



DC Historic Preservation Review Process For Property Owners

The District of Columbia's historic preservation review process is intended to give guidance and technical assistance to property owners early in their planning for a rehabilitation or construction project. The process allows property owners to informally discuss their project with a preservation specialist at the Historic Preservation Office (HPO), to learn more about their historic property, and to ask questions about products, services, or techniques appropriate for the renovation of older buildings. HPO will explain the preservation standards and review process, identify any potential preservation or design concerns, and work collaboratively with the property owner to explore mutually agreeable solutions. If it is necessary to forward a project to the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB), HPO will advise property owners how to prepare their submission and presentation.

Historic Preservation Office (HPO)

The HPO is a division of the District of Columbia's Office of Planning and is responsible for administering the city's preservation program. HPO staff includes preservation and design specialists, architects, planners, and building inspectors. Under authority granted by the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB), HPO is able to approve in-kind repair and replacement, small additions, and minor alterations that do not affect the character of historic property.

The first step for a property owner is to contact HPO to briefly describe the project. Depending on the project's size and complexity, HPO will advise the property owner on what type of information will be necessary for the review, whether a preservation specialist will need to conduct a site visit, and whether the work can be approved administratively by HPO or will need to be filed for HPRB review.

If HPO can approve the work, the property owner may submit a building permit application to the DC Department of Buildings (DOB). Once DOB forwards the application to HPO, it can typically be approved within 1-3 days of receipt.

- To discuss a project or make an appointment, please consult "HPO staff contacts" for the preservation specialist for your neighborhood at www.planning.dc.gov or send an email to historic.preservation@dc.gov.
- Permit applications must include photographs of the property, plans, specifications, and a narrative that describes the proposed work. HPO staff can advise you of the extent of plans you'll need based on the proposed scope of work.
- Owners of residential properties can apply for building permits using DOB's Permit Wizard. Owners of all other types of properties can apply using the Citizen Access Portal. For more information visit www.dob.dc.gov.
- Preservation standards and design guidelines can be found at www.planning.dc.gov.
- Property located in the Georgetown Historic District is subject to review by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA). To file for CFA review, email the application and plans to historic.preservation@dc.gov. Please consult www.cfa.gov for more information, including filing requirements and deadlines.

Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB)

The HPRB is comprised of nine District residents appointed by the Mayor and includes preservation and design professionals and citizens selected from the general public. The Board advises the Mayor on matters affecting historic property, establishes general preservation policies and principles, and designates historic landmarks and districts. The HPRB meets once a month at a public meeting to review applications for historic designation and for work affecting designated historic property.

Review by HPRB is generally only necessary for larger projects, such as sizable additions, major alterations, new construction, or any work not specifically delegated to HPO for approval. For these types of projects, the property owner needs to file an Application for Historic Preservation Review, requesting either a Concept or Permit review. Concept review is encouraged for most proposals submitted to the HPRB, as it provides an opportunity for property owners to obtain approval for the general approach to a project prior to committing the resources for full architectural drawings. Submissions for permit review require complete architectural plans necessary for the issuance of a building permit.

Filing an application for HPRB review

The Application for Historic Preservation Review is intended to provide factual and narrative information about the proposal and is forwarded to the HPRB. The submission requirements for drawings and photographs are described on the application and can be tailored to the specifics of a project depending on its size and complexity. All applications must include photographs of the subject property and plans sufficient to document the proposed work. HPO is aware of the costs associated with preparing drawings and can assist applicants in identifying the appropriate level of documentation necessary for HPRB to review the project.

- The Application for Historic Preservation Review can be downloaded at www.planning.dc.gov or requested by emailing historic.preservation@dc.gov.
- To be considered by HPRB at its next monthly meeting, an application must be filed by the filing deadline.
- Applications and plans must be filed electronically by emailing them to historic.preservation@dc.gov. If you are not able to file electronically or your files are too large, please email and we will make alternative arrangements.
- Within five days of receipt of your plans, HPO will email you an invoice with instructions for paying the filing fee and information on fulfilling your requirements to provide public notice of the project.

