

We appreciate your interest in developing property or making improvements within the Town of Durham Historic District. The Historic District Commission (HDC) and the Planning staff would like to make the application process as simple and pleasant for you as possible.

Please feel free to contact the Planning Department with any questions or comments. We encourage you to arrange a meeting with our department to discuss your proposal prior to formal submission.

Purpose

The goal of the Durham Historic District Ordinance is to foster the preservation of structures and places of historic, architectural, and community value. Through preservation efforts we hope to: a) enhance our sense of pride in this beautiful town; b) conserve property values; and c) enhance the attractiveness of Durham for homeowners, homebuyers, businesses, and tourists.

Elements Subject to Review

Approval from the HDC is required for any activity affecting the exterior architectural appearance of a building and other site changes within the district (except for exempted activities specified in the ordinance) including the following:

- the erection of new buildings;
- additions to existing buildings;
- alterations to existing buildings;
- demolition of existing buildings;
- relocation of a building;
- signs and lighting;
- walls and fences;
- driveways, parking, and paving;
- removal of 12” diameter trees

Process

An application for a Certificate of Approval must be submitted to the Durham Historic District Commission through the Planning Department, no fewer than 10 calendar days prior to a regular Commission meeting.

The HDC meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers in Town Hall.

Once an application is submitted, the applicant will be placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting after the deadline. The Commission seeks to

take action as soon as possible, which can be in one meeting if all of the necessary documentation and information is submitted in time.

It is not required that you hire an architect. However, it may be difficult to provide appropriate drawings and to meet the objectives of the district without the use of an architect, particularly where new construction or additions are involved.

Standards for Review

The HDC follows a set of criteria laid out in the ordinance when reviewing projects. All existing conditions are considered to be “grandfathered” and property owners are never required to bring any existing property into conformity with the ordinance. It is only when a property or business owner initiates a project that the proposal comes before the HDC, and only for the review of elements proposed by the property owner.

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Submission Materials

You need to submit only those materials that the commission determines are necessary to conduct an appropriate review. On small or straightforward projects submission of the application form and one or more sketches drawn by the applicant may be sufficient.

Applicants are encouraged to talk with the Planning Department prior to preparing an application package to get a sense of which of the items below are not needed. The application package may include any or all of the items listed below as stipulated by the HDC:

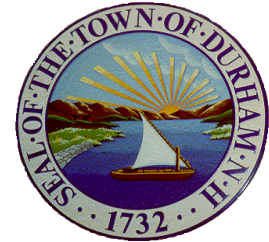
1. Application Form.
2. Elevations. Elevation drawings to scale of each affected facade of the building clearly depicting existing conditions and proposed work.
3. Details. Detail drawings of appropriate elements (such as the balustrade for a handicap ramp).
4. Plans. Site plans drawn to scale clearly depicting existing conditions and proposed work.
5. Photographs. Photographs of the building, where impacted.

6. Samples. Material sample (such as a brick or the actual window), swatch (such as a piece of the proposed awning in the actual color), color boards, and/or manufacturer's cut sheet of materials to be used, as appropriate.
7. Other Items. Any other items which the Commission may reasonably need to conduct its review.

Note that there are *no application fees* for the review. The historic district ordinance and application forms can be accessed via the Town's website (below). Once again, please feel free to contact the Planning Department with any questions. Thank you for your cooperation!

Contact Information

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Town of Durham Historic District

A Guide
for Property
and
Business Owners