

# HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION QUASI-JUDICIAL HEARINGS: *A Guide for Presenting Testimony*

## INTRODUCTION

*"It is not the function of our government to keep the citizen from falling into error; it is the function of the citizen to keep the government from falling into error."*

– Supreme Court Justice  
– Robert Jackson

Testifying at a public hearing is a principal way to be engaged in civic life and strengthen your community. Elected leaders rely on citizens to broaden their knowledge about neighborhood and community-wide issues. Still, testifying at a public hearing can be challenging, especially if you've never attended one. This outline will help you prepare and become familiar with the procedures of a **quasi-judicial** public hearing with the Historic Landmarks Commission. If you know what to expect and are prepared, your message is more likely to be effective.

### About the Historic Landmarks Commission

The Historic Landmarks Commission provides leadership and expertise on maintaining and enhancing Portland's historic and architectural heritage. Its main mission is to identify and protect buildings and other properties that have historic or cultural significance or special architectural merit. The Commission provides advice on historic preservation matters and coordinates historic preservation programs in the City. The Commission is also actively involved in the development of design guidelines for historic design districts.

## CONTENTS

This guide is organized into the following sections:

1. **Types of land use actions** – the Historic Landmarks Commission hears three different types of **quasi-judicial** land use cases.
2. **Preparing for the hearing** – things to do in advance of the hearing.
3. **Day of the hearing** – hearing process, signing in, order and time limits of testifiers.
4. **Important considerations** – reminders and tips for effective testimony.
5. **After the record closes** – what happens after the public participation part of the hearing is closed.
6. **Glossary of terms** – **terms highlighted in blue text** are explained here.
7. **Resources** – where to get additional information.



# 1. TYPES OF LAND USE ACTIONS

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The Historic Landmarks Commission hears the following types of land use actions:



1. **Major historic design review** (a Type III process) applies to major new developments. For these types of reviews, the Historic Landmarks Commission holds a public hearing on the proposal and considers the staff recommendation, a written report addressing the applicable **approval criteria**.
2. **Appeals of historic design review administrative decisions** (following a Type II process) applies to proposals that are smaller in scale than Type III proposals. The initial decision of a Type II historic design review request is called an administrative decision. A Bureau of Development Services staff planner issues the administrative decision and the Historic Landmarks Commission hears appeals of these decisions. Appeals may be filed by the applicant, the owner, those entitled to notice, and any person adversely affected or aggrieved by the decision.
3. **Review of proposed demolition or relocation for certain historic buildings** (following a Type IV process). For these types of reviews, the Historic Landmarks Commission holds a public hearing on the proposal and considers the staff recommendation, a written report addressing the applicable **approval criteria**. The Historic Landmarks Commission will forward a recommendation to the City Council, who will hold a public hearing and make the final decision.
4. **Legislative actions** are another type of land use action heard by the Historic Landmarks Commission. Hearings for **legislative actions** do not follow the procedures in this guide. Contact the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability for more information.

# 2. PREPARING FOR THE HEARING

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- 1) **Read the decision and/or the staff recommendation.**  
If the review is a Type III process, a staff recommendation will be published prior to the hearing. For Type II reviews, there will be an administrative decision and an appeal statement.

Administrative decisions and staff recommendations contain contact information and facts about the subject site, the proposal and the relevant **approval criteria**. Most importantly, the reasons behind the decision or staff recommendation are explained. In addition to the administrative decision for Type II

reviews, read the appeal statement and understand what parts of the decision are at issue.

Historic design review administrative decisions (Type II process) and staff recommendations (Type III and IV processes) are available on the BDS website. See the Resource Section of this document.

**2) Explore other sources of information.**

The case planner and other city staff, neighbors, the applicant, property owner, appellant, and neighborhood and business associations can provide you with the information needed to shape your testimony. Become familiar with the relevant sections of the Zoning Code, available online at [portlandonline.com/bds](http://portlandonline.com/bds).

**3) Identify issues important to you.**

Specify the aspects of the project you support or oppose. To be considered, your issues must be related to the relevant **approval criteria** or to criteria you think should have been addressed.

