

STRUCTURE

CUSTOM HOMES · HISTORICAL RENOVATION

A FREE GUIDE TO BUILDING IN ATHENS HISTORIC DISTRICTS



First, Determine What Kind of Historic Property You Own

Ask, “**What historic designation applies to my property?**”

Athens-Clarke County distinguishes between **local historic districts and National Register historic districts**, and those designations do not have identical implications. ACC provides separate resources explaining these distinctions.

If your property is in an Athens-Clarke County **local historic district**, exterior alterations may be subject to the local historic-preservation ordinance and COA process.

ACC currently provides maps of its local historic districts and an interactive map through its Historic Preservation Resources page.

Before You Spend Money on Plans

- Determine whether the property is in a local historic district.
- Determine which district it is in.
- Determine whether the property is individually designated as a local historic landmark.
- Determine which design guidelines apply.
- Determine whether the proposed work will require a COA.
- Determine whether the work can be handled administratively or will require HPC review.

Do this before investing heavily in architectural plans.



Historic Doesn't Mean “Make It Look Old”

Many people assume the HPC guidelines require every addition, renovation, or new structure to look as though it was built at the same time as the original house.

That's not what the guidelines are trying to accomplish.

That means a successful project doesn't necessarily have to imitate the house next door—or even imitate the original house.

The goal is compatibility, not imitation.

A contemporary addition can be appropriate. A modern door can be appropriate. A modern interpretation of a porch can be appropriate. New construction can look new.

The important question is whether the design respects the historic character of the property and its surroundings while complying with the applicable guidelines.



Know Which Guidelines Apply

Athens-Clarke County does not have one single set of guidelines for every historic property. The county currently provides separate guidelines for:



ACC identifies these separately in its Historic Preservation Resources. This is one reason you shouldn't assume that something you saw approved on one historic property will automatically be acceptable on another. The property and the district matter.

Not Every Project Goes Before the HPC



Not every historic property change requires Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) review; some projects can go through administrative/staff review.

Simple projects like certain doors, fences, and guideline-compliant work may qualify for the faster staff-review process.

The design should be planned around HPC requirements before submission, since choosing an appropriate review category can significantly reduce project delays.

Additions typically require more consideration, as their size, location, and design can affect the level of review required.



The Best Time to Think About HPC Approval Is NOW!

If the finished design doesn't meet the applicable guidelines, you may have to redesign it.

That can mean:

more architectural fees
additional engineering
additional design time
delayed construction
changes to materials
changes to the size or location of an addition
frustration for the homeowner
frustration for the architect
frustration for the builder

A better approach is to establish the parameters before the design gets too far down the road.

Additions, Windows, Doors, Roofs & Porches

Small exterior changes can have a surprisingly large effect on a historic house. Replacing one window is different from changing every window on a primary facade. A new porch, front door or addition can alter the way the entire property is perceived.

Before replacing an original element, determine whether it can be repaired. Before assuming a replacement is prohibited, determine what the actual guidelines say.

Additions deserve particular attention. A rear addition can present a very different preservation issue from an addition
that changes the front elevation.



The question isn't simply “Can we build this?”

The better question is **“How should we design this so it accomplishes what the homeowner needs and works within the applicable guidelines?”**

ADUs in Historic Districts

Historic-district status does not automatically prevent an accessory dwelling unit (ADU).

The key is understanding the property-specific requirements before designing.

Historic properties can support modern housing needs, including additional living space, when the project is thoughtfully designed and properly approved.

Instead of asking, 'Can I build an ADU in a historic district?" ask: 'What requirements apply to this property?'

An ADU must meet applicable zoning, building, and historic-preservation requirements.

Athens example:

At 628 Boulevard, Structure renovated the primary bathroom and added a 500-square-foot ADU in the rear yard.







