



**THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE
NEW YORK
BUILDING DEPARTMENT
62 CIVIC CENTER PLAZA, 2ND FLOOR
POUGHKEEPSIE, NY 12601**

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HISTORIC DISTRICT AND LANDMARKS PRESERVATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the local register of historic districts and landmarks?

The local register is a listing of properties that: a) Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; b) Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; c) Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or represent the work of a master or possess high artistic values or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction; and/or d) Have yielded or may yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Designation as a Local Historic District or Landmark offers the most protection for significant historic and architectural buildings. Allowing municipalities to establish districts and landmarks for which exterior architectural changes are reviewed by a local preservation commission helps ensure that alterations, additions or demolitions are in keeping with the special character of the district.

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of buildings, sites or areas worthy of preservation, but listing does not restrict what the property owner may do with the property unless the owner is using federal assistance.

What properties are on the local register?

There are three local historic districts:

1. Academy Street Historic District (encompassing 90 through 154 Academy Street, 113 through 151 Academy Street, 3 Barclay Street)
2. Garfield Place Historic District (encompassing all the properties on Garfield Place as well as 2 Barclay Street, 63 Montgomery Street and 69 Montgomery)
3. Dwight Street-Hooker Avenue Historic District (encompassing all the properties on Dwight Street as well as and 77 to 85 Hooker Avenue).

Individually designated local historic properties are 4 Balding Avenue, 24 Balding Avenue, 81 South Hamilton Street, 73 Mansion Street, 62 Montgomery Street, The Nelson House at 28 Market Street, and the Porter's Lodge at Springside at 20 Springside Drive, and the Hoffman House and Reynolds Homestead, both located at 83 North Water Street.

All of these districts and landmarks are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

How do I apply and what documents should I submit with the application?

You apply to the HDLPC by filing a completed application package to the Building Department. The application form, with detailed instructions, is available from the Building Department upon request. It is recommended that all applicants read the instructions carefully. Incomplete applications may not be acted upon, causing delay in the overall review of a project. Applications to the HDLPC should be made at least two weeks prior to the HDLPC meeting date. At the current time, there is no fee for review by the HDLPC.

How long does it take to get a decision and how will I be notified of the commission's decision?

Upon receiving an application, the HDLPC must first decide if the application is complete. Once the application has been accepted as complete, the HDLPC must approve, modify and approve or disapprove applications within thirty (30) days. If the HDLPC fails to act within thirty (30) days, the application is deemed to have been approved. Most often, decisions are made immediately upon review and discussion of the application. The HDLPC may also call a public hearing and call witnesses, including historians, architects, and engineers, planning consultants or other experts to aid in their review.

Does the city have any tax incentives, loans or grants for restoring a landmark home?

The City has a tax incentive program that is "intended to create a real property tax exemption that preserves or increases the historic character of real property located within the City of Poughkeepsie." Section 14-83 of the Code of Ordinances, entitled "Historic property tax exemption," describes the parameters of this program. Questions should be directed to the Office of the Tax Assessor at 451-4040, or check online at <http://cityofpoughkeepsie.com/charter/chaset.html>.

From time to time, the Office of Property Development develops programs offering grants or low interest loans to property owners desirous of improving their property. Questions about any current programs should be directed to that office at 451-4020.

Why would I want my property included in a historic district?

Local historic districts were set up to protect the investment of owners and residents of historic properties and protect historic areas from loss of historic fabric. Research by the National Trust for Historic Preservation has found that local historic districts provide the following benefits to their community and to their owners and residents:

- Local districts encourage better quality design
- Local districts help the environment by conserving the resources they contain and contributing to neighborhood revitalization
- Local districts retain the important sense of place that makes a city unique
- Local districts enhance business recruitment potential
- Local districts can result in positive economic impact from heritage tourism
- Local districts provide a tangible link to the past; a way to bring meaning and history to people's lives

What effect will being in a historic district have on my property?

Having a property in a historic district is a source of pride and honor for many property owners. Historic district designation often encourages maintenance of properties because the investment is better protected over a long period of time. Owners know that the aspects that make a particular neighborhood special will be retained. Often property values stabilize or increase as a result of historic district designation.

Will I be forced to restore my building?

No, you will not be forced to improve your building.

Will being in a historic district raise my taxes?

No. Re-assessment occurs periodically on a city-wide basis. Inclusion of a building in a historic district will not trigger re-assessment nor cause it to be singled out for additional taxes.

Does the ordinance restrict what I can do with the interior of my property?

No. Poughkeepsie's Historic Preservation Ordinance does not allow review of interior alterations. It only applies to changes in the exterior appearance of the building.

Won't it be more expensive for me to repair or remodel my property in accordance with the ordinance?

Not necessarily. There are many different materials and methods that may be used for most preservation projects. Repair is preferable over replacement and is often less expensive.

What is the Historic District and Landmark Preservation Commission, and what does it do?

The City of Poughkeepsie Historic Districts and Landmarks Preservation Commission (HDLPC) is responsible for reviewing applications for permission to alter historic buildings and properties, and for recommending designation of historic landmarks and historic districts.

Any individual or group may nominate a building or place for designation as a Historic Structure, Historic Site, or Historic District. The HDLPC reviews the applications and makes a recommendation to the Common Council that a structure or site should be declared historic. The HDLPC may also, on its own motion, make recommendations for designation to the Common Council. The Council then acts upon the HDLPC's recommendation.

