

STEPS TO ESTABLISH A HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

1. Adopt a local historic preservation ordinance based on Code of Alabama 11-68-1 to 11-68-15. A model ordinance is available from the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC).
2. Appoint a seven-member historic preservation commission with at least three members with formal training in the fields listed in Section 11-68-3(a).
3. The local historic preservation commission (HPC) holds an organizational meeting to learn about their responsibilities, nominate the officers, establish monthly meeting date, and develop by-laws. A staff member from AHC is available to assist with this meeting.
4. Adopt by-laws, approve officers, and establish an annual work plan. The work plan should be individual to the community. The town may need to have a historic resource survey conducted, apply for a grant, educate community on benefits of local designation, lobby to save a local landmark, etc. A staff member from AHC is available to assist with this meeting.
5. Once the city council's approval is given, an ordinance establishing the HPC is passed.
6. **OPTIONAL FOR HPCs:** Once a commission has been established, the municipality is eligible to apply for Certified Local Government (CLG) status. The CLG program provides technical assistance and makes the municipality eligible to receive grant funding through a competitive process from the Certified Local Government Grant Program.
7. **OPTIONAL FOR HPCs:** For communities who decide to designate a local district, the preservation ordinance must be followed for this process. The HPC to survey the district according to the AHC standards, justify the district boundaries based on architectural and historical merits, and develop local design guidelines to protect the significant features of the district. The HPC must hold a public hearing and notify all district residents of the hearing. Within 15 days (according to the model ordinance) of the hearing the HPC must present the proposed district to city council for their approval.
 - a. Complete survey of the proposed district according to AHC standards. The survey should justify the boundary of the proposed district based on architectural and historical merits. More information on architectural surveys can be found at <https://ahc.alabama.gov/architecturalprograms.aspx>.
 - b. Develop a map of the proposed district.
 - c. Develop draft design review guidelines.
 - d. HPC must hold a public hearing pursuant to the local ordinance. Each property owner in the proposed district must be notified of the meeting by mail and have the opportunity for comment.
 - e. The HPC must present the proposed district to city council for their approval within 15 days of the public meeting, or however many days specified in the local ordinance.

Once the city council's approval is given, an ordinance establishing the local district is passed. Property owners must have approval from the local HPC or architectural review board (if established by the city) before making any major changes to the property in the district. The HPC or review board must develop an application form and process. Building permits are not issued until property owner has commission or review board approval (called a Certificate of Appropriateness). City personnel must be educated on their role. Regular maintenance work can be "expedited" by the city staff. These expedited work items must be listed and have the HPC's or review board's approval. Typically, this expedited work includes re-roofing with same material, re-painting in a similar color, and ordinary maintenance to correct decay, deterioration, or damage that does not involve material change or a change in appearance.

For more information please contact:
Paige Thomas, CLG Coordinator
334-230-2643 / Paige.Thomas@ahc.alabama.gov