



Building in the Historic District

The Town of Steilacoom's Historic District was the first National Historic District established in the State of Washington. Building within the District involves the interplay of three distinct sets of rules, each with its own aim. This brochure is intended to help you navigate these rules. Town Staff is also here to assist you. The Historic Preservation Officer, Building Inspector and Town Planner can answer your questions, so do not hesitate to ask questions, especially in the early stages of your project.

Design Standards, Building Codes and Zoning Codes

The Town has adopted Design Standards for the Historic District. These Standards are intended to both preserve the historic buildings within the District and guide new construction so that it is compatible with the Town's history. A copy of the Standards is available at the Public Works building or on the Town's website.

The Town's Historic Preservation & Review Board reviews most applications for exterior changes within the District, including all new construction. The Board meets in a public hearing setting, where the public is invited to comment on each proposal. The Historic Preservation Officer serves as staff to the Board, and can assist you with any questions on the design of your building.

The Town Building Code is concerned with ensuring structural integrity. The Town Building Code consists of the International Building Codes as approved by the State of Washington, with some minor amendments by the Town. The Building Inspector will review all building plans for compliance with the Building Code.

The Zoning Code regulates the size of the lot, building setbacks, building height and size, along with the type of uses allowed. Within the Historic District there are residential, commercial and public zones, but the majority of building within the District is single-family residential.

Before You Submit

You should obtain a copy of the Design Standards and the Builder's Packet. The Packet explains the height, setback, and size regulations, as well as having information on building permit fees, utilities, site preparation and other matters. *Please review this information before committing to a particular design.* It is always advisable to meet with the Historic Preservation Officer before submitting an application.

Some builders like to have feedback from the Board itself on certain items before the public hearing. The Historic Preservation Officer can arrange a meeting with

an Architectural Review Committee, composed of Board members. The ARC will review your plans and discuss design options with you in an informal setting.

The Board meets once per month, on the fourth Wednesday at 6:30 PM in the Town Hall. Applications are due 15 days prior to that meeting. Because of public notification requirements, the 15 day application deadline cannot be waived.

Exterior Remodeling & New Construction

If your plans include an exterior remodel or a new building, you will need to submit detailed drawings of the exterior (“elevations”) to the Historic Preservation Officer along with details on the type of materials used and a plot plan. The Application for Design Review form contains all the information on what to submit and how many copies of each.

The Historic Preservation Officer will prepare a staff report to the Preservation & Review Board, analyzing how your project meets the Design Standards. It is crucial to the process that your plans be as accurate and complete as possible. Incomplete or unclear plans will delay the process. Changes to the design after the Board’s decision will result in a new hearing.

Following approval by the Board, you will need to submit an application for a building permit, attached to the Builder’s Packet. You will need to supply two sets of full building plans for your project. Those building plans will be reviewed by Town staff for compliance with the Board’s decision as well as building and zoning code compliance.

Interior Remodeling

If your project does not involve any change to the exterior of your building, you will not need to go to the Board for approval. You should discuss your project with the Building Inspector prior to submitting an application for a building permit.

Map of Historic District

