

**HISTORIC PROPERTIES COMMISSION  
DESIGN GUIDELINES  
FOR  
CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

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Alamance County Planning Department  
March, 2009  
Amended, 2014

## INTRODUCTION

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of these design guidelines is to ensure that changes in designated local historic landmarks or properties within designated local historic districts shall be in harmony with the reasons for designation. Landmark properties have the responsibility of maintaining a high standard of historic and/or architectural significance that conveys their importance to the heritage and culture of Alamance County. This high standard is appropriate, as landmark property owners are eligible for a 50% property tax deferral as long as the site retains its historic character.

### **Scope and Jurisdiction**

The Historic Properties Commission Ordinance section 6, Certificates of Appropriateness, provides the Historic Properties Commission (HPC, or "Commission") with the authority to review any proposed exterior alterations on a Local Landmark property, including changes in materials, changes to appurtenant features, and relocation or demolition of structures. Buildings evolve over time as changes in their use, the needs of their occupants, or style and design trends occur, or as new building technologies emerge. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) procedure is not intended to prevent the evolution of properties but rather to ensure that changes are compatible with the historic and architectural character of the property.

### **When a Certificate of Appropriateness is required:**

For a Local Landmark property or district, no exterior portion of any building or other structure, any appurtenant features, nor above-ground utility structure nor any type of outdoor advertising sign shall be erected, altered, restored, moved, or demolished on such landmark or within such district until a COA has been approved by the Commission.

No building permit or other permit granted for the purposes of constructing, altering, moving, or demolishing structures shall be issued until a COA has been approved by the Commission.

A Certificate of Appropriateness is required whether or not a building permit is required.

### **Exterior Features Defined:**

For the purposes of these guidelines, "exterior features" shall include the architectural style, general design, and general arrangement of the exterior of a building or other structure, including the kind and texture of the building material, the size and scale of the building or other structure, and the type and style of all windows, doors, light fixtures, signs, and other appurtenant fixtures.

In the case of outdoor advertising signs, “exterior features” shall mean the style, material, size, and location of all such signs.

### **Types of Review**

**Exempt Work** activities are normal maintenance and do not require a COA.

**Minor Work** activities include exterior changes that do not involve substantial alterations, additions, or removals that could impair the integrity of the property and/or the district as a whole. Minor Work activities do require a COA and can be approved administratively by Commission staff. No application for a Minor Works COA may be denied without review by the Commission.

**Major Work** activities are substantial modifications which may significantly alter the appearance and the integrity of the property. Major Work activities do require a COA and are required to be reviewed by the Commission. In these cases, adjacent property owners are notified of the proposed changes and the Commission holds a public hearing during their regular meeting. Appeals of Commission decisions may be made to the governing board of the corresponding jurisdiction.

### **Approval Validity**

Certificates of Appropriateness are valid for six months after the date of issuance, or in the case of a demolition COA, the effective date, if the work authorized by the certificate has not commenced. If the work has commenced but subsequently was discontinued for a period of twelve months after commencement, the permit shall immediately expire.

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## EXEMPT WORK

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Normal Maintenance does not require a Certificate of Appropriateness, since no irreversible or significant change is made to the building. Included under normal maintenance are the following items:

1. Painting (appropriate color schemes are available at the Alamance County Planning Department and May Memorial Library).
2. Replacement of window glass.
3. Caulking and weather stripping.
4. Installation of window air conditioner units, television antennas, and other temporary mechanical equipment which cannot easily be seen from the street, or are screened from view with vegetation or appropriate fencing.
5. Minor landscaping, including vegetable and/or flower garden(s), shrubbery, and side/rear yard trees.
6. Pruning trees and shrubbery, and removal of trees with trunks less than six (6) inches in diameter.
7. Repairs to walks, patios, fences, and driveways with replacement materials that match the original.
8. Replacement of small amounts of missing or deteriorated siding, trim, roof shingles, porch flooring, steps, etc., with replacement materials that match the original. (For siding, roofing and porch flooring, approximately twenty (20) square feet or less shall be considered normal maintenance.)
9. Installation of storm windows and doors, as long as trim color is white or matches house trim color and storm door is "full view" style.
10. Installation of gutters and downspouts as long as the color matches the house trim color, roof ventilators on rear slopes, and chimney caps.
11. Temporary signs – real estate, political, etc.
12. Installation of house numbers and mailboxes.
13. Removal of aluminum awnings.
14. Removal of cinderblock or concrete block walk and/or steps.
15. Removal of aluminum storm doors and windows that feature panels or decorative work.
16. Removal of shiny aluminum storage buildings.
17. Erection, alteration, or removal of temporary features that are necessary to ease difficulties associated with a medical condition, but do not permanently alter exterior features.

## **MINOR WORK**

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Minor Work items require a Certificate of Appropriateness, and may be approved administratively by Commission staff. No application for a Minor Works COA may be denied without review by the Commission.

In general, these typically do not require a permit from the Inspections Department, and/or do not change the visual character of the structure, grounds, and appurtenances. They include the following:

1. Removal of non-original siding (asbestos, aluminum, vinyl, etc.)
2. Removal of storm doors and windows.
3. Removal of non-architecturally or historically significant accessory buildings.
4. Removal of dead, diseased, or dangerous trees.
5. Removal of metal flues or chimney caps, or terracotta flues which are not original in materials or appearance.
6. Removal of concrete or cinder block (or similar materials) steps, fences, or walkways.
7. Repair of foundation walls – including vents and access doors – and/or replacement of similar or more historically correct materials.
8. Repair/replacement of pitched roof coverings with similar or more historically correct materials.
9. Repair/replacement of flat roofs.
10. Repair/replacement of wood, stone, brick, or cast iron fences and/or walls with similar or more historically correct materials.
11. Repair/replacement of patios/decks not visible from street or road.
12. Replacement/installation of storm doors and windows if finished to match trim.
13. Installation of compatible exterior lighting fixtures.
14. Installation of exterior heating and air conditioning equipment not visible from a street or road.
15. Installation of property address signs of one and one-half (1 ½) square feet or less.
16. Repair/replacement of exterior steps/stairs if materials and design are the same or more historically accurate.
17. Repair/replacement of porch floors, columns, and other features if materials and design are the same or more historically accurate.
18. Installation of temporary facilities needed for medical reasons.
19. Minor landscaping work.
20. Repair of exterior structure walls and features if materials and design are the same or more historically accurate.
21. Repair of masonry chimneys.
22. Installation of satellite dishes not visible from a street or road.
23. Repair/replacement of walks/driveways if replacement materials are the same or more historically accurate.

24. Repair/replacement of gutters, downspouts, roof vents, and chimney caps.
25. Review of material samples and dimensions for projects which have received approval in concept, or a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Commission.
26. Renewal of expired Certificate of Appropriateness where no change to approval plans is proposed, and where there is no change in the circumstances under which the Certificate was granted.

## **MAJOR WORK**

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Major Work activities do require a COA and are required to be reviewed by the Commission. In these cases, adjacent property owners are notified of the proposed changes and the Commission holds a public hearing during their regular meeting. Appeals of Commission decisions may be made to the governing board of the corresponding jurisdiction.

In general, these are items which involve a change in the appearance of the building or landscape, and are more substantial in nature than minor work items. They include the following:

1. New construction or additions to the building.
2. Demolition of any part of a structure.
3. Moving of structures.
4. Permanent signs.
5. New accessory buildings.
6. Parking lots.
7. Replacement of architectural details when there will be a change in design or materials from the original.
8. Resurfacing building with new materials.
9. Replacement of window sashes and/or doors.