

How to Apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness

Who Needs to Apply?

The following types of improvements require a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA):

- All new construction of buildings or structures.
- All exterior building improvements requiring a building permit.
- All sign changes for which a conditional use permit is not required but which requires a building permit (Overlay District standards are applicable only to the changed element or improvement).
- Renovations for which a conditional use permit is required under the provisions of the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code (UCC), as in effect at the time of the renovation (all applicable standards apply).
- All new or reconstructed parking areas with five or more spaces.
- Demolition of any structure listed or deemed eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Minor repairs that do not change the design, materials, or general appearance of a structure within the Overlay District do not require a COA. In some cases, the City's Building Code Official (BCO) shall review and approve repair and maintenance work and waive the COA requirement. When the need for a COA is unclear, city staff may solicit comments and recommendations from the Review Committee in order to make a determination. Refer to the Downtown Overlay District Ordinance for examples of repairs that do not need a COA.

A COA is required. How do I Apply?

- 1) Pre-application meeting: The building owner or developer looking to make improvements is encouraged to meet with the Downtown Overlay District Review Committee prior to submission of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Application. The intent of this meeting is to discuss early and informally the purpose and effect of the Ordinance and the criteria and standards contained herein. The applicant is encouraged to bring photographs of existing building features and examples of their proposed improvements. To arrange a pre-application meeting, contact Donna Palermo at 455-1509 or dpalermo@hazletonchamber.org.
- 2) A Certificate of Appropriateness Application shall be submitted to the Planning Commission, in writing, and accompanied by a sketch plan and elevation (profile) drawing of the proposed improvements that convey proposed structural modifications, paint colors, materials and exterior finishes, sign placement, and awning placement (as appropriate). In addition, current photographs of the existing building and adjacent buildings should be provided. In the case where new signs and awnings are proposed, the applicant will be required to provide additional details concerning the sign and/or awning materials, colors, and lettering. Applications should refer to the Downtown Overlay District Ordinance for detailed submission requirements.

My COA Application has been submitted. How is it reviewed, and when will I know if it is approved?

- 1) After a COA Application is received, the Planning Commission will forward the application to the Design Review Committee Chairman, who will determine whether the application is complete. If incomplete, the Design Review Committee Chairman shall advise the applicant within 10 business days if any additional information is necessary or required. The applicant shall have 5 business days to submit the missing information. Failure to submit the missing information will result in the application not being placed on the Review Committee's meeting agenda.
- 2) After determining that the COA application is complete, the Design Review Committee Chairman or an assigned agent shall forward the COA application to the Committee three days before the next Committee meeting.

- 3) The applicant shall receive notification of the time and place set for review of the COA application by the Review Committee and shall appear promptly at such stated time and place and shall bring with him/her such other information as are requested by the Review Committee or which the applicant deems to be helpful to a speedy and thorough review. The applicant, his/her agents, or any witnesses called by him/her may be heard at such review.
- 4) The Review Committee has 45 days to review the application and make a recommendation to the Planning Commission to either issue approval, approval subject to conditions, or disapproval. A copy of the Review Committee's decision and findings shall also be forwarded to the applicant.

What do I do if my application is denied?

If an application for a COA is denied, the Planning Commission may authorize the Review Committee to negotiate with the applicant in order to develop a compromise proposal acceptable to both. Refer to the Overlay District Ordinance for specific information regarding denials and the appeal process.