



# Laurelhurst Historic District Primer

**Laurelhurst is under threat.** The City's proposed residential infill re-zoning of Laurelhurst will allow duplexes, triplexes, row houses, and small apartment clusters. **Please consider supporting Historic District protection for Laurelhurst.**

## What is a Historic District?

**The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation.**

- Portland has 16 National Register Historic Districts. Residential Historic Districts similar to Laurelhurst include Irvington and Ladd's Addition. Eastmoreland is seeking to become a Historic District in 2017.

**Houses in historic districts are classified as either "contributing" or "non-contributing".**

- *Contributing* houses date from the historic period of the district and contribute to the historic significance and character of the district. A house that was built later, or was significantly altered, may be *non-contributing*.

## Why Should Laurelhurst Be A Historic District?

**We are a uniquely cohesive, preserved neighborhood of fine Portland houses largely from the 1910s through 1930s.**

- Laurelhurst began in 1909 as one of the earliest planned neighborhoods in the Western US. The neighborhood has four quadrants around a central roundabout (Coe Circle), with prominent arches at major street entrances. Over the past century, the original tree planting has developed into a mature urban forest in the heart of Portland.
- No multi-family housing or commercial development has ever been permitted in the core of the neighborhood.
- Laurelhurst remains a remarkably intact neighborhood of single family houses, most with their traditional architecture preserved. Perhaps more than any other neighborhood in the city, Laurelhurst has maintained its historic appearance and character. This qualifies Laurelhurst for National Register Historic District status.

## How Does Historic District Designation Protect A Neighborhood?

**A contributing house may not be demolished without Demolition Review.**

- A demolition request is reviewed by the City Landmarks Commission and may be approved by the City Council. The design of the replacement structure must be approved before demolition.
- Non-contributing houses may be demolished without review. The replacement house will be subject to Historic Resource Review (see below).

**New houses, or exterior alterations to existing houses, go through a Historic Resource Review.**

- Most projects receive the simplest Type I review by Bureau of Development Services staff, usually taking 35 days.
- Large projects, up to \$437,750 of exterior work, receive Type II review, which usually takes 42 days.
- Very large projects exceeding \$437,750 of exterior work (typically a new house, some very large additions) receive a detailed Type III review by the Historic Landmarks Commission. The review fee is 3.2% of project cost, up to \$5,000.
- Design Review considers whether the construction will preserve the house's historic character, features, and architectural design, and be consistent with the neighborhood's historic character and scale.

**Most other remodeling projects will not involve Historic Resource Review (are "exempt").**

- Repair, maintenance, and painting: exempt. *There is no restriction on paint color.*
- Storm/screen doors and storm/screen windows: exempt.
- Fences, gates, street and retaining walls, patios, decks, landscaping: all exempt.
- Interior alterations: all exempt. *Historic District designation does not affect interior remodeling at all.*
- Exterior alterations to a *non-contributing* house: exempt, if non-street-facing and not large (150 sq ft of exterior).
- Construction of small detached structures away from lot lines: exempt. These are structures up to 200 sq ft, 40 feet from the front lot line and, for corner lots, 25 feet from the side street lot line.
- Basement windows and light wells: exempt, for typical windows/wells.

- Solar panels, skylights, rooftop vents and equipment: exempt, if they meet size/location standards intended to reduce visibility from the street, e.g. solar panels on the rear of a roof.
- These projects do not require any special Historic review or fee. Normal zoning and building codes will apply.

## What Are The Benefits Of Historic District Designation?

### Historic District designation will limit impact from infill (density) rezoning.

- The city's proposed "residential infill" zoning in Laurelhurst and other Portland neighborhoods will allow two or more accessory dwelling units (ADUs) with a single-family house; all houses could be duplexes; corner lots could be triplexes; double lots could be small apartment complexes. This will *encourage demolition* of existing houses to build duplexes, triplexes, and apartments.
- If Laurelhurst becomes a Historic District:
  - *ADUs would still be permitted*, if visually consistent with the main house.
  - It will be *very difficult to demolish contributing* houses. They could be converted to duplexes/triplexes, but the exterior appearance must be consistent with the neighborhood's historic character and architecture.
  - *Non-contributing* houses could be demolished, but the replacement structure must be consistent with the neighborhood's historic character and architecture.

### Historic District designation protects property values.

- By preserving historic character, Historic Districts support property values. Irvington has been a Historic District since 2010, Ladd's Addition since 1988, and values in those neighborhoods have been protected.
- Studies in other cities consistently show the positive impact of Historic Designation.
- Historic Districts do not increase property tax rates. No special fees are levied on houses in Historic Districts. In some cases, contributing houses can get property tax abatement via Oregon Special Assessment Program. If the property is income-producing, the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit may be available.

### Historic Districts preserve quality, environmentally sustainable, affordable housing.

- Most Laurelhurst homes were built in the 1910s through 1930s, when houses were built to last. These beautiful houses are as much as 100 years old, the embodiment of *quality*.
- The most *environmentally sustainable* house is an existing house.
- When developers demolish an original Laurelhurst house and build a big expensive house, they are not creating "affordable" housing: they are *destroying* affordable housing.
- ADUs *can* offer affordable housing, and Historic Districts *permit* ADUs.

## Learn more about making Laurelhurst a Historic District.

### Refer to these resources:

- Historic District Rules And Benefits <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/133692>
- Summary of Portland Historic Resources Zoning Regulation <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/146263>
- Irvington Historic District Overview <http://www.irvingtonpdx.com/historic-overview/>
- Eastmoreland Historic District <http://historicdistrict.eastmoreland.org/about/>
- City Code, Historic Resource Overlay Zone <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/53352>
- City Code, Historic Resource Review <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/53488>
- Studies on the economic impact of Historic Designation <http://www.achp.gov/economic-designation.html>

### Come to these community meetings:

- Come learn more about Historic Districts at the Restore Oregon forum, **September 8, 2016** at 6:00 pm-7:30 pm, 10<sup>th</sup> Church of Christ Scientist (5736 SE 17<sup>th</sup> Ave). <http://restoreoregon.org/event/living-in-a-historic-district/>
- Come to the Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association meeting on **September 27, 2016** at 7:00 pm, All Saints (cafeteria) to see expert presentations, ask questions, and give your input to the LNA Board.
- *This flyer is not from the LNA Board, which has not taken a position on Historic District.*

Visit <http://historiclaurelhurst.com> for updates and more information.