

Preserving Our Heritage

A Property Owners' Guide to the Sharon Historic District

Sharon, Connecticut

Welcome to the Sharon Historic District! The Sharon Historic District Commission (SHDC) has developed this guide to provide residents of the historic district a clear understanding of the process of applying for a certificate of appropriateness.

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

WHAT IS THE SHARON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION?

First established in 1975, the SHDC is a unit of Sharon's town government. Its purpose is to preserve and protect the historical heritage and character of the areas within the boundaries of the district. The town government established the SHDC with the approval vote of two-thirds of the district property owners.

The SHDC consists of five regular members and three alternate members appointed for five-year terms (three for alternates) by the town's board of selectmen. At least two regular members and one alternate must live within the historic district. All are volunteers; none receive salaries.

The commission is organized and operates under principles set forth in Chapter 93a, Section 7-147, of the statutes of the state of Connecticut as well as those of the SHDC rules and procedures.

IS MY PROPERTY WITHIN THE HISTORIC DISTRICT?

Tax parcels with at least part of one property line bordering the following roads are in the historic district:

- Calkinstown Road to the intersection of Jewett Hill Road
- Gay Street
- North Main Street
- Main Street
- Upper Main Street
- South Main Street
- Amenia Union Road to the intersection of Boland Road
- Boland Road
- West Woods Road, #1, to the intersection of Boland Road

A map of the historic district is available for viewing in the land use office of Sharon Town Hall. Various setbacks define the outer limits of the district, meaning that some properties are partially within the district. Setbacks may be the property's back lot line or from 100 to 800 feet from the lot's frontage, depending on the location. The entire area enclosed by Amenia Union Road, Boland Road, and West Woods Road, #1, is included in the district. A map of the district is on view in the Land Use Room at Sharon Town Hall.

WHAT WORK REQUIRES A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS?

Any physical alteration to the exterior of a building or structure affixed to the land that is visible from any public way or place requires a certificate of appropriateness. The same rules apply to all new structures and demolition. "Public ways" include streets, sidewalks, and public parking lots, both inside and outside the historic district. Visibility is determined without regard to trees and other plantings, which, by their nature, are temporary.

The building and zoning official requires a SHDC certificate of appropriateness before issuing a permit for activity within the historic district. Certificates of appropriateness must be obtained before building and zoning approvals are sought. A certificate of appropriateness may be required even though a building or zoning permit is not.

Reviewable actions include, but are not limited to, construction, alteration, modification, enlargement, replacement, or removal of:

- Additions to the main and accessory or outbuildings such as barns, garages, and sheds. Examples of changes to these buildings include size or shape of the exterior, window size, and the placement and number of windows, porches, dormers, skylights, and chimneys.
- Fences, stone and other walls, walkways, steps, pools, patios, decks, driveways, parking areas, and other site improvements
- Satellite dishes, solar panels, permanent air-conditioning units, and other aboveground utility structures and mechanical appurtenances
- Outdoor and porch lighting fixtures
- Architectural details or ornaments
- Windows, window inserts, storm windows, doors, or storm doors
- Window shutters, awnings, and window boxes
- Roofing materials where there is a change in the type and/or color of shingle or other material used
- Extensive or total replacement of siding, whether similar to or different from the original
- Masonry replacements and repointing
- Statuary affixed to the land by physical means or by weight and the force of gravity
- Demolition of main and accessory buildings or portions thereof, including "demolition by neglect"

WHAT WORK DOES NOT REQUIRE A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS?

- Additions to, changes to, or demolition of structures located on the portions of properties that are fully outside the historic district (Some properties are only partially within and the historic district.)
- Activities not visible from any public street, way, or place
- Routine maintenance and repairs not involving changes in materials, design, or texture
- Painting and paint color of a building
- Temporary signs in place for three days or less
- Interior alterations

WHAT GUIDELINES DOES THE SHDC FOLLOW IN MAKING ITS DECISIONS?

