



UPDATE ON HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

STAFF REPORT

TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL PLANNING DEPARTMENT
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PROJECT LOCATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Franklin-Rosemary Historic District Cameron-McCauley Historic District Gimghoul Historic District 	MEETING DATE May 20, 2020
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STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION
Receive the staff's report.

OVERVIEW

In summer 2019, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) awarded the Town a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant of \$10,000 to revise the Historic District Design Guidelines. The Town allocated another \$15,000 to the project for a total of \$25,000. The Design Guidelines will provide direction to:

- Property owners as they plan exterior changes
- The Historic District Commission (HDC) as it reviews the appropriateness of all proposed exterior changes to make sure that future changes are consistent with the character of the Town's local historic districts
- Staff as they provide administrative approvals for minor projects

The HDC adopted the current [Design Guidelines for Chapel Hill Historic Districts](#)¹ in 2002. The HDC reviews exterior alterations, changes in exterior materials, new construction, additions, significant site changes, and the relocation or demolition of historic buildings applying the Design Guidelines. Interior alterations, routine maintenance, and minor repairs to the building's exterior that do not change its appearance and materials are not included in the design review process. The Design Guidelines need to provide a sound basis for consistent and predictable review of applications and maintain the district's historic character. The HDC will adopt new Design Guidelines that reflect the input of the HDC, Town staff, and community members.

PROJECT DETAILS

Project scope includes:

- Provide a clear description of the COA application and review process
- Outline the special character of each of the three local historic districts
- Provide guidance regarding the maintenance of historic building materials
- Provide information about appropriate alternative materials
- Expand guidelines for new construction and additions
- Include guidance for disaster preparedness and recovery
- Include updated photos and graphics
- Present the guidelines in an online/digital format

SUMMARY OF DESIGN GUIDELINE REVISIONS

Some notable changes include:

- Expanded Design Guidelines addressing new construction and new additions
- Increased guidance on design for new garages and accessory buildings
- New sections on foundations for historic buildings, disaster preparedness and planning, as well as separating windows and doors into separate sections
- Improved introductions to each section to provide more insight into common preservation practices
- Character essays describing the distinct character and uniqueness of each local historic district

Staff identified some key items that require further discussion before adopting the final draft of the new Design Guidelines:

- List of activities that require HDC review versus those that staff can administratively approve
- Greater clarity on landscape preservation as the Guidelines currently call for the HDC to review
- Guidance on incorporating sustainable features, such as solar panels and other contemporary devices

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

- In lieu of in-person meetings, staff asked for Committee members' individual reviews and comments on the consultant's proposed Design Guideline revisions.
- Draft revisions are available on the [project webpage](#)² and emailed to members of the public. This provides community members opportunity to review and comment on the draft revisions.

¹ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=2405>

² <https://chplan.us/HDGuidelineRevisions>

- Staff expects to have a final public Committee meeting to present all draft Design Guideline revisions and provide an opportunity to discuss any topics that needs further discussion.

TIMELINE FOR COMPLETING THE PROJECT

The Town’s contract with the SHPO requires that the project be completed no later than August 21, 2020. Due to the pandemic, the SHPO has advised that the Town continue to move forward on each phase of the project that can be completed safely. SHPO anticipates working with the National Park Service to coordinate extension requests this summer when realistic project deadlines may be established.

Date	Action
November 12, 2019	HDC appoints three members to serve on HDC subcommittee
February 2020	Planning Department contracted with consultant Heather Slane of HMW Preservation
February 17, 2020	HDC Committee Meeting
February 17, 2020	Public Information Meeting
March 16, 2020	HDC Committee Meeting – Cancelled. Draft revisions shared with HDC Committee and community members online and via email for individual reviews and feedback
April 4, 2020	HDC Committee Meeting – Cancelled. Draft revisions shared with HDC Committee and community members online and via email for individual reviews and feedback
June 2020	HDC Committee Meeting
June 2020 (TENTATIVE)	Public Information Meeting
July 14, 2020 (TENTATIVE)	HDC review of the final draft of the Design Guidelines
August 21, 2020 (TENTATIVE)	Project completion deadline

Meeting materials and copies of the draft design guideline revisions are available on the project’s webpage: <https://chplan.us/HDGuidelineRevisions>.