

South Wedge Historic District & Historic Tax Credits Available to Residents

By Phillip Borrelli and Tom Kicior

The recent announcement of the South Wedge Historic District's listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places is big news for homeowners and property owners in the South Wedge. Many owners within the district are now eligible to obtain State and Federal Historic Tax Credits to update or rehab their property.

The South Wedge Historic District, which is shown on the map, contains 363 buildings. The district spans most of the South Ave commercial strip from Comfort Street to Cypress Street including many surrounding residential streets. Within the area, 363 buildings contribute to the district's significance and are therefore eligible for historic tax credits. Only 17 properties are considered "non-contributing," either due to their age or substantial alteration and are not eligible for tax credits.

The District Nomination was the result of the South Wedge Historic Resource Survey, created by Bero Architecture PLLC and funded by: The Rochester Area Community Foundation; The South Wedge Planning Committee; and Preserve New York, a grant program of the Preservation League of New York State and the New York State Council on the Arts.

A historic district consists of buildings, structures and sites grouped together as being architecturally or historically related. The State and Federal government does not interfere with an owner's right to remodel, alter, paint, manage, sell or demolish the property. Listing on the State and National Registers is different from having a local landmark designation or being located in a local Preservation district. Local landmarks and Preservation districts are regulated by the local government's preservation code. Rochester's preservation code contains restrictions and approval requirements associated with making certain exterior changes to a building. Because this is a State/National District, properties in the South Wedge Historic District do not have any additional review or regulations imposed that were not already in place, unless a property owner chooses to take advantage of the available tax credits.

Owners who choose to utilize the historic tax credit programs must have their projects approved by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). SHPO reviews proposed work in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Ultimately, SHPO's goal is to preserve the historic character of the building. Work that typically qualifies for tax credits include repairs to porches, walls, masonry, ceilings, windows and doors; mechanical systems, roof replacements; even painting the exterior or interior.

NYS Homeowner Tax Credit

This program provides a 20% tax credit of rehab costs. A tax credit is much different from a tax write-off. A tax credit reduces the taxes you owe at the end of the year.

In order to receive the tax credits the home, and work must qualify. If the historic credits exceed a homeowner's State income tax and their adjusted gross income is under \$60,000, the excess can be paid as a refund.

The State Historic Preservation Office can assist you in determining if your home and project qualify.

Commercial Property Tax Credit

Both the State and Federal government provide owners of income-producing properties (including apartments) historic tax credits equal to 20% of rehab costs. Starting in 2015, if NYS historic tax credits exceed a taxpayer's income, the excess will be able to be paid as a refund.

Stay tuned for details regarding an information and Q&A session that will be held with the help of the State Historic Preservation Office and the Preservation League of New York State in the winter. For more information about the South Wedge Historic District and Historic Resource Survey visit www.swpc.org.

For technical assistance on how you can utilize Historic Tax Credits, and whether your projects are eligible please contact Sloane Bullough at the NYS Historic Preservation Office Field Services at 518- 237-8643 or sloane.bullough@parks.ny.gov