

# HISTORIC HOMEOWNER HANDBOOK

Presented By:



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO  
**OFFICE OF HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION**



# Introduction

Thank you for showing your commitment to preserving the story of San Antonio's unique history by caring for a historic house.



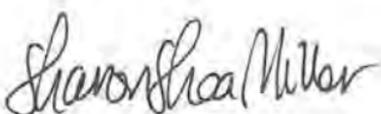
We strive to preserve our history for many reasons. Graeme Shankland, a British planner, once said, "A city without old buildings is like a man without a memory." Ask anyone what they love about San Antonio and the answers you'll likely hear will almost certainly involve historic preservation: the River Walk, diverse central city historic neighborhoods, historic sites like the Alamo and the San Antonio Missions, or historic open spaces like Brackenridge Park. Our city has been shaped by our colorful history, and our built environment helps to tell that story. We preserve so that we can pass on to future generations San Antonio's rich past.



Historic preservation is a key component to urban revitalization, especially here in San Antonio. It's a tool for neighborhood stabilization and community revitalization that is connected to broader strategies of land use, smart growth, sustainability and job creation.



Taking care of our built environment does more than just save old buildings. It provides a sense of belonging, a collective memory, and a sense of pride in our past. Historic preservation is about telling the story of our city, neighborhoods, and homes through our built environment. Preservation is not about longing for the past or resisting progress. It's about building on the past toward the future. A preservationist is by definition looking forward and impacting the future.



**Shanon Shea Miller, Director**  
Office of Historic Preservation  
Director, Office of Historic Preservation

## We can help

Please always Ask OHP before starting work so we can let you know when approvals and permits are needed. The Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) is available for consultation with applicants regarding proposed rehabilitation, new construction, and other projects dealing with historic properties and for assistance with applying for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

### **Staff Consultation**

OHP staff is available during normal business hours to discuss projects and provide initial feedback. We're happy to coordinate one-on-one meetings and site visits to ensure your project's success.

### **Design Review Committee**

The DRC is a standing committee of the Historic and Design Review Commission (HDRC) that provides informal and non-binding design consultation for applicants seeking advice on proposed development projects affecting historic resources. The DRC generally meets twice monthly and offers an opportunity for early feedback on how to design projects that will comply with these guidelines—before applicants have invested significant time and money on specific plans. We especially recommend this for large and complex projects, as well as new construction.

## Types of HDRC Review

### **Conceptual**

Conceptual review examines general design ideas and principles (such as scale and setback). Specific design details reviewed at this stage are not binding. Rather, a Commission Action is issued that provides the applicant with an assurance to proceed with more detailed design and construction details before coming back for final approval.

### **Final**

Final approval looks at the project's consistency with all applicable sections of the citywide Historic Design Guidelines, any applicable district-specific guidelines, the UDC, and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Historic Preservation at (210) 215-9274. We are open between the hours of 7:45 am and 4:30 pm Monday through Friday or email us at:

**[info@sapreservation.com](mailto:info@sapreservation.com)**

## What is a Historic House?

When the phrase “historic house” is used, the image that often comes to mind is one of a grand old Victorian mansion. The term is really applied to any house that is at least fifty years old and still has those character-defining features it had at the time it was built. Properties that are considered historic are not necessarily included in designated historic districts. Properties that require OHP review are properties that are designated landmarks or are located within a historic district.

## Historic Design Guidelines

The City of San Antonio Historic Design Guidelines were adopted by City Council on November 8, 2012. They are based on the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and provide historic district residents, property owners, architects and contractors an understanding of architectural design principles and guidelines which promote predictability and ensure compatibility between new development and the existing historic environment. Successful historic design guidelines help to reinforce and preserve the character of our historic districts. The complete set of guidelines are available at [www.sapreservation.com](http://www.sapreservation.com). Hard copies are also available at several local public libraries and for purchase from OHP.

