

# METRO HISTORIC ZONING HANDBOOK



## METROPOLITAN HISTORIC ZONING COMMISSION

Metropolitan Government of  
Nashville and Davidson County

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2023 Revised

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## ABOUT THE MHZC

In 1974, Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County adopted an ordinance creating historic zoning and authorizing the creation of the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission (MHC).

In 1977, the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission (MHZC) was established, followed by the designation of the first *historic zoning* district, Edgefield, in 1978. The five-member commission, selected by mayoral appointment and council confirmation, was authorized to review all permit applications for alterations, new construction, relocation, and demolition within areas designated as historic zoning districts, to determine the appropriateness of the proposed work and preserve the area's buildings and character.

The ordinance was amended in 1983 to bring it into compliance with revised state-enabling law; and again in January 1985, to establish a second, less-restrictive type of historic zoning called *neighborhood conservation zoning*. With the creation of this additional type of historic zoning, what had previously been called historic zoning became known as "historic preservation zoning".

The current MHZC is a nine-member commission that oversees exterior work in historic zoning districts. The panel is made up of a representative from the MHC, the Planning Commission, four overlay district representatives, a registered architect, and two representatives from districts in the downtown Code area. They are appointed by the mayor, confirmed by Metro Council, and serve five-year staggered terms without compensation.

The MHZC is staffed by an executive director, a historic zoning administrator, and professionals with training and experience in preservation, architecture, building sciences, archaeology, planning, policy and architectural history. They administer the day-to-day activities of historic zoning by meeting with and advising applicants on the appropriateness of proposed work; giving technical advice on rehabilitation matters; keeping records; monitoring work in progress; guiding neighborhoods through the overlay designation process; and developing design guidelines. The staff compiles [technical information](#) on the best practices, methods, and materials utilized by preservation professionals across the country, to share with property owners and contractors.



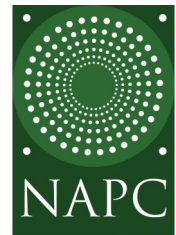
The MHZC is a Certified Local Government (CLG) through the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Tennessee Historical Commission. The CLG Program is a federal program established through the 1980 and 1992 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act, and has become a cost-effective local, state, and federal partnership. Local communities must meet certain criteria and be certified for this program in order to benefit from the federal assistance and resources.



The work of the Commissions is supported by the [Metro Historical Commission Foundation](#), a friends group that funds small projects.



The office is a member of, and frequently partners with, [Historic Nashville, Inc](#); [Preservation Society of Nashville](#); the [Tennessee Preservation Trust](#); the [National Alliance of Preservation Commissions \(NAPC\)](#); the [Civic Design Center](#), the [Nashville chapter of the Urban Land Institute](#) and the [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#), among others.



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PRESERVATION COMMISSIONS

**NATIONAL  
TRUST  
FOR  
HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION®**



## HISTORIC ZONING

### WHAT IS HISTORIC ZONING?

“Historic zoning” is an umbrella term that includes different types of historic overlays in Metro Nashville that protect the architectural character of Nashville’s historic buildings and sites by managing growth and change. A zoning overlay is in addition to the base or land-use zoning of an area. Neighborhoods in more than two thousand municipalities in the United States use historic overlays as a tool to protect their unique architectural character.

There are quantifiable reasons for historic zoning: it gives neighborhoods greater control over development; stabilizes property values; decreases the risk of investing in one’s house; promotes heritage tourism; protects viable urban housing stock; and preserves natural resources by conserving building materials. There are less quantifiable, but equally important, reasons for historic zoning: it protects our past for future generations, it nurtures a sense of community, and it provides a sense of place.



*The Ryman Auditorium is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is within a local historic overlay. Listing in the **National Register of Historic Places** is honorary and does not change property rights. Local historic overlays includes a design review process for changes. A property can be listed in the Register and also have a historic overlay.*

Most property owners desire a historic zoning overlay because it maintains property value and protects investment.

### What is the process for obtaining historic zoning?

An interested person or group, often a neighborhood organization, investigates the need for historic zoning by discussing the possibility with MHZC staff and their councilmember. (Ask for the “Neighborhood Expectation” booklet and “Frequently Asked Questions” flier.) In conjunction with staff, proposed boundaries are explored based on the historical and architectural merit of the area and on owner support. The neighborhood is responsible for paying for a preservation consultant to conduct an architectural resource survey or to create a pool of volunteers interested in being trained to conduct the survey. Staff drafts design guidelines based on the [Secretary of Interior Standards](#) and the architectural resource survey. There is at least one and usually several community meetings to explain historic zoning and answer questions.



## HISTORIC ZONING

The first official step in obtaining designation is for an individual or councilmember to file a [zone change application](#) with the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC). The application should include a map with the specific boundaries of the proposal and identification of the type of overlay requested. For districts, this step is often accomplished by the councilmember. Once an application is filed there is a moratorium (BL2021-842) on issuing permits that do not meet the design guidelines.

Next, the MHZC and Planning Commission each review the proposal at public hearings. The MHZC analyzes if the property or properties qualify for historic zoning and adopts design guidelines. The Planning Commission looks at whether the overlay is consistent with the community plan. The Planning Department forwards both recommendations to the Metropolitan Council.

Finally, an ordinance designating the district is introduced in a Metropolitan Council meeting. There are three readings with Metro Council, with the second one being the public hearing.

The length of the process depends on the neighborhood or property owner and the number of community meetings. A minimum of four to six months is a good place to start.

### What types of historic zoning are available?

There are six types of historic overlays which differ based on the level of protection and type of review.

**Historic Landmark Overlay:** A historic landmark overlay is an individual property or “campus” of special significance and is the most restrictive of the historic zoning overlays. Many landmark properties are owned by Metro.

