PERMITS AND PROCEDURES

What is a Certificate of Appropriateness?

A Certificate of Appropriateness is a permit to physically alter exterior surfaces and areas within the Historic District. A Certificate of Appropriateness may be issued when it has been determined that the proposed improvements are appropriate to and compatible with the historic character of the District. It must be obtained prior to beginning to install the improvement even if a building permit is not required. The physical improvements must comply with the terms of the Certificate of Appropriateness. If construction starts without the necessary Certificate of Appropriateness (minor normal maintenance and interior work are exempt), then the City may require that the work be halted until and unless a Certificate of Appropriateness is obtained to cover the work.

When is a Certificate of Appropriateness Required?

Generally, a Certificate of Appropriateness is required for exterior changes to existing structures, and all new construction, including buildings, walls, paving, and fencing. Minor normal maintenance does not require a Certificate of Appropriateness. This section explains more specific categories of improvements and review procedures.

Applications for a Certificate of Appropriateness may be obtained from City of Oxford Planning and Zoning Office located at City Hall, 300 Williamsboro Street. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM. For additional information call (919) 603-1117 or send an email to planning@oxfordnc.org.

A Certificate of Appropriateness is NOT needed for the following:

Ordinary maintenance and repair:

- painting in colors identical those existing on the structure, when the work is not connected with alteration or new construction
- interior work with no exterior changes
- planting of shrubs, trees, flowers, lawn and vegetables
- replacement of window glass with the same size and color caulking, weather-stripping
- installation of window air-conditioning units or antennas on the rear or side of the building so long as they are not visible from the street
- repairs to paving, fences, and walls with matching materials
- replacement of twenty (20) square feet or less of siding, shingles, porch flooring, railing, etc. with materials matching the existing materials

The Minor Works Committee of the Commission may issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the following MINOR WORKS:

- renewal of an expired Certificate with no change in circumstances
- street, sidewalk, or utility work which does not change the street-scape appearance
- repairs in excess of twenty (20) square feet with new materials, color and details matching the existing materials

- removal of artificial siding when the original siding will be retained
- installation of metal foundation vents and foundation access doors which cannot be seen from the public street
- installation of soffit vents, roof vents, and gable end vents
- installation of heating and air-conditioning units which cannot be seen from the street
- small identification signs or historic markers
- installation of storm windows and doors of full view type with painted or baked enamel finish which complement or match the structure
- painting previously painted surfaces in a color and paint scheme that is appropriate to the building's architectural style and era
- minor work where there is no change in color, materials or appearance of the structure and where the visual character of the structure is not changed; i.e., replacement of a deteriorated front porch floor when new material matches the existing material
- installation of temporary structures for handicapped access
- installation of window awnings

Applications for minor work Certificate of Appropriateness should be filed with the Planning and Zoning Department. If the application complies with the above-listed criteria, a Certificate of Appropriateness may be issued by the Minor Works Committee of the Commission. No application shall be denied unless it has been reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Applications for MAJOR WORK shall be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission. Major work includes, but is not limited to, the following categories:

- sandblasting of existing masonry
- installation of storm windows or storm doors not defined as minor work
- installation of satellite dishes
- demolition of a structure
- moving of a structures
- advertising signs
- new accessory buildings
- parking lots
- changes from the existing architectural details in color, material or design
- changes to roof line or material
- fences, walls, paving, pools, tennis courts, etc.
- installation of artificial siding
- replacement of windows or doors with a change in design or materials
- any exterior alteration not provided for under minor work, minor normal maintenance
- installation of permanent structures for handicapped access
- new construction

