

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

GENERAL INFORMATION + INSTRUCTIONS

WHAT IS A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL?

Certificate of Approval is a written authorization, much like a permit, that must be issued before any changes can be made to the designated features of a [City landmark](#) or to the external appearance of any building, structure, or site within the [City's eight historic districts](#). This includes the construction of any new building or structure. In certain historic districts, a [Certificate of Approval](#) is also required before making changes to how a building or space is used or establishing use in a new building.

Each historic district and designated landmark has a corresponding City of Seattle Ordinance that outlines the above requirements. Note that Certificates of Approval are required for work that would not typically require permits, such as minor exterior remodeling and painting.

WHAT KIND OF CHANGES REQUIRE A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL?

- a. Alterations to a building exterior in a historic district
- b. Alterations to sites, rights-of-way, and public spaces in a historic district
- c. Changes of use in Pioneer Square Preservation District, International Special Review District, and the Pike Place Market Historical District
- d. Changes to business' ownership or specialty nature within the Pike Place Market Historical District
- e. Physical alterations or changes in appearance to the designated features of a landmark: this may include a landscape, building exterior, building interiors, structure, or object

Repair-in-Kind: If the proposed work involves ONLY repairs using the same materials and exact same details and finishes, then a Certificate of Approval is not required. However, the method and scope of work must be reviewed and confirmed as in-kind by the relevant Board/Commission Coordinator prior to starting the work.

Design: a proposal to make a physical alteration or change in appearance.

Use: a proposal to make change(s) to the non-physical characteristics of a business, building or property.

The Historic Preservation Program can provide more information about the landmark or the historic district where your property is located: (206) 684-0228 / seattle.gov/neighborhoods/preservation

HOW DO I GET A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

This section is a snapshot of the process for getting a Certificate of Approval.



1. **Application submittal:** Certificate of Approval applications are submitted via the [Seattle Services Portal](https://services.seattle.gov/Portal/) [https://services.seattle.gov/Portal/]. Refer to the [application instructions](#) below to ensure that you have gathered the required submittal documents. If you do not have the technological access or tools to complete the application online through the Seattle Services Portal, call 206-684-0228.

2 STAFF REVIEW



2. **Staff review of application:** Historic Preservation staff review applications to ensure all the required documents described in the instructions below are included per the code requirements. Within twenty-eight (28) days of the application being submitted, Historic Preservation staff will notify the applicant in writing whether the application is complete or what additional information is required, including paying the fee. If additional information is provided by the applicant, the applicant will be notified in writing within fourteen (14) days of receipt whether the application is now complete or what additional information is necessary. Additional information may be requested at other times during this process.



3. **Board/Commission Review:** Once an application is determined to be complete, it will proceed to review by the relevant board or commission at a regularly scheduled public meeting. When reviewing an application, the board or commission uses established regulations, standards, and guidelines to evaluate proposals. The board or commission will vote on whether a Certificate of Approval should be approved, approved with conditions, or denied.

Other Reviews or Briefings: Depending on the board or commission, proposals may require an initial review by the Architectural/Design Review Committee (ARC/DRC) or a Use Review Committee (URC) prior to full board/commission review and decision.

See the website for board/commission meeting schedules. Larger or more complex projects may need to make informal briefings to the board, commission, or committee to receive feedback on alternatives and/or development of design starting with early concepts and continuing through the entire design process. This briefing process is referred to as "Early Guidance" in the [Seattle Services Portal](https://services.seattle.gov/Portal/) [https://services.seattle.gov/Portal/].



4. **Certificate of Approval Issuance:** Typically, a Certificate of Approval will be issued within 28 days of the board or commission meeting, assuming no successful appeals* have been filed. This 28-day period includes the mandatory 14-day period for appeals. The decision will be accessible via the [Seattle Services Portal](https://services.seattle.gov/Portal/) [https://services.seattle.gov/Portal/]

*Any interested person may appeal a decision of the board or commission to the City Hearing Examiner. Details about this process can be found later in this document.