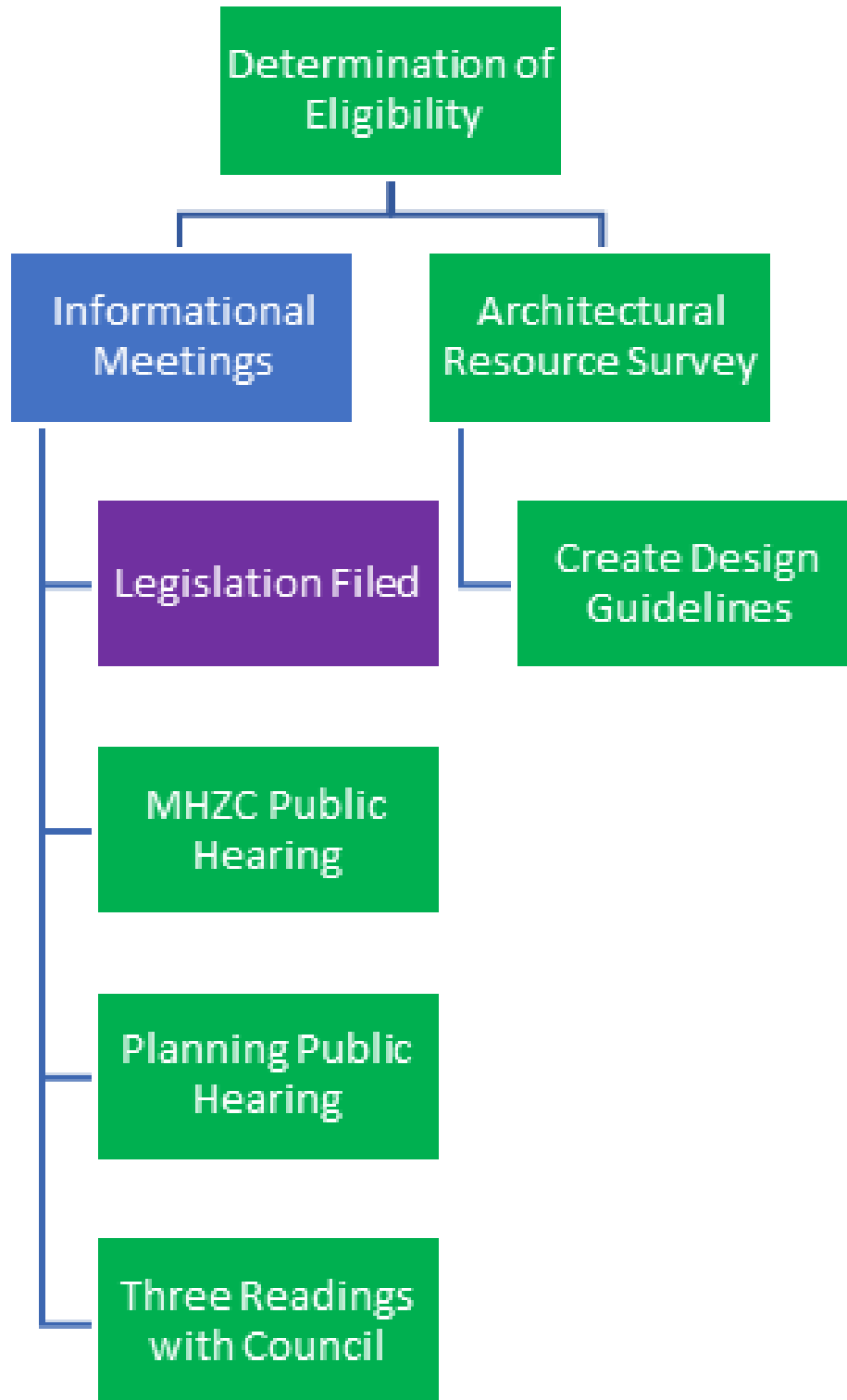
**Historic Landmark Interior Overlay:** A historic landmark interior overlay is an individual property that has had all or portions of interior spaces protected with design review. The building may or may not also be a historic landmark as well. In general, this tool is most appropriate for public spaces in civic buildings.



*The MHC/MHZC has called many historic buildings home including the Silver Dollar Saloon at the corner of 2nd Avenue and Broadway and Cummins Station. We are presently located at Sunnyside, the historic building in the center of Sevier Park in the 12South neighborhood.*



## DESIGNATION PROCESS





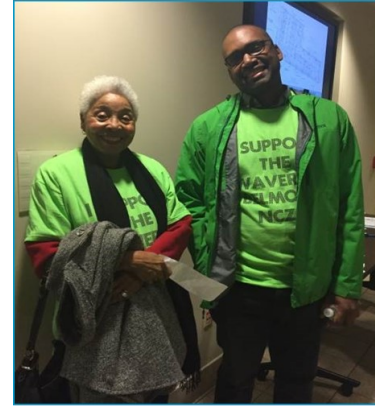
## HISTORIC ZONING

Historic Landmark Signage Overlay: A historic landmark signage overlay is a for a historic sign.

Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay: A historic preservation zoning overlay provides for a great deal of protection for a neighborhood by regulating the majority of exterior alterations.

Historic Bed and Breakfast: This type of overlay allows for a use that might not otherwise be available.

Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay: A neighborhood conservation zoning overlay is the least restrictive type and only guides change for new construction, additions, demolitions, or moving of structures.



*Property owners are actively involved in obtaining historic zoning.*

## PRESERVATION PERMIT REQUIRED

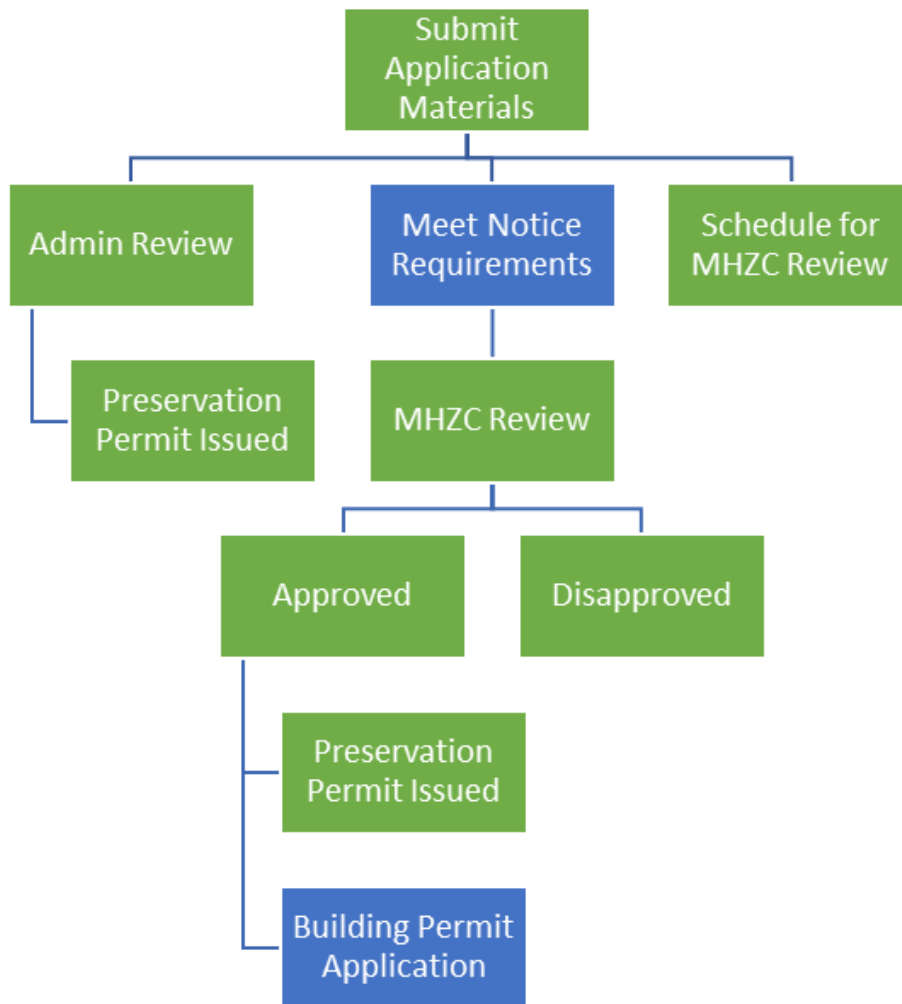
TYPE OF WORK	LAND-MARK	LAND-MARK IN-TERIOR	LANDMARK SIGNAGE	HISTORIC PRESERVA-TION	CONSERVATION/HISTORIC B&B
New construction of primary building	X			X	X
New construction of accessory building	X			X	X
Addition	X			X	X
Demolition (in-whole or in-part)	X	X		X	X
Relocation of a building	X			X	X
Construction of appurtenances	X			X	
Signage	X		X	X	
Exterior Repairs and alterations	X			X	
Interior repairs and alterations		X			



## PRESERVATION PERMIT PROCESS

Applicant has the option of submitting materials earlier than deadline to obtain staff's guidance on meeting the design guidelines.

