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Rowan County Historic Landmark Owner's Guide

What Local Landmark Designation Means for a Property

Landmark designation is an honor. It signifies recognition that the property is important to the heritage and character of Rowan County and that its protection enriches all the County's residents. An owner who wishes to make changes to the exterior of a property, outside of regular maintenance, designated as a historic landmark must first have the plans reviewed and approved by the Rowan County Historic Landmarks Commission or Rowan County Planning Staff. The owner of a designated landmark may apply for an annual fifty percent property tax deferral for as long as the property's important historical features are retained. When a property is designated as a historic landmark, the designation is filed with the title to the property. Future owners of the property are subject to the designation unless it is revoked by the Rowan County Board of Commissioners.

Making Changes to a Local Landmark

No exterior portion of any building or other structure (to include masonry walls, fences, light fixtures, steps, pavement, or other appurtenant features), nor above-ground utility structure nor any type of outdoor advertising sign shall be erected, altered, restored, moved, or demolished on such a landmark until after an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) as to exterior features has been submitted to and approved by the Landmarks Commission or Planning Staff. The county shall require such a certificate prior to the issuance of a building permit or altering, moving, or demolishing structures, which certificate may be issued subject to reasonable conditions necessary to carry out the purposes of this article. A certificate of appropriateness shall be required whether or not a building or other permit is required. "Exterior features" shall include the architectural style, general design, and general arrangement of the exterior of a building or other structure, including the kind and texture of the building material, the size and scale of the building, the type and style of all windows, doors, light fixtures, signs and other appurtenant fixtures. In the case of outdoor advertising signs, "exterior features" may, in the discretion of the county commissioners as part of the landmark designation process, include historic signs, color, and significant landscape, archaeological and natural features of the area.

A COA for minor work may be reviewed and approved administratively by planning staff. Planning staff has the discretion to refer a COA request for minor work to the commission to be reviewed as major work. No application for a COA may be denied by staff without formal action by the commission. The following list contains examples of minor work:

- Repainting using the same color.
- In-kind replacement of glass.
- Repointing and other masonry repairs matching existing materials.
- In-kind roof covering replacement.
- Foundation repairs including vents and access doors.
- Repairs to walkways, patios, fences, and driveways to match the original.
- In-kind replacement of small amounts of deteriorated siding, trim, porch flooring, stairs, landings, and steps totaling less than 25 percent of the overall square feet.
- Installation of storm windows and full view storm doors with trim color being either white or matching house.
- Replacement of mechanical or electrical equipment, antennas, and satellite dishes in same location.
- Installation of gutters and downspouts where the color matches the house trim.
- Alteration, installation, or removal of exterior light fixtures.
- Side or rear yard fences and walls.
- Landscaping side and rear yards.
- Pruning vegetation and removal of trees.
- Alteration of accessory structure with no footprint expansion.
- Removal of deteriorated accessory buildings not original to the site.
- New accessory structure totaling one hundred fifty (150) square feet or less.
- Temporary signs such as real estate, political, etc.

A COA for major work must be considered by the Historic Landmarks Commission during a quasi-judicial hearing.

Enforcement

In case any building, structure, site, area or object designated as a historic landmark is about to be demolished, whether as the result of deliberate neglect or otherwise materially altered, remodeled, removed or destroyed without receiving a COA, the County, the Landmarks Commission, or other aggrieved party by such action may institute any appropriate action or proceedings to prevent such unlawful demolition, destruction, material alteration, remodeling or removal, to restrain, correct or abate such violation, or to prevent any illegal act or conduct, with respect to such building, site, structure, area or object. Enforcement can come in the form of a Notice of Violation (NOV) or Stop Work Orders. Violations and penalties can include civil penalties, misdemeanor citations, or injunctive relief.

County Contact

The information provided in this document is for general guidance purposes and is subject to change. For questions or clarification on responsibilities of Historic Landmark ownership, please contact Rowan County Planning and Development 704-216-8588.

