

LEESBURG OLD & HISTORIC DISTRICT



New Owner Guide

www.leesburgva.gov/preservation

WELCOME

Welcome to Leesburg's Old & Historic District (OHD)! Established in 1963, ours is the oldest historic district in Loudoun County and one of the earliest in Virginia. For more than sixty years, with the support of property owners like you, the district has safeguarded this unique collection of architectural and heritage resources in the historic core of Leesburg. The Town of Leesburg is committed to the preservation of these resources by facilitating sensitive change, while also ensuring the preservation of the authenticity, charm, and character which appeals to residents and visitors alike.

While the OHD, also known as the "H-1," is a locally designated zoning overlay, a portion of the historic core is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register listing is honorary and educational, without regulatory obligations, so the continued care and preservation of properties within the OHD is upheld by the dedication of property owners, staff, and the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) to ensure the district's protection and continuity.

Among the most important things to know about your new property is that applications are required for exterior alterations to properties within the locally designated H-1 district. The purpose of this welcome guide is to help introduce new property owners to the historic district and explain our general processes for review.

For further information about your property, the district, architectural review requirements or any other inquiries regarding the BAR, Old and Historic District, or property construction projects, please visit our website at www.leesburgva.gov/preservation or contact someone on our staff. I am excited to collaborate with you in the future and, on behalf of the BAR, extend a warm welcome to Historic Leesburg.

Sincerely,



Lauren E. Murphy, Preservation Manager



MEET YOUR TEAM



Lauren Murphy

Preservation Manager

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Lauren manages the preservation division and has been with the Town of Leesburg since 2018. Prior to joining the Town staff, Lauren held various preservation and urban design roles in historic and architecturally diverse jurisdictions throughout northern Virginia.

Heather Schmidt

Senior Planner - Preservation

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Heather manages enforcement cases and inspections throughout the Old & Historic District and works with applicants throughout the COA review process. Prior to joining the Town of Leesburg in 2023, Heather held preservation roles in federal and local government agencies.



Debi Parry

Planner - Preservation

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Debi joined the Town of Leesburg in 2001 and manages administrative reviews as well as legislative reviews for the division. She is also the primary point of contact for preservation related information and outreach.

PRESERVATION MATTERS

Before understanding our processes, it's important to understand “**why preservation matters?**”

The easiest answer is best found in the feeling you get walking through the streets of historic Leesburg - the character filled streets, the buildings which tell fascinating stories, and the sense of history you feel walking around the oldest part of town. But there are also more tangible reasons to help support historic preservation in your community:

Character - Character helps one to experience and understand the identity of a particular place and how it is different from others. Character can also be captured in the architectural styles, patterns of development, and details such as the workmanship and quality materials used to construct buildings. Put together, this establishes a certain feel which sets a place such as Leesburg apart from other historic places.

Education - Retaining the appearance and character of historic structures is an important element to telling the story of a particular place. When was the area settled? Was it an area of commerce or more rural in character? Preserving historic structures preserves the stories of those who came before us and helps one to understand the history and significance of a particular location.

Economic Development - Well preserved historic buildings and districts provide a unique and vibrant location to live, work, and play. These preservation efforts enhance real estate values and foster local business, keeping downtowns viable. Further, heritage tourism is an important economic driver in communities with well-preserved character. Some properties can also qualify for federal or state tax credits.

