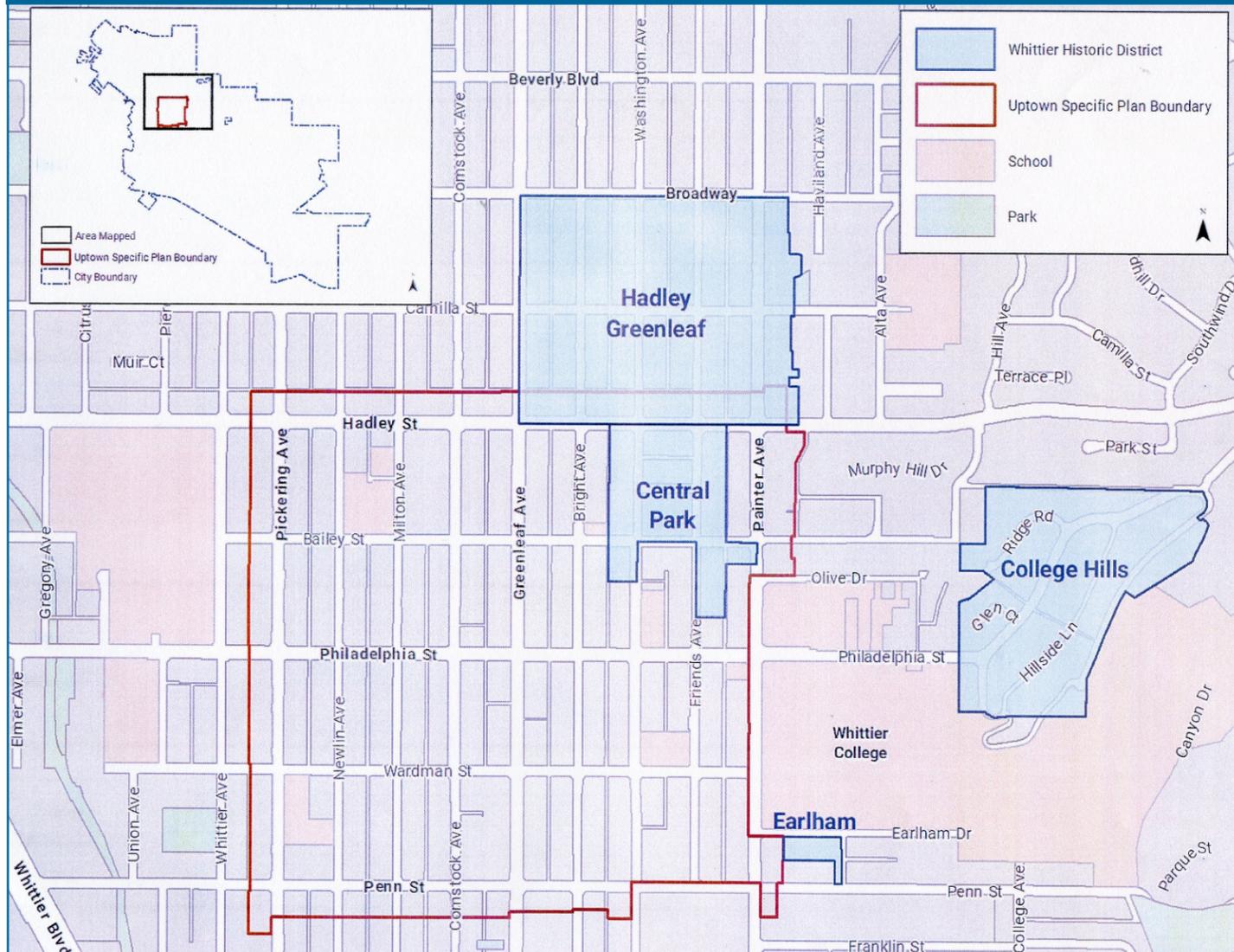


Historic Districts and Uptown Specific Plan Boundaries



Did you know?

Preservation laws do not prevent change; they *manage* it. Standards allow owners to alter their property; guidelines require only retention of “character-defining” elements and additions compatible with historic features. They ensure review of demolition requests but do not prohibit it.

