

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q Why would Floral Park want to be listed as a National Register Historic District?

A Floral Park is already an area of local historic significance. Historic buildings are tangible links with the past. They help give a community a sense of identity, stability and orientation. It will help the neighborhood preserve the aesthetic value and character that attracted us to the neighborhood in the first place, and give it the recognition and distinction it deserves. Floral Park is a unique neighborhood within Orange County which simply cannot be recreated. While new developments may try to copy many design and architectural aspects of these homes, we have the originals and there are only 630 of them!

Q What is a National Register Historic District?

A A National Register historic district is a concentration of historic buildings, structures, sites, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development. Not every home in a historic district needs to have particular historical architectural, engineering or cultural distinction, but the collection as a whole must have significance in at least one of these areas. The City of Santa Ana currently has two National Register Districts: Downtown Santa Ana (listed in 1984) and French Park (1999).



Q What is the National Register of Historic Places?

A The "Historic District" designation would be an official recognition of that fact by the City of Santa Ana and the

National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support efforts to protect our historic and archeological resources. The National Register is maintained by the National Park Service. Most historic districts locally and across the nation use the same basic criteria, a combination of the following factors: the history of the neighborhood; the identity of the people who settled the neighborhood (did they play a special role in the city's development, etc.); the age, type, and quality of the structures in the neighborhood; and the extent to which the original structures still exist.

Q What will this cost me?

A No individual homeowner will be charged anything for this process! With the final approval from the general membership, the FPNA has offered to underwrite a portion of the costs of mailing, newsletters, visual surveys, reports, pictures, application and the education of the general neighborhood.

Q Will this help me apply for the Mills Act?

A When the neighborhood files for application for Historic District designation, the level of information needed is similar to what a homeowner needs when they apply for the Mills Act. This is an added bonus, since visual surveys and reports will be conducted on each home as part of the Historic District process, so the individual homeowner will not have to repeat these surveys at their own expense. In addition, if Floral Park is designated a Historic District, the homes that might not have qualified for the Mills Act could come under the umbrella of the Historic District and make applying and getting granted a contract under the Mills Act easier for the individual homeowner.

Q Will I be prevented from remodeling or adding on to my home?

A Not at all! It is recognized that historic properties adapt and change over time; this process is designed to insure that such adaptations do not seriously damage their historic character. This benefits not only the property owner, but all neighbors within the Historic District. Properties listed on the Historic Register are subject to the Secretary of the Interior [SOI] Standards for Preservation,

Rehabilitation, Restoration and Reconstruction of Historic Buildings, but interpretation and application of these guidelines is administered through local governments, which, in Santa Ana, is through the Historic Resources Commission. These guidelines apply to exterior modifications only, and "modification" does not include painting.

Q Will Historic District designation take away my property rights?

A No. To the contrary, a historic district helps protect your property rights. Part of your property's value is based on the character and quality of the neighborhood. Historic District status would help safeguard against inappropriate development that could negatively affect your property's value. These established guidelines should discourage construction of "spec" homes and "McMansions" that are out of character with the style, size, and quality of the existing property. It will not keep you from selling your property to anyone you like, nor will it keep you from remodeling or otherwise improving your property. By sending a message that you care about the character of the neighborhood, you invite the type of buyers who appreciate these homes. In short, historic district designation is one of the best investments the FPNA can make.



Q How does historic district listing affect my home?

A In all likelihood, being listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Floral Park Historic District will not affect your day-to-day living. No additional restrictions will be placed on you or the use of your home, and unless

you choose to open the home for the Floral Park Home Tour in the spring, nobody is going to inspect your property beyond the public sidewalk. For many homeowners life will continue as it always has, with no change in a standard of living (beyond the possibility for making a lot more money in resale sometime down the road). For others, the benefits will include an easier application process for the Mills Act, a voluntary program that helps stabilize and revitalize entire streetscapes throughout California. But for all homeowners in the district, there is a pride and sense of place, knowing that your very special neighborhood will now be acknowledged with the national recognition it so richly deserves.



Q I've heard horror stories of rigid neighborhood design review boards in other places. How will this be different?

A Historic districts are what the neighbors decide they will be. The Floral Park Neighborhood Association is not proposing additional restrictions or limitations for the area. If other areas have design review boards or additional restrictions, it is because at one time the neighbors voted for those rules. This is not the case for Floral Park. All major exterior modifications are already subject to Santa Ana's local building codes and this will not change. Historic District designation will simply add an overlay review to assure that the proposed modification is not inconsistent with the existing historical, cultural or architectural values of the property. And as with any Building Dept. or Planning Commission decision, the city code provides for a public appeal process to the City Council of decisions by the Historic Resources Commission. Essentially, such SOI guidelines include the following:

- *Owners may make compatible use of a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural or architectural values.*
- *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

Q How does this differ from a Mills Act designation?

A The Mills Act is a separate program administered by the State of California and is an important preservation incentive program by granting property tax relief for homeowners of qualified historic properties. Mills Act is State legislation that allows cities to enter into voluntary 10-year agreements with individual property owners. The property owner promises to maintain their historic home and make specific improvements to the property during that time. In exchange, that agreement is forwarded to the County Tax Assessor's office, where the tax base on the home is recalculated. Most Floral Park property owners who have entered into Mills Act contracts have seen significant reductions in their property taxes. The benefits of any tax reduction transfers to new owners of the property.

The inclusion of a home within the boundaries of a National Historic District may assist in the evaluation of a property for purposes of a Mills Act designation, though this does not guarantee qualification. Check Santa Ana's website for Historic Preservation Incentives for more information on Mills Act contracts.

Q What are the boundaries for the proposed Floral Park Historic District?

A The proposed district comprises the existing residential properties within the boundaries of Floral Park, as well as the Flower Street Bridge.

Q What is the process for Historic District registration and how long will this take?

A The process includes an application to the city's Historic Preservation Committee (HPC), review and brief visual survey of homes within the neighborhood, short reports, and pictures; neighborhood meetings and majority approval; research of public records of historic homes; final submission to HPC, submission to the State Office of Historic Preservation; submission to the federal commission. The FPNA plans to outsource some of this process to an architectural historian to complete the inventory of homes in Floral park and complete the application to place the neighborhood on the National Register. It will take the architectural historian team about a year to complete the inventory. The information will then go to the City of Santa Ana, and they will send it to the State Historic Preservation Office, where our application will be reviewed for the National Register listing. This can be a few more months, but we anticipate it will likely take approximately two years to complete the overall process.

