



Communities across Alberta have significant historic places that citizens would like to recognize and conserve. Municipal Historic Resources are significant places, designated by bylaw, that are protected from unsympathetic alterations or destruction. Designation is not expropriation – it is a tool municipalities use to ensure significant places are preserved.

Historic resource designation

The designation of historic resources has three main functions:

- ① **Legal Protection:** The Provincial and Municipal Historic Resource designation categories legally protect historic places by preventing inappropriate actions that would damage or destroy their heritage value.
- ② **Formal Recognition:** Designation officially acknowledges the significance of historic places in the context of local and/or provincial history. This significance is usually established through a formal evaluation process.
- ③ **Gateway to Funding:** Designation is an opportunity to link historic resource protection with financial and other incentives for heritage property owners. It recognizes that historic resource management is a collaborative undertaking. Property owners may voluntarily relinquish certain property rights in the public interest in return for eligibility for these incentives.

Managing Historic Places

Dispelling Designation Myths



Municipal Heritage
Partnership Program

COMMON MYTHS OWNERS HAVE ABOUT HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION

Designation and its implications are often not well understood.

Historic resource designation is not imposed on heritage property owners. Rather, it is a distinction that many owners are pleased to receive. Only in very exceptional circumstances have places been designated without owners' consent.

Designation does not compel owners to restore a historic place to its original appearance. It simply requires owners to obtain approval for proposed alterations.

Designation does not affect the use of a heritage property—unless a proposed change of use would have a negative impact on a site's integrity.

Designation does not impose any legal restrictions on the sale of a historic place.

Designation has not been shown to reduce property values. On the contrary, the conservation work undertaken by owners with the assistance of grants available for protected resources adds value to the property.

COMMON MYTHS MUNICIPALITIES HAVE ABOUT MUNICIPAL HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION

Designation and its implications are often not well understood.

What can be designated as a Municipal Historic Resource?

Any historic place in the municipality can be designated through a bylaw of Council. MHPP has resources available to help with this process.

If Council designates something as a Municipal Historic Resource, is the Town then responsible for the upkeep of the building?

Only if the Town owns the building. The building owner (whether private or public) is always the steward of the building. The municipality is simply responsible for upholding its designation bylaw.

Is the Town required to compensate owners in exchange for Municipal Historic Resource designation?

The *Historical Resources Act* does include provisions for owner compensation, which applies when the economic value of a property is negatively affected by designation. Sometimes, however, designated properties increase in value. Across Alberta, compensation agreements are often worked out in advance of designation in ways that benefit both owners and municipalities. Owners of Municipal Historic Resources have ongoing access to Provincial conservation funding through the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation. Often municipal compensation is waived by the owner in response to this funding. In addition, many municipalities choose to employ local incentives. The local environment tends to indicate the best type of solutions to the "compensation clause."

Does Municipal Historic Resource designation mean owners can't make any changes to their own properties?

No. Buildings evolve over time, and changes often need to occur to keep a building functional. Designation protects the character-defining elements of the building's historic values. Changes affecting these elements are approved on a case-by-case basis by Town Council or its appointee (i.e., a local heritage advisory committee).