



Department of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Kalamazoo Historic District Commission

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Historic District Commission Application  
HANDRAIL AND GUARDRAIL HEIGHT WAIVER

(See instructions on reverse side)

Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Add. \_\_\_\_\_  
City State & Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
FAX: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

Historic District: \_\_\_\_\_  
Owner: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing add \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
FAX: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

"Waiver of Handrail or Guardrail Height" based on 17-65(b)(5)(p.1072) of the Housing code - "Residences within historic districts shall conform to historical requirements when applicable". (See the back of this form for information on eligibility for this waiver\*)

**GUARDRAIL**

Is guardrail original? \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] **PHOTOS**  
[ ] Interior Current height\* \_\_\_\_\_  
Stairs ( ) Hall or landing ( )  
[ ] Exterior Current height\* \_\_\_\_\_  
Porch – front ( ) side ( ) Rear ( )

**HANDRAIL (grip rail)**

Is handrail original? \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] **PHOTOS**  
[ ] Interior Current height\* \_\_\_\_\_  
[ ] Exterior Current height\* \_\_\_\_\_  
Steps – front ( ) side ( ) Rear ( )

INFILL WAIVER (Where brick, stone or wooden wing walls provide "infill" on exterior steps.)

Material \_\_\_\_\_ Steps on front ( ) Side ( ) Rear ( )  
Height of wing wall at tallest \_\_\_\_\_

Housing Inspector \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Applicant and owner must both sign if different)

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**-For Historic Preservation Coordinator's Use Only-**

Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Review Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Site visit Date \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

HDC meeting date \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS \_\_\_\_\_

**FINAL ACTION**

[ ] Approve [ ] Site Visit [ ] Approve w/Conditions  
[ ] Deny [ ] Postpone [ ] Withdrawn

**Decision** [ ] HDC [ ] Coordinator  
**WAIVER ISSUED** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Historic Preservation Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Rental Property Handrail and Guardrail Waiver

**"Waiver of Handrail or Guardrail Height" based on 17-65(b)(5)(p.1072) of the Housing code, Code of Ordinances, City of Kalamazoo - "Residences within historic districts shall conform to historical requirements when applicable".**

**ELIGIBILITY:** To be eligible for the waiver of guardrail height and/or waiver of handrail or handrail height, the following conditions must be met:

- The Coordinator shall make a site visit or see current photos.
- The rental-housing inspector shall be notified and sign the application after it is submitted to the Coordinator.

**GUARDRAILS:** Guardrails are meant to define the edges of a raised surface such as a porch and to prevent persons from stepping or falling off the porch. A guardrail is required on all housing with a porch deck more than 30" above the ground. *It is up to the property owner to determine what their insurance company requires for a guardrail. (This should be done before application for a waiver is made.)*

1. The guardrail must be original to the house OR if reconstructed it must be appropriate to the time period and architectural style of the house and the design must be reviewed and approved by the commission or the coordinator.
2. The guardrail and columns must be sound and in good repair. This waiver is not meant to circumvent needed repairs. Application for the waiver will be granted only AFTER repairs are completed.

**HANDRAIL WAIVER:** Handrails are provided for the safety of persons going up and down the steps. It is highly recommended that, for liability reasons, landlords provide an appropriate grip rail for tenants. *It is up to the property owner to determine what their insurance company requires for a handrail. (This should be done before application for a waiver is made.)* In those cases where the landlord prefers to not have a handrail, the following issues will be considered:

1. Wing walls (or bolsters) flanking the steps are made of a masonry material such as stone or brick.
2. There are three or fewer rental units in the house.
3. The house is partly or wholly owner occupied.

**HANDRAIL HEIGHT:** Interior and exterior handrail height requirements may be considered for a waiver if the existing, original, historic handrail is in good repair.

### PHOTOS ARE REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL OF GUARDRAILS OR HANDRAILS

\* **Guardrail height** is measured from the upper surface of the porch deck to the upper surface of the top rail of the guardrail.

Once the **WAIVER** is approved by the Historic District Commission or the coordinator a copy will be placed on the BUILDING DEPARTMENT database in Code Administration and in the property files and inspectors will no longer cite guardrail height nor will they cite the lack of a handrail, the height of a handrail or required infill in systematic inspections. The inspectors will continue to cite the state of repair of handrails and guardrails.