



What is an Historic Preservation Plan?

An historic preservation plan offers a comprehensive understanding of the historic and cultural resources found in a community, with an analysis of current preservation issues and a vision for the future. The overall goal of a historic preservation plan is to find ways for the community to grow and prosper while still maintaining a visible, tangible connection to the past. Historic resources are not limited to buildings. A preservation plan considers all types of historic resources, which might include agricultural fields, parks, archaeological sites, bridges, structures, stonewalls, burial grounds as well as many others.

Identifying and documenting historic resources is the foundation of historic preservation planning. Systematically identifying, documenting, and describing historic resources is known as historic property survey. A primary element of an historic preservation plan is reviewing the current survey and developing recommendations for additional survey that is needed.

Other sections of an historic preservation plan often include an analysis of state and national designations, preservation bylaws and ordinances such as local historic districts and demolition delay, and public awareness and the stewardship of municipally owned historic properties. In each chapter, an examination of the preservation issues is followed by recommendations. The Action Plan, at the end of the plan, prioritizes recommendations and designates a board, department, organization, or official that will lead implementation.

Benefits of an Historic Preservation Plan

A preservation plan helps the community come together with a shared vision for what makes their community a special place. By creating a plan and being proactive, the preservation of unique and significant historic resources moves forward.

Historic Preservation Plans in Berkshire County

The town of Lenox completed their historic preservation plan in 2018. This plan was partially funded by a matching grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, through the Survey and Planning Grant Program.

BRPC PROGRAM

Community Planning Program
berkshireplanning.org/programs

Preparing an Historic Preservation Plan

As the local historical commission is the municipal board responsible for community-wide historic preservation planning, much of the content relates to the local historical commission. However, an historic preservation plan should bring a wide range of stakeholders together to discuss concerns, ideas, and recommendations. As with any community planning project, an historic preservation plan must have a vigorous public outreach process that reaches a wide range of participants.



As part of implementing recommendations within their historic preservation plan, the Lenox Village Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2022.

Within municipal government, stakeholders include elected officials as well as most municipal boards and commissions, such as the planning board. Since zoning is notable for its effect on historic resources, both positive and negative, the input of the planning board is especially needed. Neighborhood groups, the chamber of commerce, real estate professionals, contractors, developers, public and private schools, and environmental organizations are just some of the stakeholders to include.

A historic preservation plan can take many different forms. Unlike a Comprehensive Plan or Open Space and Recreation Plan, there are no state requirements for what must be included within a historic preservation plan. The plan can be designed based on the needs of the local community at that point in time. Sometimes, a historic preservation plan is incorporated into the comprehensive plan for the community. Other times, it remains a stand-alone community planning document. Either way, the historic preservation plan should be well integrated into the overall planning of the community.

Some commissions have hired a consultant to prepare a detailed municipal preservation plan. Other commissions simply prepare their own plan of action for the coming year. For more information or samples historic preservation plans, contact Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Typical Sections within an Historic Preservation Plan

- Executive Summary
- The Purpose of the Plan
- The Planning Process to Prepare the Plan
- Historic Preservation Resources and Tools
- Historic Context of the Community
- History of Historic Preservation Planning in the Community
- Identification & Documentation of Historic Resources
- The National Register of Historic Places
- Local and State Designations
- Overall Status of Historic Resources
- Analysis of the Historic Preservation Bylaw or Ordinance(s)
- Analysis of the Historical Commission
- Incentives and Benefits
- Preservation Partners and Stakeholders
- Public Awareness and Attitudes
- Municipal Policy, Management and Capital Improvements
- Recommendations
- Action Plan