



### **Fieldston Historic District: Frequently Asked Questions**

**I would like to put swing sets and play equipment in my yard. Can I do this without a permit?**

Yes. The Commission considers this type of equipment temporary, and does not require a permit.

**May I place temporary religious structures or displays, like a sukkah, in my yard? Do I need a permit?**

The Commission has never required a permit for this type of installation. Because of the high level of interest in this issue by residents of Fieldston, the Commission plans to make this policy explicit and include an exemption in our rules for the district.

**The streets of Fieldston are private. Does landmark designation change this?**

No.

**Does the Commission regulate vegetation? Can I remove a tree on my property without a Commission permit?**

The Landmarks Preservation Commission does not regulate ordinary landscaping activities such as pruning, planting of seasonal flower beds or vegetable gardens, or planting of ornamental shrubs or trees. Unlike in the Riverdale and Douglaston Historic Districts, the Commission will not regulate mature trees in the Fieldston Historic District because of the neighborhood's designation as a Special Natural Area, where landscape changes require review and approval by the Department of City Planning.

**I have air conditioning units in my windows. Can I install or remove them without a permit?**

Yes. The Commission does not regulate the installation or removal of in-window air-conditioning units.

**My house has painted trim and shutters. Can I repaint them without contacting the Commission?**

Yes. Ordinary exterior repairs and maintenance, such as replacing broken window glass and repainting a building exterior to match the existing color, do not require the Commission's approval.

**Can I change my garage door? The one I have is manual and now I need an electric-opening door.**

Yes. If you were simply adding an electric opener to an existing door no permit would be required. The installation of a new door would require a permit.

**What is the difference between a staff review and a review by the Commissioners at a public hearing?**

The Commission receives more than 9,000 applications each year from people who wish to make changes to their landmarked properties. Over 90 percent of these are handled by the agency's professional staff, which uses rules and standards developed by the Commission to determine whether the proposed work is appropriate. These general rules are available on the Commission's web site at [www.nyc.gov/landmarks](http://www.nyc.gov/landmarks). The Commission will draft rules tailored to the Fieldston Historic District. The 10 percent of applications that fall outside the rules must be reviewed by the Commissioners at a public hearing. Examples of applications that require Commission review at a public hearing are new building construction, demolition, and visible additions.

**We want to install outdoor lighting along our front walk and steps leading to our front door, in addition to other security measures. Do I need a permit?**

Yes. The Commission regularly approves the installation of lighting, considering the design and placement of the lighting rather than its brightness, and other security measures.

**A family member has a disability. Can I modify my house to accommodate her needs?**

The Commission routinely reviews and approves applications for lifts, railings, and ramps to accommodate handicap accessibility.

**I am renovating my kitchen and bathroom. Do I need permits from the Commission for this type of interior work?**

The Commission only reviews interior work if it requires a Department of Buildings permit or affects the exterior of the building. If the work is purely interior, the Commission's review is limited to confirming that there will be no effect on the exterior. If there is an effect, for example a vent for a new stove, the Commission will review the proposed location, size, and design of the vent.

**We want to make an addition to our house. Can I expand my building?**

The Commission reviews additions to evaluate visibility from the street, design, materials, and detail, and the addition's effect on the design of the house. The Commission regularly approves additions in other historic districts with single-family detached homes, such as in the Riverdale and Douglaston Historic Districts. Some small additions may be approved at staff level.

**What fees are charged for work such as this?**

The Commission charges a fee only for work that also requires a Department of Buildings (DOB) permit. Minor work, such as painting, window repair and replacement, repointing, etc., does not require a DOB permit and therefore there is no Commission fee. For work that does require a DOB permit, there is a fee of \$50 for projects with an estimated cost of \$25,000 or less. For projects that cost more than \$25,000, the fee is \$50 plus an additional \$3 for every \$1000 over the initial \$25,000 project cost (for example, a \$50,000 project has a Commission fee of \$125). This fee is collected by the Department of Buildings on behalf of the Commission.

**What is the process for reviewing a proposal for a new home in Fieldston?**

All new construction in the historic district is reviewed by the Commission at a Certificate of Appropriateness public hearing. Members of the public can testify about the proposal at the hearing. Prior to the hearing, the applicant works with Commission staff to go over the proposal, identify potential issues and to ensure that the presentation is complete. The Commission will consider the appropriateness of the new building in terms of its design, massing, materials, fenestration and other relevant criteria. There is no preference for any particular style or period. The Commission approves new homes that are very contemporary in look and design as well as more traditional looking homes. The goal of this review is to ensure that the new building fits in with the other homes in the district.

**My house was characterized as "Style: none" in the Commission's designation report. How does this affect the regulation of my building?**

To preserve a historic district's special character, the Commission reviews changes to all buildings within its boundaries, regardless of the age or style of the building, to make sure that the change is appropriate to the scale and character of the building and the buildings in the historic district. No-style buildings are regulated in a more flexible manner, but the Commission still considers factors such as massing, material, color, etc. when reviewing proposed changes. No-style buildings may be demolished and replaced by a Commission-approved building.