

HVAC & MECHANICAL SYSTEMS

GUIDELINES – HVAC Equipment & Components:

Mechanical systems, including but not limited to air conditioning and heat pumps, where visible from the Public Way, are not appropriate to historic buildings. Proposals for systems should endeavor to locate all large equipment (condensers in particular) with no visibility from the Public Way and to minimize visibility of any smaller accessory equipment. Town of Marblehead bylaw §200-28 requires all freestanding exterior mechanical equipment, including but not limited to air conditioning units, compressors, condensers, and fans, to be visually screened, regardless of visibility from the Public Way, either by a method such as low fencing or evergreen vegetation. Dependent on site orientation and visibility from the Public Way, a built structure such as low fencing may be required to meet historic appropriateness. Freestanding equipment should not be located on primary facades or areas prominently visible from the Public Way. Equipment line sets (pipes, conduits, cables, and covers) can and should be routed inside the building just like traditional plumbing, either within a chase or embedded between wall studs. Alternatives to interior routing that obscure or disguise exterior line sets will be considered at the discretion of the Commission; however, horizontal sections of line sets are not permitted on the exterior where they would be visible from the Public Way.

PROCESS – HVAC Equipment & Components:

1. Complete and submit application for a COA
2. The application must include photos that best demonstrate proposed installation location(s) and any public views; photos must clearly show the proposed location(s). If the location is for new construction, only images of any public views are required.
3. Architects, designers, and drafters shall, whenever possible, include equipment locations in elevation and plan drawings for new construction and major renovations – OHDC will request these at the hearing otherwise, adding to an initial submission will help prevent delay.
4. OHDC Review/Determination:
 - a. Locations proposed where there is no visibility are usually addressed quickly to confirm that all components are not visible from any public way.
 - b. Locations proposed where there is minimal visibility, if approved by OHDC, are typically accompanied by a standard set of conditions (e.g., use of a particular type of fencing to obscure the condenser or other equipment/components, designation of a particular shielding for other components, etc.)