ASSISTANCE

Copies of relevant guidelines, standards, ordinances, procedures, and other information are available for download on the [Historic Preservation Program's website](#).

HISTORIC PRESERVATION STAFF

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR DESIGN AND/OR USE

Please read this whole document carefully before submitting your Certificate of Approval application through the [Seattle Services Portal](#).

We have provided a [step-by-step illustrated guide](#) and an [instructional video](#) for using the Seattle Services Portal to help reduce mistakes and expedite the review of the application.

Refer to the guidance below to make sure you have all the relevant, required documents in an electronic format before you begin the online submittal process in the [Seattle Services Portal](#). When possible, and according to section, combine files into a single PDF rather than uploading individual documents. Incomplete applications will not be scheduled for board review. For board/commission members to properly act on a Certificate of Approval request, they must have an accurate and thorough understanding of the proposal.

If you have questions about the process or what is required to be submitted for your specific proposal, please contact the corresponding Historic Preservation Program board/commission coordinator, listed on the previous page.

DESIGN APPLICATION - REQUIRED DOCUMENTS AND GUIDANCE

Best Practices for Uploading Documents in the Seattle Services Portal

- Assemble the required content of your application into one or two PDFs to reduce the number of documents you will be uploading. It is preferable for photographs and samples to be included in your Plan Set or Presentation/Briefing Package.
- Do not upload your Plan Set or Presentation/Briefing Package multiple times to satisfy the steps in the portal. Instead, upload a memo as described below.
- You can prepare a short memo that says “included in Plan Set” or “included in Presentation/Briefing Package” and upload this in lieu of separate packages of photographs, samples/finishes, or surveys, unless the survey is a large or complex document that you want to upload separately.

Description of Proposed Work

In your proposed Plan Set or Presentation/Briefing Package provide a detailed written explanation of the proposed project. Describe the proposed work and any changes it will make to the landmark/historic district building or property.

- For proposals that include demolition of a structure or object, provide:
 - a statement of the reason(s) for demolition; and
 - a description of the replacement structure or object
- If the proposal includes replacement, removal, or demolition of existing features, provide a survey of the existing conditions of the features being replaced, removed, or demolished. Please check with board/commission staff if you need more detailed instructions.

NOTE: In the Seattle Services Portal, you will be asked to fill out a field titled “Detailed Description”. For this field, you can use a shorter version of the “Description of Proposed Work”.

Presentation/Briefing Package

- You will be required to present your application to the relevant board or commission. For small projects you may not need a separate Presentation/Briefing Package, as everything may fit into your Plan Set. For larger projects it may be helpful to create a Presentation/Briefing Package separate from the Plan Set. It

is helpful to think ahead about how you will explain your proposal in a public meeting, which can help you put the narrative, drawings, and images in the best order.

Plan Set with Scale Drawings, Showing Dimensions

- Existing site plan including adjacent streets and buildings.
- Proposed site plan showing proposed alterations or changes in appearance.
- Existing floor plans showing the existing features and conditions.
- Proposed floor plans showing the proposed alterations or change in appearance.
- Existing building elevations and sections showing the features or conditions.
- Proposed building elevations and sections showing the proposed alterations or changes in appearance.
- Construction details and additional information as needed to explain the proposal.
- Existing landscape plan showing existing features and plantings.
- Proposed landscape plan showing the proposed physical alterations or changes in appearance to the features and plantings.

For Proposals Regarding New Signage, Awnings, or Exterior Lighting Include:

- Scale drawings of proposed signage or awnings showing the overall dimensions, material, graphic designs, typeface, letter size, and colors.
- Scale plan, photograph, or elevation drawing showing the location of the proposed awning or sign.
- Scale detail drawing showing the proposed method of attaching the new awning, sign, or proposed exterior lighting.
- The wattage, color temperature (K/Kelvin), and specifications of the proposed lighting, and a picture of the lighting fixture.
- Include this information in your Plan Set or Presentation/Briefing Package.

