

Demolition of Existing Buildings

Demolition is an irreversible action that results in a permanent loss of material integrity and historic character. The demolition of a single building can negatively impact the context and setting of the adjacent buildings and the district as a whole. Thus, demolition is never congruous with the character and qualities of the historic districts. Further, demolition is inherently unsustainable, resulting in both a loss of embodied energy and an increase of building supplies to local landfills. For these reasons, the demolition of a building within any of Chapel Hill's historic districts is strongly discouraged by the HDC.

The HDC cannot deny a COA for demolition unless the State Historic Preservation Officer has determined that the property has statewide significance. However, statewide enabling legislation gives the Commission the authority to delay demolition of any district property for up to 365 days. The intent of the delay is to ensure that adequate time is provided to fully explore ways to save the threatened property. Property owners are encouraged to work with the Commission in identifying viable alternatives and to maintain the property throughout the process. Failure to maintain a historic property can slowly result in its demolition because such neglect can eventually cause a loss of its structural integrity. The loss of historic properties due to extended neglect negatively affects the entire district and is in direct conflict with the goals of the Town of Chapel Hill in establishing the historic districts. Thus, buildings not in use should be stabilized and weatherized in order to preserve them for future rehabilitation or relocation.

Preservation Considerations and Best Practices

The HDC will carefully weigh any demolition requests to determine if the structure or site in question has special significance and to assess the impact the proposed demolition will have on adjacent properties and the character of the district as a whole. Serious consideration will be given to the following questions to determine whether a 365-day stay on the demolition is warranted:

- What is the contribution of the building to the historic district? Is it significant because of its use, an event, a person, a builder, or an architect? Is it the last or oldest example of a certain building type? Is the building one of a cluster of buildings that are significant as a group?
- What is the condition of the building (foundation, floors, walls, windows, doors, and roofs)? Is it a hazard to public health, safety, and welfare? Have all possible efforts to preserve the building been considered? Could the building be adapted to meet the needs of the property owner? Could the property be sold to someone whose needs it meets? Could the building be saved if moved to another site?
- Would the proposed new use of the site be of greater benefit to the district than the loss of the historic building?

If all possibilities for preservation have been exhausted, documentation of the building and site is required from the property owner. Efforts should be made to salvage or reuse building materials and the site should be stabilized between the demolition and any new construction in order to protect the trees, soil, and any significant site features. Finally, in order to mitigate the effects of a demolition on surrounding properties, applications for demolition must include a proposed site plan illustrating how the site will be altered following demolition.

Standards: Demolition of Existing Buildings

Note: North Carolina Law (NCGS 160.A-400.14.) states that the demolition of buildings and structures within Local Historic Districts requires the prior issuance of a COA. The standards below are designed to follow state law. Further, any project that the HDC determines to include substantial or significant exterior demolition (including the demolition of significant portions of a building) may be subject to the standards for demolition.

1. Consider demolition only when all other preservation alternatives have been exhausted (all alternatives investigated, including structural integrity reports, must be included in the COA). It is not appropriate to demolish a viable structure in order to create an infill construction opportunity.
2. Prior to demolition, document the historic building in its original setting—utilizing photographs, site plans, and building drawings—and record the existing site and building through photographs and/or drawings. Include photographs of interiors, exteriors, architectural elements, and streetscapes to contextualize the setting. Provide a copy of the documentation to both the Chapel Hill Historic District Commission and the State Historic Preservation Office.
3. Salvage or provide the opportunity for preservation organizations and others to salvage reusable building materials and architectural features—including wood flooring, doors, windows, brick and stone, trim, mantels, stair rails and newel posts, and other decorative features—prior to demolition. It is the applicant's responsibility to manage the salvage operation including identification of the salvage company or organization, hiring, contracting, scheduling, supervision, and execution of the salvage operation.
4. Protect adjacent buildings and significant site features such as mature trees from damage during-or as a result of-the demolition.
5. Protect any known or newly identified archaeological resources from any damage during-or as a result of-the demolition.
6. Submit a COA with site plan for the post-removal site stabilization. Clear the site of debris and implement the approved site plan promptly after the demolition.

Relocation of Existing Buildings

A historic building is experienced within the context of its neighborhood, landscaping, and siting. A historic district derives its significance as a collection of buildings and landscapes that tell a particular development story. Moving a historic building compromises the integrity of its context and setting, disconnecting the building from the tangible evidence of its history. It also distorts the historic development pattern of the district.

Moreover, the successful relocation of a historic building is a time-consuming, complex, and expensive process requiring careful investigation and planning in order to minimize the loss of building materials and historic context. Despite the complexities, moving a building within the historic district may be warranted as the alternative of last resort for preventing demolition or if development plans for the area threaten the historic context of the building in its current location and a move will ultimately provide a more compatible setting for the building. If the relocation is deemed to be necessary, careful planning is necessary to ensure that a compatible site is selected, that the building is appropriately sited on the new site, and that the building is secured before, during, and after the move.

Preservation Considerations for Site Selection

Relocating buildings to sites within the same historic district can help to alleviate the disconnect that results when a building is removed from its original location and is thus preferable to moving buildings to sites outside of their respective districts. As with new construction, the building being moved should be compatible with the scale, mass, orientation, and height of existing adjacent buildings on the new site.

