



Making a difference in San Antonio neighborhoods!

Neighborhood Conservation Districts



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Questions about the NCD program may be addressed to:

City of San Antonio, Planning & Development Services Department
Neighborhood and Urban Design Section
PO Box 839966
San Antonio, TX 78283-3966

Tel: 210-207-7873, 0139, 7815

Fax: 210-207-7897

Email: Gary.Edenburn@sanantonio.gov
sidra.maldonado@sanantonio.gov

Is at least 75% of your neighborhood more than 25 years old?

Does your neighborhood have distinctive features that are important to conserve?

Neighborhood Conservation Districts could be the answer!

A Neighborhood Conservation District is the latest tool in the list of resources available to neighborhoods. In the form of a zoning overlay designation, NCDs are used to address appropriateness of new construction in both residential and commercial neighborhoods.

The development of Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCD) in San Antonio responds to the 1997 Master Plan and 1998 Community Action Revitalization Group (CRAG) recommendations. The NCD addresses concerns about protection of neighborhood character for new residential and commercial construction.

Neighborhood Conservation Districts identify geographic areas in context of the total streetscape.



Neighborhood Conservation District designation, whether used to protect distinctive architecture or natural features, stabilize property values, or deter incompatible development, is a neighborhood revitalization planning tool that provides:

- a more predictable course of development for both neighborhood property owners and the development community,
- an efficient building permit process without the necessity of a Commission review, and
- a means of self-determination for residential and commercial neighborhood organizations.



Neighborhood-based design standards address the character-defining elements of local identity and perception, and may reflect a specific architectural style and/or the character of the neighborhood block.

Neighborhood Conservation Districts

Q & A



What are the benefits of NCD designation?

Neighborhood Conservation District designation protects and strengthens the desirable and unique physical features, design characteristics, and recognized identity, charm and flavor of neighborhoods. It offers a level of “protection” for property values, helping to prevent blight caused by incompatible, insensitive development.

Does a NCD affect my taxes?

Neighborhood character within a NCD will generally maintain a higher level of stability; however, NCD designation does not initiate tax increases. This is handled through the Bexar Appraisal District.

Does a NCD affect the use of my property?

Neighborhood Conservation Districts are an “overlay” zoning, and as such, do not affect the use of property. The underlying base zoning remains intact; for example, in an R-5 (NCD) zoning classification, the R-5 designation still regulates zoning use.

Is a NCD for residential or commercial properties?

Both. The boundaries may include:

- residential properties,
- commercial properties, or
- residential & commercial properties.

How do I know if my neighborhood or commercial district is eligible for a NCD?

Generally, the criteria for designation includes:

- a minimum of one blockface, and
- at least 75% of the structures in the area are at least 25 years old, and
- At least 75% of the area is presently improved, and
- the area possesses distinctive features that create a cohesive, identifiable setting, character or association.

Who is able to initiate a NCD?

There are several ways to initiate the process. Property owners may initiate the process through a petition of either:

- property owners representing 51% of the land area within the district, or
- 51% of the property owners within the district.

The City’s Planning & Community Development Department can also initiate the process if:

- a Neighborhood or Community Plan has already identified the NCD as a planning tool, or
- a City or community targeted revitalization program has identified a NCD need.

Is my neighborhood already designated?

San Antonio has many neighborhoods that are designated as either local historic districts, or are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These designations are different than a NCD designation, and maintain different standards.

If my neighborhood is eligible for Historic District status, should we consider a NCD designation?

If a neighborhood maintains the necessary architectural or historical integrity to be eligible for a historic district, it would be encouraged to pursue historic district designation, rather than a NCD designation. However, the neighborhood property owners would generally make that decision.



Are there design standards required for NCD designation?

Yes, one of the most important components of the NCD designation is a set of established design standards. The standards, however, are developed by property owners, unique to each NCD, and determined as part of the application process.

What are design standards?

Required design standards include characteristics such as building height, size, massing, principal elevation features, lot size/coverage, parking, setbacks, roof line/pitch and paving. Optional standards might include features such as signage, building materials, landscaping and natural features, fences/walls, building orientation, driveway and sidewalk location.



Who decides what design standards are important for my neighborhood?

The property owners located within the NCD determine the unique “character-defining” elements that are important to them.

Do the design standards apply to new construction or rehabilitation of existing properties?

Both, although the design standards primarily affect those properties where new construction will occur. Rehabilitation projects (beyond ordinary maintenance and repair) that affect the street facade, will also be required to adhere to the design standards.

If my property is in a NCD, will I have to rehabilitate my property to conform to the design standards?

No, property owners are not required to rehabilitate their property upon designation. However, if they elect to rehabilitate their property after the NCD designation, they would be required to conform to the NCD standards.

What if I can't afford the requirements of the design standards?

The standards are determined by the same property owners who will be using them, therefore, the local aesthetic and economic conditions become part of the determining factors for the design standards. With the exception of specific “character-defining” building materials determined unique to the neighborhood, the design standards generally address the broader elements that define the streetscape.

Will the design standards address paint color?

No, repainting is considered ordinary maintenance and repair, and is not regulated.

Is demolition allowed in a NCD?

Unless a structure already maintains a protected status, a demolition permit application will be processed in the same manner as any other demolition permit application.

Once a NCD is established, how do I get my project approved? Is a commission presentation required?

The NCD review process is an administrative process, without a commission review. Project plans will be forwarded to the NCD staff through the standard building permit process. A Certificate of Compliance (CoC) is issued if the project conforms to the design standards. If not, the applicant is issued a Notification of Non-Compliance, and may reapply after conforming to the standards, or appeal the administrative decision to the Board of Adjustment.

How long does administrative review take?

The NCD review process is completed within five days. However, if project plans change after the CoC is issued, it is voided, and the review process would be initiated again.

Is there a charge for NCD project review?

Depends. For commercial properties with project within an NCD there is a plan review fee. For residential project, there is no plan review fee.