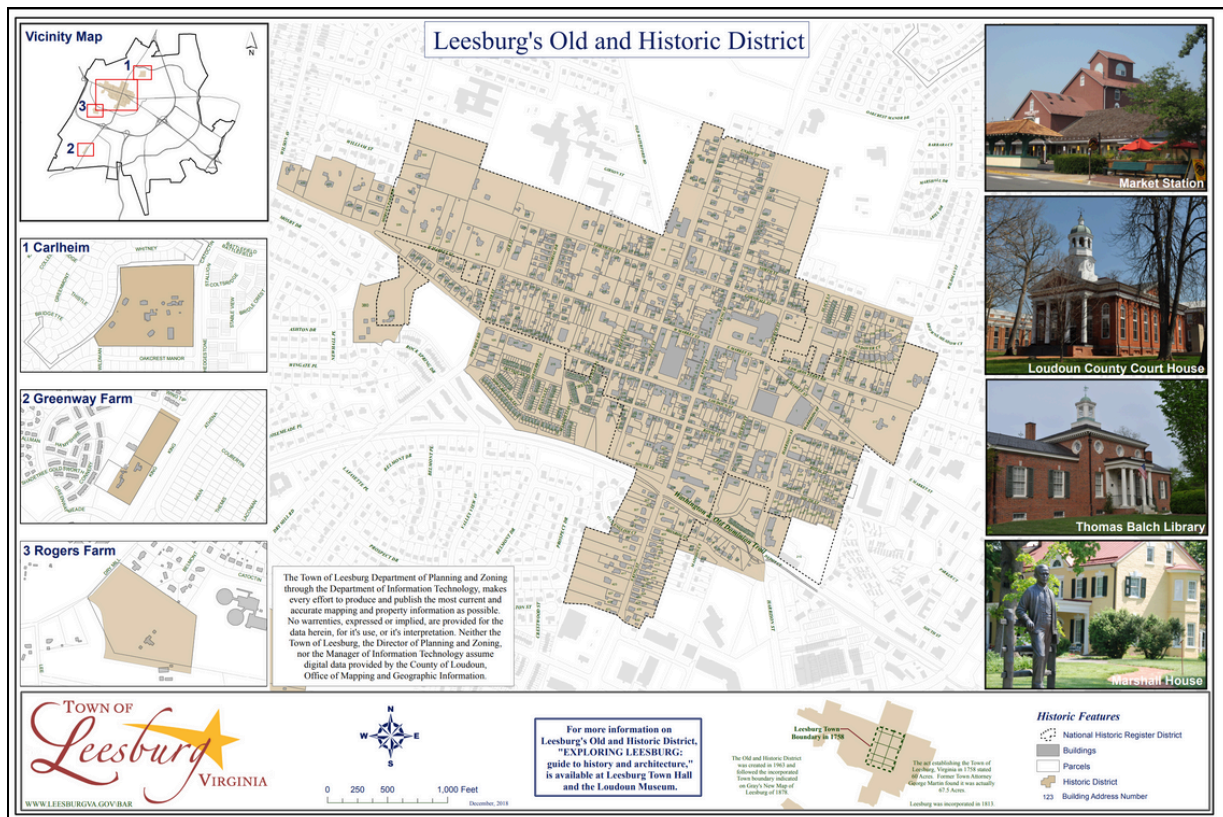
Sustainability - Historic structures were constructed with materials and a level of craftsmanship that is rarely found today. These structures were built to last hundreds of years and the adaptive reuse of historic buildings, not only preserves the history of the Town but also reduces construction and industrial waste, saving your wallet and the environment.

“Old places are where our lives, memories, and stories began. They connect us to the past, anchor us to the present, and lead us into the future.” - National Trust for Historic Places

LEESBURG OLD & HISTORIC DISTRICT

In 1757, the Assembly of Virginia selected a small settlement at the crossroads of Carolina Road (King Street) and Potomac Ridge Road (Market Street) as the location for the Loudoun County courthouse. The land was owned by Nicolas Minor who hired John Hough to survey and plat his 60 acres into 70 lots, creating a town which he named George Town. The name was changed to Leesburg the following year in honor of the Lee family. In September 1758, an Act of the Assembly established the Town of Leesburg, although the Town was not incorporated until 1813.

Leesburg stood witness to history throughout the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, two World Wars, and modern events of the 20th century like the Civil Rights Movement. Following World War II, Leesburg grew at a rapid pace and became increasingly integrated into the greater Washington area. This pace of change concerned residents who sought to retain Leesburg's historic character. Following the demolition of two iconic structures in the downtown, the Leesburg Inn and the Leesburg Opera House, and concerns regarding encroaching development, Town residents petitioned the Council to establish the Old and Historic District in 1963. Over 60 years and going strong, the Town remains committed to the identification, documentation, and preservation of its historic resources. [View the Old & Historic District map online](#)



WHAT IS A COA ?

The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application process is the primary way for the Town to ensure the continued preservation of the Old & Historic District by serving as a "checkpoint" for overseeing sensitive change within the district. [Section 3.10](#) of the Zoning Ordinance outlines the requirements and procedures for COA review in the OHD while [Section 7.5](#) also outlines specific information about the process.

Projects that need a COA include, but are not limited to:

- Building a new structure (primary or accessory)
- Making additions to an existing structure
- Changing or replacing materials (doors, siding, windows, roofs, etc.)
- Demolishing any portion of a structure
- Constructing features like patios, walkways, lighting, fences, or driveways
- Paint color changes
- Business signs



What is "IN-KIND?"

