging their preservation through a multi-faceted program, consisting of inter-related components.

To carry out a comprehensive preservation program, the Committee identified several components to be addressed:

1. Survey & Research of Historic Properties

The AHHPC recommends that the City Historic Preservation Program begin with a focus on a limited number of historic properties beginning with the oldest and ending prior to the growth that began after WWII.

2. Education, Technical Assistance & Outreach

The AHHPC recommends that education and outreach be considered a critical component for increasing public awareness and appreciation of historic resources, as well as offering technical assistance.

3. Historic Preservation Commission

The AHHPC recommends that the City of Las Cruces establish a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to coordinate, facilitate and promote historic preservation.

4. Preservation Guidelines

The AHHPC recommends that the City adopt a set of preservation guidelines as a primary reference for the care of historic properties and for development of properties in close proximity to historic properties.

## 5. Minimal Preservation Regulations

The AHHPC recommends that the City adopt an ordinance that uses a minimal number of standards to promote preservation of significant historic properties and districts. Since the Mesquite and Alameda Depot neighborhoods already have their own approaches to preservation of historic buildings, their relationship to a proposed City-wide preservation ordinance and City-wide standards will need to be addressed.

## 6. Historic Districts

The AHHPC recommends that the City support the creation and administration of historic districts and neighborhood plans or overlays as an extension of or compliment to the Preservation Regulations.

## 7. Incentives

The AHHPC recommends that the City support the preservation of historic districts and buildings through a combination of legal, financial, and community development incentives.

Examples include:

- Use of building codes that acknowledge the specific constraints of historic buildings;
- Flexible application of land use standards such as allowable uses, density, setbacks, and parking requirements;
- Reduced permit fees;
- Special valuation from the tax assessor's office following substantial rehabilitation or renovation;
- Enhancement of public areas in a manner consistent with the historic character of the area;
- Special signage for streets and primary access points;

## 8. Demolition

The AHHPC recommends that the City discourage the demolition of significant historic properties. The Committee acknowledges that demolition is the most egregious and irrevocable threat to historic resources.

In addition, the Committee recommends that demolition be contingent on a delay of up to 120-days to allow exploration of alternatives to demolition, provide time for documentation of the building, and allow for recovery of significant architectural features.

## 9. Program Coordination

The AHHPC recommends that the City dedicate one or more full-time staff member(s) to coordinate and oversee the preservation program.

If you have questions or need additional information regarding this topic, please contact me at 528-3209. Thank you!

Cc: Vincent Banegas, Planning & MPO Administrator  
David Weir, Community Development Director  
Brian Denmark, Assistant City Manager