

Buying A Historic House: *A property that is historically-protected offers both benefits and some restrictions*

Contributing Structures, Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZ):

The City of Los Angeles has a program where some older neighborhoods are officially recognized as protected historic districts. Each property within a designated district is either contributing or non-contributing. You may not engage in any exterior work on the house, building or the parcel/lot itself without building permits and/or clearances approved by the City of Los Angeles Planning Department and the local HPOZ Board. The City requires review and environmental clearance for proposed exterior work in these districts, including landscaping, fencing and walkways, exterior paint, repairs to or replacement of windows and doors, roof replacements, etc. Demolition, alteration or adding non-original siding materials such as stucco is not generally approved. Broadly speaking, if you follow the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation (see below) your project will meet the requirements of an HPOZ.

City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monuments:

When a building has been declared a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM), it joins a select few homes and other properties that the City recognizes as unique landmarks. There are a number of potential preservation benefits. For example, original and/or vintage plumbing fixtures may not need to be replaced or retrofitted upon resale of a historic property. You also may be eligible to utilize the State of California building code for historic structures, rather than some local Los Angeles building ordinances, when you are rehabilitating your historic property. HCMs are also considered restricted properties. You may not engage in any interior or exterior work on the house, building or the parcel/lot itself without building permits that have been approved by the City of Los Angeles Planning Department's Office of Historic Resources. Greene & Greene's Lucy E. Wheeler House is Los Angeles HCM No. 991.

Historical Conservation Easement:

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between an historic preservation non-profit and a property owner in which the owner agrees that any future changes to the property will meet historic preservation standards, and places a restriction on the property that prevents demolition or inappropriate alterations. A facade easement typically covers the building's exterior surfaces. In the case of Greene & Greene's Lucy E. Wheeler House, a conservation easement covers both the exterior facade and site, and the significant interior spaces. The easement is recorded on the title and runs in perpetuity with the deed to the property, regardless of the owner. The Los Angeles Conservancy and/or its successor-in-interest monitors and maintains the easement in perpetuity and has an obligation to review future proposed changes to the structure.

Mills Act Historical Properties Contracts:

In Los Angeles, both individual Historic-Cultural Monuments and Contributing Structures in HPOZs may be eligible to enter into a Mills Act Historical Property Contract, which can reduce County property taxes by 25 percent or more. In return, the property owner must have all proposed work reviewed by and approved by the City. The Mills Act requires a separate application process, and the payment of certain fees. The Lucy E. Wheeler House's Mills Act Historical Property Contract takes effect in 2011.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation:

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, a part of the U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, are a nationally recognized tool for the preservation, maintenance and rehabilitation of our nation's heritage. These Standards are the accepted benchmark at all levels of government – national, state, and local – for evaluating proposed changes to historic properties. Los Angeles utilizes the Standards in reviewing proposed alterations to historic properties. The Standards are not meant to prevent change – instead, they represent a framework for managing change. Primary guidelines are: 1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment; and 2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

Additional Information:

The City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles City Planning Department have created informational brochures on historic properties. Visit www.preservation.lacity.org to learn more and to download these publications. The Getty Conservation Institute has also prepared a handbook entitled "Incentives for the Preservation and Rehabilitation of Historic Homes in the City of Los Angeles." Visit http://www.getty.edu/conservation/field_projects/lasurvey/lasurvey_publications.html to download the pdf brochure.

City Living Realty has been selling architectural treasures in Historic West Adams since 1981.

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