



*A Guide for Owners of  
Historic Properties  
in Newark, New Jersey*

# A Guide for Owners of Historic Properties in Newark, New Jersey

The City of Newark's rich architectural history and cultural heritage are reflected in its seven designated historic districts: *Forest Hill, Four Corners, James Street Commons, Lincoln Park, Military Park Commons, North Broad Street, and Weequahic Park.*

Newark is the third oldest major city in the United States. Founded in 1666 by a group of Puritan families in search of a place to practice their religion without persecution, the pursuit of freedom continues today as people of all religions and cultures settle in Newark in search of a better life. The city experienced its greatest growth between 1826 and 1930 when commerce and industry flourished and housing construction was at its peak. It was during these decades that Newark's now-historic neighborhoods were established, leaving a legacy for the current generation to honor through preservation.

To protect this unique heritage, certain individual buildings and districts in Newark have been identified as "historic" and placed on the local, state, and national registers of historic places. This means that if you own a historic property, changes that you wish to make to it must adhere to the appropriate Newark Landmarks and Historic Preservation Regulations in the city's Municipal Ordinance (see page 200).

**[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QOtceZHWTCaQUDE4RGz7Ax\\_Ff09c9rjw/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QOtceZHWTCaQUDE4RGz7Ax_Ff09c9rjw/view)**

This guide informs and instructs owners of designated sites of their responsibilities regarding their historic properties, as detailed in the Ordinance referred to above.

**What is a historic district?** A historic district is an area of the city that has been designated by the Municipal Council, upon the recommendation of the Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission, as having a unique character or a special historical or aesthetic interest resulting in 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. For example, Forest Hill in the North Ward contains many different residential home styles such as Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Queen Anne, the majority of which were constructed between 1880 and 1930.



**What is the Newark Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission?** The Newark Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission (“the Commission”) is the Newark agency that administers the city’s historic preservation ordinance, enacted in 1990. The Commission is responsible for protecting Newark’s buildings and neighborhoods that are architecturally, historically, and culturally significant by recommending them for landmark or historic district status, and regulating them once they have been designated. The Commission consists of nine commissioners with two alternates, and is required by law to include a minimum of two architects.

**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 must approve—in advance—all types of work on the building that could change its appearance and is visible from a public street.

**How can I find out if my property is designated as “historic” or is located in a historic district?** You can call the Secretary of the Commission at 973.733.6204 with your block and lot number (from your tax bill), or the street address and the cross street, and the office will advise you whether your property is located within a historic district and must adhere to the Ordinance guidelines and procedures.

**How does historic preservation affect my property’s 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 Newark Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission will assist owners of historic properties to ensure that their property’s value is not compromised by inappropriate or insensitive alterations.

**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 in your application and find them to be appropriate before you can proceed.



**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 municipal landmark ordinance and subject to the same review procedures. If you want to perform even minor work or make alterations to your building (except for the ordinary repairs mentioned below), you must obtain the Commission's approval before you begin the work.

**What is the difference between a key and contributing building in a historic district?**

Within a historic district, buildings are categorized as key, contributing and non-contributing. A key designation is applied to a building or property that has architectural, cultural, or historic significance and would qualify as an individual landmark. A contributing designation is applied to buildings or properties within the historic district that have architectural, cultural, or historic qualities that contribute to the significance of the overall district. A non-contributing designation applies to buildings that do not have qualities that make them significant.

**What are some examples of where and when I need the Commission's approval to do work on my historic property?** All elements of your property, not just the structure, are integral to the historic nature of the property and to its historic district. Following are some examples of work that must be approved IN ADVANCE by the Commission:

- Painting the house exterior a different color
- Replacing windows and doors
- Repairing, replacing, or changing shingles and/or siding
- Replacing the roof
- Removing Yankee gutters
- Installing solar panels
- Installing a fence
- Repaving the driveway
- Erecting structures in your front yard

Also, approval in advance by the Commission is required for interior work when:

- the work requires a permit from the Building Department, or
- work on the interior affects the exterior appearance of the building

*Please note that all interior and exterior work must adhere to the Municipal Building Code for your safety and that of your neighbors.*



**Newark Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission**  
DIVISION OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**How do I obtain an application to do work on my historic designated property, or find out more about the Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission?**

Applications to do work on historic designated properties can be obtained at the link

**[www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2017-LHPC-APPLICATION\\_Revised.pdf](http://www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2017-LHPC-APPLICATION_Revised.pdf)**

You may also call the Historic Preservation Secretary at 973.733.6204 to obtain

an application. That office can also advise you of the Commission's meeting schedule.

