Chapter
Three

Design Review Process

Design Review is the process by which the Historic Preservation Commission reviews proposed material changes in appearance for properties within the locally designated district and issues or denies Certificates of Appropriateness. An approved Certificate of Appropriateness allows the proposed changes to take place. **An application for a building permit triggers the design review process; however, changes which do not require a building permit may also need to come before the Historic Preservation Commission for design review.**

Any local historic district designated by the City of Stone Mountain must adhere to the design review process as outlined in the Stone Mountain Historic Preservation Ordinance. The Stone Mountain Historic District Preservation Ordinance was passed in June 7, 1994 by the authority of the 1980 Georgia Historic Preservation Act. A copy of this ordinance can be obtained from the City of Stone Mountain. This manual does not serve as a substitute for the ordinance, and any property owner interested in the content of this ordinance should obtain a copy as a supplement to this publication.

The process for property owners to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness is described in the following chapter.

Design Review Process

Any **Property Owner** or **Occupant** wishing to make a **material change in appearance** to any building, structure, or site within the locally designated historic district must submit an application to the Historic Preservation Commission for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Demolition, relocation, and new construction within the local district also requires a Certificate of Appropriateness.

For a summary of the design review process, see the **Flowchart** on page 3-7.

Property Owner's Application Process

Step 1:
Determine Whether a Certificate of Appropriateness is Needed

A Certificate of Appropriateness is required when a property owner desires to make a material change in appearance to the exterior of a building, structure, site or work of art in the locally designated historic district. A Certificate of Appropriateness is also required before a building permit can be issued for any material change in appearance to a designated historic property. A **material change in appearance** may be:

1. A reconstruction or alteration of the size, shape, or facade of a historic property, including relocation of any doors or windows or removal or alteration of any architectural features, details, or elements;

2. Demolition or relocation of a historic structure;

3. Excavation for construction purposes;

4. A change in the location of advertising visible from the public right-of-way; or

5. The erection, alteration, restoration, or removal of any building or other structure within a historic property or district, including walls, fences, steps, and pavements, or other appurtenant features.

Routine maintenance or ordinary repair of any exterior architectural or environmental feature in or on a historic property to correct deterioration, decay, or to sustain the existing form, and that does not involve a material change in design, material or outer appearance, does **not** require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Step 2:
Submit an Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness

An **Application** for a Certificate of Appropriateness may be obtained from the City of Stone Mountain at City Hall. The application should be completed and returned to the City Clerk who will forward the application on to the Historic Preservation Commission for review. Applications are due by the 1st of the month **previous to** the monthly meeting at which the application will be reviewed.

All applications are to be accompanied by the following items:

• Drawings, photographs, plans and documentation required by the Commission.

• Demolition or relocation projects must be accompanied by post-demolition or relocation plans for the site.

Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Step 3:
Historic Preservation Commission Reviews the Application

Applications for Certificates of Appropriateness will be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission at their regularly scheduled monthly meeting. The date, time and location of the meeting will be posted at City Hall. Written notice of the meeting will be mailed by the Commission to all owners and occupants of the subject property, and public notice signage will be erected at the subject property.

Applicants and affected property owners, or their representatives, will be given an opportunity to speak at the meeting at which their application is presented.

In reviewing applications, the Commission is guided by the following standards:

1. *U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* and *Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* (See Appendix A: Sources for Maintenance and Rehabilitation).

2. Stone Mountain Design Guidelines

Step 4:
Application Approved – Certificate of Appropriateness Issued

The Historic Preservation Commission will approve, approve with conditions, or deny an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness within forty-five (45) days after the completed application has been filed. Failure of the Commission to act within this time period will constitute approval.

If the application is **approved**, the Commission will transmit a Certificate of Appropriateness to the applicant. A copy of the Certificate will be forwarded to the City of Stone Mountain Code Enforcement Office, who is responsible for enforcement.

If an application is **denied**, the Commission will notify the applicant in writing of its decision and state the reasons for the denial.

The applicant may make **modifications** to the proposed project plans and may re-submit the application at any time after doing so.

Persons adversely affected by a determination made by the Commission relative to either the approval or denial of a Certificate of Appropriateness may appeal such determination of the Mayor and City Council. These persons must appeal the determination within fifteen (15) days after the issuance of the determination. The Mayor and City Council may approve, modify, or reject the determination made by the Commission if they find the Commission abused its discretion in reaching its decision. Appeals from decisions of the Mayor and City Council may be taken to the Superior Court of Dekalb County.

Historic Preservation Commission's Review Process

Before the design review meeting:

The Historic Preservation Commission should make sure that the proper procedures for submission of an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness have been followed and that all information needed for efficient review of the application has been obtained. The following questions should be asked:

• Does the proposed project require review, or does it fall under ordinary maintenance or repair?
• Are non-design issues, such as zoning or land use, part of the proposed project?
• Have notices been sent and signage posted?
• Are Certificate of Appropriateness applications and accompanying documentation (photos, floor plans, drawings) complete?
• Have the designated Commission members or agent visited all the properties under review?
• Is all paperwork in order?

At the design review meeting:

It is critcal that the Historic Preservation Commission follows a consistent process and clearly records the results of that process. As the Commission completes design review on an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, there are basic questions that should be asked in determining whether to **approve**, **approve with conditions**, or **deny** an application. Following is the process for reviewing applications:

STEP 1 – Evaluate the property and establish its **level of significance**. Is the property historically, architecturally, and/or culturally significant? Possible classifications from most to least significant might be:
• historic landmark, architectural, and/or cultural property
• historic, architectural, and/or cultural significance of the property
• historic property
• nonhistoric property
• vacant lot
• nonhistoric intrusive property

If the property is a **historic property**, go to *Chapter One: Stone Mountain Historic District Overview* for assistance in evaluating the property's architectural integrity and significance. Consider age; historic, architectural, and cultural significance; and historic and architectural integrity.

STEP 2 – Evaluate the character and integrity of the **area of influence** of the proposed project. Is this surrounding area historically, architecturally, and/or culturally significant? Possible classifications might be:

- largely intact historically, architecturally, and/or culturally significant area
- partially intact historically, architecturally, and/or culturally significant area
- very altered historically, architecturally, and/or culturally significant area
- mixed historic/nonhistoric area
- nonhistoric area

The level of significance of the property and the area of influence should guide the degree of scrutiny used to evaluate a project.

STEP 3 – Define the **project type** (rehabilitation, addition, new construction, etc.) and evaluate the proposed project using the following questions as a guide. Use the appropriate guidelines to help in evaluating the project.

1. Would the proposed project physically impact a historic property? If so, would the impact be negative?
2. Would the proposed project visually impact a historic property? If so, would the impact be negative?
3. Would the proposed project physically impact a historic landscape or streetscape feature? If so, would the impact be negative?
4. Would the proposed project have a negative impact on the overall historic, architectural, and/or cultural character of the district?

STEP 4 – Answer the question, “Does this project set a precedent for others?”

STEP 5 – In a final and broad view, answer the question, “How will the proposed project contribute to the overall betterment of the community?”

Design Review Process Flowchart

