



CITY OF KEY WEST

Building Department

Building Permit/Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Procedures

Effective March 10, 2025

Beginning on March 10, 2025, applicants must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for any applicable improvements within the Key West Historic District **separately** from a building permit application.

Previously, the City of Key West Building Department has acted as the centralized department for all permit applications, which are reviewed by licensed plan examiners and the floodplain manager. These reviewers also sent applicable building permit applications to the Historic Preservation Department (HARC) for review. Applicants may not have noticed that two separate processes were happening simultaneously under the umbrella of a building permit application.

While applicants will continue to interact with and receive exceptional customer service provided by City of Key West Building Department staff, please take note that a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application must be applied for separately from a building permit application. This may be done in person at the permit technician desk or online through eTrakit.

A building permit is permission granted by the City of Key West Building Official to perform construction following the review and demonstrated compliance with the Florida Building Code, National Electrical Code, Florida Fire Prevention Code, and other referenced standards. Construction activities are regularly inspected by licensed inspectors for compliance with the state and locally adopted construction standards.

A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is the document issued by HARC, stating that the proposed work meets the Historic Architectural Guidelines. The HARC inspector inspects compliance with these standards.

Thank you,
The City of Key West Building Department

What is a Certificate of Appropriateness?

A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is a document issued by HARC, stating that the proposed work meets the Historic Architectural Guidelines.

When is a Certificate of Appropriateness Required?

Section 102-152 of the Land Development Regulations state *“A Certificate of Appropriateness is required for the construction of any new structure, building, fence, deck or sign or the painting, repainting, repair, alteration, remodeling, landscaping or demolition of the exterior of any existing building, structure, fence, deck, sign, landscape, or lot.”*

In addition, Page 1 of the Historic Architectural Guidelines state *“All exterior work must have HARC approval whether a building permit is required. If a building permit is required, the applicant shall obtain HARC approval prior to the issuance of the permit.”*

The HARC Guidelines also state that HARC approval must be secured on the following project types:

- Repairs of buildings
- Any painting and associated removal of existing paint
- Restoration or rehabilitation of buildings
- Additions to existing buildings
- New construction
- Fences, either new or replaced
- Alterations to streets, sidewalks, or street furnishings
- Installation of signs, awnings, benches or lighting
- Construction of swimming pools and/or decks
- Placement of temporary facilities such as vendor stands
- Miscellaneous structures (i.e. towers, etc.)
- Improvements to the right-of-way, public and private
- Exposed utilities
- Historic interior public spaces
- Interiors or all property individually listed on the National Register

Will This Affect Permit Fees?

No, the HARC review fee has previously been included in the building permit fees. This fee will now be paid separately.

How do I apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness?

Complete applications may be submitted online via eTrakit, or hand-delivered to the permit technician desk at 1300 White Street.