These are public meetings and are open to all concerned citizens.

**[www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/landmarks-historic-preservation-commission/](http://www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/landmarks-historic-preservation-commission/)**

**What is the application process for doing work on a historic property?**

1. The property owner must submit a completed application to the Historic Preservation Secretary not less than fourteen (14) days before the public meeting. The application must be complete and detailed with photos of the property, drawings, samples of materials, and all elements necessary to describe the proposed work.
2. The property owner or their agent must deliver the completed application and attachments in person to Room 112, Newark City Hall, 920 Broad Street. The Historic Preservation Secretary will review the application and advise the amount of the filing fee, which will be a minimum of \$40, and increasing depending upon the extent of the work involved. The filing fee must be paid by money order or business check, no personal checks, credit cards or cash can be accepted.
3. The Commission's Design Review Staff will review the application and determine whether the proposed work satisfies the criteria for doing work on a historic property. If it is satisfactory and can proceed as is, a "Certificate of No Effect" will be issued. If it is not satisfactory or complete, the application must be presented to the Commission at a public hearing for review and discussion.
4. The Commission's public meetings are usually held on the first Wednesday of every month. A calendar for the meetings is available on the City of Newark website:  
**[www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/landmarks-historic-preservation-commission/](http://www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/landmarks-historic-preservation-commission/)**
5. Once the application has been approved, either by the Commission staff or by the Commission at a hearing, the certificate and permit (if necessary) must be displayed prominently on the property while the work is being done.



**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. The Historic Preservation Secretary can tell you whether an approval is needed for the work you are considering.

**In 2018 the State of New Jersey changed its Building Code regarding ordinary maintenance (N.J.A.C. 5:23-2.7) and minor work (N.J.A.C. 5:23-2.17A), specifically that New Jersey no longer requires owners of one- and two-family homes to obtain permits for many exterior renovations to those properties. Why do I need to file an application with the Commission?** These changes do not negate the requirement that homeowners in our City's historic districts submit an application to the Commission for any renovations to the exteriors of their homes that can be seen from the street. Although homeowners no longer need to obtain permits for these renovations, the rules applying to historic districts still apply. Homeowners are still required to file an application with the Commission to make sure that their plans fit in with the neighborhood and adhere to the State and City's guidelines for historic properties. This process ensures the retention of the historic character of the district.

**What are some of the factors that the Commission considers when it reviews an application?** The Commission uses the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (36 CFR 67), as well as locally generated guidelines, to evaluate the effect of the proposed work on the architectural and historical character of your building and/or its historic district.

*For example, the Standards for Rehabilitation state:*

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.



6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

**I own a building in a historic district that is less than fifty years old. Why does the Commission need to review proposed 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 proposed alterations will not detract from the special qualities of the surrounding buildings. When 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.

**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 cannot recommend restoration professionals. Owners of other 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 without receiving Commission approval, the building owner will be held responsible.

**I want to sell my landmark building. Must I tell the Commission?** Landmark designation places no restriction on an owner's right to sell a property. When selling a landmark property, inform your realtor and the new owner of the historic designation of the property.

**My designated building is no longer cost-effective. May I demolish it?** Approval of the Commission and the Building Department is necessary to obtain demolition permits. Your application must meet the criteria for demolition as outlined in the Newark Preservation Ordinance. In keeping with the mission of the Ordinance, the owner of any landmark building should consult with the office of the Commission to see if the building can be saved.

**Newark Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission  
Division of Planning and Community Development Resources**

*Link to application to do work on a historic property, City of Newark website:*

**[www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2017-LHPC-APPLICATION\\_Revised.pdf](http://www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2017-LHPC-APPLICATION_Revised.pdf)**

*Link to calendar for Landmarks and Historic Preservation meetings:*

**[www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/landmarks-historic-preservation-commission/](http://www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/landmarks-historic-preservation-commission/)**

*Link to City of Newark Historic Sites and District maps, Chapter 10 /*

*Newark Zoning and Land Use Regulations:*

**[www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/NZLUR\\_Chapter10.pdf](http://www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/NZLUR_Chapter10.pdf)**

*Link to City of Newark Historic Preservation Ordinance, Page 200:*

**[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QOtceZHWTCaQUDE4RGz7Ax\\_Ff09c9rjw/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QOtceZHWTCaQUDE4RGz7Ax_Ff09c9rjw/view)**

*Link to design guidelines for work on a historic property, City of Newark website:*

**[www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Historic-Design-Criteria.pdf](http://www.planning.ci.newark.nj.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Historic-Design-Criteria.pdf)**

*Cover: Forest Hill Residence, Newark, New Jersey*



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