Applicant arranged community meetings are recommended for projects that include rezoning, large commercial projects or residential or projects more than 1-2 family.



### DATES TO REMEMBER

Application deadline is generally 16 days prior to the meeting, but may be earlier to address holidays.

MHZC public hearing is the third Wednesday of each month, 2:00 p.m.





## PRESERVATION PERMIT PROCESS

### How does Historic Zoning Work?

If your property has an historic overlay, you will need to obtain a Preservation Permit before making certain types of changes. Which alterations require a permit depend on the type of overlay. The preservation permit must be issued before a building permit will be issued. [Design guidelines](#) for each overlay are used to make decisions. The guidelines are based on [national standards](#) and customized for each district.

### WHAT?

You will need a Preservation Permit if you plan to:

- BUILD** a new structure,
- ADD** to an existing building
- DEMOLISH** a structure in whole or in part
- RELOCATE** a structure,
- EXTERIOR REPAIR OR ALTERATION** (historic preservation and historic landmark overlays only)
- INTERIOR REPAIR OR ALTERATION** (historic landmark-interior only)

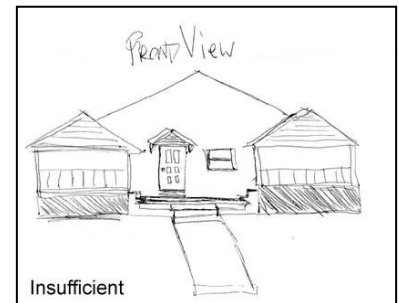
### HOW MUCH?

There is no fee for a preservation permit but there may be fees for associated permits from the Codes Department. The fee is based upon the type and value of the work done, and will be charged to you by the Codes Department when you apply for your building permit.

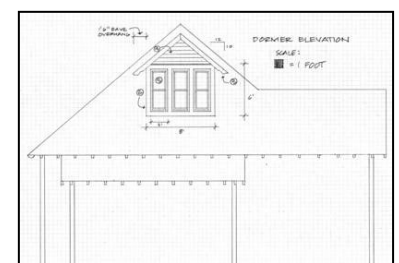
### WHEN?

Some projects are “pre-approved” by the commission. Those project can typically receive an administrative permit within approximately four days or less of receiving a complete application.

If your project is scheduled for an MHZC public hearing, it meets the third Wednesday of each month. [Meeting dates and deadlines](#) may change to avoid holidays.



*Drawings do not have to be done on a computer; however, they must be to scale (1/8" = 1'; 1/4" = 1', etc.). The example above is insufficient because it does not show details and is not drawn to scale. The drawing below, is sufficient in terms of scale but should also have major measurement and materials listed on the drawing.*





## PRESERVATION PERMIT PROCESS

### HOW?

#### 1. MEET/CONTACT US

Contact the MHZC at [historicalcommission@nashville.gov](mailto:historicalcommission@nashville.gov) or 615-862-7970 to confirm that the MHZC needs to review your project. If you have worked with a staff member before, we encourage you to send your questions to the general email box rather than a specific staff member's address to ensure your request is received and given to the next available staffer.

We are pleased to meet with you at any point during your planning process; however, we encourage you to meet with us early. (Please make an appointment as we are not always able to accommodate walk-ins.) Even if you just have an idea sketched on a scrap piece of paper we can give you guidance on how to meet the design guidelines and assure that your project is approved.

#### 2. SUBMIT APPLICATION

[Application information can be found on our website.](#) The form must be accompanied by complete site plans, elevation drawings, specifications and any other appropriate supporting information. Email materials to the [historicalcommission@nashville.gov](mailto:historicalcommission@nashville.gov), rather than a specific staff member.

The commission has pre-approved certain types of routine projects and has given MHZC staff the authority to issue Preservation Permits for them without having to go to the commission meeting for review. In those cases, a Preservation Permit is generally issued within 4 business days of receiving a complete application.

### DESIGN GUIDELINES

Most of the neighborhood conservation zoning overlays have a consolidated set of [design guidelines](#), with chapters for each specific district that may have additional guidance. There are two sets of consolidated design guidelines. One for turn-of-the-20th century districts and one for mid-century districts. Historic B&Bs follow the consolidated design guidelines for neighborhood conservation zoning overlays, if they are not also within another type of overlay.



## PRESERVATION PERMIT PROCESS

All the historic preservation zoning overlays and a small number of neighborhood conservation zoning overlays have a specific set of guidelines. There are also guidelines for the three types of historic landmarks.

### 3. NOTICE PROPERTY OWNERS'

For properties that go before the MHZC, the applicant is responsible for creating, implementing and documenting notice that includes mailed letters to property owners within 250' of the application-property and yard signs. [Please see website for additional information.](#) Conducting notice requirements does not guarantee a place on the agenda. Not meeting all the application requirements will delay the project.

### 4. AGENDA

A pre-agenda will be posted the Thursday after the deadline date with all applications received listed by council district, in no particular order. This agenda will be published prior to staff's full review and acknowledgement that each case is complete, so listing in the pre-agenda is not a guarantee of being on the final agenda. The final agenda will be posted the Friday prior to the meeting. For this agenda, cases will be organized by request-type and cases that are deferred, removed or that were administratively reviewed, will be noted.

### 5. MHZC MEETING

If your project is scheduled for a commission meeting which takes place the 3rd Wednesday of each month, staff will write a staff recommendation, as a decision making aid for commissioners. Recommendations are based on staff's analysis of the project in terms of how the proposal meets the design guidelines and how decisions have been made in the past. Recommendations are not decisions. The commission's decision is based on the design guidelines, the Secretary of Interior Standards, information from the applicant, the staff recommendation, public comment and the commissioner's expertise.



## PRESERVATION PERMIT PROCESS

### 6. PARTICIPATING IN THE PUBLIC HEARING

Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission meetings are open to the public and anyone is welcome to attend. Applicants are encouraged to attend or send a representative who can answer questions about the project.

Public comments may be sent to the office in advance via email to [historicalcommission@nashville.gov](mailto:historicalcommission@nashville.gov) or postal service. To ensure that Comments are shared with the Commission, please submit no later than 10 a.m. the day prior to the meeting.

Meetings are televised and can be viewed live at [Nashville.gov](http://Nashville.gov). Previous meetings are archived on YouTube. Viewing a past meeting is a great way to get to know the meeting procedure.

