



CITY OF EL PASO

ITEM 29

El Paso City Code 20.20

Historic Landmark Preservation Outreach

Update

Planning and Inspections

October 28, 2025

Strategic Goals

Goal 3 - Promote the Visual Image of El Paso

- 3.1 Improve the visual impression of the community.
- 3.3 Establish a brand that celebrates and promotes El Paso's unique identity and offerings.

Overview

- The ordinance was adopted in 1978 and last revised in 2006
- This Ordinance addresses:
 - City designation of historic properties
 - Review and approval authority in local historic districts:
 - New construction
 - Demolition requirements

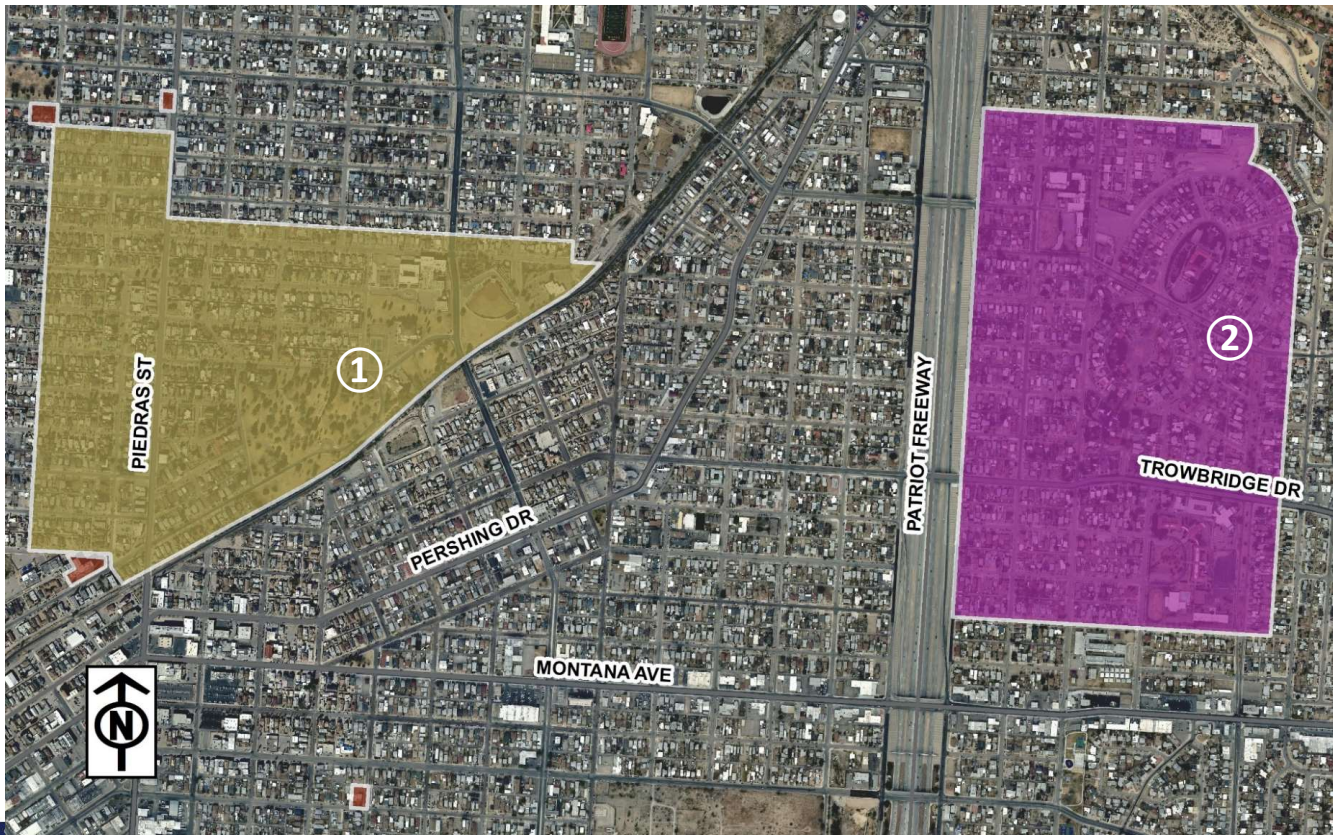
Downtown Historic Areas



Locally Designated Historic Districts

- 1 – Sunset Heights
- 2 – Old San Francisco
- 3 – Downtown
- 4 – Magoffin
- 5 - Chihuahuita

Central Historic Areas



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Locally Designated
Historic Districts