Once an historic structure, historic site, or historic district designation has been approved by the Common Council, the structure, site or district is under the protection of the City of Poughkeepsie's Historic Preservation Ordinance, and changes to the exterior require the owner to obtain approval from the HDLPC prior to commencement of any work. This approval is the HDLPC's written affirmation that a proposed change is sympathetic to the historic character of the property and consistent with the intent of the ordinance.

Who is on the HDLPC, and when do they meet?

The seven members of the HDLPC are appointed by the Mayor. The commissioners are dedicated citizens, including architects, attorneys and historians selected for their interest and skills in historic preservation. Meetings are held on the 3rd floor of City Hall in Common Council Chambers on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7pm. Occasionally, due to holidays, meetings need to be rescheduled. Therefore, it is advisable to call the Building Department at 451-4007 to confirm the meeting date and time. The HDLPC does not accept "walk-in" applications at meetings.

Under what circumstances do I need to apply for approval from the Preservation Commission?

If your house is listed on the local register as a local landmark or part of a historic district, all exterior alterations, additions, and demolitions require review by the HDLPC. This includes alterations that do not require building permits.

Exterior alterations include, but are not limited to the following: Removal or replacement of architectural detailing including, but not limited to, porch spindles, columns, railings, window moldings, cornices; construction of additions or

decks; window and door replacement; installation of storm/screen windows; masonry work; roof and/or gutter replacement with a different material; siding replacement with a different material; removal of walks or replacement of walks with a different material; construction of new walks or driveways; construction or removal of fences and walls; enclosure of porches; placement of antennas, solar panels, satellite dishes; altering, removing or replacing accessory structures such as garages or carriage houses

Altering, removing or adding significant landscape features are also projects reviewed by the HDLPC. The key word is *significant*. The HDLPC does not review every plant, but it does review character-defining landscape features, such as large trees, fencing, driveways, walkways or changes to a historic garden designed by a known landscape architect.

Ordinary repair and maintenance does **not** require review by the HDLPC. Generally, ordinary repair and maintenance is characterized by minor “like for like” replacement of materials (for example, replacing rotted wood sashes with new wood sashes of the same appearance, repainting of previously painted surfaces using same paint colors, etc.). Ordinary maintenance does not change the external appearance of the building except through the elimination of the usual and expected effects of weathering. For example, if you replace some rotted clapboards on the side of your house with clapboards of the same wood, width and thickness it would be ordinary maintenance. However, if you planned to remove your 20-inch diameter porch posts and replace them with 5-inch diameter posts you would be altering the appearance of the building which would require HDLPC review.

All projects and buildings are different, and answers to specific questions may also differ. **It is always best to check before beginning work.** If you are unsure if your project needs approval, **please contact Judith Knauss in the Building Department at 451-4010.**

What criteria are used to decide whether an alteration is appropriate?

The HDLPC must follow a set of standards when reviewing permit applications. The HDLPC has adopted “Standards for Rehabilitation,” federal guidelines established by the Secretary of the Interior (online at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rhb/>). “Rehabilitation” is defined as *“returning a property to a state of utility through repair or alteration which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural and cultural values.”*

This definition assumes that at least some repair or alteration will be needed in order to provide for an efficient contemporary use; however, these repairs and alterations must not damage or destroy materials, features or finishes that are important in defining the building’s historic character. The following rehabilitation principles guide commission decisions:

- ❖ Retain distinguishing qualities and characteristics.
- ❖ Repair existing features, materials and finishes. If deteriorated, replace in kind.
- ❖ Be authentic: if a feature is missing, use historic documentation to guide replacement.
- ❖ Respect the evolution of historic changes, fashion, taste, and use.
- ❖ Do not use treatments that damage historic materials (for example, improper repointing or exterior masonry cleaning techniques that may cause or accelerate building deterioration).
- ❖ New construction should not destroy historic features or materials, nor alter historic character. Additions and new work should be compatible with the historic property.

Where can I find more information?

The HDLPC is committed to helping homeowners find solutions to old house challenges. We have compiled a binder of articles on rehab products, suppliers, paint colors, materials, and restoration techniques which is available at the

reference desk of Adriance Memorial Library (topics include: storm windows, doors, shutters, repairing historic windows, specialty glass, sills, slate roofs, metal roofs, gutters and leader boxes, clay and concrete tile roofs, cresting and metalwork, wood shingle roofing, period landscaping, choosing paint colors, adding a new garage, choosing brick and mortar, columns, siding, porch parts, evaluating substitute materials).

If you would like to investigate the history of your property in depth, please contact the Local History Librarian at Adriance Memorial Library at 485-3445 x 3311. Hours are by appointment.

The HDLPC frequently works with owners to resolve problems or suggest solutions even prior to the owner applying for a permit. To make an appointment to discuss questions or concerns prior to submitting an application, **please contact Judith Knauss in the Building Department 451-4010.**

HELPFUL WEBSITES

nationaltrust.org (National Trust for Historic Preservation)

ncptt.nps.gov (National Center for Preservation Technology)

nysparks.state.ny.us (NYS Historic Preservation Office)

preservenys.org (Preservation League of New York State) www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm
(National Park Service Preservation Briefs)

preservationweb.com (Preservation Web)

preservationdirectory.com (Preservation Directory)

period-homes.com (Period Homes)

oldhousejournal.com (Old House Journal Online)

newoldhousemag.com (Old House Journal's New Old House)

<http://www.traditional-building.com> (Traditional Building)

valsparatlowes.com/lowes/at/national_trust.jsp (Valspar at Lowe's The American Tradition® National Trust paint palette)