At the meeting, the format for each case is as follows:

- a. Items on the consent agenda will be voted on at one time, without discussion. Anyone can request a consent item be removed from the agenda, prior to the meeting or during the reading of the consent cases. Sending public comment does not ensure that an item is removed from the consent agenda, it must be specifically requested. Items removed from consent will be heard at the end of the public hearing portion of the agenda.
- b. For all other cases, staff will make a presentation about each project and make a recommendation. Recommendations are based on staff's analysis of the project in terms of how the proposal does or does not meet the design guidelines and is not a decision.
- c. Applicant will have up to 10 minutes to present. Two of the 10 minutes may be reserved for rebuttal of public comment, if desired.
- d. Members of the public will have 2 minutes each to comment on the application. Anyone representing an organization or group, such as a

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<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/TNNASH/subscribe/new>



## PRESERVATION PERMIT PROCESS

neighborhood association, will have 5 minutes to comment if written notice is received no later than 10 a.m. the day prior to the meeting date. Please state your name and address for the record before making your comments. Direct all comments to the microphone so that they are a part of the public record.

Note: Anyone (applicant or member of the public) who would like to bring additional materials for the commission's review should bring 12 copies.

- e. If the applicant has reserved rebuttal time and there has been public comment to rebut, the applicant will be invited to speak.
- f. After presentations and comments, the commission will close the public hearing and deliberate. At this time there is no further opportunity for comments from the public or applicants unless the Commission invites them back to speak.
- g. The applicant may request that a decision be deferred, otherwise the commission will make one of the following decisions:

Approve: When the decision is to approve, the applicant will typically receive a Preservation Permit within 48 hours. A Building Permit is also required for most projects.

Approve with Conditions: When the decision is to approve with conditions the Preservation Permit may be delayed until revised drawings or other requested information is presented to staff.

Disapprove: The project is not approved as presented but an alternative design can be submitted for any future meeting.

## 7. APPEAL

If the applicant or a member of the public is not satisfied with the Commission's decision, they may appeal. Pursuant to the provisions of § 2.68.030 of the



## PRESERVATION PERMIT PROCESS

Metropolitan Code of Laws, the MHZC's decisions may be appealed to the Chancery Court of Davidson County or the Circuit Court of Davidson County via a statutory writ of certiorari. If you choose to appeal, you are advised to seek your own independent legal counsel to ensure that your appeal is filed in a timely manner and that all procedural requirements are met. You should also seek independent legal advice regarding the applicability of the writ of certiorari to the specific decision of the Historic Zoning Commission.

### 8. SUBMIT CODES APPLICATION

1. Most projects also require a permit from the [Department of Codes](#) before construction can begin. (You may also choose to begin the Codes application process before you receive a preservation permit.) Please note that applying for a permit is not the same as receiving a permit. Providing the Codes Department with drawings that are different than those approved by the Commission, can invalidate either or both permits.

Permit fees (amount charged depends on the type and value of the work done) for a Codes permit will be charged to you when applying for a building permit. There is no fee for a Preservation Permit.

Projects on Metro-owned or leased property must also go through an ADA review.

2. In most cases, the contractor/builder must meet with MHZC staff to review the permit before it may be officially issued. After the consultation, MHZC staff will sign-off on the building permit. For permits to remain valid, work must begin within six months of the date of issue.

### 9. INSPECTIONS/APPROVALS

Each Preservation Permit will include a list of additional approvals and inspections. Often, not every material is decided upon at the time the application is submitted. In those cases, the materials are listed as requiring additional approvals. That



approval must be obtained prior to purchasing the material. In most cases, the approvals can be handled quickly by staff.

The Preservation Permit will also list when inspections are needed. It is the responsibility of the applicant to contact our office at [historicalcommission@nashville.gov](mailto:historicalcommission@nashville.gov) or 615-862-7970 when ready for those inspections. If the inspections are the same as what Codes requires, both departments need to be contacted.



If the applicant was the owner or designer/architect, the applicant needs to be sure that the contractor has a copy of the Preservation Permit so that no approvals or inspections are missed. Work done differently than permitted will have to be corrected. Additional expense and delays can be avoided by contacting our office before making changes and before purchasing exterior materials.





## APPLICATION GUIDANCE

### AVAILABLE APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

Staff's role is to provide application guidance to property owners and design review analysis to commissioners. The MHZC staff often meets with property owners virtually, at our office or on-site to discuss an application or just to provide advice. Staff issues permits for the commission, but are not decision makers.

### WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE?

What you need to include depends on your project, but a good rule of thumb is to consider what the Commission will need to fully understand your project. Here are the minimum requirements. All drawings must be no larger than 11 x 17 and MUST be to scale.

### NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS

- Site plan showing the entire lot with property lines and with all setbacks and public/private easements clearly noted. It should show all associated site improvements, e.g. sidewalks, lighting, pavement, etc. For infill or new outbuilding projects, the footprints of the abutting properties should be shown in relation to the proposed building and elevation contour lines. *Basic site plans may be obtained from [Mapping Services and GIS](#). Please note that online metro maps show accurate lot dimensions but the footprint of buildings is not accurate. These maps might work for a simple garden structure but are not likely to be adequate for infill, most outbuildings, or an addition.*
- Elevation drawings of each façade with major dimensions (including roof pitch) and materials specified. For additions, existing and proposed areas should be clearly delineated. For infill projects, the foundation, eave and ridge heights of the abutting properties should be shown in relation to the proposed building. Streetscapes are encouraged for infill projects.
- On drawings, please do not include shadowing, plants, or furniture placement.
- Current photographs of building or site. (Digital preferred) Photos should show the building overall as well as detail views of where the work is proposed.
- Floor plans

### *Drawing Types*

**Elevation:** *A drawing showing the vertical elements of a building. When referencing the sides of the building itself, not the drawing, we use the term "façade."*

**Floor Plan:** *A simple line drawing showing rooms from a "top down" perspective. At a minimum, a floor plan will show the location of walls, doors, and windows.*

**Site Plan/ Plot Plan:** *A site plan, sometimes referred to as a plot plan, is "top down" oriented, accurate drawing or map of your property that shows its size and configuration and the size and precise location of most man-made features on the property such as buildings, parking areas and driveways.*

**Perspective:** *A graphic representation of a building or part of a building shown as it would appear three-dimensionally.*

**Rendering** *A perspective or elevation with artistic delineation of materials, shades, and shadows.*

**Schematics** *A presentation of the element-by-element relationship of all parts of a system.*

**Cross Section:** *A view or drawing that shows what the inside of a building looks like after a cut has been made through it.*







## APPLICATION GUIDANCE, continued

### **REHABILITATION** (Historic Preservation & Landmark Overlays)

- Plans or drawings illustrating the proposed work
- Photographs (detail and overall) of the relevant facades
- Specifications, manufacturer's literature and samples may be required
- Design and materials of windows, doors, trim and features

**DEMOLITION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS** (It is the responsibility of the applicant to prove hardship rather than for the staff or commissioners to disprove hardship. Hardship is based on the property and not the individual's economic situation.)

