

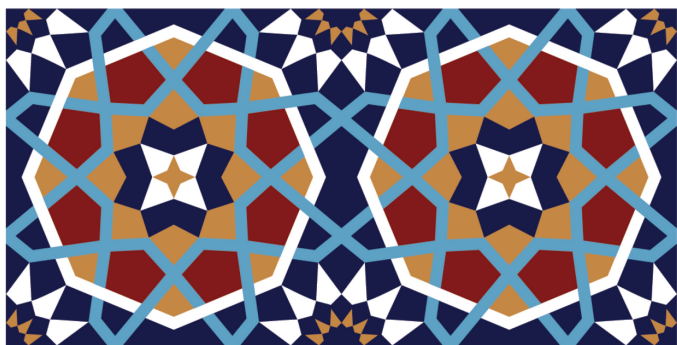
HISTORIC HOMEOWNER HANDBOOK

Your Guide to Owning,
Maintaining, or Altering a
Historic Property in San Antonio

Revised February 2023




**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 San Antonio's rich past to future generations.



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, affordability, 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

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Director, Office of Historic Preservation



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. However, 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

City of San Antonio Historic Design Guidelines were adopted by City Council in 2012. They are based on the Secretary of the Interior’s 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 on our website. Hard copies are also available at several local public libraries.

Understanding the Historic and Design Review Process

The City’s Unified Development Code (UDC) requires OHP or Historic and Design Review Commission (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 beginning the work. You must also obtain proper permits from the Development Services Department (DSD). Your property may also require review by OHP or the HDRC if it is zoned RIO or Downtown.

The principal type of written approval for development affecting a historic property is the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). A COA can





be reviewed and approved in two ways: administratively, for relatively minor and straight-forward projects, and by the HDRC for more significant projects. For all COAs, decisions are guided by the Historic Design Guidelines, Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and the City's Unified Development Code (UDC).

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

We Can Help

Please talk to OHP staff before starting work so we can let you know when approvals and permits are needed. We are available for consultation with applicants regarding proposed rehabilitation, new construction, and other projects dealing with historic properties, as well as assistance with the Certificate of Appropriateness application process.

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 (DRC)

The DRC is a standing committee of the 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.



Historic Property Owner Dashboard

We've collected all the information you need before getting started on a project in one place. Scan to view!





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 & 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.

Policy Guides

Because every historic property is different, it can often be difficult to understand how the Historic Design Guidelines will be applied to your project. To provide additional guidance and examples, OHP has developed a series of Policy Guides that are intended to illustrate how the Guidelines are routinely interpreted and applied. The Policy Guides also provide examples of best practices and ideas for your historic home.



Visit our website to view the Policy Guides, which include guidance for windows, replacement materials, front lawn landscaping, porches, fences, and energy retrofit.



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.

Wherever feasible, retain as many original materials as possible. This not only preserves the architectural integrity of your property, but is a much more sustainable choice than discarding and replacing with new materials.



How Do I Submit a Request?

If you are planning on doing any work to the exterior of a property in a historic district, RIO district, Downtown district, or one that is zoned an individual landmark, you will need to complete a Certificate of Appropriateness application on our online application portal:

www.sanantonio.gov/historic/HDRC/ApplicationsPortal



Required documentation such as photos and drawings can be uploaded directly to the portal from your home computer, tablet, or smartphone. There is no fee for a residential request.

After you successfully submit your application, you will receive an email from OHP staff with next steps.





Review & Approval

Depending on the scope of your request, review and approval may follow one of two paths:

Administrative Approval

Some minor repairs and alterations may be approved by OHP's dedicated staff without review by HDRC. Eligible items may include:

- Repairs using the same materials
- Routine maintenance such as painting, patching, or caulking
- Re-roofing using the same type and color of material
- Landscaping, fencing, and patios
- Small additions

A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is just one step in the permitting process. Always be sure to confirm with the Development Services Department (DSD) regarding any additional requirements.

Commission Review

Historic and Design Review Commission (HDRC)

Projects with larger scopes such as changes in materials, additions, new construction, or demolition of historic structures require review by the HDRC. The HDRC meets the first and third Wednesday of each month. If you think your project might require HDRC review, then we recommend visiting our website clicking on the "Design Review" tab to learn more about the process and to identify your OHP case manager. Your case manager will guide you through the process so you know what to expect.

