



# CITY OF FALL RIVER HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ONE GOVERNMENT CENTER  
FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS 02722

## Policy for Holding Landmark Designation Study Hearings

Whereas the preservation and protection of significant buildings is among the purposes of the demolition delay ordinance, Division 3 of Chapter 38, and whereas one means of protection available is that of a landmark designation, it is therefore the policy of the Fall River Historical Commission that in demolition review cases where a building has been determined by the Commission to be a preferably preserved significant building or is a significant structure listed in the Fall River Register of Significant Structures, as defined in Division 2 of Chapter 38 and the Commission has not theretofore waived the remainder of the delay, the staff shall advertise a public hearing on the matter of whether to initiate a landmark designation study of the building and its site, per the procedures of Division 3 of Chapter 38, to occur at the fifth monthly Commission meeting following a decision of the Commission to find the building a preferably preserved significant building listed on the Fall River Register of Significant Structures and to commence a demolition delay period.

### 38.180 - Designation procedures.

- A. The Historical Commission by majority vote may recommend for designation as a landmark any property within the City being or containing a place, structure, feature or object which it determines to be either (1) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth or (2) historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of construction or association with a famous architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of structures; may recommend for designation as a neighborhood conservation district any area within the City containing places and structures which it determines are of importance to the architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City, and which considered together cause such area to constitute a distinctive neighborhood or to have a distinctive character in terms of its exterior features; and may recommend amendments to any designation of landmark or neighborhood conservation district theretofore made.
- B. Prior to the recommendation of designation or amendment of designation of any landmark or neighborhood conservation district an investigation and report on the historical, architectural and other relevant significance thereof shall be made. The report shall recommend the boundaries of any proposed landmark or neighborhood conservation district and shall recommend for incorporation in the order of the City Council designating each landmark or neighborhood conservation district general and/or specific standards and appropriate criteria consistent with the purposes of this article and the provisions of Section 38.190 of this article that are to be applied in making any determination, with respect to the designated landmark or within the designated neighborhood conservation district.



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- C. In the case of a landmark, the report shall be prepared by the Historical Commission. In the case of a neighborhood conservation district, the report shall be prepared by a study committee consisting of three members or alternates of the Historical Commission and four persons appointed by the City Manager, including at least one person who resides in the district under consideration, at least one person who owns property in the district under consideration, and one person who owns property or resides elsewhere in the City and has demonstrated knowledge and concern for conservation and enhancement of those exterior features of the City which are important to its distinctive character.
- D. Any ten registered voters of the City may petition that the Historical Commission initiate, or the Historical Commission on its own may initiate, the process of designating a landmark or neighborhood conservation district or amending or rescinding any such designation theretofore made. The Commission shall within forty-five days following the filing of such request or petition hold a preliminary hearing and arrange for the preparation of a report and, if required, request the appointment of a study committee. The Historical Commission shall not reconsider a proposed designation, amendment or rescission of designation within one year of its previous hearing thereon, unless two-thirds of all its members vote to do so. No later than forty-five days after the transmittal of a report to the Commission pertaining to a proposed designation, the Commission shall hold a public hearing. The Commission shall give not less than fourteen days' notice of such public hearing by publication in a newspaper of general circulation in the City and by mailing notice thereof to the owner of the proposed landmark and to every owner abutting the proposed landmark or within the proposed neighborhood conservation district, each such owner to be determined from the then current records of the Assessing Department, and to the Mayor, the Planning Board and the City Clerk.
- E. Prior to the public hearing, the Commission shall transmit copies of the report to the Planning Board for its consideration and recommendations.
- F. The recommendation of the Historical Commission with regard to any designation, amendment or rescission shall be transmitted to the Mayor and to the City Clerk with a copy of the approved designation report. Designation of a landmark or a neighborhood conservation district or amendment or rescission of designation shall be by order of the City Council. In the case of a designation, the order shall include a statement of the reasons for such designation and a statement of standards which the Historical Commission or neighborhood conservation district commission is to apply under Sections 38.190 of this article.
- G. No designation, amendment or rescission of designation shall become effective until a map setting forth the boundaries of the landmark or neighborhood conservation district or change in the boundaries thereof, has been filed with the City Council and has been recorded with the Registry of Deeds for the Fall River District Registry of Deeds in Bristol County.
- H. If the order establishing or amending a neighborhood conservation district contains provisions for both regulatory and educational/incentive programs, the regulatory provisions of the order



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shall not be effective unless and until the educational/incentive provisions of the order are funded.