- 1 – Manhattan Heights
- 2 – Austin Terrace

Mission Valley Historic Areas



Locally Designated
Historic Districts
1 – Ysleta
2 – Mission Trail

Public Outreach

- 8 Meetings Conducted between June 16 through August 7
 - Virtual (Teams)
 - Pavo Real Recreation Center
 - City Hall
 - Memorial Senior Center
 - COEP Economic Development Board Room
 - Nestor Valencia Mission Valley Transit Center
 - Guillen Middle School
 - Greater El Paso Association of Realtors
- 131 total attendees

Survey Results



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Public Input –Survey Results

34 Survey Responses

- 55% live in historic districts
- 88% believe saving El Paso's historic, architectural, and cultural resources is important
- 66% believe their historic property contributes to the City's identity
- 73% **agree or strongly agree** with the importance of historic preservation
- 41% **agree or strongly agree** that amendments were clearly communicated
- 43% **disagree or strongly disagree** that amendments will make it easier and faster to obtain permits.

Survey Results



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Purpose of Revisions

Revisions address:

- Clarify ordinance by leaving less room for interpretation
- Streamline and simplify process for more user friendly and greater efficiency in obtaining permits
- State Historic Preservation Office requires Certified Local Governments (CLG) to adopt and maintain a local historic preservation ordinance
 - CLG is a local, state, and federal government partnership supporting local historic resources and providing technical support and grants
- Update obsolete verbiage
- Alignment with other City development codes, best practices and State law



Key Changes

Proposed Amendment	Current Code	Proposed Code Change
Interim protection	None provided	Interim protection for properties recommended for local designation • Request for designation may be made by CC, HLC, property owner or a member of the public. • If owner consents or approved by CC, would prohibit the issuance of permits for a period not to exceed 180 days* • Process similar to other Texas cities and formal designation follows state procedures

Designation process – No consent

Two Step process

Consideration for designation

- Owner notified 15 days before initial HLC hearing.
- HLC reviews and forwards recommendation to CPC
 - Nominated property must meet 1 of 11 designation criteria
- CPC forwards recommendation to Council for consideration of a city initiated historic overlay and interim protections
- If request is approved by City Council, interim protection is effective for the lesser of 180 days or Council action for formal designation

Formal designation process

- Per State law, requires three-fourths approval vote of HLC, CPC, and Council
 - If three-fourths approval vote is not achieved, request for designation process stops

20.20.050 - Historic landmarks designation criteria.

The HLC, the City Plan Commission, and City Council shall consider, but shall not be limited to, one or more of the following criteria:

- A. Character, interest or value as part of the development of the city, state or the United States;
- B. Listed as a Texas or National Landmark or eligible to the National Register of Historic Places;
- C. Distinguished characteristics of an architectural type or specimen;
- D. Work of an architect or master builder;
- E. Embodiment of distinguished elements of architectural design and architectural innovation;
- F. Relationship to other distinctive buildings, based on architectural, historic or cultural motif;
- G. Portrayal of the environment of a group of people characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
- H. Archaeological value;
- I. Illustration of the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage;
- J. Site of a significant historic event;
- K. Connected to a person(s) who significantly contributed to the culture and development.

Texas Municipalities Designation Process

City	Initiation of Designation Process	Initiation of Interim Protection
Dallas	• Property owner • Five members of CC • Three members of CPC • One member of HLC for individual property or; • Three members of HLC for new district	• Upon initiation of designation procedure • Duration: 2 years after initiation of designation procedure, or; • When designation is denied by HLC, CPC, or CC • When consent is withdrawn by property owner
Fort Worth	• Property Owner • City Council • City Manager • Historic and Cultural Landmark Commission (HCLC)	• When notice of nomination mailed by HPO • Duration 180 days or when designation is denied • Permits issued before nomination not subject to protection

Texas Municipalities Designation Process

City	Initiation of Designation Process	Initiation of Interim Protection
San Antonio	- Any person - Property owner - City Council - Historic and Design Review Commission - Zoning Commission - Historic Preservation Officer	- When determined by HPO or HDRC and notice mailed - Duration lesser of 180 days or action by City Council
Houston	- Property owner - Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission	- When majority vote by HAHC to prepare application - Duration lesser of 181 days or action by City Council - When consent withdrawn

Public Input –Survey Results

- 34 Survey Responses
 - 48.5 % **agree or strongly agree** that interim protection is necessary
 - 33.4% **disagree or strongly disagree** that interim protection is necessary
 - 59% **disagree or strongly disagree** to designation without owner consent
- Public Responses – Interim Protection
 - Necessary changes to give El Paso the power to save historic properties
 - It's a good idea except nomination from anyone, that is what I disagree with.
 - Regulations stagger the redevelopment of downtown.
 - This is an overreach by the City
 - More restrictions and financial burdens to home owners
 - The City is making downtown redevelopment more difficult and is way out of line in proposing additional requirements. No owner consent? That is just wrong.

