

# Downtown Historic Burlington



## Owning a Building in the City of Burlington Downtown Historic Preservation District

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) works to protect and enhance the downtown historic district in Burlington. The HPC was established in 2000 to safeguard the City's historic and cultural heritage, including stabilization and improvement of property values, enhancement of the City for its residents, businesses and visitors, and to strengthen the City's economy.

### Building Renovation/Rehabilitation Process

Prior to conducting any façade change, including signage and/or exterior renovations to a building in the Historic District, business owners and/or property owners must submit an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) that requires approval by the HPC. The exterior work you propose will need to comply with a set of historic rehabilitation standards aimed at preserving the heritage and character of the building which can be found on the City's website at [www.burlington-wi.gov](http://www.burlington-wi.gov).

### What is a Certificate of Appropriateness?

The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is a document issued by the City of Burlington Historic Preservation Commission that documents that the exterior work planned for a historical structure or site is fitting to its historic nature, character and architecture and also fitting to its context and appearance within a particular block or a historical district. The COA needs to be obtained in conjunction with a regular building permit.

### How do I get a COA?

An application, available at the City's Building Department or on the website at [www.burlington-wi.gov](http://www.burlington-wi.gov) must be completed and reviewed by the City staff, the City Planner and the Burlington Historic Preservation Commission. All projects are required to follow the city's General Design Guidelines for Historic Properties to determine the project's potential effect on the historic character of the property and/or district. See detailed information on the reverse side.

### Façade Grants and Financing Opportunities

The City offers façade grants up to \$5,000 for each façade facing a public street. Grants are first come, first serve and available until the funds run out. The HPC approves and/or denies the grant at their monthly meeting. You must apply for the grant prior to doing work on the façade that would be included within the grant. Any work completed before a grant is approved is disqualified from the grant. No more than \$250 of matching funds of the \$5,000 grant maybe used for exterior signage. A COA application must accompany a Façade Grant application.

If you are starting a new business, need support in growing your existing business, RCEDC can serve as your project partner with state, county and local resources. They can assist you in applying for incentives and offer attractive financing opportunities for eligible companies. RCEDC is located at 2320 Renaissance Boulevard, Sturtevant, WI, 53177 or at 262.898.7400.

### Site Selection

The Racine County Economic Development Corporation (RCEDC) offers a site selection tool that aids in the search of commercial and industrial properties. You can find this tool at <http://sites.racinecountyedc.org/>

### Zoning

Zoning is about proper use of a property. Zoning laws help preserve property values and ensure communities are functional and safe places. Prior to starting a business, it is recommended to contact the Building Inspector to determine if the property is zoned appropriately for the new use and if the new use will trigger any specific code related improvements. An application for Zoning Certificate of Compliance will be required with the Building Department to register your business and ensure proper zoning.

### Conditional Uses

If your project requires a change of use to the property, it is recommended to make an appointment with the Building Inspector to discuss the project, verify any special approvals, or coordinate the sequence of reviews and approvals.

City of Burlington  
Building Department  
Gregory Guidry  
Building Inspector  
300 N. Pine Street  
Burlington, WI 53105  
262.342.1164

[gguidry@burlington-wi.gov](mailto:gguidry@burlington-wi.gov)  
[www.burlington-wi.gov](http://www.burlington-wi.gov)

# Applying to the Historic Preservation Commission

## Step 1: Plan Ahead

- Study your property carefully and learn as much as possible about the history, style, and period of your building. Walk around the neighborhood and acquaint yourself with architectural features that are significant. Consider the removal of inappropriate elements which may have been added over the years, so as to restore original architectural integrity to your home or building.
- If your project involves substantial construction that may affect the community, you should discuss it with the building inspector and interested community organizations before filing. Major project reviews proceed more smoothly if you work with the building inspector and any others interested to identify and resolve as many concerns as possible before presenting to the HPC.
- If your project requires special approvals such as a zoning variance or conditional use, you should consult with the Building Inspector to coordinate the sequence of reviews and approvals.

## Step 2: Prepare the Application

- Building owners and developers must apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) with the Building Department before they can proceed with their planned renovation or construction activity, including signage changes. Certificates of Appropriateness are granted by the Historic Preservation Commission after review. Tenants or lease holders can also submit applications for COAs, but must have the written consent or sign-off of the property owner to do so.
- Materials Required for COA Application Review:
  - Completed COA Application form
  - Architectural plans, elevations, photographs, material samples, color samples and/or perspective drawings and sketches illustrating the design and character of all proposed alterations
  - An appointment may be arranged with the Building Inspector to discuss a proposed project, deadlines for providing the necessary documentation, and information on the monthly public HPC meetings held for the application review.

## Step 3: Submit the Application

- Submit the application and supporting materials to the Building Department at 300 N. Pine Street to begin the review process. Historic Preservation Commission meetings are held the fourth Thursday of each month, with a deadline for material submittal three and a half weeks prior to the meeting.

## Step 4: Attend the HPC Meeting

- If your submittal is on the agenda at the HPC meeting, either you or a representative should attend to answer questions from the commissioners. At the meeting, HPC considers your presentation, the City Planner report, and any public comments. The Commission members evaluate the project and give their recommendations. They may recommend revisions, approve the project concept, or state why the project is not compatible with preservation standards.

## Step 5: After the HPC Meeting

- Once the HPC approves your project concept, you may proceed to apply for a building or sign permit, if necessary. If you make any significant changes, you should consult with HPC to make sure the changes are consistent with the concept approval. You should also ensure that the Building Inspector is aware of any major changes directly related their expressed concerns.
- If the HPC has requested a resubmission of revised plans for further review, you should consult with the Building Inspector to make sure the resubmission is adequate for reconsideration by HPC. The Building Department will then reschedule the submittal for an upcoming HPC meeting.

