



Meeting of the Historic District Commission

September 11, 2025, 5:30 PM

City Hall Room 101 & Zoom

NOTE: The September 11, 2025 Historic District Commission meeting was held in person and online, with commissioners attending in person and online. Staff were present in person.

Members: Chair Christine Myres, Meredith Mahan, Mark Harper, Cheri Coley, Jennifer Didway, Tommie Flowers Davis, and Karen Rorex

City Staff: Kylee Cole – Long Range & Preservation Planner; Britin Bostick - Long Range Planning & Special Projects Manager

Call to Order: 5:30 PM

In Attendance: Chair Christine Myres, Cheri Coley, Jennifer Didway, Mark Harper, Karen Rorex, Kylee Cole, and Britin Bostick. Commissioners Flowers Davis and Mahan were absent at the time of roll call.

Approval of Minutes from the August 14, 2025 Meeting: Motion to accept by Commissioner Coley, second by Commissioner Harper. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Unfinished Business:

1. **Downtown Design Overlay District Review:** Chair Myres introduced the item and noted Cole had provided a marked up and highlighted version. Cole clarified that the document provided was commented and struck through with a proposal to remove, with red lettering indicating proposal to change or move text. Cole elaborated further with a presentation to the commission, recapping the section and subsection approach for residential, commercial, and mixed use, then further to subsections for new, historic, and non-historic buildings.

With residential structures highlighted at the last meeting, this meeting's discussion began with porches. Cole noted there is repetitive language scattered throughout the section, which she proposes to condense, and that much of the edits are proposed to reduce redundancy and properly separate out the separate sections.

Cole asked the commissioners for feedback on language for historic-age buildings in response to last month's discussion. Since the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation provide guidance for historic structures, it presents an option for guidance language for the treatment of historic buildings in the Downtown Design Overlay District as the standards are meant to address changes to historic buildings in particular.

Chair Myres addressed “appurtenances” and whether they would be able to encroach into the right of way. Cole noted that is the current language and agreed that the correct term would be needed. A discussion of “appurtenances”, “accessories”, and other possible alternative terms followed. Cole referred to the definitions provided in the Unified Development Code (UDC) and noted that the term “appurtenances” was written to cover a multitude of building features that may not best be grouped. Chair Myres noted she did not want to overburden the document unnecessarily, but a listing of elements under “additions” would be needed. Commissioner Coley concurred. Various options to write the language were explored. Cole noted the code is not currently set up for footnotes, but a subsection would work. “Building features” or “Building elements” was much more agreeable as a term.

Cole highlighted a turrets and cupolas portion for new construction and explained the difference between the features. She asked the commissioners if they preferred to strictly regulate those features or if an architect should be allowed to design those features without strict size limits. Commissioner Coley would like to see the final document with that section removed. Commissioner Didway asked about the relationship to building height. Cole replied that other height protections are in place that she thought were sufficient to control. A discussion of turrets, cupolas, and oriels followed, with the age of architecture associated. Cole proposed to remove from new construction for now but that it could be added back if needed.

On front porches for new construction, residential buildings, Cole showed the current definition and read it aloud. A discussion of the difference between porches and stoops followed, and whether the standards should be minimum or maximum. Chair Myres favored removing some of the prescriptive dimensional standards. When asked by Chair Myres, Cole stated her position as “open” and noted porches being integral to development as she showed examples of recent residential projects in the Downtown. Chair Myres summarized as “big enough for a chair or bench.” Commissioner Harper favored larger porches. Commissioner Coley inquired about a contemporary structure’s porch. Cole requested to confirm hearing from commissioners that the preferred porches, but what was the preference on depth or dimension? Commissioner Harper talked about some of the challenges of establishing dimensional standards.