In-kind repairs or replacement in-kind means work conducted with the same material as existing in size, dimension, color, quality, and design. In-kind replacement is a standard approach to retain as much historic material as possible and ensure the character of the structure is preserved.

The Zoning Ordinance allows for staff review and approval of minor projects that comply with the Guidelines while other projects require a public hearing and full BAR review. Specific details about these projects are outlined in section 3.10 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Projects Exempt from BAR or Staff Review:

Some projects do not require review by the BAR or staff. These include, but are not limited to:

- Routine maintenance or in-kind repairs necessary to maintain and preserve structures
- Repainting a previously painted structure or surface (changes in color require a COA)
- Patio furniture, play equipment, or holiday decorations
- Using natural plantings or landscaping materials like mulch
- Interior modifications which do not alter the external appearance

Note: Failure to obtain a COA prior to commencement of work could result in a zoning violation, fines, or court fees. In all cases it is best to check with Preservation staff prior to beginning a project.



OHD GUIDELINES

Historic District Guidelines

The OHD Design Guidelines are used by property owners, staff and the BAR to help review the appropriateness of changes and construction projects in the OHD.

The Guidelines are organized by chapter to address different types of projects within the District. Within the Guidelines, “Existing (Ext.) Buildings” refers to contributing structures while non-contributing structures are evaluated using the Guidelines for “New Construction”:

[Introduction](#)

[Site Design](#)

[Ext. Buildings -
Style & Design](#)

[Ext. Buildings -
Materials](#)

[Additions & New
Construction](#)

[Demolition &
Relocation](#)

[Maintenance &
Rehabilitation](#)

[Signs](#)

The Guidelines are available online at www.leesburgva.gov/preservation with selected chapters linked above. Preservation Division staff are available to help interpret or explain how these Guidelines may relate to your specific project or needs.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

Our Preservation Division is here to help you with your OHD questions. To review your application, discuss the COA process or answer your general questions. Please visit our office or make an appointment with a member of our team, especially if you are requesting an "on the spot" review of project plans or elevations.

Our office is located at 222 Catocin Circle SE, Suite 200 (Monday-Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm)

COA HELPFUL HINTS



www.leesburgva.gov/preservation

01

File A COA Before You Start Work

If your property is located in the Old and Historic District,, a COA is required for any exterior alterations, signs, and site improvements.

02

We're Here To Help

If you have questions regarding whether a COA is needed for your project or what submission materials are required, please call us. We are happy to help.

03

Minimum Submission Checklist

The COA minimum submission checklist requirements are available on our webpage www.leesburgva.gov/preservation Ensure all items are included in your submission.

04

Meeting Dates & Deadlines

The BAR adopts a meeting calendar each year which includes all submission deadlines and meeting dates. Consult this resource when setting your project timeline. Applications must be received by the deadline to ensure scheduling.

05

Other Approvals May Be Needed

After receiving your COA, other approvals may be needed from zoning, engineering, or even Loudoun County Building & Development. Any changes resulting from those permits should be discussed with the preservation team as new approvals may be required.

06

The Final Project Must Match the COA Approval

It is your responsibility to ensure that your final project matches your approved COA. Staff will inspect the property to ensure compliance and if deviations are noted, new approvals may be required.

Submitting a COA

All COA applications are submitted to the Department of Community Development electronically through our [eTRAKiT](#) system. Applicants are encouraged to contact preservation staff to determine which process (administrative or BAR review) is appropriate before submitting to discuss process and compatibility.

Administrative Review

Preservation Division staff review administrative applications as they are submitted. There is no deadline for submission and no public hearing notice requirements. Administrative COAs are typically reviewed by staff within a week. There is no fee for administrative actions (except for sign reviews). Applications typically require:

- **Statement of Justification outlining the project and consistency with the Guidelines**
- **Project sketch/elevations**
- **Photos of existing conditions**
- **Property plat**
- **List of building materials**
- **Other items dependent on project type**

Please Note:

Proposals which do not meet the Guidelines will automatically be referred to the BAR for review at the next available public hearing.



Common Admin Review Projects:

- Paint color change
- In-kind material replacement
- Most signs
- Fences
- Low garden walls under 24" tall
- Sheds under 100 sq. ft.
- Walkways
- Patios under 200 sq. ft.

