



## Frequently Asked Questions

The purpose of a local historic district is to encourage the restoration, preservation, rehabilitation, and conservation of historically, architecturally, and archaeologically significant areas, structures, buildings, sites, and objects and their surroundings. The historic district will be applied as an overlay zoning district which will supersede other zoning districts with respect to compatibility, context, and appropriateness of exterior features. The historic overlay requires the area to be rezoned.

### Structure

1. What is the Charlotte Historic District Commission (HDC)?

- Citizens appointed by the Mayor and City Council to administer the Local Historic District Program. The majority of HDC members have proven expertise in architecture, preservation, history, etc.

2. What does it mean to own property in a local historic district?

- Property owners in local historic districts are required to contact the HDC office before undertaking any exterior changes to existing structures, or before beginning any project involving new construction or demolition.
- If the project meets the HDC design guidelines a Certificate of Appropriateness will be issued. A building permit for exterior work cannot be issued in an historic district without a Certificate of Appropriateness.

### Project Types

3. What are minor projects?

- Typically includes fencing, signage, windows and doors, rear yard improvements, retaining walls, driveways, walkways, some tree removal.

4. What are major projects?

- Typically includes new construction, large additions, demolition, front/side porch enclosures, substitute siding, large accessory buildings, major tree removal, significant landscape features, front yard parking, the painting of unpainted masonry and others.

5. What about maintenance?

- Routine maintenance is encouraged. We typically do not review repair and maintenance projects, as long as no significant material or design changes are made.

### Plan Review Process

6. What is required in an application to the Historic District Commission?

- Application requirements and fees vary, depending on the nature and complexity of the proposed project. Photos, architectural plans, product samples, etc. are often required.

7. How long does it take to have projects reviewed and approved?
- Administrative approvals usually take only a few days. Projects that require full HDC approval will take up to thirty days or more. The Commission meets monthly.
9. Does the HDC require restoration of a property?
- No. The Historic District Commission only gets involved when you decide to do something to your property.
10. Isn't it more expensive to make improvements in historic districts?
- Not always. The majority of our customers make minor improvements which would usually cost the same anywhere. Major projects usually require industry professionals who understand historic structures (new construction, major additions). We also encourage repair versus replacement of older building features to reduce costs.
11. Does the HDC require museum quality restorations?
- No. The purpose of Charlotte's historic district program is to ensure that changes that are made are compatible with the neighborhood.
12. What about projects underway at the time a local historic district is established?
- Projects holding a valid building permit at the time a local historic district is established are grandfathered.

### **Incentives**

13. Are there tax incentives for improvements?
- Properties within local Districts do not receive tax credits or reduced property taxes. However, if the property is a designated individual landmark (through the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Preservation North Carolina, etc.) tax incentives are available.
14. Are there grants available?
- Yes. Grants for projects such as architectural and archaeological surveys, National Register nominations, publications, preservation planning, and archaeological excavations are available through the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. *Façade Improvement Grants* are available through the City of Charlotte for commercial properties.
  - The Housing Services department within the City of Charlotte provides funding for rehabilitation of residential structures.
15. Does the HDC restrict my use or transfer of the property?
- No. Those are private property matters governed by others.

### **Violations**

16. What happens if one chooses to disregard the Commission's review process?
- When Commission staff learns of a project that is underway without HDC approval every attempt is made to contact the property owner and resolve the situation as quickly as possible. Financial penalties may be imposed.

### **Contact Us!**

If you have any questions at all, please feel free to contact the Historic District Commission staff at 704-336-2205 and ask to speak with either Kristi Harpst, Cindy Kochanek, or Candice Leite.