

Historic Preservation in Larchmont

*Frequently
asked questions*



What is the Historic Preservation Task Force?

The Historic Preservation Task Force (HPTF) was established in 2017 by the Larchmont Village Board of Trustees and Mayor. The primary goal of the HPTF is to research historic-preservation legislation and resources, identify Larchmont’s “features and objects” of historic interest and value, and to make recommendations regarding historic preservation in Larchmont to the Village Board. The HPTF created this brochure to engage Larchmont residents as part of its community outreach efforts.

What is historic preservation?

Historic preservation is an official means of identifying buildings, properties and cultural artifacts as important contributors to a community and its heritage, and recognizing a collective responsibility to protect these resources. By officially designating historic landmarks individually, or as broader historic districts encompassing groups of important structures, the special qualities of a community can be protected.

Why should Larchmont adopt a historic preservation law?

Larchmont is an historic community blessed with buildings of significant character and importance. The historical, architectural, and cultural heritage of our community is among the most important assets of the Village. Dozens of communities of similar age and character in Westchester County and New York State have opted to establish historic preservation laws to recognize and protect their significant historic, architectural and cultural resources. A historic preservation law, if enacted in Larchmont, may protect and enhance our shared heritage.

Do other Westchester municipalities have historic preservation laws? Which ones?

20 of the 43 municipalities in Westchester County have adopted historic preservation laws, with provisions tailored to the particular desires of each community. Westchester communities with historic-preservation laws include:

Village of Ardsley
Town of Bedford
Town of Cortland
Village of Dobbs Ferry
Town of Greenburgh
Village of Irvington
Village of Mamaroneck
Town of New Castle
Town of North Castle
Town of North Salem
City of New Rochelle
Village of Ossining
City of Peekskill
Town of Pound Ridge
City of Rye
Town of Scarsdale
Village of Tarrytown
City of White Plains
City of Yonkers
Town of Yorktown

How does a building become a designated historic property?

Significant buildings, properties and artifacts are usually identified by professional architectural historians and are published in a Historic Resources Inventory and Survey (HRIS). The community’s Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) reviews the HRIS and, according to established criteria, proposes specific properties for designation. The local Board of Trustees reviews the HPC’s recommendations and determines designation. Once designated, properties are subject to review of proposed exterior

changes. Review is based on recognized guidelines, such as the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards and local preferences.

What makes a property historically significant?

A number of factors are considered when determining the significance of an individual building, such as the architectural style and age of the building, the events that took place in the building and the people who resided in the building or were otherwise affiliated with it. Buildings possessing a high level of significance may be considered for individual designation as an Historic Property and a collection of significant buildings may be designated together as part of a Local Historic District.

What is a Historic District?

An area containing a collection of significant buildings, or a neighborhood with shared historical importance, can be designated as a Local Historic District.

What are the benefits of individual designation or inclusion within a Historic District to homeowners?

Designation is an opportunity to highlight particularly significant and beloved parts of a community. Establishment of designated structures and historic districts typically results in stabilization of neighborhoods, protection of the continuity of the built environment, an enhanced collective sense of pride in the neighborhood, and improved maintenance of individual properties.

What are the drawbacks?

Designation requires the owner to submit to a review process when considering changes to exterior elements or demolition of the property.

What would be my new responsibilities as an owner if my property is historically designated?

Owners' responsibilities would be no different from what they are now. Residents of Larchmont take the care of their homes seriously. It is all part of cherishing our homes and of sharing a sense that we live in a very special historic village. Owners of designated properties, like their neighbors, would be required to maintain designated properties in good condition and submit certain proposed exterior alterations for review against recognized and well-articulated guidelines. Such review would typically not be required for maintenance-level upkeep of existing features.

If my house is designated, can I still make alterations to it?

Absolutely. Historic-preservation designation does not prohibit modifications to designated properties. The type of review needed would depend on the proposed alterations, in a manner similar to the present reviews by our Village's Zoning, Planning, and Architecture Review Boards.

What is the difference between restoration and rehabilitation?

Restoration refers to meticulous repairs to the appearance of a building in a specific period of its history, usually tied to a historic event or era, and using original period materials. Rehabilitation involves repairs following the general architectural style of the property, taking advantage of efficient contemporary materials and techniques.

What if I want to demolish my designated house in order to build a new one?

This touches on the essence of historical preservation. Preserving historically designated properties would be the primary goal of a community's preservation effort. Proposed demolitions of designated properties would need to be submitted for

review under the same criteria used for historic designation.

Will I need permission to paint my designated house a new color?

Replace my windows?

While some communities with historical designations have guidelines for these types of changes, that is not true of all such communities. Should the Village enact historical-preservation guidelines, proposed changes to the exterior of designated properties would be submitted for review under the same criteria used for historic designation.

Can I add an addition to my designated house?

Yes. Additions can be made to designated properties after submitting the proposed design for review, applying the same criteria upon which the original designation was based. Other pertinent reviews mandated by the Village's Zoning, Planning, and Architecture Review Boards would still be required.

Would there be any restrictions on remodeling the interior of my designated house?

Historic designation is typically limited to exterior elements of buildings, without restrictions on interiors. However, interiors of particular aesthetic or historical significance, such as where a famous person lived or worked, or where a significant event occurred, can sometimes be designated also.

Can I change the landscaping?

Landscaping is typically not included in historic-preservation designation. Landscaping changes remain subject to other local restrictions.

Would I be able to appeal historic preservation designation?

Yes. An appeals process to historic-preservation designation is part of every historic-preservation law. An owner would have the right to challenge the designation under a variety of conditions, including

disagreement with the original review process and/or economic hardship.

What impact does historic designation have on property values?

The economic impact of historic-preservation legislation has been studied and reported in universities and by various state and municipal entities across the country. The results of these studies are generally consistent, showing that local historic districting stabilizes and enhances property values. Other reports, however, raise questions about the property-value assessment methodologies used in landmarking and historic districts studies and encourage further study. The Larchmont Historic Preservation Task Force is continuing to review this issue.



Historic Preservation Task Force