Demolition Is a Different Conversation

Demolition has its own review process in Athens-Clarke County. Current ACC guidance states that exterior demolition of properties more than 50 years old can be subject to Commissioner review. Within a local historic district,
exterior demolition is handled through the COA process. Homeowners should not assume that a building can be demolished simply

Start With the Right Team

A successful historic renovation requires more than a good set of drawings. It requires a team that understands the relationship between the homeowner's goals, the existing building, preservation requirements, zoning and building requirements, the budget and the realities of construction. At Structure Building Company, we believe these things have to be considered together.

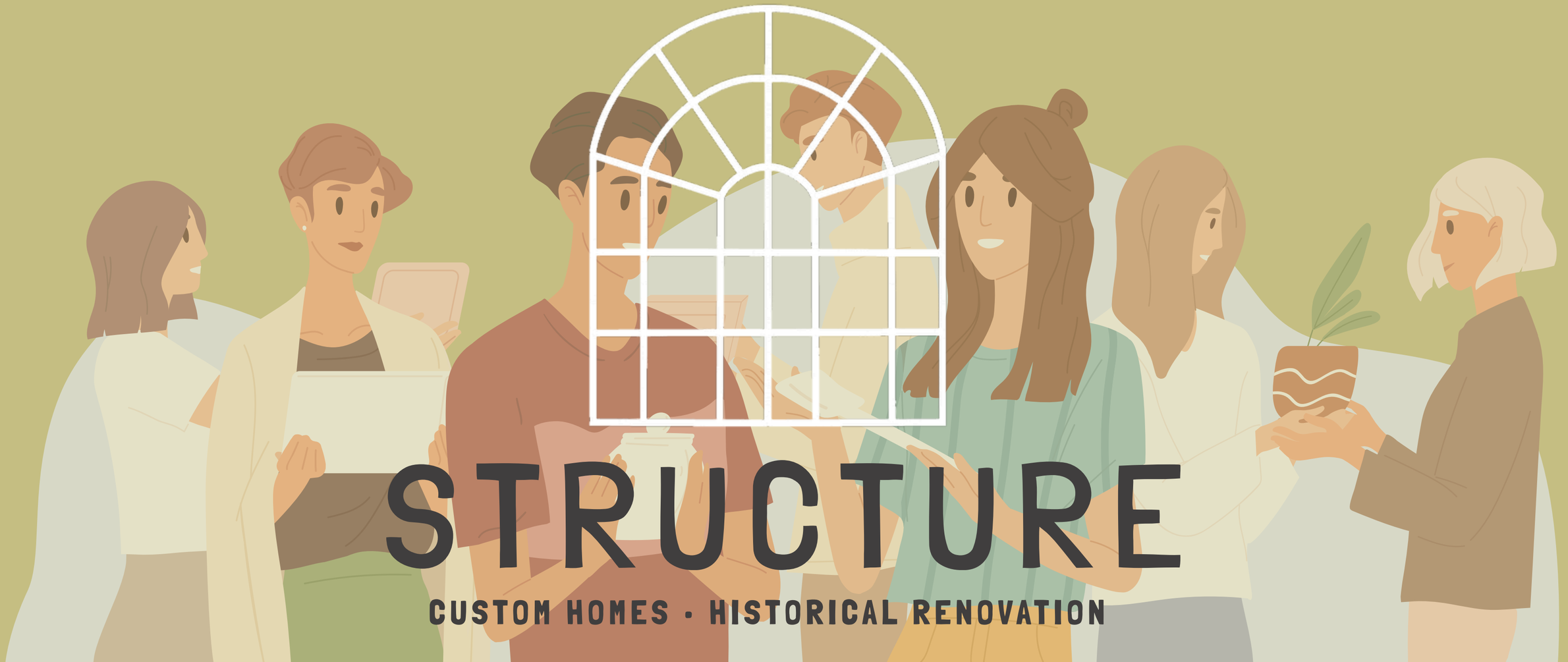
Our experience includes historic renovation additions: ADHS and new construction in Athens. Neighborhoods where historic contest matters:

If you're considering a project in an Athens historic district, starting the conversation in early. The earlier the historic requirements, design, budget and construction realities are considered together, the more customs you have





Thank You



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