

Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission

Frequently Asked Questions

Role and Function of the Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission

1. What is the role of the Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission in Oneonta?

The Oneonta Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission is a group of community members chosen by the Mayor and approved by the Common Council. Their job is to protect and celebrate our city's unique history by preserving our historic buildings and resources. They also aim to share their love for our historic community through education.

2. Does the Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission limit property owners' rights?

The commission's goal isn't to limit property owners' rights. Instead, the Commissioners work with property owners to preserve the historic fabric of our community. The commission is empowered by the City to approve, approve with modifications, or disapprove of proposals to modify building exteriors within local historic districts. The Commission uses various resources to guide their decisions, including the City's Certified Local Government ordinance, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and preservation briefs issued by the National Park Service.

3. Who is on the Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission?

A: Historic preservation commissions are made up of community members who care about preserving their local history. They are chosen by local government officials and may include professionals like architects, historians, planners, builders and licensed realtors. Commissioners are required to be residents of the City of Oneonta, and their job is to make sure that decisions about historic preservation are made with expert advice. They also take into consideration public comment at each monthly meeting and all submitted

4. Why does the Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission pay attention to even the smallest details?

A: The Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission's job is to preserve our community's historic character and architectural integrity. Even though it may seem like they focus on small details, their goal is to maintain the overall historic integrity and unique identity of our neighborhoods. By paying attention to even the smallest elements, the Commission aims to protect the authenticity and charm that makes our area special.



Importance & Impact of Historic Preservation

5. Why is historic preservation important for our community?

Historic preservation is important for Oneonta because it helps us keep our unique charm, character, and identity. Our city has unique buildings that tell stories of our past. By preserving these buildings, we can keep that uniqueness alive. Additionally, neighborhoods that are protected by historic preservation designation hold their property values much better than those which are not.

6. How are buildings considered historic?

Buildings are usually considered historic through a detailed evaluation process. The criteria for evaluation can vary, but it usually involves looking at the property's historical importance, architectural integrity, and connection to important events, people, or architectural styles. This evaluation often includes research, documentation, and expert analysis by professionals in the field of historic preservation.

7. Can the designation be removed? If so, how?

A: In some cases, a historic designation can be removed, but it requires a detailed review and approval process. Usually, the property owner or a designated authority would need to submit a formal request to the Oneonta Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission, the New York State Historic Preservation Office, and National Park Service. The request must show a significant change in circumstances or evidence that challenges the property's eligibility for historic designation. The commission would then evaluate the request based on established guidelines and consider input from experts and the public before making a decision.

Property Owner Concerns & Resources

8. Does listing my house on the National Register of Historic Places subject my property to any restrictions?

No. Listing on the National Register is in itself an act of recognition for the historical importance of your property, but does not offer any protections to or restrictions upon the property.

9. Can I make changes to my historic property?

Yes, you can make changes to your historic property. Our commission encourages property owners to make thoughtful changes that preserve the property's historical importance. We're here to offer guidance, resources, and information about possible financial incentives to help you with your preservation efforts.

10. Are there financial incentives available for historic property owners in Oneonta?

Yes, the Oneonta Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission can provide information and help in accessing various financial incentives to support your historic preservation projects. One notable incentive is the historic preservation tax credits offered by the State of New York.

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12. How can I learn more about the history of my property?

The commission can help direct you to local resources like archives, libraries, and historical societies that can help you to discover the stories and importance behind your property.

13. Can the Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission help me find contractors or resources for historic preservation work?

Absolutely! The commission has a network of preservation professionals and can recommend contractors, architects, and specialists with experience in historic preservation. We can also guide you to resources, workshops, and educational opportunities to help you understand the preservation process.

Property Owner Concerns & Resources, cont.

14. What are my options if I disagree with the recommendations of the Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission?

If you disagree with the recommendations issued by the Landmarks and Historic Preservation Commission, it's important to seek clarification from the Commission and review the specific guidelines and regulations in question. Open and constructive communication with the Commission can help address any misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Sharing accurate information about repair options, such as alternative materials, can allow for a more informed discussion and potential resolution. The Commission's goal is to work collaboratively with property owners to find suitable and feasible solutions that meet both preservation standards and practical needs. For details about the appeals process, please consult the [City of Oneonta Code, chapter 160, section 19](#).

15. How can the Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission address concerns about accessibility?

The Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission understands the importance of accessibility and making sure that properties meet the needs of all residents. It is possible to preserve the architectural integrity of a property while still providing access to all, and we encourage you to bring your project to the Commission for assistance in determining the best outcome.

Community Engagement & Contact Information

16. How can I support historic preservation efforts in Oneonta?

We welcome and encourage community involvement! You can attend our public meetings, participate in preservation events, share your concern for historic preservation with the mayor and Common Council, or even organize an event of your own! Together, we can make a big difference in preserving our shared heritage.

17. What if I have concerns or questions about a specific property or project?

If you have concerns or questions about a specific property or project, we encourage you to reach out to the Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission and the City of Oneonta Code Enforcement Office. We're here to listen and address any issues you may have. Your input is valuable in shaping the preservation decisions that affect our community.

18. How can I contact the Landmarks & Historic Preservation Commission?

You can contact the Oneonta Historic Preservation Commission via the City Clerk.

Environmental Impact of Historic Preservation

19. What is meant by the statement: “The greenest building is one that is already built?”

"The greenest building is one that is already built" means that existing buildings, including historic ones, have built-in sustainability benefits. By preserving and rehabilitating these buildings, we avoid the environmental impacts associated with new construction, such as the consumption of raw materials, energy, and resources. Historic buildings often have embodied energy, which is the energy used during their original construction. This makes their preservation and adaptive reuse a sustainable choice that conserves resources and reduces carbon footprint.

20. Are historical windows as energy efficient as modern windows?

Yes, historical windows can be just as energy efficient as modern windows when properly restored and maintained. While modern windows may offer advanced technologies, historical windows can still provide adequate insulation and energy efficiency when addressed correctly. Techniques like weather-stripping and retrofitting storm windows can make historical windows meet modern energy standards while preserving the authentic character and charm of the building.

21. Is vinyl siding environmentally friendly for historic buildings?

Vinyl siding is not considered environmentally friendly for historic buildings. Its production and disposal have negative environmental impacts, including the release of toxic chemicals and the generation of non-biodegradable waste. In contrast, preserving and maintaining original materials like wood siding on historic buildings promotes sustainability by minimizing resource consumption, reducing waste, and preserving the building's unique historical character. Furthermore, the reuse of existing buildings reduces the amount of demolition and construction waste deposited in landfills and lessens the unnecessary demand for new energy and other natural resources needed to construct a new building.