Regardless of the location, the selected site should allow for the moved building (or buildings) to be sited with spacing, setback and lot coverage, orientation, and landscaping that are both similar to the original location and compatible with surround structures. This includes replicating the grade of the site, constructing a foundation of similar height, and reconstructing significant site features including foundation plantings, walls, fences, and outbuildings if they contribute to the historic context of the building.

Best Practices for Relocating Buildings

Careful planning is required to property support, transport, and reassemble moved buildings. Once a site has been selected, it is necessary to determine whether the building is structurally sound enough to endure the physical move and to devise a feasible relocation route. A contractor experienced in moving buildings can help identify ways to prevent or minimize damage to the building itself, to the original and new site, and to properties along the route.

Buildings should be moved as a single unit whenever possible. If partial deconstruction is necessary, buildings should be divided into as few pieces as possible. In rare instances, a more thorough deconstruction may be necessary. In these cases, additional considerations should include the following:

- Important architectural features and components of a historic building or structure—trim, windows, doors, wall panels, roof elements, etc.—shall be removed, marked, and securely stored on-site in a storage trailer or off-site in a garage/warehouse/trailer prior to the disassembly of the structure and until needed for reassembly.

- To ensure accurate reassembly, all parts of the building, structure, or element shall be marked as they are systematically separated from the structure. Contrasting colors of paint or carpenter wax crayons should be used to establish a marking code for each component. The markings shall be removable or shall be made on surfaces that will be hidden from view when the structure is reassembled.
- As each component of a historic building is disassembled, the physical condition shall be noted, particularly if it differs from the condition stated in pre-disassembly documentation. When a component is too deteriorated to remove, it shall be carefully documented—with photographs and written notes on its dimensions, finish, texture, color, etc.—to facilitate accurate reproduction.
- Wall panels and roof surfaces shall be protected with rigid materials, such as sheets of plywood, when there is risk of damage during the disassembly/storage/reassembly process.

Property owners are encouraged to work carefully with Town of Chapel Hill planning staff and the Restoration Branch of the State Historic Preservation Office for advice and assistance regarding the relocation of buildings. A COA is required for the relocation of buildings. In reviewing the COA, the Commission will consider the condition and the architectural merits of the historic building and the impact the relocation will have on adjoining properties and the district streetscape. They will also consider the future use of the original site and, if the new site is in a historic district, the impact of the relocated building on the district character.

Standards: Relocation of Existing Buildings

Note: The standards below apply to the removal of the building from the site, the selection of a new site, and the transportation of the building within the historic district. The standards for New Construction, District Setting, and Changes to Existing Buildings apply to the placement of the building on its new site and any modifications to the building that occur as part of its new site and rehabilitation.

The COA application constitutes a written plan detailing the steps and procedures for relocation or reorientation of a historic building. This plan shall outline, step by step, the proposed work to relocate and/or reorient the building to ensure that the least destructive method of moving the building will be employed. As with any exterior change, the COA application shall be completed and approved by the Planning Department and HDC prior to any physical work being done.

1. Consider relocation only when all other on-site preservation alternatives have been exhausted (all alternatives investigated must be included in the COA).
2. Prior to relocation, undertake a professional structural assessment of the building to determine whether it is structurally sound enough to withstand the move.
3. Prior to relocation, document the historic building in its original setting and record the existing site conditions through photographs. Provide a copy of the documentation to both the Chapel Hill Historic District Commission and the State Historic Preservation Office.
4. Select a new site that is compatible with the original site in visual character and historical association, choosing a site within the same historic district when possible.
 - Select a site that will provide a similar setting in terms of setback and lot coverage, spacing, orientation, landscaping, and rhythm with neighboring properties.
 - The relocated building shall be sited in a position similar to its historic orientation and shall maintain its relationship with the street through a similar setback.
 - Relocating a historic structure to the rear of a parcel to accommodate a new building in front of it is not appropriate.
5. Ensure that the structure is secured and protected from adverse weather conditions, water infiltration, and vandalism before, during, and after the move.
6. Employ a professional house-moving contractor to move the building as a single unit and to protect the historic building from damage during and after the move by taking the following recognized preservation methods:
 - Take all necessary precautions to prevent damage to the structure during the moving process by adding bracing, strapping, and by temporarily infilling door and window openings for structural rigidity. These measures can mitigate damage caused by shifting load bearing points, vibration, and lateral shifting during the move.
 - Coordinate with the Town of Chapel Hill and local utilities when planning a route for the move.
7. If it is not possible to move the building as a single unit, partial disassembly may be necessary. Total disassembly of building components shall be avoided except under extreme situations and in all cases, structures shall be disassembled in the largest workable pieces possible. When disassembly/reassembly must be undertaken, it shall be done using the following recognized

preservation methods:

- Measured drawings and thorough photographic documentation of the structure or element to be disassembled/reassembled shall be completed.
- Written plans detailing the disassembly and reassembly steps and procedures shall be completed and approved by the Planning Department and the process of disassembly shall be recorded through photos and/or video.

8. Protect significant site features—including other buildings and structures, man-made features, archaeological sites, mature trees and plantings, topography, and other natural features—on the original site, along the relocation route, and on the new site from damage during or as a result of the move.

9. If relocating a building within the historic district, review the compatibility of its proposed siting according to the standards for New Construction.

10. If relocating a building within the historic district, submit a COA for any related proposed site modifications—including site features, plantings, driveways, walkways, and accessory buildings.

11. Submit a COA with site plan for the post-removal site stabilization. Clear the site of debris and implement the approved site plan promptly after the relocation.