



## INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING A DESIGN REVIEW APPLICATION

*For Certificate Of Appropriateness/Design Approval/Exemption*

The design review application form is the same for all Landmarked properties in Boston - Historic Districts and Individual Landmarks - and is also used for advisory and accelerated review. Please read all instructions carefully before filling out an application on our website. To access the online application, navigate to the Landmarks Commission page by going to [boston.gov/landmarks](http://boston.gov/landmarks) and click on the 'Apply for Design Review Online' button on the right underneath our contact information. Please refer to the Standards and Criteria for the specific District or Individual Landmark - also available on [boston.gov/landmarks](http://boston.gov/landmarks) in the Study Reports section.

**CONSULTATION WITH COMMISSION STAFF:** Our website has email contact information for all Preservation staff, or call 617-635-3850 for answers to basic questions and/or to make an appointment for consultation. Staff is available by appointment to discuss proposed projects, and answer questions about the Standards and Criteria and documentation requirements.

**ZONING ISSUES:** All outstanding zoning issues must be resolved prior to submitting an application for commission review. Written confirmation of zoning status from either the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) or the Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) must be provided with the application if the scope of work involves changes in square footage, height, enclosed space, legal use of occupancy, rooftop construction, etc. ISD will determine whether zoning variances will be required for your project.

**OTHER REVIEWS:** In addition to commission review, other government agencies' may be required. These agencies may include ISD (617-635-5300), Boston Planning and Development Agency (617-722-4300), Public Works (617-635-4900), Parks and Recreation (617-635-4505), Boston Art Commission (617-635-2434), the Mass. Architectural Access Board (617-727-0660), etc. **It is your responsibility to ensure that all required approvals are obtained.**



**APPLICATIONS AND HEARING DATES:** Our commissions' monthly design review hearings are open to the public. Hearings are located in City Hall or held virtually via Zoom, as specified on the agenda. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. To be added to a commission's hearing agenda, an application must be determined to be complete by staff fifteen business days prior to the hearing date. **Incomplete applications cannot be added to a hearing agenda.** See the annual schedule of hearing dates online at [www.boston.gov/landmarks](http://www.boston.gov/landmarks), also available at Boston City Hall, Room 709. Applications must be submitted online at [boston.gov/landmarks](http://boston.gov/landmarks). Supporting documents including images and signature pages must also be uploaded on the online application. Paper applications and emailed applications will not be accepted. Refer to the application form section below for more detailed instructions on completing online applications.

Please note that staff is not available to review applications for completeness immediately upon submission. Review all instructions and requirements carefully before submitting your application. It is your responsibility to submit a complete application. **Incomplete applications cannot be added to a hearing agenda.** If you have questions about your application, please email the appropriate staff person as found on the website or call 617-635-3850 for answers to basic questions and/or to make an appointment to meet with staff.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW:** In order to expedite the review process, commissions have delegated to staff the approval of certain work items, such as those involving ordinary maintenance and repair and restoration or replacement with minimal impact on a property's appearance that meet applicable guidelines. Applicants with projects listed on a hearing agenda under this heading NEED NOT APPEAR to make a presentation at the hearing. After approval at the hearing, staff will issue a Determination Sheet as confirmation of project approval for the permit at Inspectional Services Department (ISD) 1010 Mass. Ave. Administrative review is part of the design review hearing, it does not bypass the process, and only staff can make this determination.



## THE APPLICATION FORM

The application form used is for all Landmarked properties in Boston including Historic Districts and Individual/Pending Landmarks. Please fill out the online application form as completely as possible. Applicants may continue to edit applications after submission. Incomplete applications cannot be added to a design review hearing agenda. Lack of information delays the review process.

## ONLINE APPLICATION OVERVIEW

**BEGINNING AN APPLICATION** Navigate to the Landmarks Commission page by going to [boston.gov/landmarks](https://boston.gov/landmarks). Click on the blue button labeled ‘**Apply for Design Review Online**’ on the right under the contact and hours information. If this is your first time submitting an online application through the BLC, you should **create a free account**. If you have submitted an online application before, you will need to login to your account. Then, you can begin a new application.

**FORGOT PASSWORD:** If you forgot your password, click the “forgot password” link and the system will email you a form to reset your password. If you no longer have access to the email address that was used to sign up for the account, please contact our office.

**FILLING OUT THE APPLICATION** Fill out the application as directed online. \* Indicated required information. See Parts I, II, and III below for detailed instructions on each section of the application.

