

# Locally Designated Historic District

## Comparing the Costs to the Benefits



**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.

**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



What does the city typically approve?

(or at least let go)







Replacement



Historic



Replacement RO unit installed within existing jamb

Arched-top replaced with square head



Full RO unit installed within existing jamb

Historic window with storm



New RO unit installed without removing old frame, reducing glass size and adding wide covering over historic trim







Historic windows with typical wide mullion



Matching replacements but without the appropriately sized mullion



Historic 6/1 windows surviving in most of this uniform row.  
Replacements installed in the recent rehab of the house on the left are 2/2, typical of a building 30 years or more earlier.

All of the examples in the previous slides are from longstanding historic districts

Work was either done without approval and consequence

Or approval was generous enough to have allowed it

Typical work involving replacement or improvement subject to review in a district, using the facades of housing types as found in Burleigh




Door  
Windows  
Railing  
Roofing

**(a) Building structures and equipment:**

Description	Fee Description	Fee Amount	Enhanced Fee	Total
New construction and alterations	Filing deposit	50% of the assessed permit fee based on the estimated cost of construction not to exceed \$20,000.	10% additional	Calcul
New construction and additions	Permit fee	\$0.03 per cubic foot of construction	10% additional	Calcul
	Green Building Fee - New construction	\$0.002 per square foot of construction	10% additional	Calcul
Alteration and repair	Permit Fee: construction valued less than \$500	\$33	0% additional	\$36.30
	Permit Fee: construction valued between \$501-\$1,000	\$65	0% additional	\$71.50
	Permit Fee: construction valued between \$1,001-\$1 million	\$30 + 2% of construction value \$1001-\$1 million	0% additional	Calcul
	Permit Fee: construction valued over \$1 million	\$10,020 + 1% of total construction over \$1 million	0% additional	Calcul
	Green Building Fee: construction valued between \$1,001-\$1 million	0.13% of construction value		
	Green Building Fee: construction valued over \$1 million	\$1,300 + 0.0065% of construction value over \$1 million		
Asbestos removal		Same as alteration/repair		
Awning		\$65 each		
Capacity placard review		\$20/hour		
Contamination testing		\$33		
Demolition		\$30 + 2% of construction cost		
Excavation only	Less than 50,000 cubic feet	\$130		
	50,000 cubic feet or more	\$650		
Fire retardant painting	Less than 200 square feet	\$26		
	200 square feet or more	\$46		
Fence on private property (installation or repair)		\$33		
Foundation only	Less than 50,000 cubic feet	\$130		
	50,000 cubic feet or more	\$650		
Garage (new) or shed (new)		\$65		
Grandstand	100 or fewer seats	\$33		
	101-500 seats	\$65		
	501-1,000 seats	\$100		
Projection into public space	Each additional 1,000 seats	\$33		
	Residential	\$65 each		











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**AVAILABLE NOW!**  
 Historic Property  
 Special Permit

As of October 1, 2017, the District government has reduced the price for certain types of permits for properties located in a historic district. Projects that require a permit only because they are located in a historic district, pursuant to 12A DCMR §105.2.5, will now be subject to a reduced fee (\$36.30) and will use a revised application process.

Prior to this change, projects that required a building permit only because they were located in a historic district were charged the standard permitting rate, which could rise to hundreds of dollars depending upon the scope of the project. The cost for this special permit type is now set at a reduced flat rate of \$36.30. The specific construction work listed below are subject to the new reduced fee and revised application process for work in a historic district.

- Brick Pointing
- Repair or replacement of fences, except as deemed an ordinary repair
- Painting of unpainted exterior masonry at a landmark property
- Replacement in kind, of: Roofing and coping, Siding - Gutters and downspouts and fascia, Private sidewalks and driveways, Patios
- Garden storage shed
- Prefabricated pools
- Retaining walls

If the project will contain other construction activity that requires a permit, the above construction activities can be included in a regular building permit application. Standard permitting rates will apply.



Melinda M. Bolling  
 Director

# Permit fees

## Comparing cost for replacement projects not subject to historic review to those that are:

	Non-historic Area		Permit	Historic District		Permit	Difference
	Material	Labor		Material	Labor		
Door	\$400	\$750		\$400	\$750	\$36	\$36
Windows	\$1400	\$1100		\$2550	\$1100	\$36	\$1186
Porch Railing	\$190	\$350	\$72	\$350	\$800	\$36	\$578
Roof	\$190	\$900	\$35	\$320	\$900	\$38	\$133

Costs are approximate and represent the least costly option in each circumstance



Paintable fiberglass doors compatible with the two example houses, available at the base level price point for entry doors

Incompatible door, more expensive than a compatible alternative



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Costs are approximate and represent the least costly option in each circumstance



