



Historic District Commission

Application for Certificate

General Bylaw Section 7.3

The application needs to be dropped off and date stamped at the Public Service Department to begin the process

Certificate Requested: *Please read application information and instructions*

- Appropriateness** – for work described herein
- Hardship** – financial or otherwise described herein and does not conflict substantially with the intent and purposes of the bylaw
- Non-Applicability** – for the reason(s) described below. See Guidelines for further information

Property Address _____ **Date Built** _____

Owner Name(s) _____

Phone Number(s) (H) _____ **(C)** _____ **Email** _____

Owners Address _____

Contractor & Company Name _____

Contractor's Address _____

Phone Number(s) (W) _____ **(C)** _____ **Email** _____

Anticipated work dates: **Start:** _____ **Completion:** _____

Work Description: Please describe how the proposed work is historically/architecturally compatible with the building and the District as a whole. (Attached additional pages as necessary)

Required documentation to be attached: Failure to provide sufficient documentation could delay action upon application. (See attached instructions)

- Detailed plans/drawings
- Existing and proposed site or plot plans
- Existing conditions photographs of structure and areas affected
- Material samples and/or product literature
- Other: _____

By signing below, I agree that I have read the attached instructions and to the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this application is accurate and complete. I give permission for members of the HDC to access the property for the purpose of reviewing this application and work done under any certificate issued to me. I also give permission for the contractor to act on my behalf, in matters relative to work authorized by this application

Owner Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Owners Printed Name: _____

Contractor Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Contractor Printed Name: _____

Please Submit to the Public Services Department, Reading Town Hall:

- 9 copies of completed application
- 1 copy of request for certified abutters list

Application Information and Instructions

Contact the Commission before you begin any exterior work within the historic district: Property owners in the Historic District are required to obtain a certificate from the Commission prior to starting any exterior work on buildings or structures. *The application is to be filled out and submitted to the Public Services Department at Reading Town Hall.* Once an application is received, the Commission will determine within 14 days whether the proposal is subject to review by the Commission and will require a public hearing. Such hearing is to be held within 45 days of receipt of application. Please note that, by Town Bylaw, the Building Inspector cannot issue a building permit for exterior work or demolition without the necessary certificate from this Commission. Anyone contemplating exterior work should contact the Commission. Property owners are encouraged to present preliminary plans at a regularly scheduled Commission meeting to better understand Commission requirements.

Summary of Commission Authority: The Historic Districts Act, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C, was created to protect and preserve the historic resources of the Commonwealth through a local review system that encourages and ensures compatible improvement and development. Under Chapter 40C and Town Bylaw, the Historic District Commission is required to review the architectural appropriateness of most proposed exterior design changes, whether they be a minor alteration, new additions, or removal of trim or structures. The applicant bears the burden of establishing that the proposed work is not inconsistent with the historic nature of the district. The Commission will issue a Certificate of Non-Applicability for items specifically excluded from review. Failure to comply with the Reading Town Bylaws establishing the Historic District by failing to obtain a required certificate or refusing to cease uncertified work can result in penalties as described in Reading General Bylaw Section 1.8.

Types of Certificates:

Certificate of Appropriateness – Required for exterior alterations and new construction that is subject to public view unless specifically exempted by the Bylaw.

Certificate of Non-Applicability – Issued for matters that are specifically excluded from review under the Bylaw.

Certificate of Hardship – Issued when the denial of a Certificate would constitute a hardship, financial or otherwise, on the property owner and if the proposed work does not conflict substantially with the intent and purposes of the Bylaw. Approval of a Certificate of Hardship requires detailed documentation of specific hardship to an individual property owner.

Required Documentation: In addition to the documentation specifically listed on the application form, a “Request for Certified Abutters List” is required. This form should be filled out and submitted along with the application. Please check off the appropriate boxes on the application to indicate which of the required documentation is attached. It is best to provide as much documentation in advance of the hearing to expedite the process. Required documentation can be presented at the formal hearing, however, this may delay action on the application. Based on the complexity or unique nature of a particular project, the Commission may, as allowed by law, require additional information. Failure to provide sufficient documentation could delay approval or be cause for a negative determination.

Contact Information: The Commission typically meets once a month at 7:00PM. The meetings are held at the Reading Town Hall, 16 Lowell Street. **Completed applications should be submitted to the Public Services Department located in the Reading Town Hall.** Any inquiries should be directed to the Commission’s Chair at HDC@ci.reading.ma.us.

Application Process and Procedures
General Bylaw Section 7.3.

Step 1:

Submit Application for Certificate to Historic District Commission (HDC). **Submit to the Public Service Department in Town Hall.**

Applications should include plans, elevations, and specifications about materials, colors, demolition or removal, a statement of proposed work and description of the existing conditions.

Step 2:

The HDC will review the application and determine if it is within the jurisdiction of the Commission. A determination will be made within 14 days of the date the application was received.

If the Commission determines that the proposal is not subject to the Commission's review then the Commission will issue a Certificate of Non-Applicability.

If the Commission determines that the application involves exterior architectural features subject to review under this by-law, it may hold a public hearing; unless it is determined the hearing can be waived. The public hearing shall be held within 45 days from the date the application was received.

Note: A public hearing may be waived by the Commission if work is determined to be insubstantial and can be reviewed without a public hearing. However, the applicant will be responsible for mailing cost to inform the abutters. Ten (10) days shall elapse after the mailing of such notice before the Commission may act upon such application and after considering any responses.

Step 3:

Fourteen days before the hearing, notice shall be given by posting in a conspicuous place in Town Hall and in a newspaper of general circulation in Reading. Concurrently, a copy of public notice shall be mailed to the applicant and to the owners of properties within 300 feet. The applicant is responsible for the costs of the mailing and advertising. **Abutters envelopes must be turned into the Public Service Department at noon, 16 days before the meeting. If the 16th day falls on Friday, Saturday, Sunday or Holiday they must be turned in by noon on the Thursday before.** *Please note that if the envelopes are not received in time then the Public Hearing would need to be rescheduled and the applicant will have to pay a re-advertisement fee.*

Step 4:

The Commission will disapprove the application or issue a certificate within 60 days from the date the application was received and stamped.

In the case of disapproval, the Commission will write a letter to the applicant explaining the reasons for disapproval and recommendations for changes for approval. The applicant may then file the application with the changes in a subsequent application.

The Certificate or Letter-of-Disapproval will be filed with the Town Clerk and Building Department.

If the Commission should fail to issue a Certificate or disapproval within 60 days of the application for a Certificate, the Commission shall thereupon issue a Certificate of Hardship due to failure to act.

Anyone aggrieved by a determination of the Commission may, within 20 days of the issuance of a Letter-of-Disapproval, file a written request for a review by a person acting as arbitrator and designated by the Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Agency. The finding of the review shall be filed with the Town Clerk within 45 days after the request.