- Estimated cost of demolition
- Detailed report from a licensed engineer outlining each issue and including photographs. Complete reports generally include qualifications of inspector noting his/her preservation technology experience, findings, methodology, information keyed to photographs, source of information, scope of services requested by applicant.
- Estimated market value of current condition and after alterations to meet basic code requirements
- Two detailed estimates from an architect/designer, developer, general contractor or other real estate professional experienced in rehab. Preferably, the estimates should include the preservation qualifications of the estimator
- Amount Paid for the property, date of purchase, who purchased from including a description of the relationship, if any, and terms of financing between seller and buyer
- For income producing properties: Annual gross income for the previous two years, itemized operating and maintenance expenses for the previous two years, and depreciation deduction and annual cash flow before and after debt service.
- Remaining balance on the mortgage or other financing secured by the property and annual debt-service, if any, during the prior three years
- Assessed value of the property according to the two most recent assessments
- Real estate taxes for the previous four years and assessed value of the property according to the two most recent assessed valuations
- All appraisals obtained with in the last two years by the owner or



## APPLICATION GUIDANCE, continued

applicant in connection with the purchases, financing or ownership of the property

- Form of ownership or operation of the property, whether sole proprietorships, for-project or not-for-profit corporation, limited partnership, joint venture or other
- Any listing of the property for sale or rent, price asked, and offers received if any, within the previous two years, including testimony and relevant documents regarding: any real estate broker or firm engaged to sell or lease the property, reasonableness of price or rent sought by the applicant and any advertisements placed for the sale or rent of the property
- Evidence of due diligence conducted prior to purchase, that would have revealed the existence of the overlay and the condition of the property.
- Evidence of regular maintenance of the property
- Feasibility of alternative uses for the property that could earn a reasonable economic return
- Any inspection reports conducted prior to purchase, if the building has been purchased in the last 12 months
- Evidence that substantial avenues for reuse were attempted, which may include actions such as:
  - Applied incentives for rehab
  - Worked with MHZC Staff on the possibility of new construction that would make rehab more viable
- For any professional that is providing any of the above information, please also provide information regarding their expertise in the field, specific to historic properties.



## MEETING GUIDANCE

### MEASUREMENTS

Appropriate heights and square footage for new construction is determined based on several factors outlined in the design guidelines. The following is guidance on how height and area are generally calculated.

1. Maximum foundation is measured from existing grade. Grade may need to be adjusted for water runoff but should not be built up for the sole purpose of increasing building height. In instances where the grade increases from front to back, this could push a foundation to be an inappropriate height. In those situations, there are options that will ensure that the front foundation is an appropriate height. Excavating into the slope and creating a rear patio with retaining wall is one option, or stepping down interior first floor levels is another. The thickness of the first-floor system will be taken into account when evaluating the foundation height.
2. For new infill construction, finished floor elevation (FFE) should not only be held to a minimum, it must take into account the FFE of the surrounding historic structures. This can be especially challenging on a street with what appears to be minimal grade change front to back on the lots and when the new house is significantly deeper than surrounding historic buildings. In this case, the increase in elevation that could result from the deeper house should not result in an increased front foundation height.
3. Wall and ridge heights are measured from finished floor (to be specified in proposed plans.) Walls are measured to where the roof meets the wall, regardless of whether the soffits are of an open or closed design.
4. Area is measured from the greatest extents of exterior wall to exterior wall (gross square footage.) Covered areas and cantilevered upper levels are generally included in the calculation of square footage.
5. Cantilevered sections and roof overhangs define the “edges” of the building when determining appropriate setbacks.



## MEETING GUIDANCE

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO KEEP IN MIND

#### Public Right-of-Way Intrusions

Construction that extends over a public right-of-way, such as an awning or signage, will need to go through the “Mandatory Referral” process which starts with NDOT.

#### Moving a Building

In some cases, moving a residential building to a new foundation also requires approval of the Planning Commission, according to 13-3-502 of the Tennessee Code Annotated. Please contact the Planning Department for additional information.

#### Lead Paint Removal

Removal of lead paint must be done by a [contractor certified by the state](#) for this type of work.

#### Right Upon Entry on Land

The commission, its members, and employees, in the performance of its work, may enter upon any land within its jurisdiction and make examinations and surveys and place or remove public notices as required. There shall be no right of entry into any building without the consent of the owner.

#### Building Code Variances

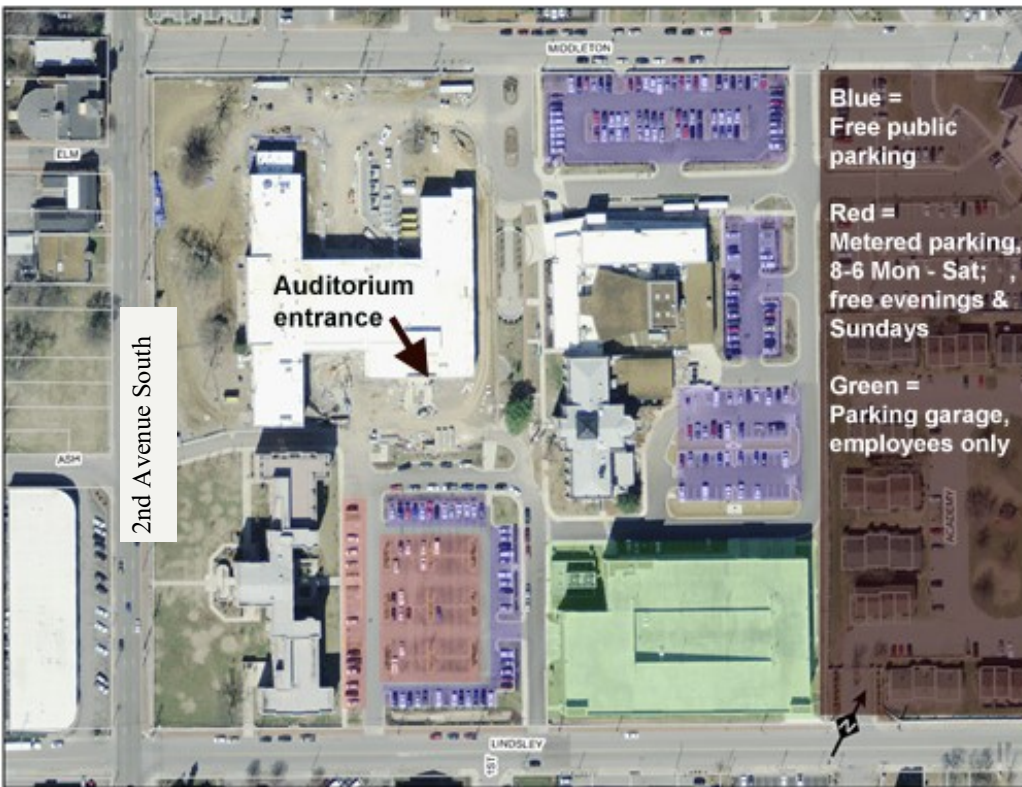
Section 16.48.010 allows for variances to building codes for historic buildings, where meeting the code would create a practical difficulty or undue hardship.



## MEETING GUIDANCE

### WHERE

The Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission typically meets in the Sonny West Conference Center at the Howard Office Building, 700 Second Avenue South, at 2 pm the third Wednesday of the month. Depending on availability, the hearing sometimes takes place in a different location so please check the posted agenda for the correct meeting location.



