

Proposed

BUENA VISTA HISTORIC DISTRICT

Distrito Histórico Propuesto de Buena Vista



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
OFFICE OF HISTORIC
PRESERVATION

Q&A From the First Public Information Meeting

Friday, August 7, 3 PM

What is the Historic Design and Review Commission and Certificate of Appropriateness?

The Historic and Design Review Commission (HDRC) is a group of volunteers appointed by city council members and the Mayor to review requests from owners of landmarked properties. The members represent architecture, architectural history, landscape architecture, and other professional fields with expertise related to historic preservation. While OHP staff can approve about 2/3 of the applications we receive for work on historic properties, some bigger requests require an additional level of review by the Commission. Overall, 97% of the requests we receive are approved either by staff or the Commission. A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is the official record of approval given to owners whose requests for work on historic properties are approved by OHP staff or the HDRC. The COA is what you need in order to pull permits required to begin exterior work.

Will my taxes go up?

Taxes are based on property value and tax rates, and historic designation is not a factor in your property value assessment. In 2015, OHP published research on the economic impact of historic preservation in San Antonio. The study found that tax increases correlated with increased development, and not designation. We find tax increases tied to owners' investment in their properties through rehabilitation projects. If you have a homestead exemption on your property, you would get an automatic 20% tax break on your city taxes for as long as you remain in the home, up to 15 years, if the historic district is approved.

Will the historic district change how I use my property, for example, for renting?

No. Historic district designation is a zoning overlay that doesn't impact use. Use is determined by your base zoning.

What if my home has no significance but is in the district? Do I have to follow the same guidelines of the district?

Yes, the historic design guidelines apply to all properties within the district. One of the benefits of our guidelines is that they let us consider the context of each property as we review requests for COAs. This means that when you submit a request, staff considers the age of the property and changes that may have been made in the past as part of their review.

Am I required to fix my property?

There are no requirements to make repairs or improvements. As with any other property, whether in a historic district or not, structures must meet health and safety requirements per the Unified Development Code.

Do I have to consult or contract an architect if wanting to make repairs to my property?

You do not need to hire an architect or contractor to repair your property. You only need to submit an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to OHP and receive approval for your project before you begin.

If I am currently approved for construction, do I have to redesign my current design to match the historic district?

No. Any work that is already permitted can be completed as approved. However, if you are interested in the substantial rehabilitation tax credit, you might want to get your work approved by us so that you can be eligible for the incentive. We are happy to talk to you about your options.

Does the interior of a house have to be reviewed when remodeling?

No. OHP does not have purview over interior projects. safety requirements per the Unified Development Code.



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Can I replace my windows with energy efficient windows?

This depends on the kind of windows you currently have. OHP considers historic windows a character-defining feature of historic properties and typically only approves in kind replacement. For example, wood windows should be replaced with wood windows. You can request window replacement, but if the HDRC does not approve the request, staff can share options for products and repairs that can help increase efficiency.

Can a home be painted any color, or does it have to be approved by OHP?

We don't regulate paint colors. However, you must have an approved application for a Certificate of Appropriateness before work begins.

Are there any landscaping requirements?

Landscaping changes do require approval, but only if you're replacing grass or other organic materials with impermeable materials like stone, concrete, etc. Most landscaping requests can be approved by staff.

Can solar panels be added to a property in an historic district?

Yes, we regularly approve solar panels on designated properties. The owner needs to get approval via the Certificate of Appropriateness process prior to installation.

If I have a vacant lot and decide to build a home, do I have to make it look historic?

No. New construction in the historic district is subject to the historic design guidelines. We do not require new construction to look historic, but we do consider things like square footage, massing, and materials in relation to other homes on the block.

Do we have to turn in repair receipts to receive remodel incentives?

In order to receive the Substantial Rehabilitation Tax Incentive, owners must submit invoices or receipts for items and work claimed toward the 30% investment.

If home repairs are not cost effective, for example, repairs outweigh the cost of building new home, can a new home be built on the property?

Owners of designated properties can request demolition of their designated structure. The application requires proof of loss of integrity and proof of economic hardship. It also requires you to have replacement plans for the structure. It is very unusual for demolition to be approved within a historic district.

Explain the steps to get exterior work approved in a historic district.

For any work on the exterior of the property, you or your representative (like an architect or contractor) submit a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness through our online application. The application requires photos of each side of the house before work begins; a brief written description of the project; measured drawings if the project involves additions, changes to windows or doors, or other changes to the historic footprint of the structure; and a description of materials to be used.

Once submitted, OHP staff determines we can approve the request administratively or if it needs to be heard by the Historic and Design Review Commission (HDRC). Administrative approvals are typically granted for routine maintenance (painting, repairs, etc), replacing materials in kind (such as replacing a wood deck with a new wood deck in the same configuration and location), and other small projects that don't impact the historic materials or footprint of the property.

Administrative approvals are typically returned to you in about two or three business days, and about 2/3 of the applications we receive are eligible for administrative review. Larger projects, like additions over 200 square feet or replacing historic wood windows with new windows, may require review by the HDRC. Approvals for projects that require this level of review are returned to the customer within 10 days of the HDRC hearing. The HDRC meets the first and third Wednesday of each month at 3 PM. Application deadlines can be found at sanantonio.gov/historic.