- I. Following acceptance of a designation petition by the Historical Commission, no application for a building permit for new construction or alterations on the premises of a property being considered for designation shall be granted until reviewed by the Commission as though the property were designated as a landmark or a neighborhood conservation district under this Article III. Beginning with the acceptance of a designation petition and until (a) the Historical Commission makes a negative recommendation on a proposed designation, (b) the City Council determines not to enact the proposed designation, or (c) one year has elapsed, whichever is less, the Commission shall review all proposed construction, demolition, or alteration that affects the exterior architectural features, other than color, of the structures on the premises of a proposed landmark or within a proposed neighborhood conservation district.
- J. Notwithstanding the prior provisions of this section 38.180, a neighborhood conservation district previously established by order of the City Council, in accordance with this section, which order instructs that there be a review of the activities of the neighborhood conservation district commission established pursuant to that order, following one or more public hearings by such neighborhood conservation district commission and by the Historical Commission, and a report to the City Council by such commissions containing a summary of testimony at such hearings and recommendations by such commissions for amendments to the powers, responsibilities and procedures of such neighborhood conservation district commission (including amendments to the boundaries of the affected neighborhood conservation district), may be amended by the City Council, in a manner consistent with the recommendations of such report, or be rescinded without the necessity of the appointment of a new study committee or of a de novo study process.

## 38.190 - Review procedures.

- A. Except as the order designating or amending a landmark or neighborhood conservation district may otherwise provide in accordance with this article, the Historical Commission or neighborhood conservation district commission having jurisdiction shall review all construction, demolition or alteration that affects the exterior architectural features, other than color, of any landmark or within any neighborhood conservation district.
- B. The order designating or amending a landmark or neighborhood conservation district may provide that the authority of the Historical Commission or neighborhood conservation district commission having jurisdiction shall not extend to the review of one or more of the following categories of structures or exterior architectural features of the landmark or within the neighborhood conservation district in which event the structures or exterior architectural features so excluded may be constructed or altered without review by the Commission:



# CITY OF FALL RIVER HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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1. The application of exterior wall material in a manner that does not require the removal or enclosure of any cornice, fascia, soffit, bay, porch, hood, window or door casing, or any other protruding decorative element;
  2. Alternations to the exterior of existing structures that do not increase or diminish the size and location of windows and doors, cause the removal of any bay, porch, hood, window or door casing or any other protruding decorative element, or alter the appearance of a roof;
  3. The exterior appearance of a new structure that does not require a variance or special permit under the zoning ordinance then in effect;
  4. Signs, temporary structures, lawn statuary, or recreational equipment, subject to such conditions as to duration of use, dimension, location, lighting, removal and similar matters as the Commission may reasonably specify;
  5. Terraces, walks, driveways, sidewalks and similar structures substantially at grade level;
  6. Walls and fences;
  7. Storm doors and windows, screens, window air conditioners, lighting fixtures, antennae, trelliswork and similar appurtenances.
- C. The Historical Commission or a neighborhood conservation district commission may determine from time to time after a public hearing that certain categories of exterior architectural features or structures, including, without limitation, any of those enumerated in this section, if the provisions of the applicable order do not limit the authority of such commission with respect thereto, may be constructed or altered without review by such commission without causing substantial derogation from the intent and purposes of this article.
- D. If the order establishing or amending a neighborhood conservation district provides, the determination of a neighborhood conservation district commission shall be binding only with regard to applications to construct a new building, to demolish an existing structure if a demolition permit is required, to construct a parking lot as a principal use, and to construct an addition to an existing structure that would increase its gross floor area, and in all other cases the determinations of a commission shall be advisory only and not binding on an applicant. In no case shall a building permit be issued until the commission has made a determination under the applicable provisions of this article.

-Revised on October 20, 2015  
By the Fall River Historical Commission.



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