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VISION

MUNICIPAL IMPLEMENTATION TOOL # 7 :

HISTORIC PRESERVATION



Delaware Valley Regional
Planning Commission

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Historic preservation is the protection and maintenance of important places from the past, including buildings, neighborhoods, sites and landscapes. The Delaware Valley region is home to some of the nation's most celebrated and significant historic resources, including registered historic districts, national parks, and a range of unique structures reflecting a variety of architectural movements and traditions. By protecting, preserving and encouraging the use and reuse of their historic resources, municipalities from throughout the region can maximize efficient use of their existing infrastructure, curb sprawling development patterns, and help to create a unique local identity that will be a source of pride to their residents.



Delancey Street, Philadelphia

Why Does DVRPC Care About Historic Preservation?

This brochure is part of a series in support of *Horizons 2025*, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's (DVRPC) long-range land use and transportation plan. The Plan provides an integrated land use and transportation vision for the region's future, and specifically seeks to encourage core city revitalization, stabilization of older townships and boroughs, growth management in growing suburbs, and preservation of rural communities and natural areas. In Pennsylvania and New Jersey, townships, boroughs and cities have the primary authority and responsibility to implement these policies. This series of brochures introduces local officials and citizens to planning tools that may be useful in their communities.

Various resources are available that provide additional information on historic preservation. In addition to this brochure, DVRPC has published several reports that advocate historic preservation as a means of supporting revitalization and mixed-use development strategies. Interested readers are also encouraged to consult the sources listed on pages 10 and 11 for more details on the topics summarized in this brochure.

This question has no easy answer. Not all older structures merit preservation and properties may be deemed significant for a variety of reasons. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, rather than asking "Is this building historic?" it may make more sense to pose the question "Is this building worth saving?" That said, the importance of a property and a community's reasons for preserving it may derive from one or more of the following factors:

- **Beauty and Unique Character**

Building and site enhance the attractiveness of the surrounding community, making the area a more interesting place to visit and live.

- **Structural Condition**

Building is well constructed and could be rehabilitated and put to future use, decreasing the need for costly new investments in infrastructure.

- **Association with Past Events**

Site provides community with a physical link to its history. Such a property could be a downtown theater, an old schoolhouse or the location of a historic treaty signing.

What Are the Benefits of Historic Preservation?

Investing in historic preservation efforts can provide municipalities with important and impressive returns. Among these, preservation enhances the quality of life in communities by:

- Creating attractive places to live, work and play;
- Stimulating new investment in older communities;
- Reducing sprawl by creating opportunities for job and residential growth in developed areas;
- Decreasing the need for costly new investments in infrastructure;
- Boosting tourism and commercial/retail sales;
- Enhancing the unique character of individual communities; and
- Helping residents to cultivate a sense of place.

Several federal agencies and national non-profit organizations provide funding for preservation activities throughout the country. Included among them are the National Park Service and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, both of which administer extensive grant programs that support local efforts. Additionally, both Pennsylvania and New Jersey have statewide preservation groups, including publicly funded state historic preservation offices (SHPO) and private non-profit alliances.

Every state is required by law to have an SHPO, a government agency charged with the following responsibilities:

- Identifying historic properties;
- Preparing and updating a statewide preservation plan;
- Awarding grants and certifying tax incentives for rehabilitation projects;
- Assessing the impact of federal projects on historic properties; and
- Providing assistance to government agencies at the federal, state and local levels, as well as to citizens groups, non-profit organizations and the private sector.

In Pennsylvania, the Bureau for Historic Preservation, a division of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, serves as the SHPO. In New Jersey, the Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Historic Preservation fills this role.

In both Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the efforts of the SHPO are supported by statewide nonprofit organizations that finance resource protection and education programs. These groups include Preservation Pennsylvania and the New Jersey Historic Trust, which award grants and manage revolving loan funds that benefit a range of preservation efforts throughout their respective states. In addition, the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia provides technical assistance and training to enhance the quality of restoration projects within the City of Philadelphia and its surrounding Pennsylvania counties. For information on how to contact these organizations, see page 10.

In 2001, the Bureau for Historic Preservation released *A Gift for Pennsylvania*, the state's five-year preservation plan. Through extensive survey work, the report's preparers found that Pennsylvania's residents place a particularly high value on the protection of their state's historic neighborhoods, main streets and downtowns. In order to facilitate continued investment in these and other areas, the report articulates a three-point strategy that seeks to accomplish the following:

- Educate Pennsylvanians about their heritage and its value;
- Build better communities through preservation; and
- Provide strong leadership at the state level that will promote and support preservation efforts throughout the Commonwealth.

In addition to charging statewide agencies and organizations with the responsibility of delivering strong and coordinated leadership, *A Gift for Pennsylvania* calls on local governments, community groups and businesses to build partnerships and adopt best practices that ensure preservation remains an integral part of the state's future. The final version of the plan may be viewed online at www.phmc.state.pa.us/bhp/Plan/presplan.asp?secid=25.