Public notice and participation

HPRB review is an open process that provides for public input. HPO provides public notice of filed applications to Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs), community organizations, and any individuals who request the monthly notice, and applicants are required to post notice of their pending project on their property and to provide copies of their plans to abutting property owners.

By law, the HPRB gives “great weight” to the position of an ANC, and carefully considers the views of community organizations and concerned citizens. ANCs typically expect consultation to occur before HPRB meeting to review the project and may request that a case be deferred for up to 45 days if the commission wants more time for consultation. While applicants are not required to notify or seek approval from neighborhood organizations or their neighbors, they are encouraged to share their plans in the spirit of mutual respect and maintenance of good neighborly relations.

Scheduling cases for the HPRB meeting

Prior to the HPRB meeting, HPO will notify the applicant whether their project has been scheduled on the Board's consent calendar or agenda. Projects on the consent calendar are uncontested cases for which HPO is recommending approval and for which there have been no objections received from an ANC, community organization, or individual. The agenda is generally reserved for larger projects or projects about which concerns have been raised by HPO, the ANC, community organizations or individuals that require HPRB to determine whether the proposal is consistent with preservation standards.

- The HPRB agenda, which includes a specific time assigned to each case, the consent calendar and HPO reports to the Board are posted on the HPO website five days prior to the HPRB meeting.
- Applicants and members of the public wishing to testify at the HPRB meeting must register at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. Instructions for testifying will be provided by email to those who have registered.
- Applicants with projects on the consent calendar do not need to attend the HPRB meeting or make a presentation.
- Applicants with projects on the agenda are strongly encouraged to attend the meeting and are given an opportunity to present their case directly to HPRB. An applicant may also be represented by their architect or contractor at the meeting.
- Applicants, ANCs, or those registered to speak before the Board may submit PowerPoint slides to supplement their testimony to the Board. Slides must be submitted five days in advance of the meeting.

The HPRB meeting

HPRB meetings are currently being held via WebEx and may be accessed via links posted on the HPO website. When an agenda case is called, HPO will summarize its report and the relevant preservation issues. Applicants or their representative will be asked to present the project through drawings, photographs, or other presentation materials that have been pre-loaded into a PowerPoint presentation, and to address any issues raised in the HPO report. Following the applicant's presentation, testimony is accepted from public agencies and ANCs, community organizations, and individuals. Prior to taking a vote, Board members often ask questions, make individual statements regarding the issues involved, and state their opinions, recommendations, and rationale for supporting or opposing a project. The Board concludes by taking a vote to approve, approve with conditions, or recommending denial of the proposal.

While the Board is aware that a project may raise other important issues and considerations, it must make its findings on the basis of consistency with the purposes of the historic preservation law and cannot take into consideration zoning or economic issues, traffic or parking concerns, views from or impacts on the light and air to private property, or other matters unrelated to the preservation law.

- The HPRB typically meets on the fourth Thursday of each month and holds a continuation meeting on the following Thursday if needed. The annual meeting schedule of HPRB meetings can be downloaded from www.planning.dc.gov.
- HPRB meetings are currently being held on WebEx. Instructions for watching or registering to participate in the meeting are included in each month's public notice and agenda posted on the HPO website.
- HPRB meetings are transcribed by a court reporter and webcast live on the HPO website.
- The historic preservation law (the Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act) and regulations (10-C DCMR) can be downloaded at www.planning.dc.gov.

After the HPRB meeting

Permit and concept applications that are approved by HPRB typically do not need to return to the Board for further review; applicants will be directed to coordinate with HPO on any needed refinement of the proposal and approval of the final plans will be delegated to HPO. In instances where significant changes are requested, applicants may be asked to return for HPRB review. If the Board denies a permit application, HPO will provide written notice to the applicant of the right to request a hearing before the Mayor's Agent. Further information on the Mayor's Agent review process is available on the HPO website.

