

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN WESTFIELD

Revisions to the HPC Ordinance: The Facts

Master Plan 2002: Goals and Objectives

To promote the conservation of the various historical sites, structures and districts in Westfield by:

- **identifying** the various historic sites, structures and districts that exist
- establishing **appropriate regulations** for the preservation of historic sites and structures
- establishing appropriate regulations that encourage development and redevelopment in historic districts to be **compatible** with existing historic structures and sites in the district



Master Plan 2002: Goals and Objectives

- The 2002 Master Plan recommended that the Town of Westfield apply to the Office of New Jersey Heritage to receive **Certified Local Government** status (CLG)
- As a CLG, Westfield would be eligible for special **Historic Preservation Fund grants**



Certified Local Government Program

- The Certified Local Government (CLG) program offers municipalities the opportunity to participate in **state and federal historic preservation programs**. Participation requires that a municipality have a historic preservation ordinance and historic preservation commission conforming to the specifications of both the Municipal Land Use Law and the National Park Service approved New Jersey Certified Local Government Guidelines. As a CLG, the community is eligible to apply for **Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grants** for a variety of local preservation activities.

Historic Preservation Fund Grants

Goals of Historic Preservation Fund Grants to identify all buildings, sites, and districts which are significant in American historic, architecture, archaeology and engineering, and which meet the criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as well as to design and implement planning tools for the protection of these resources.

Typical projects include:

- Historic Preservation Plans
- Historic resource surveys
- National Register nominations
- Historic preservation education projects
- Historic structures reports
- CLG training opportunities

2019 Master Plan Reexamination: Guiding Principles

- As we grow, we will **strive to preserve the attributes of our unique, hometown character and community identity**, the beauty of our natural environment, and the strengths of our neighborhoods, while lessening the adverse effects of growth
- We will **retain the best qualities of a small town and respect its heritage**, while embracing the opportunities that new technologies, programs and concepts in urban design provide
- We will **maintain and enhance the historic and human orientation of our Downtown** as the center of our community

2019 Master Plan Reexamination: Guiding Principles

- We realize that **architectural and land use design is fundamental to our identity**
- As Westfield progresses into the future, special attention will be given to **promoting high quality residential and commercial development that reflects aesthetic excellence**
- We will **preserve our single family neighborhoods while providing housing choices that will allow people to age in place**



Master Plan Reexamination Results

- **80%** of survey respondents agreed that historic preservation is a worthwhile goal for the Town
- Preservation of historic properties **strengthens neighborhoods by raising home values** and adding local character, charm, and a sense of **civic pride**
- Preservation creates **positive economic benefits by building on the existing and unique assets of an area**, which in turn attracts visitors, new residents, and investment
- **Historic preservation is an excellent agent for managing growth and change**

Master Plan Reexamination: Demolitions

- One of the most concerning trends that came up in the re-exam survey is the **teardown of older homes** which are then replaced by larger homes on the same sized residential lot. In addition to the dislike of these **overdeveloped lots**
- According to the Zoning Department, **2000 to 2015**, there was a net loss of **643** housing units due to demolition (6 in 2000, 85 in 2015)
- In the next 4 years, from **2016 to 2020**, there were **an additional 259 demolitions**



RECENT DEMOLITIONS:

Since the year 2000, over 900 homes have been razed and replaced with new construction. Here are a few:



RECENT DEMOLITIONS:

Changing the Economic Diversity of our Town



Ernest Flagg - renowned beaux-arts style architect, built the Singer Tower and the Scribner Building in NYC, as well as the Corcoran Gallery of Art in D.C. but also known for these English Style stone cottages. This one featured in his 1922 book *Small Houses: Their Economic Design and Construction* is now gone.



Existing Historic Preservation Ordinance

- The existing ordinance was **created in 1984** with revisions in 2008 and was approved by the Town Council in 1986 in an effort to protect the town's history.
- Existing ordinance is **direct conflict** with the MLUL, as it includes a voting procedure for the creation of any historic district.
- The existing ordinance includes **inadequate wording** regarding what kinds of changes would trigger a minor versus a major submission for a COA.

