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In's and Out's of Designating Local Landmarks

**Rick Bernstein, Field Services
Wisconsin Historical Society**

wisconsinhistory.org

Overview

- **Legal Foundations**
- **Designating Local Landmarks**
- **Inventories**
- **Types of historic properties**
- **Significance and Integrity**
- **Defining Historic Districts**
- **Politics of Local Designation**



Legal Foundations

State Laws Enabling Local Preservation Ordinance

1) Counties – 59.69

Planning and Zoning Authority

2) Cities (and Villages) – 62.23 – City Planning (7)(em) – Historic Preservation

3) Towns – 60.64

Historic Preservation

***(SEE Handout for more detail)**



HPC's in Wisconsin

- Currently there are about 170 communities that have passed historic preservation ordinances
- About 2/3 are active (rough estimate)
- Many are paper commissions – law on the books but no commission appointed/active.



CLG's in Wisconsin

68 are Certified Local Governments (CLGs)

2 CLGs - counties
(Jefferson, La Crosse)

2 CLGs - Towns
(Westport, Perry – Dane County)

*Map is on our website



Naming Conventions

- **The names of the commission can vary –**
 - **Landmarks Commission (Madison)**
 - **Historic Preservation Commission (Evansville)**
 - **Heritage Preservation Commission (La Crosse)**
 - **Historic Sites Preservation Commission (Jefferson County)**



What does a HP ordinance do?

- **Authorizes the creation of a commission:**
 - Usually 5-7 members appointed by chief elected official/approved by governing body
- **Ordinance gives commission primary authorities:**
 - Designation
 - Design Review
 - Demolition Delay/Denial



Authority Can Vary

- **HPC either:**
 - Has sole authority to designate – or -
 - It can be advisory to a governing body
- **Designation - Some communities require owner consent before designating**
 - CLG program does not allow for owner consent
- **Design review is either**
 - HPC has authority or (strong)
 - HPC is advisory only to property owner (weak)



Locally Landmarking

- **The designation document should include:**
 - **Description of the historic, architectural, or archeological significance of the property**
 - **Statement of Significance**
 - **Boundaries of the property**
 - **Specific Reference to Criterion in Ordinance**
- *Form available**



Steps in the Designation Process

- 1. Prepare the nomination**
- 2. File the nomination with the HPC**
- 3. Schedule a HPC hearing**
- 4. Preservation commission decision**
- 5. Council/county meeting**
- 6. Appeal (if requested)**



The Commission's Role

- 1. Review the nomination**
- 2. Hold informational meetings
(highly recommended)**
- 3. Hold Public Hearing**
- 4. Make formal recommendation to
the elected body (if necessary)**



Local Inventories

- **Critical first step**
- **Best if done before you start designating properties**
 - **Collection of data about the potential significance of historic properties**
 - **Maintain as an informational resource**
- **Survey itself is usually not controversial since it doesn't trigger any regulation**



What is an inventory?

- Can be funded thru CLG program
- Can survey for both National Register eligible and for local landmarks
- Should be updated every 15-20 years

*ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL
SURVEY*

Of

HALES CORNERS

By

*Carol Lohry Cartwright
Historic Preservation Consultant*

*Prepared for the Historic Preservation Commission, Village of Hales
Corners, Wisconsin*

Hales Corners: January, 2002




How is an inventory used at the local level?

- As a reference point in determining if any properties would merit consideration for designation
- As a means of developing educational materials
- As a reference when developing neighborhood plans
- As a reference when evaluating development proposals under other permitting regulations



National Register Bulletin 16

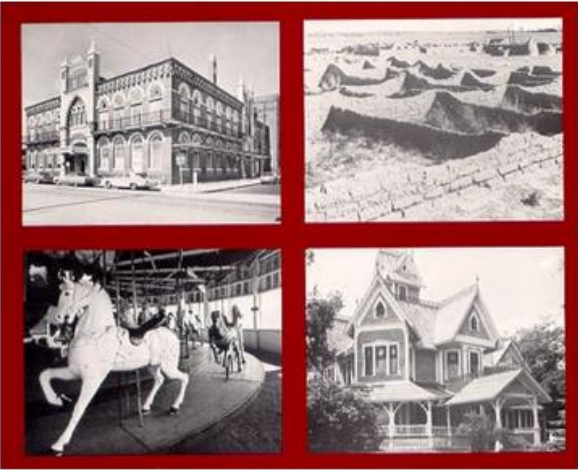
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER PUBLICATIONS NR HOME RESEARCH TRAVEL EDUCATION 

NATIONAL REGISTER BULLETIN
HOW TO COMPLETE THE NATIONAL REGISTER REGISTRATION FORM

Next

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service

PDF of: [How to Complete the National Register Registration Form bulletin \(22 MB\)](#)



1997

How to Complete
The National
Register Form

www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/



Types of Historic Properties

Building

- A structure which is intended to shelter some sort of human activity. Examples: a house, barn, or church.