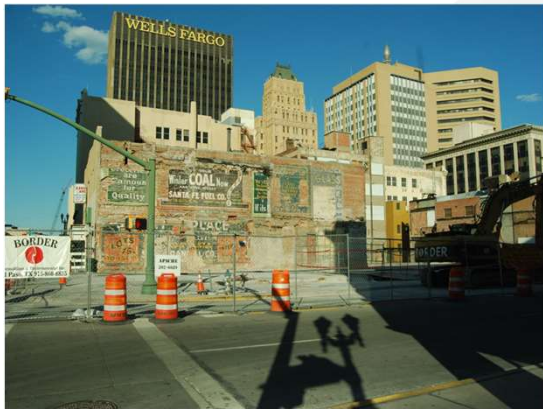
Survey Results



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Key Changes

Process	Current Code	Proposed Code Change
Certificate of Demolition	HLC review and approval required	Certificates of Demolition will require a minimum of two HLC hearings within 60-day State timeline



Key Changes

Process	Current Code	Proposed Code Change
Prevention of Demolition by Neglect	Property owner may submit plan to address deterioration	Demolition by neglect requires a plan to address deterioration • Requires consensus by Building Official and a private structural engineer • Timeline for abatement • BSC notification and action if no response by property owner • BSC has authority to order rehabilitation or issue civil penalties. • Provides appeal mechanism for property owner

Public Input –Survey Results

- 34 Survey Responses
 - 64% **agree or strongly agree** that process for demolition permit is clear
 - 62% **agree or strongly agree** on importance of public input on demolition of privately owned historic properties
 - 77% **agree or strongly agree** that it is important to safeguard against demolition of historic properties
- Public Responses
 - I like the fact that the City is finally making adjustments to the historic codes!
 - This helps preserve historical properties and not losing them to only owners decisions
 - City is making downtown redevelopment more difficult
 - More restrictions and financial burdens to home owners
 - The citations for willful neglect of historic properties should be strengthened.
 - Disappointing to know that there are no financial incentives

Survey Results



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Key Changes

Requirement	Current Code	Proposed Code Change
Appeal of HLC Decision to City Council	Fee codified in Schedule C	Codify appeal fee in ordinance

Property before alterations



Same property after unpermitted alterations



Key Changes

Requirement	Current Code	Proposed Code Change
Approval Expiration Dates	No expiration dates	Approvals will have expiration dates (includes both administrative and HLC approvals) • Administrative approvals – 24 months • Certificate of Appropriateness – 48 months • Certificate of Demolition – 12 months

Key Changes

Requirement	Current Code	Proposed Code Change
Administrative Review	Property owner may request approval of structure up to 150 sq ft without HLC approval	Expand administrative review authority to expedite routine improvements - Structures up to 200 sq ft may be approved administratively (aligned with current building codes) - Expanded flexibility for railings, ADA ramps, security bars, etc.

Public Input –Survey Results

- 34 Survey Responses
 - 41% agree or strongly agree that additional application requirements are necessary for fast permitting process.
- Public Responses
 - I agree with the new expiration of approval timelines and the process for temporary protection. I worry that requiring large technical drawings.....That's not within the knowhow, capability, or financial of most El Pasoans.
 - Not taking in consideration the voice of the owners of the property and stop the redevelopment of downtown.
 - Yes, trying to mainstream the process and make it more accessible to the homeowner.

Survey Results



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Staff Recommendation

Proceed with amendments:

- For interim protection for properties nominated for designation.
- To City Code section 20.20.040. A, to only allow nomination by City Council, Historic Landmark Commission and the property owner.

A. The city council may designate buildings, structures, sites, districts, areas and lands in the city as historic landmarks and define, amend and delineate the boundaries thereof. Requests for designation may be made by the city council, HLC or by the public property owner on a form or zoning application obtained from the city.

- Requiring a minimum of two public meetings for request for certificates of demolition
- Modify provisions to prevent demolition by neglect
- Codify appeal fee
- To set expiration dates
- To increase authority and flexibility for administrative review

MISSION



Deliver exceptional services to support a high quality of life and place for our community.

VISION



Develop a vibrant regional economy, safe and beautiful neighborhoods and exceptional recreational, cultural and educational opportunities powered by a high performing government.



VALUES

Integrity, Respect, Excellence,
Accountability, People

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MISIÓN



Brindar servicios excepcionales para respaldar una vida y un lugar de alta calidad para nuestra comunidad

VISIÓN



Desarrollar una economía regional vibrante, vecindarios seguros y hermosos y oportunidades recreativas, culturales y educativas excepcionales impulsadas por un gobierno de alto desempeño



VALORES

Integridad, Respeto, Excelencia,
Responsabilidad, Personas

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