Historic Design Review Made Easy ?!

Brainstorm ideas from a discussion during the LCG workshop Oct. 19, 2010.

The discussion was set up in sections to provide a framework. These are ideas that may or may not work for your community, be sure you follow all laws and rules in the process. The ideas are not necessarily recommended by the State Historic Preservation Office. They are solely results of a group brainstorm.

Advance information, design help & education:
Design guidelines
Newsletters
Workshops
Website – All information online (Sect. Interior’s Standards, design guidelines, applications, etc)
Pre-application opportunity – staff and/or commission, possibly a subcommittee with advisors, form so that it is fully disclosed.
Send the customers links rather than just directing them to search on the website
Have good meeting notification (letter, website, newspaper)
Have regular timeline for meetings and review – publish it so people know what to expect
Mail a complete packet to all property owners and tenants – applications, incentives, design guidelines, ordinance, summary page
Provide free design services – a specific number of hours with specific, willing, qualified people.
Send a regular newsletter – design review information, historic value, preservation tips, etc.
Discuss possible conditions or mitigation prior to meeting.
Provide more training to commissioners prior to review – building code, process training, by professionals
Incorporate 15 minutes of commissioner training in each meeting.
Hotline: Build it green
Find and educate local contractors
Give information to new buyers, realtors
Publicize lead paint rules
Site visit – notification, etc.
DAR – design advice request
Research green materials
Resource center at planning office and online
Historic preservation certificate at college
Show images on screen so everyone is looking at the same images
Define what constitutes reasonable repair, when it can be replaced
Offer grant funds for appropriate work

Application:
Site plan and elevation on the application
Lower fees or fees paid with CLG funds
More staff review and approval for clear cases
Streamline applications
Form that follows the application through all of the city processes, so it is clear what
must be approved and completed
Have examples of good applications
If they have used design services – no fee
Have staff review be free to encourage them to follow the guidelines – if you do it this
way staff can approve, if you do it this way you must go before the commission and pay
the fee.
Have separate form for historic review that includes the standards on the form.
Include a checklist in the application for what additional materials are required (photos,
historic photos, elevations, etc.)
The staff and builder have the same form
Require quality drawings with application

Staff Reports
Include survey info
Which Secretary of the Interior’s Standards apply
Which points of the ordinance apply
Application
Drawings
Current photos
Historic photos
Executive summary
Staff recommendations
Key points from nomination
Summary of historic significance (individual and district)
Sample motion
Have a check off list
Provide to applicant (customer) before hearing, be sure they understand it
Staff reports to commissioners (summary) on staff level decisions so they are aware of
work on historic buildings

Findings Report – criteria, standards, clear for appeal, stamp design review on all
paperwork (permit, plan, inspector, etc), to protect from unapproved field changes.

Review:
Commissioners prepare and read material in advance of the meeting
Commissioners stick to the topic to be reviewed
Have a clear process for hearings, practice and follow it
Chair needs to summarize, clarify, keeps things moving, refrain from too much
involvement in the discussion.
Site visits are helpful – if you do them as a group, be careful of public meeting laws
Respond to evaluation criteria
Have everyone sit around the table – professional, but friendly
Show drawings, photos, maps on screen so everyone will be talking about the same images
Do not try to redesign, unless it is the design consultation and not the application review
Do not judge the quality of material (historic or new)
Do not just the aesthetic, but where it meets the criteria

**Incentives:**
Eliminate, reduce or subsidize fees with CLG funds
Tax freeze
Grants
Free design services/advice
Education – resource center, website, maintenance workshops
Good information about new materials
Historic Preservation certificate or award
Set back reduction or height adjustment
Zone – lot line lenience for detached garages
Incentivize corner lots - they are double burdened with two facades
Handouts and website to explain incentives
Tips for improvements
Bibliography at library
Hotline – planning/sustainability, Building Green
Encourage repair