Historic District

- A geographically definable area, possessing a significant concentration of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

Object

- Constructions that are usually is artistic in nature, or small in scale when compared to structures and buildings, and is generally associated with a specific setting or environment. Examples: monuments, sculptures and fountains.



Types of Historic Properties

Site

- A discrete area significant solely for activities in that location in the past, such as a battlefield or designed landscape (parks and gardens)

Structure

- A functional construction intended to be used for purposes other than sheltering human activity. Examples include, an aircraft, a ship, a grain elevator, and a bridge
- Other categories include:
 - Cultural landscape
 - Traditional cultural property
 - Maritime sites
 - Archaeological resources



Landmarks & Districts

Contributing Property:

- Any building, structure, object or site within the boundaries of the district which reflects the significance of the district as a whole, because of historic associations, historic architectural qualities or archaeological features.
- Another key aspect of the contributing property is historic integrity.



Landmarks & Districts

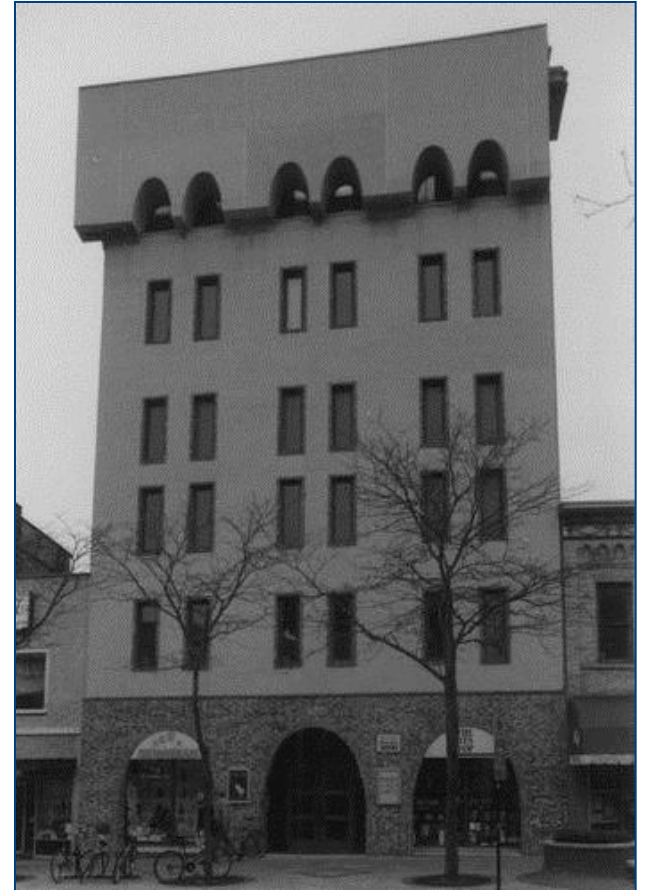
Non-contributing Property:

- **In a historic district, those properties that do not have historic significance are termed "non-contributing."**
- **This does not indicate that the property is incompatible in its character with the district; that is a different consideration.**



What Makes a Non-contributor?

- Recent Construction
- Substantially Altered
- Insufficient Information



Significance & Integrity

Age of Historic Resources:

- In general, properties must be at least 50 years old
- Exceptions do exist when a more recent property clearly has historic value
- Should be spelled out in ordinance

**Dorcas Chapel, Marian College
Fond du Lac, WI
Constructed 1966**



Significance Criteria

Most local governments use criteria adapted from those of the *Secretary of the Interior*

- Association with events or trends important in the history of the community
- Association with individuals who made a demonstrable and lasting contribution
- Architectural merit
- Potential to Yield Information (Data)



Significance Criteria



Embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or of indigenous materials



Aspects of Integrity

Integrity includes:

