



## What is a Historic District?

A Historic District is a zoning overlay district created to protect and conserve the heritage and character of the City of Monroe.

Owners of property in the Historic District are required to receive approval for many exterior changes in the form of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). COAs are approved or denied based on a set of Design Guidelines set forth for the Historic District. These regulations are intended to encourage the preservation of historic structures through the use of rehabilitation techniques that are economical yet do not sacrifice historic architectural features that define the district. These guidelines are used by the commission and staff in reviewing proposed rehabilitation plans and when considering applications for COAs.

## About the Historic District Commission

The Historic District Commission's mission is to promote the sound and orderly preservation and conservation of historic properties in the City of Monroe as well as conserve the heritage of the city and any individual property that embodies important elements of its social, economic, political or architectural history for the education, pleasure and enrichment of residents and of all the citizens. The Historic District Commission's regular meeting is the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in Council Chambers. For more information, please visit the Planning and Development Department website: <https://www.monroenc.org/Departments/Planning-Development/Historic-District>

Please contact the Planning and Development Department for any further questions.



## Owning a Home in the South Monroe Historic District



**For property owners and prospective buyers of properties located in the South Monroe Historic District**

\*\* It is **strongly** recommended that real estate brokers or sellers of property in the Historic District inform potential buyers that the property is located in the district. \*\*

# South Monroe Historic District

## Making Exterior Changes to Properties in the Historic District

The owner or buyer of a property in the Historic District must obtain an approved Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for many exterior projects. There are two types of approvals for COAs; staff approved or minor works, and Commission approved or major works. Staff can *only* approve minor work items such as like for like changes.

The Historic District Commission (HDC) or staff will review your application and review the Design Guidelines prior to making a decision to determine if the proposal is congruous with the Design Guidelines. The requirements for a COA can be found in the Unified Development Ordinance in sections 156.201-156.206. The Design Guidelines can be found on the city's website under the Planning and Development page.

### COA Process

#### 1) Application Process

Obtain the COA application from the website or in our offices at City Hall. Submit the completed application to the Planning and Development Department. A complete application includes the following:

- COA Application
- Detailed description of the work
- Pictures of the existing conditions and pictures of proposed materials, sketch plans, etc.
- Site Plan (where applicable)

The fee for minor works is \$25 (\$50 after the fact), while the fee for major works is \$100 (\$200 after the fact).

Completed applications must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the scheduled Historic District Meeting.

### COA Process

#### 2) Application Review

The HDC or staff will review your application and supplemental documents provided. If staff cannot approve your request, it will be forwarded on to the HDC for review. Consideration will be given to the historical and/or architectural significance of the structure as well as the exterior appearance of any proposed additions or modification to the structure.

10 days prior to the HDC Meeting, staff will notify all property owners within 150 feet of the subject property in question and a sign will be posted on the property for notification as well. The meeting is public and the property owner and others will be given an opportunity to speak on the request.

The applicant **must** attend the meeting or send a representative to the meeting to answer questions. Failure to attend or send a representative can result in the request being tabled until the next meeting or denied.

In most cases, the HDC will make a determination on the application the same night it is presented; however, the HDC can table requests to a future meeting to gather more evidence. The HDC will make a motion to approve, approve with conditions, or deny the application. Any conditions will be clearly stated and reasons for denial will be clearly stated.

If the COA is approved, the applicant will need to verify what permits are required for the work through our Permit Center. Permits must be obtained prior to work commencing.

Applicants must comply with the COA. Failure to comply with the COA can result in a zoning violation and can incur fees as such.

The regular HDC meeting is the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m., as long as there is an item on the agenda.

## Making Quasi-Judicial Decisions

The Historic District Commission is a Quasi-judicial Board. Quasi-judicial decisions involve applying ordinance and guidelines rather than setting new ones. In quasi-judicial decisions, the Board making the decision must act much like a court to apply the Design Guidelines to a specific case. When ordinances and guidelines are being applied to an individual case, the legal requirements shift to a focus on securing a fair and impartial hearing on the merits of the case. First the Board must determine the facts of the case and second it must apply the standards in the Design Guidelines to those facts. In this task the HDC acts much like a judge in applying the law to a given set of facts.

Only those parties whose legal rights are directly affected are entitled to participate. Those offering testimony are placed under oath. Members of the decision making body are not allowed to discuss the case or gather evidence outside of the hearing (what the courts term *ex parte* communication). Members are allowed to view the site, but not discuss the case with the applicant, neighbors, or staff outside of the hearing. There must be "substantial, competent, and material evidence" to support each critical factual determination; therefore the findings cannot be based on conjecture or assumptions.