**4) Create an outline of your testimony.**

Base your outline on the relevant approval criteria. How does the proposal meet or not meet the approval criteria? It's also a good idea to rehearse and note the time. Typically, testimony will be limited to 3 to 5 minutes to ensure that all present have an opportunity to testify.

**5) Decide the format of your testimony.**

You may supplement your oral or written testimony with presentation boards, maps, photos, or powerpoint presentations. Ten (10) copies should be submitted to the Historic Landmarks Commission clerk, as follows:

**Written testimony** will be accepted prior to or at the hearing. Please provide 10 copies.

**Photographs** may be provided as part of your testimony. Please label and provide 10 copies of each photograph.

**Large scale maps or presentations** may also be part of your testimony. You must provide 10 reduced 8-1/2" by 11" copies.

*"If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to sleep in a room with a mosquito."*

*-- Anita Roddick*

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## 3. DAY OF THE HEARING

**Arrive early.** Hearings are usually held at the City of Portland's administrative building, 1900 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Room 2500A. Confirm the location and time of hearing: Agenda items are not time-certain. Check the Historic Landmarks Commission's calendar at [www.portlandonline.com/bds](http://www.portlandonline.com/bds) or contact the case planner for an estimated start time for your case.

*“The most common way people  
give up their power is by  
thinking they don’t have any.”*

*-- Alice Walker*

**Testimony.** Testimony cards are available as you enter Room 2500A. Please fill in the requested information. You may write comments on this card for the Historic Landmarks Commission to consider, even if you do not want to testify orally. To receive a copy of the final decision, you must provide your complete address. To receive additional related documents including staff reports, you must provide an email address. If you are submitting written testimony, provide 10 copies to the Historic Landmarks Commission clerk.

**Introducing your Testimony.** State your full name and address for the record. Speak directly into the microphone.

**Time Limits.** Generally, your testimony should be limited to 2 to 5 minutes. For hearings that involve a large number of testifiers, the Commission may request that testifiers adhere to a two (2) minute time limit in order for all testimony to be heard.

**Order of Presenters and Testifiers for a Public Hearing:**

| <b>Presenter/Testifier</b>                               | <b>Notes</b>   |
|--|--|
| 1. City Planner, Bureau of Development Services          | Presents summary of staff report, with photos of site and surrounds. If appeal, staff presents summary of administrative decision, and issues of appeal. |
| 2. Applicant   | Presents their proposed development project.   |
| 3. Public Testimony in Favor                             |  |
| 4. Public Testimony in Opposition                        | Presents arguments.  |
| 5. Applicant Rebuttal                                    |  |
| 6. Public Testimony closed                               |  |
| 7. Historic Landmarks Commission discussion and decision |  |

## 4. IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

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### EXAMPLE of a relevant Approval Criterion:

*The historic character of the property will be retained and preserved. Removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that contribute to the property's historic significance will be avoided.*

- **Your testimony can only address the applicable historic design guideline approval criteria.** State how you think the proposal meets or falls short of meeting the approval criteria. Historic design review approval criteria are stated in the administrative decision or staff recommendation and are referenced in Zoning Code Chapter 33.846.
- **Be clear about your position.** Your testimony should clarify your role and interest in the historic design review. For a Type III historic design review, do you agree with the staff recommendation? If not, what parts do you oppose? Or, in the case of a Type II appeal hearing, do you support the appeal and disagree with the administrative decision?
- **The burden of proof is on the land use review applicant** to show that each and every element of the approval criteria can be satisfied. Testifiers may argue the criteria are being incorrectly interpreted, the incorrect approval criteria are being applied, or additional approval criteria should be applied.
- **Testifying as a Group.** Instead of each group member restating the same issue, it is much more effective to have each group member address a different issue and to state that they support the previous testimony on an issue.
- **Requests to the Historic Landmarks Commission.** Any party may request that the hearing be continued or that the record be kept open.