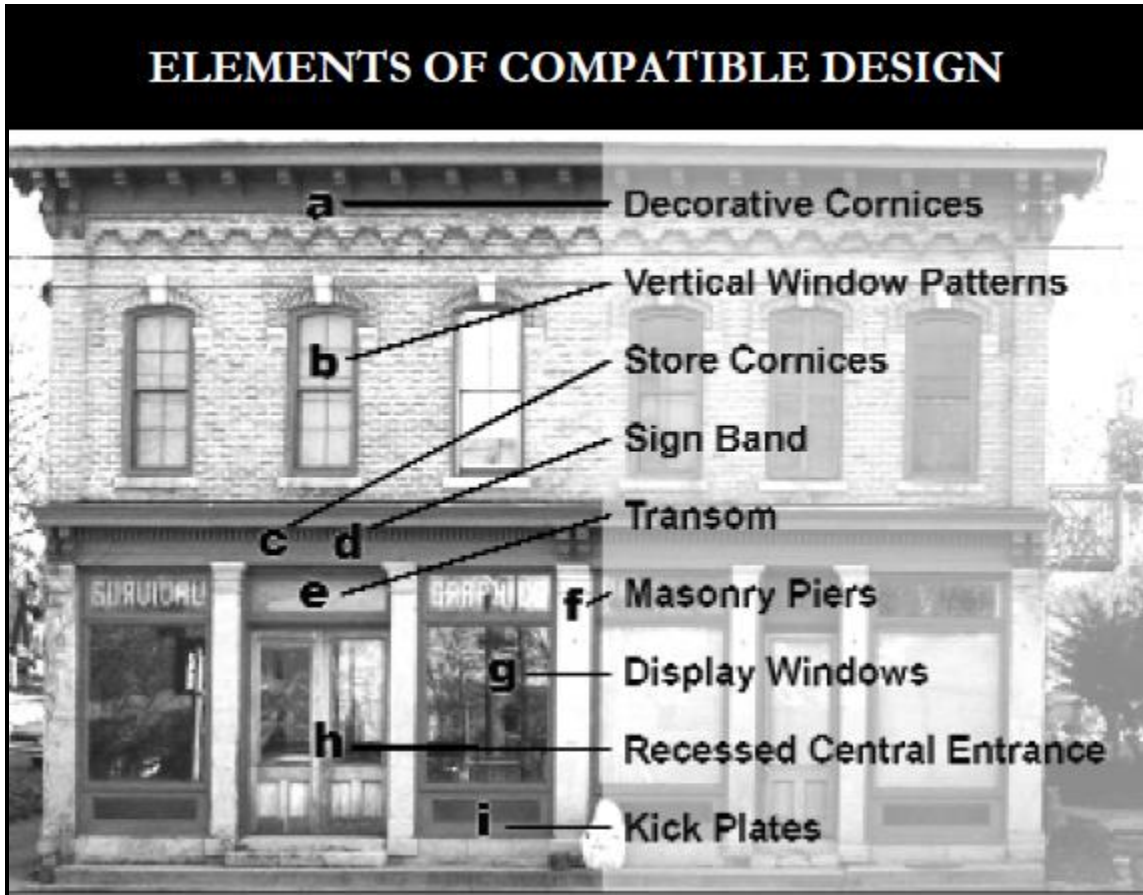
- Location
- Design
- Setting
- Materials
- Workmanship
- Feeling
- Association

Conserve this *Avoid this*



The historic appearance of a building can be greatly altered by the removal of original architectural trim, replacement of siding with new materials that are too wide, and alterations to windows and entries.

What are Character-Defining Features?



An example of an illustration of character-defining features

Integrity

Local and National Standards Can Differ

Concordia Ballroom Hall
La Crosse
Built 1891

Not Eligible for NRHP
Locally Landmarked

Stucco
Fake Stone exterior



Character–Defining Features

17 Preservation Briefs

Technical Preservation Services
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Architectural Character
Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic
Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their
Character

Lee H. Nelson, FAIA

» [Three-Step Process to Identify the Visual Character](#)

» [Step 1: Overall Visual Aspects](#)

» [Step 2: Visual Character at Close Range](#)

» [Step 3: Interior Spaces, Features and Finishes](#)

» [Conclusion](#)

» [The Architectural Character Checklist/Questionnaire](#)

