

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****April 1, 2025**

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SUBJECT: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL LANDMARKS COMMISSION

The purpose of this Informal Report is to provide information on the duties and responsibilities of the Historic and Cultural Landmarks Commission (HCLC) in Fort Worth and how this compares to other cities in Texas. For the purposes of this report, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, and Austin have been chosen as comparable cities.

In general, historic commissions in Texas are created and operate in similar ways using Chapter 211 of the Local Government Code. They are a quasi-judicial body that are appointed by City Council with the purpose of protecting and enhancing each city's historic, cultural and archeological heritage. Duties and responsibilities are outlined in each ordinance and include identification and recommendation of designation of historic resources, education of public and elected officials on cultural heritage and review of Certificates of Appropriateness.

Fort Worth

The purpose of the Historic and Cultural Landmarks Commission is to serve in the identification, protection, enhancement, and perpetuation of landmarks or districts of historical, cultural, architectural, or archeological significance are necessary to safeguard and promote the economic, cultural, educational, and general welfare of the public.

The Fort Worth HCLC is a quasi-judicial body made up of 11 members appointed by City Council and 4 alternates. Terms for commissioners are every two years, and the commission meets once a month in accordance with the Fort Worth Zoning Ordinance. All members of the HCLC, regardless of background, must have a demonstrated interest, competence and knowledge in historic preservation and planning within the City of Fort Worth. Six appointees should be practicing professionals from fields of architecture, landscape architecture, history, architectural history, urban planning, archeology, real estate, law or other disciplines related to historic preservation.

The HCLC's duties include hearing and making recommendations to the city council on nomination cases for individual landmarks or districts, educating the public and elected officials on the historic and cultural heritage of the city, and hearing and making determinations on cases for individual property design applications that affect the exterior of a building known as Certificates of Appropriateness. Under the Historic Preservation ordinance, the HCLC reviews and approves specific project types including but not limited to, new construction of primary structures, waivers from applicable design standards, demolition and relocation of historic structures and referrals of any projects from the Historic Preservation Officer. All other project types are administratively reviewed and approved by the Development Services staff.

An interested party may appeal decisions made by the HCLC to the Board of Adjustment, except those relating to historic designations and tax exemptions, which are decided by City Council. The Board of Adjustment may affirm or reverse the decision of the HCLC or may remand the case back to the HCLC for further considerations.

Dallas

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The City of Dallas Landmarks Commission is made of 15 members and three alternates and also meet on a monthly basis. Each city council member appoints one member to the commission. Similar to HCLC, the Dallas Landmarks Commission must include at least 6 members employed as a real estate developer with experience in re-development of commercial historic properties, architect, historian, urban planner, landscape architect, and real estate appraiser. All members, regardless of their background, must demonstrate experience in historic preservation and outstanding interest in the historic traditions of the city and have knowledge in the fields of history, art, architecture, architectural history, urban history, city planning, urban design, historic real estate development, or historic preservation.

The duties of the Dallas Landmarks Commission are also comparable to the HCLC except they review most types of design applications for individual properties that are not considered 'routine maintenance' such as painting or cleaning of a historic property or minor repair work using the same materials. Project types that are not considered routine maintenance can include but are not limited to, new construction of primary buildings, additions, window or siding replacement, demolition and construction of accessory buildings or garages.

Appeals of decisions of the Dallas Landmarks Commission are heard by the Dallas City Plan Commission. The City Plan Commission may reverse, affirm, or modify the decision of the Landmarks Commission or remand the case back for further proceedings.

San Antonio

The City of San Antonio Historic and Design Review Commission consists of 11 members who are appointed by city council and also meet monthly. City council must appoint members that have a background in real estate, economic development, law, engineering, or preservation related professions, such as, but not limited to, architecture, history, architectural history, planning, conservation, prehistoric and historic archeology.

The City of San Antonio's HDRC duties and responsibilities are comparable to the City of Dallas in that they review most types of applications with larger scopes such as changes in materials, additions, new construction, and demolition of historic structures, while minor projects are reviewed at the staff level. When considering a Certificate of Appropriateness, the commission makes a final recommendation to either approve, deny, or approve with stipulations to the city manager or historic preservation officer. The city manager or historic preservation officer may implement such recommendation and approve or deny the Certificate of Appropriateness.

The applicant may appeal the decision of the city manager or historic preservation officer to the city's board of adjustment. The board of adjustment may approve or deny the city manager or historic preservation officer's decision.

For more information on the Historic and Cultural Landmarks Commission, please contact Lorelei Willett, Historic Preservation Officer, Development Services, at 817-392-8015.

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