



## CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

The review process for alterations, updates, and rehabilitation projects  
in St. Petersburg's residential Local Historic Districts

The "Sunshine City's" historic neighborhoods are more than collections of old homes – they are tangible reminders of the city's history, architectural trends, and culture. These residences, like any other, will change over time to accommodate occupants' needs. To ensure that these changes are sympathetic to the district's character, the City's historic preservation staff conducts Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) reviews of proposed changes. COAs are also needed for demolition or new construction within historic districts.

### COA Fast Facts

1. COA review of alterations and new construction in Local Historic Districts is limited to exterior changes.
2. Alterations that existed before a Local Historic District was designated don't need to be reversed just because the area was listed in the St. Petersburg Register.
3. Ordinary repair and maintenance that is otherwise permitted by law may be undertaken without a COA.
4. COAs can be processed concurrently with the local Ad Valorem Tax Exemption for Rehabilitation.
5. Paint color/texture is not reviewed in St. Petersburg's residential Local Historic Districts.
6. Planting or removal of non-historic vegetation does not require a COA.
7. COA review is always based on *St. Petersburg's Design Guidelines for Historic Properties* and *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, not the tastes of neighbors, staff, or a historic commission.

### Applying for a COA

A COA is required in addition to any other **building permits** required by law.

The **COA application**, *Design Guidelines*, and other information on St. Petersburg's historic resources can be found at [www.stpete.org/history](http://www.stpete.org/history).

In general, **changes that maintain the same material, that only affect non-historic material, changes to mechanical systems, restoration of historic features, and any alteration to non-contributing properties within a district** are processed by staff within 72 hours for a fee of \$50.

Projects that include **additions, new construction, or the replacement of historic features with a different material** require review by the Community Planning and Preservation Commission (CPPC) for a fee of \$300 plus the cost of notifying neighbors within 200'.

*In 2017:*

**70%** of COA applications were processed at staff level.

**13%** of COA applications were brought to the CPPC for review at public hearing.

**17%** of COA applications were determined by staff to require no formal review.

## Frequently Asked Questions

***A previous owner enclosed my front porch with jalousie windows in the 1970s. Will I be required to open it back up?***

No. Designation doesn't require owners to undo any alterations that already exist.

***What if I want to replace the jalousie windows on the enclosed porch of my Craftsman? Do I have to retain the jalousies? Do I have to have wooden windows custom built to match the historic windows on my home?***

You won't be required to retain any non-historic features such as 1970s windows added to a 1920s building, but you certainly can maintain/repair these features as long as you'd like. If you decide to entirely replace them, you won't need to have new features custom built to exactly replicate historic elements. We would suggest in this case that you use windows in the same style as those historic to your home (if there is evidence), with simulated or true divided lights if there are muntins.

***My kitchen is so small. Can I open it up to my dining room? Do I have to keep my cabinets?***

Only exterior changes are reviewed as part of the COA process. We hope your kitchen renovation goes well!

***How do I know what changes are "appropriate?"***

St. Petersburg's Design Guidelines for Historic Properties have detailed information on the prevalent architectural styles throughout the city and the elements most common to each. Staff is also available to provide research and let you know whether certain changes might need a COA.

***Energy conservation is very important to me. Can I replace my home's original wooden windows with a more energy-efficient set?***

A 2012 study of the efficiency of restored windows by the National Trust for Historic Preservation found that retrofit measures can achieve performance results comparable to new replacement windows and generally offer a greater return on investment. We suggest that you at least consult an expert in historic window restoration for an estimate, because owners are often surprised at how much more affordable repair is than replacement. Taking measures such as adding attic or duct insulation can also yield greater energy savings at a lower price tag.

All told, yes, property owners may replace windows provided that the replacements are impact resistant and Energy Star qualified, and that they match the historic depth in wall, frame size, configuration, proportions, and, where commercially reasonable, finish, as that of the original.

***Will I be able to have solar panels installed in a historic district?***

Yes. Solar panels should just be located and installed to minimize their visibility from, and resulting impact to, the rest of the district.

***What about hurricane shutters?***

Metal or fabric storm panel shutters are most appropriate since they are removable. Roll-down or accordion shutters may be appropriate when reasonably concealed.

***Are fences allowed in historic districts? Are there other requirements for my landscaping?***

Generally, yes, wooden or metal fences can be added within historic districts. This can vary by district because some neighborhoods were developed with landscape features that truly add to their character. Any landscape features that are protected in your district will be clearly detailed in the designation report. COAs will not be required to plant or remove non-historic vegetation. Certain "Grand, Protected, and Signature" trees are already protected by City Code.

***Where can I find the list of paint colors I'm allowed to use?***

Trick question! We don't review paint color in residential historic districts.

*For more information, contact:*

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