

North Reading Historic District Commission

Background

Throughout Massachusetts, cities and towns face the needless destruction of their treasured historic resources. Village centers, neighborhoods and downtowns are often not very well protected, and through demolitions and insensitive alterations can easily disappear. However, many cities and towns in Massachusetts have taken steps to better protect their historic resources by establishing historic districts, provided for by Massachusetts General Law.

In a local historic district, before any exterior architectural feature that is visible from a public way is altered, the plans to carry out that alteration must first be approved by a local historic district commission. In this way, needless demolitions and alterations can be permanently prevented. North Reading is one of over 100 cities and towns in Massachusetts that have already recognized the value of historic districts, and has established one such district in the old center. An Historic District Commission, appointed by the Selectmen, oversees this area.

Purpose of the North Reading Historic District Commission

1. To preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and locations significant to the history of North Reading;
2. To oversee maintenance of the settings of those buildings;
3. To assure that new construction is compatible with the existing property and the historic nature of the neighboring property;
4. To assist affected property owners to ensure that their property will continue to reflect the past while meeting present needs;
5. To provide guidance and advice to property owners.

Certificate Process

If a property owner residing within an historic district wishes to make exterior alterations, it is advisable to first discuss the project with the HDC by making an appointment through the Chairman. Should the Commission indicate a positive response, the next step is to secure an application from the Community Planning Office at Town Hall.

A short form for minor alterations or a longer form for substantial building additions is available. One of these applications must be presented to the Commission for action before a Building Permit can be issued.