The Pinellas County Register of Historic Places (hereinafter referred to as local register) is an official listing of neighborhoods, structures, sites, objects, and buildings throughout the unincorporated portions of the County that are architecturally, historically, or archaeologically significant to our community. Individual municipalities, such as Tarpon Springs, Clearwater, and St. Petersburg, may operate and legislate their own register of historic places. For the unincorporated areas, application must be made through the Pinellas County Planning Department. The Local Register designation is an official action taken by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners through approval of a zoning overlay which grants certain benefits and imposes certain obligations on the landowner. Exterior alterations to designated historic properties require review and approval by the Pinellas County Planning Department. This review, known as the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process, is designed to protect designated historic properties from being adversely altered or demolished.

The National Register is the official listing of districts, buildings, structures (i.e. bridges, water towers), sites (i.e. cemeteries, archaeological sites, landscapes), and objects (i.e. signs, ships) throughout the country that reflect the historic development of our nation, states, and local communities. The Register is maintained by the National Park Service under the Secretary of the Interior and is used primarily as a planning tool by governmental agencies in making decisions concerning the development of our communities to ensure, as much as possible, the preservation of resources that are significant to our history and cultural heritage. National Register listing should not be confused with Local Register listing. National Register listing does not prevent a private property owner from applying vinyl siding, replacing historic windows with aluminum, enclosing a porch, or even demolishing their building. Only the Local Register listing requires a review of alterations or demolition of historically significant properties.

- **What are the benefits of historic preservation?**

  *Historic preservation has tangible and intangible benefits to property owners and the greater community. Preserving historic building/sites gives a community a sense of identity, maintains a community’s heritage and improves the quality of life. Preservation activities also create jobs, promote tourism and in most instances increase property values.*

• Why would a property owner want his/her property designated as historic or included in a historic district? What are the benefits?

In addition to the items listed above, historic designation may make your property eligible for property tax relief, federal rehabilitation tax credits or grants depending on the use of the property.

• What is the process to have a property designated as a local resource or part of a locally designated historic district? How long does it take? Does it cost anything?

A historic preservation ordinance establishes the framework for creating a local historic register and the standards and process for properties to be listed on the register. It also establishes standards that govern improvements/changes to properties once on the register. If your property is located within a city, please contact your municipal government to inquire about its process.

To begin the designation process for property located in the unincorporated areas of the county, a zoning application for a Historic Preservation Overlay must be submitted to the Pinellas County Planning Department. The application triggers a notification to any interested groups or citizens. Approximately nine weeks after the application is submitted, the Local Planning Agency (LPA) will hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). Roughly five weeks later, the BCC will hold a public hearing and either approve or deny the application.

The application for the Historic Preservation Overlay can be found at: http://www.pinellascounty.org/build/pdf/zoning_application.pdf. No fee is required and the entire process takes approximately 3½ months.

• I don’t have the expertise to apply for designation. If the County thinks the building is worthy will it do the designation work?

Typically the property owner applies for historic designation; however, the County Planning Director may also apply. County staff is also available to assist a property owner in making application for a historic designation. Contact the Pinellas County Planning Department http://www.pinellascounty.org/historic/default.htm or call (727) 464-8200 for assistance.

• Can I remove my property from the locally designated historic district?

No; a property owner cannot remove his/her property from a locally designated historic district.

• What is the National Register of Historic Places?

The National Register is an official listing of buildings, sites, objects, structures and districts that have local, state or national significance as determined by the National
How do I designate my house or neighborhood on the National Register of Historic Places? How long does this take?

Listing in the National Register of Historic Places involves several steps undertaken over a one to two year period, potentially culminating with approval from the Keeper of the National Register in Washington. First, anyone - an individual, neighborhood group or governmental agency - may prepare a nomination provided they detail the history of the historic resource and describe why it is significant. Next, the Pinellas County Historic Preservation Advisory Board (HPAB) will hold a public hearing and vote on the nomination. If the HPAB rejects the nomination, then it goes no further unless appealed to the Florida Division of Historic Resources (DHR). If approved by the HPAB, the Florida National Register Review Board will vote on the property or neighborhood’s eligibility for listing. If approved by the Board, the nomination will be sent to Washington, DC where the final determination of eligibility is made by the Keeper of the National Register. For additional information, please visit the Florida DHR website (http://dhr.dos.state.fl.us/preservation/registration/nr/criteria.cfm) or the National Register of Historic Places website: http://www.nps.gov/nr/national_register_fundamentals.htm.

We already have a National Register Historic District, why do we need to establish a local historic district?

