

Procedures for the Establishment of Richmond Old and Historic Districts

The following is intended to be an explanation of the procedures followed by the Commission of Architectural Review (CAR) in the establishment of Old and Historic Districts. The steps outlined in this document are designed to be consistent with the requirements of Section 114, Article IX, Division 4 of the City Code (Old and Historic Districts) and the requirements for rezoning a property.

1. Nomination Request Submitted. The CAR, a neighborhood organization, preservation group, property owner or other interested party requests a staff evaluation of a neighborhood or individual property, for possible designation as an Old and Historic District; or the City Manager or a member of City Council introduces an ordinance for the creation of an Old and Historic District. In the case of a designation sponsored by a Council member or the City Manager, the process will go directly to step 3.

2. Staff Review. Staff meets with the sponsor(s) of the proposed Old and Historic District to discuss procedures for designation. Staff evaluates boundary options and identifies additional information required for preparation of a staff report. A preliminary report is made by staff to the CAR. After reviewing the report, the CAR will decide whether or not to proceed.

3. Staff Report. With the assistance of the nomination sponsor(s), staff prepares a report on the proposed Old and Historic District for the CAR. The report includes the following information on the proposed Old and Historic designation:

- A summary of the history and development of the proposed district;
- A description of the existing historic building(s), environmental features, urban design elements and non-historic features of the proposed district;
- Photographs that document the history and architecture of the proposed district;
- A map showing the boundaries and major features of the proposed district;
- The number of property owners and a discussion of the type of ownership;
- A summary of current land use and zoning;
- Information on the sponsor(s) of the designation and why the designation was requested; and
- Justification for Old and Historic District designation.

4. CAR Review. After evaluating the report, the CAR decides whether to continue to review the proposed Old and Historic District. If the designation proceeds, the CAR will request the sponsor(s) undertake an owner information process. If an ordinance has been introduced by City Council or the City Manager, the process will proceed automatically and go directly to step 7.

5. Owner Information Process. The goal of this process is to attempt to inform all affected property owners and determine property owner support (or a lack thereof), before beginning the actual legal process of designation. The proposed district sponsor will be responsible for contacting all property owners within the proposed Old and Historic District. Staff will provide the mailing labels, response post cards and information on Old and Historic District designation for a direct mailing to be done by the sponsor. The packet will also include notification of the time, date, and place of a public information meeting.

A public information meeting is held by the sponsor. At the meeting staff will make a presentation on the process for designating an Old and Historic District, requirements for property owners in Old and Historic Districts and why the property or district is being considered for Old and Historic District status. Staff and a CAR representative will answer questions from those in attendance. Property owners may return a response post card stating their support, opposition, or lack of opinion on the proposed designation. The response post card can also be mailed within two weeks of designation.

6. Additional CAR Review. Upon completion of the public information process, the CAR is presented with a written summary on the process and the property owner response. After consideration of the report, the Commission determines whether to continue with the designation process.

7. Scheduling and Notice of Public Hearing. If the CAR decides to proceed, it will schedule a public hearing. The Commission will decide if the hearing will be at a regular CAR meeting or at a special time and place. The Commission Secretary will notify all property owners within and adjacent to the proposed Old and Historic District by mail, of the date, time and place of the public hearing. Adjacent property owners are those within 150 feet of the proposed district.

8. Public Hearing Is Held. The CAR will conduct a public hearing to allow the Commission the opportunity to hear public comments on the proposed designation before making a recommendation to City Council. At the hearing staff will make a presentation that summarizes the staff report and the process up to that point. Following the staff presentation, questions and statements for or against designation will be heard from those in attendance.

9. Formal Action. The Commission will vote whether or not to recommend designation to City Council.

10. Submission to Council. After approval of a recommendation for designation, staff prepares an ordinance for consideration by City Council. In addition, staff will provide a briefing packet for City Council and the City Planning Commission. Council will refer the ordinance to the City Planning Commission before taking action.

Upon submission to Council, the proposed district will be treated as any other rezoning. Following standard zoning procedures, notices with the time and place of the City Council hearing will be published in the local daily newspaper. A direct mailing will be made by the City Clerk to all property owners in the proposed district and all of those within 150 feet of the proposed district. The mailing will include the time and the place of the City Planning Commission and City Council meetings where consideration of the designation will take place.

11. City Planning Commission Review. Staff will make a presentation to the City Planning Commission that summarizes steps 1 through 10. The Planning Commission will vote whether to recommend the proposed Old and Historic District to City Council.

12. City Council Hearing. City Council will hold a public hearing and vote whether to designate the property or district as an Old and Historic District. Staff and at least one member of the CAR will attend the hearing. A presentation will be made summarizing the process and the impacts of Old and Historic District designation. The Commission member will summarize the position of the CAR. Council will consider public input and vote whether or not to designate the property or district as an Old and Historic District. A vote of seven members of Council shall be required if more than 20% of the property owners have at some point objected to the Old and Historic designation.

13. Property Owner Notification. After approval by City Council, all property owners within the approved Old and Historic District will be notified by staff.

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