## 5. AFTER THE RECORD CLOSES

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*A community is like a ship: everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm.*

– Henrik Ibsen

**When will the Historic Landmarks Commission make a final decision?** After discussion, the Historic Landmarks Commission will vote to either approve or deny a Type III proposal. In the case of a Type II Appeal, the Historic Landmarks Commission will vote to either uphold or deny the appeal. The decision may occur at the initial hearing or at a later public meeting. The decision is rendered and effective on the day the Commission votes?

**Who is notified of the final decision?** The Bureau of Development Services will mail the final decision to the applicant, owner, recognized organizations and persons who responded to the appeal notice, testified at the hearing, or requested notice of the decision.

**Appeal rights.** In the case of a Type II Appeal, the Historic Landmarks Commission's decision is a final land use decision and may not be appealed to another review body within the City. If you appeared before the Historic Landmarks Commission orally or in

writing, you may appeal the decision to the State Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) within 21 days of the date the Historic Landmarks Commission's final decision.

In the case of a Type III review, the Historic Landmarks Commission's decision may be appealed to the City Council.

## 6. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**Approval criteria.** The set of statements that must be answered, supported by facts, and be satisfied in their entirety in order for a proposal to be approved. Depending on the location of the proposal, historic design review approval criteria may be one or more of the following: specific historic district design guidelines, the Community Design Guidelines, the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines, Central City Plan subdistrict guidelines and/or Historic Approval Criteria in Section 33.846.060.G of the Portland Zoning Code. Approval criteria ensure that the proposal complies with the historic design guidelines specific to the area. The public notice, the staff report and recommendation, and the review body's decision describe the relevant approval criteria. Approval criteria are also stated during the public hearing.

**Burden of proof.** The burden to present facts and evidence demonstrating that the approval criteria have been satisfied.

**Continued hearing.** The review body may decide to continue the hearing to a future date. The review body will state the date and time of the continued hearing.

**Legislative actions.** Generally, legislative actions involve the adoption of law or policy citywide or to a broad geographical area of the city.

**Quasi-judicial actions.** Generally, quasi-judicial actions involve the application of existing law or policy to a small geographical area or a specific factual situation. Three factors distinguish quasi-judicial decisionmaking: (1) the process results in a decision; (2) pre-existing criteria are applied to facts to make a decision; and (3) the decision is directed at a closely circumscribed factual situation (site and proposal). A quasi-judicial process must include notice, an opportunity to be heard and present evidence; an impartial decisionmaker; and a written decision that explains the basis for the decision.

**Record closed.** After all testimony, evidence and rebuttal are submitted, the review body will end the public participation portion of the hearing. This means review body will accept no more oral or written testimony.

**Record held open.** A participant may request and the review body may decide to leave the record open until a specified date, to allow

submission of additional information and rebuttal of that information. The record will close after that date.

## 7. RESOURCES

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### HOW TO GIVE TESTIMONY AT PUBLIC HEARINGS

#### Tips:

- *Arrive early to sign up to testify. This will also allow you to listen to testimony from others.*
- *Be polite and project a positive image.*
- *Try to anticipate questions you may receive and consider how you would answer them.*

**Case Planner**, Bureau of Development Services (503) 823-7300 (or direct line listed on front page of the decision).

#### **Bureau of Development Services Website**

[www.portlandonline.com/bds](http://www.portlandonline.com/bds)

Zoning Code, land use review procedures. Land use decisions listed by neighborhood area. Historic Landmarks Commission agendas also posted.

#### **Bureau of Planning and Sustainability Website**

[www.portlandonline.com/bps](http://www.portlandonline.com/bps)

Historic Design Guidelines, Legislative Projects, District Liaison program, ongoing planning projects and studies

**Oregon Dept. of Land Conservation and Development**  
(503) 373-0050

[www.oregon.gov/lcd](http://www.oregon.gov/lcd)

Publications/citizen involvement.

Tips about How to Testify at Land Use Hearings.

**State Land Use Board of Appeals** (503) 373-1265

[www.oregon.gov/luba](http://www.oregon.gov/luba)

File an appeal, hearings schedules.