

City Hall  
Springfield, Massachusetts  
01103

## **Explanation Sheet for Historic District Certificate Applications**

### **What is a Historic District?**

A historic district is an area of the city declared to be of historic and/or architectural significance. Districts can be created only after a study by the Historical Commission, a 2/3 vote of City Council, and the approval of the Mayor.

### **What does Historic Status Mean?**

Properties within a historic district are given architectural protection by the Historical Commission. Any exterior architectural feature visible from the public street or park is protected. Before any change may take place, approval must be sought from the Historical Commission..

### **How Can a Change Take Place?**

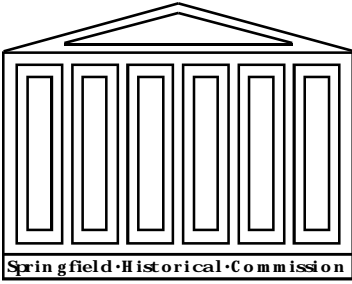
The Historical Commission can issue three types of certificates to allow changes within historic districts:

1. Appropriateness: issued for those changes that are in conformance with the guidelines and/or acceptable for the particular district.
2. Hardship: issued for those changes that are not appropriate but which may be necessary due to economic, physical, social, or other special conditions that apply to the individual property but not to the overall district.
3. Non-applicability: issued for those changes that affect features not controlled by the Commission. (This certificate simply informs other city agencies that work can proceed.)

### **How can a Certificate be Obtained?**

Applications for certificates can be obtained from the Historical Commission (in the Planning Department) City Hall. Fill out the application and return it with supporting information to the Historical Commission. The application form shall include:

1. Address of property to be altered
2. Name of owner of property
3. Address of owner of property
4. Written description of the proposed change (if a change of siding is requested, fill out the reverse side of the application sheet)
5. The reason for a Certificate of Hardship (if that is being requested)



### **Additional Information required as follows:**

1. Drawings for alterations and/or additions to existing structures, or for new constructions. Drawings shall be plans or elevations drawn to scale with sufficient detail to show the architectural design of buildings, including proposed materials, textures and colors. Samples of material or colors, and the plot plan or site layout, indicating all improvements affection appearances such as walls, walks, terraces, plantings, accessory buildings, signs lights, and other elements, shall also be included.
2. Photographs required with application to demolish existing structures--applicant shall submit photos showing all sides of property and contiguous properties on either side and across the street.
3. Photographs required with application for new construction--applicant shall submit photos of adjoining properties on either side and across the street.
4. Photographs required with application for repair, alterations, and/or additions to existing structures -- applicant shall submit photos of all sides of structure to be effected by proposed action.

### **What Happens After the Application Has Been Returned to the Commission?**

Once the Commission receives an application form, it follows one of three procedures as required in Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40C, Section 11:

1. It may schedule a public hearing, giving abutters of the property written notification by mail 14 day before the hearing.
2. It may determine that the proposed change is not significant and waive the public hearing, giving abutters of the property written notification by mail 10 days before making a decision.
3. It may hear the matter immediately if all abutters waive, in writing, their right to notification.

The Commission must reach a decision within 60 days of the filing of the application form, otherwise the Certificate is automatically granted.

**For further information, call the Historical Commission a 787-6020**