

The Historic Neighborhood of Federal Hill A City of Baltimore CHAP District

Baltimore, known for its rich history and diverse architecture, boasts several neighborhoods designated as CHAP (Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation) historic districts. CHAP is an agency of the Baltimore City Department of Planning and is charged with designating and preserving the historic character. CHAP also administers the program of granting tax credits for residents and developers that renovate in concert with their historic guidelines. In 2017 residents of Federal Hill, through their neighborhood association, successfully petitioned the City to zone our neighborhood historic. For residents lucky enough to live in these areas, there are numerous benefits and responsibilities that come with being a CHAP district.

CHAP districts showcase a blend of historic structures and unique architecture. Living among these well-preserved buildings provides residents with a sense of charm, history and character that is not found in modern developments. Residents have the privilege of being surrounded by tangible reminders of Baltimore's past, fostering a deeper appreciation for the city's roots and development. Preserving the historic significance and keeping future development within Federal Hill's architectural context has historically resulted in increased property values. This makes living in these areas a sound investment for homeowners. Residents of CHAP districts often develop a strong sense of community pride. Many become avid stewards of the area's history and work together to maintain its unique character. And finally CHAP districts contribute significantly to the preservation of Baltimore's local identity. These neighborhoods serve as living museums, reflecting the city's heritage and enriching the overall cultural landscape.

These advantages also come with some responsibilities. One of the primary responsibilities of living in a CHAP district is following its preservation guidelines. These guidelines are designed to protect the historical integrity of the area through reviews and approval of exterior modifications and building renovations. These guidelines are accessible at:

https://chap.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/CHAP%20Design%20Guidelines_2022.07.06_APA%20Version_opt.pdf). Failure to obtain CHAP approval can result in citation and fines. To receive the appropriate authorization for proposed improvements requires the completion of an Authorization to Proceed (ATP) which can be found at:

https://chap.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/ATP%20Application_November%202021.pdf). If an improvement requires a building permit, the permit will not be issued without an ATP. Residents in CHAP districts also have an obligation to maintain their properties in a manner consistent with the neighborhood's historical character. This might require periodic restoration work and ensuring the preservation of architectural elements.

Living in a CHAP historic district in Baltimore is a privilege that comes with significant benefits and responsibilities. Residents have the opportunity to enjoy the architectural beauty, cultural heritage, and community pride that these neighborhoods offer. Simultaneously, they carry the responsibility of preserving and safeguarding the historical integrity of the area for future generations. By striking a balance between the advantages and responsibilities, residents of CHAP districts contribute to the preservation and enhancement of Baltimore's unique cultural identity, making the city a more vibrant and meaningful place to call home.

If you have questions, feel free to contact the Federal Hill Neighborhood Association's Architectural Review Committee at preservationfh@gmail.com.