Commissioner Rorex asked about the application of the standards currently and what the complaints are. Cole responded that other sections tended to garner more complaint than porches but with a reconsideration of the standards to separate out new construction it was worth discussing. Commissioners then considered combining porches and stoops. Chair Myres read a definition of stoop. Cole had not found many examples in Fayetteville’s downtown and was able to show two examples. Chair Myres preferred to address porches and stoops separately. Cole showed the current code definitions, which do not live in the same section and

noted it can be confusing. Commissioner asked if the reason for the standard was to ensure a roof and control the width? He further asked what it was that the commission cared about in terms of need to regulate. Commissioners discussed the relationship to the right of way and the guidance to an architect. Chair Myres recommended considering the audience for the standards. Commissioner Coley discussed the various uses of the requirement and applicability to infill. The relationship of front doors to step or stair orientation was also discussed. Bostick noted that Planning staff also use the code to verify compliance when they review project drawings. Chair Myres preferred clarity in the text and having porches and stoops in the same section but addressed separately.

Instances of sites with steep slopes were discussed and considered that create situations for lengthy stairs to stoops and porches. Bostick noted that a variance to the standards is available via petition to the Planning Commission. Awnings, roofs, and other covers to porches and stoops were discussed and dimensional requirements for those. Bostick talked about the relationship of building codes to the city's zoning and development code and Commissioner Rorex having an excellent point about the applicability of building code ultimately. Commissioner Harper asked if the commission needed to focus a specific way, and staff's recommendation was to focus on aesthetic issues, while they were happy to check with Building Safety to coordinate with building code requirements. Commissioner Harper and Chair Myres talked through scenarios for stoop height and depth and the relationship to the historic character of the Downtown. Chair Myres asked Cole to combine stoops and porches to review at the next meeting, where projecting bays will also be discussed.

New Business:

- 1. 2026 CLG Grant Application:** Cole described two project options for the commissioners. The first is Phase 2 of the citywide historic resource survey. The proposed area would include the downtown area as the Downtown Plan is starting and there is a timely opportunity to capture the southwest portion of the city. The proposed area has approximately 2,000 parcels. The second proposed project is for consultant support for local historic district design guidelines. Two neighborhoods are in the process of proposing local historic districts, and this would assist with the development of guidelines. Commissioner Harper asked if the petitions have been certified. Cole replied the Clerk's office is still reviewing. Commissioner Coley motioned to recommend the proposed projects. Seconded by Commissioner Rorex. Unanimously approved by voice vote.
- 2. Local Historic Districts:** Cole provided a presentation on the process to establish a local historic district starting with the Arkansas Historic Districts Act. The presentation included a process flow chart, which Cole provided in printed copy to the commissioners. Commissioner Coley asked for a clarification if this is the same as the White Hangar at Drake Field. Cole affirmed and compared a National Register Historic District, which does not have regulations attached, to a local historic district,

which is the regulatory district. Two areas of town are now exploring the creation of a local historic district with regulations and must follow the state's prescribed process. Cole walked commissioners through the flow chart and detailed the multiple steps. Commissioner Coley asked about the timeline for the HDC to issue the initial report. Cole replied that was not defined like the later steps in the process. Commissioner Harper asked about the comments from the Planning Commission and whether HDC would be able to see those comments. Cole replied that the Planning Commission's role would be advisory only as they would be making a recommendation to HDC but not making a final decision. The state preservation office would similarly be making a recommendation and would likely have more substantive comments. Neither group is able to kill the proposal. At present one of the two groups has developed guidelines and one group would be using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and would need to go through a process to develop their own design guidelines. Commissioner Coley asked if three districts could have different guidelines or if they would all have to be the same. Cole noted that the three areas are different and cities both have custom standards and one size fits all standards so both options are possible. She illustrated by discussing the different approaches that would be needed for Mt. Nord versus a neighborhood with cottages. Cole is hopeful she will have more to share by next months' meeting, but the timing is not within Long Range Planning staff's control. The petitions cannot move forward without being certified as complete.

Other Business: None.

Announcements:

1. **Downtown Plan:** Bostick shared an update on the Downtown Plan and provided a presentation sharing information about the project, timeline, and opportunities to engage, noting that commissioners would receive an email on Monday with details and a link to the new engagement web page.

Adjourned: 7:00 PM