A local designation is the only mechanism that can ensure that alterations, additions, new construction, demolitions, relocations, etc. will maintain the integrity of the district.

What happens when I want to sell my property? Does the new owner have to keep the local or National designation?

If the property has any historic designation, this designation will transfer with the ownership of the property.

Does designating my house on the National or a local register mean that I have to give house tours to people?

No, designation does not obligate you to give house tours.

If my property is designated as historic or is located in a locally designated historic district, can I remodel or make improvements?

Yes, local designation does not preclude you from making changes to your property; however certain standards must be met and a certificate of appropriateness may need to be obtained. Essentially alterations should be compatible with the original architectural
design of the building and distinguishing historic qualities and character should be retained with deteriorated historic features repaired rather than replaced if possible. Owners should avoid changes that create a false sense of historical development and new additions should be differentiated from the old but should be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property.

If the property is located in the Downtown Palm Harbor Historic District there are design criteria that must be met. Please contact the County Planning Department for more information at (727) 464-8200.

- **I want to “go green” and want to know if being in a designated historic district or having a designated historic property prevents me from doing that?**

  By reusing an existing building, you're already on your way to going green! Many greening measures are compatible with your historic building but it is likely some will require a certificate of appropriateness. Please contact the County Planning Department for specific questions. You may also find some helpful green information on the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s website:

  http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/sustainability/.

- **My contractor says that the termites holding hands are keeping this building standing. How do I know what can be repaired or is too far gone and needs to be replaced?**

  As evidenced in cities such as New Orleans, Savannah, Charleston, and Williamsburg, most historic materials can be repaired rather than replaced regardless of the climate, humidity, and proximity to water. In Florida, the historic building has often survived 80+ years in this climate and, with the proper maintenance and pest control, can survive another lifetime.

- **Can I use new materials on my historic house? If I can't find or install the historic material (i.e. asbestos shingle), what is a good replacement material and where can I find it?**

  Based upon the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, the removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural feature should be avoided when possible. Deteriorated historic features should be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement, the new material should match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features should be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence. To assist owners in the rehabilitation of their properties, the Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State issued a policy paper entitled
Several nationwide organizations and publications specialize in the repair of historic buildings and the replacement of historic materials to match the original design. The following organizations and websites provide up-to-date information on technologies, replacement materials, and sources to assist in your rehabilitation project:

- The Association for Preservation Technology International (http://www.apti.org/);
- Traditional Building (http://www.traditional-building.com/);
- Architectural Heritage Committee of the Tampa AIA regional chapter (http://www.projectviewpoint.com/ahc/tampabay/default.aspx); and
- This Old House (http://www=thisoldhouse.com/ioh/).

Can I tear down my locally designated historic house?

To demolish a locally designated historic property you would need to follow all appropriate rules associated with your municipality. If the house is located within unincorporated Pinellas, you must apply for and be granted a certificate of appropriateness and a demolition permit.

Does historic designation mean I have to do everything by a special set of regulations that may increase my cost?

The goal of historic preservation provisions is to retain as much of the historic appearance and materials as possible. Regulations typically encourage the repair of deteriorated items instead of whole scale replacement, which often lowers rehabilitation costs.

What is a certificate of appropriateness (COA)?

It is authorization given by Pinellas County to the owner(s) of a locally designated property or any building, structure or site within a designated historic district in the unincorporated area of the County that allows a proposed alteration, relocation, or demolition of a building, structure or site. The COA must be obtained prior to the issuance of any building permit.

What is the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation?

The Secretary of the Interior Standards were developed to help protect our nation’s irreplaceable cultural resources by promoting consistent preservation practices. They provide basic principles to assist in the preservation of the distinctive characteristics of a historic building and its site, while allowing reasonable changes to meet new needs. They embody a series of concepts regarding the maintenance, repair and replacement of
historic materials, as well as the design of new additions or alterations to historic properties. Four interrelated approaches to preservation are established in the Standards and include preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction. For more detailed information please visit the National Park Service website at: http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rhb/stand.htm.

- Can any construction be done to a locally designated historic property without obtaining a certificate of appropriateness (COA)?

Limited types of maintenance/repair work may not require a COA. Please consult the Pinellas County Planning Department if your property is located in the unincorporated areas of the County to verify whether or not your improvement is exempt from the process. If your property is located in a city please contact your municipal government for assistance.

- I would like to renovate a historic building. Do I have to follow current building codes, fire codes, and American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements?