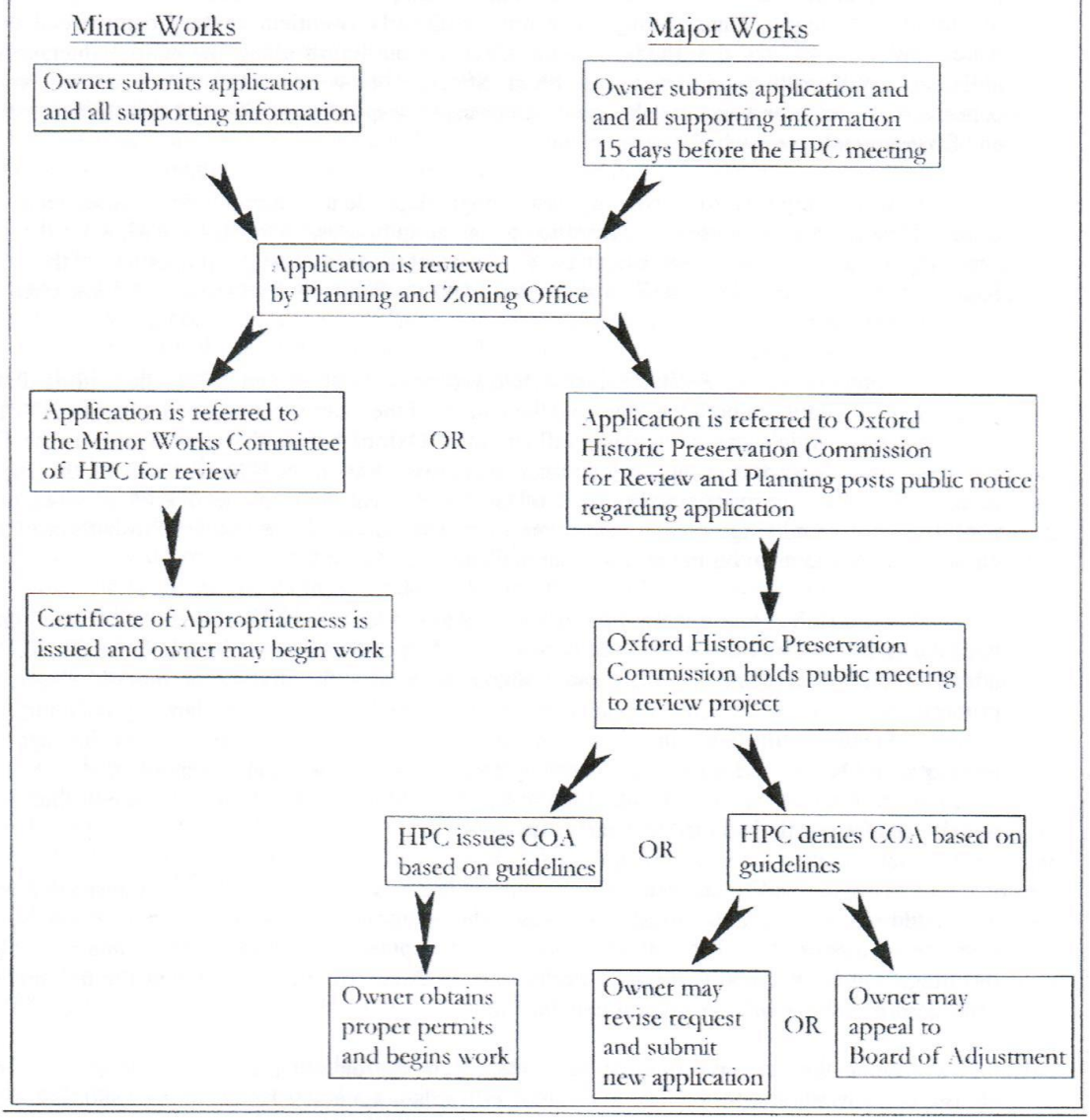
Procedure for Certificate of Appropriateness for MAJOR WORK

FILING: The filing deadline for applications for a Certificate of Appropriateness for Major Work is fifteen (15) days before the date of the next meeting of the Commission. A complete application with plans must be submitted to the Planning and Zoning Department by the deadline in order for the request to be reviewed at their regular quarterly meeting or at a special meeting if deemed necessary or advisable. Prior to issuance or denial of a Certificate of Appropriateness the Commission will give public notice within the published meeting notice(s) the addresses of proposed major works to be considered. The applicant and other potentially affected property owners shall have an opportunity to be heard. In cases where the Commission deems it necessary, it may hold a public hearing concerning the application. All meetings of the Commission shall be open to the public.

REVIEW: The regular quarterly meetings of the Historic Preservation Commission are held at 6:00 PM on the third Thursday of the months of January, April, July and October, or as required and as called by the chairman or in his/her absence by the vice chairman, in City Hall and is open to the public. Applicants are requested to attend the meeting. The Commission must take action on all complete applications within forty-five (45) days of the filing date unless an extension has been agreed upon by the applicant. If no action is taken within forty-five (45) days of the filing date of a complete application, then the application shall be deemed approved. The Commission may approve, approve with conditions, or deny an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

DENIAL: If the Commission denies an application, it must state the reasons in writing for the minutes and give the applicant a copy. If an application is denied, it may not be resubmitted for review unless there are material changes in the application. The applicant may appeal the action of the Commission to the City of Oxford Board of Adjustment within forty-five (45) days of the action by the Historic Preservation Commission.

COMPLIANCE: The operations authorized by the Certificate of Appropriateness must begin within six (6) months of its approval or the Certificate shall be void. All improvements must comply with the terms of the Certificate of Appropriateness. If the work on the improvements is discontinued for a period of six (6) months, the Certificate of Appropriateness is void.

The Certificate of Appropriateness Process

1. Historic Property Owner Plans Project
2. Owner Contacts Planning and Zoning Office, City Hall
3. Project is classified either as Minor Works or Major Works