

FAQS ABOUT HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN CLOSTER



What are the benefits of historic preservation?

Historic preservation has been shown to increase property values, particularly in historic districts. Preservation ordinances give property owners greater rights, in that they have a say in the look of their historic neighborhood. Additionally, and uniquely to Closter, The Mayor and Council recently passed legislation that allows a greater maximum building coverage and impervious coverage on the properties of designated landmarks in Closter. (See Closter Borough Code, Chapter 200, Schedule A)

Can I paint my house any color that I want ?

Yes, you can! The Historic Preservation Commission does not regulate paint colors on surfaces that have already been painted, but they are always available to advise on appropriate historical colors if the owner would like such advice.

(The Closter ordinance does require review of the use of paint on historically unpainted surfaces, such as painting never-before-painted stone surfaces.)

What about landscaping?

The Closter ordinance does not address landscaping.

Can I tear a building down?

Demolition of an historic building would require a hearing before the Historic Preservation Commission before the Building Department could issue the permit. Every effort should be made to protect the building if is restorable.

FAQS ABOUT HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN CLOSTER (CONTINUED)

Can I add on to it?

If the addition will be visible from a public right-of-way, then a hearing before the Commission would be required prior to issuance of a permit by the Building Department.

What is a "Certificate of Appropriateness"?

A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is the name of the approval issued by the Commission following a hearing. The COA tells the building department that the work proposed for the historic building has been approved as appropriate in style and proportion for the historic structure or neighborhood. Once the Building Department receives the COA from the Commission, a permit can be issued for the work.

How long does it take to get a COA?

COA applications for major projects are heard at a regularly scheduled monthly Commission meeting and are within 45 days from the date that the application is submitted to the Commission. Minor projects are reviewed by the Chairman or subcommittee of the Commission and can be completed in a short time.

The HPC meets on the 4th Monday of each month at 8 pm in Closter Borough Hall. To be scheduled for a hearing, the application must be submitted at least ten days prior to the meeting date.

What is a minor project?

A minor project is one for which a building permit is not needed, such as replacement in kind of minor architectural elements visible from the street. A minor application can be reviewed by the chairman or a subcommittee in a very short time. If the minor work is not approved, then a COA hearing before the entire Commission would be required.

What does it cost?

There is no fee for a COA hearing before the Commission.

How do I apply for a COA?

COA forms are available at the building department and on line at www.closterhistory.com. The completed form can be submitted to the Building Department, and it will then be forwarded to the Historic Preservation Commission.

CLOSTER HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

295 Old Closter Dock Road, Closter, NJ 07624



CLOSTER HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The Closter Historic Preservation Commission was created by ordinance of the Closter Mayor and Council in 2001. The Commission is responsible for promoting the preservation of Closter's historic sites, structures and cultural heritage. Meetings are open to the public and take place every fourth Monday of the month at 8 p.m. in the Council chambers of Borough Hall. See calendar for meeting dates.

HISTORY



Closter's identity and charm is due in great part to its wealth of important historic resources that remind us of Closter's history and the extraordinary human effort and talent that shaped our town. These irreplaceable resources merit preservation, or they risk being lost forever.

To date, thirteen late 18th Century and early 19th Century homes, including 10 Bergen County stone houses, the 28 structure West St. / Harrington Ave. District (which includes two churches), an historic farmstead, and an historically important African American church, have been formally designated as historic landmarks in the Borough of Closter. Many of these landmarked properties are also listed on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places.

A complete list of the landmarked properties by address as well as block and lot number and the date that the property was designated, is located in Chapter 200 of the Borough Code (Zoning), which can be found online at www.closterboro.com. That list of Closter's designated properties is also available, along with many photos and helpful and historical information, at www.closterhistory.com.

HISTORIC DESIGNATION



Designation of properties empowers neighborhoods to retain their special ambience by discouraging destruction and harmful alteration of historic properties. For the historic property owner, this does involve some obligations:

- * Exterior alterations, additions or changes that are visible from the public right of way require review by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Other actions requiring review are

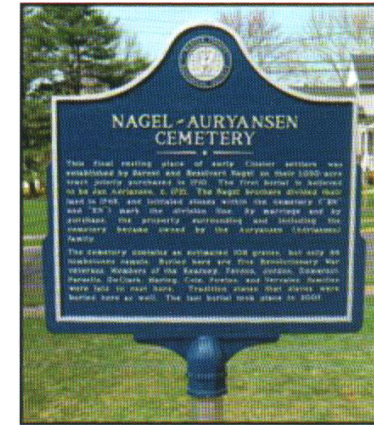
- * Demolition of a designated structure or one within a designated district
- * Relocation of a historic structure or one within a district
- * Emergency repairs to the exterior visible from the public right of way, which can be *commenced* without review

Actions NOT requiring review are:

- * Interior work of any kind
- * Repair, replacement or maintenance with no change in scale, material or appearance
- * Additions or changes not visible from the street

The Commission uses written Design Guidelines to help the property owner make choices that are optimal for maintaining the integrity of the historic structure. The Guidelines can be found at www.closterhistory.com.

SIGNS



You may notice large blue historic signs and/or small blue or red signs in front of some of Closter's historic houses and landmarks. The large blue signs are provided by and purchased from The Bergen County Historic Society.

The small numbered blue or red signs were installed during the 1976 Bicentennial by The Closter Environmental Committee.

Both types of signs are purely honorific and carry no obligations for preservation, nor do they prevent demolition. Only historic designation voted on and approved by the Mayor and Council, after considering the recommendations of the Historic Commission and the Planning Board, provides safeguards for historic properties.

