

A Primer for Property Owners and Residents of Raleigh Historic Districts



RALEIGH HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION





What is a Raleigh Historic District?

A Raleigh Historic District is a distinctive area, a place of singular historical flavor characterized by its streets and squares, buildings and trees, architectural design and landscape features. It may be monumental or simple, residential or commercial. Historic districts are also a legacy, linking present and future generations with their heritage and providing a diversity of lifestyles vital to our city's future quality of life.

Development that enhances the character of these areas is encouraged. Raleigh's Unified Development Ordinance (Section 5.4) legally establishes Raleigh Historic Districts as General and Streetside historic overlay zoning districts (abbreviated to HOD-G and HOD-S), recognizing that these neighborhoods are valuable assets to the identity of the city. It also recognizes that change is an important element in the city's evolution, an indicator of a healthy, vital neighborhood, and reflects the pride of residents in their community.

The Raleigh Historic Development Commission (RHDC) is made up of volunteers from the community and serves the public both as a steward for these districts and as a facilitator to those who own properties in these areas. It provides assistance to owners and tenants, helps them plan the alterations they are considering for their properties, and guides the owners through the application process necessary to implement these changes.

How can I find out if my property is in a Raleigh Historic District (or a proposed one)?

Raleigh Historic Districts are established by City Council after a rezoning request has been made by a neighborhood organization, preservation group, or the city, and after careful research and evaluation.

Presently there are six areas that are designated as Raleigh Historic Overlay Districts: Blount Street, Boylan Heights, Capitol Square, Moore Square, Oakwood, and Prince Hall. If you are uncertain about the status of your area, contact RHDC. They can tell you whether your property falls within the boundaries of an existing historic district or a proposed one. Maps showing the boundaries of each district are available at www.rhdc.org and maps.raleighnc.gov/imaps.



If my area is proposed for a Raleigh Historic District designation, do I have any say in whether it is established?

Yes, public comment is an important part of the designation process. By law, property owners in a proposed historic overlay district must be notified of the proposal so that they may appear and comment on it during the public hearings of the Planning Commission and City Council. Neighborhood forums, including both owners and tenants, are usually sponsored by the RHDC prior to the public hearings.

Might my neighborhood lose its ethnic and social character?

No, historic district designation is designed to protect and enhance the existing character of a community, not to change it.

What are the benefits to me as a historic district property owner? Are there any tax benefits?

Owning a property in a historic district ensures that your neighborhood will be protected from unmanaged change. Since the review process is based upon established guidelines, you have greater security in the evolution of your neighborhood than you would if historic district overlay zoning were not in place.



Additionally, if your property is commercial or income producing, you may be eligible for significant tax benefits. Federal law provides for sizable tax credits on rehabilitation work done to eligible historic properties. Contact the N.C. State Historic Preservation Office (hpo.ncdcr.gov) for more information.

There are also federal tax advantages in the form of charitable contribution deductions for owners who donate a historic preservation easement to a charitable organization. For more specific information on easements, contact Preservation North Carolina (presnc.org) or Capital Area Preservation (capitalareapreservation.com).

As a property owner in a Raleigh Historic District, can I still make changes to my property?

Yes, historic districts are not created to prevent changes. Rather, the RHDC offers assistance to the property owner in shaping those changes while meeting the requirements of city code. The code provides for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process which ensures that property exterior changes are appropriate to the spirit and character of the district. This special design review process examines the plans before the work is begun. Any exterior alterations, new construction, demolition, significant landscape changes, or moving of buildings is considered. In the case of demolition, the code provides a 365-day delay during which alternatives to demolition can be explored. Under certain circumstances, the delay may be waived, either in part or completely.

Does Raleigh Historic District designation affect the usage of my property?

No, it does not affect the uses of your property that are permitted by the existing zoning. The historic overlay zoning simply identifies the historic area and provides the mechanism for the design review process for exterior changes.

Will I be required to restore my property?

No, you will not be required to make changes to your property.

Is interior work or routine maintenance reviewed?

No, interior alterations and routine maintenance that does not change exterior appearance are not reviewed.

How can I find out if my project requires other permits?

The Development Services Customer Service Center at 919-996-2495 will be glad to answer your questions about whether the work you are considering requires other permits or visit raleighnc.gov for more information.

What can I use as guidelines for the changes I am planning?

One of the purposes of the RHDC is to assist and consult with you about the changes you propose for your property. Contact them in your early planning stages with any questions or concerns you might have. They will direct you to the *Design Guidelines for Raleigh Historic Districts* (www.rhdc.org). These guidelines are based upon a common-sense approach for the enhancement of historic structures and districts.

The RHDC has also established a Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC) to assist you in interpreting the guidelines for complex projects such as major additions and new construction. DRAC is made up of volunteers (former commission members, architects, contractors, etc.) who are familiar with the guidelines. This group will meet with you informally prior to the review of your application.

Are different guidelines used for Streetside and General Raleigh Historic Districts?

No. The only difference between them is that in the Streetside HOD a smaller portion of the building and lot is subject to the design review process.

Let's assume I've done all that, consulted the guidelines and DRAC, and I'm ready to have the project reviewed. How does that work?

Obtain a COA application form from www.rhdc.org. Drawings and/or photographs depicting the proposed changes are required for the review. Submit the completed application packet to the Development Services Customer Service Center.

Most applications can be reviewed and approved by RHDC staff through the Minor Work process. Major Work projects are reviewed by RHDC's Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Committee in a quasi-judicial public hearing. Examples of these types of changes are new construction, additions, demolition, tree removal, and parking lots. A COA list of work is available at www.rhdc.org. The five-member COA committee meets monthly, and a decision is usually reached during the meeting at which the application is heard.

Can I contact RHDC with my questions? Can they provide any technical help in maintaining my property?

Yes, the staff of the RHDC will be happy to help you. They can interpret the code, suggest solutions to problems, explain your part in the review process, and assist you in filling out your application. Staff can make on-site consultations concerning your project and provide technical assistance common to older buildings (such as persistently peeling paint). In addition, RHDC has a library of preservation resource materials that you may consult or borrow. Contact them at 919-832-7238 or rhdc@rhdc.org for assistance.



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RALEIGH HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

One Exchange Plaza, 3rd floor
PO Box 829
Raleigh, NC 27602

Tel: 919-832-7238
Fax: 919-516-2684
email: rhdc@rhdc.org
www.rhdc.org