**ADDING SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:** Add supporting documents to an online application under the ‘Existing Conditions Photographs’ section and the ‘Additional Supporting Documents’ section. Images of the existing conditions can be uploaded to the ‘Existing Conditions Photographs’ section. All other supporting documents must be added to the ‘Additional Supporting Documents’ section, including the signature page. If there is more than one additional document to upload, create one file with all additional documents to upload to this section. See Part III for detailed instructions on required documentation.



**COMMON PROBLEMS WITH SUBMISSIONS** Verify that all fields marked with a red “\*” are completed, as the \* indicates a required field. Additionally, you must be able to mark yes in response to the question “Have you received all necessary approvals from other city agencies including but not limited to Zoning, Parks, Architectural Access, etc?” You must receive all necessary approvals from other city agencies before you are able to apply for historic review.

**EDITING APPLICATIONS** Once you have submitted an application, you may edit it at any time by logging into the application portal and clicking the ‘Edit’ button listed next to your application information.

**APPLICATION FEE:** The application fee is dependent on the amount and type of work being proposed. An explanation of what work falls under each fee category can be found at the bottom of this document.

## APPLICATION STATUS

**APPLICANTS** will be notified via email of any updates to the application status. After receiving an email update, login to the application portal to view the updated application status and any notes from BLC Staff. It is the responsibility of the applicant to keep track of the application status. Once a final decision has been made on your application, be sure to store a copy of the application in your files. The Boston Landmarks Commission reserves the right to clear applications from its online application program annually to conserve space on its servers. Copies will remain on file at City Hall for reference.

**APPLICATION SUBMITTED:** An application has successfully been submitted, but BLC staff has not yet reviewed it. You will also receive an email confirmation to the email of the applicant.

**APPLICATION RECEIVED/UNDER REVIEW:** This status indicates that the application has been received and is under review by the appropriate staff person. You will be notified shortly if more information is required on the application or if it is scheduled for a hearing.

**Depending on when you submit your application during the review cycle, your application may remain in this status for several weeks.**



**HEARING SCHEDULED:** The application has been scheduled for a Hearing. This application status will also indicate if you have been scheduled for a Design Review Hearing or an Administrative Review Hearing. For Design Review Hearings, attendance is required. For Administrative Review Hearings, attendance is NOT required.

**INCOMPLETE/MISSING INFORMATION:** If an application is marked with this status, log in to the online application portal and add any missing information. Notes on missing information will be under the 'Staff Notes to Applicant' section of the application. Update the application using this information. If a document is missing, upload the document using the "Missing Information" upload field. This will automatically notify staff that the missing information has been received. **Incomplete applications cannot be added to a hearing agenda.**

**WITHDRAWN:** This status indicates that the applicant has decided not to continue to pursue historic review and your application has been removed.

**EXEMPT:** The work you are applying for is either not within the purview of the Commission. If you receive this notification please keep the withdrawal letter for your records.

**APPROVED:** The application has been approved by the commission exactly as submitted. Be sure to print out the approval placard provided and display it on site for the duration of construction. Failure to do so may result in a stop work order.

**APPROVED WITH PROVISOS:** The application has been approved by the commission with some modifications or requests. Read your approval carefully to be sure there are no outstanding requirements needed before a final approval can be issued.

**DENIED:** The application has been denied by the commission and the project cannot proceed. Applications that have been denied may not be the subject of a new application for a period of two years, unless substantially revised.

**DENIED WITHOUT PREJUDICE:** A denial without prejudice is a request for additional documentation or design development that does not dispose of the Commission to approve an application upon a subsequent hearing. If you wish to pursue the Commission's approval



for this work, a formal request must be made to commission staff, accompanied by all documentation requested by the Commission.

**APPROVED FOR EMERGENCY REPAIR:** This status is reserved for projects that are of urgent nature and pose a danger to the public or building occupants. Projects with interior water damage also qualify for emergency repairs. Evidence is required to be submitted to staff with the application. Staff will determine if the project qualifies for emergency repair. Emergency repair applications are still required to be reviewed by the Commission at a later date.



## APPLICATION FORM DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS

### PART I:

**ADDRESS\*** Provide the legal property address (street number and street name). Regardless of the neighborhood the property is located, enter "Boston" as the city.