Meetings are usually held the third Wednesday of each month but may need to be rescheduled to avoid holidays. The location sometimes needs to change, so always check the appropriate agenda to confirm meeting location, date, and time. View agendas at [www.nashville.gov/Government/Boards-and-Committees/Committee-Information/ID/78/Historic-Zoning-Commission.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Government/Boards-and-Committees/Committee-Information/ID/78/Historic-Zoning-Commission.aspx)

### HOW SHOULD I PREPARE?

If you ARE the applicant::

- Staff recommendations are available [online](#) prior to the meeting. Review the recommendation of your project and contact the staff project lead with any questions you have.
- Make notes and organize them so you are able to cover all aspects of the project that are important to you during the presentation.
- The Commission will not accept new information at the public hearing so be sure to submit everything you want to consider by the application deadline.



## MEETING GUIDANCE

You may bring additional materials that help to explain your project, such as photographs that were not available at the application deadline or a model. If you plan to make an electronic presentation, the presentation must be sent to the lead staff member listed on the agenda, prior to 10am the day before the meeting. If you are bringing printed information, please provide 12 copies.

- Keep in mind that staff will present an overview of the project prior to your presentation. You do not need to repeat what has already been said.

If you are NOT the applicant:

- Staff recommendations are available [online](#) prior to the meeting.
- Anyone can speak before the Commission during a public hearing. Representatives of neighborhood groups or other organizations may speak for five minutes if written notice is received no later than the day prior to the meeting day. Councilmembers may speak at the beginning of the meeting, after an item is presented by staff, or during the public hearing on that item, with no time limit.
- If you would like to speak about a project, please have all your comments organized so you are able to share all your considerations within the time limit. Comments may also be sent to the office in advance via email, fax, or postal service. See agenda for contact information.
- If multiple people wish to speak on the same topic, consider selecting one spokesperson to speak for all of you or divide the points you want to make between multiple speakers so there is no repetition of information.

## AFTER THE DECISION

After the MHZC meeting, staff will provide the applicant with a Preservation Permit or a Notice of Decision, unless the applicant has requested a deferral. The Preservation Permit should be used to obtain a Building Permit for most projects. The typical Preservation Permit will require inspections throughout the building process and additional information on details that were not known at the time of approval. An applicant should stay in contact with the MHZC office throughout the construction process to assure compliance and avoid delays.



## MEETING GUIDANCE

### WHAT IF I DO NOT LIKE THE DECISION?

If your project was denied, you may submit a new application for a new project. Staff can assist you with advice on how to alter the application so that it meets the design guidelines.

You or anyone else with standing may also appeal. Appeals to decisions of the MHZC can be taken to a court of competent jurisdiction as provided for by law. We recommend hiring an attorney if this is an option you are considering. In addition to the ordinance (17.36.110) that allows historic overlays, there are additional Metro Ordinances that address preservation and are administered by the MHZC.





## NEIGHBORHOOD GUIDANCE

The public hearing process provides neighbors and neighborhood associations the opportunity to participate in the design review process. Follows are places that can help keep you informed.

### AGENDA NOTIFICATION

[You can sign up on line to receive notices of any metro agenda](#), including historic zoning. When the agenda is posted each month, you will receive an email, letting you know its ready to be viewed. More than sixty percent of applications are issued administratively, which means you will not see them on the agenda. For all other projects, they will show up on an agenda.

### REVIEW APPLICATIONS

Find applications, staff recommendations and permits via our [application tracker map](#).

### MEETING DOCUMENTS

Click on any [meeting date on the website](#) to access multiple years of staff recommendations, agendas and minutes. Staff recommendations are posted online the Thursday before each meeting, which are on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month. Recommendations are NOT decisions and do NOT reflect final decisions. They are simply a tool to assist commissioners with the review process

### INTERACTIVE MAPPING

ITS and the Planning Department have created a number of different [maps--static and interactive--](#)that can assist you with finding information such as the boundary of the overlays. Step-by-step instructions for using the different layers to is available from our office.



## NEIGHBORHOOD GUIDANCE

### HUB Nashville

We also encourage you to use [HUB](#) to report issues that we cannot help with, such as construction noise after-hours, unsecured buildings, trash in yard, stormwater runoff, etc.



## MHZC'S ROLE IN OTHER METRO PROCESSES

### DEMOLITION

Pre-1865 Demo Review: The MHZC reviews all demolition requests for buildings constructed prior to 1865 and that are not located within a historic overlay and makes a recommendation to Metro Council. See § 16.28.190 of the Metro Code.

90-Day Demo Delay: The MHZC has the authority to place a 90 day delay on requests to demolish historic buildings listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and that are not also located in a historic overlay, for the purpose of attempting to mitigate planned demolition with documentation, salvage, dismantling of historic structure for educational purposes, relocation or other appropriate measures. See § 16.28.190 of the Metro Code.

### SPECIAL PURPOSE (SP) REZONING PROCESS

Generally, the Planning Commission (PC) reviews changes to use, infrastructure, and density, while the Historic Zoning Commissioner (MHZC) reviews massings, bulk standards and details such as materials and elevations for an SP rezoning; therefore, the process of rezoning requires concurrent reviews by both the Planning Commission and the MHZC. The general steps are:

1. Preliminary meeting with Planning and MHZC staff. This can be scheduled through the PC or MHZC departments.(optional)
2. Pre-app meeting with multiple Metro departments. This should be scheduled through the PC department.
3. File SP rezoning with MPC for review. Plans will be distributed to MHZC for consideration by MHZC prior to Planning Commission consideration.
4. SP preliminary approval by MHZC.
5. SP approval by the MPC.
6. SP approval from Council.
7. Final approval of details and materials by MHZC.
8. Final site plan approval by PC staff, or commission if case is not eligible for administrative approval.
9. Submit plat at Planning Commission for approval, if necessary.
10. File building permit applications at Codes for distribution to reviewing agencies.



## **MHZC'S ROLE IN OTHER METRO PROCESSES**

### **HISTORIC HOME EVENTS**

Section 17.16.160.B allows for an event use in a historic building as a Special Exception approved by the Board of Zoning Appeals. MHZC's role in the process is to verify whether or not the building proposed as a Historic Home Event meets the requirements to be "historic."

### **RESIDENTIAL USE IN IWD OR IR**

Section 17.16.030 allows for multi-family use in a historic building located in areas zoned as industrial districts, specifically IWD or IR.

### **REZONING**

The rezoning of property is administered by the Planning Department. The MHZC comments on the appropriateness of rezoning in historic overlays. Zoning that might encourage the demolition of a historic building, generally receives a recommendation of disapproval.

### **SUBDIVISIONS & HORIZONTAL PROPERTY REGIMES**

The subdivision of property is administered by the Planning Department. The MHZC comments on the appropriateness of subdivision in historic overlays in order to help maintain the historic rhythm of the street. Horizontal Property Regimes (HPR) are sometimes thought of as subdivision of property but are not. An HPR deals with the ownership of property and so is not reviewed by the MHZC.

### **MULTI-DEPARTMENTAL DESIGN REVIEW**

Sometimes overlays and design review districts of other departments overlap, requiring [multi-departmental design review](#). In those cases, both departments will assist you with getting through both processes as seamlessly as possible. Both processes are necessary as one department may be considering actions that the other is not. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all departments receive the same set of drawings. Sending different versions to different departments could result in the rescission of permits.



## GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

**Certified Local Government:** A Certified Local Government (CLG) is a city or county that has been “certified” by the State Historic Preservation Office as eligible to apply for federal grants for historic preservation.