Vinyl windows as typically installed in areas without historic review



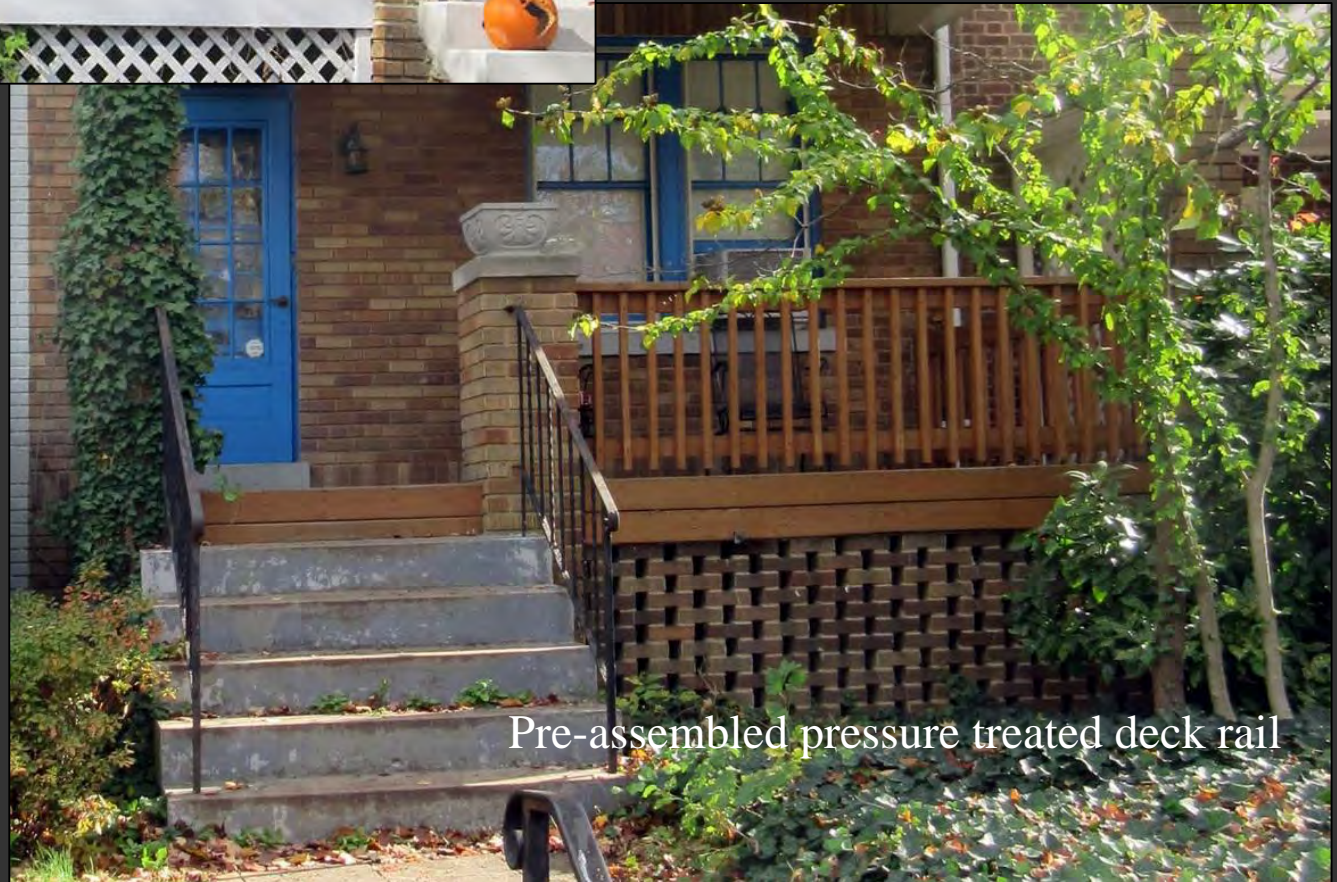
Compatible wood or clad window as readily approved in a district

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Historically appropriate painted porch rail



Pre-assembled pressure treated deck rail

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Cost are approximate and represent the least costly option in each circumstance



Small area of slate roofing  
typical of many facades



Five-tab fiberglass shingle with slate-like proportions generally approved for façade slate replacement in districts



Incompatible architectural fiberglass shingle evoking wood, similar in price to five-tab above



Three-tab fiberglass shingle, least expensive roofing shingle

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	Non-historic Area		Permit	Historic District		Permit	Difference
	Material	Labor		Material	Labor		
Roof	\$190	\$900	\$35	\$320	\$900	\$38	\$133

Costs are approximate and represent the least costly option in each circumstance



Is the cost for meeting the requirement that work in an historic district be compatible worth the protection that it affords?



Addition in an historic district typical of what is approved



Without historic designation additions limited only by zoning and the variances typically granted within zoning regulations