Building officials in Florida are required to use the Florida Building Code when reviewing and approving building plans. This code provides very specific requirements for the construction or renovation of buildings in Florida. The Florida “Existing” Building Code, however, acknowledges the need to preserve the character of historic buildings and includes a separate chapter (Chapter 11) that responds to the unique needs of historic buildings. If specific conditions are met and are found acceptable to the building code official, a historic structure may not need to strictly comply with the Florida Building Code. Because of the complexity of the Building Code, a property owner should consult with their local building official or with a qualified professional familiar with the Code to determine how the flexibility contained in Chapter 11 can benefit renovation of a historic building.

When renovating historic buildings that will be open to the public, one of the biggest challenges is complying with ADA access requirements. These requirements affect both access into the building and access within the building itself. Section 11-4.1.7 of the Florida Building Code has alternative requirements for making a historic building accessible if it is determined that complying with the standard requirements would threaten or destroy the historic significance of a building. There are procedures in the Florida Building Code for determining whether a renovation project would be able to use these more flexible ADA minimum requirements for historic buildings. A property owner who is interested in renovating a historic building should consult with their local building official or with a qualified professional familiar with the Code to get a better idea how the accessibility requirements would affect their project.
The Florida Fire Prevention Codes consist of the Uniform Fire Code (NFPA 1) and the Life Safety Code (NFPA 101). Each county, municipality, and special fire district are responsible for enforcing these fire safety codes. If you are considering renovation of a historic building or property, you will need to consider the potential impact of the Fire Prevention Codes on the project, although the fire codes do not generally apply to one and two family dwellings.

- **What will it cost to preserve my house?**

  Since all houses are different, the best way to estimate cost is first to determine what needs to be done through consultation with a design professional and then obtain realistic estimates from reputable local contractors.

  The challenge is finding a skilled contractor or architect who is knowledgeable about historic buildings and their construction elements. For example, historic wood windows are a character defining feature in most buildings and new windows rarely match the design, depth, profile, and texture of the wood or the glass panes. Frequently the rotted sill may need replacement and the weight system repaired to make it operational again, but the entire window need not be replaced. Your local building/planning department may be able to provide a list of contractors and architects who work in the area, but the best sources are likely your local historic preservation organization, the association for the local historic neighborhood, or contacting the owner of a property which recently underwent restoration in your neighborhood.

- **Can I get grants to rehab my house?**


- **Are there financial incentives for preserving historic properties?**

  Yes. There are local tax exemptions and a federal income tax credit available for certain designated property.

  The Historic Property Tax Exemption is available to locally designated historic properties or those listed in the National Register and located in the unincorporated areas of Pinellas County. This ad valorem tax exemption may be granted for a period of 10 years to income and non-income producing property consistent with the increase in assessed value as a result of the historic rehabilitation/renovation. In order to be eligible for the exemption, a preconstruction application must be submitted to and approved by the Pinellas County Planning Department. Some Pinellas municipalities may also have a similar exemption so please contact your city directly for information.
Income producing property such as rental housing, offices, retail, industrial property listed on the National Register of Historic Places or in and contributing to a National Register Historic District may be eligible for a Federal Income Tax Credit equal to 20% of the amount spent on qualified rehabilitation costs. There is also a 10% credit for older non-designated historic buildings built before 1936. For additional information see http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/index.htm.

- Are building additions and/or new construction associated with historic buildings eligible for historic preservation tax credits?

The federal historic preservation tax credit does NOT include enlargement or new construction. However, for purposes of the Pinellas County property tax exemption, improvements may include additions and accessory structures (i.e. a garage) that have been determined by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners to be necessary for efficient contemporary use.

- Are there incentives to rehab buildings for low income housing?

Yes. Generally these involve combined use of Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. To see case studies of historic rehab for low income housing visit http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/Affordable/index.htm.

- What happens to my taxes if I designate?

Designation alone does not affect your taxes. However, if you undertake improvements after designation, you may be eligible for the ad valorem tax exemption for 10 years. The amount of the exemption is determined by the assessed value of improvements. Contact the Pinellas County Planning Department for information for the unincorporated areas of the County or your municipal government if located in a Pinellas city.

- Where do I go to find insurance for my historic house?

The Florida Trust for Historic Preservation advises homeowners seeking insurance for a historic house to visit a National Trust for Historic Preservation affiliated entity that offers insurance on historic properties: www.nationaltrust-insurance.org.

The Florida Trust also advises that there are many local insurance companies that offer insurance for historic building as well and the best is to call around to local companies and to ask owners of historic properties in your area who provides their insurance.