**NAME OF BUSINESS/PROPERTY** Provide the business name for a commercial property, for example a restaurant. If the property has a historic name, please provide that name. *If neither applies, leave this space blank.*

### PART II:

We use the names, phone numbers, email and postal addresses in the application form for all communications about the application, including hearing notices and commission decisions. Please provide accurate information. The applicant will be considered the primary contact for pertinent communications.

**APPLICANT\*** Provide name of contact person, organization (if applicable), daytime phone number, email address and complete mailing address. Anyone can act as an applicant: property owner or representative (such as a property manager or attorney), tenant, architect, contractor, etc.

**PROPERTY OWNER\*** Provide name of the legal property owner (and contact person if applicable), daytime phone number, email address and complete mailing address. "Property owner" is the owner of the entire building or site, not the owner of a business or unit inside the building.

**ARCHITECT:** If an architect or other design professional is involved with the project, you can provide name, phone number, email address and mailing address. If not, leave this space blank.

*\* indicates required information*



**CONTRACTOR:** If a contractor has been selected, provide name, telephone number, email address and complete mailing address. If not, leave this space blank.

### PART III:

Commissions review a wide variety of projects; therefore, the amount of documentation varies with the scope of work. Please refer to the required documentation instructions below or consult staff regarding your specific project, if necessary.

The application and documentation are part of the commission's public record. One hard copy set needs to be submitted with your application. Please, electronic copy only, paper versions cannot be considered part of the application. We also request a digital version of your hearing presentation be attached to the Presentation Upload field to make it available on the city's public notice website. All documentation should be attached to the online application under the *Additional Supporting Documents* and *Existing Conditions Photographs* sections. All images of existing conditions should be uploaded under Existing Conditions Photographs. Signature Pages and anything else you wish to add must be uploaded as one document under Additional Supporting Documents. Additional hard copies of application materials may be required for the hearing per staff. All documentation, including color photos and drawings, must be dated and labeled with the property address. See the Specific Documentation Requirements section below for more information on file size requirements and sharing attachments.

Interior floor plans are generally not required except for Individual Landmarks with interior designations (see website). Be aware that some interior work affects the exterior of a building - window replacement, changes in floor levels, elevators, fireplaces, mechanical systems, fire egress, window signs, exhaust/air vents, etc. - are exterior impacts most likely to be subject to commission review; consult staff.



Revisions to projects between filing the application and the hearing date are not uncommon. If further design details have developed, please notify staff of the changes and submit a set of revised drawings with you to the hearing for the commission's files. Additions to the scope of work, however, are not permitted to be discussed by the commission at the hearing. A separate application and public hearing are required.

### **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORK\*:**

A concise, complete summary of the entire scope of work, including the existing conditions, historic conditions if known, and the proposed scope of work, for example *"Remove all of the non-historic aluminum windows on the front façade and install two-over-two, double-hung wood window sashes with true divided lights and wood brick molds all with a black painted finish to match the historic."* An itemized list of work items is strongly recommended. This description is used to create the official notice and subsequent decision, and it must clearly represent the entire project. **You must provide a summary of the scope of work in the space on the front page of the form or the application is considered INCOMPLETE.** Additional pages can be attached if necessary to provide additional more detailed information.

**DO NOT TYPE "SEE ATTACHED" – THE APPLICATION WILL BE CONSIDERED INCOMPLETE.**

### **REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION\***

All applications must have supporting documentation that clearly illustrates the existing conditions, the scope of work and its impact on the building: color photographs, fully dimensioned existing and proposed drawings, written specifications, etc. You are not required to hire an architect but professional design advice is strongly recommended, especially for projects involving construction or design changes.



## **DOCUMENTATION SHOULD ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING CLEARLY AND COMPLETELY:**

*What is being proposed? Sample: "Replace existing roof deck with new, expand size by three feet."*

*Where proposed changes are based on historic evidence, provide documentary or physical evidence to support (e.g. historical photos)*

*How, specifically, will the work be performed?*

*Exact location on the building that will be affected, with photographic support.*

*Show what the building will look like when the proposed work is finished.*

## **SPECIFIC DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS:**

**APPLICATIONS WITHOUT PHOTOGRAPHS ARE INCOMPLETE.** Current, clear color photographs are required for all applications, including for ordinary maintenance and repair projects, to record existing conditions. These photographs should be uploaded to the Existing Conditions Photographs section of the online application. Context and close-up photos must be provided-the building facade in its entirety, any rear or side elevations, roof, individual details, and abutting buildings if affected. High quality photographs are preferred. **Screenshots from Google Street View or other online mapping services are not allowed.** Alternatively, file sharing services such as Google Drive and DropBox may be used. Add a link for the file sharing service in the 'Project Description' section of the online application. Contact Staff with any questions regarding file sharing. There are no file size limits in the application, but a file less than or equal to 20MB is preferred.

**REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE\*:** Photographs documenting existing conditions, a written scope of work, specifications (methods, materials, colors, etc.) this includes projects involving cleaning and repair of masonry and other historic exterior materials. Test patches on site may be required for all maintenance items.



**REPLACEMENT\*:** Photographs to document existing conditions; drawings or specifications for both existing and replacement elements comparing existing to proposed conditions to ensure consistency; material or color samples. For replacement windows, both existing and proposed fully dimensioned Elevation, Horizontal Section, and Vertical Section drawings must be submitted with all of the details fully dimensioned (top rail, meeting rail, stiles, muntins, bottom rail, sill, brick mold, etc.).

**MINOR MODIFICATIONS\*:** Photographs documenting existing conditions, sketches or shop drawings (drawn to scale and including all dimensions, materials, colors, method of attachment, etc.), manufacturer literature or specifications sketches or elevation drawings showing the proposal in context with the building or site.

#### **DESIGN CHANGES, MAJOR ALTERATIONS - FACADES, REAR OR SIDE**

**ELEVATIONS\*:** Photographs to document existing conditions; full elevation drawings of both existing and proposed conditions (annotated, labeled, dated, drawn to scale); detail drawings of specific elements; manufacturer literature; material and color samples. For basement excavations, gates/fences, landscaping\*\*, parking areas, paving, new stoops/stairs, other site alterations: same documentation as above plus full section drawings. A new fire egress required by Inspectional Services Dept.: same as above plus certification from ISD that work is required. Increase in height, square footage, enclosed space, legal use or occupancy: same as above plus written certification of zoning status.

**SIGNAGE:** Photograph of entire building façade, plus close-up details of subject storefront or other building element; drawing(s) of signage indicating where it will be positioned on building, to-scale detail drawings of sign dimensions, materials, methods of attachment; lighting, colors, and lettering sizes.

**ALTERATIONS TO ROOFS:** This includes roof decks, additions, elevator headhouses, rooftop mechanical equipment, etc. Required documentation as stated above under "Design Changes" plus color photos of existing rooftop conditions; color photographs of the rooftop mock-up, existing and proposed roof plans; full sightlines section drawings; full elevation drawings showing context; block plan. For equipment: documentation as above plus



manufacturer literature. For any increase in the floor area ratio (FAR): block plans should indicate existing additions on the block. For decks, headhouses, additions, or mechanical equipment, a mock-up of the proposed height and volume on site will be required by the commission to determine visibility before approval. To save time, a mock-up should be in place at the time your application is submitted (photographed on the roof and from the ground), so that it may be inspected and verified by staff.

**MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** Complete photographic documentation of the site; full, detailed construction drawings, including context of abutting buildings, site and block plans. Advisory (informal) presentation before the commission of preliminary concepts and drawings may be helpful before filing an application or proceeding with design development.

**DEMOLITION(ALSO SEE ARTICLE 85 FOR NON-LANDMARKED STRUCTURES):**

Complete photographic documentation of the structure (interior and exterior), report on historic and architectural significance of the building; engineer's report documenting condition of the building; economic impacts of demolition vs. rehabilitation; site and block plans; certification from ISD that demolition is required for public safety; proposal for new construction on site.

**ESTIMATED COST OF CONSTRUCTION:** Estimate the total cost of the work proposed.

**PART IV:**

**DULY AUTHORIZED SIGNATURES\* (BOTH REQUIRED):** The applicant AND the legal property owner must sign the application form as required. It can be the same person, but we need **two signatures**. There are two ways to sign the application: complete an electronic signature on the website, or sign and upload a signature page and attach it to the 'Additional Supporting Documents' field in the application portal.

**UNSIGNED OR PARTIALLY SIGNED FORMS ARE CONSIDERED INCOMPLETE.**



For condominiums, the association chair or authorized representative (such as a property manager) shall sign as owner; for institutional ownership, an authorized representative shall sign as owner. The property owner's signature represents consent to the work being proposed. NOTE: A signature on the application confirms that the facts in the application and accompanying documentation are true. Misrepresenting owner consent/signatory authority and/or relevant facts in the application shall **invalidate any Certificate of Appropriateness or Design Approval and approval for permits**. The Design Review Application is limited to the aforementioned work. I understand that any additional exterior work done under my ownership must be submitted by application and approved by the appropriate commission. Any unauthorized work will be required to be removed.

