

City Planning  
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Hours

Monday-Friday  
8am-5pm



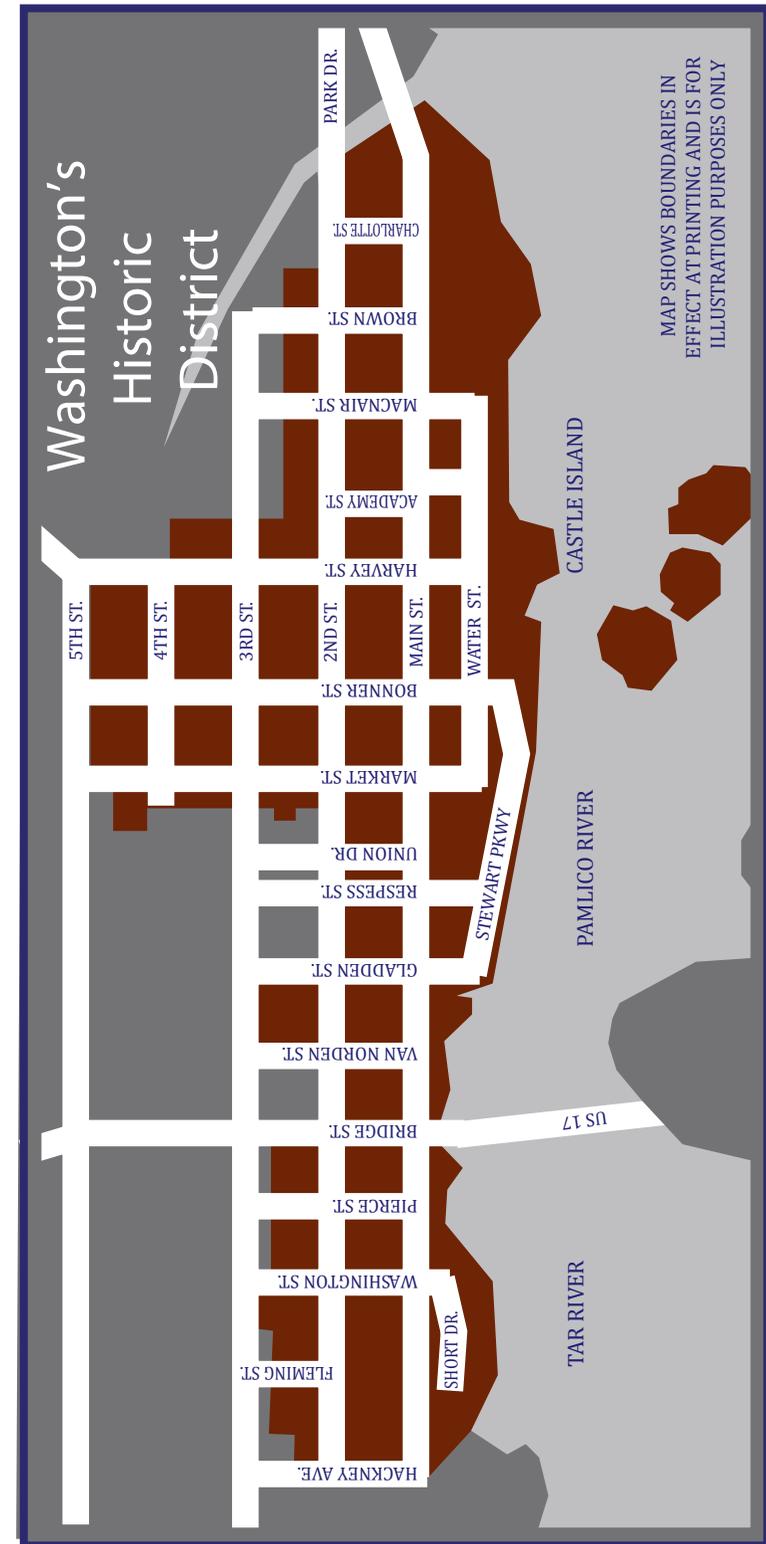
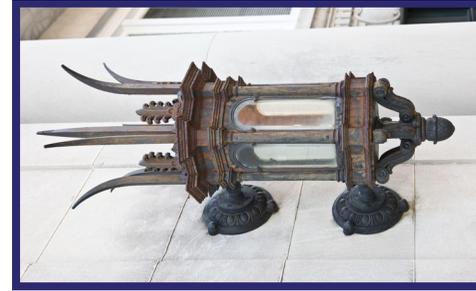
Municipal Building  
P.O. Box 1988  
102 East Second Street  
Washington, NC 27889

Washington's

# Historic District



Guidelines for property owners



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## Historic Washington

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Washington's rich history adds to the character of the community. The city was founded in 1776-the same year of our nation's independence. It was the first town in America to have been named for George Washington. Because of Washington's strategic location at the junction of coastal and inland rivers, the town developed as a regional shipping center. Washington also was a federal supply outpost during the Revolutionary War.

