

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

Technical Paper No. 20



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Introduction

Any project that alters a designated feature of a King County Landmark must be approved through a formal design review process. This paper provides information about the review process for Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) applications. *Technical Paper No. 21* provides additional information on preparing a project for design review.

The King County Landmarks Ordinance establishes the COA review process and defines the types of projects requiring review. Generally, alterations other than general in-kind maintenance and minor repairs require a COA. Depending on the type of project proposed, an application for a COA is reviewed by either the Historic Preservation Officer or the Design Review Committee of the Landmarks Commission. Upon formal review and approval of a project, the applicant will receive a certificate from the Historic Preservation Officer and/or the Landmarks Commission that clarifies the scope of the approved work and allowing construction to begin.

The Certificate of Appropriateness process is separate from the building permit process. COAs must be obtained before building permits can be issued. However, projects that may not require a building permit must still have a COA in order to proceed. A COA is not required for routine maintenance and repairs, or changes to utility systems such as plumbing and wiring which do not disturb any significant historic features of the building. Examples of typical projects that do not require a COA include reglazing a broken window or replacing missing shingles on a shingle roof.

The Landmarks Ordinance establishes three types of Certificates of Appropriateness: *Type I*, *Type II*, and *Type III*. Each type is described in more detail below.

Type I

Projects that involve restoration of historic features and major repairs using the same type of materials originally found on the building require a Type I COA. An example of a project that requires a Type I COA is replacing a deteriorated shingle roof with a new shingle roof.

Type I COAs are reviewed by the Historic Preservation Officer and applications are approved, denied, or forwarded to the Landmarks Commission within ten days.

Type II

Projects that involve alterations in the appearance of the property require a Type II COA. Examples of projects requiring a Type II COA are constructing an addition to a landmark building, or adding a new building within the boundary of a landmark property or district.

The Design Review Committee reviews Type II COA applications at a monthly meeting generally held on the second Thursday of each month. The committee may either (a) enter into a written agreement with the applicant/owner that specifies the approved work which is then ratified by the Commission at a public meeting or (b) make a recommendation to the Landmarks Commission, which after full public notice will hold a public hearing to act on the application. In either case, the Landmarks Ordinance requires that an action be taken within forty-five day time period.

Type III

Projects that propose the demolition or relocation of landmark properties or the excavation of archaeological sites require a Type III COA. These types of projects have an irreversible effect on a landmark property, and therefore require the most stringent review. Consult the Landmarks Ordinance for more information about the Type III COA review process.

Some answers to questions about the COA process:

How can I expedite the review process?

Consult with the Landmarks Coordinator prior to preparing an application to learn the schedule for upcoming meetings and deadlines for applications, discuss the applicable guidelines, and obtain resources materials to plan your project. The Landmarks Coordinator will also review your completed application to make sure it provides the information the Design Review Committee will need to evaluate and recommend action on the proposed project.

When do I apply for a COA?

It is best to initiate the design review process prior to applying for any required permits from the Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES). If you submit an application for a building or development permit to DDES without obtaining a COA, they will refer the project back to the Landmarks Commission for its review and approval. More importantly, design review may result in changes to the project design or specifications; apply for a COA prior to finalizing your plans. Even if your project does not require a building permit, you should still apply for a COA as early as possible in your planning/design process.

How do I know what changes are acceptable?

Alterations to King County Landmarks are evaluated using *The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. These standards include specific guidelines that are used throughout the country to plan and guide the appropriate rehabilitation of historic properties. A copy of these standards and guidelines can be obtained from the Historic Preservation Program. They are also available via the Internet at: <http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/standguide/index.htm>. *Technical Paper 13* also includes useful information about the design guidelines and process.

What if I do not agree with the decision to approve or deny a COA?

Decisions of the Historic Preservation Officer (Type I COAs) can be appealed to the Landmarks Commission within fifteen days after being issued. Decisions of the Landmarks Commission can be appealed to the Metro-King County Council within thirty days of the decision. For more

information about the appeal process, consult with the Historic Preservation Officer or refer to the Landmarks Ordinance.

When does a COA expire?

While a COA does not have an expiration date, keep in mind that work must be completed *exactly* as specified in the COA document issued to you. If the scope or nature of the work changes after the COA is approved and issued, you will need to apply to have the initial COA amended.

To request a COA application form and instructions or to obtain more information about the design review process, please contact the King County Historic Preservation Program at (206) 296-8636.

This information is available upon request in alternative formats for persons with disabilities at (206) 296-7580 TTY.

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