

15.459 Areas of historical significance.

The provisions of [sections 15.445 through 15.458](#) do not apply within the limits of a city. However, in order for a city to designate an area which is deemed to merit preservation as an area of historical significance, the following shall apply:

1. An area of historical significance shall be proposed by the governing body of the city on the governing body's own motion or upon receipt by the governing body of a petition signed by residents of the city. The city shall submit a description of the proposed area of historical significance or the petition describing the proposed area, if the proposed area is a result of the receipt of a petition, to the state historic preservation officer who shall determine if the proposed area meets the criteria in [subsection 2](#) and may make recommendations concerning the proposed area. Any recommendations made by the state historic preservation officer shall be made available by the city to the public for viewing during normal working hours at a city government place of public access.

2. A city shall not designate an area as an area of historical significance unless it contains contiguous pieces of property under diverse ownership which meets the criteria specified in [section 15.445, subsection 1](#), paragraphs "a" through "f".

3. A city may provide by ordinance for the establishment of a commission to deal with matters involving areas of historical significance but shall provide by ordinance for such commission upon the enactment of the ordinance designating an area as an area of historical significance as required in [subsection 4](#). Upon the establishment of the commission the city shall provide by ordinance for the method of appointment, the number, and terms, of members of the commission and for the duties and powers of the commission. The commission shall contain not less than three members. The members of the commission shall be appointed with due regard to proper representation of residents and property owners of the city and their relevant fields of knowledge including but not limited to history, urban planning, architecture, archaeology, law, and sociology. At least one resident of each designated area of historical significance shall be appointed to the commission. Cities with a population of more than fifty thousand shall not appoint more than one-third of the members to the commission of an area of historical significance that are members of a city zoning commission appointed pursuant to [chapter 414](#). The commission shall have the power to approve or deny applications for proposed alterations to exterior features within an area designated as an area of historical significance. An aggrieved party may appeal the commission's action to the governing body of the city. If not satisfied by the decision of the governing body, the party may appeal within sixty days of the governing body's decision to the district court for the county in which the designated area is located. On appeal the governing body or the district court as the case may be shall consider whether the commission has exercised its powers and followed the guidelines established by the law and ordinance, and whether the commission's action was patently arbitrary or capricious.

4. An area shall be designated an area of historical significance upon enactment of an ordinance by the city. Prior to enactment of the ordinance or enactment of an amendment to the ordinance, the governing body of the city shall submit the ordinance or amendment to the state historic preservation officer for review and recommendations.

[C81, §303.34; [82 Acts, ch 1238, §19](#)]

[89 Acts, ch 145, §1](#); [92 Acts, ch 1204, §7](#); [2019 Acts, ch 59, §84](#); [2020 Acts, ch 1063, §130](#); [2023 Acts, ch 19, §2102, 2125](#)

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Referred to in [§8C.7A, 414.2, 427.16](#)