Photographs

- Include in your Plan Set or Presentation/Briefing Package, color photographs of any existing features of the building, site, or object proposed to be altered, and photographs showing the context of those features such as the building facade where they are located. The photographs must clearly show these features.
- Label all photographs to explain what is shown.
- If you do not have a Plan Set or Presentation/Briefing Package, assemble your photographs into one PDF file. Do not upload individual image files.

Proposed Materials, Colors and/or Finish Samples

- Include in your Plan Set or Presentation/Briefing Package, labeled images that represent the proposed materials, colors, and/or finish samples. If the proposal includes new finishes or paint, provide a labeled elevation drawing or a photograph showing the locations of proposed new finishes or paint. Provide similar labeled drawings or photographs for proposed signs, awnings, etc.
- It is preferable to photograph the new physical samples together with the existing materials, finishes, and colors at the property. It is also helpful to see new exterior materials photographed in sun and shadow, and new interior materials photographed under similar interior lighting or in daylight.
- Historic Preservation staff will follow up with the applicant if a physical sample needs to be submitted, in addition to images or photographs.
- If you do not have a Plan Set or Presentation/Briefing Package, assemble your images or photographs into one PDF file. Do not upload individual image files.

Survey of Existing Conditions

- For small projects, a Survey of Existing Conditions may fit well into the Plan Set or Presentation/Briefing Package. For large or complex projects, it may be preferable for this PDF to be uploaded separately.
- A survey can take different forms that include a narrative report, drawings, photographs, etc. Examples include:
 - Window and door conditions
 - Existing tree conditions or ISA Certified Arborist Report
 - Information needed for context and comparison to the proposed new work i.e. existing building lighting or hardware

Statement of Property Owner Consent

- Complete the Department of Neighborhoods [Statement of Property Owner Authorization](#) form.
- Fill in all of the fields and have it signed by both the Property Owner and the Applicant.
- For the purposes of your application, the “Property Owner” is the owner of the building, structure, or site; not the owner of a business.
- You will upload this document separately from the other pieces of your application.

Construction Value

- This is for the project scope included in the Certificate of Approval application. This may be less than the overall project cost.
- The staff will calculate the application fee during their review and invoice it in the record within the Seattle Services Portal. The applicant will be notified.
- See fee and payment information below.

USE APPLICATION - REQUIRED DOCUMENTS AND GUIDANCE

Identify which of these apply to your application:

- New business
- Change of use for existing business
- Expansion of use
- Temporary use
- Change of ownership for existing business (FOR PIKE PLACE MARKET ONLY)
- Change of location
- Increase business area (square footage)
- Increase/decrease commercial area/areas not open to the public
- Street use/right of way
- Other

Current use/vacancy information, if applicable:

- Provide a written description of the current use.

Written description of proposed use:

- Provide a complete written description of the merchandise or service to be provided. The description should include any proposed use, change of use, expansion of use, change of ownership (if applicable) or location, increase, or decrease in business area.

Proposed business hours (FOR PIKE PLACE MARKET ONLY):

- Provide the business hours using 24-hour clock.

Site plan showing location of business:

- Provide a site plan showing the location of the business in relation to surrounding streets, rights-of-way, and other significant or relevant features.

Floor plan showing layout of business:

- A floor plan showing the existing features and a floor plan showing the proposed new features or changes.

Written description of ownership interest and role in the business operation (FOR PIKE PLACE MARKET ONLY):

- List all existing owners and their roles in the business operation.
- Describe the type of proposed ownership of the business (sole-proprietor, LLC, corporation, etc.).
- What percentage in the corporation, LLC, etc. does each owner own? Provide a copy of documentation listing all proposed owners and the percentages they own, such as corporation/LLC formation documents or an Annual Report. Note: Sole proprietors do not need to submit this documentation.
- Describe any financial affiliations of all the prospective owners have an existing business or businesses, including any retail locations. If there are no affiliations, write “none.”
- State specifically the role of each owner in the operation of the business, including which owner(s) will be onsite regularly at the business.

