Preservation Myths and Facts
About Historic Overlay District Zoning

How much do you really know about Landmarks Designation?

Much of what passes for “information” on historic preservation is actually just rumor, speculation and myth. Let’s set the record straight. The reality may surprise you. We hope you’ll use this fact sheet to educate your friends and neighbors and that you’ll join together with us in speaking out in favor of designating Vollintine Evergreen as a Landmarks Historic District – preserving its unique architectural heritage – before it’s too late.

What are the advantages of a Landmarks Designation?

Landmark district designation ensures that change and new development will enhance, not detract, from a district’s special qualities. Status as a Landmarks district can enhance an area’s prestige, increase the value of the properties within it, and help stabilize an entire neighborhood. Its one of the best tools available to VECA for maintaining and preserving Vollintine Evergreen’s unique character.

How does landmark designation affect property values?

Study after study across the nation have conclusively demonstrated that historic designation and the creation of historic districts actually increase property values. Historic neighborhoods with overlay zoning in place – to preserve their architectural integrity and character – retain their values and appreciate at a higher rate than those without these guidelines.

Get Involved!

You can become involved by joining the Historic Committee or attending future information meetings.

Successful preservation efforts are the result of resident involvement at the grassroots level. Each and every individual can make a difference. If you care about the protection of our historic housing, buildings, natural and public spaces, here are 4 concrete steps you can take:

LEARN about the benefits of historic preservation and the ways in which you can help to protect VECA’s unique and rich architectural heritage.

THINK about what is irreplaceable in our historic urban neighborhood. What would you (and future generations) miss if it were no longer here?

TALK with your neighbors and friends about what you’ve learned and encourage them to get involved.

JOIN VECA!

VECA is your neighborhood organization composed of neighbors, volunteers, schools, businesses, and churches. We have a membership level to fit every budget.
The City of Memphis currently has 14 diverse neighborhoods that are designated as Landmarks Districts. Each neighborhood has its own set of design guidelines that it adopted to govern demolition, new construction, and rehabilitation.

Residents of each neighborhood determine what types of activities are addressed in their guidelines. They recognize the important role historic overlay protection can play in revitalizing older areas, building civic pride, retaining the sense of place and continuity with a community’s past as well as the economic benefits of conserving resources and reinvestment.

**TRUE OR FALSE?**

**Owners of property in designated historic landmark districts are still able to make changes to their properties.**

✔ **TRUE** Historic preservation laws are intended to manage change in a responsible way, not to prevent change. However, the most significant or “character-defining” features should be preserved, and new additions should be compatible with the existing architecture. It will not affect the paint color of your property, ordinary or minor repairs, or any interior work. Only major changes visible from the street will be subject to such standards. Rather, the standards specify that historic features that have deteriorated should be repaired if possible – while allowing for replacement when the severity of damage leaves no other reasonable option.

If I make alterations or repairs to my landmark designated property, then I have to use materials that have historic specifications?

✔ **FALSE** It is a misconception that all building materials must meet historical specifications. The standards don’t require that every element of a historic site remain intact. This is done in part by encouraging the use of recycled historic materials and the use of materials that benefit from modern technology. It is acceptable to use building materials that are new as long as they closely resemble the original character of the structure.

If a building is designated as a historic landmark, it can never be torn down.

✔ **FALSE** Landmark designation helps to ensure a thorough review of proposals to change or demolish historic buildings, but it does not prohibit demolition outright. Local district zone overlays give communities control over the scope and rate of development and protect neighborhoods from detrimental changes.

Does becoming a landmark historic district lead to gentrification?

✔ **FALSE** There is not a correlation between gentrification and historic districts.

Historic preservation has often been conflated with gentrification. In most cases gentrification either precedes designation or does not occur. Gentrification can occur without displacement and displacement can occur without gentrification. And both can occur without historic districts.