What are the criteria for determining if a home is historic?

Contributing homes within the District are based on age of the home but also consider that sufficient original materials or integrity of the home remains. A “contributing” home is a home located in the District that was built in 1952 or earlier and retains sufficient integrity and materials of the original home. Although each home is different, some of the features considered included retention of the original windows and doors, siding, massing (i.e., shape and size), and other architectural attributes.

My home is in the District and was built in or before 1952 but was determined to be “non-contributing”. Can that determination be changed?

No. The FAA and the IHPD determined which homes are “contributing” based on criteria established when the District was created. To remain consistent with the District’s criteria, the determinations are binding.

What is the difference between a standard sound insulation package and a sound insulation package for an eligible historic home? Is one better than the other?

A sound insulation package for an eligible historic home meets the U.S. Department of Interior’s standards for preserving the historical character of a home. Sound insulation packages for historic homes were developed in coordination with the FAA and the IHPD. There is no significant difference in the quality of the sound insulation packages; the insulation package for an eligible historic home may be comprised of different components so that the historical character of the home is preserved.

How was the approach for sound-insulating “contributing” homes established?

The approach for sound-insulating “contributing” homes is based on the experience and results gained from a pilot program conducted under the guidance of the IHPD. Through that process, the IHPD confirmed a comprehensive approach to be used for every “contributing” home, and the measures and materials to be used consistent with the IHPD’s criteria for preserving the existing historic character of the “contributing” home.

How will I know if my home is selected for sound insulation?

Homes eligible for the RSIP receive a letter from the CDA. To find out if your home is eligible, please call 773-894-3255 and leave a voicemail. You can find your home’s location in relation to the 65 DNL of the OMP Build-Out Noise Contour at the CDA’s website: www.flychicago.com/OHare/EN/AboutUs/NoiseManagement/RSIP/Property-Locator.aspx.

Who can I contact with questions about the District and the “contributing” and “non-contributing” designations?

For questions related to the District, please contact the IHPD, Carol J. Dyson, AIA, Chief Architect & Tax Incentives Coordinator (217-524-0276).

Background

Since 1995, the Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) has administered the Residential Sound Insulation Program (RSIP) in communities surrounding Chicago O’Hare International Airport (O’Hare). As one of the most aggressive programs in the world, it has provided over $339 million in federal and airport funds to sound-insulate over 11,500 homes (or dwelling units). In 1996, the O’Hare Noise Compatibility Commission (ONCC) was formed to provide input and oversight to the implementation of all noise programs, including the RSIP.

Purpose

The RSIP is designed to reduce the effects of aircraft noise inside the home. The goal of the RSIP is to achieve a quieter environment and better quality of life within the homes in the highest impacted areas affected by aircraft noise. The noise reduction goals of the RSIP are to reduce aircraft noise levels in residences by at least 5 decibels (dB) and to bring the interior noise level below 45 dB. By properly sound-insulating eligible homes, homeowners not only gain a quieter interior, but may also benefit from long-lasting improvements and increased efficiency in their heating and cooling utilities. The home must meet the following criteria to be eligible for the RSIP:

1. Home must have been constructed before September 30, 2005;
2. Home’s annual day/night average sound level is equal to or greater than 65 decibels (65 DNL) within the FAA-approved O’Hare Modernization Program (OMP) Build-Out Noise Contour as defined by the FAA’s 2005 Record of Decision for the O’Hare Modernization Environmental Impact Statement, except in cases of block-rounding described below; and
3. Home must be on a block where an individual home is within the 65 DNL noise contour, and in such cases, homes on both sides of the street and up to the next intersection or street change are eligible.

Dwelling units can be in single-family, multi-family, or mixed use buildings. In cases of mixed use buildings, only the residential portion of the building will be sound-insulated.

Norwood Park Historical District

Phase 17C of the O’Hare RSIP includes the Norwood Park Historical District (District), which is listed on the National Register of Historical Places (National Register). The District was listed on the National Register in 2002 under Criterion A (Community Planning and Development) and Criterion C (Architecture). The District is roughly bounded by Harlem Avenue to the west, Nagle Avenue to the east, Bryn Mawr Avenue to the south, and Avondale Street to the north. The historical designation is based on the historical character of the entire district and not based on individual homes. The southwest portion of the District is located within the 65 DNL of the OMP Build-Out Noise Contour. Homes eligible for sound insulation that are located within the district have been determined as either “contributing” or “non-contributing” to the historic character of the District.

Historical Determination and Eligibility

In October 2002, the 41st Ward of the City of Chicago submitted a National Register nomination form for the District. The form identified a total of 841 buildings located within the District. Of the 841 buildings in the District, 259 buildings were eligible for the RSIP. Of the 259 eligible buildings, 159 buildings were identified as contributing to the character of the District, and 100 buildings were identified as non-contributing because they were constructed after 1952, which is the “Period of Significance” as defined in Section 8 of the National Register nomination form, or because substantial alterations to the home were made.
Funding
The FAA provides 80% of the funding using Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grants, while the City of Chicago provides the remaining 20% using approved airport revenue sources.

Types of Insulation
Once a home is enrolled in the RSIP, there are several measures that can be done to the home in order to reduce the impact of aircraft noise. Typical sound insulation measures could include:

- Windows (modify existing or replace with acoustically rated);
- Solid-core wood entry door (known as prime doors);
- Replacement of sliding glass doors;
- Acoustically-rated storm doors;
- Solid wood baffle box air conditioner covers

Note: Work will only be performed in dwelling units. Common areas of multi-unit buildings such as shared laundry rooms, hallways, entrances, stairwells, etc. are not included in the RSIP.

Street Facing Façade Designation
The Illinois Historic Preservation Division (IHPD) was consulted during the development of the historic home treatment process, and its primary concern was to maintain as much of the historic character and existing materials on the street facing façades of the contributing homes as possible.

In coordination with the IHPD, the RSIP defines the street facing façade as follows: any exterior façade of a building located directly adjacent to a road or street designated for vehicle travel. For the sake of continuity on the interior of a room, the street facing façade will be extended to include corner rooms that contain both street facing and non-street facing facades.

Each window and door opening in a home will be associated with either the street facing or non-street facing façade and additional information will be gathered regarding the condition, operational style, and material in order to determine a treatment.

Pre-Construction Activities
The CDA invites homeowners to attend an informational briefing in order to learn about the sound insulation process. Participation in the briefing is for eligible homes by invitation only. The CDA maintains an RSIP Showroom at the Aviation Administration Building (10510 W. Zemke Road, Chicago, IL 60666) with some full-size samples of windows, prime doors, and storm doors. For every home participating in the RSIP, a home inventory appointment is scheduled to select a sound insulation package that is most beneficial to the dwelling and to take rough measurements of the windows and doors.

Construction and Post-Construction Activities
After a construction contract is awarded, a field measurement appointment is scheduled for each home. At this appointment, the construction contractor takes exact measurements of every window and door opening and confirms the homeowner’s selections. All acoustical doors and windows in the O’Hare RSIP are custom-made for each home.

The sound insulation construction work in each home takes two weeks. At the end of construction, each homeowner receives a labor and material warranty package for the work performed on the home.

Noise audits are performed on 20% of the homes. A post-construction noise audit will take place in homes where pre-construction noise audits were performed. Noise audits are performed to determine if the building modifications have decreased the interior noise level.