CHARLOTTE HISTORIC PRESERVATION EST. 1976

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The purpose of a Historic District Overlay District (HDO) and Historic District Overlay Streetside District (HDO-S) is to encourage the restoration, preservation, rehabilitation, and conservation of historically, architecturally, and archaeologically significant areas, structures, buildings, sites, and objects and their surroundings. The HDO/HDO-S is be applied as an overlay zoning district which will supersede other zoning districts. The historic overlay requires the area to be rezoned.

1. **What is the Charlotte Historic District Commission (HDC)?**
   A board of citizens appointed by the Mayor and City Council to administer the Local Historic District Program. The majority of HDC members have proven expertise in architecture, preservation, history, etc.

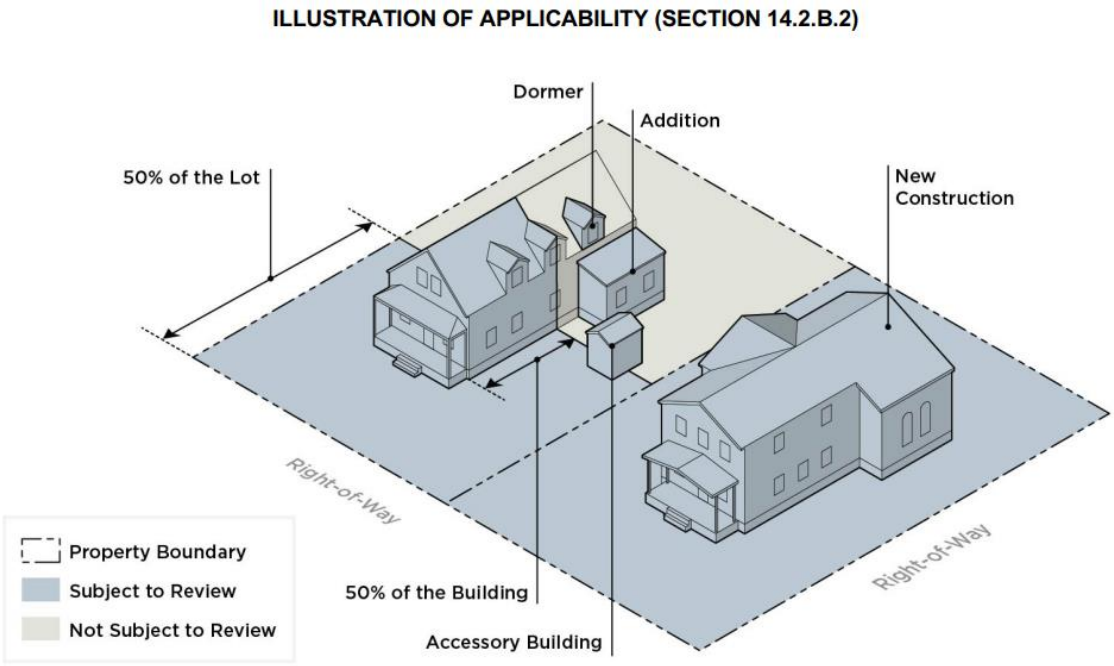
2. **What does it mean to own property in a local historic district?**
   Property owners in local historic districts are required to contact the HDC office before making any changes to a property or building exterior.

   If the project meets the HDC Design Standards, then a Certificate of Appropriateness will be issued. A building permit for exterior work cannot be issued in an historic district without a Certificate of Appropriateness.

3. **What types of projects are reviewed by the HDC?**
   - Minor projects are mostly Administrative level reviews and include small additions, new and replacement fencing, retaining walls, signage, windows and doors, rear yard improvements, driveways, walkways, some tree removal.

   - Major projects require review by the Commission. Project approval is based on finding(s) of fact administered by a quasi-judicial review process to ensure that proposed changes meet adopted architectural design standards. Types of projects that the Commission reviews include new construction, large additions, demolition, front/side porch enclosures, substitute materials, large accessory buildings, major tree removal, significant landscape features, front yard parking, and the painting of unpainted masonry. More information about projects requiring review are outlined the Design Standards.

4. **How is the HDO-S different from an HDO?**
   The HDO-S mostly focuses on the first 50% in depth of principle buildings and lots. COAs are typically not required for projects located in rear yards or additions that extend off the rear but are required for any additions that are taller or wider than a structure. Demolition and the entirety of new construction inside an HDO-S is subject to full review.



5. **What is the process to become an HDO/HDO-S?**
   The creation of an HDO/HDO-S overlay is a two part process. Part 1 is the completion of a Local District Designation report and Part 2 is the Rezoning process.

   - Part 1 is the compilation of the Local District Designation Report. The report must include a boundary map, property-by-property survey, and written narrative about the history and the development of the area. Once complete, the Local District Designation Report is transmitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) for review and comment.
   - Part 2 is the Rezoning process. To qualify for this city-sponsored Rezoning, the Local District Designation Report, HPO comment letter,

and a petition of support signed by 51% of property owners within the proposed boundary must be submitted with the Rezoning application.

6. **What about projects underway at the time an HDO/HDO-S is established?**
   Projects holding a valid building permit at the time a local historic district is established are grandfathered.

7. **Does the HDC require restoration of a property?**
   No. The Historic District Commission only gets involved when property owners decide to make changes or updates to buildings or properties.

8. **Isn't it more expensive to make improvements in historic districts?**
   Not always. The majority of customers make minor improvements which would usually cost the same anywhere. Major projects usually require industry professionals who understand historic structures (new construction, major additions). An HDO/HDO-S encourages repair versus replacement of older building features to reduce costs.

9. **What about maintenance?**
   Routine maintenance is encouraged. Staff typically do not review repair and maintenance projects, as long as no material or design changes are made. Please contact staff to discuss any maintenance projects prior to beginning work.

10. **Are there tax incentives for improvements?**
    Properties within an HDO/HDO-S do not receive tax credits or reduced property taxes. Properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places are eligible for state and federal tax incentives. Properties designated as individual historic landmarks through the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission often receive a reduction in property taxes.

11. **Does an HDO/HDO-S restrict the use or transfer of the property?**
    No. Land use is determined by the underlying zoning. Transfer of property is a private matter governed by others.

12. **What happens if a property owner chooses to disregard the HDC's review process**
    When Commission staff learns of a project that is underway without HDC approval every attempt is made to contact the property owner and resolve the situation as quickly as possible. Financial penalties may be imposed.

Contact Us!

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