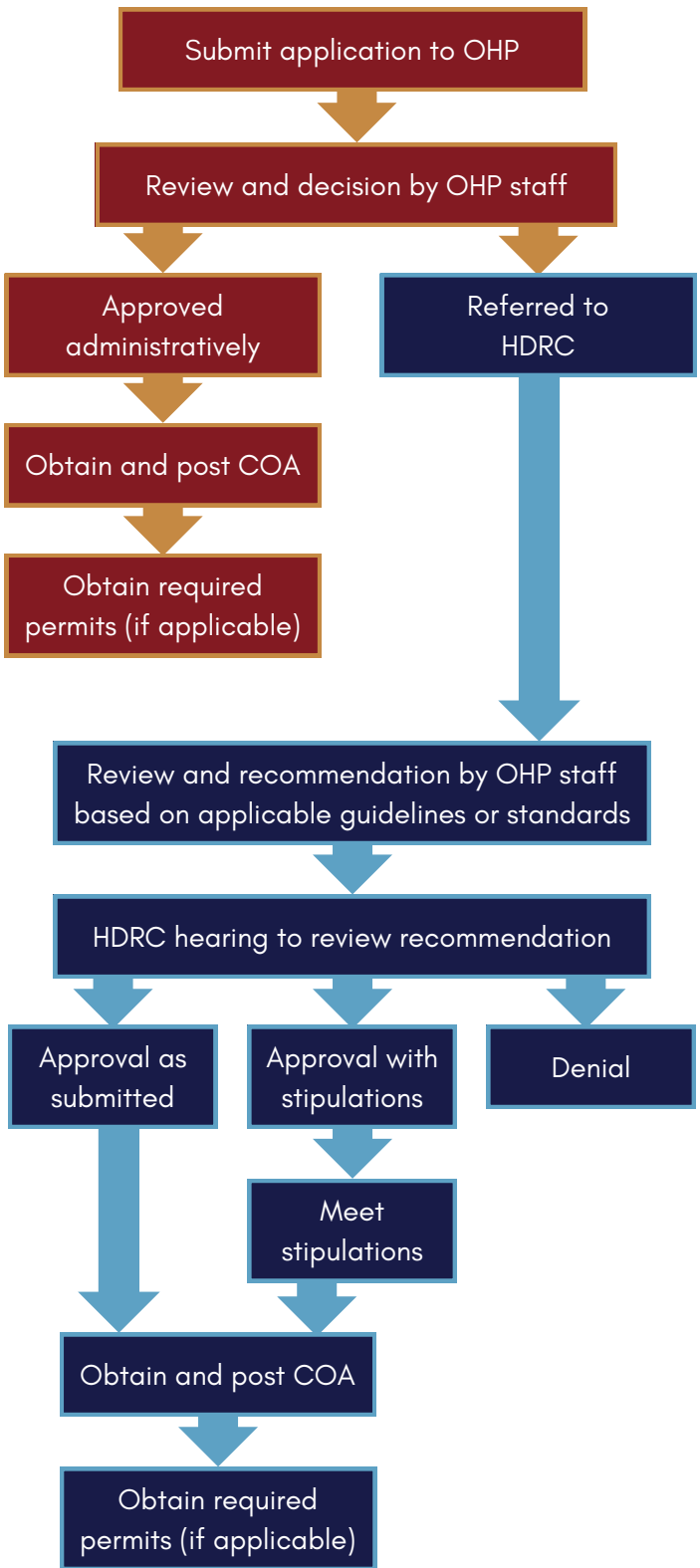
Compliance and Technical Advisory Board (CTAB)

Depending on scope, your request may be reviewed by the CTAB. The CTAB focuses on technical issues such as window replacement, changes to roofing material, composite substitutes, and compliance cases. The CTAB meets monthly.





Application Review Process



Review Bodies

Office of Historic Preservation

The primary purpose of the OHP is to administer the Unified Development Code and preservation program for the City of San Antonio. Our primary goal is to be a resource and achieve best outcomes that preserve our rich and diverse architectural heritage.

Historic & Design Review Commission

The HDRC consists of eleven members who reside in San Antonio and are appointed by City Council. The responsibilities and duties of the HDRC are to review applications for the designation of local historic districts and historic landmarks; recommend approval or denial of Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs) with respect to proposed exterior alterations to applicable structures; maintain a record of all proceedings to be available to the public; and periodically initiate updates to the Historic Resource Survey for the City.

Compliance & Technical Advisory Board

The CTAB is a board of the Historic & Design Review Commission that reviews applications for projects that focus on technical issues, including the replacement of materials, composite substitutes, and violation cases.