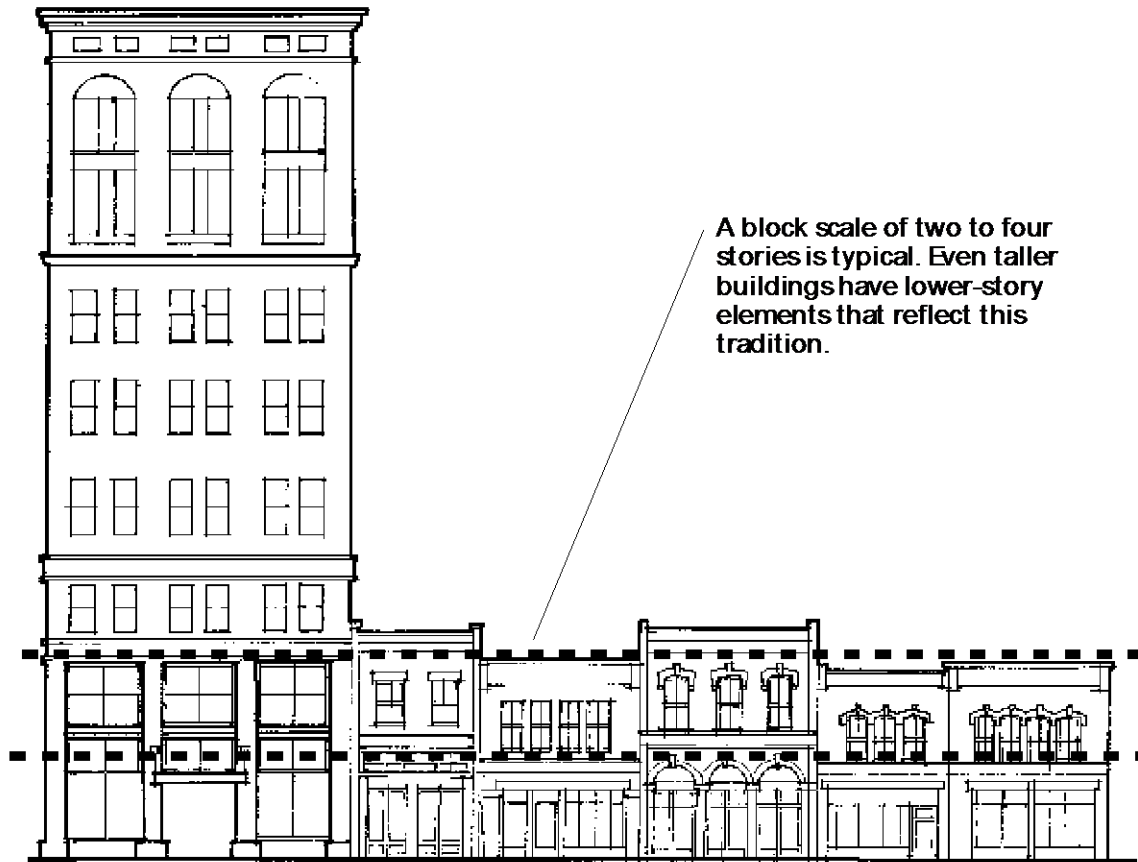
A NOTE TO OUR USERS: The web versions of the **Preservation Briefs** differ somewhat from the printed versions. Many illustrations are new, captions are simplified, illustrations are typically in color rather than black and white, and some complex charts have been omitted.



www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief17.htm



Character-Defining Features in Historic Districts



A block scale of two to four stories is typical. Even taller buildings have lower-story elements that reflect this tradition.

In many commercial districts, similarity of floor heights at the street level, and horizontal moldings combine to create a horizontal alignment that establishes a distinctive scale for a block. This can be a key character-defining feature.





Home

About Ripon Main Street, Inc.

Downtown Ripon Strategic Plan

Downtown Business Directory

Gift Shops & Retail Businesses

Restaurants

History

Business Opportunities

Real Estate

Renovation Assistance

Special Events

Ripon Mystery Cave

Links & Credits

Map



Contact Information:

craig@riponmainst.com

Design Guidelines for Historic Downtown Ripon

The Main Street program offers free design assistance to business/property owners within the Main Street area who are interested in doing exterior and interior renovation projects. This program can help take the guesswork out of your rehab project by providing you with sample drawings of possible facade improvements. Color schemes, paint and awning samples, signs as well as technical information about how to get the work done are just some of the solutions the program can offer. These design guidelines serve as a guide for various improvement projects. They are intended to suggest ways in which property/business owners can take advantage of downtown Ripon's unique charm and history.

The [**Downtown Ripon Design Manual**](#) can be downloaded by clicking on the PDF link.

