

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is design review?

The Historic Preservation Ordinance provides for a design review process. Design review consists of the evaluation of any proposed exterior work upon a property within a locally designated historic district. Both minor and extensive projects must be reviewed and approved prior to beginning work. The design review process is often triggered by a building permit application; however, building permits can not be issued until design review is complete. Although some types of work projects, such as installation of a walkway or a fence, may not require a building permit, design review is still required.

Which properties require design review?

All locally designated properties require design review. Locally designated properties include all properties within locally designated historic districts and any locally designated individual properties. Please note that design review covers both historic and non-historic properties in a historic district. The city's Official Zoning Map shows all designated districts and properties. A call to the City Hall can confirm whether or not a property is locally designated.

What type of work requires design review?

All work involving a change to an exterior feature of a locally designated property requires design review. Projects that physically alter the property include but are not limited to: changes in site or setting; repair or rehabilitation; new construction or additions; and relocation or demolition.

Neither interior alterations nor a change in the use of the property require design review. The Historic Preservation Ordinance applies only to the external aspects of the property and regulates neither zoning nor land use. The HPC does not review planting or repainting. Ordinary maintenance does not require design review.

What is a Certificate of Appropriateness?

When planning a work project, an owner must submit a completed application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). Applications are available from and should be returned to the city clerk. Monthly meetings of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) are advertised in the local newspaper. Public notice necessitates that applications to be submitted in advance of the meeting. Contact City Hall for deadlines.

Utilizing design guidelines and the general standards for the preservation of historic properties, the HPC must decide to approve or deny the application. If the application is approved, a Certificate of Appropriateness is issued and design review is complete.

What should an application include?

In order that the Commission may make an informed decision, completed applications must be accompanied by support materials. Illustrations may include site plans, elevations, and floor plans drawn to a standard architectural scale, e.g. 1/4" = 1'. Photographs of the building, site, and neighboring properties are also helpful. Support materials may differ according to the type and size of the project. The application and support materials must be submitted at the same time.

What could happen if work begins before design review?

If work is initiated prior to approval of a COA application or to obtaining a building permit, a stop work order may be issued. If these requirements are not met, the property owner may face fines and/or an order to restore the original condition of the property.

Are there any other review procedures?

Review of projects by the HPC may not be the only review required before work may proceed. Other city departments and commissions may be required to examine a project for compliance with existing zoning regulations, building codes, and sign or landscape ordinances.