Once accepted, a staff member will be assigned to review the proposal for consistency with the OHD Guidelines. During review, staff may reach out with questions or to discuss changes needed to obtain administrative approval. If required, administrative applications may be forwarded for BAR review at the next available meeting.

Staff will provide you with a COA letter approving the request which can be used to obtain your zoning and building permits, as needed. Please note that the finished project MUST match your approved COA. If changes are required, please contact staff as soon as possible.

Submitting a COA

BAR Review

The BAR reviews applications once a month at their business meeting. These meetings are typically held on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7pm in the Council Chamber (2nd floor, 25 W. Market Street). The meeting schedule and submission deadlines [can be found on our website](#). Minimum submission requirements include the following:

- **Application fee (assessed after acceptance)**
- **Statement of Justification outlining the project and consistency with the Guidelines.**
- **Building specifications/elevations**
- **Photos of existing conditions**
- **Property plat**
- **Building material list and physical samples**
- **Other materials depending on the type of project**

Once accepted, a preservation staff member will be assigned to review your proposal. During the review process, your assigned staff member will be in touch with you regarding any additional information needed and to schedule a site visit.

Information regarding the public hearing process is included on the following page.

Following the BAR's decision, staff will provide you with a COA letter outlining findings and conditions associated with the BAR's action. If approved, this letter can be used to obtain zoning and building permits, as needed.

Please note that the approved application MUST match any zoning or building permits necessary for your project. If changes are required, please contact staff as soon as possible.

Looking to research your property?

Thomas Balch Library - <https://www.leesburgva.gov/departments/thomas-balch-library>

Clerk of the Circuit Court Office - <https://www.loudoun.gov/2165/Historic-Records-Deed-Research>

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps - <https://digitalsanbornmaps.proquest.com/about?accountid=58752>



BAR Meetings

Following acceptance of a COA application, Preservation staff review the application for consistency with the OHD Design Guidelines and prepare a staff report for the BAR.

- COA applications are reviewed by the BAR in a public hearing format.
- A public hearing sign will be provided for posting on the subject property in advance of the meeting.
- Staff reports and submission materials are available online approximately one week in advance of the meeting at www.leesburgva.gov/bar.
- We recommend that applicants attend meetings to answer questions from the Board or the community and agree to any conditions of approval.
- Applications are reviewed by the BAR based on the Design Guidelines. The BAR does not typically need to review proposed uses, parking requirements, buffering requirements or other zoning ordinance requirements.
- The BAR may approve, approve with conditions, defer with questions, or deny any COA. Most applications are approved the same night while more complicated projects may require a work session.
- Once the BAR has taken action, applicants receive a letter outlining the findings and/or conditions associated with the BAR's decision and may dispose of the yellow sign.
- BAR decisions are final and binding, unless appealed to and overturned by Council.

The Board of Architectural Review

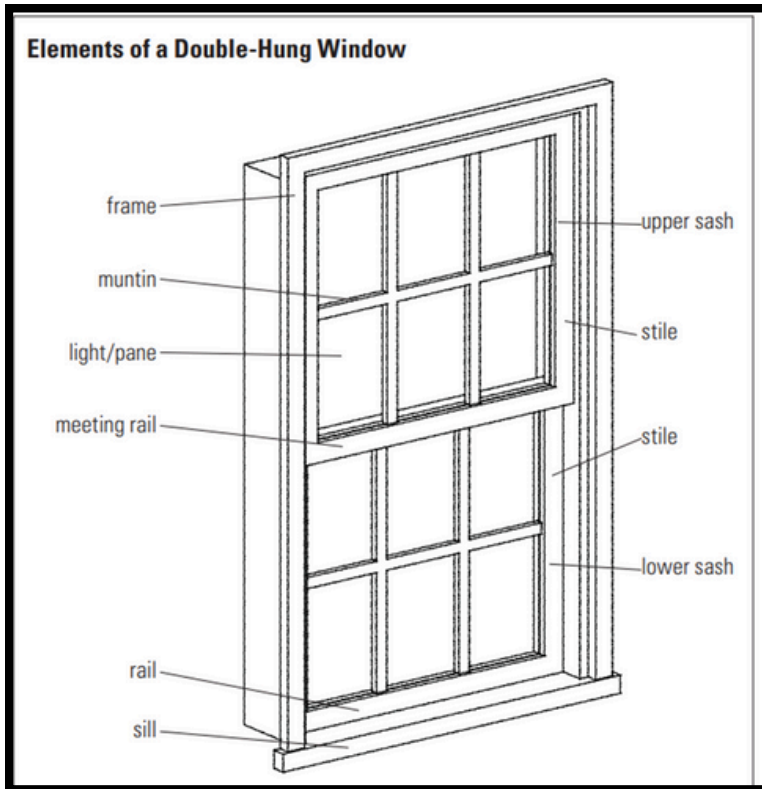
The BAR is a seven-member body appointed by Council. The BAR is tasked with reviewing applications in the historic district and advising the Council on preservation related matters. Members must meet certain criteria to serve on the BAR. More information can be found at www.leesburgva.gov/bar. Staff receives correspondence on behalf of the Board. Please do not email COA applications to the BAR directly.