Preservation laws should not impinge on property rights any more than other long-accepted rules. Zoning laws and HOA requirements and limitations are often more restrictive than preservation laws.

Preservation is a great tool for encouraging new development and stimulating economic growth. Programs nation-wide report enhanced property values, increased tourism, reduced costs over building new, a significant number of new jobs, and sizeable sums in reinvestment.

Historic districts assure property owners that the aesthetic qualities of the neighborhood will endure. Districts alleviate fears that the neighbors may undertake inappropriate exterior alterations.

Adapted from Ken Bernstein, “Ten Top Myths about Historic Preservation,” Los Angeles Conservancy, revised March 30, 2016. Data in original regarding dollar savings do not reflect actual dollar savings in the City of Whittier.

Whittier Historic Preservation

**We welcome you,
your family, and your business!**

Our town has a diverse and colorful history. Shifts in control of the land on which it sits mirror pivotal California events. The native Gabrielino witnessed the Spanish Mission era of the 1700s, and a grant of these acres to retired soldier José Manuel Nieto. Mexican independence from Spain in 1821 began the *Californio* period, and in 1835 this area became Rancho Paso de Bartolo Viejo. American control in 1848 allowed German immigrant Jacob Gerkens to acquire 160 acres, some of which he sold in the settlement boom of 1887 to Pickering Land & Water Company to establish a “Quaker Colony,” named for poet John Greenleaf Whittier.

The colony survived the collapse of that boom, thanks to the 1891 creation of the state school that became the Fred C. Nelles Youth Correctional Facility. A stable water supply and the arrival of the railroads enabled the town to thrive to become the largest walnut grower in the country.



Advantages of Historic Preservation

- INCREASES property values, affordable housing
- STABILIZES real estate markets, environment
- CONTROLS excessive spending, urban sprawl
- PROTECTS unique cultural heritage
- CONSERVES resources, materials, artisanal skills
- PRESERVES cultural heritage, sense of place
- CREATES jobs, educational opportunities
- PROMOTES cultural activities, interaction
- ATTRACTS business, investment, tourism
- PRODUCES quality design, creative thinking
- BUILDS community pride, cohesion



City of Whittier Office of Community Development

Second Floor of City Hall
13230 Penn Street, Whittier, CA 90602
Counter open 8:00 am to 4:00 pm
Call for an appointment with a planner

562-567-9320

Visit our website:
<https://www.cityofwhittier.org>

For information on historic preservation see
Whittier Municipal Code 18.84-18.89

One of the Gateway Cities considered regional economic anchors, Whittier still retains its unique small-town character. Home to a four-year liberal arts college and two hospitals, It has nurtured many well-known writers and artists; the families of two United States Presidents had deep ties to the town.

Extensive damage caused by the 1987 earthquake spurred residents to protect remaining resources that convey our heritage, which currently include four historic districts, 120 city landmarks, 26 listings on the State Register, seven on the National, and numerous resources city-wide.

Whether or not you own a historic resource, we welcome you. Help us to ensure that those special qualities of our city are managed for future generations to enjoy.



What is Historic preservation?

Historic preservation is not just about protecting monumental buildings. It is about who we were and what we dreamed. William J. Murtagh, first “Keeper” of the National Register of Historic Places, said that historic preservation is about:

“engaging the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future.”

We preserve the story of life in our town by protecting neighborhoods and artifacts of our cultural heritage. This helps us realize our strengths and use them to ensure future development that improves the lives of all residents.



What are historic resources?

Historic resources may be **buildings** (City Hall), **landscapes or landscape features** (the Whittier Boulevard Paradox Hybrid Walnut Tree), **building features** (the façade of the former First National Bank on Philadelphia), **sites** (Pio Pico State Historic Park), **objects** (College Hills streetlamps), or **lost technology** (Batchelder tile fireplace surrounds.)

A **historic resource** is any of the above located in a historic district or listed on the *City of Whittier Local Official Register of Historic Resources*; see the City website.

A **landmark**, a sub-category of resources, is a single resource that is listed on the City, State, or National registers. Whittier designates its landmarks based on criteria in the preservation ordinance.