\*\* Specific Landscape Requirements for the Aberdeen Architectural Conservation District can be found on the website, the following covers Landscaping and Tree Removal within the Back Bay Architectural District:

The Back Bay Architectural Commission (BBAC) has review authority over front- and rear-yard trees located within the boundaries of the district. Believing that well-maintained trees of appropriate species, scale and location are an important visual amenity, the commission discourages the casual removal of trees. In many cases, diseased and/or overgrown tree limbs can be addressed. At the same time, the commission understands that it is sometimes necessary to remove trees with health or structural integrity issues, or those with roots causing damage to foundations or other below-grade infrastructure systems. In considering the appropriateness of removing trees under the relevant guidelines, the BBAC requires that applications include the following items of documentation:

- Photographs and site plans depicting the tree or trees identified for removal within their context
- For trees that are believed to be diseased or unstable, a report from a certified arborist as to the health of the tree(s)
- For trees whose root systems may be damaging foundations or utilities, a structural engineer's report detailing the nature and extent of the compromise



- A plan for the introduction of replacement tree(s) should the commission so require
- Tree species identification is required in all cases.

### **AFTER APPLICATION APPROVAL**

After an application is approved, the applicant will receive an application status update and be able to check the update in their application portal. An approval letter will be uploaded in the online portal, which can be used to obtain a building permit with the Inspectional Services Department (ISD). If required by your district, print your approval placard for display at the construction site - visible to the public and near the building permit.



## FEES FOR DESIGN REVIEW APPLICATIONS

For Certificate Of Appropriateness/Design Approval/Exemptions  
(As authorized under City of Boston Code, Title 14, Section 450) Effective 1 March 2004

**NOTE:** All fees should be paid online through the application portal. See instructions below for details. If you are unable to pay online, you may submit a check or money order made payable to the City of Boston.

- \$25.00** **Minor modifications** to the exterior architectural features of a building, including painting, cleaning of masonry, interior window signs, masonry repointing, new window shutters, planting boxes or parterres, paving surfaces, intercom and security devices, storm windows, lighting, residential window grates, screens, benches and plaques.
- \$50.00** **Design changes** to the façade of a building, including but not limited to changes to or installation of doors, windows, balconies, exterior signs, roof decks, handrails, fences, masonry walls, changes to window size, siding or roofing materials, skylights, solar panels, large antennae, ramps, new chimneys and flues, residential vents, fire escape, heat pumps and non-portable air-conditioning units, major masonry repair (including resurfacing of stoops and brownstone façades).
- \$100.00** **Major alterations** to the exterior design or form of the building, including replacement of front stoop, roof headhouse, new penthouse, new storefront, yard excavation, commercial exhaust vent, new or raised dormer, new window and door openings, new terrace, demolition and increase to floor area.
- \$250.00** **Major construction** including new building, infill structure, or major development project.



In cases where the cost of new construction or major exterior changes exceed five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000), the fee shall be one-half (1/2) of one percent (1%) of the fair cost of the work, provided, however, that in no case shall the fee be more than five thousand dollars (\$5,000).

For Certificates of Design Approval for work on a Landmarked interior space not requiring a building permit from the Inspectional Services Dept. The fee shall be ten dollars (\$10.00), in all other cases twenty five dollars (\$25.00).

All applicants must pay the appropriate design review application fee.

### **PAYMENT INSTRUCTIONS**

**Pay Online:** The City of Boston offers constituents easy and convenient options for making online payments through a third-party service provider. The third-party service provider may assess a service fee for processing these payments.

*Payments made by electronic check/ACH are not subject to a service fee. However, payments made by debit or credit card will be assessed a non-refundable service fee of 2.75% of the total payment amount (\$1.00 minimum).*

**Pay by Mailing or Dropping Off a Check:** Fill out a check with the correct amount as determined by the guidelines above and address it to the City of Boston. In the Memo, please put the address of the property where work is being proposed. Sign the check and drop it off in the Environment Department or mail it to the following address:

**Environment Department, Room 709**

**1 City Hall Square**

**Boston, MA 02201**

Questions? Call Environment Department staff at 617-635-3850