



Living and Working
in a Historic District
*A Guide for
Owners of Historic Properties
in Newark, New Jersey*



Newark Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission

OFFICE OF PLANNING, ZONING & SUSTAINABILITY

City Hall, Room 112, 920 Broad Street, Newark, NJ 07102

Tel: 973.733.6204

HON. RAS J. BARAKA, Mayor

Living and Working in a Historic District

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Newark is the third oldest major city in the United States. It was founded in 1666 by a group of Puritan families seeking a place where they could practice their religion without persecution. The city reached its peak of growth between 1826 and 1930. During this period people came from all over the world to find a better life. Commerce, industry, and neighborhoods flourished leaving a rich architectural heritage and history for the current generation.

In an effort to protect its architectural and historic heritage, individual buildings and districts in Newark have been designated as “historic,” and may be placed on the local, state and national register of historic places. This guide attempts to guide owners of designated sites of their responsibilities in adhering to the municipal ordinance concerning historic properties.

How can I find out if I my property has been designated as “historic,” or is located in a historic district? You can call the Secretary of the Commission at 973.733.6204; it will help if you have your block and lot number, or the street address and the cross street.

What does historic designation mean? This designation means that your building has special historical, cultural, or aesthetic value and is an important part of Newark’s heritage. As such the Commission or the Historic Preservation Officer must approve in advance any work on the building that changes its appearance if it is visible from a public street.

What is a historic district? A historic district is an area of the city that has been designated by the Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission because it has special character or a special historical or aesthetic interest which causes it to have a distinct “sense of place.” Each historic district represents at least one period or style of architecture typical of one or more eras in the city’s history. Historic districts may contain a variety of building types and styles from several different eras.

My building is located in a historic district. Do I need the Commission's approval to make changes and repairs? Yes. Every designated structure, whether it is an individual landmark or a building in a historic district, is protected under the landmark ordinance and subject to the same review procedures. If you want to perform minor work or make alterations to your building (with the exception of the ordinary repairs mentioned below) you must obtain the Commission's approval before you begin the work. For example, approval by the Commission is needed for the repair and replacement of windows and roofs.

Do I need the Commission's approval to put a fence around my property, repave my driveway or repair my garage? Yes. All elements of the property, not just the structure are integral to the historic nature of the property and to the District.

Are there any types of work that do not require the Commission's approval? Ordinary exterior repairs and maintenance such as replacing broken glass or removing graffiti do not require the Commission's approval. Approval for interior work is needed when 1) it will effect the exterior appearance of the building; 2) when the work requires a permit from the Buildings Department; and 3) when work on the interior affects the exterior. The Historic Preservation Officer can tell you whether an approval is needed for the work you are considering.

What are some of the factors that the Commission considers when it reviews my application? The Commission uses the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, as well as locally generated guidelines (as they become available), to evaluate the effect of the proposed work on the architectural and historical character of your building and/or the historic district.

I own a building in an historic district that is less than fifty years old. Why does the Commission review changes to my building? The Commission must review the proposed changes to your building to make sure the overall design is sensitive to the scale and character of the historic district and that alterations will not detract from the special qualities of the surrounding buildings in the district. If you apply to the Commission to make changes to your building, the Commission will take into account the fact that your building is a contemporary structure.

Will landmark designation prevent all alterations and new construction? No. Landmark designation does not “freeze” a building or an area. Alterations, demolition, and new construction continue to take place, but the Commission must review the proposed changes and find them to be appropriate before you can proceed.

How can I find architects or contractors who have experience with historic buildings?

When selecting an architect or contractor, you should keep in mind that many professionals are not accustomed to working on historic buildings or with renovation methods that are sensitive to the historic character of old buildings. Ask professionals about their experience with landmark buildings and whether they are familiar with the Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission application process. Request references and look at completed projects. The Commission does not recommend restoration professionals. Owners of historic buildings in your neighborhood may be able to provide information about contractors they have used.

I own a designated building. Should I tell the tenants in my building about the building’s landmark status? Yes. If a tenant makes alterations before receiving Commission approval, the building owner will be held responsible.

I want to sell my landmark building. Must I tell the Commission? No. Landmark designation places no restriction on an owner’s right to sell a property. When selling a landmark property be sure and to inform the new owner of its designation so that they may adhere to the ordinance.

My designated building is no longer cost effective. May I demolish it? You may demolish it; however, approval of the Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission is necessary. Your application must meet the criteria for demolition as outlined in the Newark Preservation Ordinance. It is hoped that the owner of any landmark building would approach the office of the Commission to see if there would be any way in which the building could be saved.

How do I obtain an application to do work on my historic designated property, or find out more about the Historic Preservation Commission? You may call the Historic Preservation Officer at 973.733.6204 to obtain an application to do work on historic designated properties, or to find out the meeting schedule of the Commission. These are public meetings and are open to all concerned citizens.

How does historic preservation affect my property value? Historic designation is an important tool that can stabilize and increase the value of your property, provided owners of historic properties and residents of historic districts abide by the provisions of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Neighborhoods such as Greenwich Village and Harlem in New York City, or Georgetown in Washington, D.C., have experienced revitalization through historic designation. The Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission will help owners of historic properties to ensure that their property values are not compromised by inappropriate or insensitive alterations.

*Cover: Lake Street Residence, c. 1920, Newark, New Jersey
Courtesy of The Newark Public Library*



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