**Compatible:** Designed to be in harmony with elements such as surrounding architecture and landscape in terms of massing, design, scale and siting.

**Contributory Status:** All buildings and structures within an overlay are considered ‘**contributing**,’ meaning they contribute to the historic character of the district; or ‘**non-contributing**,’ which means that they do not contribute because of age, condition, and/or alterations.

**Design Guidelines:** Written tenets, based on the Secretary of Interior Standards, according to which the MHZC interprets the standards of the zoning overlay for alterations, new construction, demolition, and relocations. Design Guidelines include specific instructions for how to meet the standards of the ordinance, guide the applicant’s planning, and guide the MHZC’s decisions.

**Double frontage lot:** A lot, other than a corner lot, that has frontage on two or more streets that do not intersect at a point abutting the property.

**Elevation:** A drawing showing the vertical elements of a building. When referencing the sides of the building itself, not the drawing, we use the term “façade.”

**Floor Plan:** A simple line drawing showing rooms from a “top down” perspective. At a minimum, a floor plan will show the location of walls, doors and windows.

**Footprint:** The area on a project site that is used by the building structure and is defined by the perimeter of the building plan. Parking lots, landscapes, and other nonbuilding facilities are not included in the building footprint.

**Half Story:** Usable space fully under the roof, often identified by dormers, skylights or windows in a gable field. The primary wall and eave heights are consistent with single-story building.



## GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

**Historic Context:** Historic contexts are those patterns or trends in history, architecture and development that create a setting for a particular place and help to give a place meaning.

**Period of Significance:** The span of time during which significant events and activities occurred. Events and associations with historic properties are finite; most properties have a clearly definable period of significance.

**Perspective:** A graphic representation of a building or part of a building shown as it would appear three-dimensionally.

**Porch Beam:** (Sometimes also referred to as a “porch rack.”) The beam at the top of porch columns which supports the porch roof.

**Preservation Permit:** A legal document issued by the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission confirming review and approval of work to be done on property within the boundaries of an historic or neighborhood conservation zoning overlay districts. A preservation permit is required before obtaining a building permit. Previously called Certificate of Appropriateness.

**Rendering:** A perspective or elevation with artistic delineation of materials, shades, and shadows.

**Schematics:** A presentation of the element-by-element relationship of all parts of a system.

**Setback Determination:** The Commission has the ability to determine appropriate building setbacks of the required underlying base zoning for new construction, additions, and accessory structures (ordinance no. 17.40.410). The commission has a policy to follow the setbacks of bulk zoning and setbacks specifically noted in these design guidelines. Any construction approved to take place within the setback area is a setback determination.



## GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

**Site Plan/ Plot Plan:** A site plan, sometimes referred to as a plot plan, is a “top down” oriented, accurate drawing or map of your property that shows its size and configuration and the size and precise location of most man-made features on the property such as buildings, parking areas and driveways.

**Sustainable:** A pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the resource so that these needs can be met, not only in the present, but also future generations. Historic Preservation is environmentally, socially, economically, and culturally sustainable. It is environmentally sustainable because reuse of a building is the ultimate in recycling. It is socially sustainable because our historic districts disproportionately meet the housing needs of those of modest means. It is economically sustainable because it increases property values, creates more jobs than new construction, increases heritage tourism, and keeps money local. Preservation is culturally sustainable because it preserves the “stage on which to learn and explore our culture.”



## TOP 10 CONSTRUCTION OBSTACLES TO AVOID

Over the years, we have seen the same construction problems occur repeatedly, problems that could have easily been avoided and saved money and heartache. It is not uncommon for a project to change during construction, and notifying our office of any changes as they arise ensures that we can work together on a solution before any problems become more costly to resolve.

Here are the top ten things to avoid:

**1. Reviewing Permit.** The most common mistake made is not reading a permit once it is issued or not passing it along to the contractor. This mistake has led to easily avoidable mishaps that can end up being quite costly; such as installing embossed siding, using brick-mold on windows in walls with lap-siding, leaving out the required 4”-6” mullion between double or triple windows, installing vinyl windows and installing HVAC and mechanicals in the wrong location.

**2. Requesting Sign-offs and Reviews.** Each project has a series of sign-offs and reviews that must be requested by the applicant once the permit has been issued. Projects that involve new construction require a “sign-off” when the foundation has been staked, when the foundation has been laid, and when framing has been completed. It is rare that an applicant has made every decision on a project at the time of approval, so often there is a need to have staff review and approve details such as trim, windows and doors, and cladding and roofing materials. Remember: the review process isn’t over once you have a permit in hand.

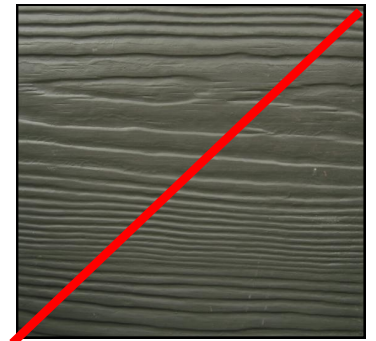
**3. Grade.** Often new homes or accessory buildings are planned as if the building is on flat ground, but due to Middle Tennessee’s rolling terrain, many lots have a change in grade. Disregarding how the grade affects the design assures that construction cannot begin or continue as permitted. It is always easier to consider the grade at the beginning of a project rather than later.

**4. Consistency.** Planning a new building can be a large undertaking with lots of small changes before plans are submitted to us. As a result, views of drawings may be inconsistent with each other. When this happens, construction might take place in a manner that doesn’t meet the design guidelines requiring costly reconstruction.

**5. Accuracy.** When projects are planned around existing conditions, such as an addition to an existing house, it is extremely important that the existing conditions be measured and drawn accurately. If not, it is probable that the project cannot be completed as planned. It is far less expensive to spent money on the front end than to redesign the project during construction.



*The rise in grade on this lot was not considered, resulting in a foundation significantly higher in the front than what the MHZ approved. Contractors had to stop work in order to devise a solution.*



*Fiber cement siding is an appropriate cladding for new construction but not when it has a faux (embossed) wood grain, as seen above. Below is an example of a smooth fiber cement siding that looks more like historic wood siding.*







## TOP 10 CONSTRUCTION OBSTACLES TO AVOID

**6. Planning.** Sometimes interior plans are not fully considered in terms of placement of windows, door, bays and fireplaces. This usually prompts multiple calls to our office to change the size or placement of these elements.

**7. Scale.** The MHZC requires that all submitted drawings be to-scale and that major measurements be called-out. Sometimes the scale is lost when reducing plans to the required 11 x 17 size. Be mindful of the scale when you are submitting your drawings. Make sure it is accurate and noted on each page.

**8. Railings.** Porch railings are often overlooked in planning and are sometimes required by building codes.

**9. Porch Posts.** Sometimes the thickness of a post veneer is not taken into consideration, resulting in a post that hangs out over the edge of the porch floor.

**10. Flooring system.** Occasionally the thickness of the flooring system is ignored, resulting in a need to increase the overall height of a building during construction. This problem often occurs when using stock plans or working from a pattern book of historic buildings. Be sure to make allowances on the outside to accommodate what is happening on the inside.

