



# MAIN STREET PALESTINE

## **MAIN STREET FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### ***Q. What is Main Street?***

**A:** The Texas Main Street Program, part of the Texas Historical Commission's Community Heritage Development Division, helps Texas cities revitalize their historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts by utilizing preservation and economic development strategies.

The program began in 1981 and is affiliated with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Texas Main Street Program is among the most successful downtown revitalization programs in the nation, and has assisted more than 130 Texas cities through the program. The program has resulted in the private reinvestment of more than \$860 million in Texas downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts, the creation of more than 18,200 jobs and the establishment of more than 4,600 new businesses.

### ***Q. Does the Main Street program award grants?***

No, Main Street is a self-help program. Cities, in most cases, fund the program. Local incentive grant programs are often established, however.

## **HISTORIC DISTRICT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Q. What is a Historic District?**

A: A Historic District is an area of the community designated by the City of Palestine or The National Park Service's *National Register of Historic Places*. Many neighborhoods vividly illustrate the City of Palestine's history and physical make up.

### **Q. What is the National Register of Historic Places?**

A. The *National Register of Historic Places* is the Nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

### **Q. Why are Historic Districts Designated?**

A. Historic Districts are designated for a variety of reasons that relate to the social, architectural, or cultural significance of the area. Local historic districts are regulated by the City of Palestine's Historical Landmark Commission. The goal of these districts is to preserve the unique character of a district or neighborhood.

National Register sites and National Register Historic Districts recognize important historical areas. No restrictions are placed on buildings included on the National Register, although owners of commercial properties may be eligible for tax incentives for appropriate rehabilitation of those properties. The National Register's Heritage Preservation Services division and the City of Palestine's Historic Preservation Officer can provide more information.

- **HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION IS DESIGNED TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE EXISTING CHARACTER OF A COMMUNITY**

### **Q. Are there any Historic Districts in the City of Palestine?**

A. Yes. Currently there are **FIVE (5) Historic Districts** in the City of Palestine:

- Four *National Register Historic Districts* in the City of Palestine:
  - *North Side Historic District\**
  - *South Side Historic District*
  - *Micheaux Park Historic District*
  - *Old Town Residential Historic District*
- Three local *City of Palestine Historic Districts*:
  - *Downtown Historic District*
  - *North Side Historic District*
  - *South Side Historic District*
  - *Micheaux Park Historic District*

**Q. What does having a property in a historic district mean for me as a property owner?**

A. If your property lies within a local historic district, the law protects the district by establishing a special review process. This process ensures that proposed work is compatible with the nature of the historic property and with the character of the historic district as a whole.

**Q. What kind of changes can I make to my property?**

A. Plans for new construction, exterior alterations, demolition, or subdivision of land that require a city permit must be reviewed before any action may be taken. This includes actions such as additions to existing buildings, removal of porches, erection of a sign or retaining wall, and additions of antennae or roof decks. Demolition and new construction are also reviewed. Photographs and construction documents will be required for the review process.

When you apply for a permit, your application is automatically forwarded to the City of Palestine Historic Preservation Officer. Plans are reviewed and forwarded to the Historical Landmark Commission for comment and decision. This 9-member commission is appointed by the mayor and holds a public hearing at 4 PM on the third Tuesday of every month.

**Q. What can I use as guidelines for changes?**

A. The professional staff at the City of Palestine Historic Preservation Office can consult with you about proposed changes to your property. In your early project planning stages, call them with questions, for advice, or for a copy of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. These standards are based on a common sense approach to protecting and enhancing historic structures.

**Q. What are the benefits to me?**

A. Owning property in an historic district ensures that your neighborhood will be protected from unmanaged change. Because the review process requires public comment, private citizens are given more control over development and alterations in their neighborhood than in areas where no historic district is in place.

In addition, if your property is commercial or income-producing, you may be eligible for significant tax benefits. The Economic Recovery Tax Act of April 1981 (amended in 1986) provides for a 20 percent federal tax credit for rehabilitation work done to historic properties.

**Q. If my neighborhood is proposed for historic designation, do I have any say in whether it is established? What is the process?**

A. Yes. Public comment is an important part of the designation process. By law, property owners in a proposed historic district must be notified of the proposal so they may testify for or against it during hearings of the Historical Landmark Commission. Neighborhood public forums (including both owners and lessees) to discuss the effect of the proposed designation are also required.

**Q. Will the value of my property increase if it becomes part of an historic district? How about my taxes?**

A. These are two of the most frequently asked questions about historic district designation.

Neighborhood change is driven by forces that occur independently of historic district designation. Economic pressures of development and shifting population trends are what generally increase property values.

**Q. Won't my neighborhood lose its ethnic character? Will historic district designation mean displacement or gentrification?**

A. Changes in the residential make up of a community are part of the constant evolution of a city. They are caused by a complex set of forces--including new development, ease of transportation, and changing urban lifestyles--*not* specifically by historic district designation.

Districts are designated for a variety of reasons that relate to the social, architectural, or cultural significance of the area. Historic district designation is designed to protect and enhance the *existing* character of a community.

**Q. Can the upper stories of my building be used for residential?**

A. Yes, if the property is in the "CBD" Zoning District.

**Q. Who can I contact for more information?**

➤ **The City of Palestine Historic Preservation Officer**

504 North Queen Street  
Palestine, Texas 75801  
903/ 731-8442 [nplumb@palestine-tx.org](mailto:nplumb@palestine-tx.org)

➤ **Texas Historical Commission**

PO Box 1226  
Austin, Texas 78711-2276  
512/ 463-6100 <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/>

➤ **National Trust for Historic Preservation**

1785 Massachusetts Ave.  
Washington, DC 20036  
202/ 588-6000 <http://www.nationaltrust.org/>

➤ **National Register of Historic Places** <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/>