Enabling Legislation of the MLUL

- Municipalities in New Jersey **obtain their authority** to identify, evaluate, designate, and regulate historic resources (individual sites and districts) from the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL), the enabling legislation for municipal land use and development planning, zoning, and, **since 1986**, historic preservation zoning.
- A 1999 survey by the HPO of New Jersey's 566 municipalities revealed that 165 communities had historic preservation commissions established by local ordinance. **The historic preservation ordinance is an extension of the municipality's zoning laws**, and should be tailored to the community's character and historic preservation goals.

Proposed Revision: Historic Preservation Ordinance

- The existing ordinance **does not comply** with the current Municipal Land Use Law of NJ.
- Only the elected Town Council is able to designate historical districts and sites.
 - Current legal stance: Michigan, Delaware, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New York and Massachusetts among others.
 - zoning by referendum is not allowed in the State of NJ



Proposed Revision: Historic Preservation Ordinance

- Lowers the threshold from the existing ordinance for petitions of protest (20% vs. 25%)
- Institutes a requirement for a super majority vote of $\frac{2}{3}$ of the Town Council to override written petition of protest
- The HPC has advisory input only. This adds an Historic Commission review process step for any site plan, subdivision, or variance request related to properties identified in the Historic Plan Element of the MP with those already designated.



Proposed Revision: Historic Preservation Ordinance

Based on feedback from designated homeowners:

- Removes the requirement to submit exterior paint colors to the HPC for approval
- Removes the fees associated with submitting an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness



Proposed Revision: Historic Preservation Ordinance

Based on feedback from designated homeowners:

- Adds an informal review process to expedite understanding of proposed plans
- Adds the ability to waive items for non-relevancy when reviewing Certificates of Appropriateness submissions



Proposed Revision: Historic Preservation Ordinance

- Includes a demolition provision review process for homes built prior to 1930
- Provides visibility into demolition before destruction of historical assets.
 - Allows time for possible designation by the Town Council (National Register of Historic Places Criteria 36 SFR 60.4)
 - HPC and Planning Board input



Proposed Revision: Historic Preservation Ordinance

Misconceptions

- The Historic Preservation Commission - Advisory Board Unchanged from existing ordinance.
- The HPC only has purview over changes to the exterior of homes. The HPC has no jurisdiction over any interior modifications. Unchanged
- The criteria utilized by the Historic Preservation Commission in the creation of advisory reports is based on the National Register of Historic Places Criteria of Eligibility(36 CFR 60.4). Unchanged

Benefits: Revised Ordinance

- Creates public oversight:
Demolition of historic sites and structures
- Improves the communication:
Planning Board/Board of Adjustments/Historic Preservation
Commission
- Facilitates a more in-depth understanding
Historical/cultural/architectural significance of the subject property
before a demolition permit is issued

Benefits: Revised Ordinance

- Provides for HPC review: site plan, subdivision or variance requests for designated properties and listed in the historic preservation element of the Master Plan **before a subdivision is granted**
- Provides Certified Local Government option gaining access to State and Federal historic preservation programs/funds to aid in historic preservation.

Economic Benefits to Historic Preservation

- Rehabilitation offers a **higher return on investment** in terms of job creation than new construction or manufacturing. (Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers Univ.)
- For every \$1 million spent on rehabilitation, **14.6 jobs are created** (Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs)
- Preservation work depends more heavily on the work of craftsmen than the purchase of raw materials. **Preservation more directly benefits local businesses than new construction.** Community preservation attract visitors, new residents, and investment.



Arcanum Hall, Westfield, N. J.

Economic Benefits to Historic Preservation

- Nearly all Millennials (**97%**) feel it's important to preserve and conserve buildings, architecture, neighborhoods, and communities (Millennial Research Report from National Trust for Historic Preservation 2017)
- Restoring older commercial and residential buildings is **environmentally responsible**. Historic preservation, as a form of infill development, provides usable and attractive buildings on land that is already developed and reduces reliance on environmentally unfriendly building materials and energy intensive production of new building materials
- **Historical downtowns:** \$252 in sales per visit compared to \$157 for non-historical towns



Frequently Asked Questions

- FAQs on HPC page of town website
- Email HPC@Westfieldnj.gov

“Properties within local historic districts appreciate at rates greater than the local market overall and faster than similar non-designated neighborhoods”

- Donovan Rypkema, Professor at University of Pennsylvania and author of *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide*