## Understanding the Historic and Design Review Process

The City’s Unified Development Code (UDC) requires OHP or HDRC review for exterior work, additions, or new construction on properties that are zoned Historic (H, HL, HS, HE). If you live in a house that is individually landmarked or that is located in a historic district, you must get written approval from OHP before completing the work. You must also obtain proper permits from the Development Services Department (DSD). Your property may also require review by OHP or HDRC if it is zoned RIO.

The principal type of written approval for development affecting a historic property is the Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA). There are two types of CoA approvals: administrative, for relatively minor and straightforward projects, and those requiring HDRC review and approval for more significant projects. For both types of COAs, decisions are guided by the

Historic Design Guidelines, Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and the City's UDC.

Both the OHP and the HDRC only review changes to the exterior of designated historic buildings. Interior alterations are not reviewed.

## Administrative Approval



## HDRC Review



## Treatment Options

When determining how to treat a historic building, feature, or site element, choose your treatment option according to the following hierarchy.



Preservation is the preferred method for treatment; repair rather than replace deteriorated historic features whenever possible.

Rehabilitation is appropriate when elements are deteriorated beyond repair. Replacement elements should match the historic element in size, scale, profile, and finish.

Restoration can be used to reinstate missing elements based on evidence such as photographs or other matching elements that are still intact.

Reconstruction should only be used when none of the other treatment options are available. New construction should be simple in design as to not distract from the historic character of the building or district.



# Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

The Historic Design Guidelines were created to conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. These standards are the essential framework for historic design review across the country.

## **Standards for Rehabilitation**

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will 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 elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.





9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale, and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will 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.



932 N PINE

BEFORE



932 N PINE

AFTER





## Frequently Asked Questions

*I'm only planning to make minor improvements; do I still need to go through the HDRC review process?*

No, minor projects can usually be approved by OHP staff with an Administrative Certificate of Appropriateness (COA).

*How do I make sure that my project will be approved by the HDRC?*

Talk to staff early in the process. Provide all required documentation.

*Do I need to hire an outside professional to get the HDRC's approval?*

Not necessarily, it generally depends on the scope of work. As long as it is not required by law and sufficient documentation can be provided you may not have to hire a professional designer for HDRC or OHP review.

*I am planning a complex project. When is the best time to consult with OHP staff?*

As soon as possible. Staff is always available to sit down and review proposed projects even when it's just an idea or concept. It may also be helpful to consult with HDRC.

*How long does the HDRC review process typically take?*

Applications are due 19 days before the desired HDRC meeting date. COAs are issued within 10 days of the meeting date (and often sooner than 10 days).

*What information do I need to submit with my application?*

There's a checklist on the application itself.

*How are the Historic Design Guidelines enforced?*

The OHP has a full time Historic Building Enforcement Officer that inspects work against issued COAs. Any work that was initiated without a COA will be subject to a Stop Work Order and an associated \$500 post-work application fee.

*Are there any financial incentives available for historic preservation?*

There is a Substantial Rehabilitation Tax Incentive. See <http://www.sanantonio.gov/historic/incentives.aspx>.

*Who can I contact with questions?*

OHP staff at (210) 215-9274 or email us at: [info@sapreservation.com](mailto:info@sapreservation.com)



## Review Bodies

### **Office of Historic Preservation:**

The primary purpose of the OHP is to preserve and protect the unique historic structures and design features of San Antonio. The OHP administers all aspects of the historic preservation program, including reviewing and deciding upon COAs.

### **Historic and Design Review Commission:**

The HDRC consists of eleven members who reside in the City of San Antonio and are appointed by the City Council. The responsibilities and duties of the HDRC are to review applications for the designation of local historic districts and local historic landmarks; recommend approval or denial of COAs with respect to proposed exterior alterations to landmarks and properties within local historic districts; maintain a record of all proceedings to be available to the public; and continue to periodically update or cause to be updated the Historic Resource Survey for the City of San Antonio.