Documents:

[Downtown Ripon Design Manual](#) 

[Facade Grant Application](#) 

[Building Improvement Loan Application](#) 

[Watson Street National Historic District Application](#) 

Historic Downtown Design Manual

Guidelines for Ripon's Central Business District

Setting Boundaries

Factors to Consider in Establishing Boundaries:

Historical Factors

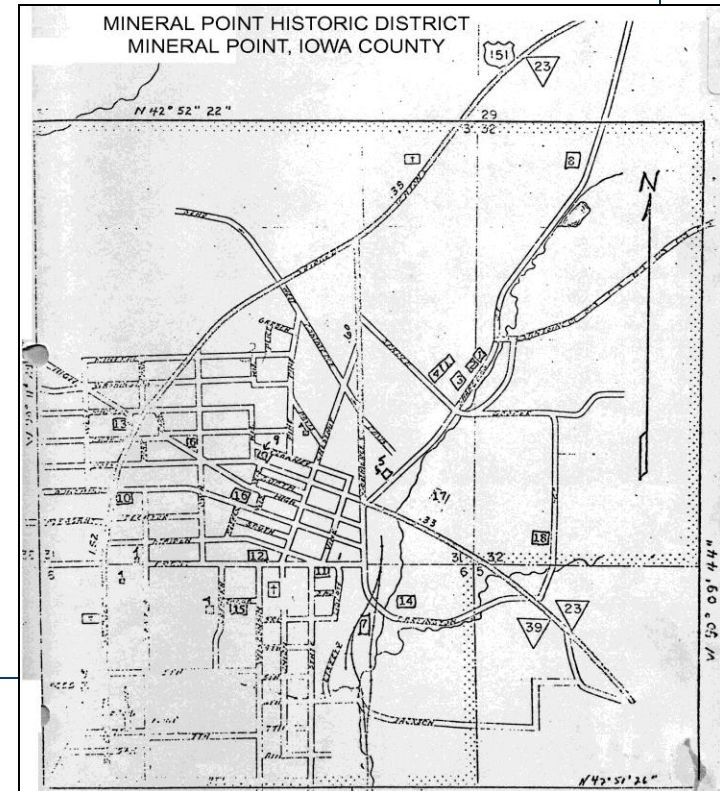
- Original settlement boundaries
- Early concentration of buildings

Visual Factors

- Views
- Gateways
- Topography

Mineral Point
Historic District

Original mining
claim as district
boundaries

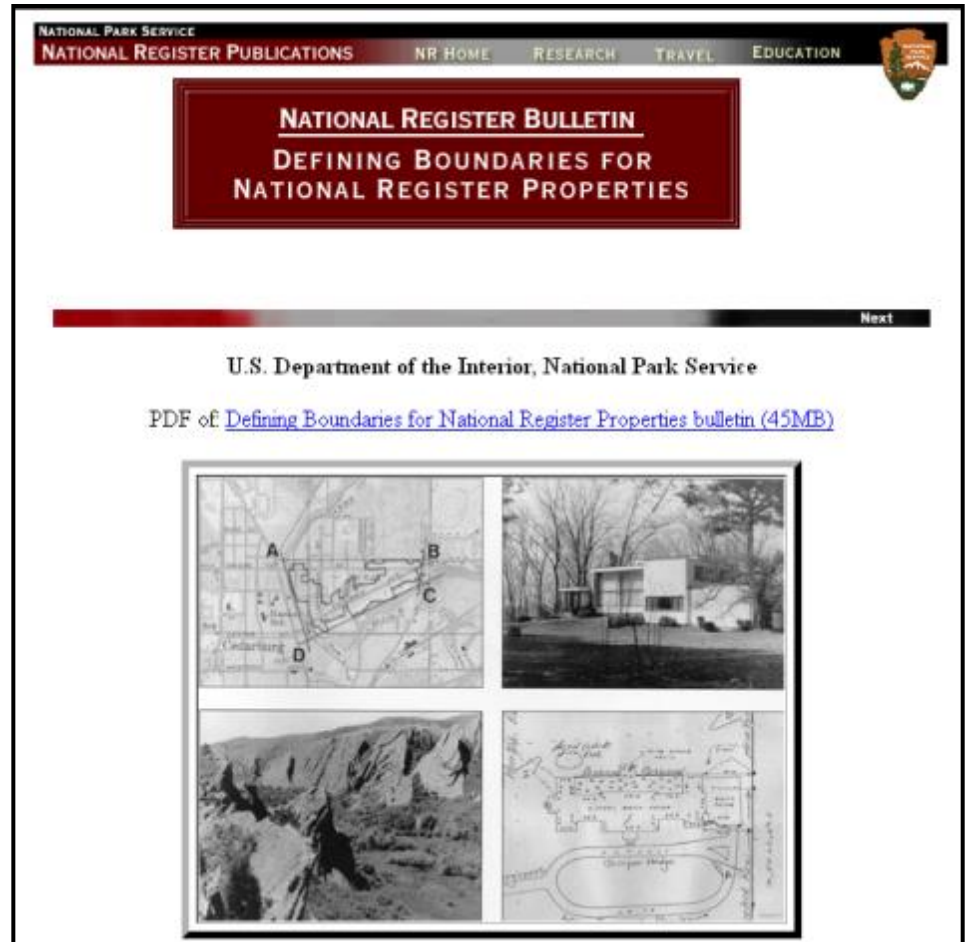


Historic Districts - Boundaries

[Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties](#)

