



WESTPORT<sup>SM</sup>

## Historic District Commission

Town Hall, 110 Myrtle Avenue  
Westport, CT 06880  
Westportct.gov  
Telephone (203) 341-1184

### HDC DEMOLITION POLICY – 5-9-2023

In the interest of fairly and equitably treating all applicants to the Westport Historic District Commission (“HDC”) for waiver of the automatic 180-day delay before a demolition permit may issue for structures over 500 square feet and over 50 years old, the HDC hereby clarifies its standard for consideration of granting such waiver pursuant to Sections 14-24 and 14-25 of the Town Ordinances.

1. The stated purpose of the ordinance is to impose a waiting period of not more than 180 days before the demolition of structures of historical, architectural, or cultural importance that will provide time for all interested parties to consider and put forth alternatives to demolition.
2. To consider waiving any portion of the 180-day waiting period, the HDC must be convinced that the structure in question does not have significant remaining historic, architectural, or cultural characteristics that would warrant the consideration of alternative options to demolition.
3. Should HDC determine that the structure in question *does* have significant remaining historic, architectural, or cultural characteristics, applicants will not initially be granted a waiver.
4. If the HDC has denied a waiver after a finding of historic, architectural, or cultural characteristics, Applicants may request that the HDC rescind its denial after providing evidence demonstrating, in the HDC’s sole discretion, that a good faith effort has been made to try to save the structure. Arguments that are not considered in the above deliberations are:
  - a. Financial hardship
  - b. Owner/contractor convenience
  - c. Pre-emptive statements by the owner that they will not seek alternatives to total demolition
5. Removal of existing architectural features prior to filing for a demolition permit—or after filing for a demolition permit—is viewed very unfavorably by HDC.
6. HDC recognizes that postwar structures in many cases do not include elements readily seen as having intrinsic value. In many cases, the original features have been removed or replaced over time—or inappropriate or out of scale additions have been made—thus making them likely candidates for waivers. However, a postwar structure with most of its original features intact is a less likely candidate for a waiver.
7. HDC recognizes that suburban housing developments are an important part of Westport’s history and aims to preserve them. This starts with encouraging the sensitive renovation and/or expansion of existing structures. However, should a significant number of neighboring residents be in support of granting a demolition waiver for a specific structure in a development, HDC will take this into consideration.
8. For pre-WW2 structures possessing significant historic, architectural, or cultural characteristics, HDC expects an increased commitment from the owner to investigating options for saving the structure.

Exceptions to policy beyond the above policy are to be granted for matters of Public Safety. Specifically, Section 14-27 of the Town Ordinances state that “The provisions of this article shall not apply to orders issued by the Director of the Health District or the Building Official for emergency application because of a threat to public health and/or safety.”

Adherence to the standards above should comport with the findings in the Westport Plan of Preservation as adopted.