

What is the Springfield Historical Commission?

The Springfield Historical Commission (SHC) is the City agency responsible for the documentation and preservation of Springfield's historic assets. The SHC should include residents of local historic districts as well as nominees from the Board of Realtors, American Institute of Architects, Springfield Preservation Trust, and Historic New England. The seven volunteer Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor for staggered three-year terms and confirmed by the City Council.

What is the FEDERAL SQUARE – UPPER STATE STREET Local Historic District?

Following the steps outlined in Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40C, Local Historic Districts are established by a two-thirds majority city council vote. The *Federal Square-Upper State Street District* (see Map) is Springfield's 24th local historic district. The *District* includes contiguously located historic resources which typify a mid-nineteenth through early-twentieth century urban streetscape and exemplify a mix of buildings constructed for residential, commercial, and institutional use. Built resources in this area were generally constructed between 1835 and 1938 and provide examples of Italianate, English Revival, Classical Revival, Gothic Revival, and Art-Deco architectural styles. The *Federal Square-Upper State Street Historic District* is significant for commerce, economics, education, ethnic heritage, and architecture. To support the preservation of this important area, in 2022 the SHC, City Council, and Mayor have established it as one of Springfield's Local Historic Districts in recognition of its local and architectural significance and to protect it from inappropriate exterior alterations.

What does Local Historic District Status Mean for Property Owners?

The SHC will review proposed changes to exterior architectural features visible from a public way. The SHC must approve any exterior work **PRIOR** to work beginning. This review mechanism is in accordance with the ordinance and attempts to ensure that repair, restoration, or rehabilitation work is compatible with the character of the district. New construction and demolition are also controlled. Landscaping with plants, shrubs, and trees is not controlled. Applications must be submitted to the Office of Planning & Economic Development (OPED) for review by the SHC. Forms for proposed work in one of Springfield's local historic districts can be found at: <https://www.springfield-ma.gov/planning/historic-comm> and questions regarding this process can be directed to the OPED at 413-787-6020.

The following can be approved through a certificate of non-applicability, which requires submitting an application to the SHC but will likely not require a public hearing:

1. Ordinary maintenance, repair or replacement of any exterior feature, which does not involve a change in design, material, or outward appearance thereof.
2. Features which cannot be seen from any public way or park.
3. Temporary signs or structures subject to conditions such as duration of use, location, lighting, removal, and similar matters as the SHC may reasonably specify.
4. Terraces, walks, driveways, and sidewalks, provided they are substantially at grade level.
5. Storm windows, screens, window air conditioners, antennae [satellite dishes are regulated; please see *Satellite Dish Guidelines*], and other similar appurtenances.
6. Signs of not more than one square foot in area in connection with use of a residence for a customary home occupation, or for professional purposes, provided only one such sign is displayed in connection with each residence and, if illuminated, are illuminated only indirectly.
7. Reconstruction, substantially similar in exterior design, of a building, structure, or exterior architectural feature damaged by fire, storm, or other disaster, provided such reconstruction is begun within one year thereafter and carried forward with due diligence.

Federal Square – Upper State Street Local Historic District
District Guidelines

8. Color of exterior surfaces or roof material (this exemption does not apply to factory-applied finishes nor to unpainted surfaces).
9. Gutters and downspouts.
10. Fencing not lying between the foundation line and the street.
11. Screen and storm doors. *It is suggested, however, that storm doors be compatible with the building, be unelaborate and contain as much glass as possible.*

What Exterior Controls and Guidelines are Being Adopted?

The following features **ARE** controlled, and the following guidelines have been adopted to respect the individual character of each building and retain the integrity and remaining visual cohesiveness of the **Federal Square – Upper State Street** local historic district.

FEATURES

GUIDELINES

Fencing	To protect street vistas, the yard between the street and foundation line should be kept open. Only under special circumstances and on a case-by-case basis will fencing in front of the foundation line be approved.
Steps	Replacement shall be in the shape and design of the original; any change in material, e.g. wood to concrete, is permissible but requires review.
Roof	Change of shape or material of roof requires approval.
Building Additions	Proposed new construction to be approved on a case-by-case basis.
Grillwork (on roofs and porches)	Shall be retained unless it can be demonstrated to the SHC that Retention would result in a safety hazard or economic hardship.
Exterior Siding	Original materials should be repaired or replaced in kind to to match the original appearance. A change in type or material of siding shall require approval on a case-by-case basis. Any change should not affect trim or other decorative features.
Trim	Removal of corner boards, window casings, cornices, and trim Features should be retained or replaced in kind to if deteriorated or missing. Alternative materials may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
Windows	Original windows should be retained and repaired or replaced in kind if proven to be deteriorated beyond repair. If replacement in kind is approved, please see <i>Window Replacement Guidelines</i> and <i>Window Replacement Appropriateness Standards</i> .
Doors	All doors shall require approval for changes in size, location, or design.

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Chimneys	Any change in shape, location, or design shall require approval. When repointing, mortar should match the original in appearance and composition.
Awnings	Rigid permanent awnings are not allowed. Canvas or other fabric is recommended. Rollable aluminum awnings will be considered.
Signs	Size, shape, and designs of signs larger than 1 square foot shall require approval.
Garages	Changes in shape or design subject to approval feature by feature.
Paint	Color of paint is not controlled. However, approval must be sought prior to painting any previously unpainted masonry.
Lighting Fixtures	Must be approved on a case-by-case basis.
Satellite Dishes and Similar Appurtenances	Please see <i>Satellite Dish Guidelines</i> and <i>Outdoor Mechanical Equipment Guidelines</i> .

What are the procedures for applying for an exterior alteration?

1. Visit the SHC page on the city website at <https://www.springfield-ma.gov/planning/historic-comm>. Review the applicable *Historic Neighborhood Guidelines* and *Local Historic District (LHD) Application* form. This completed form, along with recommended documentation, needs to be submitted to the OPED for review by the SHC.
2. If you have questions about the process, call the OPED (413-787-6020) and ask for the SHC staff person to determine if the proposed change needs to be reviewed.
3. If the proposed change or changes require SHC review, download or request a copy of the *Local Historic District (LHD) Application* form.
4. Upon receipt of the complete application form and supporting documentation, the SHC will either provide a Certificate of Non-Applicability or will schedule a public hearing to discuss the request. Notices will be sent to abutters by mail fourteen (14) days prior to the schedule hearing.
5. The SHC must decide on all requests within sixty (60) days of receipt of application; otherwise, the application request will be automatically approved.

What certificate categories are available by application?

1. **APPROPRIATENESS** – issued for changes that conform with the guidelines and/or are acceptable for the district.
2. **HARDSHIP** – issued for those changes that are not appropriate but may be necessary due to economic, physical, social, or other special conditions.
3. **NON-APPLICABILITY** – issued for those changes which affect features that are not controlled by the Springfield Historical Commission.

What about further recourse?

If a petitioner disagrees with a ruling by the Springfield Historical Commission (SHC), he or she may, within twenty (20) days after filing the notice of such ruling with the City Clerk, appeal to the Superior Court (Housing Court may also have jurisdiction). On the other hand, the SHC, through the Superior Court (or Housing Court), may seek an injunction against any violation to the applicable historic district ordinance. The Court may order the removal of any such violation, or the restoration of any building or feature altered or demolished in violation of the ordinance. Persons found guilty of violating the ordinance may be fined not less than Ten Dollars (\$10.00) nor more than Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00).

If you would like more information, please call the Springfield Historical Commission staff person at 413-787-6020.