



**THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE
NEW YORK**

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HISTORIC DISTRICT AND LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

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. A property must demonstrate at least one of these significance areas to be placed on the local register. Although sometimes properties demonstrate multiple types of significance, only one type of significance is necessary to qualify for designation.

Why is a local list of landmarks important when we already have a state and national list?

Designating 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 or the individual landmark.

The National Register of Historic Places is the federal list of buildings, sites or areas worthy of preservation, but listing does not prevent demolition or severe alteration unless the owner is using federal financial assistance.

What properties are on the local register?

There are three local historic districts:

1. Academy Street Historic District (encompassing 88 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 Street)

3. Dwight Street-Hooker Avenue Historic District (encompassing all the properties on Dwight Street as well as 120 S. Hamilton Street and 79, 81, 83 and 85 Hooker Avenue).

34 individually designated local historic properties include:

20 Academy Street (Lady Washington Fire House)
21 Academy Street (Enquirer Building)
4 Balding Avenue (Hermance House)
24 Balding Avenue (Hasbrouck House)
148 Cannon Street (Governor George Clinton School No. 8)
204 Church Street (Cannon House)
11 Davies Place (Holy Comforter)
16 Davies Place (Harloe House)
18 Davies Place (Levi Lumb House)
1 Grand Street (Zimmer House/St. John the Baptist Rectory)
3 Grand Street (St. John the Baptist/First German Evangelical Lutheran)
115 Hooker Avenue (Morschauer House)
284 Main Street (Welles-Zimmerman Building - DEMOLISHED 2009)
317 Main Street (Grant Building)
328 and 330 Main Street (Livingston Buildings)
370 Main Street (French Pastry Shop)
635 Main Street (Glebe House)
73 Mansion Street (Cossum House)
28 Market Street (Nelson House – DEMOLISHED 2012)
120 Market Street (Soldiers Fountain and Park)
57 Montgomery Street (Bain House)
62 Montgomery Street (Jacob Corlies House)
149 N. Clinton Street (Clarence Lown Memorial Rock Garden at College Hill Park)
149 N. Clinton Street and 12 Bartlett Street (College Hill Park)
36 N. Clover Street (Pelton Mansion and Wheaton Park)
83 N. Water Street (Hoffman House and Reynolds Homestead)
55 Noxon Street (Barrett Art Center)
81 S. Hamilton Street (Currier House)
85 S. Hamilton Street (Corlies-Brinckerhoff-Rutherford House)
87 S. Hamilton Street (Wilkinson House)
103 S. Hamilton Street (Corlies-Ritter-Hart House)
20 Springside Drive (Springside Porter's Lodge)
20 Springside Drive (22-acre Springside Landscape)
83 Worrall Avenue (Travis House).

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 (see Section 19-4.5 of the city code). Changes to the exterior require the owner to obtain an approval (also known as a "Certificate of Appropriateness" or COA) 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 and must include an architect, a historian and a preservationist. Three members must live in a historic district or landmark. All members must have a demonstrated interest in historic preservation and architectural development in the City of Poughkeepsie. Meetings are held on the 3rd floor of City Hall in Common Council Chambers on the second Thursday of the month at 7pm. Occasionally, due to holidays, meetings need to be rescheduled. Therefore, it is advisable to check the city's website calendar or call the Planning Department at 451-4047 to confirm the meeting date and time. The HDLPC does not accept "walk-in" applications at meetings.

If I own a historic property, under what circumstances do I need to apply for approval from the Preservation Commission?

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

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 the Planning Department at 451-4047.

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 (<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehab/stand.htm>). “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.

How do I apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA), and what documents should I submit with the application?

You apply to the HDLPC by submitting a completed application package to the Building Department's intake officer. The application form, with detailed instructions, is available from the Building Department at City Hall or by downloading the application from the HDLPC page on the city's website. 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, approve with conditions or disapprove applications within forty-five (45) days. 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, 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 property?

1. 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 in more detail.) Under this program, historic properties may be exempted for a period of time from tax increases resulting from rehabilitation projects that add assessed value to a property. Applications for such exemptions must be submitted to the City Tax Assessor *prior to the start* of any rehabilitation project. Questions and applications for a real property historic tax exemption should be directed to the City Tax Assessor at 451-4039.

2. From time to time, the City 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 the Planning Department at 451-4047.

3. For properties that are listed on the National and State Register of Historic Places and are located within distressed census tracts, New York State and the federal government offer historic tax credit programs to help offset the cost of rehabilitating historic properties. Almost all of Poughkeepsie is located within distressed census tracts that would qualify National and State listed historic properties to apply for these benefits. For more information on these state and federal financial incentive programs, visit the New York State Office of Historic Preservation website at <https://parks.ny.gov/shpo/tax-credit-programs/>.

Why would I want my property included in a local 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 property.

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.

Where can I find more information?

The HDLPC is committed to helping homeowners find solutions to old house challenges. We are happy to meet with property owners prior to a formal application. Please call the Planning Department at 451-4047 to schedule an appointment or to request time on a meeting agenda.

Please explore the HDLPC page on the city's website to read informational and how-to articles on common preservation topics like repairing old windows, adding a deck, placing solar panels, selecting historic paint colors, and more. Follow us on Facebook where we delve into Poughkeepsie's architectural heritage and share the latest in preservation news.

If you would like to investigate the history of your property in depth, please contact the Local History Librarian at Adriance Memorial Library at (845) 485-3445 x3350. Hours are by appointment.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

National Trust for Historic Preservation

<https://savingplaces.org/>

New York State Office of Historic Preservation

<https://parks.ny.gov/shpo/>

Preservation League of New York State

<https://www.preservenys.org/preserve-new-york>

National Park Service Preservation Briefs

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm>

The Preservation Directory

<https://www.preservationdirectory.com/HistoricalPreservation/Home.aspx>

Period Homes Magazine

<https://www.period-homes.com/>

Old House Journal Magazine

<https://www.oldhouseonline.com/>

Old House Interiors

<https://www.oldhouseonline.com/tag/old-house-interiors>

This Old House

<https://www.thisoldhouse.com/>

Traditional Building Magazine

<https://www.traditionalbuilding.com/>