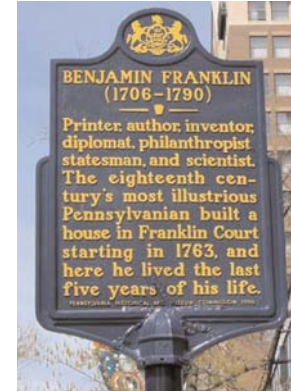
Similar to *A Gift for Pennsylvania*, New Jersey's current five-year preservation plan outlines a series of goals that aim to coordinate the work of statewide agencies and organizations with municipal and grass-roots efforts. Released in 2002, *New Jersey Partners for Preservation: A Blueprint for Building Historic Preservation into New Jersey's Future* puts forth the following five objectives:

1. Make historic preservation an integral part of planning and decision-making processes at the local and regional levels;
2. Use historic preservation as a catalyst to strengthen New Jersey's state and local economies;
3. Increase understanding and appreciation of the state's historic resources among private citizens, elected officials, and organizations;
4. Become a national leader in the stewardship of publicly-owned historic and cultural resources; and
5. Provide the financial resources and incentives necessary to advance historic preservation efforts throughout New Jersey.

By organizing the state's network of preservation advocates around a common set of goals, *New Jersey Partners for Preservation* establishes a vision for the state's future that is enhanced by the protection and reuse of resources from the past. The final version of the plan may be viewed online at www.state.nj.us/dep/hpo/4sustain/njhpp.htm.

National and State Registers of Historic Places

For their respective states, the SHPOs for Pennsylvania and New Jersey manage applications and listings for the National Register of Historic Places. Since 1970, New Jersey has also maintained its own statewide register. Like its national forbearer, the New Jersey Register of Historic Places protects sites from any public undertaking that might threaten, harm or destroy them. It also requires the Commissioner of the state's Department of Environmental Protection to authorize all projects that propose to impact historic properties.



Use of historic markers, interpretive signs and unique light fixtures can help residents and visitors to identify historic properties and the boundaries of historic districts.

Jointly administered by the National Park Service and SHPOs, the Certified Local Governments (CLG) program provides technical assistance and funding to community-based preservation efforts. To participate in the CLG program, municipalities must maintain a historic preservation commission, survey local historic properties, provide opportunities for public participation in preservation activities, and develop and enforce local preservation laws. Municipalities wishing to qualify as a CLG must submit a program application to their SHPO.

In exchange for their preservation efforts, CLGs are granted a stake in the Park Service's national preservation program and become eligible to draw on an exclusive pool of government matching funds. Federal law mandates SHPOs set aside at least ten percent of their Historic Preservation Fund grant allocation dollars for projects in municipalities that participate in the CLG program.

According to the National Park Service, more than \$40 million in funding has been distributed to CLGs since 1985. The 1,200 municipalities that currently participate in the program include 29 in Pennsylvania and 36 in New Jersey. CLGs located in the nine-county Delaware Valley region are shown in the table at right.

Certified Local Governments (CLGs) in the Delaware Valley Region

<p>Pennsylvania</p>	<p>Bucks County: Bristol Borough, Chalfont Borough, Lower Makefield Township, Newtown Borough</p> <p>Chester County: Birmingham Township, Tredyffrin Township, Kennett Square Borough, Phoenixville Borough, West Chester Borough</p> <p>Delaware County: Ridley Park Borough</p> <p>Montgomery County: Cheltenham Township, Lower Merion Township, Pottstown Borough</p> <p>City of Philadelphia</p>
<p>New Jersey</p>	<p>Burlington County: Burlington City, Mount Holly Township</p> <p>Camden County: City of Camden, Collingswood Borough, Gloucester City, Haddonfield Borough, Haddon Heights Borough</p> <p>Gloucester County: Harrison Township</p> <p>Mercer County: Ewing Township, Hopewell Township, Lawrence Township, Princeton Borough, Princeton Township</p>

Source: Bureau for Historic Preservation, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and Historic Preservation Office, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, May 2004.

Pennsylvania

Signed into law in 1961 and subsequently amended in 1963 and 1980, Pennsylvania's Historic District Act empowers counties, boroughs, and incorporated towns and townships to create historic districts within their jurisdictional boundaries. (Exempt from the policies outlined under the Act, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh must develop and enforce their own legal mechanisms for designating and protecting historic properties.) The law provides for the appointment of historic architecture review boards (HARBs) that are authorized to regulate development and structural rehabilitation efforts within their community.

Proposed historic district ordinances, which grant an area legal status as a designated historic place, should be developed in partnership with the SHPO. Once the appropriate governing body (generally the municipality's elected officials) has approved the ordinance, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission must certify it. Without certification, the ordinance has no legal effect.

