



Historic Preservation in Washtenaw County

Historic Preservation focuses on our irreplaceable treasures and provides programs and tools for protecting them. Historic resources enrich and enliven our surroundings and quality of life by maintaining a unique sense of place, helping to distinguish the unique landscapes in Washtenaw County. Rehabilitating our historic resources, preserving architectural details and materials that would be costly to replicate, and recycling and adapting old buildings creates economic, environmental and social benefits.

Washtenaw County has an abundance of unique historic resources that bestow a sense of legacy. These valuable historic resources include buildings, structures, sites, objects, and open space that tell the story of our past and inform future generations about our founding values. *The guiding principle of the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission is to safeguard the heritage of Washtenaw County.*

Historic Preservation Links

- National Trust for Historic Preservation
www.preservationnation.org
- National Park Service
<http://www.cr.nps.gov>
- Michigan State Historic Preservation Office
Including the Federal Tax Credit Program
<https://www.miplace.org/historic-preservation/>
- Michigan Historic Preservation Network
www.mhpn.org
- Michigan Barn Preservation Network
www.mibarn.net
- Washtenaw County Government
Including the Historic Preservation Program & Historic District Commission
www.washtenaw.org/preservation

FAQ About Historic Preservation in Washtenaw County

What can I do to protect my property from inappropriate alterations or the bulldozer?

You can call the Historic Preservation program (734-544-2954) or visit the public website at www.washtenaw.org/preservation for a Historic District application to start the process.

What are the benefits of local designation for my property?

Local historic designation stays with the property regardless of ownership. It creates an ordinance which requires third-party review by the local historic district commission and protects the property's historic significance over time. Designated properties are also entitled to some local government staff support and design review assistance. State tax credits are no longer offered in Michigan.

Will the Historic District Commission tell me what color to paint my house?

Typically, paint is viewed as a temporary application that does not damage original material and therefore is not regulated. However, some communities do regulate paint colors, if paint color has been documented to be a significant feature of the district. In that case, the HDC should review it.

What is a historic district?

State law defines it as: "an area, or group of areas not necessarily having contiguous boundaries, that contain one resource or a group of resources that are related by history, architecture, archeology, engineering or culture."

May we include my farm drive, stand of maple trees and viewshed in the protective ordinance?

Yes. If we have proof through photographs, the 1940 aerials of the county or drawings that the resources are 50 years old or older, we may count them as contributing resources to the historic district.

How long does it take for the study committee to write the historic district study committee report?

Depending on the size of the district and the number of active study committee members, it can take 12-18 months.

What is the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission?

In Washtenaw County, it is a group of seven or nine citizens, appointed by the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, for a term of three years. They act with the full authority of state and local law. They are not the historical society.

What if I disagree with a decision of the Commission?

Anyone who disagrees may appeal the decision to the State Historic Preservation Review Board by contacting the State Historic Preservation Officer at 517-373-1630. There will be a formal hearing in Lansing with a recommendation to the Review Board. If the appellant is still unsatisfied, the matter may be taken to circuit court.

How can I get money for my Historic Preservation Project?

Washtenaw County is a Certified Local Government and may apply yearly for Historic Preservation Fund dollars. The grant can be in the form of a pass-through or a direct grant. Proof of a 40% match is required for each request. Other grant sources may look favorably on local historic districts, too.

For more information, contact:

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