Connecticut's enabling law and the SHDC's rules and regulations require that the following standards be used in determining appropriateness:

- Historical and architectural value
- Architectural style
- Scale
- General design
- Arrangement
- Texture and material of the architectural features
- Type and style of exterior windows, doors, light fixtures, signs, aboveground utility structures, mechanical appurtenances
- Type and texture of building materials
- Relationship to the exterior architectural style and pertinent features of other building and structures in the immediate neighborhood

More specific guidelines and technical briefs are provided by the U.S. Department of the Interior to aid homeowners and historic districts. These can be viewed at:
www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehab/stand.htm

WHEN AND WHERE DOES THE SHDC MEET?

The SHDC meets the fourth Monday of every month at 6 pm in the town hall. Legal notices of meetings are published in the *Waterbury Republican-American* 5 to 15 days prior. Agendas for meetings are available from the town clerk the day prior. Minutes are available, also from the town clerk, one to seven days after meetings. Minutes and agendas are posted on the town website.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF OBTAINING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS?

Applications for certificates of appropriateness are available in the selectman's office and on the town website. The deadline to submit the application to the land use office is 4 pm on the Thursday before the SHDC meeting at which the application will be reviewed. Fees must be paid with the application.

The information submitted with the application depends on the nature of the project but often includes the following: plot plans, architectural drawings, samples of materials being used, as well as manufacturers' drawings or pictures of the models to be used. Current photographs taken from the public way of the area or structure affected by the proposed change are required. Photographs should include buildings and affixed structures.

Completed applications received in a timely manner will be placed on the agenda for acceptance at the next meeting, included in the legal notice of the meeting, and scheduled for the following month's public hearing. SHDC meetings consist of two parts: a public hearing if required and a regular meeting.

Public hearings take place in months where there are accepted and warned applications to be reviewed. Commission members discuss pros and cons of the applications. Property owners or their representatives may present their plans. Members of the public may speak in favor or opposition of applications.

At the regular meeting the SHDC votes on the applications discussed in the public hearing. New applications are reviewed for completeness. If complete, the applications are accepted for voting, and notices are placed in the *Waterbury Republican-American* newspaper. During the ensuing month, applicants may submit additional requested material so that their application is deemed complete and ready for review and decisions.

at the next public hearing. Also at the regular meeting, minutes are read and other business is discussed. The public may attend this part of the SHDC meeting.

Once the SHDC approves a certificate of appropriateness, the commission informs the applicant and files a copy with the building and zoning official's land use office. The property owner may then seek any necessary building and zoning approvals. A certificate of appropriateness is valid for one year.

HOW LONG DOES THE PROCESS TAKE?

Because an application must be discussed at two separate SHDC meetings, the shortest amount of time the process takes is slightly more than a month. Incomplete applications take longer, with the time necessary depending on when the applicant provides the needed information. The commission must render a decision no more than 65 days after it deems the application complete and filed.

IS THERE ANY WAY TO SOLICIT FEEDBACK FROM THE SHDC PRIOR TO THE PUBLIC HEARING?

Yes. The SHDC strongly encourages property owners to discuss their plans with the SHDC before submitting an application. The SHDC is also happy to answer questions as to whether a change is considered a modification, requiring a certificate of appropriateness, or a repair, which does not.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF, AFTER STARTING WORK, I REALIZE THAT CHANGES NEED TO BE MADE TO MY PROPOSAL?

The property owner or his or her agent must amend the certificate of appropriateness. Depending on the nature of the change, the SHDC may require an additional meeting.

WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE DECISION OF THE SHDC?

If the commission denies an application, it will send written notice to the applicant and the building and zoning official, along with an explanation of why the application was denied. The SHDC may decide to approve an application with additional stipulations. If the applicant does not wish to implement the stipulations, the applicant may re-apply with a modified design proposal or may appeal the commission's decision in Superior Court. The Connecticut statute enabling historic district commissions sets forth fines for violations of commission decisions.

HOW DO I CONTACT THE SHDC?

Contact Jamie Casey, clerk of the SHDC, at 860-364-0909.