



A citizen's guide to
**Living in the Stephens City
Historic District**

This brochure is for people who

- Live in the Stephens City Historic District
- Own buildings in the Stephens City Historic District.

It includes the general guidelines that must be followed if you are planning exterior alterations, additions, or new construction.

If you have any questions, please contact the Town Planner at 540-869-3087 or bhenshaw@stephenscityva.us.

At the Town's website you can view historic district maps, download the Certificate of Appropriateness application and view the full text of the Historic Preservation Guidelines.

www.stephenscity.vi.virginia.gov

The Historic District

How do I know if the historic district guidelines apply to my property?

The guidelines apply if you have a “contributing” or “noncontributing structure” in the Stephens City Historic District. A “structure” means any dwelling, building, apartment building, garage, or accessory building located in the Historic District.

The map in this brochure shows the boundary of the district.

What are design guidelines?

The design guidelines for the Stephens City Historic District are intended to set forth best practices for the treatment of historic properties. These guidelines are based upon the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. For property owners, residents, and contractors the guidelines provide direction in planning projects sympathetic to the special character of the Stephens City Historic District. For the Historic Preservation Commission and Planning Staff, the guidelines offer a basis for evaluating proposed changes. In reviewing applications, the Preservation Commission and Planning Staff take into account the exterior of the structure, the property as a whole, the street context and the special character of the entire Historic District.



The Certificate of Appropriateness

When do I need a Certificate of Appropriateness?

If your property is in the Stephens City Historic District and you are planning to:

- **Demolish** a building or accessory structure
- **Construct** a new building or accessory structure
- **Add** to an existing building (build an addition, add a roof dormer—anything that increases habitable space)
- **Move** a building or
- **Repair** or **alter** a building: (windows, doors, etc.)
- **Fences;**
- **Significant changes to landscape**

you must first obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The HPC reviews all Certificates of Appropriateness applications on a case by case basis.

The Town Planner can meet with you to discuss your project and answer any questions about the Historic District and the COA process. The Town Planner can also advise you as to whether or not your plans will meet the design guidelines. Each application is considered to be unique and has its own set of considerations based upon location, setting, and scope of project.

Routine maintenance such as minor repairs, painting, and re-roofing are considered standard functions of homeownership or being a property owner. However changing any outside material (siding or roofing) would be considered a change that shall be reviewed by the HPC. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact the Town Planner and he will make a determination if the work requires a COA.

The Historic Preservation Commission

What is the Historic Preservation Commission?

The Historic Preservation Commission is an appointed seven-member board by the Town Council of Stephens City that reviews COAs on the third Tuesday of every month. If you want an application reviewed in an upcoming month, you must have your **complete** application in by the due date (usually by the first Friday of month). An incomplete application will not be processed, but the Town Planner will work with the applicant if the application was considered incomplete.

Why is it important to get a COA before starting work on a project on your property?

If you begin work without a COA, the Town can issue a Stop Work Order and can fine the property owner. You may not continue work on the structure until you obtain a COA. If you make alterations that do not meet the historic guidelines, the property owner will have to remove them at their expense.

What if I want to make changes to the inside of my house or building?

Unless the changes affect exterior windows or doors, you **do not** need a COA for interior changes.

Can I paint my home/ building any color I choose?

Yes. The Commission does not review color. You don’t need a COA to paint the exterior of your home unless it is unpainted masonry. Heritage colors are available at most paint stores.

What about building permits?

You will need a building permit if you make structural changes to either **the interior or exterior** of your home. This is a safety code. It applies to everyone in the Town, whether or not the building is in the Historic District. Building permits are obtained from Frederick County Building and Inspections, but the process begins with a Zoning Permit application with the Town.