Washington has rebuilt after devastating fires destroyed all but a few of the city's antebellum structures. The construction that followed the second major fire in 1900 (the first burning was during the Civil War) produced a concentration of Victorian era homes and commercial buildings in the area now designated as the Washington Historic District. Composed of the waterfront business district and surrounding neighborhoods, the Historic District also boasts fine examples of revival, colonial, Greek, federal, traditional cottages, and other architectural styles.

Washington's historic district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of the largest commercial and residential historic districts in North Carolina. It is a source of pride for the community, and the City of Washington is committed to preserving the historic character of this area.

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## The Historic Preservation Commission

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Members of the Historic Preservation Commission are city residents appointed to three-year terms by the Washington City Council. In addition to issuing Certificates of Appropriateness for major works in the Historic District,

the Commission also recommends to City Council properties to be designated as historic districts and landmarks and recipients of Downtown Washington Facade Improvement Grants.

The Historic Preservation Commission regularly meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, Municipal Building, unless otherwise announced. Agendas are posted on the City of Washington's website and are advertised in the Washington Daily News. Submit requests for consideration by the Historic Preservation Commission to the City's Department of Planning and Development in the Municipal Building on or before the 15th of the preceding month.

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### Certificate of Appropriateness

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Exterior improvements, new construction, a change in materials, or alternations to property in the Historic District require review by the City to ensure that changes will comply with Historic District Guidelines. The City must issue a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) before a property owner can erect, alter, restore, demolish, or move any of the following: any exterior portion of any building; property features such as stone walls, fences, light fixtures, steps and pavement; above-ground utility structures; or outdoor advertising signs.

Projects that will not alter the appearance and character of the property and/or will recreate the property's original appearance are considered minor works. City staff can issue a Minor Works COA for certain improvements. More substantial projects require review by the Historic Preservation Commission before receiving a COA. The commission also reviews requests that have been denied by City staff.

A COA is never required for improvements to the interior of a building.

Before proceeding with improvements to the exterior of a building or property in the Historic District, the property owner should contact the City's Planning and Development Department about obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness. Property owners will need to complete a form to describe the work to be performed and pay a fee. For some projects, property owners also may need to secure other permits from the City's Inspection Division. Copies of the Historic District Guidelines and Historic District Maps are available from the City's Department of Planning and Development and their website.

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### Guidelines for Common Building and Renovation Projects

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**Roof Replacements.** Maintain existing roofing material whenever possible. Replace deteriorated roof covering with new materials that match the existing in composition, size, shape, color, and texture.

**Fences.** Use traditional fencing materials made of wood, stone, and iron in the Historic District. Street front fences may not be more than four feet high. Vertical wooden privacy fences six feet high or less are permitted in rear and side yards.

**Awnings.** Commercial or residential awnings should be made of either canvas, vinyl coated canvas, or acrylic. Awnings should not be used where there is evidence of the previous use of shutters.

**Minor Repairs.** Nothing in the Historic District guidelines prevents ordinary maintenance or repair of buildings and property as long as work does not involve a change in design, materials, or outer appearance.

Some minor repairs, such as fence repairs, awnings installation, and landscaping projects may require a minor works COA. More substantial projects, such as additions or changing doors or windows, will require a COA review before the Historic Preservation Commission. Property owners should consult with the city's Department of Planning and Development at 975-9384 prior to beginning work to determine the need for a COA.

**New construction.** New buildings in the historic district should respect the character of historic buildings without copying them. New construction projects will be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission to evaluate compatibility with surrounding structures.

**Windows and doors.** Repair of existing windows and doors is usually recommended over replacement. If replacement is allowed, the new window or door should match the old as closely as possible.

**Exterior wall materials.** When siding cannot be repaired, it should be replaced with the same type of siding. Artificial sidings, such as vinyl, aluminum, or masonite, are not allowed unless already existing on a building. Brick which has previously been painted may be repainted; however, sandblasting is prohibited.

**Signs.** The Historic District Guidelines contain requirements for the number, size, location, and color of signs. Please contact the Department of Planning and Development prior to placing or painting a sign on a building or window, including interior windows.

**Demolition.** The Historic Preservation Commission may not deny a COA request for a demolition but may delay the demolition for up to 365 days. During the delay, the Commission may work with the property owner to attempt to save the structure.