National Register Bulletin 21

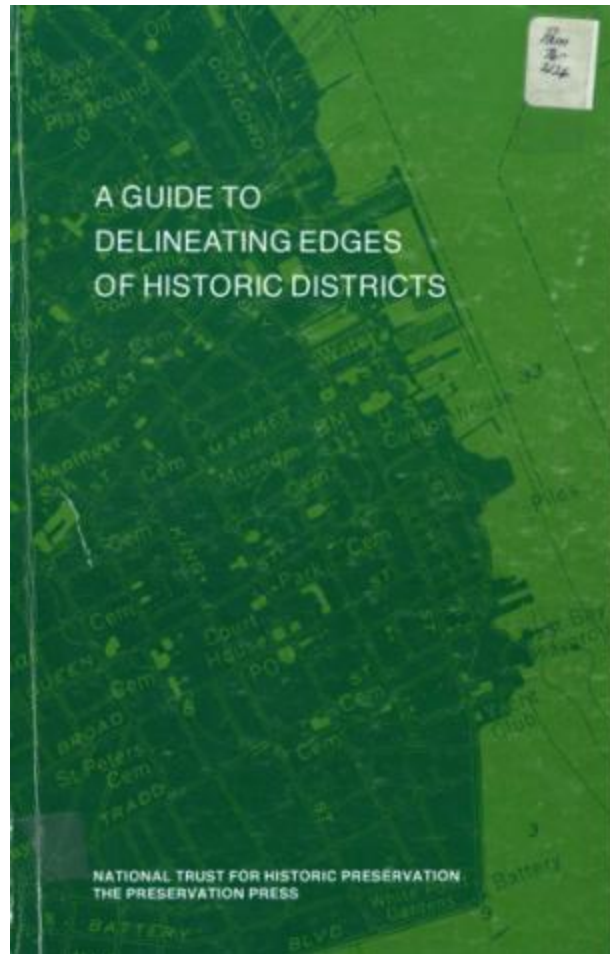
www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/boundaries



The screenshot shows the National Park Service website for National Register Publications. The main heading is "NATIONAL REGISTER BULLETIN" followed by "DEFINING BOUNDARIES FOR NATIONAL REGISTER PROPERTIES". Below this, it identifies the publisher as the "U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service" and provides a link to a PDF of the bulletin (45MB). The bottom section features a 2x2 grid of images: a map with labeled areas A, B, C, and D; a photograph of a modern building; a photograph of a rugged, rocky landscape; and another map showing a detailed site plan.



Historic Districts - Boundaries



**A Guide to Delineating Edges of
Historic Districts**

National Trust, 1985

Available on Amazon for \$5.00



Historic Districts - Boundaries



**San Xavier Del Bac
“White Bird of the
Desert”
Construction started
1783
“Viewshed as District
Boundaries”**

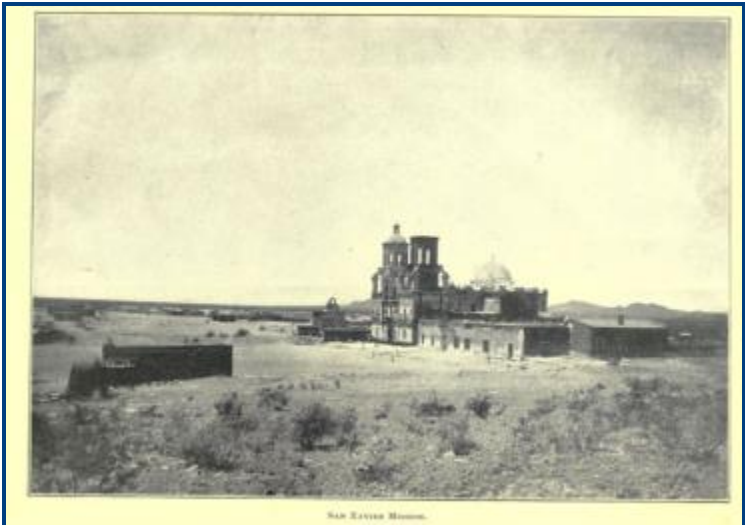


**SAN XAVIER
TUCSON, ARIZONA**

The San Xavier Historic District boundaries are perhaps unique; the district encompasses two segments of a circle drawn with a radius extending 1 1/2 miles from the San Xavier del Bac Mission Church, located nine miles south of Tucson on the San Xavier Indian Reservation. The mission church itself is a National Historic Landmark and as such is in the National Register.

