

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
OFFICE OF PLANNING



**COMPLETING PART I APPLICATIONS FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
CERTIFICATION (CONSERVATION EASEMENTS)**

Donations of conservation easements preserve the character of the city's historic properties for generations to come while also potentially providing tax advantages to property owners. Through a conservation easement, owners agree to maintain the exterior of their property and may not make changes without approval of the easement holding organization. In return, they may claim a tax deduction for their donation. To qualify, a property must either be listed individually or as a contributing structure to an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. While property qualification requires certification by the National Park Service (NPS), Part 1 Certification Applications are submitted through the DC Historic Preservation Office. Because tax law is complex and certain qualifications or exceptions may apply, owners are encouraged to consult an accountant or tax advisor for details.

**Photography**

Good photographs are critical for evaluating Part I applications. NPS strongly recommends using a 35mm camera with a lens no wider than 50mm to produce crisp photographic images of the building. If absolutely necessary, digital images may be acceptable if they are set to at least 2048 x 1536 pixels. Digital prints must be printed in color on photographic, not stock, paper with no more than two 4 x 6 images per page. When printing digital photos, images should not be stretched or compressed. If the printed digital images are determined inadequate by NPS, the application will be returned in full, and will have to be resubmitted with better quality images for consideration.

It is important to keep in mind that when taking photos, certain considerations must be made to adequately document the building. Photographs should generally be taken at a distance at which the camera can be held level (rather than tilted up) so as to reduce the distortion in perspective. This means standing across the street and shooting the building straight on as well as from either oblique angle. It is also important to capture each façade as a whole without cropping the top, bottom, or sides of the building (unless you are focusing in on an architectural detail). The NPS photography bulletin at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/photobul/> can provide more information on effective architectural photography.

**Maps**

A map showing the footprint of the building and its lot lines must be included, preferably one which supports the date of construction (i.e. Sanborn maps).

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### **Architectural Description**

When describing a building, it is helpful to give a general introduction indicating the overall form, style, and materials before describing the individual aspects of its façade. The description should discuss which parts of the building are original and mention any alterations and/or additions and the approximate date those changes were made.

### **Statement of Significance**

For each Part I application, every attempt should be made to fully document the history of the building, its architecture, occupants, uses, and surroundings. A researcher's efforts should be summarized and photocopies of supporting documentation should be included in the submission. Photocopies should list the source of records and their location. A typical statement of significance may be several paragraphs or longer in length. It *must apply to the building itself* based on actual research, as well as the neighborhood as a whole. The content should not be solely based on the architectural style of the building and/or district, although a description of how a building is a good representative of its style may be useful. Please cite the sources for all information in the statement of significance.

The statement of significance should include the statement of significance from the historic district nomination, and any reference to the specific building from the nomination. The date of construction needs to be specified, and a reference cited for that date. If a *circa* date is all that may be determined, sources must be cited and reasons stated as to how the *circa* date was determined. Copies of historic maps would satisfy the above requirement as well as serve as justification for a *circa* date. Please note that the DC Tax Assessor's dates of construction are not always reliable, especially when the year given is 1900 (a catch-all date often assigned indiscriminately by the Assessor). Similarly, owners' information on the year of construction is not sufficient without documentary evidence.

The HPO website ([www.planning.dc.gov](http://www.planning.dc.gov)) includes information that may be helpful, including maps of historic districts and a research guide entitled *Researching the History of a Building in the District of Columbia*. NR Bulletin 15 may be useful in preparing statements of significance (<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>).

### **Submission**

Two copies of the Part I Certification Application and all supporting documentation should be submitted to the DC Historic Preservation Office, 1100 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Suite E650, Washington, DC 20024. Generally, the HPO forwards them to the NPS within two weeks of receipt.

If you should have questions, please call the DC Historic Preservation Office at 202-442-7600.