Remember that when the commission approves a project, they are approving the drawings you submitted to them, not just the *concept*. Avoid delays and additional expense by planning well and keeping us informed of changes.



*The foundation plans showed a porch depth of 4', the elevations showed a porch depth of 6' and the floor plans showed a depth of 8'. This homeowner now as a portion of their porch too narrow to be useful.*



*The depth of the stone veneer was not considered, leaving a porch pedestal hanging over the edge of the porch floor.*



## TOP 10 REASONS TO SAVE HISTORIC WINDOWS

1. **More heat is typically lost through your roof and un-insulated walls than through your windows.** Adding just 3 and 1/2 inches of insulation in your attic can save more energy than replacing your windows.
2. **Replacement windows are called “replacement” for a reason. Manufacturers often offer lifetime warranties for their windows.** What they don’t make clear is that 30% of the time, a replacement window will be replaced within 10 years. That doesn’t say much when historic windows that have been properly maintained, have lasted between 100 and 200 years.
3. **Replacement windows that contain vinyl or PVC are toxic to produce and create toxic by-products.** Installing these in your house is not a “green” approach.
4. **If your wood window are 60 years or older, chances are the wood they are made of is old growth—dense and durable wood that is now scarce.** Even high-quality new wood windows, except for mahogany, won’t last as long as historic wood windows.
5. Studies have demonstrated that **a historic wood window, properly maintained, weather-stripped and with a storm window, can be just as energy efficient as a new window.**
6. According to studies, **it can take 240 years to recoup enough money in energy savings to pay back the cost of installing replacement windows.**
7. **Each year, Americans demolish 200,000 buildings. That is 124 million tons of debris, or enough waste to construct a wall 30 feet tall and 30 feet thick around the entire US coastline.** Every window that goes into the dump is adding to this problem.
8. With a little practice **it can be easy—and inexpensive—to repair and maintain your wood windows with basic tools and readily available materials.**
9. Not a DIY-er? There are people near you who can do it for you. **Hiring a skilled tradesperson to repair your windows fuels the local economy and provides jobs.**
10. **Historic wood windows are an important part of what gives your older building character.**

*Regardless of the manufacturer’s “lifetime warranties” 30 percent of the windows being replaced each year are less than 10 years old.*

*From the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s “Historic Wood Windows” tip sheet.*



## TEN WAYS TO “GREEN” YOUR HOME

1. **Keep original windows intact.** Studies show that old windows can perform as well as vinyl replacements. Weather strip them so that they seal tightly, caulk the exterior trim and repair cracked glazing or putty around glass panels. You will reduce landfill waste and the demand for vinyl, a non-biodegradable material that gives off toxic byproducts when it is made.
2. **Use light paint colors** for your home’s exterior. Light colors reflect heat better than darker ones.
3. **Insulate attic, basement and crawl space.** About 20 percent of energy costs come from heat loss in those areas.
4. **Reuse old materials** such as brick, glass, stone and slate when making home improvements. For example, if you’re rebuilding a staircase, use wood from a shed that couldn’t be saved.
5. **Install fireplace draft stoppers, attic door covers and dryer vent seals** that open only when your dryer is in use. An open damper in a fireplace can increase energy costs by 30 percent and attic doors and dryer vents are notorious energy sieves.
6. **Plant trees.** Evergreen trees on the north and west sides of your house can block winter winds, and leafy trees on the south and west provide shade from the summer sun. Using old photos of your house, try to match the historic landscape.
7. **Have an energy audit done.** Audits can help pinpoint problem areas and measure energy savings after you improve your home’s efficiency.
8. In the summer, **open the windows and use fans and evaporative coolers,** which consume less energy than air conditioning. Many old houses were designed with good cross ventilation; take advantage of your home’s layout.
9. **Keep doors airtight** by weather stripping, caulking and painting them regularly.
10. **Restore porches and awnings.** Porches, awnings and shutters were intended for shade and insulation. To save energy, draw shades on winter nights and summer days.



## TOP TEN INFILL CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Avoid “Mr. Potato Head Design.”** Sometimes designers will simply pick design features seen throughout our stylistically eclectic neighborhoods. The result can be mishmash of elements from different time periods and different architectural styles. Designers are encouraged to present forms that replicate those found in the district but with a fresh look in terms of style. Abstract interpretations of the historic design features often fit the bill. Complete historic replicas compromise the architectural quality and authenticity of a district. Being able to appropriately abstract an element takes an understanding of its parts and function as well as what it simply looks like.
2. **When designing a porch, consider all aspects:** foundation, depth, railings, columns, steps, and roof. Historically, porch foundations have been solid or piers. Railings should only be added if needed for safety. A usable porch depth is between 6’ and 8’. Don’t forget scale. For instance, a 4 x 4 square post can look too spindly on most homes, and historic homes often had thick porch racks.
3. **If using multiple cladding materials, keep in mind that historically, materials changed horizontally and at floor lines.** There should always be a change in materials at the foundation line of residential buildings. Consider a skirt board between floors help to break-up large facades with little articulation.
4. **Choose appropriate windows.** Historically, windows with divisions were small panes of glass with wood mullions between; however these are typically cost-prohibitive. To achieve the same look, use simulated divided lights with spacer bars, or save money and leave off dividers all together. Flat snap-on muntins or between-the-glass muntins are not appropriate. Faux shutters are inappropriate too; however, shutters that actually close and are the same size as the window can be an approvable design feature.
5. **Carefully consider new materials.** Contemporary materials are appropriate for new construction if they look and act like historic materials. For instance, smooth cement fiber siding is appropriate since, once painted, it looks like historic wood siding and because it can be sanded, painted and repaired, similar to wood siding.
6. **Material colors are important.** The commission does not review paint color but does review painting of masonry and the inherent color of materials such as roofing, brick and stone. New brick and stone should have a color similar to the brick and stone found in the district. Roofing colors should be natural hues



## TOP TEN INFILL CONSIDERATIONS

such as black, gray, dark green and brown.

7. **Window heights are important for appropriate scale.** The windows of an upper floor should never be taller than the windows of the ground floor since, historically, ground floor ceiling heights were taller than upper stories.
8. **Make sure eave overhang is appropriate.** Most of our historic buildings have overhanging eaves of at least one foot. Tight to no-overhangs may be appropriate in areas where the historic buildings were constructed after World War II.
9. **Don't forget the trim.** Trim is an important feature of historic buildings. Window trim on a lapsed building should be thicker than the siding but should not be a brick mold. Lapsed buildings typically had corner trim as well.
10. **The roof pitch and form should be similar to what is seen in the district.** Roof "intrusions" such as dormers, skylights and solar panels are appropriate for new construction and historic buildings, when placed in appropriate locations.



**METRO HISTORIC ZONING COMMISSION**

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Phone: 615-862-7970  
historicalcommission@nashville.gov

**WE ARE ON THE  
WEB AT  
WWW.NASHVILLE..  
GOV/MHC**

*The Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission reviews applications to create new historic overlay districts and reviews and approves preservation permits in historic overlays for new construction, alterations, additions, repair and demolition. For design guidelines, permit applications, and meeting information, visit us at [www.nashville.gov/Historical-Commission/About.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Historical-Commission/About.aspx).*



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