

Frequently Asked Questions

The City of Paterson recognizes that the character and quality of life enjoyed by its citizens depend in great measure upon the City's rich architectural heritage. The City and the Paterson Historic Preservation Commission work together to ensure our historical, cultural, archeological, social and economic heritage entrusted to each generation is enriched and passed on to future generations.

In effort to protect the City's vast heritage, individual buildings and districts in the City of Paterson have been designated as historic and listed either on the Paterson, State and/or National Register of Historic places.

This FAQ guide attempts to guide owners of designated sites their responsibilities in adhering to the municipal ordinance concerning historic properties.

Is my property a local landmark?

Please contact the Division of Historic Preservation at 973-321-1220 ext. 2263 to verify if your property is listed as a local landmark. It will help if you have your block and lot number, or the street address and the cross street on hand. A full listing of historic properties is also available on the web at www.patersonnj.gov/hpc.

What does historic designation mean?

This designation means that your building has special historical, cultural, or aesthetic value and is an important part of Paterson's heritage. As such, the Commission or the Historic Preservation Staff must approve in advance any work on the building that changes its appearance.

What is a historic district?

A historic district is an area of the city that has been designated by the Historic Preservation Commission because it has special character or a special historic 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/or repairs?

Yes. Every designated structure, whether it is an individual landmark or a building in a historic district, is protected under the City's Zoning Ordinance and subject to the same review procedures. If you want to perform minor work or make alterations to your building 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.

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Are there any types of work that do not require the Commission's approval?

Ordinary maintenance such as replacing broken glass and/or removing graffiti do not require 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 Building Department; and 3) when work on the interior affects the exterior. The Historic Preservation Office can inform you whether an approval is needed for the work you are considering.

Will my property taxes be increased due to designation as a historic property?

No. Property assessments will not be affected by this designation.

Where can I find a full copy of the Ordinance?

The full Zoning Ordinance is on file for your review at the Planning Office located at 125 Ellison Street, 4th Floor. The Historic Preservation portion is fully available on the web at www.patersonnj.gov/hpc.

Do I need a permit to perform work on my property?

Per the City of Paterson Zoning Ordinance, the Paterson Historic Preservation Commission must review any proposals for alterations to buildings listed within the Paterson Register of Historic Places and determine whether they have any effect on the building or within the historic district. Any effect must be harmonious or appropriate. When in doubt if your work needs approval, please contact the Preservation or Planning Division staff.

Any exterior work that is visible from a public right-of-way that alters or involves a change of existing materials and is not normal upkeep and maintenance (i.e. replacing wood siding with synthetic siding, painting unpainted brick, installing new windows, painting the façade) requires a permit. Demolition and new construction as well as installation of fencing or a wall on the grounds of the property also requires a permit. Permits are required for businesses wishing to put up new signs, even if it is behind the glass in a window, or to install or recover awnings as well as for other more permanent forms of signage and exterior lighting.

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/or district.

What is the application procedure?

Applications must comply with local zoning codes. Applications must be filled out, signed by the owner, and submitted with documentation and architectural plans as required. Guidelines for the submission are given in the Application. Applications, procedures, and guidelines can be found at www.patersonnj.gov/hpc. Applications may be turned in at any time of the month and are then reviewed for completeness by the Historic Preservation staff. Applications are subject to a final review by an Commission.

I own a building in an historic district that is less than fifty (50) 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.

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How does the public hearing work?

Public Hearings before the City of Paterson Historic Preservation Commission typically begin at 6:30 pm on the third Monday of each month. The meetings are typically held in the Great Falls Welcome Center located at 65 McBride Avenue Ext., Paterson. You will be informed of the completeness of your application and the exact time and place of your hearing two weeks prior to the hearing.

An applicant, architect or sign representative's attendance may be necessary at the public hearing to represent your application. At the hearing, Historic Preservation staff may help you present your application to the Commission and then Commissioners will ask direct questions regarding your application. It is often helpful to have a professional on hand to answer questions if you do not fully understand the logistics of installation or construction and the nature of the proposed materials.

The Commission may decide to approve, conditionally-approve, or deny your application without prejudice. Applications that are held over will receive first priority as "Old Business" at future meetings. Interim sub-committee meetings with the Historic Preservation staff may meet prior to returning with your application before the Commission.

How long will it take to obtain a Certificate of No Effect, Appropriateness, or Denial?

A decision will be made as quickly as possible, but within a maximum of 45 days after the completed application has been referred to the Commission, unless a mutually agreed-upon extension is granted.

After I have obtained a Certificate of Appropriateness, can I begin work on my property?

Yes. The property owner can proceed immediately, provided any and all required permits and certificates have been obtained from the City of Paterson **and any conditions of permitting are followed.**

Can I appeal the Commission's decision?

Yes. If a property owner does not agree with the findings of the Commission, she/he may appeal to the Board of Adjustment.

Are there any penalties for violating provisions of the ordinance?

Yes. Any activity that violates the provisions of the City of Paterson Zoning Ordinance must be stopped immediately. The property owner must then apply to the Commission for approval and take any steps necessary to preserve the property while the approval is pending. If a landmark is threatened with imminent harm by the actions of an owner who continues to violate the Ordinance, the City of Paterson may apply to the courts to stop the activity. There are also fines which may be levied against owners following their conviction for a violation of the Zoning Ordinance.

I own a designated building. Should I tell the tenants in my building about the landmark status?

Yes. If a tenant makes alterations before receiving Commission approval, the building owner, tenant and con-

For more information, please contact the Division of Historic Preservation at 973-321-1220 ext. 2263 or email garchimede@patersonnj.gov