



Historic Building Occupancy

809 N. Broadway, 1st Floor / Milwaukee, WI 53202-3617 / 414-286-8210

Congratulations! The Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission has given the building you plan to occupy special status. Either the structure itself has been designated as a local historic site, or the neighborhood in which it is located has been designated a local historic district.

In either case, you have the privilege of using a space that is a part of our city's history. Preserving that history requires a partnership among owners, tenants, and the City of Milwaukee.

Your part in that partnership is to seek a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the Historic Preservation Commission **before doing any work that affects the exterior of your building.** This includes work that requires a building permit, and even extends to work that does not require a permit. The requirement to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness is contained in the City code of ordinances.

A COA is issued when the work you want to do is consistent with the historic character of the building or district. Many certificates are issued administratively by the city's Historic Preservation Officer. Some require the consent of the Historic Preservation Commission.

All work that requires a building permit (including fences) may also require a COA. In addition, you must obtain a COA for the following projects:

Signs: All new signs require a COA. Also, any alteration of a sign that changes the sign's appearance, including a change in the words on the sign, requires a COA.

Awnings All new awnings require a COA. Also, the alteration of any existing awning requires a COA.

Lighting Any lighting affixed to the exterior of the building, including lighting that illuminates signs and entrances, requires a COA.

Mechanical installations Any exterior mechanical installation such as an air conditioning unit, venting pipe, or utility meter requires a COA.

Windows Installation of new windows requires a COA, even if the work does not require a building permit.

Obtaining a COA is not difficult, but may require several weeks lead time. When you apply for building permits, you will be given an application for a COA. If you have a project that does not need a permit but requires a COA, you can get an application for a COA from the Historic Preservation Commission office, located in Rm B-4 at City Hall. To have an application mailed to you, call (414) 286-5712. There is no fee for a COA.

The Department of City Development has published an excellent resource to help you plan your renovation project in a way that is consistent with the historic character of your property or neighborhood. **Good for Business: A Guide to Rehabilitating the Exteriors of Older Commercial Buildings** is available at the Milwaukee Development Center, located on the first floor at 809 N. Broadway. This publication, which sells for \$15, is free to owners of locally designated historic buildings. The Historic Preservation Commission also maintains a reference library.