

# TOWN OF PALM BEACH

Information for Town Council Meeting on: October 14, 2020

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To: Mayor and Town Council

From: Laura Groves van Onna, Historic Preservation Planner, PZB

Cc: Kirk Blouin, Town Manager  
Wayne Bergman, Director of Planning, Zoning and Building

Re: Incentives for Landmarks

Date: October 1, 2020

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## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Town Council review the information contained herein regarding incentives for Landmarks, consider, discuss, and provide guidance on next steps.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Staff has received expressions of interest from the Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach in assessing current benefits available to Landmarked properties and what capacity exists to further incentivize Landmarks.

Please see below for a list of current benefits available at Local, State, and Federal levels:

- Tax Abatement for Ten Years – ad valorem tax exemption based on the cost of rehabilitation project(s).
- Florida Building Code and FEMA Exemption – substantial improvements are exempt from the need to elevate buildings in large renovations.
- Landmark Plaque to place on exterior wall.
- Expedited plan review and permitting of Landmark projects.
- Florida Building Code Equivalency Program – allows historic buildings to deviate slightly from prescriptive building code requirements.
- Certified Local Government (CLG) Grants and Assistance Program.
- Florida Coastal Partnerships Initiative – grants and funding to improve disaster-prone historic resources.
- Florida Mitigation Assistance Program – funding through the State of Florida and FEMA for retrofitting historic properties to become less prone to flooding.
- Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program – 20% rehabilitation tax credit for a building that is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places or that is a contributor to a historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

At present, Local benefits that the Town of Palm Beach has to offer include: 1) tax abatement for ten years; 2) Florida Building Code and FEMA exemption; 3) a Landmark plaque; 4) expedited plan review and permitting of Landmark projects; and 5) references to State grants, funding and Federal tax incentives. Incentives for Landmarked properties provided by the Town have the potential to be expanded upon.

Speaking with representatives from the Preservation Foundation, the Commission Chair, and fellow staff, it is apparent that the greatest potential benefit to owners of Landmarked properties would be some form of relief from the Code of Ordinances as it relates to zoning. For example, when reviewing an application for rehabilitation of a Landmarked property that would normally require a variance, we could consider providing relief from that requirement – with conditions. These conditions might include that the proposed project must a) protect, contribute to, and not detract from the historic character of the property; b) meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation; c) be considered for potential impacts on neighbors; and d) not exceed certain limits, perhaps customized to certain property types. Further research and discussion regarding these limits could take place.

Staff is seeking direction from the Town Council with regard to next steps in consideration of incentives for Landmarked properties. The goal is to assess the comfort level of the Town Council with regard to any proposed zoning relief that could be applied to Landmarked properties as a further incentive to owners. Staff would also like to emphasize the collective gain inherent in further incentivizing Landmarks. This could be a win for an individual property owner and for the Town as a whole by encouraging preservation, enhancement, and promotion of the character that defines Palm Beach.