



Brief A-4 May, 2001

WHAT IS A HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION?

One of the best ways to ensure protection of local historic resources is by having a **Historic Preservation Ordinance** that designates and regulates historic sites or historic districts and establishes design criteria and guidelines for their municipality, and a **Historic Preservation Commission** that oversees the ordinance. More than 165 New Jersey municipalities have historic preservation ordinances and commissions. **An ordinance must be in place for a commission to be formed.**

The Composition of a Historic Preservation Commission

A historic preservation commission is structured based on the guidelines laid out in the historic preservation ordinance. It is made up of three classes of members including:

- a.) People with knowledge of architectural history, building or construction
- b.) People with a knowledge of local history
- c.) Residents of the municipality
- d.) The mayor usually appoints members to the Historic Preservation Commission.

What Kind of Power does a Historic Preservation Commission Have?

Historic Preservation Ordinances vary among municipalities in the degree of authority granted to commissions to protect designated historic properties. Based on a community's ordinance there are two types of commissions, **regulatory** and **advisory**. The strongest ordinances are **regulatory** and allow the historic preservation commissions to review things like proposed alterations, new construction, and to make binding decisions regarding the issuance or denial of municipal permits. Another type of ordinance is **advisory**, and set up differently, allowing commissions only to make advisory reports to planning or zoning boards who then make binding decisions.

How does our Community form a Historic Preservation Commission?

Since Historic Preservation Commissions are formed based on guidelines stated in the historic preservation ordinance, passing an ordinance is the first step. You might start by talking with local officials about setting up a group of citizens to write an ordinance or about hiring a consultant to write one. You should also contact the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office for assistance. Please see toolkit brief AP- 4 for more information on the process for creating an ordinance.

For further information on Historic Preservation Ordinances and Commissions contact George Chidley at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office - 609.984.6017 / gchidley@dep.state.nj.us

What is the Process for Creating a Historic Preservation Ordinance?

AP-4

