

**DATE:** May 21, 2024

**CASE:** TA-05-24 Text Amendment (Historic Handbook Update)

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### **BACKGROUND**

The three local Historic Districts in the City of Concord (Edgewood, North Union and South Union) are a source of great pride and an asset to our community. These districts are regulated by our zoning ordinance and City Council has appointed a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to review applications from owners of structures in these historic districts who plan to make changes to the exterior of their properties. The historic district residents use the Historic District Handbook as a resource to help guide them with appropriate design and materials for their projects. The Historic Preservation Commission's authority and the guidelines of the Historic Handbook are incorporated into the Concord Development Ordinance (CDO) by reference. The handbook explains how the regulations work and answers the most frequently asked questions about living in a Historic District. It also provides background about the history and the architecture of Concord's Historic Districts. It illustrates the importance of physical features and sound site planning practice in the process of historic preservation. Additionally, the handbook is intended to serve as a supplement to the CDO and as a guide and reference manual for the Historic Preservation Commission in their deliberations.

With the last significant update to the handbook being in 2015, planning staff and the HPC recognized the need for changes. Since October 2022, the Handbook Committee has met twice monthly to review and suggest changes to the current handbook. The resulting draft has a more modern look, with fresh illustrations and clarifying text. Staff incorporated additional changes after receiving public input on the draft update at the end of February.

As a result of the comments from the Handbook Committee and public input from the citizens in Concord, we have identified and made changes, a summary of which are listed below:

- The handbook design has been updated and includes a new in-color layout.
- The Approval Requirement Needs table includes three new types of work; art, safety fencing, and accessory ramps. Additionally, the level of approval needed has changed for eight minor work items from "Commission Approval Needed" to "Staff Approval." Clarifying edits were made to help residents identify their projects.

- “Chapter 1: Preface” and “Chapter 2: History” have minor clarifying edits and labeling of photographs.
- “Chapter 3: Working with the Historic Preservation Commission” includes expanded information on the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process, a section about appearing before the Commission, and the Commission’s mission statement.
- “Chapter 4: Local Standards & General Policies” includes clarification on terminology with regards to compliance, includes explanation of state and federal tax credits available to National Register properties, and removes duplicate information.
- “Chapter 5: Sections 1-14”, which encompasses the bulk of the Handbook has now been divided into four individual chapters: “Chapter 5: Standards for Site and Setting”, “Chapter 6: Standards for the Exterior Building”, “Chapter 7: Standards for New Construction” and “Chapter 8: Demolition and Relocation.”
- “Chapter 6: Standards for the Exterior Buildings” includes new design standards for masonry, fenestration, and porches and includes a new section titled *Accessibility, Health & Safety Considerations*.
- “Chapter 7: Standards for New Residential Construction” includes a new section: *New Decks, Patios and Porches*.
- “Chapter 8: Demolition and Relocation” includes the new *Relocation* section and new design standards for both.
- Addition of “Chapter 9: Maintenance,” predominantly a compilation of the existing maintenance language in the Handbook.
- The Appendices chapter removes the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation (links are included in other areas of the handbook), removes the Tree Maintenance section (included and updated in the Maintenance chapter), and includes technical information, contact information, updated resources, and list of addresses of structures in all historic districts, along with their categorization.
- Continued updates to vague language throughout the Handbook with respect to the new State Land Use Law (160D).

The draft handbook was presented to the Historic Preservation Commission at the April 10, 2024 meeting, where they unanimously recommended approval of the newly updated handbook to the Planning and Zoning Commission. As the handbook works in conjunction with the CDO, we are asking for your review and recommendation for approval of the updated handbook to City Council, which will be presented at the June 13, 2024 meeting.