



PLANNING DIVISION CLIENT ASSISTANCE MEMO

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS for Historic Preservation

The Gig Harbor Municipal Code (GHMC) Chapter [17.97](#) – Historic Preservation:

- establishes procedures for the voluntary designation of properties to the city's Register of Historic Properties;
- explains the effect of such designation, including the property's eligibility for special tax valuation;
- describes the process for maintenance and monitoring of such properties;
- and delegates the authority for implementation to the Historic Preservation Commission.

What is a Designated Historic Property?

A designated historic property is one that is voluntarily listed on the Gig Harbor Register of Historic Properties as defined by GMAC Chapter [17.97.040](#). The property may be a building, structure, site, or object of architectural, historical, or cultural significance.

All owners of designated historic properties are required to obtain a **Certificate of Appropriateness** before making any exterior changes to their property. The Gig Harbor Community Development Department must receive a completed Certificate of Appropriateness Application for consideration by the [Historic Preservation Commission](#) (HPC). The HPC reviews the project and certifies the changes as not adversely affecting the historic characteristics of the property which contribute to its designation.

Owning a property on the historic register can enhance its prestige, as the property becomes part of the local heritage narrative, attracting attention from history enthusiasts and contributing to the cultural and architectural legacy of the community.

Work Requiring a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Review
All modifications that result in a significant change in the external appearance of a site, structure, or object require HPC review, including:

- Alterations
- New construction
- Reconstruction
- Restoration
- Remodeling
- Demolition
- Alterations to any historically significant outbuildings, staircases, signs, fences, or auxiliary structures on the designated property

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Work Exempted from a Review by the HPC

- Ordinary maintenance
- Repainting with same color
- Re-roofing with the same material and same color
- Emergency repairs

Failure to Apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness

Property owners of designated sites who fail to apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness may be:

- Denied building permit for proposed work until plans are reviewed by the HPC and Certificate of Appropriateness is issued.
- Denied demolition permit for proposed demolition until plans are reviewed by the HPC.
- Subject to removal from the Gig Harbor Register of Historic Properties.

Modification Criteria for Property Owners

Property owners seeking to alter designated structures or sites may find guidance in

The Secretary of Interior Standards and Guidelines for Preservation,

Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction for Historic Properties

(www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/). Property owners shall apply the following elements to ensure sites are appropriately modified:

- Evaluate historic, architectural, and cultural value of the structure/site
- Consider texture and material of the structure or its fixtures
- Review relationship of features on surrounding structures/sites
- Review position of each structure/site in relation to the street or alley
- Evaluate position of each structure/site in terms of other structures
- Preserve historic integrity of structure, site, or object
- Ensure compatibility of new work with existing site/object
- Within the existing setting, review consistency of:
 - Materials
 - Scale
 - Size
 - Height
 - Design
 - Placement

Certificate of Appropriateness Application Process

1. Property owner must file a completed Certificate of Appropriateness Application with Community Development Department to be scheduled for the next available HPC meeting.
2. Set of plans, material samples and/or manufacturer's brochures must be submitted with the Application for review.
3. The HPC shall conduct a Certificate of Appropriateness review at a regular Historic Preservation Commission meeting. The HPC shall evaluate the work proposed and make recommendations and suggestions regarding the project.

Certificate of Appropriateness

The HPC shall complete its review and make its recommendation. If the Commission is unable to process the application, it may ask for an extension of time. The HPC shall issue its recommendation in writing, and any conditions agreed to by the applicant shall become conditions of approval required for site development. If the property owner agrees to the Commission's recommendations, a Certificate of Appropriateness shall be issued with the signatures of the owner and of the chairman of the Gig Harbor Historic Preservation Commission. The Certificate is **not** a permit for work. The Certificate and application packet must be taken to the City of Gig Harbor Community Development Department for issuance of appropriate site development permits.

Waivers of Certificate of Appropriateness

A waiver of Certificate of Appropriateness may be issued by the Historic Preservation Commission for a proposed whole or partial demolition of a local register property. Failing to find alternatives to demolition, the waiver allows the Building Official to issue a permit for demolition.

Certificate of Appropriateness
Site Project Checklist (See GHMC Chapter 17.97.050)

PROJECT	HPC REVIEW REQUIRED	DISCRETIONARY ITEMS **
Primary & Accessory Building Changes: (Accessory = outbuildings, i.e., garages, sheds, docks, net sheds, wash houses, smoke houses, chicken coops, barns, and greenhouses)		
Building exterior new construction	X	
Building demolition	X	
Alterations in exterior materials	X	
Building interior alterations ¹		X
GENERAL IMPROVEMENTS		
Change Roofing or Siding material or color	X	
Change Chimneys, windows, shutters, awnings, doors, exterior staircases, porches material or color	X	
LOT IMPROVEMENTS		
Driveway alterations	X	
Sidewalk alterations	X	
Patio or deck changes	X	
Exterior staircase changes in style or materials	X	
Retaining wall alterations or addition	X	
Fence changes in style or materials	X	
Landscape ponds, fountains, Bar-B-Ques, dog-houses, trellises		X
Hot tub, swimming pool	X	
LANDSCAPING		
Yard lighting		X
Planting or removal of shrubs, ground cover, or hedges		X
Removal of healthy trees	X	

** **Discretionary Items** represent those alterations that do not directly impact the historic characteristics of the property but contribute to its designation.

¹ A review of alterations to building interior is mandatory for projects seeking Special Tax Valuation for interior work. For property owners not seeking Special Tax Valuation, interior alterations are not subject to HPC review.

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