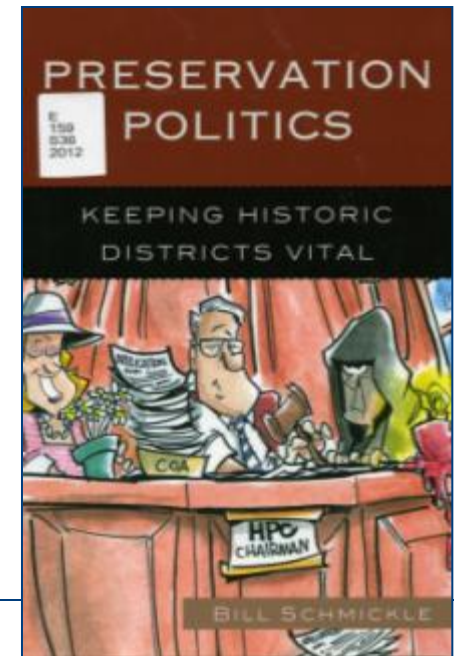
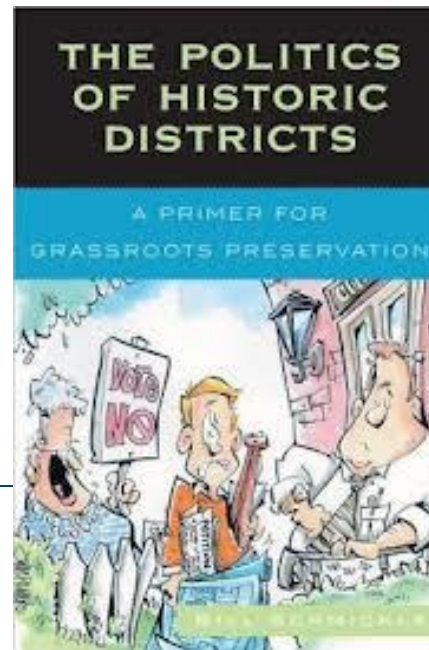
Ordinance 42 of the Pima County Zoning Plan, adopted in April 1972, (Pima County Ordinance No. 1972-39 (1972).

“Historic Zone,” amending Pima County Ordinance No. 1952-111 (1952), “Pima County Zoning Plan”) creates an “influence zone” 1 1/2 miles in radius from any historic site in the county, specifying the development restrictions on use, density, signs, and heights permitted in the district. Since Arizona has no specific enabling legislation for historic districts, this ordinance is based on the state zoning law, which does provide for historic district zoning. The distance of 1 1/2 miles was selected because it is from this distance



Politics of Landmarking

- Learn to Read the Political Landscape
- Who supports what you do?
- Mayor/Alder?
- Planner?
- Neighborhood?
- Landowner?