New Jersey

New Jersey's Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) gives municipalities throughout the state the authority to identify, designate and regulate their own historic resources, including both historic districts and individual sites. Under the MLUL, historic preservation ordinances in New Jersey are considered an extension of local zoning laws; hence they should be developed and enforced by the citizens and governments of individual municipalities.

The MLUL also empowers local governments to create and define a historic preservation commission by local ordinance. The law requires such commissions to have five to nine members, plus alternates, who have a variety of professional backgrounds. Municipalities have the power to decide whether their commission should serve as an advisory or regulatory review board. A 1999 survey by New Jersey's Office of Historic Preservation revealed that 165 of the state's 566 municipalities had established historic preservation commissions by local ordinance.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania's Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) guides the state's cities, boroughs and townships in their efforts to prepare and implement comprehensive plans (Article III). The MPC supports the protection, conservation and enhancement of historic resources by permitting counties to develop their own historic preservation plans and enabling local governments to incorporate preservation provisions into their municipal zoning ordinances (Article VI).

New Jersey

As noted above, the MLUL allows New Jersey municipalities to regulate their historic resources through the creation of preservation ordinances and commissions. Like the MPC in Pennsylvania, the MLUL also provides local governments with a framework for creating municipal master plans and putting them into effect. Incorporated into this framework is a provision that authorizes the inclusion of historic preservation elements in municipal master plans.



In Radnor Township, Pennsylvania, portions of the Wayne commercial area comprise a registered historic district.



Residents enjoy a sunny afternoon in the historic downtown of Haddonfield, New Jersey.

Tax Incentives for the rehabilitation of historic structures have been in place in the United States since 1976, and took their current form following the passage of the Tax Reform Act of 1986. Among other things, the Act created the Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit, a federal tax incentive designed to encourage the preservation and reuse of older, income-producing properties, including offices, apartment buildings and retail stores. The program is widely considered one of the federal government's most successful and cost-effective community revitalization programs.

The Internal Revenue Code establishes a two-tiered system for the provision of Rehabilitation Investment Tax credits:

1. 20 percent tax credits for the rehabilitation of certified historic structures; and
2. 10 percent tax credits for the rehabilitation of non-certified, non-residential buildings constructed before 1936.

A substantial rehabilitation is necessary for a project to qualify for a tax credit and the work must meet national standards for the treatment of historic properties developed by the United States Department of the Interior (see www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/secstan1.htm for additional

information). Applications are reviewed by SHPOs and the National Park Service.

Every year, dozens of preservation projects are initiated or continued in Pennsylvania and New Jersey as part of the Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit Program. These projects have helped to leverage hundreds of millions of dollars of new investment and contributed to the creation of thousands of jobs.



Shoppers stroll a revitalized Haddon Avenue in historic Collingswood Borough, New Jersey.

Bureau for Historic Preservation, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

www.phmc.state.pa.us/bhp

Historic Preservation Office, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

www.state.nj.us/dep/hpo

As SHPOs, these offices manage preservation efforts throughout their respective states and review applications for the RITC. In Pennsylvania, call 717.783.8946. In New Jersey, call 609.292.2023.

Preservation Pennsylvania

www.preservationpa.org

Preservation Pennsylvania advises local and regional preservation groups and manages a private revolving fund that supports a range of grant and lending programs. For more information, call 717.234.2522

New Jersey Historic Trust

www.njht.org

This statewide, nonprofit organization provides funding and technical assistance to preservation efforts throughout New Jersey. For more information, call 609.984.0473.

Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia

www.preservationalliance.com

The Alliance supports preservation efforts in Philadelphia and its surrounding Pennsylvania counties. For more information, call 215.546.1146.

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

www.achp.gov

This federal agency advises on historic preservation policy and works to ensure historic preservation is appropriately factored into government project requirements. For more information, call 202.606.8503.

Preservation Services, National Park Service

www2.cr.nps.gov

A federal clearinghouse for information on historic preservation programs, the Historic Preservation Services Office connects communities and organizations with the information they need to identify and protect historic resources. For more information, call 202.513.7270.

National Trust for Historic Preservation

www.nationaltrust.org

The National Trust is a privately funded non-profit organization dedicated to protecting America's historic places and increasing awareness of preservation efforts. For more information, call 202.588.6000.

SOURCES

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Created in 1965, the **Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)** is an interstate, intercounty and intercity agency that provides continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning to shape a vision for the future growth of the Delaware Valley region. The region includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties, as well as the City of Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer counties in New Jersey. DVRPC provides technical assistance and services; conducts high priority studies that respond to the requests and demands of member state and local governments; fosters cooperation among various constituents to forge a consensus on diverse regional issues; determines and meets the needs of the private sector; and practices public outreach efforts to promote two-way communication and public awareness of regional issues and the Commission.



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