### **Design Review Committee:**

The DRC is a standing committee of the HDRC that provides informal and non-binding design consultation on an as-requested basis for applicants seeking advice on proposed development projects affecting historic resources. The DRC meets twice monthly and offers a good opportunity for early feedback on how to design projects that will be consistent with these guidelines—before applicants have invested significant time and money on specific plans.

### **Board of Adjustment:**

The BOA hears and decides appeals of administrative decisions; hears and decides special exceptions in those specific instances authorized by the UDC; and authorizes variances in specific cases, subject to evidence of a property related hardship.

## Which Form Do I Need?

If you are planning on do any work to the exterior of your property in a historic district, RIO district, or individual landmark, you will need to complete either an Historic Design and Review (HDRC) Application or an Administrative

### **HDRC Application**

New Construction or additions to buildings

Exterior alterations in material and design including replacing historic or original windows with non-historic materials.

Demolition of a structure in a historic district or an individually-designated structure

Construction, alteration, or removal of new stairs, deck, porch, railing

Relocation of historic structure

New hardscaping, new or expanded driveways, new or expanded parking areas

Change in materials for replacement of features such as roof, windows, doors

Construction of new accessory structure larger than 200 square feet or with a foundation

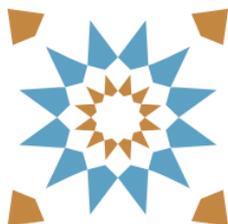
Changes to COA or renewal of expired COA

Historic Landmark designation, new historic district designation

New exterior signage

New front yard fencing

Tax Certification and verification



## Administrative COA Application

Replacement of aged or deteriorated exterior materials or surface finishes with the same materials or finishes Foundation repair. Sidewalk, driveway, or patio repair

Glass window replacement with no change in appearance window and door repair with same material HVAC unit placement in rear of house

Replacement or new fencing for the side and backyard with appropriate material and in conformance with the UDC

New or replacement exterior lighting fixtures for residential homes with no impact on surrounding homes

Refacing or replacement of appropriate signs in conformance with the UDC and RIO guidelines. New signage for buildings with an approved Masterplan. Temporary banners

Replacement of synthetic siding with original wood siding

Removal of burglar bars and burglar doors

Addition of prefabricated storage shed no larger than 200 square feet with temporary foundation located in the rear of the property

Paint color that is consistent with the district on previously painted surfaces

Minor landscaping and sprinkler systems. Backyard landscaping.

Construction, addition, or removal of inground swimming pools installed in the backyard

Demolition of non-historic accessory structures, non-historic additions of non-historic materials

Reopen enclosed porch

\* These are sample lists. Each request will still be reviewed by staff for a COA. Staff may require additional materials for review or review by the HDRC.

For a full explanation of the Office of Historic Preservation application process, please contact staff at [info@sapreservation.com](mailto:info@sapreservation.com) or (210) 215-9274. Applications and additional information are also available on our website at [www.sapreservation.com](http://www.sapreservation.com).

# My Project Checklist

Project Name/Address:

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Architect:

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Contractor:

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Sub-Contractor :

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Sub-Contractor:

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Sub-Contractor:

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My OHP Contact:

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Use the checklist below to make sure you've included everything needed to make your application complete. A complete application ensures a faster turn-around time for your project.

- Signed authorization from owner
- Scaled site plan
- Photos of existing conditions\*
- Elevations
- Construction drawings
- Materials list
- Material samples (photos)
- Landscape plant list
- Detailed description of proposed work
- Proof of economic hardship (for the demolition of landmark structure)
- Conceptual plan for use following demolition





## **ASK OHP**

Questions about a project?

Call: 210.215.9274

M-F 7:45am - 4:30pm

Email: [info@sapreservation.com](mailto:info@sapreservation.com)

Need to report a concern?

Email: [report@sapreservation.com](mailto:report@sapreservation.com)

Call: 210.219.2093 or Dial 311

[www.sapreservation.com](http://www.sapreservation.com)