Design Review Committee

The DRC is a standing subcommittee of the Commissions 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 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.

Zoning 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.



Incentives for Rehabilitation

Your project may qualify for a City of San Antonio tax incentive if:

- Your property is a local historic landmark or is located within a local historic district; and
- Your planned rehabilitation project meets or exceeds 30% of the current assessed improvement value of the property as defined by the Bexar County Appraisal District (BCAD). *Improvement value* refers to the value of structures only; this does not include the assessed land value.

Qualifying applicants for the Substantial Rehabilitation Tax Exemption for Residential Properties may choose one of the following ten year incentives:

1. City property taxes frozen for ten years at the assessed value prior to the substantial rehabilitation.
2. No City property taxes owed for five years after rehabilitation is complete. In the subsequent five years, the improvement value will be taxed at 50% of the assessed value.

City property taxes refers to the City of San Antonio line on your tax bill (Entity 21). The property tax exemption remains with the property regardless of changes in ownership. Exemptions take effect January 1 of the year following completion and verification of work. Owners must submit a BCAD tax exemption application along with the tax verification approval letter from OHP to Bexar County each year of the 10-year incentive period.

How to Apply

This tax incentive requires approval prior to its implementation. Visit our website to apply today, and be sure to reach out to OHP staff with any questions!

[www.sanantonio.gov/historic/
HDRC/ApplicationsPortal](http://www.sanantonio.gov/historic/HDRC/ApplicationsPortal)





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 administratively. You can verify with our staff.

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

Talk to staff early in the process to receive curated project feedback, and be sure to provide all required documentation.

Do I need to hire an outside professional to get approval from OHP or HDRC for my project?

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.

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.

How long does the HDRC review process take?

Applications are due 19 days before the desired HDRC or CTAB meeting date. After a project is approved, Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs) are issued within 10 days of the meeting date, and often much sooner.

What information do I need to submit for review?

See the next page for a checklist!

How are the Historic Design Guidelines enforced?

Any work that was initiated without prior approval is subject to a Stop Work Order and a \$500 post-work application fee. In extreme cases, a municipal court case may be filed to achieve compliance.

Are there any financial incentives available?

The Substantial Rehabilitation Tax Incentive and possible fee waivers are available for historic preservation projects. Learn more on our website.

Who can I contact with questions?

You may connect with OHP staff at (210) 207-0035 or via email at OHPpermits@sanantonio.gov.





My Project Checklist

Use the checklist below to make sure you've included everything needed to make your application complete. This list is also available on our online application for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

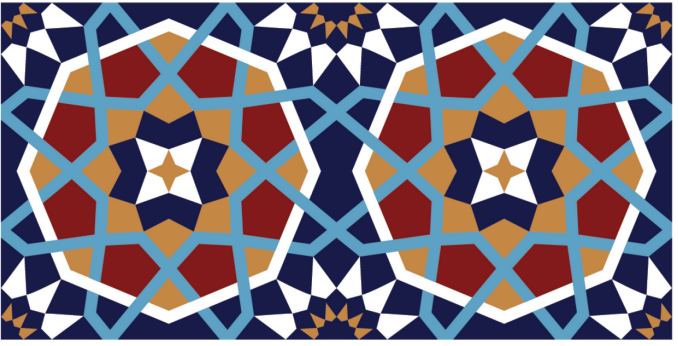
Not all requests require every document listed below, but every application requires current color photographs of the subject property and a site plan or annotated survey that indicates all structures on the lot. A complete application ensures a faster turn-around time for your project.

- Scaled site plan
- Photos of existing conditions*
- Detailed description of the proposed work
- Elevations
- Other related construction drawings
- Materials list
- Material samples (photos)
- Landscaping plant list
- Proof of economic hardship (for the demolition of a landmark structure) and replacement plans for a site

*Photos should show the current conditions of the specific project area in addition to the condition of the entire structure(s). If you are requesting to replace windows, pictures of every existing window, pictures of each side of the house, a window schedule, and specifications for the proposed replacement windows should be included. Photos should show each side of the building, corner to corner. If this isn't possible, please provide as many photos as necessary to show a complete side. **Google Street View images are not accepted!**

A schedule of upcoming hearings may be found by visiting www.sanantonio.gov/historic.





ASK OHP!

Questions about a project?

Call: (210) 207-0035

Mon-Fri: 7:45am - 4:30pm

Email: OHPpermits@sanantonio.gov

Need to report a concern?

Email: report@sapreservation.com

or Dial 311

www.sapreservation.com

