

# The Review Process for the Certificate of Appropriateness

## Property Owner has a Project

All property owners within the district are required to obtain a COA before beginning any work.



## Property Owner contacts Commission Staff

Commission Staff will provide guidance and recommendations to ensure that the project is within the Design Guidelines.



## Property Owner submits COA Application

Application includes the application form and supporting materials: drawings, photographs, details on proposed materials, dimensions, colors, etc. as appropriate. This should be completed 14 business days before the Commission's meeting in order to be heard that month.

## Staff sends project to Commission

If project is larger in scope, the Commission will review and receive Staff recommendation. The Commission meets the third Wednesday of every month.

## Staff approves project

If Project is within the Guidelines or is a basic maintenance issue, the project is issued a COA and may proceed with the work after also obtaining the required zoning compliance and/or building permit.

## Commission approves project

If project is within the Guidelines or issues are resolved, the project is issued a COA and may proceed with the work after also obtaining the required zoning compliance and/or building permit.

## Commission does not approve project

If Project is not approved, the property owner must return to the Commission with revised plans in order to proceed. The Commission will provide guidance to how the project may be improved.

## Property Owner returns with revised plans

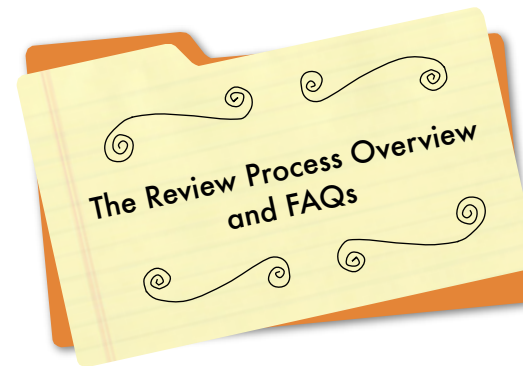
Above steps are repeated. If project is approved, then the project may proceed. If project is not approved, then the property owner must continue to improve the plans for the project. If the property owner feels the Commission is making an arbitrary and capricious decision, they have the option to appeal the decision to the court system.

# Downtown Historic District



Meridian Street Looking South, Portland, Ind.

1003 U.S. WILLIAM F. CHITTE, BLUM



## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***Will inclusion in a Local Historic District restrict how I may use my property?***

No. A local historic district is generally "overlaid" on the existing zoning classifications in a community. Therefore, a local district commission deals only with the appearance of the district, not with the uses of those properties.

### ***Will inclusion prevent me from making changes to my property?***

Designation does not prevent owners from making changes to their properties, nor does it require them to restore or even fix-up their property (unless they are allowing it to deteriorate and collapse). Designation ensures that alterations, additions or demolitions are in keeping with special character of the area. This happens through a process called design review, whereby the Historic Preservation Commission approves major changes that are planned for the district and issues Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs). Local designation encourages sensitive development in the district and discourages unsympathetic changes from occurring.

### ***What is a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)?***

A COA is an official City document required before any permit can be issued for demolition, new construction, moving a building or any proposed exterior alteration according to the Downtown Portland Historic District Guidelines. The COA affirms that in the opinion of the Portland Historic Preservation Commission, the proposed activity is consistent with historic preservation standards and will not have a negative effect on any significant historic resource. Any work being completed without a COA will be required to stop work until the COA and a Certificate of Compliance or Building Permit from the City Planning office are acquired.

### ***What sorts of changes require a COA?***

Minor repairs and ordinary maintenance, such as repainting and repairing a roof with the same materials, does not require a COA. A COA would be required for work that physically alters the appearance of the property, such as replacing windows and doors, installing artificial siding, enclosing a porch, adding a fence or demolishing all or part of a structure. Interior changes that do not affect the outside appearance are not reviewed.

### ***Are all buildings in Local Historic Districts necessarily historic?***

No. A major goal of local historic districts is maintaining the overall character of the area. When the boundaries are drawn for a local historic district, it will often include non-historic properties and vacant lots. Projects to non-historic properties will not be reviewed, however, it is appropriate that the basic guidelines are used to be consistent and have as little negative impact on the area or on adjoining buildings as possible.

### ***What information do I need to provide?***

A complete application must contain the following information:

- Photographs of the property to document existing conditions
- Samples of any new materials to be introduced
- Drawings of your project, showing dimensions, details and materials.

### ***How do I obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness?***

Once you submit your application, the Historic Preservation Commission Staff will review the proposed work, consult the design guidelines and determine if the Commission needs to review the matter. The time line for approval depends on the nature and scope of the proposed work. The Commission Staff may approve simple, routine improvements. In general, larger or more complex projects require a hearing before the Commission, which meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month. The deadline for submitting material for consideration is 14 business days prior to the meeting.

### ***When can I begin work on my project?***

The applicant is responsible for meeting all provisions of the city's building and zoning codes prior to beginning work.

### ***NOTE:***

**You must post your Certificate of Appropriateness, along with all other required permits, in a publicly visible location on your property. The Certificate must remain posted for the duration of your project.**

### ***If I disagree with a decision made by the Commission concerning my Certificate of Appropriateness application, may I appeal?***

Yes. Appeals may be made to the Circuit Court, who will determine if the HPC abused its discretion – not following the standards in the ordinance or the design guidelines – in reaching their decision. A property owner has 30 days to appeal a decision.

### ***What might happen to the value of my property if it is included in a Local Historic District?***

Designation of an area as a historic district will not directly affect property values. Because Local Historic District properties are protected from insensitive development, owners may be more inclined to make improvements to their properties, and this may increase the value of all property in a given district.

National and statewide economic studies show that historic district designation first stabilizes property values, and then slowly values begin to rise. In most cases properties in local historic districts appreciate at rates greater than: (a) the local market as a whole, and (b) similar neighborhoods that are not designated. This is akin to the principal behind subdivision covenants, which are put in place by a homeowners association to ensure quality improvements and to enhance property owners' investments (though private covenants are often more restrictive than public ordinances). Remember that if property taxes go up, it means the value of your investment in the property is going up.

### ***Who may I contact for more information or to begin the COA process?***

The City of Portland is contracted with Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana to provide staffing assistance and guidance to the Preservation Commission and public. Commission staff shall provide recommendation to the Commission for all project reviews. Information and applications for a COA should be directed to:

Joseph Jarzen  
Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana  
P.O. Box 284  
Cambridge City, IN 47327  
765.478.3172  
765.478.3410 (fax)  
inra@historiclandmarks.org

For general questions about the Design Guidelines, the public may also contact any one of the five (5) Preservation Commission Members or Jane Spencer, President of the Commission. For additional assistance, the public may also contact:

Ami M. Huffman, Director  
Jay County Community Development  
118 South Meridian Street  
Portland, Indiana  
260.726.3497  
260.726.4477 (fax)  
jccd@omnicityusa.com