A **historic district** is a geographic area with well-defined boundaries that contains a concentration of resources. Districts contain two types of properties: an approved **contributing resource** that adds to the historical, cultural or architectural significance of a district, or a **non-contributing resource** that has not met those criteria.

The above are summaries; see WMC 18.84-18.89 for full definitions.

What is my role in the preservation process?

First, determine whether the property you own or want to buy is a historic resource. The map on the reverse of this page shows the historic districts and Uptown area. Find individual resources in other areas on the *Official Local Register of Historic Resources*, available on the city’s website.

When you are considering any action related to a historic resource, begin by talking to the City Planning Department about what procedures and applications that may pertain. If your property is *not* a historic resource, the rest of this brochure may not apply. That status could change, however, so we encourage you to stay informed.

You may become involved in the process either because there are things you *want* to do or are *required* to do with your property: (1) you want to know the obligations and advantages of owning a historic resource; (2) you own a resource and want to apply for local, state or national **landmark status**; (3) you own a resource and want to join your neighbors in forming a **historic district**; (4) you own a resource and want to make changes. In this case, you need to secure a **Certificate of Appropriateness (C of A)**, or a **C of A Waiver**.

How does the preservation program work?

City Planning Staff implements the policies and procedures in the historic resources ordinance of the City zoning code, which complies with the United States Secretary of the Interior (**USSI**) Standards and the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (**CEQA**).

Staff collaborates with the **Historic Resources Commission (HRC)**, a five-person body appointed by the City Council guided by USSI qualification standards. The purpose of the HRC is to implement the City’s General and Specific Plans. It fosters an appreciation of Whittier’s cultural heritage, protects and promotes its architectural legacy,



boosts its attraction for residents and visitors, stimulates business, and protects owners’ property rights.



How do I apply for landmark or district status?

Any person or group may nominate a **historic resource** for landmark status, or a concentration of resources for **historic district** status by submitting an application and the required fee to the Planning Department. All submissions must be supported by historic research that meets local and state standards. The HRC reviews applications for recommendation to the City Council for final approval. Talk to the City Planning staff about **national or state landmark status**.

Is financial aid available for preservation?

The Mills Act is state legislation that enables local government to offer economic incentives to qualified owners of landmarks or owners of contributing resources within a historic district. Under Mills Act contracts, owners may receive tax relief for preservation of their property based on a renewable ten-year agreement.

Additional incentives may include:

Federal tax credits, loans, grants, or historic preservation easements, local use of historic building codes, adaptive re-use variances, priority plan check, and fee waivers.



What is a Certificate of Appropriateness?

A **Certificate of Appropriateness (C of A)** is a formal determination by the HRC at a public hearing prior to beginning work on the exterior of a historic resource. A C of A is required for rehabilitation, restoration, additions, remodeling (changes to windows, doors, or other specified exterior features), relocation, demolition, or construction in historic districts. A C of A is not required for maintenance, painting or interior work that does not alter the exterior of the building.

In consultation with Planning Staff, you prepare an application and plans for your proposed project and pay a fee. In certain circumstances, staff may grant a **C of A Waiver** for a lesser fee.

Staff prepares a report and you appear before the HRC for review, where you have an opportunity to speak. This ensures that historic structures are preserved and proposed changes are compatible with the character of the property and/or district.

If approved, you agree to follow conditions specified by the HRC, which are based on your project’s compliance with USSI Standards and the city’s design guidelines for historic resources. If your project is not approved, you may appeal the HRC decision to the City Council.

To demolish a historic resource, you must apply for a **Certificate of Appropriateness-demolition**. If you find HRC conditions or denial of an application creates undue economic hardship, you may apply for a **Certificate of Economic Hardship**.

Remember . . .

As the owner of a historic resource, you enjoy advantages that assist you in maintenance. In return, the City asks that you comply with Special procedures and requirements that protect our cultural legacy.

If you own a historic resource, secure a C of A prior to exterior work, even if a building permit is not required, or you may incur penalties.

Know the rules, enjoy the benefits!