

# Chicago Landmark Designation Process

## Overview when a Chicago Landmark district is being considered

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1. **Preliminary and informal discussions with stakeholders**  
(community organization(s), owners, preservation advocates, alderman)
2. **Chicago Landmark Designation Report prepared by Commission Staff or Consultant**  
Commission staff or consultant researches the historic and architectural significance of the district and submits a report to the Commission.
3. **Preliminary Landmark Recommendation**  
The Commission votes whether to initiate the consideration process for a proposed designation. A positive vote puts in place the Commission's authority to review building permits during the consideration process.
4. **Report from Department of Planning and Development**  
Statement of how the proposed landmark designation affects neighborhood plans and policies.
5. **Commission Requests Owner Consent**  
The Commission contacts each owner and requests consent. Owner consent is advisory—not required—for designation (except for houses of worship).
6. **Public Hearing**  
A public hearing is held to gather relevant facts and information to assist the Commission in its consideration of the proposed landmark designation.
8. **Final Commission Recommendation**  
After a review of the entire record, the Commission votes whether to recommend the proposed landmark designation to the City Council.
9. **Hearing by City Council's Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards**  
The Commission's recommendation is referred to the City Council Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards, which votes on whether to recommend the designation to the full City Council.
10. **Vote on Designation by City Council**  
Designation of a Chicago Landmark is a legislative act of the Chicago City Council.

# Criteria for Designation of Proposed Chicago Landmarks

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In considering a building or district for potential landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (a nine-member board appointed by the Mayor and the City Council) is limited in its consideration solely to the following seven criteria, as established in the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect.2-120-620):

1. ***(Value as a Part of City, State, or National Heritage)*** Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.
2. ***(Significant Historic Event)*** Its location as a site of a significant historic event which may or may not have taken place within or involved the use of any existing improvements.
3. ***(Significant Person)*** Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.
4. ***(Exemplary Architecture)*** Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.
5. ***(Significant Architect)*** Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.
6. ***(Distinctive Theme as a District)*** Its representation of an architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social or other theme expressed through distinctive area, districts, places, buildings, structures, works of art, or other objects that may or may not be contiguous.
7. ***(Unique Visual Feature)*** Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Chicago.

A proposed Chicago Landmark must meet at least **two** of the above landmark criteria.

Proposed landmarks must also meet an additional **“integrity” criterion**, as specified in the Municipal Code (Sect.2-120-630), i.e., have “a significant historic, community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value, the integrity of which is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value.”

## Differences between the National Register of Historic Places and Chicago Landmark designation

The Ravenswood Manor neighborhood is already listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. How would Chicago Landmark designation be different, and what would it mean?

- National Register listing provides tax incentives for rehabilitation if a property owner gets their rehab plans approved by the State of Illinois.
- But National Register listing does NOT prevent non-historic change to buildings or even demolition of buildings in a National Register-listed historic district.

Chicago Landmark designation would:

- put in place building permit application review by the Commission on Chicago Landmark (CCL).
- prevent demolition of buildings determined to be historic and “contributing” to the district.
- work to see that changes to the exteriors of buildings in the district would be in keeping with the historic character of the buildings.
- Chicago Landmark designation is not about “freezing” the buildings in a district. Instead, it is about managing change so that historic visual character is preserved and enhanced.

## General points about Commission on Chicago Landmarks review of building permit applications for buildings in Chicago Landmark districts

The Commission only reviews changes that require City of Chicago building permits.

The Commission is only concerned about EXTERIOR changes visible from the street.

Purely interior rehabilitation work, such as kitchens, bathrooms, electrical or plumbing work, and interior HVAC work, are not of concern to the Commission.

The Commission and its staff (who are part of the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Planning and Development) use the Commission’s *Guidelines for Alterations to New Buildings and New Construction* and the *U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings* as their guidelines for reviewing building permit applications. The guidelines, along with much other information about Chicago Landmarks, are found on the City of Chicago’s website at [https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/supp\\_info/chicago\\_landmarks-publicationsandadditionalinformation.html](https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/chicago_landmarks-publicationsandadditionalinformation.html)