Division of Development Administration and Review
City of Pittsburgh, Department of City Planning
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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION OF PITTSBURGH

DESIGN GUIDELINES:
FAÇADE LIGHTING FOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Background and Policy

The Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission reviews and regulates all exterior alterations to City-designated Historic Landmarks and to structures within City-designated Historic Districts. The Commission conducts an established public process through which it may approve, deny, or suggest modifications to all proposals for exterior alterations which are visible from the public street or way.

The goal of the Commission's regulation is to preserve and protect the distinctive architectural and visual character of the structures, sites, and neighborhoods which are important to Pittsburgh's heritage.

All proposals for installation of exterior lighting on City Historic Landmarks or within the boundaries of City Historic Districts must be reviewed and approved by the Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission before these installations can take place.

The lighting of facades has the potential to enhance the character of historic buildings and/or districts by highlighting important architectural features and compositions. Therefore, the Historic Review Commission shall approve applications for the lighting of building facades when the following Guidelines are adhered to.

Guidelines

1. **Lighting design**:
   a. *Amount and intensity of light:* Illumination should be sufficient to "wash" a façade with light at night, taking into consideration other nearby lighting sources (street lighting, interior lighting, etc.). Lighting should be directed specifically at the façade(s) in question. It should not spill onto adjacent property, nor shine directly onto the street or into interior building spaces, and should minimize "light pollution" of the surrounding area. Lighting which scallops the building surface or distorts the building with shadows should be avoided.
   b. *Type of light:* Illumination should consist of clear light which does not distort the color of building materials and finishes. Colored bulbs or gels, high pressure sodium/sodium vapor bulbs, and tubular fluorescents are generally not appropriate for lighting historic building facades. Metal halide bulbs may not be appropriate for red or orange-colored facades.
   c. *Electrical equipment:* Lighting fixtures should be of minimum possible size. If possible, they should be hidden behind parapets, screened with landscaping, or attached to separate structures, such as light poles. If it is not possible to conceal light sources, they should be of inconspicuous color and design. Installation methods should not damage original building materials or finishes. Rust resistant hardware should be used to prevent staining of the façade. Wires and conduits should be kept off of primary building facades.
   d. *Test Projection:* The Historic Review Commission may ask to view a test projection of the proposed lighting on the building in question before acting on an application.
2. **Other Requirements:**

   Applicants are responsible for securing all relevant electrical permits from the City.