Statement of Property Owner Consent

- Complete the Department of Neighborhoods [Statement of Property Owner Consent](#) Form.
- Fill in all of the fields and have it signed by both the Property Owner and the Applicant.
- For the purposes of your application, the “Property Owner” is the owner of the building, structure, or site; not the owner of a business.

Fee

- See fee information below.

FEE INFORMATION

SMC 22.900G.010 requires that an application fee be charged for each review for a Certificate of Approval. The fee is determined by the dollar value of the proposed construction.

Design Application

\$0 - 1,500 of construction costs \$25.00
 Each additional \$5,000 of costs..... \$10.00
 Maximum fee per review \$5,000.00*

Use Application..... \$25.00
 Street Use Application..... \$25.00

*Except that the maximum fee for a Certificate of Approval for new construction projects shall be \$25,000; except projects including housing financed, in whole or in part, by public funding; or projects that elect the MHA performance option according to Sections 23.58B.050 or 23.58C.050.

PAYMENT INFORMATION

- After the staff has calculated and invoiced the fee, the applicant, will be notified and can pay via credit card in the Seattle Services Portal.
- You cannot pay via an existing account with the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI).
- You may pay via check and should contact the relevant board or commission coordinator. Please note that payment by check may take several days due to mailing and processing time.
- City Departments can pay via interdepartmental transfer of funds and should contact the relevant board or commission coordinator.

REFERENCES

You can find more specifics in the [Seattle Municipal Code](#). To search, copy an SMC code number below, use the navigation bar on the left-hand side of the page, or the SEARCH TOOL, to go to the full code citation for each topic:

DETERMINATION OF APPLICATION COMPLETENESS

- City Landmarks – SMC 25.12.680
- Ballard Avenue Landmark District – SMC 25.16.080
- Columbia City Landmark District – SMC 25.20.080
- Fort Lawton Landmark District – SMC 25.21.080
- Harvard-Belmont Landmark District – SMC 25.22.100
- Pike Place Market Historical District – SMC 25.24.060
- Sand Point Naval Air Station Landmark District – SMC 25.30.080
- International Special Review District – SMC 23.66.030
- Pioneer Square Preservation District – SMC 23.66.030

PRELIMINARY CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL*

- City Landmarks – SMC 25.12.680
- Ballard Avenue Landmark District – SMC 25.16.080
- Columbia City Landmark District – SMC 25.20.080
- Fort Lawton Landmark District – SMC 25.21.080
- Harvard-Belmont Landmark District – SMC 25.22.100
- Pike Place Market Historical District – SMC 25.24.060
- Sand Point Naval Air Station Landmark District – SMC 25.30.080
- International Special Review District – SMC 23.66.030
- Pioneer Square Preservation District – SMC 23.66.030

*Seeking a Preliminary Certificate of Approval is atypical, and at the discretion of the staff. If you think a Preliminary Certificate of Approval is needed for your project, contact the relevant board/commission coordinator before submitting in the Seattle Services Portal.

EXPIRATION OF CERTIFICATES

- City Landmarks – SMC 25.12.680
- Ballard Avenue Landmark District – SMC 25.16.100
- Columbia City Landmark District – SMC 25.20.100
- Fort Lawton Landmark District - SMC 25.21.080
- Harvard-Belmont Landmark District – SMC 25.22.100
- Pike Place Market Historical District – SMC 25.24.070
- Sand Point Naval Air Station Landmark District – SMC 25.30.080
- International Special Review District – SMC 23.66.030
- Pioneer Square Preservation District – SMC 23.66.030

APPEAL PROCEDURE

- City Landmarks – SMC 25.12.740
- Ballard Avenue Landmark District – SMC 25.16.110
- Columbia City Landmark District – SMC 25.20.110
- Fort Lawton Landmark District – SMC 25.21.130
- Harvard-Belmont Landmark District – SMC 25.22.130
- Pike Place Market Historical District – SMC 25.24.080
- Sand Point Naval Air Station Landmark District – SMC 25.30.110
- International Special Review District – SMC 23.66.030
- Pioneer Square Preservation District – SMC 23.66.030

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