



## Town of Wake Forest

# Certificate of Appropriateness Factsheet

July 2004

### **What Is a Certificate of Appropriateness?**

A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is prior approval authorizing some kind of change to take place on properties located within the Wake Forest local historic district and on locally designated landmark properties. In order to gain approval the proposed activity must adhere the standards outlined in the Wake Forest Historic District Design Guidelines, available through the Planning Office.

### **Why Does the Town Require a Certificate of Appropriateness?**

The Town of Wake Forest has recognized the importance of the town's historical heritage. "This historical heritage of the Town of Wake Forest is a valuable and important asset. By listing and regulating historic districts and landmarks, and acquiring historic properties, the Town of Wake Forest seeks:

1. To safeguard the heritage of the Town, by preserving districts and landmarks therein that embody important elements of its culture, history, architectural history, or prehistory; and
2. To promote the use and conservation of such districts and landmarks for the education, pleasure, and enrichment of the residents of the Town, the County and the State as a whole." (Historic Preservation Ordinance, Article V. Section 1. of the Wake Forest Zoning Ordinance)

The Design Guidelines were adopted by the Historic Preservation Commission in 1999 in order to accomplish the above goals. As stated in the guidelines, "The purpose of these guidelines is to provide standards by which the Wake Forest Historic Preservation Commission may evaluate the compatibility of a proposed improvement, alteration, or demolition in the Wake Forest Historic District or on a locally designated property. The guidelines and standards stated herein are

intended to ensure, insofar as possible, that changes in covered properties shall be in harmony with the reasons for designation, yet to be flexible so that property owners will be encouraged to make innovative improvements. At the same time, property owners will be assured that other buildings and improvements in the Historic District and to other historic properties will be aesthetically compatible with their own.”

### **When Is a Certificate of Appropriateness Required?**

Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs) are required *in advance* of making any change or major repair to the exterior of any building, outbuilding, structure, major landscaping features, or the lot itself, that is visible from a public street in the historic district. This includes, but is not limited to, such items as additions or other structural changes, installing a new roof, replacing a porch post, replacing the flooring of a porch, installing or paving a driveway, installing a walkway, installing a lamppost, removing a tree or other major mature landscaping, installing or removing shutters, installing storm windows or doors, replacing windows, replacing siding, installing or changing an outdoor advertising or nonresidential identification sign, building an accessory structure, such as a fence, deck, trellis, storage shed, greenhouse, well house, swimming pool, or garage apartment. A COA is also required if any structure is to be demolished. ***If you are in any doubt about whether a COA is required or not be sure to call the Planning Office or simply submit a completed application.*** If you submit an application when not needed you will be informed and your application discarded.

### **When Is a Certificate of Appropriateness Not Required?**

A COA is not required for painting, for regular maintenance, or for minor repairs that do not involve any change in design, material, or outer appearance. In case of storm damage you do not need a COA to stabilize the structure or make immediate repairs necessary for safety or to protect your property or belongings, ***as long as the resulting job does not change the design or appearance of the building before the storm and does not use different materials than before the storm.*** A COA *is required* if major repairs or reconstruction is necessary after storm damage.

### **Are All COAs the Same?**

No. There are two kinds of COAs, a regular COA and a minor COA. A minor COA can be approved by staff, but denied only by the Historic Preservation Commission, and is used for changes to exterior features of property that do not involve substantial alterations, additions, or removals that could impair the integrity of the property or district as a whole. You do not need to specify which kind of COA you are applying for. Staff will automatically consider it for a minor COA, if appropriate. Examples of minor COAs include, but are not limited to, 1-the removal of any element prohibited by the design guidelines, 2-the removal of asbestos, aluminum, vinyl, or other artificial siding, 3-the removal of awnings, 4-the removal of carriage lamps, kickplates, carports, and concrete block walks, steps, and walls that were not part of the original design, 5-the removal of accessory buildings that are not architecturally or historically significant, 6-the removal of storm doors or windows that are inappropriate to the building, 7-the

repair or replacement of exposed foundation walls, 8-the repair or replacement of asphalt or fiberglass shingle roofs, 9-construction or replacement of walks, sidewalks, and entry steps, 10-installation or replacement of storm windows or doors meeting the standards given in the guidelines, 11-installation or replacement of shutters or blinds original to the building, 12-installation of mechanical equipment, 13-installation of identification signs, 14-the replacement of missing architectural details, 15-repair or replacement of wood trim, eaves, cornices, fascia, gutters, steps, handrails, porch decking, sills, windows, and doors when matching the original, 16-reglazing windows, 17-changes to previously approved COAs which will not substantially affect design elements of the project or surrounding property owners, 18-the installation of Hardiplank siding, and 19-the renewal of expired COAs where no change is being proposed and where there is no change in circumstances.

### **How Do I Apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness?**

Fill out a COA application. One is attached at the end of this document and you may obtain copies from the Planning Office at 221 South Brooks Street. You may also call the planner, Agnes Wanman, at 554-3911 and she will mail one to you. Return your application, along with any drawings, site plans, photographs, catalog cutsheets, or other materials you may have, or that are requested, to the Planning Office no later than 31 working days before the meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission at which you wish your case to be heard. The Historic Preservation Commission meets the evening of the second Wednesday of each month, usually in the Planning Office. There is no charge for a COA.

### **Once I Have a Certificate of Appropriateness – What’s Next?**

Once you have your COA you may begin work at any time. The COA is good for six months and may be renewed by staff. You do not need to complete the work in six months, but should begin it during that time. Your COA may include conditions. That means that your COA is valid only if you abide by those conditions. ***A COA does not excuse you from any other requirements of the town.*** You may still need to obtain a building or other permit.

### **What If I Begin or Complete a Project Before Obtaining a COA?**

If your project requires a COA but have already begun it, or even completed it, you will still need to apply for a COA anyway. Your project will be reviewed just like any other and may be granted as requested, granted with conditions, or may be denied. If it is denied or granted with conditions not met by your already begun or completed project the Historic Preservation Commission will require that you demolish any construction not meeting the requirements. Therefore, ***it is in your best interest to check first to see if a COA is required and to check the design guidelines before planning your project.***

For further inquiries, please contact the Town of Wake Forest, Department of Planning & Inspections at 919-554-6140.