Historic Preservation Office
DC Office of Planning
899 North Capitol Street NE
Suite 7100
Washington, DC 20002
www.planning.dc.gov
202-442-8800

DC Department of Buildings
1100 4th Street SW
Washington, DC 20024
www.dob.dc.gov

Project overview

Work Not Subject to Historic Preservation Review

- Interior alterations and non-structural interior demolition
- Ordinary maintenance
- Painting and paint color selection (with the exception of landmarks with unpainted masonry)
- Gutters and downspouts
- Window attachments
 - Screens
 - Storm windows
 - Non-commercial awnings
 - Security bars
 - Air conditioners
- Window repair (reglazing, caulking, weatherstripping, consolidating deteriorated elements)
- Landscaping (planting or removing trees and shrubs, but not including paving)
- Movable site features
 - Outdoor furniture
 - Play equipment
 - Sculpture and ornaments
- Light fixtures and lamp posts
- Dumpsters, scaffolding, construction fences, use and occupancy permits
- Any work not requiring a building permit

Minor and Routine Work

HPO response or approval typically within 1-3 days

- Minor repairs and in-kind replacement of deteriorated elements
 - Roofing and flashing
 - Siding, cornices, moldings, shutters, and trim
 - Front steps, walks, fences, and other site elements
 - Masonry repointing or repair that does not require HPO site visit or review of test patch
- Front fences up to 42" high and retaining walls less than 12 inches high
- Alterations and installations clearly not visible from a street
 - Skylights, vents, and chimneys
 - HVAC equipment and solar panels
 - Satellite dishes and antennae
 - Dormers
 - Opening or blocking up window and door openings on secondary elevations
- Work in rear and side yards clearly not visible from a street
 - Fences up to seven feet in height
 - Steps, walks, and retaining walls
 - Patios, terraces and first floor decks
 - Garden sheds, gazebos, and trellises
 - Garage door replacement
 - Parking pads on private property accessed from an alley
- Certifications of designated property for parking and loading waivers; renewal permits
- Excavation, sheeting & shoring and other underground work for approved construction
- Unenclosed sidewalk cafes on existing paving with removable furniture
- Solar installations that are consistent with HPRB guidelines
- Subdivisions involving minor or insignificant lot changes, conversion of assessment and taxation
- lots to record lots

Work Requiring HPO Staff Review

HPO response or approval typically within 5 days

- Front alterations, and side alterations when prominent from a street
 - Window replacement, consistent with HPRB standards
 - Door replacement
 - Porch reconstruction, replacement of elements (not including enclosure)
- Work in front yards, and side yards when prominent from a street
 - New steps, walks, and paved areas
 - Trellises and landscape structures
- Major regrading and alteration of topography; retaining walls over 12 inches high
- New areaways or basement stairs, consistent with HPRB design standards
- Masonry repointing and replacement requiring HPO site visit or review of test patch
- Roof decks, penthouses, solar panels and other roof alterations requiring HPO site visit and/or mock-up and determined not visible from street views
- Minor additions (less than 500 square feet in size) at rear or side of property if not prominently visible from the street
- Rear decks and balconies extending above the first floor

- New one-story garages along an alley or not prominently visible from a street
- Signs, awnings, canopies and marquees, consistent with HPRB standards
- Projects involving substantial scopes of rehabilitation work, specification or narratives requiring review
- Work approved in concept by HPRB with final approval delegated to HPO staff

Major Work Requiring HPRB Review (Agenda or Consent Calendar)

Review by HPRB typically within 30-60 days of filing

- Demolition of landmarks or contributing buildings in historic districts, substantial or in their entirety, as defined in DCMR 10-C, Section 305
- New buildings
- Front and side additions, including new porches (other than reconstruction of missing original porches) and porch enclosures
- Front alterations, such as new dormers, entrances, and entrance features
- Substantial rear additions
- Roof additions or decks visible from a street
- New two-story garages and garages prominently visible from a street
- Solar installations not consistent with HPRB guidelines
- New curb cuts, driveways and parking pads in front or side yards
- Significant alteration of important architectural features
 - Window or door openings on front facades
 - Removal of special windows, distinctive materials, and decorative architectural features
- Subdivisions involving landmarks, significant changes in lot boundaries, or substantial combination/division of lots
- Work that exceeds HPO delegated authority or determined by HPO to be inconsistent with HPRB standards and practices