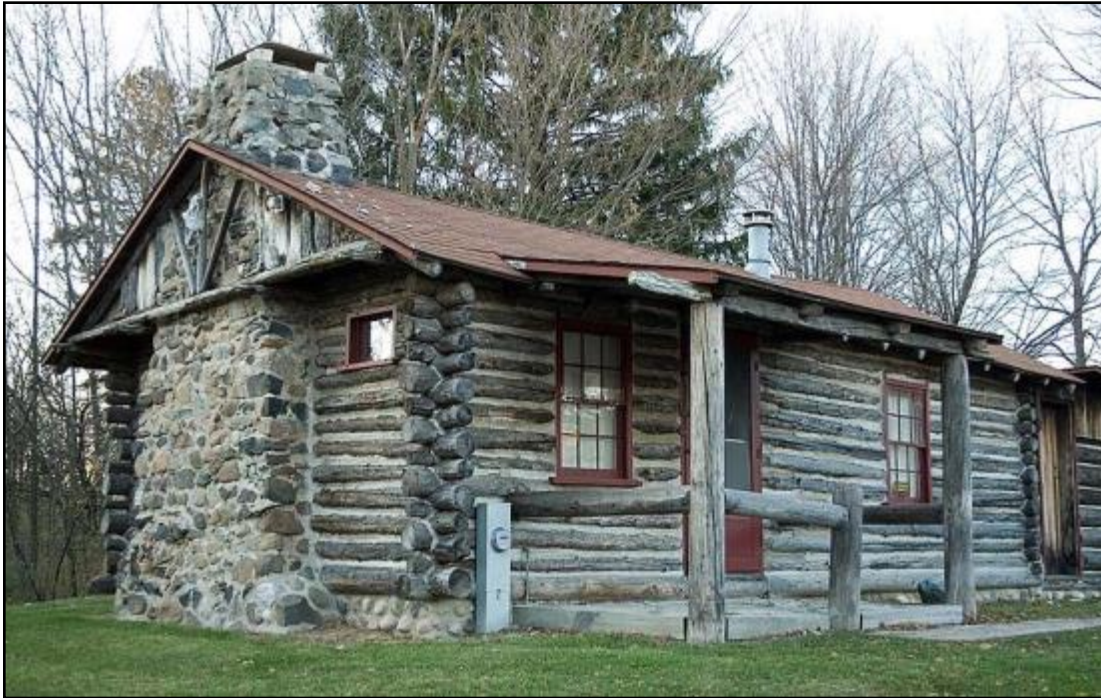
Politics of Landmarking

Start with something that:

- Everyone Agrees is Historic
- Is Already listed – NRHP
- Is Publicly-owned
- Ask yourself is this the best way to protect this?



Politics of Landmarking



**Ben Hunt Cabin
Hales Corners, WI**



**Hales Corners' First Local Landmark
Owned by City/Leased to Local
Historical Society**



Politics of Landmarking

When **NOT** to Landmark

- When There is No Public Support
 - Owner/Government/General Public
 - Can Become a Lose/Lose Situation
 - Makes Your Commission Appear Anti-development
- During a Compliance Review (Chip Brown)



Politics of Historic Districts

Think carefully before you try to locally
landmark a **local historic district**



Stoughton's Historic Districts



Politics of Historic Districts

Most municipalities require a plurality of property owners petition the government before starting the designation process for a local historic district

“People who want to keep the old crap should pool their resources, take out a loan and do it themselves instead of constantly demanding that others do what they say instead of doing what will make money.”



The screenshot shows a news article from The Capital Times. The header includes the logo 'ct The Cap Times' and the tagline 'Your Progressive Voice'. The navigation bar lists 'Sites', 'Writers', 'Opinion', 'About', 'Weather', 'Communities', 'Get It', 'CarSoup', and 'Jobs'. The article title is 'Langdon area historic district pushed; developers wary'. Below the title are social media sharing buttons for Recommend (0), Tweet (0), +1 (0), and Share (4), along with Print and Email options. The article is dated March 15, 2013, 10:45 am, by Mike Ivey. The main text discusses a new six-story apartment complex and a petition drive for a historic district. An image of the apartment complex is shown with a caption: 'Palisade Property received approval last month for its six-story apartment project on Iota Court, in the Langdon Street neighborhood.' Below the image is an 'Enlarge Photo' link. The article concludes by mentioning a debate over housing affordability in downtown Madison.



Plan to Preserve

- **Determine Priorities/Develop Work Plan**
 - **Consult “Survey Results” in survey report**
 - Which properties are most important?
 - Which properties are most threatened?
 - Which would benefit the most from being landmarked?
 - Where is there the greatest support?
 - Educate, Educate, Educate



Funding

Certified Local Government Funding

- Architectural/Archaeological Surveys
 - Can Evaluate for both NRHP and Landmark eligibility
- National Register/Local Landmark Nominations
- Up to \$25,000 (No match required)
- www.wisconsinhistory.org/hp/grants/



Online Training

You are in our new website (in real-time development). Return to the old [Wisconsin Historical Society Website](#)



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SITE

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BROWSE SEARCH CALENDAR CART ?

Feedback & Support

TRAINING MATERIAL
Historic Preservation Commission Training

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Welcome to the Wisconsin Historical Society's Historic Preservation Commission Training! This website is the only comprehensive online training program of its kind for preservation commissioners in the United States. It has been designed for new commissioners, but it is also a useful tool for experienced commissioners who have a need for more advanced information.

What You Will Learn

This program will help you learn more about historic preservation and the roles and responsibilities of preservation commissions. Although this training is specifically designed for Wisconsin, much of the content is broadly applicable to the work of preservation commissions nationwide. Be advised that each historic preservation commission operates under its own unique local ordinance and may have special considerations as a result.



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<http://preview.wisconsinhistory.org/Content.aspx?dsNav=N:4294963828-4294963805&dsRecordDetails=R:CS245>



Questions?





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