



# CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

## ***Why is a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Required?***

When a property is located in a local historic district **OR** is a locally designated historic landmark the property owner is required to receive prior approval for exterior changes. This approval is called a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) and it is required whether a building permit is needed or not.

## ***What Type of Work Requires a COA?***

While some changes are considered to be routine maintenance and thus require no prior approval, others must be approved by the Durham Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) or administratively by the Planning Department staff.

**Work that requires a COA:** A list of the types of approval required based on the scope of work can be found at: <http://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1347>.

Classifications in this list are based on the scope of work, project scale, and amount of deviation from historic materials and methods. Refer to this list to determine the correct level of COA approval required for the scope of your project.

**Routine Maintenance (does not require a COA):** A COA is not required for routine maintenance of historic properties, although other permits may be required. Activities considered to be routine maintenance include:

For All Properties:

1. All interior work as long as it has no exterior impact (i.e., window replacement is not considered interior work for these purposes)
2. Minor repairs to windows, including caulking or reglazing and replacement of window glass as long as window size and style are not altered
3. Minor repairs to doors, siding, trim, gutters, flooring, steps, fences, and walls, as long as the replacements match existing materials in scale, style, design, and materials
4. Roofing, foundation, and chimney work, if no change in appearance occurs; replacement of roofing material with matching material
5. Removing screen doors or storm doors
6. Caulking and weather stripping
7. Exterior painting of a previously painted surface, including when a change of color is proposed
8. Replacement of existing mechanical equipment (including vents)
9. Repairing or repaving of flat paved areas, such as driveways, walkways, and patios, if the material used is the same or similar in appearance
10. Installing landscaping, including vegetable, flower, and rain gardens, shrubs, and trees. Landscape maintenance, including pruning trees and shrubs (this does not include removal of landscaping required to screen mechanical equipment or utilities)
11. Curb, gutter, and pavement work that follows the Public Works Procedural Approach for Preserving Granite Curbs in Historic Districts
12. Removal and/or replacement of street trees in the right-of-way with review and approval by the Urban Forestry Manager
13. Non-fixed elements (that can be moved without the use of heavy equipment) such as rain barrels, planters, dog houses, bird baths, and similar decorative or functional items.

For Noncontributing Properties:

1. Painting of nonhistoric material, whether previously painted or not
2. Installation of prefabricated outbuilding or outbuilding of 80 square feet or less when located in the rear yard
3. Modifications to or demolition of outbuildings
4. Addition of new rear decks or porches
5. Modification, installation, or replacement of windows and doors not facing the street
6. Addition of screen doors or storm windows
7. Alteration or replacement of roof materials
8. Installation of skylights and solar panels not visible from the street
9. Installation of gutters
10. Alterations to ornamentation or to cladding material

### ***What is a Minor COA?***

A Minor COA application can be approved at the staff level and does not require a meeting of the HPC. Staff nevertheless reserves the right to determine, upon review of the application, that the request cannot be approved administratively and must be scheduled for a hearing before the HPC.

### ***What is a Major or Master COA?***

A Major or Master COA application requires review through the HPC. The HPC will hold a quasi-judicial hearing of the application. It will review the information, take testimony from the applicant and any other persons wishing to speak on the matter, and can either continue the hearing, approve the request (with or without modifications), or deny the request.

### ***Can a COA decision be appealed?***

Yes. Appeals are taken to the Durham Board of Adjustment and must be filed within 30 days of the decision, and then may be further taken to Superior Court.

### **Application Instructions:**

- 1. Pre-submittal Meeting Requirement:** Prior to submitting an application for a Major or Master COA, the applicant is required to meet with staff to review the proposed request. Applications are considered incomplete and will not be accepted if the required pre-submittal meeting has not been held. To schedule a pre-submittal meeting, contact Karla Rosenberg at 919-560-4137, ext. 28259 or [Karla.Rosenberg@DurhamNC.gov](mailto:Karla.Rosenberg@DurhamNC.gov).
- 2. The application must be complete.** Refer to page two of the application for detailed requirements.
- 3. Applicable Criteria and Standards:** Proposed work in historic districts and for historic landmarks is evaluated against the adopted [Historic Properties Local Review Criteria](#). Please refer to the specific criteria and standards that may apply to your project. Applicants are required to explain how their project conforms to the applicable standards.
- 4. Submittal Deadlines:** Minor COA applications are reviewed and approved by staff and may be submitted any working day during regular business hours. Major and Master COA applications are reviewed and approved by the Durham Historic Preservation Commission, and are scheduled for a hearing five weeks in advance of the next available hearing date only when the application is considered complete and free of comments (allow at least one additional week to receive staff comments).
- 5. Site Visits:** As part of the evaluation of your COA application, staff may visit your property to better understand site conditions pertaining to your request.

### ***Who can I contact if I have any questions?***

Please contact Karla Rosenberg at 919-560-4137, ext. 28259 or [Karla.Rosenberg@DurhamNC.gov](mailto:Karla.Rosenberg@DurhamNC.gov).