Is There More To Know?

When considering repairs or alterations to your historic structure, it truly is all in the details. Those extraordinary features such as decorative trim or unique window patterns establish the specific character for your structure, but it can get confusing. Below, are some common terms which are frequently used in historic preservation and in architectural review. [A more in-depth list of terms is included in the Guidelines.](#)

- **Structure** - Anything constructed or built for use, occupancy, or ornamentation whether installed on, above, or below the surface of land or water.
 - **Historic** - a structure more than 50 years old.
 - **Contributing** -in Leesburg - a structure built before 1950 which has retained its integrity, character, materials, context, and appearance.
 - **Non-Contributing** - a structure built after 1950 or an older structure which has been extensively modified from its original state.
 - **In-Kind** - repair or replacement work conducted with the same material as existing, matching the size, dimension, color, quality, and design.
 - **Composite Materials** - a manmade material which is a combination of two or more materials such as cement fiber, T1-11, cellular PVC, Trex, etc.
 - **Cladding** - any exterior wall covering, including masonry.
 - **Sheathing** - any exterior roof covering.
 - **Compatible** - the general design, arrangement, texture, material, and color of the elements or features, and the relationship of such to similar elements and features, as well as buildings and structures in the neighborhood.
 - **Rehabilitation** - returning a property to a state of utility through repair or alteration which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions or features that are significant to its historical, architectural, and cultural values.
 - **Restoration** - accurately recovering the form and details of a property and its setting as it appeared at a particular period of time, by removing later work and/or replacing missing earlier work.
 - **Streetscape** - Features such as streetlights, street trees, paving, street furniture, plantings, and signage that contribute to, enhance, and help to define the unique character of a neighborhood.
-

It's All In The Details



- **Wood Window** - a window product fully constructed of wood.
- **Clad Window** - a window product that is fully constructed of wood with an outer layer of aluminum or fiberglass.
- **Muntin** - vertical and horizontal elements that divide the window glass into a grid.
- **Mullion** - vertical shafts located in between windows.
- **Fenestration** - arrangement of windows and doors on the elevations of a building.

- **TDL** - true divided lite meaning the muntin bars separate the glass into individual panes.
- **SDL** - simulated divided lite meaning the muntin bars are applied to the exterior of the glass on both sides, usually with a spacer bar between.
- **Grilles-Between-The-Glass** - meaning the muntin bars are flat and placed between the panes of glass.
- **Balustrade** - the entire railing system, consisting of the top and bottom rails and balusters.
- **Baluster** - the post or spindle that supports a hand railing of a balustrade.
- **Cornice** - any continuous, molded projecting cap to a wall, window or opening (upper projecting part above the frieze).
- **Wrought Iron** - iron that is hammered or forged into the desired shape.



Helpful Links

Old & Historic District Guidelines:

<https://www.leesburgva.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/25480/636771878928530000>

Historic District Sign Guidelines:

<https://www.leesburgva.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/1537/635477178326200000>

Board of Architectural Review:

<https://www.leesburgva.gov/bar>

Certificate of Appropriateness Information:

<https://www.leesburgva.gov/departments/community-development/historic-preservation/certificates-of-appropriateness>

Virginia Department of Historic Resources Guide for Property Owners:

[https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/pdf_files/Virginia's Historical Registers A Guide 2017.pdf](https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/pdf_files/Virginia's_Historical_Registers_A_Guide_2017.pdf)

Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Information:

<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/programs/tax-credits/>

We look forward
to working
with you!

