



## D.C. 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 delegated authority from the 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 by phone or email 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. All permit applications must include one set of photographs of the property and four sets of plans, specifications, a scope of work, or other narrative sufficient to describe the work. For minor and routine work, HPO may be able to approve the application the same day it is received. For more substantial work that requires a site visit or full staff review, HPO can typically approve the application within five days.

- To discuss a project or make an appointment, please consult the staff directory for the preservation specialist for your neighborhood at [www.planning.dc.gov](http://www.planning.dc.gov), send an email to [historic.preservation@dc.gov](mailto:historic.preservation@dc.gov), or call 202-442-8800.
- HPO staff is available to answer questions on a first-come/first-served basis at the Historic Preservation desk at the Permit Center weekdays between 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM (9:30 AM – 4:30 PM on Thursday), located at 1100 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.
- Permit applications must include one set of photographs of the property and four sets of plans, specifications, or a narrative that describes the proposed work.
- A list of the types of work delegated to HPO for approval and anticipated review times is included at the end of this document.
- Preservation standards and design guidelines can be found at [www.planning.dc.gov](http://www.planning.dc.gov).
- Property located in the Georgetown Historic District is subject to review by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA). All applications must be filed for CFA review at the Historic Preservation desk at the Permit Center. Please consult [www.cfa.gov](http://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 the applicant 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](http://www.planning.dc.gov), or requested by emailing [historic.preservation@dc.gov](mailto:historic.preservation@dc.gov) or calling 202-442-8800.
- In order to be considered by HPRB at its next monthly meeting, an application must be filed by the fourth Friday of the preceding month at the Historic Preservation desk in the Permit Center at 1100 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.
- Applications cannot be filed electronically and should not be mailed, delivered or dropped off at the Historic Preservation Office.
- The preservation filing fee for residential alterations is \$25, and \$100 for residential additions and new construction. The fee for commercial work is set on a sliding scale depending on the size of the project. A list of filing fees can be downloaded at [www.planning.dc.gov](http://www.planning.dc.gov).

### **HPO review of HPRB applications**

Once an application is filed, the applicant will be contacted by HPO to discuss the review and scheduling of the case. HPO will identify any clarifications to the submission necessary for the project to be evaluated, discuss any preservation or design concerns, and may provide suggestions on how the proposal could be made more consistent with preservation guidelines and standards. Applicants may revise their proposals up to 10 days before the HPRB meeting, at which point the HPO must finalize its written report and evaluation for the HPRB. The HPRB will not consider changes to plans made after the HPO report is finalized.

- Prior to issuing its report, HPO will share any concerns about a project with the applicant.
- If necessary, applicants may revise their proposal up to 10 days before the HPRB meeting.
- Upon confirmation by HPO that the project will be scheduled for HPRB review, the applicant is responsible for providing 10 sets of 11" x 17" plans and photographs (or color copies of images) 10 days prior to the HPRB meeting for distribution to the Board.

### **Public participation**

The preservation review process encourages public participation and comment on projects that may impact historic property or the surrounding neighborhood. HPO provides public notice of filed applications to Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs), community organizations, and any individuals who request the monthly notice. By law, the HPRB gives "great weight" to the position of an ANC, and carefully considers the views of community organizations and concerned citizens. 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.

- ANC contact information can be found at [www.anc.dc.gov](http://www.anc.dc.gov).
- HPO can provide contact information for neighborhood groups and preservation organizations.

### **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.

- 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.
- The HPRB agenda, which includes a specific time assigned to each case, the consent calendar, and HPO reports are posted on the HPO website the Friday before the HPRB meeting or may be requested by emailing [historic.preservation@dc.gov](mailto:historic.preservation@dc.gov) or calling 202-442-8800. HPO will also email the report and agenda to the address provided on the review application.

### **The HPRB meeting**

When an agenda case is called, HPO will summarize its report and the relevant preservation issues. Applicants or their representative, such as an architect or contractor, will be asked to present the project through drawings, photographs, or other presentation materials, 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 recommends 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 meets on the fourth Thursday of each month, except in November and December when the meeting is scheduled on the third Thursday. The Board does not meet in August. The annual meeting schedule of HPRB meetings can be downloaded from [www.planning.dc.gov](http://www.planning.dc.gov).
- HPRB meetings are held at 441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW in Room 220-South, beginning at 10:00 AM.
- 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](http://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  
1100 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Suite E-650  
Washington, DC 20024  
[www.planning.dc.gov](http://www.planning.dc.gov)  
202-442-8800

**DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs**  
Permit Center and Historic Preservation desk  
1100 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Washington, DC 20024  
[www.dkra.dc.gov](http://www.dkra.dc.gov)

The Historic Preservation Office and Permit Center are located at the Waterfront Metro station on the Green line.

### **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 same day**

- 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
- Subdivisions involving minor or insignificant lot changes, conversion of assessment and taxation lots to record lots

<b>Work Requiring HPO Full Staff Review</b> <b>HPO response or approval typically within five business days</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front alterations, and side alterations when prominent from a street <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Window replacement, consistent with HPRB standards</li> <li>Door replacement</li> <li>Porch reconstruction, replacement of elements (not including enclosure)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work in front yards, and side yards when prominent from a street <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New steps, walks, and paved areas</li> <li>Trellises and landscape structures</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Major regrading and alteration of topography; retaining walls over 12 inches high</li> <li>• New areaways or basement stairs, consistent with HPRB design standards</li> <li>• Masonry repointing and replacement requiring HPO site visit or review of test patch</li> <li>• Roof decks, penthouses, solar panels and other roof alterations requiring HPO site visit and/or mock-up and determined not visible from street views</li> <li>• Minor additions (less than 500 square feet in size) at rear or side of property if not prominently visible from the street</li> <li>• Rear decks and balconies extending above the first floor</li> <li>• New one-story garages along an alley or not prominently visible from a street</li> <li>• Signs, awnings, canopies and marquees, consistent with HPRB standards</li> <li>• Projects involving substantial scopes of rehabilitation work, specification or narratives requiring review</li> <li>• Work approved in concept by HPRB with final approval delegated to HPO staff</li> </ul>

<b>Major Work Requiring HPRB Review (Agenda or Consent Calendar)</b> <b>Review by HPRB typically within 30-60 days of filing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demolition of landmarks or contributing buildings in historic districts, substantial or in their entirety, as defined in DCMR 10-C, Section 305</li> <li>• New buildings</li> <li>• Front and side additions, including new porches (other than reconstruction of missing original porches) and porch enclosures</li> <li>• Front alterations, such as new dormers, entrances, and entrance features</li> <li>• Substantial rear additions</li> <li>• Roof additions or decks visible from a street</li> <li>• New two-story garages and garages prominently visible from a street</li> <li>• New curb cuts, driveways and parking pads in front or side yards</li> <li>• Significant alteration of important architectural features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Window or door openings on front facades</li> <li>Removal of special windows, distinctive materials, and decorative architectural features</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Subdivisions involving landmarks, significant changes in lot boundaries, or substantial combination/division of lots</li> <li>• Work that exceeds HPO delegated authority or determined by HPO to be inconsistent with HPRB standards and practices</li> </ul>

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW PROCESS

