



City of Detroit Historic District Commission

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
2 WOODWARD AVENUE, SUITE 808, DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226

WHO IS THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

The Historic District Commission (HDC) is made up of seven Detroit residents who reside in historic districts and are appointed by Mayor Duggan. They generally meet the second Wednesday of the month, beginning at 5:30 PM, to review applications for building permits in historic districts.

The Commission is required to review **all** exterior changes, including those not visible from the street. The **entire** house, garage and yard contribute to the historic character of the district. The Commission is required to use “The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation” when deciding whether work is appropriate in a historic district. A building permit is required for any exterior changes to a building or site in a designated or proposed historic district.

STAFF

The HDC is staffed by two architectural historians who have the authority to approve certain projects (as listed on the following pages). Should a project need to be reviewed by the Historic District Commission, please contact HDC staff to confirm the application requirements.

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For a quicker response, please contact staff through **email*

WALK-IN COUNTER HOURS

TUESDAY AND THURSDAY 9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.

It is recommended to email staff in advance to confirm their availability on these days.

HELPFUL INFORMATION

- ❖ Email property addresses to HDC staff to confirm if property is located within a local historic district.
- ❖ Any exterior change to a property (structures and landscape) within a local historic district requires review and approval by the HDC before a permit can be issued.
- ❖ Color charts for exterior painting can be obtained only in the Planning Department, or a chart can be mailed to you.
- ❖ For more information on the Historic District Commission, including project application requirements, please visit: <http://www.detroitmi.gov/Government/Boards>

**WORK ITEMS THE STAFF OF THE DETROIT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
CAN APPROVE**

Note: all other types of work must go before the Commission at their monthly meeting.

1. *Gutter and downspout replacement*, provided that: (a) quality materials like copper are not being removed and replaced, and (b) the design of gutters and downspouts closely resembles the original, and the routing of the downspouts is either the original or not so placed as to be intrusive in the design of the building, and (c) the colors meet the terms and conditions of the *Detroit Historic Districts Style & Color Guide*.
2. *Masonry cleaning*, provided that the application meets the terms and conditions of the Commission's policy on Exterior *Masonry Cleaning Techniques*.
3. *Re-roofing of an asphalt shingle roof* with new asphalt shingles, provided that the shingles are of a color and texture resembling historic roofing materials used in the district and/or on the building in question.
4. *Window and/or door replacement*, provided that the design and material(s) conforms with the original, and the color conforms to the *Detroit Historic Districts Style & Color Guide*; where the existing door or window is not original to the structure, the replacement should be compatible with the architectural design of the structure.
5. *Storm window and/or door installation* provided that (a) mullions, muntins, and meeting rails of storm windows conform with those of the prime window, and the design of the storm door reflects the design of the prime door, and (b) if aluminum or vinyl storm windows and doors are used, the color is appropriate under the *Detroit Historic Districts Style & Color Guide*.
6. *Window or door boarding*, provided that (a) the boarding up of window(s) and/or door(s) is temporary and for the protection of the building.
7. *Replacement of the fabric of existing canvas awnings*, provided that the new canvas is not plastic or vinyl coated or does not appear to be so; and where the color is appropriate to the trim colors on the building.
8. *Antenna and Satellite dish installation*, provided that the design and location meets the guidelines in Historic district commission *Antenna and Satellite Dish Guidelines*.
9. *Replacement of an existing fence* provided the type, materials, and height match the existing fence, OR meets the *Fence and Hedge Guidelines*.
10. *Replacement of an asphalt shingle roof with a wood shingle, tile or slate roof* provided the owner or contractor can substantiate that wood shingles originally existed on the roof.
11. *Installation of gas or electric lamps* in the tree lawn of the Indian Village Historic District, provided the lamps match the standard lamp in the district.
12. *Reconstruction of existing porches*, provided the materials and design match the existing materials and design, and that the colors meet the *Detroit Historic Districts Style and Color Guide*.
13. *Change of paint color(s)*, provided the new color(s) meets the *Detroit Historic Districts Style and Color Guide*.
14. *Installation of a temporary, chain link construction fence* for a period that does not exceed nine (9) months.

15. *The installation of glass blocks to replace basement windows* provided the installation meets the *Glass Block Installation Guidelines*.
16. *The removal of dead, diseased or damaged trees* with a written statement from a professional service or arborist.
17. *A change in walkway or driveway material* that matches the same width and length, and meets the districts' elements of design.
18. *Erection of a fence and or hedges at a new location* provided the type, materials, and height conform to the *Fence and Hedge Guidelines*.
19. *Installation of a sign or canvas awning at a new location* provided it conforms with the Historic District Commission guidelines on *Signs and Awnings*.
20. *Erection/installation of canvas awnings or canopies* at a new location provided that the new awning or canopy is not plastic or vinyl coated or does not appear to be so; the color is appropriate to the trim colors on the building; and installation meets the terms and conditions of the Commission's *Signs and Awnings Guidelines* and the *City of Detroit Zoning Ordinance: Article XIV. General Development Standards*.
21. *The renewal of seasonal outdoor café plans* with the condition that the future application does not change from a plan that the Detroit Historic District Commission approved and no complaints were received about the seasonal outdoor café plan during the previous season.
22. *A change in street furnishing and/or materials* that does not change the location of the barrier, barrier style, and meets the *Detroit Historic District Commission Color Guide*.
23. *Erection of temporary event tents* for a period of fifteen (15) days, with one renewal per calendar year.
24. *Removal of landscaping* that is located in close vicinity to an historic building to the extent that it is damaging/has the potential to damage the historic building.
25. *Installation of new cellphone antennas and associated equipment* at a building rooftop provided that the new cellphone antennas and associated equipment is finished the same color of the exterior surface to which it shall be affixed and it is minimally-visible from the direct right-of-way.
26. *Installation of new metal or wood hand railing at existing porches* under the condition that such work does not result in the removal/replacement of existing historic age fabric and the new railing is compatible in design, dimension, and finish color to existing porch's historic appearance.
27. *The replacement of non-historic age asphalt roof shingles* with new asphalt shingles under the condition that the design, dimension, profile, and color of the new/replacement asphalt shingles are compatible with the district's Elements of Design and the building's historic appearance.
28. *The installation of a new hand railing at porches* under the condition that they are compatible to the building's historic appearance and do not result in the removal of historic fabric.
29. *The installation of new light fixtures* under the condition that they are compatible with the building's historic appearance in scale, style and finish and meets the district's Elements of Design.
30. *The installation of potted/moveable plants*.
31. *The installation of a new dumpster enclosure* under the condition that the location, dimension, and materials conform to the Detroit City Code/Zoning Ordinance.

32. *The installation of concrete hardscape* under the condition that it is not “bright white.” Specifically, such concrete must be composed of an exposed aggregate, tinted grey, or finished with a clear or tinted grey curing compound.

33. *The installation of DTE equipment for underground residential service*, provided that a) all items associated with the equipment shall meet the structural conditions as required by the Detroit Building, Safety, Engineering, and Environmental Department, and b) all work proposed for installation in the public right-of-way be approved by the Detroit Department of Public Works, City Engineering Division.

**“THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR’S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION
AND GUIDELINES FOR REHABILITATING HISTORIC BUILDINGS”**

- 1) A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
- 2) The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
- 3) Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
- 4) Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
- 5) Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
- 6) Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and where possible, materials. Replacement of a missing feature shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
- 7) Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
- 8) Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
- 9) New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
- 10) New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.